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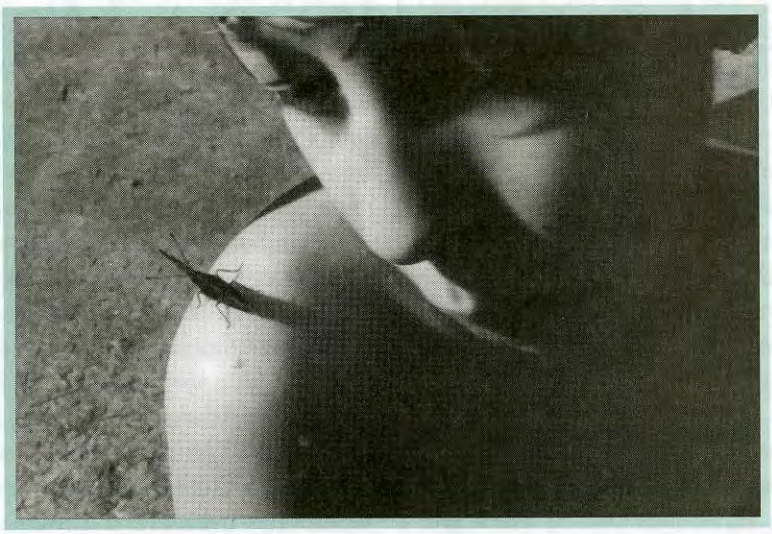
Una Finestra di Opportunit'a

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Een Raam van Gelegenheid

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Una Janela de Oportunidade



"Such a life on such a planet."

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Please note that the views expressed in this publication represent the opinions of their authors, and not necessarily those of the editors or of *The Urantia Book* Fellowship.

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Reflections on the Urantia Movement in 2002

By Philip Calabrese, San Diego, CA

Preface: My theme for these reflections is the personal and social reactions by readers to *The Urantia Book*, and especially to the cosmology of *The Urantia Book*. Let me start with my own experience.

Reactions to *The Urantia Book*

It was back in the summer of 1970 that my eyes first fell upon *The Urantia Book*, and it was love at first sight. I read it in its entirety in less than four months, from August to November, and it has made a great difference in my life.

Yet, it was, and still is, easy to react unwisely to *The Urantia Book*. For instance, in my own case, as a young mathematician and professor, I had to decide whether to incorporate *The Urantia Book*'s science into my contemporary scientific research program. If not, then I would be giving up the enlightened stance that *The Urantia Book* affords—not very idealistic. On the other hand, if I tried to incorporate *The Urantia Book*, then my efforts would be divided between Urantia material and more conventional writing. Somehow I just knew that it would be professionally impossible or at least premature to attempt to publish ideas such as Paradise in conventional scientific peer review journals.

In 1970 *The Urantia Book*'s full cosmology was far too advanced for contemporary science and it is still too advanced in 2002. Therefore, much of my work has remained unpublished or at best published with exposure only to *Urantia Book* readers. Nor have I been afforded anything like contemporary scientific peer review or ongoing dialogue and development among scientists who are enthusiastic partners in the research.

Given the contemporary flow of social, scientific, and religious culture, *The Urantia Book* was written in a form and with a content that had predictable implications on its likely initial acceptance, or more correctly, its lack thereof. The characters and narratives presented in *The Urantia Book* presume a radical change in perspective by the reader (one familiar to science fiction enthusiasts)—that super-humans have contacted earth in our day and sponsored the publication of *The Urantia Book*. In 1970 this was just one more cultural shock wave that hit us. But now, as then, it is all too easy for a serious student of *The Urantia Book* to raise eyebrows in his non-believing associates by professing belief in *The Urantia Book*'s revelatory claims. But that is just what *The Urantia Book* asks of the reader. This is not an accident of the writing of the book. It was foreseen. Faith, after all, is required to appreciate every divine revelation.

The authors knew that at first it would be hard for most people to accept *The Urantia Book*. The universe perspective is so foreign here on Urantia that the truth about the universe as presented in *The Urantia Book* sounds like a fairy tale to contemporary scientists and even to philosophers and religionists. Recall that almost all of the story of Melchizedek was lost because after hundreds of years during the captivity, the narrative sounded so strange to the religious leaders of the Jews that they expunged almost all of Melchizedek's exploits lest they be subjected to ridicule!

To get more of us skeptical Urantians to take it seriously, *The Urantia Book* needs to demonstrate a certain amount of super-human knowledge. As I will show, *The Urantia Book* has already done this, and I believe there is much more coming.

The mandate to the superhuman authors from the universe and superuniverse authorities included a positive component of what definitely to reveal, not only an admonition not to reveal what was to be our evolutionary knowledge acquirement during the next one thousand years. I will list these mandated types of cosmological revelation and link them with specific areas of contemporary scientific thought. This will demonstrate that *The Urantia Book* is still way ahead of contemporary cosmology and that the book will be recognized more fully by virtue of its cosmological predictions in science about to be discovered. Contemporary scientists, too, will eventually have a reaction to *The Urantia Book*.

But what should be our own long-term reactions to *The Urantia Book?* What would be a worthy way to proceed? How might we serve the process of assimilation of *The Urantia Book* by humanity?

It's been 47 years from its first publication and still there is no conventionally credible, recognized scientific venue for the scholarly study of *The Urantia Book*. We have some fine newsletters, periodicals, and web-sites, but we have nothing of intended long-term social construction to carry our continuing understanding and our

continuing presentations to each new generation of the sons of God. It is time for a change. Otherwise, the quality of the discussion of *Urantia Book* readers will continue to be limited and fragmented instead of the highest quality that our combined minds can muster. We need a unifying mode of service for careful discovering and presenting of *The Urantia Book* that facilitates learning and discovery and also graciously presents it to others without raising religious or philosophic animosities. My suggestion is for us to resurrect Cymboyton and sponsor the second Urmia University for the study of science and religion.

The Coming Cosmological Revolution

In the meantime, I'm happy to report that the pressure is building fast for a real revolution in scientific thought (a paradigm shift as we say nowadays) that will find the 1955 *Urantia Book* still cosmologically well ahead of contemporary science. This shift in thinking is now being imposed upon contemporary science by the increasingly pointed quantum experiments that are forcing scientists to realize the truth. As *The Urantia Book* puts it,

"Human beings are only just beginning to realize that the reactions of existence appear between acts and their consequences." [86:2.3] (P. 951)

Think about what this single line implies; many of the consequences of any act will always happen at the speed of light. Just the movement of an arm will cause light to travel in patterns that would not have been present had the arm not moved. Even in the dark, the arm gives off its own energy at the speed of light. Yet, before any of these light consequences can occur, at any distances whatsoever, "existence" has already reacted! Scientists have been slow to believe in these "reactions of existence."

I'm happy to report that the pressure is building fast for a real revolution in scientific thought (a paradigm shift as we say nowadays) that will find the 1955 *Urantia Book* still cosmologically well ahead of contemporary science.

My present understanding is that the waves associated with the motions of a particle of matter are instantaneous space force reactions of the universe in perfect synchrony with the motion of that particle. But these associated waves are not the particle. They are in the yet undiscovered space force reactions of the Unqualified Absolute pervading all space, responsible too for the force of atomic cohesion, the so-called "strong force" of contemporary science.

The whole universe reacts to a movement; not only the local parts are influenced. The parts are, after all, just qualifications of the one primordial whole. The *whole* is not merely an aggregation of mechanically separated parts.

The Whole Regards the Part

Pause to consider that our ability to wonder about the *totality* is so rich in information only because the totality has afforded to each one of us an individual view of that totality! Who are we that *reality totality* should regard us as important enough to afford us each a personal view of the *whole?* Perhaps it is because we are each personally regarded by the First Person of Reality, the First Source and Center. We are spiritually encircuited with the totality of reality in many unseen ways, but one way that *is* seen is how the whole is displayed to each and every human being in the night sky. The infinite One is expressed in the minds and in the eyes of each one of us who walk the earth.

Jesus affirmed such a topology of space, bodies, minds, and spirits when he declared: *"The Father in the Son and the Son one with the Father–that is my life-giving revelation to the world and my saving gift to all nations."* Here is the whole quotation with more enveloping dimensions.

"I am this bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and are dead. But this bread which comes down from God, if a man eats thereof, he shall never die in spirit. I repeat, I am this living bread, and every soul who attains the realization of this united nature of God and man shall live forever. And this bread of life which I give to all who will receive is my own living and combined nature. The Father in the Son and the Son one with the Father–that is my life-giving revelation to the world and my saving gift to all nations." [153:2.12] (P. 1711)

The inside-ness and outside-ness experience of each of our minds constitutes primary experience and is the basis for all concepts of reality–spatial, spiritual, or personal. With this initial context of inner and outer viewpoints, it is possible to formulate additional space dimensions and a different space topology. This topology must allow absolute Paradise to have gravity presence as elastic tension in space. It must also incorporate

. . .the fleeting shadow of absolute Paradise realities

the absolute source of space force energy—the Unqualified Absolute, which pervades space. And it must also include the motions of space in space initiated by the Absolute Mind, the Third Source. And these actions may be supplemented by the Universal Absolute. The First Person and the Mother-Son and the Deity Absolute complete the seven Absolutes, and these also correspond to spatial dimensions.

Action at a Distance

Now scientists and others have tried hard to do away with this "spooky action at a distance," as Albert Einstein would describe such interpretations of quantum experiments. These so-called Bell-type experiments[1] increasingly are being shown to have no explanation other than that an action of measurement in one place can somehow affect measurements made so far away that light speed could not explain the influence. Light could not go from one place to the other in time for the measurements to be so influenced. So great has been the scientific confusion, some have suggested that probability or logic itself is wrong. In any case, from the standpoint of contemporary science, there is practically no other possible conclusion except that measurement in one place can affect measurements in another place without any possibility of information transfer at the speed of light having caused the influence. This has big implications for all of science and philosophy.

Heretofore, science has tried to build a case for "local" influences aggregated into a universe. Newton's gravitational attraction was instantaneous, proportional to the two masses involved and inversely with the square of the distance between the masses. Since gravity influence died off with the square of the distance as it spread out like the surface of a balloon, it was a modified local theory. The far-away influence of a body vanished practically to zero. But now scientists are detecting new influences occurring at relatively long distances. Light is much too slow to travel between the two distant measurements in the time taken to mechanically decide what to measure and make those measurements, and pure linear gravity could not produce such affects. Is that spooky? Not if you've been reading your *Urantia Book*.

Only non-locality of action saves classical probability and conditional logic. Why do we resist it so? Answer: Because we take space as absolute nothingness and the universe as an aggregate. Rather than nothingness, space is a transcendental reality that *The Urantia Book* mentions 851 times and extensively develops. Yet it is just the fleeting shadow of absolute Paradise realities.

The space force concept promises to stop the "endless confusion" over particles versus waves in contemporary physics. A new cosmology is about to be propounded that incorporates the whole of reality into an integrated concept of how a particle affects the totality and so therefore potentially any other particle, as quantum mechanics has already shown.

Even Einstein's theory of gravitation is a "bending of space" so that objects turn toward an attracting body as they travel through space. But what mechanism accomplishes this bending of space? Is it not instantaneous? Some scientists have carried the claim of local explanations for all phenomena to the point of looking for a "graviton," a hypothetical particle by which one body mechanically tells another that it is being attracted by the first body.

Einstein's Special Relativity enshrines the so-called "Principle of Equivalence"—the notion that any two reference frames moving with constant velocity with respect to each other are equivalent to each other for describing the equations of motion. At the same time Einstein discarded the possibility allowed by his equations—a unique reference frame by which to measure all motions, and he does this on esthetic grounds, saying that such a supposition is not intuitively pleasing. Without some absolutely fixed thing to which to tie such a fixed reference frame, choosing one arbitrarily would have been artificial. But *The Urantia Book* says that there is in fact such a fixed reference frame by which to measure all motion, and the name of this unique non-moving place is Paradise, a word that *The Urantia Book* uses 1437 times. Where in contemporary science is there any mention of such a reality in the cosmos? Who would dare suggest such a thing?

We already know "up" and "down" as the directions perpendicular to the plane of the Milky Way, which is also the plane of Orvonton and that of the whole creation including Paradise. It may also be possible now to observe the other absolute space directions of the master universe—North, South, East, and West by observing the outer space zones and determining the overall shape of the rings of galaxies as ellipsoidal, following the outline of ellipsoidal Paradise itself. The center of

gravity of these rings would also determine the location of Paradise at the macroscopic focus of space shrouded by a vertical wall of dark gravity bodies.

There are other exciting predictions, which will make or break *The Urantia Book*'s prophetic scientific record. But before I mention any more of them, I would like to specifically address an important issue being debated in the Urantia movement. What kind of credence should we give to *The Urantia Book*'s cosmology, its scientific pronouncements on many matters? How should we react to the cosmology of *The Urantia Book?*

Belief in the Cosmology of *The Urantia Book*

There are many gradations of belief in *The Urantia Book*. Some important ones are:

(1) Belief in the supernatural origin and spiritual truths, and

a) Complete skepticism of the cosmology,
b) Fundamentalist belief in the cosmology except for typos,
c) Partial belief in the cosmology.

(2) Disbelief that *The Urantia Book* is superhuman in origin.

(3) Belief that *The Urantia Book* is a work of the devil.

I will not be discussing folks in categories 2 and 3 here. Concerning 1a) I want to say that I sometimes read that fine Urantian periodical *Innerface International*. But I have sometimes winced as I read true believers of the spiritual teachings of The Urantia Revelation make statements along the lines that *The Urantia Book*'s cosmology is already outdated, being about what was thought in the early part of the 20th century. As a life-long scientist I can say that this simply is not true. Concerning 1c) I have also flinched when seeing believers who are scientists take the attitude that contemporary science from its position of ignorance is capable of critiquing *The Urantia Book*'s cosmology.

It may seem like good philosophy of religion and science to caution folks against putting overmuch confidence in the cosmology of *The Urantia Book*, especially with the strong cosmological disclaimer in the book itself about its own cosmology. But it is not right to claim that the eternal spiritual truths in *The Urantia Book* are accompanied by gratuitously revealed cosmological material that is quite incorrect and already largely superceded by contemporary science. In my opinion, that is a gross misinterpretation of *The Urantia Book*'s cosmological disclaimer. It seriously degrades and underestimates the value to Urantia of this gift of transient cosmological revelation.

While the sincere folks who regard themselves as debunkers of "Urantia Fundamentalism" always point out that the cosmology of *The Urantia Book* is definitely not "inspired," whatever that is taken to mean, they tend to ignore that this revealed cosmology is still of "immense value." Here is a carefully balanced statement that should not be ignored:

"Truth may be but relatively inspired, even though revelation is invariably a spiritual phenomenon. While statements with reference to cosmology are never inspired, such revelations are of immense value in that they at least transiently clarify knowledge by:

1. The reduction of confusion by the authoritative elimination of error.

2. The co-ordination of known or about-to-be-known facts and observations.

3. The restoration of important bits of lost knowledge concerning epochal transactions in the distant past.

4. The supplying of information which will fill in vital missing gaps in otherwise earned knowledge.

5. Presenting cosmic data in such a manner as to illuminate the spiritual teachings contained in the accompanying revelation. [101:4.5] (PP. 1109-10)

Now let's analyze this a bit and explore the implications. Rephrasing this, it says that while we should not treat the revealed cosmology as though it had the ageless, long-term value and application of the *relatively* inspired spiritual truths of *The Urantia Book*, we should still gather from the cosmology of *The Urantia Book* these five items of immense value.

The first thing to notice is how much *time* will be required for human science to gain these items of immense value. For instance, Item 1 may refer to how human science can reduce its "never-ending confusion" about "wave mechanics" and the common definitions of mass and energy. *The Urantia* Book author of Paper 42 says he cannot follow our commonly accepted definitions, there being such a paucity of language to describe the origin and metamorphosis of energy from primordial force to mechanical power. Has the promised reduced confusion been received yet by contemporary human science forty-seven years after its publication? I don't think so. Therefore in this respect the transient cosmology can not yet have been superceded by contemporary science.

Concerning Item 2, what known or about to be known cosmological facts and observations is *The Urantia Book* transiently coordinating? How long is it likely to take for such facts to be coordinated by human readers

of *The Urantia Book*? We are talking about more than a few years, even more than a few decades. Not many scientists are even taking *The Urantia Book* seriously, and those that do can't talk about it openly to their peers except those few that happen to be fellow believers. In these circumstances, working alone, as we tend to do, we may not accomplish something socially and scientifically significant that is also closely related to *The Urantia Book*.

Shall we consider the mention of a race of nonbreather humanoids which *"inhabits a sphere in close proximity to Urantia"* as about to be learned knowledge under the heading of Item 2? [49:3.6] (P. 564) If so, then forty-seven years from publication in 1955 has not been enough time for this benefit of immense value to be received by contemporary science. So far there is little or no evidence for the possibility of such a race. Such a discovery would be completely unprecedented. Such a discovery would draw immediate attention to *The Urantia Book* for having predicted it.

On the other hand, if no such race were ever to be found after sufficient observation of possible spheres in the solar system, then what else in *The Urantia Book* should we question? If such a supposedly gratuitous story concerning a fictitious humanoid race in close proximity to our world could find its way into the 1955 edition of *The Urantia Book*, then it would be reasonable to entertain doubts about many other stories and themes in *The Urantia Book*. This would not be a simple typo but rather a real falsehood, supposedly purposely put into the Revelation.

I do not share the opinion that such can be the case. There is no good reason that obvious falsehoods would need to be explicitly stated in order to tell the truth. That is sophistry! That is a veiled attack on the veracity and spirit source of the Urantia Revelation. Nothing gratuitously false such as a false time of light travel to M31 needed to have been put into *The Urantia Book* by the superhuman editors in their request for the reader to pause to reflect about how long ago light left that galaxy. There is no good reason for that time to be purposely incorrect. A number need not have been included at all to make the author's point. It might be a typo, or yet be correct, but I do not believe it could be a deliberately false and yet justified insertion.

The Urantia Book admits the inability of any document written in English and interpreted by the human mind to be anything more than transiently authoritative on cosmology. But it was not necessary to purposely include errors; they come unbidden. Nevertheless, the transitory cosmology is of immense value to humanity, a value still largely unclaimed by contemporary science, or religion for that matter.

Shall we take the mention of myriads of galaxies in outer space, no less than 375 million, to be information about to be discovered, or just what was thought early last century? Of course it was not what was thought at the beginning of the 20th century. This prediction has already come to pass. At the time of the 1955 publication of *The Urantia Book*, the galaxies were numbered under one hundred, more like a dozen. During the last sixteen years the number has grown from 5 or 10 million to rough estimates of 50 or 100 million galaxies in outer space. But this is not all. *The Urantia Book* predicts much more.

Shall we accept stories about Adam and Eve, the Lucifer Rebellion, and the Caligastia betrayal that go on for pages as more or less literal, or do we imagine that such accounts are meant to be poetic?

Shall we imagine that the outer space level of alternating whirling rings of hundreds of millions of galaxies is old cosmology, or recently partially recognized as the "great wall of galaxies" in outer space limited only by the extent of the observations? Science has not yet looked to see where this wall ends, or if it ends. *The Urantia Book* predicts this wall extends all the way around in four concentric alternately rotating rings of hundreds of millions of galaxies!

Shall we accept stories about Adam and Eve, the Lucifer Rebellion, and the Caligastia betrayal that go on for pages as more or less literal, or do we imagine that such accounts are meant to be poetic? Do we accept life initiated and evolved by the Life Carriers, and Andon and Fonta as two advanced animals that grew to have personal will dignity and the ability to know God and who became the parents of the human race? If these stories are not reasonably accurate, then how can we learn of forgotten epochal events as Item 3 claims that we can

do with the cosmological material in *The Urantia Book?*

Concerning Item 4, what missing vital gaps in our knowledge have been already filled by *The Urantia Book*'s cosmology and recognized by contemporary scientists? Have we discovered the tablets of Dilmun lying below the shallow waters of the Persian Gulf off the shores of Iraq?

Have we gotten Item 5, the cosmic perspective, well enough to illuminate the spiritual teachings? Have we understood Jesus' saying that the Father is in the Son and the Son at one with the Father, and that this is his saving revelation? Have we begun to regard time as the moving image of eternity, and space as the fleeting shadow of Paradise realities? Something tells me that without a shocking discovery, we have a long way to go before human science will routinely recognize Paradise and the existence of other human and even super-human life. But if that non-breather race is discovered, who knows how fast things will change?

Daily Progress in the Urantia Movement

So we can all hope that something will happen to further human religious and scientific recognition of the transiently authoritative cosmology provided by *The Urantia Book*, perhaps an unlikely discovery corroborating *The Urantia Book*, forcing scientists and others to take notice. Even Jesus found himself demonstrating his powers for those with weak faith and who needed outward signs. People are impressed by the power to predict. Science predicts. Revelation also predicts but calls it prophecy.

But as a movement we can not live by such efforts. Consider that Jesus had twelve well-taught Apostles. Besides the one who deserted, and putting aside his replacement, none of the other eleven was responsible for building an institution that would carry even a distorted story of Jesus and the memory of his life down through the centuries. Abner and Nathaniel at Philadelphia had the most faithful account of Jesus' teachings but their development didn't spawn a surviving institution. While many of the others led heroic lives, their legacy did not provide enough for future generations.

It took Saul, the Christian persecutor, who later became the new Apostle, Paul. He was wise enough to promote an institution of individual churches in different places, to carry the good news of Jesus from one generation to the next. So we got Jesus as Paul understood him. We also got the other Gospel writers and some other writings not granted canonization, together with rituals, traditions, and some continuity for two thousand years. Without Paul, Jesus is hardly remembered by contemporary history. Today we need a similar development to carry on the effort of Jesus to enlighten our world. Our unique circumstances include being alive while the knowledge of the presence of this new divine and epochal revelation called *The Urantia Book* is hardly recognized or believed by contemporary society. What can we do?

Like Paul, we can initiate an ongoing institution that can be of service for the long haul by gracefully introducing people to *The Urantia Book* as one of many religious traditions. Along the lines of the Cymboyton school in *The Urantia Book*, I propose that the Urantia community undertake to host the great discussions with rules like Cymboyton's for equal treatment and religious equality for all. Only God is spiritual sovereign; Cymboyton was sovereign over the school, but he never took sides in the philosophical discussions except to maintain order. I can discuss in some detail how Cymboyton's ideas might be adapted to present circumstances; perhaps I will in a future issue of this publication.

News: Discovery of the Human Sources for *The Urantia Book*

Researcher Matthew Block has unearthed an unrevealed number of human sources of the concepts and sometimes even the phraseology used in *The Urantia Book*. Recently Matthew showed me an important and impressive science source book. There is no doubt in my mind that it was a source book, but *The Urantia Book*'s use of this human source posed no cause for concern. There were no red flags.

However, there have been a large number of rumors in the Urantia movement and hints of shocking discoveries to be revealed when Matthew finally publishes his research. The most recent of these rumors is the notion that the story of Rodan was lifted word for word from a human author and that this raises serious questions about the historical basis for such a person called Rodan in Jesus' time. Some people are even drawing conclusions about the superhuman mandate and possible purposeful inclusion of errors before they actually see any hard evidence for such conclusions, without seeing any of the sources. I would strongly caution against jumping to conclusions before we see the evidence. There has been a certain amount of sensationalism associated with this long awaited exposé of the human sources of *The Urantia Book*.

The Copyright of *The Urantia Book*

There was a time, fifteen years after publication, that I wrote a paper entitled "Why *The Urantia Book* was Copyrighted." My reasons for supporting a copyright on *The Urantia Book* were that we should take care that the young movement not be monopolized by some powerful individual or group who might decide to appropriate it for his own purposes before many people had even read it or could defend it. A copyright by the Urantia Foundation would be insurance against preemption and usurpation by some opportunistic entity. However I also indicated that I saw long-term dangers with such a strong central organization in control of the presentation of *The Urantia Book.*

In fact, the first time I visited the Urantia Foundation "headquarters" at 533 West Diversey Parkway in Chicago, I met Christy, and Edith Cook. For some reason, I was moved to ask whether they had plans for Urantia Foundation to self-destruct after about fifty years since it would then avoid the usual fate of such organizations, as described by *The Urantia Book* itself. Edith smiled, recognizing the passage to which I was referring, and seemed relieved to pass me off to Christy.

Concerning the copyright, some people will worry and fret, but it is past the time for Urantia Foundation to relinquish its control over the book. Let in the fresh air to the movement. No more contention; no more special status for some believers over others not allied with "headquarters." It's time for us to put these things away and walk forward together on equal footing. The book has been protected. The fostering can begin a new phase.

The Old Timers and the Future of the Movement

I recall with fond memories Julia K. Fendersen in Los Angeles and Berkeley Elliot in Oklahoma City, two pillars of the western Urantia movement, who attracted large numbers of enthusiastic readers young and old from all stripes of life. They sponsored regular conferences that were very well-produced. Yet already were there rumblings of past disputes and talk of present lawsuits and estranged reader groups. I visited Christy and Martin Myers several times in Chicago during the 1970s, including once when there was obviously a dispute going on and Christy was saying to me two or three times, about the second edition, "I don't know why we need to change it at all." The others at the office were trying to quiet her down. I was told of the typos that would be fixed, and I thought that was the issue. But we now know that "corrections" were quietly being made in several places that went beyond typos. A word was changed in a few places because there was a judgment that it was an error in transferring from the manuscript to the plates. Around the same time those plates were destroyed and the reason given was to prevent their idolization.

Whatever the plusses and minuses of the early leaders concerning *The Urantia Book*, I believe that they did deliver to us a *Urantia Book* that is essentially identical to the revealed text. While acknowledging human errors "on its face." this was nevertheless judged good enough by the Revelatory Commission to allow the Urantia Foundation to publish it as the 1955 First Edition. For that we can all be eternally grateful. The project got completed and *The Urantia Book* is here. Now is the time to expand the understanding of *The Urantia Book* and the visibility of it as the world community looks for unifying themes.

There is science to be discovered, cosmology to be propounded, and exciting events to be experienced, all waiting for those who will take the initiative to explore these discoveries waiting to be experienced, and present them to others for the benefit and appreciation of all. One way to do all of this in a continuing way is to found a permanent organization to conduct a forum for the presentation, discussion, and possibly scheduled debate by the various schools of belief in science or religion. Since "we Urantians" will be hosting this discussion, we will get to offer our views along with all the others in the spirit of the Cymboyton College at Urmia.

Raised Catholic in Chicago, Phil got a BS, MS, and, in 1968, a Ph.D. in mathematics at IIT. In 1970 he discovered The Urantia Book in California. He has been a professor, an analyst and computer programmer, and now a research mathematician. He has four children.

1 J S Bell 1964 On the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen paradox, Physics 1 195-200; Andrew Steane 1997 Quantum Computing, University of Oxford Clarendon Laboratory,1-65; R Y Chiao, P G Kwiat, and A M Steinberg 1995 Quantum NonLocality in Two-Photon Experiments at Berkeley, 1-16; A. Zeilinger, Apr 2000 Quantum Teleportation, Scientific American, 50-59.

"Jesus...[told]...his believers that...if their religion were spiritual, never could the progress of physical science disturb their faith in eternal realities and divine values." [155:3.6] (P. 1727)

Centering – A Method of Divine Embrace

By Marvin Gawryn, Mercer Island, WA

When I began reading *The Urantia Book* many years ago, the possibility it promised that most excited me was that I could have a direct relationship with God. It asserted that I was a child of God and that I could actually experience this truth daily. How can we vividly experience sonship with our Father each day? How can we enjoy intimate communion with our indwelling Adjusters, a constant affection-filled friendship with God? After all Jesus said, "*It is not so important that you should know about the fact of God as that you should increasingly grow in the ability to* feel the presence of God." [155:6.12](P. 1733)

Ever since those first magical months of discovering the revelation, I have searched in *The Urantia Book* and beyond for ways to more fully share the inner life with God. Regular worship greatly expands our capacity to feel and share God's presence. Worship techniques help us to align the mind and soul in effortless attention upon God. In the worship embrace we simultaneously pour forth our adoration and are enveloped in God's love; we experience the astounding exchange of affection that makes the experience of being God's child utterly real.

If we take time to rest daily in the nourishing embrace of worship, our awareness of God's presence and myriad actions begins to spread steadily into all the parts of our lives. This is the great goal of human living: "*Man's greatest adventure in the flesh consists in the well-balanced and sane effort to advance the borders of self-consciousness out through the dim realms of embryonic soul-consciousness in a wholehearted effort to reach the borderland of spirit-consciousness—contact with the divine presence ... Such spirit-consciousness is the equivalent of the knowledge of the actuality of sonship with God.*" [196:3.31] (P. 2097) If we persist in the habit of frequent immersion in the divine presence, then the "pearl of great price," the delightful prospect of unceasing relationship with God, can eventually be ours.

For centuries the great teachers of Christian spirituality have sought to develop contemplative methods, practices designed to aid in the approach to union with God. Thirty years ago a group of Trappist monks, inspired by Thomas Merton, began to recover the work of the great contemplatives of the Middle Ages (John of the Cross, Theresa of Avila, *The Cloud of Unknowing*). They combined these methods into a simple discipline, which any of us can practice in the midst of our busy lives. Merton and his colleagues used the term "Centering Prayer," even though the approach actually leads to an experience of worship as *The Urantia Book* defines it. This practice of Centering is a deeply restful technique of opening to God's presence and action in the innermost recesses of our being. Practiced twice daily as suggested, it is one of the most potent methods of developing inner relationship with God that I have encountered.

The description of Centering which follows is adapted from the book, *Open Mind, Open Heart* by Thomas Keating, Abbot of the Trappist Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado.

The Method of Centering

Centering is the opening of mind and heart—our whole being—to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond thoughts, words, and emotions. We open our awareness to God whom we know by faith is within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than choosing—closer than consciousness itself. Centering is a process of interior purification leading, if we consent, to divine union. During the time of centering, we consent to God's presence and action within. At other times our attention moves outward to discover God's presence everywhere.

Centering Guidelines

I. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.

II. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.

III. When you become aware of thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.

IV. At the end of the Centering period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

I. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.

1. The sacred word expresses our intention to be in God's presence and to yield to the divine action.
2. The sacred word can be chosen during a

brief period of prayer asking the Spirit to inspire us with one that is especially suitable for us. Some examples are: Jesus, Abba, Father, Mother, Love, Peace, Shalom.

3. Having chosen a sacred word, we do not change it during the Centering period, for that would be to start thinking again.

4. A simple inward gaze upon God may be more suitable for some persons than the sacred word. In this case, one consents to God's presence and action by turning inwardly toward God as if gazing upon him. The same guidelines apply to the sacred gaze as to the sacred word.

II. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.

1. By "sitting comfortably" is meant relatively comfortably; not so comfortably that we encourage sleep, but sitting comfortably enough to avoid thinking about the discomfort of our bodies during this time of Centering. Whatever sitting position we choose, we keep the back straight.

2. If we fall asleep, we continue the Centering process for a few minutes upon awakening if we can spare the time.

3. Centering in this way after a main meal may encourage drowsiness. It is better to wait at least an hour before Centering. Also, Centering just before retiring may disturb one's sleep pattern.

4. We close our eyes to let go of what is going on around and within us.

5. We introduce the sacred word inwardly and as gently as laying a feather on a piece of absorbent cotton.

III. When you become aware of thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.

1. "Thoughts" is an umbrella term for every perception including sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, reflections, and commentaries.

2. Thoughts are a normal part of Centering and occur often during the process.

3. By "returning ever-so-gently to the sacred word," a minimum of effort is indicated. This is the only activity we initiate during the time of Centering. During the course of Centering, the sacred word may become vague or even disappear.

IV. At the end of the Centering period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

The additional 2 or 3 minutes give the psyche time to readjust to the external senses and enable us to bring the atmosphere of silence into daily life.

Some Practical Points

• The minimum time for Centering is twenty minutes. Two periods are recommended each day, one first thing in the morning, and one in the afternoon or early evening.

• The end of the Centering period can be indicated by a timer, providing it does not have an audible tick or loud sound when it goes off.

• The principal effects of Centering are experienced in daily life, not in the period of Centering itself.

• We may notice slight pains, itches, or twitches in various parts of the body or a generalized restlessness. We may also notice heaviness or lightness in the extremities. This is usually due to a deep level of spiritual attentiveness. In either case, we pay no attention, or we allow the mind to rest briefly in the sensation, and then return to the sacred word.

Points for Further Development

1. During centering, we avoid analyzing our experience, harboring expectations or aiming at some specific goal such as:

a. Repeating the sacred word continuously.
b. Having no thoughts.
c. Making the mind a blank.
d. Feeling peaceful or consoled.
e. Achieving a spiritual experience.

2. What Centering is not:

a. It is not a relaxation exercise.
b. It is not a form of self-hypnosis.
c. It is not limited to the "felt" presence of God.

3. What Centering is:

a. It is at the same time a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship.
b. It is an exercise of faith, hope, and love.
c. It is a movement beyond conversation with God to communion.
d. It habituates us to the language of God, which is silence.

The experience of entering the "inner chamber" for twenty to thirty minutes to rest completely in God's presence, to let go and open to God's actions inside, is like no other experience I have ever encountered. It is profoundly an act of reception, of receiving the *most* valuable gift; direct relationship with God. It is like a little child climbing up into the lap of its parent to be held in loving embrace for an extended time of nurture, until its heart is full.

What has amazed me is how little I must do to receive this gift. It was a great relief for me to realize that it is not my responsibility to make worship happen. God gives the gift of the worship experience. I simply have to want it enough to dedicate the time required to receive it. As a Divine Counselor explains *"The mortal mind consents to worship; the immortal soul craves and initiates worship; the divine Adjuster presence conducts such worship in behalf of the mortal mind and the evolving immortal soul."* [5:3.8] (P.66) It is the Adjuster that orchestrates the divine encounter. We simply bring our profound yearning, our craving, our hunger for connection with God; the Adjuster within each of us lays out the spiritual feast and nourishes us. What we must do is dedicate the time, put aside all of our other preoccupations long enough to sit ourselves down to the table and partake of the feast.

A friend asked me what changes result from a regular practice of the divine embrace. In my experience, quite a bit changes when I am worshipping regularly, and even more markedly when I worship a second time each day. Without trying, or even thinking about it, I find myself acting with noticeably greater patience, affection, and generosity. Love seems to well up in me more often, gently, and overflows in little ways to people all around; my children, my coworkers, even passersby. I find myself looking into people's eyes and smiling, instead of staring off in a different direction.

When I don't worship for a day or two, I feel a pervasive underlying tension that is both psychological and physiological. When I worship regularly that tension just isn't there, and I experience an almost delicious sense of relaxation and well being. As Jesus taught, *"The strain of living—the time tension of personality—should be relaxed by the restfulness of worship."* [143:7.3] (P.1616)

Without trying, or even thinking about it, I find myself acting with noticeably greater patience, affection, and generosity.

I also find that, if I have worshipped recently, when I encounter situations that arouse anger, fear, or other negative emotions the feelings seem less visceral, lacking their usual power. It is easy to "see past them," and they subside quickly. Larger, more encompassing perspectives easily prevail.

I believe that each time we engage in worshipful contact with God, the Father's qualities, the fruits of the Spirit, suffuse through us. We become ever so slightly more like the Person with whom we have shared the embrace; we experience a micro-fusion of sorts. The process is effortless, unconscious. It seems to be a natural effect of the God-contact which is its cause.

As expressed in the comments above, the principal effects of this centering process seem to occur not so much in the period of worship itself as in the rest of daily life. The immediate worship embrace is certainly a wonderful experience. But during the hours in between I have experienced a delightful semi-conscious sense of God hovering just close by. It is as if he is touching my soul often in brief encounters, some of which I am aware and some not except for the increased fruits.

I believe that by regularly encountering God and inviting him to act within us, we give our Adjusters a powerful kind of "carte blanche" permission to work on our soul growth with increased access. We open all our interior doors wide and invite God in to work in the deepest recesses of our personalities. Seemingly without any other action on our part, the pace of growth picks up and new insights, emotions, challenges, and capabilities begin to emerge in many parts of our lives.

All of these marvelous results, I believe, flow naturally from the simple practice of time spent intimately with our Father. In the words of a Solitary Messenger, *"The doing of the will of God is nothing more or less than an exhibition of creature willingness to share the inner life with God..."* [111:5.1] (P.1221)

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Eugenics and *The Urantia Book*: Another Perspective

By Paul Premsagar, MD, Scotia, NY

The Fellowship Herald of the summer of 2001 published an article entitled "Ethical Eugenics: A Modest Proposal for the 21st Century" written by Charles (Chick) Montgomery. I am writing this in response to it, pointing out where I disagree with Chick based on my understanding of the teaching of *The Urantia Book*. What follows is not a rebuttal, but another perspective. I have used quotes from *The Urantia Book* to support my arguments.

"The story of man's ascent from seaweed to the lordship of earthly creation is indeed a romance of biologic struggle and mind survival. Man's primordial ancestors were literally the slime and ooze of the ocean bed...in which the Life Carriers established the three independent life implantations on Urantia." [65:2.1](P. 731) Such a humble origin of man notwithstanding, it is the eternal plan of God to elevate him to divine status into the Paradise of the Universal Father, and to make him stand in his very presence.

From the time man appears on a planet to the time the planet attains the age of light and life many ages must elapse. This long period of time includes the reign of two rulers of divine origin, the Planetary Prince and the Material Son and Daughter. In the regular course of events these divine beings design and plan for man's ascent from little more than an animal to a God knowing person. The Planetary Prince and the Material Son exercise authority to bring about unity among the various people of the planet and rule on the biological fitness or otherwise of the inhabitants.

Urantia, the sentimental shrine of the whole of Nebadon, suffered double disasters in that the Planetary Prince rebelled and the Material Son defaulted. Thus our planet is irregular in its developmental course. If our planet had not suffered these disasters, we would have both the Planetary Prince and the Material Son resident on the planet; but as matters stand, they are absent.

Urantia is unique in the local universe in that the Creator Son bestowed himself here, and after his death and resurrection poured out the Spirit of Truth and released the Thought Adjusters to indwell all normal minds. There are probably many other planets in the local universe wherein a bestowal Son of the Avonal order incarnated and later released the Spirit of Truth.

In any discussion of improving the human species on Urantia by selective methods of procreation, three factors must be kept in mind: (1) absence of the resident celestial rulers in the persons of the Planetary Prince and the Material Son and Daughter, (2) Pentecost that sent the Spirit of Truth to help all those of honest heart, and (3) Thought Adjusters that indwell all men and women of normal minds.

There is one other important factor that we need to keep in mind in planning to improve the human species. There is in man an immortal soul—*"the joint offspring of an adjutant mind dominated by a human will that craves to know God, working in liaison with the spiritual forces of the universe which are under the overcontrol of an actual fragment of the very God of all creation—the Mystery Monitor."* [111:2.10](P. 1218) The free will of an individual and the developing soul puts human beings far above the rest of the animals, and any consideration of manipulating genes in the name of eugenics must take this into consideration. *The Urantia Book* repeatedly states that God does not interfere with the free will in humans. No human being has any right to coerce others in matters of procreation.

Such judgment is the prerogative of gods and even they are forbidden to interfere with free will. *The Urantia Book* categorically states that there are no competent judges to determine the biological fitness or unfitness of the individuals on Urantia. [51:4.8](P. 585) We ought not to arrogate to ourselves the divine prerogative of the Planetary Prince and the Material Son who in the ordinary course of events practice eugenics in their wisdom.

Such a situation does not obtain on Urantia at present.

In describing the Adamic default, *The Urantia Book* states that the biological uplift that Adam was to confer on the inhabitants of the planet miscarried and laments that by describing some human beings in very uncomplimentary terms. The implication is that the genetic endowment that Adam carried did not reach all the inhabitants in sufficient quantity and hence some are a drag and a bane on the planet. Do we as individuals have a role to play in improving the character of those *The Urantia Book* considers undesirable? If we have an obligation, how are we to accomplish this? Are genes responsible for some individuals' undesirable conduct and if

so, to what degree? How do they affect the health of human beings? What is their relationship to morality and crime? These crucial questions must be answered before preaching or practicing eugenics. I shall try to answer these questions in light of scientific knowledge of genetics and then use the teachings of *The Urantia Book* as a lens to examine what can be done ethically and morally to address the problems that we are facing.

Genes and Intelligence

In the beginning of the twentieth century Alfred Binet in France formulated a method to predict potential for academic performance of students. Since that time many methods of testing one's intelligence have been devised, and they all measure the ability of an individual to succeed academically. The exact manner in which intelligence is inherited is not known. At present it is a matter of guesswork, and prediction of intelligence in the offspring is at best a probability. In recent years IQ as we understand it has been subjected to intense scrutiny and a new term called emotional intelligence has come into vogue. It appears emotional intelligence is a measure of a person's social maturity and positive conduct such as respect for others and social harmony.

How does intelligence relate to one's spiritual life and his status before God? Jesus said, *"There are only two groups of mortals in the eyes of God: those who desire to do his will and those who do not. As the universe looks upon an inhabited world, it likewise discerns two great classes: those who know God and those who do not."* [133:0.3](P. 1468)

Mere intelligence is not a criterion for knowing God and choosing to do his will. On the contrary, there are a number of instances described in *The Urantia Book* where superior intelligence did not prevent its possessor from going astray. A prime example of this is Lucifer, who is described as brilliant; and yet in spite of this, or perhaps because of this, pride entered him and he lead a rebellion against God.

Spiritual nature is not correlated with superior intelligence. The Universal Father indwells all humans of normal minds, that is, every one who has the capacity to know God. The Alpheus twins are described in *The Urantia Book* as being stupid, albeit reverently. The teaching of Jesus on many points was beyond their comprehension. Jesus said that there are millions of such individuals in his universe and commended them for their faith. In his final admonitions to the apostles at the time of the last supper he told them, *"...I will receive you on high, where in glory you shall tell of your salvation to seraphic hosts and to multitudes of the high Sons of God."* [181:2.19] (P. 1960) In spiritual terms they fared a lot better than Judas, who for all his learning and talent as a superb executive, wrecked his life and proved a traitor.

When *The Urantia Book* talks about higher spiritual types, it does not tell us who they are; and to equate people of superior intelligence with them is not warranted. Perhaps by higher spiritual types it means those who trust God and submit to his will and not cerebral heavyweights who have no regard for spiritual matters. Intelligence is a measure of cleverness and *The Urantia Book* says, *"Cleverness is not a substitute for true character."* [48:7.3](P. 556)

Although we know the patterns of inheritance for some diseases, we do not know how desirable traits such as kindness, love, trust, and humility are inherited, if they are inherited. There is good evidence in *The Urantia Book* that these qualities are not dependent on the genes. Adam and Eve possessed ideal and perfect genetic endowment directly imported from Jerusem. The conduct of Eve, that sexual indiscretion with Cano, brought chaos and misery to the whole of the human race. Her ideal genetic endowment did not prevent her from falling prey to vanity and impatience. She disobeyed the warnings of celestial beings not to stray from the right path. Her ideal genes notwithstanding, her conduct was delinquent. True, Eve was not indwelt by a Thought Adjuster, but she had celestial intelligences to consult.

Cain was the offspring of Eve and Cano, who is described as *"a magnificent specimen of the survival of the superior physique and outstanding intellect of his remote progenitors of the Prince's staff."* [75:3.8](P. 842) This admirable genetic endowment from his mother and father notwithstanding, Cain was bellicose and proved to be a murderer. He *"had never been indwelt by an Adjuster, had always been defiant of the family discipline and disdainful of his father's religion."* [76:2.8](P. 849) He later repented; and when he took Eve's advice, he was indwelt by an Adjuster and became a great man.

When *The Urantia Book* talks about higher spiritual types, it does not tell us who they are; and to equate people of superior intelligence with them is not warranted.

Abel, the offspring of Adam and Eve, possessed an "*ideal inheritance*" and yet nurture overpowered the genes. His intolerance of his half-brother Cain and the taunts that he hurled at him brought about his own death. *The Urantia Book* states that inheritance in the absence of good nurturing is not very effective. "*The observation of Abel's conduct establishes the value of environment and education as factors in character development. Abel had an ideal inheritance, and heredity lies at the bottom of all character; but the influence of an inferior environment virtually neutralized this magnificent inheritance.*"[76:2.6](P. 848) When the book says that the heredity lies at the bottom of all character, I understand it to mean the foundation for subsequent behavior of all kinds, both good and bad. The life an individual leads is not entirely dependent on the foundation as the later description shows. This is a clear indication that we ought to pay more attention to nurture, over which we have control, than to manipulation of genes, over which we have little control.

There is no mention of eugenics in "*The Life and Teachings of Jesus.*" As a matter of fact, Michael was counseled by Immanuel to start a eugenics program "*under no circumstances and not even in the least detail...*" [120:3.4](P. 1329) Jesus in his love and wisdom invites all the Father's children to share his faith and enter the kingdom of God. His incarnation and the subsequent bestowal of the Spirit of Truth has radically altered the equation for human behavior. When a man believes the gospel and enters into a relationship with God, extraordinary and great things happen. Simon Peter is an example. On the night of Jesus' arrest a servant girl bullied him into denying the Master. He left the scene fearing for his life. Just a few weeks later he was so full of courage that the religious leaders of the Jews were astounded and were fear-struck at his boldness. Certainly there was no change in his genes. It was the Spirit of Truth that changed his cowardice into courage.

When we observe bad conduct in people, we ought not rush to the conclusion that it is the result of bad genes. If we look at these situations from our heavenly Father's perspective, we will see things quite differently. Repentance and forgiveness are part of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Lives of many holy men and women attest to this. There have been many who turned to God after less than exemplary lives and led holy lives and proved an inspiration to many. The most desirable qualities are the fruits of the spirit. Jesus said, "*And the fruits of the divine spirit which are yielded in the lives of spirit-born and God-knowing mortals are: loving service, unselfish devotion, courageous loyalty, sincere fairness, enlightened honesty, undying hope, confiding trust, merciful ministry, unfailing goodness, forgiving tolerance, and enduring peace.*" [193:2.2](P. 2054) These are not consequent on genes.

The relationship of the will and the Thought Adjuster is exemplified in *The Urantia Book* thus: "*Mind is your ship, the Adjuster is your pilot, the human will is captain. The master of the mortal vessel should have the wisdom to trust the divine pilot to guide the ascending soul into the morontia harbors of eternal survival. Only by selfishness, slothfulness, and sinfulness can the will of man reject the guidance of such a loving pilot and eventually wreck the mortal career upon the evil shoals of rejected mercy and upon the rocks of embraced sin. With your consent, this faithful pilot will safely carry you across the barriers of time and the handicaps of space to the very source of the divine mind and on beyond, even to the Paradise Father of Adjusters.*" [111:1.9](P. 1217)

The important thing to remember is that the choice of the parents is respected and there is absolutely no coercion. This is eugenics at its best.

We can also compare the genetic endowment to the foundation of a building and the superstructure to the result of life choices of the resident, the human will. True, the foundation limits the superstructure, but the builder is at liberty to build to suit his needs, and most importantly, to invite into his house guests of his choice. The divine fragment is his constant companion and never forces him.

Man can enjoy the companionship of the Thought Adjuster and lead a divine life. He can also spurn the guidance of the divine spirit and make his home a source of evil. Certainly one cannot blame foundation for a man's choice of house guests. "*The material mind of mortal man is the cosmic loom that carries the morontia fabrics on which the indwelling Thought Adjuster threads the spirit patterns of a universe character of enduring values and divine meanings–a surviving soul of ultimate destiny and unending career, a potential finaliter.*"[111:2.2] (P. 1218)

Jesus in his talk on self-mastery quoting the prophet Jeremiah, warned his listeners saying, "*Did not the Prophet*

Jeremiah long ago tell you that the human heart is deceitful above all things and sometimes even desperately wicked? How easy for you to become self-deceived and thereby fall into foolish fears, diverse lusts, enslaving pleasures, malice, envy, and even vengeful hatred!" [143:2.5] (PP. 1609-1610) In the same discourse, Jesus told his disciples, *"By the old way you seek to suppress, obey, and conform to the rules of living; by the new way you are first* transformed *by the Spirit of Truth and thereby strengthened in your inner soul by the constant spiritual renewing of your mind, and so are you endowed with the power of the certain and joyous performance of the gracious, acceptable, and perfect will of God."* [143:2.4](P. 1609) The mind indeed is to a certain extent dependent on the inheritance, but here Jesus is saying that it is transformed by the Spirit of Truth.

Jesus exemplified *"...in his life what he taught in his religion: the growth of the spiritual nature by the technique of living progress. He did not place emphasis, as did his later followers, upon the incessant struggle between the soul and the body. He rather taught that the spirit was easy victor over both and effective in the profitable reconciliation of much of this intellectual and instinctual warfare."* [157:6.4](P. 1749) By instinctual we understand a pattern of behavior that is common to a given biological species and not the learned patterns of behavior. Spiritual guidance, not being of the genes, is the easy victor in this conflict. Spirit guidance is a matter of choice, the sovereign free will and not the genes. The Spirit trumps the genes.

Genes and Disease

Urantia suffers from more than its fair share of disease because the experiment of the Life Carriers went wrong; this situation was later compounded by the twin disasters of the Caligastia betrayal and the Adamic default. The description of this is found in the paper entitled "The Overcontrol of Evolution" in the section "Life-Evolution Vicissitudes" [65:5](P. 736) Jesus, answering Nathaniel's question about suffering, reiterated this by saying *"the natural order of this world has been so many times upset by the sinful adventures of certain rebellious traitors to the Father's will."* [148:5.2](P. 1661) Jesus spent a great deal of his time in ministering to the sick and suffering and in comforting them and healing them by superhuman means when he deemed it appropriate. In his charge to the apostles and the disciples he advised them to be ever mindful of the sick and to minister to them. It behooves us to make every effort to reduce, and if possible to eliminate, disease and suffering from the face of the earth.

It has long been known that some diseases are hereditary and the science of genetics has elucidated the pattern of inheritance and postulated laws as to how genes are responsible for many diseases. There are many diseases for which the pattern of inheritance is not yet worked out. The field of human genetics has thus far advanced to identify some disease-producing genes in prospective parents who carry these genes. This has enabled many prospective parents to seriously evaluate their procreative choices depending on the probability of the disease occurring in their offspring. It is important to keep in mind that genetics predicts the probability and not certainty when gene-carrying parents are tested.

An example of this is the disease cystic fibrosis. It is now possible to study the genome (the sequence of the DNA in the cells) and determine who carries the gene and who does not. Prospective parents who have blood relatives with cystic fibrosis are offered this test. The pattern of inheritance of this disease is that each pregnancy has a one in four chance of producing the offspring with disease and a one in four chance of producing a healthy offspring. There is also a one in two chance of producing offspring who carry the gene for the disease but will not have the disease itself. Genetic counseling is now available for prospective parents to be screened. Now that tests of genetics are available and prospective parents can make procreative choices depending on their convictions, it is probable that this disease will disappear in several generations. The important thing to remember is that the choice of the parents is respected and there is absolutely no coercion. This is eugenics at its best.

It is now possible to detect by genetic testing individuals who are at risk for some types of cancer. Genetic counseling offers them various choices of treatment for themselves and advice regarding their transmitting the gene to their offspring. When individuals and prospective parents are advised about all their options and they give informed consent to any treatment, only then is their free will respected.

Genetics and Crime

The argument for eugenics is premised on the fact that physical features such as the color of the eyes or a disease are inheritable. To consider a disease inheritable, it must be demonstrated that it has occurred in several generations in a pedigree. There is no crime or negative behavior that I know that is inherited. The relationship between criminal predisposition and the genetic makeup is not clearly established. The studies of identical twins reared apart are rare and do not permit any definite conclusions. Even if a gene or genes are proven as a causative

factor, it only establishes that in that particular individual they are responsible and only when and if the gene is identified in parents or offspring of that pedigree can it be considered as hereditary.

A fundamental question that arises is, what role if any do genes play in criminal conduct? Genes certainly determine the physical traits of organisms such as the skin color and the eye color. Because the genes determine the physical structure, does it follow that criminal conduct is also determined by the genes? I do not believe so. Here is an example to clarify the issue. Genes determine the sex of an individual and also the attainment of sexual maturity and sexual behavior through the hormones. Sexual activity has a wide range–from the loving embrace of one's spouse to the violent act of rape. Hormones are a crucial link in all sexual behavior exhibiting both proper and improper sexual conduct, and these hormones are chemically identical. At one end of the gamut of sexual behavior is the normal act and at the other end is the crime. Both are dependent on choice. The genes are indeed responsible for manufacturing the hormones that form a crucial link in sexual behavior, both proper and improper.

The hormones of man are chemically identical, but the act differs in context and choice of expression and not in the biological manifestations, one of which is appropriate and the other is not. The genes are morally neutral. A criminal act is the result of deliberate choice and man must be held responsible for his criminal actions for the society to survive. The choices that a man makes are dependent on his belief system and his environment.

What role do the genes play in substance abuse and addictions? Here again, it is dependent on the choice a man makes. Some researchers have pointed out the predisposition of certain individuals for alcohol abuse. They have pointed out that there is a familial tendency, thus implicating genes. Perhaps there is a predisposition, although no one has as yet found the gene for alcoholism. The course of events in substance abuse start as a habit, leading to a dependence and finally an addiction, when the will is paralyzed; a stage is reached where the patient is helpless and is enslaved. This stage is reached after a series of choices that a man makes, and a man must take responsibility for his choices.

During the ministry of Jesus, he helped such people. *"Jesus was increasingly sought by the victims of moral enslavement and mental harassments, and he invariably taught them the way of deliverance."* [149:2.6] (P. 1671) Please note the word victims. It is unfortunate that *The Urantia Book* does not describe the methods used by Jesus in his treatments of the victims. We can only speculate.

Using genetics to rid our species of all inherited diseases is commendable and must be encouraged. This is genetics at its best, when the free will of the individuals is respected. There is no evidence that character can be improved by manipulating genes. To the contrary, there is an abundance of evidence that faith and the Spirit of God can and do accomplish this.

The central message of *The Urantia Book* is the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. We are enjoined to live this gospel and to serve our fellow human beings with love. When a man believes in the fatherhood of God and consecrates himself to doing his will, the Spirit of Truth joins with the Thought Adjuster and transforms him into a true spiritual son of God, bound for heaven and triumphing over the vicissitudes of the mortal career. When we have this gospel of Jesus to offer the world, preaching eugenics is a distraction.

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"The great circuit of love is from the Father, through sons to brothers, and hence to the Supreme. The love of the Father appears in the mortal personality by the ministry of the indwelling Adjuster. Such a God-knowing son reveals this love to his universe brethren, and this fraternal affection is the essence of the love of the Supreme." [117:6.10] (P. 1289)

Revelatory Mouthpiecing

By Finlan

Matthew Block has opened up a new age in *Urantia Book* scholarship by his discovery and documentation of the use of human sources. In his most recent article (*The Fellowship Herald*, Summer 2001), he details how Weatherhead's *Jesus and Ourselves* was used in the composition of "Instruction for Teachers and Believers." [159:3.1-14] (PP. 1765-67)

I have a term for what the midwayers have done in that section; I call it "mouthpiecing." They have used a human author as the mouthpiece for a particular teaching session of Jesus. This differs from simply using an author for teaching purposes as in the Religion Papers, for instance. With mouthpiecing, the words of the human source are attributed to a historic character. We are forced to reassess what we understand the revelators to be doing. It seems that they are not giving us an English translation of the actual words of Jesus on that evening, but are reshaping the words of a known 20th-century author, using this author as a mouthpiece for that teaching.

If we take the revelatory claims of *The Urantia Book* seriously, we need to do some thorough assessment of what this means. A few initial observations are easy to make, and would be hard to dispute. Some further reflections that I will make are more open to argument. First of all, we must recognize that the human sources are made to become *major* contributors to the revelation; they are not just dipped into for a phrase here and there. Secondly, the use of these particular sources is not disguised but is highlighted, sometimes by utilizing chapter headings or quoting from the first page of a source book. With Weatherhead, they make heavy use of pages 27 through 42. *We were meant to discover these books.*

In this article, I want to focus on what is involved in using a human source as a mouthpiece for a particular teaching session of Jesus'. I would like to offer three alternatives regarding the historicity of that session and how it is reported to us in *The Urantia Book*: (1) that session never happened; it is just a fabrication of *The Urantia Book* authors; (2) *The Urantia Book*'s reshaping of Weatherhead's narrative really does capture the essence of Jesus' teaching that evening; (3) *The Urantia Book* version conveys some points made by Jesus that night, along with a number of related ideas, one that Jesus communicated at other times in his career, as well as ideas generated by believers over the centuries, and finally, Weatherhead's own development of the same ideas. I consider number 3 the most likely probability.

The Truth-Stream

When truth is put into words, it is put into a succession. All truth, on the human level, is part of a truth-stream, a tradition. It may shock us to find out that the narrative of Part IV is not a direct translation of Jesus' actual words, that it is a reinterpretation, or even a reshaping of a series of interpretations; but that seems to be God's way. He always uses human conduits when it comes to communicating truth to humans. We may think of truth as "thought gems;" but is turns out that all these gems have been rolling along a streambed of tradition, getting their shine, their polish, from the human religionists whose lives they touched, and who then handed them on. Each truth-morsel is part of an age-old conversation.

All truth makes use of a truth-tradition. Jesus constantly interpreted Scripture, Scripture itself interpreted the old portions of Scripture, and Moses made use of the traditions of Melchizedek [96:5.3](P. 1058); Melchizedek based his commandments upon those of Eden and Dalamatia [93:4.6] (P. 1017); and the Eden teachers re-stated the seven commandments of Dalamatia. [74:7.8] (P. 836) The revelators have plugged some new links into the "Scriptural" truth-chain, using 20th-century human authors to give voice to truths spoken by Jesus.

In the same way as they used Weatherhead, the midwayers used Henry Wieman as Rodan's mouthpiece, as Matthew Block has reported. Once again, the same three choices are available: either Rodan is an invention of the authors, or their reshaping of Wieman's book is a faithful recounting of Rodan's teaching, or it includes actual Rodanian expressions along with Wieman's own 20th-century equivalent of Rodan's concerns. The interests of Rodan (the art of living, the effect of healthy values upon society, stable and progressive institutions) were also the interests of Wieman. If we can accept that there are such things as *"creature-kinship serials"* [49:5.22] (PP. 567-8), it should not be hard to imagine that a person may have the same truth-concerns, be "akin" to, someone who lived in the past.

Revelatory usage of tradents (people who hand on tradition) is nothing new. After all, Christians use the traditions handed on by Mark, Matthew/Isador, Luke,

and John/Nathan for the words of Jesus; and *The Urantia Book* does so as well. The Bible is, by far, the most frequently-used of the human sources. The four canonical gospels are the main source books behind Part IV.

Human Distortion?

We need to go on and ask ourselves whether the revelatory mandate to utilize human mouthpieces means that the revelation incorporates any human distortions or biases (not a particular problem with Weatherhead, but maybe with some other sources). We know that Jesus trained Peter and John and sent them out to preach, even though he knew they would not get it exactly right. The gospels incorporate some fallible human material, and *The Urantia Book* apparently does, as well–but not when it concerns the personal attitude of God! In that case, the Divine Counselor speaks authoritatively, and in his own voice, in "Erroneous Ideas of God," [4:5] (PP. 59-61) A Melchizedek does the same in the last section of Paper 98, "The Christian Religion," as do the midwayers in "Meaning of the Death on the Cross," at the end of Paper 188.

Nevertheless, it is a stunning discovery (to me, anyway) to find that the use of human tradents is so crucial, that it is considered acceptable to allow the revelation to be heavily colored by the viewpoints of the human sources. The revelators *have* to use human mouthpieces: *"The laws of revelation hamper us greatly..."* [101:4.1] (P. 1109) This means that the revelation is flavored or slanted by some early 20th-century viewpoints, just as the gospel was flavored and slanted by first century viewpoints. But when it comes to things of primary importance, like the attitude of the Father, the authors are crystal clear and without distortion.

Still, it seems that *Urantia Book* readers need to have the experience that many Christians have had: realization of the fallibility of our scriptures: *"...nothing which human nature has touched can be regarded as infallible."* [159:4.8] (P. 1768)

Updating

Truths *must* be restated or updated in order to be influential. Luther's updating of Paul involved substantial distortion of Paul, reshaping Paul in Luther's image; yet it was highly effective, and still shapes Protestant views about Paul. Similarly, Philo of Alexandria updated the message of Moses and made it accessible to many of his contemporaries, even though he hugely distorted Moses by making him sound like a Greek Stoic philosopher. Yet *The Urantia Book* repeatedly mentions Philo as an important teacher, barely taking notice of his distortions. Of course, the original Moses is probably unrecoverable. The Hebrew texts attributed to Moses are themselves the product of tradition and accretion, and were written 400 to 600 years after Moses.

The Urantia Book actually draws attention to its updating process in an unprecedented way. For instance, in their restatement of the Urmia lectures (prefaced with the remark that they will be taking liberties), they actually have Jesus talk about "the American Federal Union"! [134:5.13-15] (PP. 1489-90) Obviously, they are shouting at us: "look, we are allowed to add present-day thought to our narrative about ancient events." The America reference is a red banner demanding that we rethink the way we understand this revelation. We need to recognize the process of updating and the role of tradition.

Conclusion

By utilizing authors like Weatherhead, *The Urantia Book* has salvaged a great liberal theological tradition that has since disappeared. By leaving their fingerprints on the human sources in such an obvious manner, the revelators have given a clear message to us: "Learn that truth is conveyed through tradition, learn to dive into tradition and taste the truth that is there, read these authors! Step into the truth-stream!"

"...religious leaders are making a great mistake when they try to call modern man to spiritual battle with the trumpet blasts of the Middle Ages. Religion must provide itself with new and up-to-date slogans." [195:6.10] (P. 2077)

"Do not overlook the value of the river of truth running down through the centuries, even to the barren times of a materialistic and secular age." [195:9.1] (P. 2082)

Faith Wiring In The Brain

A Look at Research in the Field of Neurotheology and Some Implications for Spiritual Parenting—Parenting with the Spirit

By Sara Blackstock, Benicia, CA

(Editor's note: This article is adapted from a workshop given by Sara Blackstock at the University of California at Santa Cruz during the Fellowship's Summer Study Session 2001.)

Neurotheology is "...a discipline dedicated to understanding the complex relationship between spirituality and the brain," "...a probe into the biology of religious experience," "...a study of the neurobiology of religion and spirituality," "...a look at the brain's spirituality circuit" (Newberg, D'Aquili, and Rause, 2001). Over the past 20 years two major realms, each of which has been asking its own profound questions for years, have intertwined and raised new questions in both fields. This newly created relationship has pioneered the exploration in neurotheology, combining neurology–the study of the brain, and theology–the study of God, religion, and the relations between God, mankind, and the universe.

My desire for presenting this information is twofold: (1) to suggest that readers of *The Urantia Book* keep their eyes open for further development in this relatively new field; and (2) to present parents with information on brain research that shows that their children are "preprogrammed" or "hard-wired" for the development of their spiritual intelligence, and what this might look like as they guide their "sons and daughters of God" into a deep connection with the divine.

The authors of two recent books on the brain and spirituality, *Spiritual Intelligence* (Zohar and Marshall, 2000) and *Why God Won't Go Away* (Newberg, et al., 2001), established professionals from the worlds of nuclear medicine, brain physiology, psychiatry, and theology, present some of the following tantalizing questions: "Is religion merely a product of biology or has the human brain been mysteriously endowed with the unique capacity to reach and know God?" "What is spiritual intelligence and can a place in the brain be located where 'spiritual' subject matter creates energy?" (Their hypothesis is that spiritual experience and human biology are intimately interwoven. Basically they are asking: Is our brain wired for God?

The Urantia Book has presented us with information on topics related to neurotheology–mind, psychic circles, human consciousness, the superconscious, and faith. We have an advantage because we accept the following concepts as being valid:

"The physiologic equipment and the anatomic structure of all new orders of life are in response to the action of physical law, but the subsequent endowment of mind is a bestowal of the adjutant mind-spirits in accordance with innate brain capacity." [58:6.7] (P. 670)

"The physical brain with its associated nervous system possesses innate capacity for response to mind ministry just as the developing mind of a personality possesses a certain innate capacity for spirit receptivity and therefore contains the potentials of spiritual progress and attainment. Intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual evolution are dependent on the mind ministry of the seven adjutant spirits and their superphysical associates." [65:6.10] (P. 738)

We are fortunate to avail ourselves of these concepts, some of which are revelatory, and others, which have been culled from the higher concepts of human knowledge. This background helps us weave not only a fabric of understanding about the world of the outer cosmos, but helps us to be discriminating about the "truths" imbedded in research and guides us into deeper experience with our own inner spirituality.

The Research and Studies

Meditating Tibetan Buddhist Monks and Praying Franciscan Nuns

With the MRI scans which were begun in the 1960s, neurobiologists have been able to look into almost every nook and cranny of our brains. When an area of the brain lights up on these scans, it means that more energy is being used in that area. The brain activity of eight individual Tibetan Buddhists deep in their meditation practice was represented on SPECT (single photon emission computed tomography) scans wherein images show blood flow patterns in the brain cells through radioactive emissions.

In this experiment a kite string was the connecting link between the researchers and a meditating Buddhist. The author of this study sat on the other side of a door with the twine wrapped around his finger, and the meditator was to tug on the twine when his meditative state was approaching its transcendent peak. When the medi-

tator was at this "peak moment of spiritual intensity," he said he experienced his inner self as more real than the outside world; he felt that a deeper, simpler part of himself emerged, that "...this is his truest part of himself," "the very essence of his being." "There is a sense of timelessness and infinity," "like I am part of everyone and everything in existence." All eight Buddhists reported that they felt "actively blissful," "profoundly calm yet highly alert and intensely aware" (Newberg, et al., 2001, pp. 2-3).

When the researchers felt the tug on the string, they injected a radioactive material into a long intravenous line that ran into the meditator's room and into a vein in his left arm. They waited for him to finish his meditation and then quickly took him to a room in the hospital's Nuclear Medicine Department, where a massive state-of-the-art SPECT camera awaited. Scanning inside the meditator's head, the radioactive tracers carried by blood flow are located. The tracer locks into brain cells and remains there for hours. The scan images showed unusual activity in a small part of gray matter located near the top rear section of the brain. Unusual activity indicates more energy is being directed to an area.

The parts of the brain which "lit up," showing an increased flow of energy, are the highest levels where the most sophisticated processing occurs, where information is integrated to basically create the "building blocks of consciousness." (Newberg, et al., 2001, p. 25) In each of four lobes of the right hemisphere were found effects of meditation, response to religious words and concepts, processing of sacred images such as crosses or candles, prayer, religious emotions such as joy and awe. It appears the scientists may have found the physical counterpart of what *The Urantia Book* refers to as "the highest levels of human consciousness." [7:3.4] (P. 84)

Only two of these areas are discussed in this paper: (A) the orientation area and (B) the association area. The orientation area is discussed because the researchers believe this area is "...extremely important in the brain's sense of mystical and religious experiences, which often involve altered perceptions of space and time, ego and self. Since the orientation area is instrumental in shaping these basic perceptions, it must somehow be an integral part of spiritual experience" (Newberg, et al., 2001, p. 29). The association area is discussed because of its connection with emotion and ritual.

. . . it may be beneficial to the physical, mental, and spiritual health of an individual to relieve the ego state of awareness for a time.

A. Orientation Area

Before meditation (normal state) a particular area of one of the lobes is a center of furious neurological activity which registers red and yellow. After meditation, this same area is bathed in dark blotches of cool greens and blues, indicating sharp reduction in activity levels. The meditators said they felt "at one with the Universe," "the self is endless and interwoven with everyone and everything." This is the description of peak meditative and spiritual and mystical moments. In the words of the Hindu Upanishads (Newberg, et al., 2001, pp. 6, 7):

> As the rivers flowing east and west
> Merge in the sea and become one with it,
> Forgetting that they were ever separate rivers,
> So do all creatures lose their separateness
> When they merge at last...

Regarding the orientation area, meditation reduced the energy in the orientation area of the brain, blurring the lines between "self" and "other" or the rest of the world. The incoming flow of information had been reduced or even blocked by meditation. This gives the feeling of ONENESS with ALL, which seems to be one of the most desirable goals of the Buddhist monks...to lose oneself and mesh with the cosmic ocean, self-transcendence.

The same techniques as above were used with a group of Franciscan nuns engaged in prayer. Again the SPECT scans showed the same changes in the orientation area during the sisters' most intense religious moments, except the nuns described their experience as a "tangible sense of the closeness of God and a mingling with Him" (Newberg, et al., 2001, p. 7).

As students of *The Urantia Book*, we might lodge a criticism of this research in light of what it says religion is not:

> *"True religion is not...a fantastic and mystic experience of indescribable feelings of ecstasy which can be enjoyed only by the romantic devotees of mysticism."* [101:1.1] (P. 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."* [101:1.3] (PP. 1104-5)
>
> *"The contact of the mortal mind with its indwelling Adjuster, while often favored*

by devoted meditation, is more frequently facilitated by wholehearted and loving service in unselfish ministry to one's fellow creatures." [91:7.1] (P. 1000)

This is not to say that the meditative state is undesirable; in fact, it may be beneficial to the physical, mental, and spiritual health of an individual to relieve the ego state of awareness for a time. Even though meditation is somewhat encouraged, especially as a "listening" practice, we are given this caution:

"Under no circumstances should the trancelike state of visionary consciousness be cultivated as a religious experience. The characteristics of the mystical state are diffusion of consciousness with vivid islands of focal attention operating on a comparatively passive intellect. All of this gravitates consciousness toward the subconscious rather than in the direction of the zone of spiritual contact, the superconscious...The more healthful attitude of spiritual meditation is to be found in reflective worship and in the prayer of thanksgiving." [100:5.8-10] (PP. 1099-1100)

And at least one theologian agrees: C. Kenneth L. Woodward, Newsweek religion editor: "The chief mistake these neurotheologians make is to identify religion with specific experiences and feelings. Losing one's self in prayer may feel good or uplifting, but these emotions have nothing to do with how well we communicate with God. In fact, many people pray best when feeling shame or sorrow, and the sense that God is absent is not less valid than the experience of divine presence." He goes on to say that the neurotheologians confuse spirituality with religion. "But doing the will of God—or following the dharma—involves much more than prayer and meditation. To see Christ in the person of an AIDS victim or to really love one's enemy does not necessitate a special alteration in the circuits of the brain" (Begley, 2001, p. 53).

How might we apply this research material to the cosmic, yet daily, demanding task of spiritual parenting—parenting with the Spirit? Since *The Urantia Book* seems to somewhat discourage the attainment of "mystical" states, is there value to helping our children to "meditate" as a life skill, and if so, what might the benefits be? One of the most important skills for our children to learn is how to become positive problem solvers. Rodan feels that the *"greatest of all methods of problem solving"* he learned from the Master:

"I refer to that which he so consistently practices, and which he has so faithfully taught you, the isolation of worshipful meditation. In this habit of Jesus' going off so frequently by himself to commune with the Father in heaven is to be found the technique, not only of gathering strength and wisdom for the ordinary conflicts of living, but also of appropriating the energy for the solution of the higher problems of a moral and spiritual nature." [160:1.10] (P. 1774)

B. Association Area

Deepak Chopra gives some insight in this area in a book called *The Seven Spiritual Laws for Parents–Guiding Your Children to Success and Fulfillment.* For the purposes of training a child in meditation, Deepak suggests "young children can be nurtured in this practice gradually. From the time your children are the age of six or seven [but not before] begin to teach them that a few minutes of being alone and quiet every day is good." "Inner silence is a delicate experience that cannot blossom until the nervous system has begun to mature." And rather than insisting on specific meditation times, the adult might wait for "relaxed opportunities to invite the child to sit still with you...and breathe quietly with eyes closed." "Inner silence promotes clarity of mind; it makes us value our inner world; it trains us to go inside to the source of peace and inspiration when we are faced with problems and challenges."

In a different lobe of the right hemisphere the research demonstrated that this area lit up, that is, received energy and was stimulated through repetitive auditory stimuli. This area responds to ritual and ceremony and is heavily involved in emotional responses to religious symbols. As most who work with children know, they seem to enjoy ceremonies and thrive on colorful rituals. This may be something that the Urantia community might want to consider as we contemplate engaging our offspring in the truths of revelation. *"Jesus taught the appeal to the emotions as the technique of arresting and focusing the intellectual attention. He designated the mind thus aroused and quickened as the gateway to the soul."* [152:6.4] (P. 1705)

Under no circumstances should the trancelike state of visionary consciousness be cultivated as a religious experience.

In our neighborhood at home there are five children ages nine to fourteen. We recently began our first "Kid's Urantia Study Group." I was interested in what activities were meaningful to them, even though I was personally interested in beginning to read the Jesus papers with them. In a two-hour period of time, we lit candles, beat the drums,

played other musical instruments, did a play, chanted in a circle, danced, ate, and drank tea. I felt blessed to have my desire respected to the extent that I was "allowed" my wish to read from the Jesus papers for 15 minutes. Next time I am going to carve out more time for this, but what interested me was the amount of time and variety of activities that involved the emotions that were chosen by the group of spiritually active and intelligent young people. And then they really seemed ready to "get mindal."

There are parts of the brain that need stimulation and exposure to spiritual realities and to ways of accessing and experiencing these realities.

So it would seem that short periods of quiet or meditation will provide the time and space for children to begin to form a *habit* of stopping the outside world in order to "go inside." If we show them a way to find and explore their inner space, they will develop their own practice of "tuning into God." They will feel at home in this quiet; they will experience being with God in this "temple"; they will know where to find this "safe haven" for the rest of their lives.

The "G" Spot (God Spot) in the Brain, and the Third Intelligence—SQ

According to the authors of *Spiritual Intelligence,* there are three forms of brain neural organization. The first is a linear, logical, step by step, 2+2=4, serial thinking, the basis of our IQ (Intelligence Quotient upon which all of the educational tests are based.) The second form of neural organization is called associative thinking, upon which our emotional intelligence (EQ) is based. This is our pattern-recognizing, habit forming intelligence which "thinks" with both heart and body. This second kind of intelligence "rewires itself in dialogue with experience, trial and error" (Pert, 1997, p. 135).

The third form of brain neural organization is called unitive thinking or spiritual intelligence (SQ). This process is devoted to unifying and giving meaning to our experience, a neural process that literally binds our experiences together and can ask *why,* looking for the connections between things, bringing to the surface the assumptions we have been making about the meaning behind and within things, becoming more reflective, reaching beyond ourselves, taking responsibility, and becoming more self-aware, more honest, more courageous, insightful, and intuitive. This third kind of intelligence registers our hopes, visions, and values. Using this process we can move the goal posts and play with boundaries and change the rules. It provides a holistic view of life (Zohar and Marshall, 2000, p. 12).

Several studies support scientific evidence of spiritual intelligence. When Dr. Michael Persinger, a neuropsychologist, discovered in the early 1990s that he could artificially stimulate the temporal lobes with magnetic field activity, he went on to investigate many different kinds of temporal lobe activity with mystical experiences such as out-of-body experiences, UFO sightings, and "seeing God." He induced this state in himself by fitting his head with a "transcranial magnetic stimulator, a device that beams a powerful and rapidly fluctuating magnetic field at selected small areas of brain tissue" (Zohar and Marshall, 2000, p. 92). He set the device to stimulate tissues in his temporal lobes, which are located just under the temples, and "He saw 'God' " (Zohar and Marshall, 2000, p. 93).

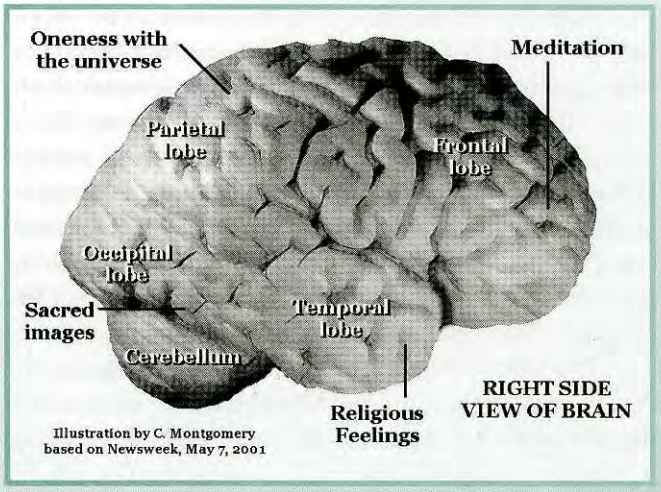
In 1997 neurologist V. S. Ramachandran and his team at the University of California found in the human brain a "God Spot," which is an isolated bunch of neuronal networks in the temporal lobes. On scans taken with positron emission topography of these neural areas, this area lights up when research subjects are exposed to religious symbols or spiritual topics. The researchers called this area "the built-in spiritual center" located in the temporal lobes (Zohar and Marshall, 2000, p. 11). Interestingly, for years research on the lighting up of the temporal lobes has been done in connection with epileptics, who can have mystical visions during the seizures, and with people who take LSD.

Based on these studies and many more, the researchers concluded that we are hard-wired for God, that there is a part of the brain that not only seems to induce so-called spiritual experiences, but that lights up in the presences of religious symbolism and responds to questions and discussions of religious and spiritual nature. Stated in their words: "The 'God spot' does not prove the existence of God, but it does show that the brain has evolved to ask 'ultimate questions,' to have and to use a sensitivity to wider meaning and value" (Zohar and Marshall, 2000, p. 12).

There are many paths this article could follow to further explore these studies. For now I simply want to encourage teachers and parents to assume that not only

do children need the intellectual parts of their brains stimulated and trained, which is what most of the literature deals with, and the educational systems are geared for, *but* we should also provide for the stimulation, guidance, training, habits, and skills that use the parts of the brain discussed in both of the above-mentioned studies: the SQ–Spiritual Intelligence. Most alert parents and educators are aware that there is more than just one kind of intelligence; there has been research reporting the importance of EQ–Emotional Intelligence. Now let us seriously consider the studies provided by these neuroscientists. There are parts of the brain that need stimulation and exposure to spiritual realities and to ways of accessing and experiencing these realities. We would never think of ignoring our children's potential for reading, writing, or math. Remember, development of many parts of the brain, and the accompanying skills and habits, are age specific. Children are ready for developmentally appropriate spiritual stimulation with the coming of the Thought Adjuster.

We can ask how and where the Holy Spirit circuit connects with our minds, and what we can provide in the environment to provide for the richest soil for the reception of the Thought Adjuster. Does the Spirit of Truth "light up our temporal lobes," but maybe on a very subtle level? What part do decisions play in helping to develop the child's SQ–spiritual intelligence? All of these circuits begin to operate when a child makes his or her first moral decision, and the Thought Adjuster is sent from the Paradise Father to indwell the child. As the child makes intellectual decisions, moral choices, and develops spiritually, the Adjuster *"...is .increasingly enabled to register his picturizations of destiny with augmenting vividness and conviction upon the evolving consciousness...."* [110:6.5] (P. 1209)



These realities do not need studies with string and magnets to prove them. Anne Underwood, who wrote the excellent review on "God and the Brain" in the May, 2001 Newsweek, says it so well: "For all the tentative successes that scientists are scoring in their search for the biological bases of religious, spiritual, and mystical experience, one mystery will surely lie forever beyond their grasp. They may trace a sense of transcendence to this bulge in our gray matter. And they may trace a feeling of the divine to that bulge. But it is likely that they will never resolve the greatest question of all—namely, whether our brain wiring creates God, or whether God created our brain wiring. Which you believe is in the end, a matter of faith" (Begley, 2001, pp. 50-58).

Having worked with children most of her life, Sara Blackstock is the director of a large day care center; and her work for the Urantia movement has revolved around her interest in families and children. She has a grown son who was brought up with The Urantia Book, *and she is devoted to kindling the spark of God in children and youth.*

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"The cosmic-mind-endowed, Adjuster-indwelt, personal creature possesses innate recognition-realization of energy reality, mind reality, and spirit reality." [16:9.1] (P. 195)

In Search of the Error So Great...

By Nancy Johnson, Mesquite, TX

(First presented at the 1990 Fellowship International Conference, Snowmass, CO.)

Editor's note: Underlined sections of quotes from *The Urantia Book* indicate the author of the article's emphasis on those statements.

"Forms are valueless when lessons are learned. No chick may be had without the shell, and no shell is of any worth after the chick is hatched. But sometimes error is so great that its rectification by revelation would be fatal to those slowly emerging truths which are essential to its experiential overthrow...."[48:6.21](PP. 554-5)

No doubt we have all paid attention service to this provocative statement by an archangel from Nebadon, and surely this archangel intended to pique our curiosity and stimulate us to examine our conceptual environment—our belief system—to recognize an error that's so out of sync with true reality that they couldn't tell us what it was. What truth could have had such a traumatic impact on us at that time? Did they give us any clues?

Consider for a moment the nature of the following conceptual errors, presented in arbitrary order, which the revelators of truth did not hesitate to correct:

- There is no hell. When we die we do not proceed directly to the right hand of God where we will somehow become magically perfect, even as he is perfect. Rather do we proceed to the mansion worlds where we take up exactly where we left off here and where we will encounter numerous other creatures who may appear somewhat different from ourselves and who were born on other worlds.
- While Jesus, whose real name is Michael, is a Creator Son of God, he is not the second person of the trinity. Nor did he come here to die for our sins in order to appease an offended God. God is not like that.
- Jesus was not born of a virgin. He came into the world in the same manner as all children before and since.
- While it contains the best collection of inspired writings available on our world, the Bible is not *the* word of God, much less the *final* word of God. It contains errors, parts of it are not inspired, and some parts were not written by the authors to whom they were ascribed. Revelation will continue through the ages.
- Adam and Eve were not the first human beings on our world; they were, in fact, transported here nearly a million years after the first mortals evolved in order to upstep the human race and become its spiritual leaders. They would still be here except that they defaulted in their mission. Of the battle that rages between the evolutionists and creationists, it can simply be stated that both sides are correct.
- It doesn't matter, in the ceremony of baptism, whether we sprinkle, pour, or dunk. It's just a ceremony insisted on by Jesus' followers; he only required that we be born of the *spirit*. We do not have to be baptized a Christian in order to be saved. While it is true that no one goes to the Father except through Christ, that path may be encountered after we leave this world.
- Since Jesus' time the devil has had no power to invade normal minds (we are responsible for our own misbehavior); we do not reincarnate (we have only one trial life in the flesh); astrology is a mass of superstitious error which has no place in the gospel of the kingdom; charms and relics are impotent to heal disease; magic and witchcraft are superstitions of ignorant minds.

This list could be expanded considerably, but the point to be made here is that the revelators did not hesitate to refute these cherished beliefs of ours—beliefs so strong that wars have been proudly fought and lives sacrificed in a noble and courageous attempt to defend them.

The kind of error we're looking for couldn't possibly be found in the realm of religious dogma. Each school of religious belief has its own dogma, while too many mortals have no religious belief at all. The error must have to do with a misperception that virtually everyone shares—unquestionably an error set in motion at the time of the Lucifer rebellion and the Caligastic betrayal of our world—and one which hits us at the *supposed* core of our very being. But what could it be? And if we're oblivious to the error, how will we recognize the truth? Surely they gave us some clues.

What was uppermost in the mindset of the world in the mid-1930s that prevented the revelators from correcting this great error in our belief system—material survival? These people had just stepped out of the First World War. They were face to face with the setback of a devastating depression and were on the brink of engaging in another world war where attack seemed justified. Science and technology were just beginning to blossom, psychology was regarded as a pseudo-science, and few people believed there might be life on other worlds.

Today's problems are not any better or worse, but our lifestyle is drastically different. Overall we're much better educated and have more time to think and pon-

der the solution of our problems from a higher perspective. Has that mindset changed sufficiently in recent times to allow correction of the error? These words from a Melchizedek would lead us to believe that it is at least *possible* when he said:

"Because your world is generally ignorant of origins, even of physical origins, it has appeared to be wise from time to time to provide instruction in cosmology. And always has this made trouble for the future. The laws of revelation hamper us greatly by their proscription of the impartation of unearned or premature knowledge. Any cosmology presented as a part of revealed religion is destined to be outgrown in a very short time. Accordingly, future students of such a revelation are tempted to discard any element of genuine religious truth it may contain because they discover errors on the face of the associated cosmologies therein presented." [101:4.1] (P. 1109)

Forty years later another revelation appeared on the scene: *A Course in Miracles*. The author presumably is Christ himself (or possibly the Spirit of Truth speaking for him). According to the author, our perception of reality is totally off base. Our ego minds think the material world is the real world and that our bodies prove we're all separate beings, blinding us to our oneness. In this world of non-reality, our ego minds try to reign supreme, even demanding that we see ourselves as separate so we can exploit our specialness and justify attacking one another. The ego's only purpose is to survive; it doesn't even concern itself with right thinking. The purpose of the course is to teach us how to forget everything we think we know and let the Holy Spirit correct our perception for us. It is time, he says, to correct the *ancient* misperception, heal the separation, and begin living as God created us to live—as one.

The kind of error we're looking for couldn't possibly be found in the realm of religious dogma.

The text was difficult to study—oftentimes frustrating in its repetitious hammering away at a single theme. I was sometimes disturbed as it hit upon areas into which I had personally invested some reality, saying it had no reality. Only toward the end did I begin to see the point of it all, but perhaps that wouldn't have been possible without reading the other parts first.

By the time I finished studying the text of *A Course in Miracles*, I could begin to understand the validity of its claim that we have a split mind (material [ego] mind/cosmic [spirit] mind), with the ego mind investing enormous energy in self-defeating judgments about ourselves and others that have absolutely no reality in eternity. The invitation was for all who would participate as miracle workers to suspend all judgments about anything we can perceive through our material senses, holding ourselves and all others as blameless of any wrongdoing, while the Holy Spirit lets us see who we really are and heals the separation.

In subsequent readings of *The Urantia Book* I noticed a remarkable number of statements which would support the claims in *A Course in Miracles*, and I began to wonder if these were clues—attempts on the part of the revelators to condition us to recognize the "great error" when the time was right.

An archangel of Nebadon revealed his technique of conveying ideas by *implication*, and I observed that this technique was effectively used by many of the other authors also. Referring to the Harmony Workers, he said: *"If I had the least possible basis for comparison, I would attempt to portray this unique field of spirit achievement, but I despair—there is no hope of conveying to mortal minds this sphere of celestial artistry. Nevertheless, that which cannot be described may still be implied:"* [44:7.1] (P. 507)

He then painted a word picture that each reader might interpret according to his/her comprehension capacity. The revelators told us they were handicapped by the necessity of describing spiritual realities in distorted form so they might be at least partially comprehended by the material intellect. The excerpts from *The Urantia Book* used in this presentation pertain mostly to the nature of material personality, material mind, and the soul as they would be described from the Paradise viewpoint and which are more in alignment with statements made in *A Course in Miracles*. Some of these statements from the book are subtle and imbedded in heavy subject matter, so they may be easily overlooked by the material intellect but are nevertheless registered on the brain; others are direct and even blunt. All together they clearly imply that our material existence is nothing more than a means to an end. This may be what the archangel meant when he said, *"No chick may be had without the shell, and no shell is of any worth after the chick is hatched."* [48:6.21] (P. 554)

A Course in Miracles tells us to wake up from our dream and remember who we are—that we're not who we think we are. As far as they had permission to, I believe the revelators of *The Urantia Book* tried to tell us the same thing. In Paper 1 a Divine Counselor says: *"Human personality is the time-space image-shadow cast by the Creator*

They clearly imply that our material existence is nothing more than a means to an end.

personality. And no actuality can ever be adequately comprehended by an examination of its shadow. Shadows should be interpreted in terms of the true substance." [1:6.1] (P.29)

In Paper 5 he describes a little more: *"Personality is potential in all creatures who possess a mind endowment ranging from the minimum of self-consciousness to the maximum of God-consciousness. But mind endowment alone is not personality, neither is spirit nor physical energy. Personality is that quality and value in cosmic reality which is exclusively bestowed by God the Father upon these living energy systems of the associated and co-ordinated energies of matter, mind, and spirit. Neither is personality a progressive achievement. Personality may be material or spiritual, but there either is personality or there is no personality. The other-than-personal never attains the level of the personal except by the direct act of the Paradise Father."* [5:6.3] (P. 70)

So personality is bestowed by God the Father, and it may be material or spiritual. The material self is endowed with material personality which is temporarily ours for use during this life in the flesh, for he goes on to say: *"Capacity for divine personality is inherent in the prepersonal Adjuster; capacity for human personality is potential in the cosmic-mind endowment of the human being. But the experiential personality of mortal man is not observable as an active and functional reality until after the material life vehicle of the mortal creature has been touched by the liberating divinity of the Universal Father, being thus launched upon the seas of experience as a self-conscious and a (relatively) self-determinative and self-creative personality. The material self is truly and* unqualifiedly personal. *The material self has personality and identity, temporal identity; the prepersonal spirit Adjuster also has identity, eternal identity. This material personality and this spirit prepersonality are capable of so uniting their creative attributes as to bring into existence the surviving identity of the immortal soul."* [5:6.6&7] (P. 71)

The time-space image-shadow called human personality is made possible by the pattern arrangement of our material forms. But it is not observable as an active and functional reality until after the Thought Adjuster and soul are present. Also, we are told many times that the bestowal of personality is the exclusive domain of God the Father, but does he delegate the bestowal of "shadow" personality to the Conjoint Actor? Consider the implication of the following statement, which appears without apparent explanation in Paper 112: *"While it would be presumptuous to attempt the definition of personality, it may prove helpful to recount some of the things which are known about personality:*

1. Personality is that quality in reality which is bestowed by the Universal Father himself or by the Conjoint Actor, acting for the Father." [112:0.2&3] (P. 1225)

Ordinarily we regard the Conjont Actor as the bestower of mind. How does the Conjoint Actor act for the Father in the bestowal of personality? We are told in Paper 12 that he reacts to both material and spiritual realities, and ministry to beings such as ourselves (who represent a union of both the material and spiritual phases of creation) is his exclusive domain. Does he bestow material (temporal) personality on material minded creatures? The material aspect of creature mind can only respond to the material gravity circuit, as explained by a Divine Counselor [9:6.5](P. 104), but if we focus our attention on one short paragraph in Paper 8, we will see that he had already called attention to a primary flaw in our view of reality and suggested how we might try to understand the nature and work of the God of Action: *"...But material creatures who tend towards the error of viewing matter as basic reality and mind, together with spirit, as postulates rooted in matter, would better comprehend the Third Source and Center if he were called the Infinite Reality, the Universal Organizer, or the Personality Co-ordinator."* [8:2.3] (P. 92)

He describes "the error," but is it the root of the error? Matter is not basic reality, and mind and spirit are not rooted in matter. Perhaps we would do better to think of them as temporarily *housed* or *encircuited* in matter–a sort of complementary "shadow" composed by the Conjoint Actor in his role as Universal Organizer. As Personality Co-ordinator, the Conjoint Actor awaits the advance preparation of the Creator Son and Creative Spirit who *duplicate* certain Havona *patterns* of personality and mind in their material creation. (It's somewhat important to the entire discussion for you to be aware that in the Foreword we are told: *"...pattern is pattern and remains pattern; only* copies *are multiplied."* [F:VI.10] (P. 10) We are given some interesting information about the advance preparation of the Creator Son and Creative Spirit in Papers 14 and 3.

"A Creator Son uses the creatures of Havona as personality-pattern possibilities for his own mortal children and spirit beings." [14:6.25] (P. 162)

"On the worlds of Havona the Spirit and the Daughters of the Spirit find the mind patterns for all their groups of spiri-

tual and material intelligences... " [14:6.30](P. 162) *"...mind of the human order is a bestowal of the Daughters of the Conjoint Actor, the Divine Ministers of the evolving universes."* [3:1.8] (P. 45)

"Havona is the home of the pattern personality of every mortal type and the home of all superhuman personalities of mortal association who are not native to the creations of time." [14:6.34] (P. 162)

Now we can take a fresh look at two statements in Paper 112 which round out the picture of the material stage for the enactment of the human part of the drama unfolding in the seven superuniverses: *"Human beings possess identity only in the material sense. Such qualities of the self are expressed by the material mind as it functions in the energy system of the intellect. When it is said that man has identity, it is recognized that he is in possession of a mind circuit which has been placed in subordination to the acts and choosing of the will of the human personality. But this is a material and purely temporary manifestation, just as the human embryo is a transient parasitic stage of human life. Human beings, from a cosmic perspective, are born, live, and die in a relative instant of time; they are not enduring. But mortal personality, through its own choosing, possesses the power of transferring its seat of identity from the passing material-intellect system to the higher morontia-soul system which, in association with the Thought Adjuster, is created as a new vehicle for personality manifestation."* [112:5.4] (PP. 1232-33)

"At death the functional identity associated with the human personality is disrupted through the cessation of vital motion. Human personality, while transcending its constituent parts, is dependent on them for functional identity. The stoppage of life destroys the physical brain patterns for mind endowment, and the disruption of mind terminates mortal consciousness. The consciousness of that creature cannot subsequently reappear until a cosmic situation has been arranged which will permit the same human personality again to function in relationship with living energy." [112:5.14] (P. 1234)

The body, then, is merely a temporary functional vehicle with a unique neural pattern. Once activated with the spark of life, it becomes a mechanism for the functioning of the mind and personality circuits. The morontia-soul system is also a vehicle for personality manifestation, and we are supposed to transfer our seat of identity to this soul. The soul is what is observable to spirit beings as an active and functional reality. A Mighty Messenger, a one-time mortal like ourselves, made this so clear when he said: *"On a material world you think of a body as having a spirit, but we regard the spirit as having a body. The material eyes are truly the windows of the spirit-born soul. The spirit is the architect, the mind is the builder, the body is the material building."* [42:12.5] (PP. 483-4)

But what is the soul? Do we really know? From the material viewpoint, it's "something" we created in partnership with the Thought Adjuster. The book tells us this repeatedly. We were only about five years old at the time and probably don't remember too much about it. Nevertheless, from the Paradise viewpoint there must be something additional involved in the "birth" of the soul. First a Mighty Messenger tells us, *"The great Supreme is the cosmic oversoul of the grand universe. In him the qualities and quantities of the cosmos do find their deity reflection..."* [117:5.1] (P. 1285) A few pages later he tells us this: *"The act of the creature's choosing to do the will of the Creator is a cosmic value and has a universe meaning which is immediately reacted to by some unrevealed but ubiquitous force of co-ordination, probably the functioning of the ever-enlarging action of the Supreme Being;"* [117:6.4] (P. 1288)

"The morontia soul of an evolving mortal is really the son of the Adjuster action of the Universal Father and the child of the cosmic reaction of the Supreme Being, the Universal Mother. The mother influence dominates the human personality throughout the local universe childhood of the growing soul." [117:6.5](P.1288)

Consider the implication of this remark—and add to it the Divine Counselor's words that we are not observable as active and functional reality until *after* the appearance of the Thought Adjuster and the soul. Could it be that the soul is a fragment of the Supreme just as the Adjuster is a fragment of the Father? I have to ask—because *A Course in Miracles* urges us to remember who we are, saying we forgot, but not to fear, because the Holy Spirit remembers for us until we awaken from our dream.

Mighty Messengers must be granted more freedom than others in the revelation of truth to mortals. Four times other revelators use a familiar quote from Scripture with reference to the Universal Father—the one that says: *"In Him we live and move and have our being."* [2:1.11] (P. 35)

There is no cause to question it, since we know the Primal Father is the source of all that is. But the Mighty Messenger uses the same quote in reference to the Supreme, creating a big shift in perception. He tells us: *"The Supreme Being did not create man, but man was literally created out of, his very life was derived from, the potentiality of the Supreme. Nor does he evolve man; yet is the Supreme himself the very essence of evolution. From the finite standpoint, we actually live, move, and have our being within the immanence of the Supreme."* [117:3.12] (P. 1283)

Are we too focused on our individuality to fully

welcome the role of the Supreme in the evolution of the worlds of time and space? *A Course in Miracles* frequently makes reference to God's Son (capitalized) in a collective sense which clearly distinguished it from "God's son" (not capitalized), which is the style used to refer to individual mortals. Since it tells us we're all really *one*, a *Urantia Book* student might easily infer that "God's Son" (capitalized) probably refers to the evolving Supreme Being.

So *A Course in Miracles* tells us to "remember who we are" and a Mighty Messenger tells us that we are the children of the Supreme. A thorough study of *The Urantia Book* alone provides sufficient ground for us to infer that, collectively speaking, in reality we *are* the Supreme—but not our bodies or our temporary identities, because we've already learned that these do not survive mortal death. We have learned that the Father is self-realizing in the worlds of time and space by sending a fragment of himself to dwell within us after contact has been made by the sixth and seventh adjutant mind spirits. The soul repercussion of this act is a child of the evolving Supreme in whom we actually live, move, and have our being. And we are told about the overcontrol of Supremacy.

Still quoting from a Mighty Messenger, the next two references from the paper on "*Energy–Mind and Matter*" are thought provoking and have left many a reader puzzled as to their possible meaning. These may or may not have something to do with the overcontrol of the Supreme, but they're definitely clues of some sort:

"Mind is always creative. The mind endowment of an individual animal, mortal, morontian, spirit ascender, or finality attainer is always competent to produce a suitable and serviceable body for the living creature identity. But the presence phenomenon of a personality or the pattern of an identity, as such, is not a manifestation of energy, either physical, mindal, or spiritual. The personality form is the pattern *aspect of a living being; it connotes the* arrangement *of energies, and this, plus life and motion, is the* mechanism *of creature existence."* [42:12.2] (P. 483)

"...And from there on out through the realms of time and space, wherever a divine spirit reality is present, whenever a real spirit-mind is functioning, there always tends to be produced a material or physical counterpart of that spirit reality. The spirit is the creative reality; the physical counterpart is the time-space reflection of the spirit reality, the physical repercussion of the creative action of spirit-mind." [42:12.6-7] (P. 484)

At least we have a little more information regarding the source of the mechanism of creature existence. The next three references explain the limitations of this mechanism and something about the overcontrol of Supremacy:

"Mechanisms produced by higher minds function to liberate their creative sources but to some degree unvaryingly limit the action of all subordinate intelligences. To the creatures of the universes this limitation becomes apparent as the mechanism of the universes. Man does not have unfettered free will; there are limits to his range of choice, but within the radius of this choice his will is relatively sovereign.

The life mechanism of the mortal personality, the human body, is the product of supermortal creative design; therefore it can never be perfectly controlled by man himself. Only when ascending man, in liaison with the fused Adjuster, self-creates the mechanism for personality expression, will he achieve perfected control thereof.

The grand universe is mechanism as well as organism, mechanical and living–a living mechanism activated by a Supreme Mind, co-ordinating with a Supreme Spirit, and finding expression on maximum levels of power and personality unification as the Supreme Being. But to deny the mechanism of the finite cosmos is to deny fact and to disregard reality." [118:9.2,3&4] (P. 1303)

"..the Primal Father is even now–as always–self-realizing of an ever-expanding arena of time-space, and of time-space-transcended, meanings, an arena of changing relationships wherein energy-matter is being progressively subjected to the overcontrol of living and divine spirit through the experiential striving of living and personal mind." [42:10.1] (P. 480)

"We do not find the overcontrol of Supremacy to be wholly predictable. Furthermore, this unpredictability appears to be characterized by a certain developmental incompleteness, undoubtedly an earmark of the incompleteness of the Supreme and of the incompleteness of finite reaction to the Paradise Trinity.

The mortal mind can immediately think of a thousand and one things–catastrophic physical events, appalling accidents, horrific disasters, painful illnesses, and world-wide scourges–and ask whether such visitations are correlated in the unknown maneuvering of this probable functioning of the Supreme Being. Frankly, we do not know; we are not really sure. But we do observe that, as time passes, all these difficult and more or less mysterious situations always *work out for the welfare and progress of the universes. It may be that the circumstances of existence and the inexplicable vicissitudes of living are all interwoven into a meaningful pattern of high value by the function of the Supreme and the overcontrol of the Trinity."* [10:7.4&5] (P. 115)

Could it be that the Supreme is orchestrating this growing sense of urgency among many readers that it is time for us to begin manifesting the unifying nature of Supremacy in our worldwide fellowship? But we cannot effectively do this unless we manage to transfer our seat of identity to the higher morontia-soul system. Our

material selves are not capable of discerning spiritual reality, as pointed out in the next three references:

"It is exceedingly difficult for the meagerly spiritualized, material mind of mortal man to experience marked consciousness of the spirit activities of such divine entities as the Paradise Adjusters. As the soul of joint mind and Adjuster creation becomes increasingly existent, there also evolves a new phase of soul consciousness which is capable of experiencing the presence, and of recognizing the spirit leadings and other supermaterial activities, of the Mystery Monitors." [5:2.5] (P. 65)

"Religious experience, being essentially spiritual, can never be fully understood by the material mind;... The difficulties and paradoxes of religion are inherent in the fact that the realities of religion are utterly beyond the mortal capacity for intellectual comprehension." [5:5.6] (P. 69)

"Knowledge is the sphere of the material or fact-discerning mind. Truth is the domain of the spiritually endowed intellect that is conscious of knowing God. Knowledge is demonstrable; truth is experienced. Knowledge is a possession of the mind; truth an experience of the soul, the progressing self. Knowledge is a function of the nonspiritual level; truth is a phase of the mind-spirit level of the universes." [130:4.10] (P. 1435)

As you may now understand, it never has been our material selves who were comprehending the spiritual truths associated with the factual information we've been storing in our brains, but it was truly important to get it recorded there. Only in recent times has science discovered that every experience we have ever had, along with any emotional response connected with the experience, is indelibly recorded on the brain. This would include all spiritual experiences as well, even though, as we just read, these are actually experiences of the soul. These accumulated records are scanned and the information used as a basis for making decisions in the present. The joy emotion associated with gradually accumulated spiritual recordings becomes an increasingly attractive choice stimulus to the material creature who naturally seeks pleasure over pain. The indwelling Adjuster can then help us remember the joy at each moment of choice. The midwayers explained it this way:

"The human mind does not create real values; human experience does not yield universe insight. Concerning insight, the recognition of moral values and the discernment of spiritual meanings, all that the human mind can do is to discover, recognize, interpret, and choose." [196:3.10] (P. 2094)

"Unless a divine lover lived in man, he could not unselfishly and spiritually love. Unless an interpreter lived in the mind, man could not truly realize the unity of the universe. Unless an evaluator dwelt with man, he could not possibly appraise moral values and recognize spiritual meanings..." [196:3.13] (P. 2094)

A Melchizedek solicits our cooperation with a practical logic our mortal minds can understand: *"But mortal mind without immortal spirit cannot survive. The mind of man is mortal; only the bestowed spirit is immortal. Survival is dependent on spiritualization by the ministry of the Adjuster–on the birth and evolution of the immortal soul; at least, there must not have developed an antagonism towards the Adjuster's mission of effecting the spiritual transformation of the material mind."* [49:4.9] (P. 565)

The choosing power of the material personality should not be understated, but as we grow more consciously aware that it is actually our soul-selves, not our material selves, who are capable of recognizing the leadings of our Thought Adjusters, it makes more sense to consciously shift the focus of our identity to our soul-selves. You might ask "How can we do this?" *The Urantia Book* tells us we *can*; *A Course in Miracles* tells us how! It may be the only way we can truly demonstrate our sincerity when we say: "It is my will that your will be done." Without this focus, growth is likely to be spontaneous and wholly haphazard rather than controlled, directed, and constructive. *The Urantia Book* provides us with the skeleton concept, which is basically this: *"...such a spirit dominance of the material mind is conditioned upon two experiences: This mind must have evolved up through the ministry of the seven adjutant mind-spirits, and the material (personal) self must choose to co-operate with the indwelling Adjuster in creating and fostering the morontia self, the evolutionary and potentially immortal soul."* [111:1.2] (P. 1216)

"Having thus provided for the growth of the immortal soul and having liberated man's inner self from the fetters of absolute dependence on antecedent causation, the Father stands aside...it remains for man himself to will the creation or to inhibit the creation of this surviving and eternal self which is his for the choosing...." [5:6.8] (P. 71)

"By and with the consent of your will, the Adjuster has the power to subject the creature trends of the material mind to the transforming actions of the motivations and purposes of the emerging morontial soul." [108:5.4] (P. 1191)

A Course in Miracles picks up where *The Urantia Book* left off. We know our world is classed as semibarbaric on the evolutionary scale. *A Course in Miracles* asks us to become instruments of peace and tells us how to let the Holy Spirit use our physical presence as a communication tool to turn all forms of fear into love. A Solitary Messenger encouraged us to do this, too, when he said: *"Since this inner life of man is truly creative, there rests upon each person the responsibility of choosing as to whether this creativity shall be spontaneous and wholly haphazard or controlled, directed, and constructive. How can a creative imagina-*

tion produce worthy children when the stage whereon it functions is already preoccupied by prejudice, hate, fears, resentments, revenge, and bigotries?" [111:4.9] (P. 1220)

The first volume of *A Course in Miracles*, the Text, has an unusual introduction which says, in part: "This is a course in miracles. It is a required course. Only the time you take it is voluntary. Free will does not mean that you can establish the curriculum. It means only that you can elect what you want to take at a given time. The course does not aim at teaching the meaning of love, for that is beyond what can be taught. It does aim, however, at removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence, which is your natural inheritance...."

It could rightly be called a course in how to respond to the leadings of our Thought Adjusters who long to bring about our spiritual transformation. As we learned from *The Urantia Book* earlier in this discussion, material creatures tend toward the error of viewing matter as basic reality and mind, together with spirit, as postulates rooted in matter. As long as this fundamental error in perception persists in our minds we will not be able to transcend our animal response to the material gravity circuit. Any attempt to live in unified Supremacy will be doomed to failure, because that is a spirit-dominated realm.

Jesus understood 2000 years ago that it would not be easy for believers to suddenly transfer their seat of identity from the material self to the soul. Otherwise he would not have said: *"Forewarn all believers regarding the fringe of conflict which must be traversed by all who pass from the life as it is lived in the flesh to the higher life as it is lived in the spirit. To those who live quite wholly within either realm, there is little conflict or confusion, but all are doomed to experience more or less uncertainty during the times of transition between the two levels of living."* [159:3.7] (P. 1766)

He's been a patient Master, but today he says we're running out of time, so he sent us a course to tell us how it can be done. To mainline Christianity "running out of time" suggests that the catastrophic events foretold in the Scriptures are just around the corner. Students of *The Urantia Book* might infer that we're about to embark on a new age–the first stage of light and life–and most of us fondly wish to make a significant contribution toward that end. But we know there are conditions which must first be met before this can happen, and one of those conditions–the end of rebellion–requires our direct participation, as we were told in Paper 35:

"In the event of rebellion on a system headquarters, a new sovereign is usually installed within a comparatively short time, but not so on the individual planets. They are the component units of the material creation, and creature free will is a factor in the final adjudication of all such problems. Successor Planetary Princes are designated for isolated worlds, planets whose princes of authority may have gone astray, but they do not assume active rulership of such worlds until the results of insurrection are partially overcome and removed by the remedial measures adopted by the Melchizedeks and other ministering personalities." [35:9.9] (P. 394)

A Course in Miracles says it is time to correct an *ancient* misperception. It tells us what it is and teaches us how to become the kind of miracle workers it will take to correct it.

The Urantia Book tells us our enduring reality is that we are fragments of the Father and possibly living cells of the Supreme Being. True, we have a material form, with a material mind and a material personality, but *"Forms are valueless when lessons are learned. No chick may be had without the shell, and no shell is of any worth after the chick is hatched."[48:6.21] (P. 554)* Once a certain phase of soul consciousness–awareness of our true reality–is reached, we no longer have to *"live face to face with the incessant clamoring of an inescapable self for recognition and honor." [3:5.13] (P. 51)* We're able then to forsake the self-life and dynamically choose the divine life instead.

Nancy Johnson is a puzzle person who has worked extensively with the text of The Urantia Book *for 26 years. She She typed the text of the book into an electronic format in 1981, and she indexed it electronically in 1990. Nancy has typeset both Uversa Press editions of* The Urantia Book. *As a member of the Fellowship's Publications Committee she also typesets the* Mighty Messenger.

"The mortal personality initiated on the evolutionary worlds and tabernacled in the flesh—indwelt by the Mystery Monitors and invested by the Spirit of Truth—is not fully mobilized, realized, and unified until that day when such a Jerusem citizen is given clearance for Edentia..."
[47:10.6] (P. 540)

Jesus' Miracles and the Father's Will

By Ronald Besser, York, PA

More than one student of *The Urantia Book* has wondered if the miracles performed by Jesus contravene his own post-baptismal decisions which purposed *not* to use superhuman powers in completing his lifework on Urantia. Trying to fathom the Father's will or the Creator Son's actions on any level is a weighty process, for it attempts to understand divine minds, Deity personality, spiritual power, and what motivates Deity actions and reactions to circumstances.

In trying to solve the seeming paradox between Jesus' miracles and the Father's will, we might ask ourselves the following questions: (1) Were Jesus' six great decisions [136:5-10] (PP. 1516-1523) a list of actions the Father just concurred with, or were they actions of the divine will, which were supposed to be implemented? (2) Are we defining the Father's will so narrowly that we misconstrue the far greater insight of the Father?

I believe Jesus' post-baptismal decisions were completely in line with the Father's will. I also think we must expand the horizon of our assumptions about the Father's will. I will answer these questions more fully later, but first, let's review the midwayers' biography of Jesus for in-person observations of these events.

Remember, the midwayer record is ours, but their reference material is not. We have no way to judge how well they synthesized the information they had at hand. But they did have one unimpeachable source no written record can duplicate–their own observations as these events took place. They were eyewitnesses.

"*What a* Creator Son *desires and his Father wills IS.*"[145:3.11)[P.1633] Below is the same statement in full context, which is preceded by the eyewitness midwayer's comment: "*Evidently the Father's will interposed no objection, for the words of the Master has scarcely been uttered...*" (when the celestial personalities began healing the assembled throng).[145:3.10](P. 1633)

Then:

"*But of all the beings who were astonished at this sudden and unexpected outbreak of supernatural healing, Jesus was the most surprised. In a moment when his human interests and sympathies were focused upon the scene of suffering and affliction there spread out before him, he neglected to bear in his human mind the admonitory warnings of his Personalized Adjuster regarding the impossibility of limiting the time element of the creator prerogatives of a Creator Son under certain conditions and in certain circumstances. Jesus desired to see these suffering mortals made whole if his Father's will would not thereby be violated. The Personalized Adjuster of Jesus instantly ruled that such an act of creative energy at that time would not transgress the will of the Paradise Father, and by such a decision–in view of Jesus' preceding expression of healing desire–the creative act* was. *What a* Creator Son *desires and his Father* wills *IS. Not in all of Jesus' subsequent earth life did another such en masse physical healing of mortals take place.*" *[145:3.11] (P. 1633)*

This miracle is a paradox to the human audience. To unravel some of its internal contradictions, let us examine what the revelation may say about the laws of Deity actions.

First, we are taught that all things done by God are accomplished in the best way possible and done with somewhat predictable behavior on the part of the Deities. We are also taught that the best way to do something by God may at any time be changed to another way if the circumstance requires it; that God is not a slave to his own process.

This qualification–that the usual action of the divine will has elevated to a superior, alternative action–should alert us to the possibility that we are observing an unexpected reality moment in what otherwise may appear to us as a straightforward cause and effect phenomenon. The midwayers tell us that there was no contravention of Father-will by the miraculous works. Therefore, the healing must be the result of a higher law than the injunction against miracles actually represents. Apparently, we have to know the Deities better to be able to predict how and what they do. We may not be including all the information that we need in order to calculate what will happen.

Secondly, the miracle demonstrates that Jesus was doing nothing more than continuing to use his human mind and subjecting his will to the Father's will, just as he did through the remainder of his life on Urantia, up to and including his own death. Jesus felt, thought, and prayed as a mortal during the "healing at sundown," bowing to the sovereign will of his Paradise Father, just as he always did even to the last days in the flesh.

Remember that this event occurs during the second part of Michael's bestowal mission on Urantia. Upon his baptism, the first phase of the bestowal was completed. He had successfully led the life of a mortal subject to the Father's will. The Adjuster detached, to return moments later as a Personalized Adjuster, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Now, part two of the bestowal mission is beginning to unfold; therefore, it has elements of mystery for the assembled celestial personalities, the midwayers, and even for Jesus himself. From the perspective of the human Jesus, details regarding the future—even the end of his own bestowal—were not yet evident. However, Jesus did know of the details of his death some time before Gethsemane.

Jesus had decided to use the mortal mind for those decisions concerning his own behavior during the second phase of his bestowal. He could have communicated with Gabriel and other universe personalities if he had wished, but with the Father's request that he finish the bestowal through the intelligence of the flesh, Michael made no attempt to circumvent the normal insights of his mortal mind. Thus, in this episode of the healing of 683 afflicted mortals, Jesus willingly subjected himself to the same restriction—using the human mind—which eventually led to the tragic ending of his own life.

In discussing the closing hours of Jesus' life in the flesh, as pertaining to the Father's will, an eyewitness statement flows from the midwayer's pen, *"The cruel treatment of Jesus ... must not be confused with the fact that Jesus, in patiently submitting to all this ... was truly doing the will of the Father in Paradise."* [183:1.1](P. 1972) How does the author support his reasons for this statement?

Summarizing, the midwayer says: (1) The Father willed that Jesus should drink the full cup of mortal experience—birth to death; (2) The Father willed that Jesus finish his bestowal *naturally;* (3) The Father willed no special dispensation to treat the life of Jesus differently from that of a normal mortal's life, with the attendant human difficulties, which are specific to each of us. [183:1.1-2] (P. 1972)

Had Jesus been in error in his actions relative to his post baptismal plans, he would have subverted the three basic tenets operating as the Father's will listed above. He need not have submitted to this death nor put up with the sham trial preceding it if he would have broken faith with the rightness of his own plans of action concerning his proscriptions against miracle making.

Third, and the crux of the matter, is that Jesus technically would not have needed to continue the bestowal after the Thought Adjuster detached in order to achieve the rulership of Nebadon in his own right [136:3.5] (P. 1513) Jesus completed the requirements to exhaust the possibilities of human potential as Joshua ben Joseph, but to claim the role of Supreme Ruler of Nebadon he had to conclude the bestowal in cooperation with the sevenfold associated wills of the three Paradise Deities, as expressed in the Supreme.

"...[H]e had embarked upon a program of the revelation of the Supreme which involved co-operative functioning with the diverse wills of the Paradise Deities. Thus his sovereignty, when finally and personally acquired, would actually be all-inclusive of the sevenfold will of Deity as it culminates in the Supreme." [120:0.7] (PP. 1324-1325)

Forget not that the expression of the Father-Son union is *the* creative union of Deity that makes possible the deified time-space creation. This is one of the most important parts of Michael's bestowal background. While Michael incarnated subject to the Father's will, he is also the Son of the same Father-Son union by whose creativity came the fountainhead of power to produce untold numbers of celestial and mortal beings in Nebadon, via Michael's expression. It was the Father's will operating in Jesus' life on the soil of Israel. However, the antecedent creativity for beings, healing, life creation, and *re-creation* is associated directly in Michael through these ancestral Deity unions. This is a part of the cooperation of the associated Deity wills that comes forward and is operative within Michael as he was expressing Supremacy and his Creator desires on Urantia.

The Urantia Book teaches that the seven wills of Deity are coordinated for Supremacy through the Paradise Trinity and most probably executed by the Infinite Spirit (until God the Supreme assumes this function). As the Father's will is the coordinating influence on Paradise, so is it also in the time-space manifestation of the various Deity wills. As an example of Deity cooperation, Lazarus could not have risen to new life without the full coordination and cooperation of the Paradise Trinity, whose primal member, the Father, is also the singular will that Jesus was living in his life on Urantia.

The Father is never divided in his attitudes whether he acts for himself or within the Paradise Trinity. He *remains consistent* in whatever group, mind, or individual action he is involved with. The Father would not frown on Jesus' miracles in one instance because of Jesus' personal decisions not to perform them, and in the next moment, cooperate with the Trinity to let them pass. He is not thus changeable.

So why wasn't it against the Father's will for Jesus to perform such miracles? I think it becomes obvious that the Father's will is universal and consistent for *all* the operations of an all-but-infinite creation. What we think should not be permissible in the eyes of our divine Parent may run counter to what the Father will allow. Yes, it would be an error if Jesus had just been showing off, but this was not the case. The context for each of

Jesus' miracles was grounded in compassion and/or his sincere desire to aid or teach the most important lessons possible.

Realize this: No miracle of healing or physical manifestation in the universe is possible without the cooperation of the Supreme Deity functions and its Trinity antecedents in the universe, of which the Father is the First Source. The feeding of the five thousand, turning water into wine, the en mass public healing–all of these miracles flowed naturally through Michael as ancestral cause by virtue of his simultaneous existence as a Paradise Creator Son.

Think about the goals of Michael's bestowals as being more than winning the sovereignty of Nebadon. His aim was also to synthesize, through bestowals, the creative sevenfold expression of Supreme Deity as it originally was expressed in the infinite original patterns of the I AM–that very same absolute and infinite Father as heir to I AM whose will Jesus learned to do. Michael, by these actions, thereby put into place those Supreme foundations we use to ascend through Nebadon.

Nebadon is not complete without these Supreme foundations for maturing the light and life future for Urantia, and even for planets yet unformed, to achieve a spiritual golden age. The behavior of Jesus, whether the miracles were unconscious or planned by him, relates directly back to the multiple purposes he was seeking to fulfill. They were almost bigger than he was or more than he could control, in their rightness of action, when once the proper elements were in place.

Consciousness of the Supreme includes God consciousness of the diverse wills of original Deity. Jesus is the only individual to have lived on Urantia who took all these wills into account; his actions and behavior included and demonstrated this sevenfold manifest expression of the Paradise Trinity.

However he managed it, and in spite of appearances, Jesus committed no errors–he lived his life on behalf of the Father's will. The fact that these miracles happened, that Michael achieved full sovereignty of Nebadon, and that he ascended to Paradise to receive the Father's approval of the bestowal, demonstrates there was no contravention of the Father's will during Michael's short and eventful life on Urantia.

Ron Besser, a student of The Urantia Book *for over 23 years, recently retired from the engineering business and plans to devote more time to projects associated with the revelation's dissemination.*

NOT WHAT WE GIVE.. BUT WHAT WE SHARE...

The following verses are excerpts from "The Vision of Sir Launfal" by James Russell Lowell. Sir Launfal has returned from the Crusades a beggar, his arrogance broken, and with only a single crust of bread to eat, when a leper begs him for alms.

And Sir Launfal said, "I behold in thee
An image of him who died on the tree;
Behold, through him, I give to thee!"

He parted in twain his single crust,
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,
And gave the leper to eat and drink,

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,
A light shone round about the place;
The leper no longer crouched at his side,
But stood before him glorified,
Shining and tall and fair and straight
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate, –
Himself the Gate whereby men can
Enter the temple of God in Man.

His words were shed softer than leaves from the pine,
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,
That mingle their softness and quiet in one
With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;
And the voice that was calmer than silence said,
"Lo, it is I, be not afraid!
In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold it is here, - this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water His blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need;
Not what we give, but what we share, –
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

A Demystification and Redefinition of Cult

By Alison Gardner, Great Falls, VA

A couple of years ago, a diverse group of long-time *Urantia Book* readers took on the daunting task of establishing a new and expanded meaning for the word, cult. The panel is now preparing to publish their work through *The Urantia Book* Fellowship's Wrightwood Series, a program that sponsors the scholarly pursuit of mainstream topical studies. These publications are intended for a broad audience including people new to *The Urantia Book* or learning of its existence for the very first time.

The word, cult, has a range of meanings, theological and religious, sociological, and anthropological. It is a word that has been denigrated in the modern age, mostly unfairly, making it ripe for a healthy examination. Every forward-thinking person, especially those fortunate enough to have uncovered *The Urantia Book*, should care how its meaning has evolved. As this Wrightwood panel has gradually unraveled the perplexities of this topic, they have steadily grown in their commitment to find answers and, more important, ask new questions to generate a global dialog on this intriguing subject.

What follows are selected excerpts from the draft Introduction and my chapter, "Free Will and Consciousness of Being." Part I examines cult from a global perspective, Part II addresses the individual's viewpoint. Look for this material in its soon-to-be published expanded form, which includes more than 6 chapters and many extras from the rest of the panelists covering diverse aspects of cult.

Part I

The importance of cult, or culture, to the prosperity and well being of enlarging civilization should never be underestimated.

Humankind can identify meanings and values and communicate ideas, even ideals. *"It is this ability to communicate and share meanings that constitute human culture and enables man, through social associations, to build civilizations. Knowledge and wisdom become cumulative because of man's ability to communicate these possessions to succeeding generations. And thereby arise the cultural activities of the human race: art, science, religion, and philosophy."* [160:2.3] (P.1775)

The etymological roots of the word, cult, reach back to the Latin and French, *cultus*, which means, simply, and exquisitely, *to worship*. Words such as culture and cultivate capture this meaning, expressing how humanity generally, and cults and religions specifically, revere and perpetuate that which holds worth for civilization as a whole. Worship-cult is so ubiquitous in the social stream of daily life, we hardly notice it.

"The cult type of social organization persisted because it provided a symbolism for the preservation and stimulation of moral sentiments and religious loyalties. The cult grew out of the traditions of 'old families' and was perpetuated as an established institution; all families have a cult of some sort. Every inspiring ideal grasps for some perpetuating symbolism—seeks some technique for cultural manifestation which will insure survival and augment realization—and the cult achieves this end by fostering and gratifying emotion." [87:7.1] (P. 965)

Up until about 500 years ago, the common man found religious practice enshrouded in mystery, held closely and authoritatively by the cleric class. Only priests could set eyes on the few bibles in existence, for example. Geography and the power of the state determined religious destiny.

At the time of the Renaissance, however, religious texts were more in demand in large part due to man's blossoming interest in philosophy and a renewed need to seek out the roots of his own spiritual urges. New printing aided this quest, of course. Man for the first time began to think about spirituality in a personal sense rather than as his connection to his cohorts.

Personally held ideas about religion challenged the state's authority. From the perspective of those in (self-appointed) authority, religion and its underpinning cult practices began to diverge. This may mark the institutionalized disparagement and downfall of the word, cult, for it became inexorably associated with "other" beliefs, held as heretical, antithetical to authoritative orthodoxy.

Consider the transformative proclamation of Luther's Protestantism as a metaphor for the constantly changing understanding of the word, cult. While the idea of worshipping a personal God had been around for hundreds of years, Luther, in practically one generation, replaced the singularly arrogant concept that each man would *receive* faith via the church and priests, with the dynamic idea that individuals can and do find and *have* faith on their own by virtue of their personal rela-

tionship with God. At the time, Luther was seen by the centralized church as a flawed cult leader while today he is remembered as a great visionary who led the way for the diverse expression of Christianity throughout the world.

Humorist Leo Pfefffer expresses today's popular beliefs about "cult." "If you believe in it, it is a religion or perhaps the religion; and if you do not care one way or another about it, it is a sect; but if you fear and hate it, it is a cult." We observe in this witticism the mind of the superficial thinker who easily ignores the underlying theology of any idea outside his own chosen core beliefs, even fears and hates ideas different or challenging to his own.

"When you presume to sit in critical judgment on the primitive religion of man (or on the religion of primitive man), you should remember to judge such savages and to evaluate their religious experience in accordance with their enlightenment and status of conscience. Do not make the mistake of judging another's religion by your own standards of knowledge and truth." [101:9.2](P. 1115)

"Theology is always the study of your *religion; the study of another's religion is psychology."* [103:6.1](P. 1135)

Modern fears of "cult" are simplistic (hence easily lampooned by Pfeffer) because they spring from fear of a group's practices—always assumed to be deceptive, with psychological pressure techniques, assumed to be dangerous—rather than the actual belief system of its adherents. Even international leaders of interfaith movements concede their efforts invariably revert to superficial ecumenical dialog in place of true pluralism. Rarely will one group proclaim another's path equally effective, or be willing to change their core beliefs to accommodate one another's chosen path. And here lies the great irony of modern fears of cults: every religion, sect, and cult known to man has and does engage, to a greater or lesser extent, in deceptive practices and psychological pressure techniques. For what could be more misleading or emotionally manipulative than the inexorable doctrine and creeds every mainstream religion uses to control its constituents' behavior, finances, and personal decision-making?

With our generation's rise of extreme groups hiding their motives and actions behind a veil of religion, from Hitler to bin Laden, simply the utterance of the word, cult, evokes fear and loathing. As a global community we must address head-on the germinating source of these fears, despite their superficial nature.

There has been one driving force in particular that has denigrated and obfuscated any positive appreciation for what cult is, and its great importance to the growth of civilization. Fundamentalism in its various manifestations, whether outside or within organized religion, triggers the fear response to the word, cult. Fundamentalism can be viewed as the simplistic, primitive precept that all must think and believe alike, and in some cases, die if we do not.

Hitler was a master manipulator in pressing his political megalomania, hiding behind carefully selected Teutonic and racial myths, expressing them in a religious context, and landing on murder as the seemingly justifiable final solution to fully express this contrived cult. Bin Laden, too, dismantled the basic tenets of Islam, established a fundamentalist cult bearing just enough similarity to Islam, linked it to hatred (jealousy) of western prosperity, and planted it in the minds of a fear-driven, retrograde desert society, to justify his own greedy grasp for power.

Fundamentalism among Christians fares no better, subscribing to only various literalistic beliefs and dismissing or condescending to any group that doesn't express Christianity in precisely its sectarian way. Likewise, other religions and modern cults set their members apart and above the "unwashed" among whom they live by ascribing to some special truth known and possessed only by them. It is understandable that fundamentalist cults seek insular, cloistered existences, making it easier for their leaders to control the fortunes and fruits of their followers' labors, censoring even their followers' creative thoughts that may stray outside the boundaries of their cult.

"Evolutionary religion makes no provision for change or revision; unlike science, it does not provide for its own progressive correction. Evolved religion commands respect because its followers believe it is The Truth; *'the faith once delivered to the saints' must, in theory, be both final and infallible. The cult resists development because real progress is certain to modify or destroy the cult itself."* [92:3.4] (P. 1006)

Every evolutionary religion, by design or chance, has created a way for those who fear change, diversity, pluralism, even creativity itself, to justify their base materialism, placing themselves in direct opposition to true personal spirituality. By adopting any unchanging set of core beliefs, each religion or individual person sets it/himself against the next one, because the logical extrapolation of any set of unchanging core beliefs perforce suggests that any other set is inadequate or antithetical to the "real" path. But fundamentalism is much worse than even that, for it subtly and/or overtly promotes among its very adherents a growing fear and intolerance of others (and other ideas) outside one's immediate community of believers. It is this innate exclusionary aspect of fundamentalism that destroys any potential for good its

supporters perceive. If it is static, it is forever stuck in partiality, unoriginality, and incompleteness. The idea that everyone must think alike devalues humanity by looking at others (most of the rest of the world) as unsalvageable unless they go along with you—a most unspiritual attitude.

The ceremonies, rituals, and slogans characteristic of a positive and determinedly non-static cult positively express religious, philosophical, and social impulses, securing them from one generation to the next. Conversely, fundamentalism has a deconstructive effect by institutionalizing a delimiting set of beliefs and protecting materialistic, disassociative, anti-social impulses.

"If your religion is a spiritual experience, your object of worship must be the universal spirit reality and ideal of all your spiritualized concepts. All religions based on fear, emotion, tradition, and philosophy can be termed intellectual religions, while those based on true spirit experience can be termed true religions. The object of religious devotion may be material or spiritual, true or false, real or unreal, human or divine. Religions can therefore be either good or evil." [160:5.3] (P. 1780)(paraphrased)

Belief is the foundation of every religious ideal, but to the extent that these beliefs remain static or remain at a level that is not universal (for all), they actually can hold man back from God, even from his fellow man. For example, the idea that man requires an intermediary to make contact with God, a minister, priest, rabbi, guru, has been elevated far above the idea that God dwells within the hearts and minds of all humankind, there 24/7 just to "talk things over." By requiring a believer to act out his religious impulse in the presence of any other human, on a certain day, at a certain time, in a certain place, in a particular sequence, we demean the idea of religion itself.

"While the religion of authority may impart a present feeling of settled security, you pay for such a transient satisfaction the price of the loss of your spiritual freedom and religious liberty... The religion of the spirit leaves you forever free to follow the truth wherever the leadings of the spirit may take you...To honor the God-knowing leaders of the past may indeed be worth while, but why, in so doing, should you sacrifice the supreme experience of human existence: finding God for yourselves and knowing him in your own souls?" [155:6.5,7] (PP . 1731-2)

Static religions and cults damn man for his natural spirit impulses. You're out if you haven't accepted Jesus as your personal savior. You're out if you do not observe the Sabbath. You're out if you do not fast during Ramadan. You're out if you do not believe in the virgin birth. You're out if you sanction and hang onto individuality. You're out if you have not been chosen. You're out, you're out, you're out. All of these exclusions are directed outward from within the static cult of selected core beliefs, and ironically, incriminate the cult or religion being promulgated.

The Urantia Book elucidates this quandary, this tension between set beliefs and inclusive belief systems, in the following paragraphs.

"From the dawn of civilization every appealing movement in social culture or religious advancement has developed a ritual, a symbolic ceremonial. The more this ritual has been an unconscious growth, the stronger it has gripped its devotees. The cult preserved sentiment and satisfied emotion, but it has always been the greatest obstacle to social reconstruction and spiritual progress." [87:7.2] (P. 965)

"Notwithstanding that the cult has always retarded social progress, it is regrettable that so many modern believers in moral standards and spiritual ideals have no adequate symbolism—no cult of mutual support—nothing to belong to. But a religious cult cannot be manufactured; it must grow. And those of no two groups will be identical unless their rituals are arbitrarily standardized by authority."[87:7.3] (P. 965)

"In the past, truth has grown rapidly and expanded freely when the cult has been elastic, the symbolism expansile. Abundant truth and an adjustable cult have favored rapidity of social progression. A meaningless cult vitiates religion when it attempts to supplant philosophy and to enslave reason; a genuine cult grows." [87:7.5] (PP. 965-6)

The one and only cure for fundamentalism, and the only antidote to the negative expressions of cult, is universality, a prerequisite "cult of mutual support." Only universal concepts envelop all of humanity, excluding no one. The basic idea that all men and women are children of one heavenly father is in itself a most revolutionary concept in that it assertively challenges all hatred, intolerance, or urge to control others, while giving comfort to the most downtrodden among us.

"Modern man must find some adequate symbolism for his new and expanding ideas, ideals, and loyalties. This enhanced symbol must arise out of religious living, spiritual experience. And this higher symbolism of a higher civilization must be predicated on the concept of the Fatherhood of God and be pregnant with the mighty ideal of the brotherhood of man." [87:7.6](P. 966)

Having been fortunate enough to be the beneficiaries of the expanded truths found in *The Urantia Book* and elsewhere, we have a duty to those around us, and those to come soon after us, to rescue the word, cult, and reestablish its meaning, free from its baggage. In so doing, we will restore an understanding of the basic ele-

ments of religion and spiritual life in ways that bring God closer to man and man closer to God.

"There is great hope for any church" (any religion, sect, or cult) *"that worships the living God, validates the brotherhood of man, and dares to remove all creedal pressure from its members."*[103:5.12](P. 1135) (with paraphrase)

Part II

Having looked at the current meanings and values imposed on the word, cult, what is the individual, searching for his own answers, to do? Consider that belief and faith are always a matter of free will choice. Tracking the emergence of individual consciousness and its natural, intimate relationship to emerging cults, and religion in general, is a key to understanding for yourself all three: belief, faith, and free will. All three, by man's nature, undergo a lifetime of progressive growth, perfecting evolutionarily, under a unifying, unique personality.

"Religious faith (is) *human belief in spiritual realities and divine values."* [195:7.1](P. 2078)

"The Universal Father never imposes any form of arbitrary recognition, formal worship, or slavish service upon the intelligent will creatures of the universes. The evolutionary inhabitants of the worlds of time and space must of themselves–in their own hearts–recognize, love, and voluntarily worship him . . . The affectionate dedication of the human will to the doing of the Father's will is man's choicest gift to God; in fact, such a consecration of creature will constitutes man's only possible gift of true value to the Paradise Father. In God, man lives, moves, and has his being; there is nothing which man can give to God except this choosing to abide by the Father's will . . ." [1:1.2](P. 22)

States of consciousness can be mapped, despite the poverty of current language and symbology, but mapped nonetheless as three distinct attributes of personality: the unconscious, the conscious, and the superconscious.

Superconsciousness is a consciousness of consciousness, for only man can think about what he is thinking. It is the inborn philosopher in all of us. Superconsciousness is the individual's unique consciousness of divinity comprising the philosopher's leap of faith, recognizing that there is much unseen and unknown. Cult, whether acknowledged or not, represents the cumulative efforts of man to grasp these cosmic secrets.

Plato called this unseen and unknown knowledge "hidden knowledge." The word, apocrypha, also means hidden. More recently, the words, occult and mysticism, have been used as synonyms for attempts to participate in cosmic mysteries. In the pursuit of this hidden knowledge, man has left much evidence of his intimacy with cult and religion, for he has sought nothing less than the actual convergence of the human and divine, and all of it laying patterns of perfection within man's superconsciousness.

Superconsciousness is the very arena of creature-Creator contact where free will, belief, and faith gradually expand. Always will this superconscious reach higher each day toward an ideal, perfecting toward perfection. And, the superconscious does all this even when the conscious mind appears unaware of this inherent, mutual, and driving intent to join man and God; but it becomes superpersonal when it is acknowledged consciously more and more by the mind and heart of its indwelling.

It is somewhat humbling to think of the few tools we have on our own, as we wander through life wondering what the big fuss is about cults and religions. We are born into a world with free will and all the time in the world to exercise it. Once set upon a path of our own making, the enlightened among us commit their free will, their egos, to doing God's will, universal peace on earth and goodwill towards men, truth, beauty, goodness, and LOVE combined.

No personal suffering or cataclysmic life event is required to come to fully embrace the will of God. It's what *The Urantia Book* calls personal "light and life," available on an individual level in the here and now to the receptive personalities unifying among us, and global "Light and Life," to be enjoyed on a planetary level as its citizens worldwide unite along universal spiritual goals. Humankind is so often dominated by the ideal of a far-off perfection, not realizing that, like Jesus the Man, we can experience unbroken spiritual communion, everyday, every moment "light and life." One day, children will be born into a world where they are encouraged to live their lives in communion with the divine. For now, we can actually choose this, and without removing us for day-to-day living on earth, become an active, aware, and integral part of the eventuation of Light and Life as a planetary destiny.

After eons of spiritual growth within a grand universe of progressive attainment in time and space, evolutionary mortals arrive at the center of the Grand Universe having achieved their first endowment of God's perfection...the *"perfection of purpose."*

"'Be you perfect, even as I am perfect.' That is the astounding invitation-command broadcast to the finite children of the worlds of space. The promulgation of that injunction has set all creation astir in the co-operative effort of the celestial beings to assist in bringing about the fulfillment and realization of that tremendous command of the First Great Source and Center." [26:4.5](P. 290)

This first goal of mortal attainment—the personal perfection of one's spiritual purpose—begins the day it is recognized consciously, the dawn of one's "superpersonality." While this is wholly a matter of free will, the God-conscious man enters into a true partnership with God the Father and His manifold eternal-infinite spiritual reality—by far the greatest adventure to be had. This deity adventure comprises the totality of man's evolutionary quest for self-understanding, as expressed in culture and in religion.

While the unconscious and conscious minds serve many of the higher mammals, superconsciousness, a higher level of mind, a higher level of thinking, is unique to humans. Only man can worship and gain wisdom. On the conscious level, man—not God—has proclaimed both popes and street variety cult leaders, yet labors in his superconscious to discover still greater self-knowledge, self-actualization, and self-spiritization.

Only man loves his children's children, distinguishing evidence of his in-born superconsciousness, the gateway to divinity. This wholly human aptitude, to consider one's progeny, or anyone other than himself for that matter, uncovers an unending series of philosophic challenges necessary to resolve if there is ever to be continued growth on any level of consciousness. As he meets these philosophical challenges, one by one, day by day, the expansile mysteries of divinity are expressed before his eyes, in his daily life, especially in his relationships with others.

Gradually all of man's relationships synchronize with his growing, internal, and entirely personal experience of divinity. Man's interior and wholly personal relationship with divine realities is confirmed to all other personalities by the degree of sincere and boundless love he showers on his fellow man. Always is the Fatherhood of God in sync with the brotherhood of all mankind.

With every act, man is empowered to act as God to any of His children, to actualize divine love in time and space, and, thereby, to make ready for a further enlargement of his superconscious—true, and alive, God-consciousness.

This God-like love we give to our fellows is not just run of the mill brotherly love and affection. It is not mere ethical service, but a dynamic form of fatherly love, looking upon one's fellows as God the Parent does, expressing the Divine Affection for all His children. This may sound difficult to do but the reality is that it is the easiest path, the one with least resistance, and the greatest constructive results. God's Love carries a power no mortal can conceptualize, yet any man or woman can wield this power creatively on behalf of his fellows, all according to an individualized, self-obtained God-consciousness. This is the very foundation of the expandable, adjustable "cult of mutual support."

(If you don't believe this, that loving service to your fellow man leads to constructive results and a greater God-consciousness, why not challenge yourself to *pretend* this is true for one week. Satisfaction is guaranteed in 7 days or less!)

Superconsciousness—consciousness of the divine—is a higher level of thought than the merely conscious mind. Superconsciousness enables man to meet deity in its many forms, in its many descriptions confronting daily life. It is a level of mind, which can connect superpersonally with other personalities, human and divine, and can do so in any arena of human choice, in the family, commerce, academe, the media, nations, and the world community-at-large.

Superconsciousness enables man to personalize the spirit that lies within, and we do it through free will choice. While spiritizing our personality, the spirit is eventuating its unique personalization, resulting in a divine soul residing within the human mind, and many say in the heart, of man. Man's intellectual and philosophical grasp of divinity within his superconscious translates and connects the growing personal spirit, the soul, no matter how fledgling, to God.

"Religion is only an exalted humanism until it is made divine by the discovery of the reality of the presence of God in personal experience." [195:10.1](P. 2084)

Evolutionary growth born of personal spiritual experience is as important to God as it is to man's well being. God's nature is sevenfold, one-seventh in reserve for us, all races of humans, to give to the personality of God something precious, an actual part of His growing nature born of our finite spiritual experience. This exclusively experiential spirit growth contributes, one ideal at a time, to the eventuation of one seventh of God's nature, the one-seventh not already infinite-eternal perfect. It is best described as God the Supreme, comprising as it eventually does, the totality of supreme values. This is the motivation for the expandable, adjustable "cult of mutual support."

All of man's finite perfecting throughout the evolving universes of time and space adds up to this actualized, new, original deity personality, The Supreme—truly the Motherhood of God. This one-seventh of God, still under construction in a cosmic sense, comprises the complete marriage of humanity and divinity, in both an individual and a planetary context. These and many other

connections to the divine are the channel markers as man makes his way upward and inward in loving service to his brethren as an expression of his internal, and most personal, relationship with the original divine personality known to those who love Him as God the Father.

Much now depends on our answers to the question of why it is very important at this particular point in our mutual history to better understand each other and at the same time God. More fruitful understanding of each other, creating peace, is one ideal with which every person should be able to agree, no matter where they fall on the humanistic-philosophic-religious/spiritual spectrum. Improving relationships with each other and creating new and peaceful relationships with those we've yet to know is a noble goal from any viewpoint. There are no boundaries or borders that can retard our finding better ways each day to communicate with each other and, thereby, God Himself. The future health of the entire planet needs these answers now. The expansive and ever-changing nature of these types of universal goals lay the cornerstone in the new cult of mutual support–goals and beliefs that grow and expand with greater self-knowledge. Demystifying and redefining cult and religion, we can begin to move forward, salvaging the best of that which is old and good and marrying it to the new, original possibilities we now have at our fingertips throughout the world.

Each person must make life's journey on his own terms. Intellectual understandings day by day upgrade to spiritual certainties as man begins to look upon his fellows with love, each new relationship another opportunity to express his internal relationship with God. In partnership with divinity, man's hopes and desires can all be reconciled in terms of truth, beauty, goodness, and, love. And, each person gets to give God personal evolutionary experience, something He can only receive from us.

Only by discovering for oneself the true meaning of religion and cult will man be successful in cleansing his mind of any subsidiary distractions set upon him by the course of events or the well-meaning doctrines of other humans. By faith, he rises from mere self-understanding to self-actualization and self-spiritualization.

The drive toward melding one's personality with God arrives early and naturally in man's experience. An examination of the roots of philosophy and religion uncover the cults that were foundational to their modern expression. It is interesting to keep in mind that this path from impulse and illusions to a philosophy-based religion is startlingly similar when considering *both* primitive man's first assumptions about the world in which he found himself *and* modern man's primitive beliefs. (The inserted bracketed words in the following quotes speak to this fascinating correlation, and, as a type of literary exercise, allows each of us to recognize our own antecedent or still latent fears which, hopefully, will soon be replaced by a personal cultivation of religious ideals, free of all primitive fear.)

"Primitive religion. *The seminatural and instinctive urge to fear mysterious energies and worship superior forces, chiefly a religion of the physical nature, the religion of fear.*" [155:5.3] (P. 1728)

"*Primitive religion had* [has] *a biologic origin, a natural evolutionary development, aside from moral associations and apart from all spiritual influences. The higher animals have fears but no illusions, hence no religion. Man creates his primitive religions out of his fears and by means of his illusions.*" [85:0.1] (P. 944)

"*Fear, joined with ignorance of natural phenomena, is about to give* [gives] *birth to primitive religion.*" [62:5.4] (P. 708)

"*Early religion was* [is] *wholly intellectual in nature and was* [is] *entirely predicated on associational circumstances. The objects of worship were* [are] *altogether suggestive; they consisted* [consist] *of the things of nature which were* [are] *close at hand, or which loomed* [loom] *large in the commonplace experience of the simple-minded primitive...*[man]." [85:0.2](P. 944)

"*Man's earliest prereligious fear of the forces of nature gradually became* [becomes] *religious as nature became* [becomes] *personalized, spiritized, and eventually deified in human consciousness. Religion of a primitive type was* [is] *therefore a natural biologic consequence of the psychologic inertia of evolving animal minds after such minds had once entertained [entertain] concepts of the supernatural.*" [86:0.2](P. 950)

"*Aside from the natural worship urge, early evolutionary religion had* [has] *its roots of origin in the human experiences of chance–so-called luck, commonplace happenings. . . and this gives certain origin to those experiences which man interprets as* good luck *and* bad luck. *Mischance was* [is] *a great factor in the lives of men and women who lived* [live] *constantly on the ragged edge of a precarious and harassed existence.*" [86:1.1](P. 950)

"*Into this major premise of illusion and ignorance, mortal fear has packed all of the subsequent superstition and religion of primitive peoples. This was man's only religion up to the times of revelation, and today many of the world's races have only this crude religion of evolution.*" [86:6.3] (P. 955)

"*Religion represents man's adjustment to his illusions of the mystery of chance.*" [87:5.2](P. 962)

"*Prayer, as an agency of religion, evolved* [evolves] *from*

previous nonreligious monologue and dialogue expressions. With the attainment of self-consciousness by primitive man there occurred [occurs] *the inevitable corollary of other-consciousness, the dual potential of social response and God recognition."* [91:0.1] (P. 994)

"The simple prayer of faith evidences a mighty evolution in human experience whereby the ancient conversations with the fictitious symbol of the alter ego of primitive religion have become [becomes] *exalted to the level of communion with the spirit of the Infinite and to that of a bona fide consciousness of the reality of the eternal God and Paradise Father of all intelligent creation."* [91:3.4] (P. 997)

"Primitive religion was [is] *largely a material-value consciousness, but civilization elevates religious values, for true religion is the devotion of the self to the service of meaningful and supreme values. As religion evolves, ethics becomes the philosophy of morals, and morality becomes the discipline of self by the standards of highest meanings and supreme values—divine and spiritual ideals. And thus religion becomes a spontaneous and exquisite devotion, the living experience of the loyalty of love."* [92:7.5](P. 1012)

"Religion, as a human experience, ranges from the primitive fear slavery of the evolving savage up to the sublime and magnificent faith liberty of those civilized mortals who are superbly conscious of sonship with the eternal God." [101:0.1] (P. 1104)

"Philosophy transforms that primitive religion which was largely a fairy tale of conscience into a living experience in the ascending values of cosmic reality." [101:7.6] (P. 1114)

The cave man went thoughtlessly through his life, a series of fleeting pleasures and egregious bad luck. When bad things happened, and there were some very bad things happening in this period, he asked himself why. Religion and the cult of religion are here born with man's hope to overcome future bad luck. Modern man, too, can be found in this primitive spiritual state. All evolutionary dogma is built on the fear of bad luck. Even the self-serving humanist will concede that he does good to offset bad fortune.

The cave man clan's shamans were set to work to help individuals and groups avoid bad luck, by supplication and some promised sacrifice to whatever the forces of bad luck could be. Much later, early man awakened to the possibilities of good fortune, as well as the now very familiar bad fortune he was enduring, and his redemptive sacrifices expanded, became more codified, and formed group religious practice. These new entreaties, to the imagined gods of both good luck and bad luck, can be considered one of man's great steps forward in the development of religion-cult, modern philosophy, and, better civilizations.

Today, the religions and cults of our cohorts echo this simplistic, bad-luck-good-luck interpretation of human and divine realities. Man's search for the divine is today and throughout history written in his cults and religions.

These early events set the stage for mankind's march through millennia in search of salvation, a loving union with all truth, beauty, and goodness. These images of primitive religion, a war between good luck and bad luck, just as assuredly map our own interior life antecedent to a sincere search for spiritual values and divine realities. After all these hundreds and thousands of years, people are left in a self-made form of spiritual slavery, just barely removed from this good-luck-and-bad-luck state of mind about divinity—that God surely is nothing more than an inconsistent meter of both good and bad luck, an often wrathful God sitting in judgment of our every action, while quite the opposite is true.

God's salvation is central to man's search for divine truth. To the God-knowing individual it is simply the acceptance of sonship with Him. Yet for many this salvation continues to be held hostage by human intermediaries, evolutionary religions (the religions of us/good and them/unwashed), and every manner of false cult. All offer material superiority and eternal salvation—for a price, for acceptance of their man-made dogma, for a set of rituals assuring survival.

It is the individual himself, who must break free from these profane interruptions, distractions by humans to humans. In this way, today or tomorrow, he may fully embrace divine and sacred realities, to live in partnership with God, one personality with The Personality.

"The cult advances slowly in generation epochs and agelong cycles. But it does move forward. Evolutionary belief...laid the foundation for a philosophy of revealed religion which will eventually destroy the superstition of its origin." [92:3.5] (P. 1006)

Alison Gardner discovered The Urantia Book *in 1970 after hearing excerpts read on the radio. She was a founder of the Connecticut Society, has served on the General Council and as a member of the Education Committee, and is Chair of the Fellowship's Ad Hoc Public Relations Committee. Alison has served as moderator and contributor for the Wrightwood Series. She and her husband, Dan Massey, have two teenage children.*

Religious Practice and the Urantia Revelation

By Byron Belitsos, San Rafael, CA

We reader-believers in *The Urantia Book* sometimes forget that the Urantia revelation is a perfect mystery, a total unknown, to the religious believers and spiritual practitioners around us. Our religious life derives from an unacknowledged revelatory teaching with almost no practical link with the evolutionary religions of the planet. And because we as a religious movement are in our infancy, our religious identity is a deep enigma—even to ourselves. In an odd way, we are both a mystery to ourselves, and to the rest of the world.

We are a revelatory community that has been wrapped for over fifty years in a shroud of mystery and even secrecy. And thus the question arises: Seeing that we are so primitive in our own religious evolution as a group, how do we share the content of our religious life with Christians—or with others who may be practitioners within some other evolutionary religion? When asked, what would you say are the practices or beliefs that constitute the religious life of a *Urantia Book* reader? Is there anything that can be publicly claimed about our "religion"—as distinct from simply restating the content of the revelation itself? Or is this question a purely personal matter of which nothing definitive can be said?

My own observation over a 25-year period tells me that our religious identity is highly fragmented; there is really very little common agreement on this score among *Urantia Book* readers. Indeed, the text itself contains ambiguities that seem to allow for this. The Urantia revelation is vast and multi-sided; it appears to be designed to foster a diversity of beliefs and practices among its adherents, while providing for unifying principles. This rich ambiguity is perhaps one of the revelation's chief strengths. Consider, for example, the openness of the text to creative interpretation, its allowance for religio-cultural differences in understanding, plus its call for religious freedom and discouragement of creedal pressure on believers. Yet this very strength will likely become a source of confusion for new readers in the coming decades, who will confront a "movement" that is divided and fractional not only politically and culturally, but also as a religious body lacking a coherent identity. These factors, and the relative absence of religious leadership in our community, combined with our immaturity as a community, seem to guarantee that the question of our religious identity will for a long while abide as a source of difficulty even for veteran readers.

Religious Practices and Religious Identity

For the purposes of this essay, I will narrow my inquiry to a quest for the central religious practices—rather than beliefs—that may be said to be uniquely derived from the Urantia revelation, and that may possibly be constitutive of our religious identity. Religious practices may be said to derive from one's abiding faith; beliefs are merely mental phenomena. *"Faith...dominates the mode of living....Belief fixates, faith liberates."* [101:8.1,2](P. 1114) Beliefs bind the imagination and too often restrain spontaneity and creativity—which are the lifeblood of devoted and religious living; but practices, daily religious practices, such as sincere service and ceaseless prayer, are substantive. They arise from faith itself—from the foundations of the whole personality—and they make a publicly recognizable impact in the form of discernable fruits of the spirit. They contribute to the soul's growth and to the evolution of the Supreme. Religious practices can further be defined as our conscious attempt to live a devoted and consecrated life with a goal of Adjuster fusion followed by an eternal life of service and God-discovery. Consistent and conscious practice will crystallize in reliable religious habits; but religious practices are nearly meaningless when they are not persistently cultivated. Discovering and doing the will of God requires conscious effort, and to some extent, systematic practice as well as social support.

Assuming that we agree on these definitions, what then are the chief practices, if any, among the highly diverse groups of *Urantia Book* readers? Is it as simple as saying that we are reader-believers of a rather lengthy text, and that our practice is to read and understand it? Or is there anything else one can properly say is the core set of practices of the diverse body of believers? Should we not look to Jesus, as Rodan said we should, to find this answer? But if we look there, what specifically do we find?

This question of spiritual practice and religious identity dogged me from my earliest days as a reader after I found the book in 1974. By coincidence, I was a college student in Chicago in those days, so I had the unique opportunity to attend study groups still containing a

few people from the very earliest group of readers. And I was immediately stunned to discover that this group of veteran readers had no religion as such. The group lacked any of the trappings of a religious organization: there was no spiritual teacher to point out the central beliefs, no minister to lead prayers or rituals of worship, and as far as I could discern, no religious practices by the adherents. The only recurring practice that I could observe was the weekly ritual of reading the text, followed by a group recitation of the same few lines from the text at the end of the meeting.

Over the years it became clear that something was either amiss with this Chicago group, who were otherwise lovely people, or, there was a hidden method to this apparent effort to cultivate a secular demeanor. In later years I sponsored study groups in different places and at different times; yet none of us seemed to acquire a particular religious practice as there was no particular leadership of the Urantia movement that was able or willing to point in this direction. Yet all around me—this being the early 1980s—there were friends and acquaintances who were pursuing spiritual practices in the evolutionary religions. By this time I lived in Boulder, Colorado, where there was a veritable spiritual renaissance going on with the sudden appearance of communities of Buddhists, Sufis, Hindus, and yoga practitioners. Inspired by *The Urantia Book*'s praise of Buddhism, I soon found myself splitting my leisure time with the nascent Tibetan Buddhist community in Boulder, while still attending *Urantia Book* study groups. At least there was a religious practice and a religious identity of sorts among the Buddhists! I'll never forget the day that I ran into a Buddhist in that Boulder group, a committed senior practitioner, who was secretly a fan of the Urantia revelation. But he told me that he had left it behind because the text and the group did not seem to lead to a specific "spiritual practice," a genuine "how-to," that one could actually engage with to grow spiritually.

I have had occasion to live in other areas of the country in the two decades since my time in Boulder. And in time the truth became transparent: by contrast with other religionists I knew, we Urantians were a rather secular lot. How many of us engaged in those specific religious practices that would deepen our God-consciousness? Where was the evangelism that would, like that of the apostles, turn the world upside down? Where was our Spirit of Truth?

It began to dawn on me that we had not yet come into our evolutionary moment—a thought that is rather obvious in retrospect. We had not yet developed a religious culture; our doors were in effect shut to ordinary folks thirsting for truth and righteousness, who needed more than a literary experience. Remember, *"...every new revelation of truth has given rise to a new cult, and even the restatement of the religion of Jesus must develop a new and appropriate symbolism."* [87:7.6](P. 966) But we had not yet developed our *"higher symbolism of a higher civilization."* [87:7.6] (P. 966)

Coping With the Shock of Revelation

Rather, our profile was that of a people who were—much like the apostles in the days before Pentecost—sitting apart from ordinary society in shock and isolation. We were absorbing the trials and trauma of being the human custodians of an epochal revelation, without divine input as to how to manage it. We were that secretive and underground crowd of reader-believers in a new revelation, that epoch-making gift to all of humankind that was ironically hidden away in study groups and in the vaults of the Urantia Foundation. Some of us were actual separatists, caught up in an isolated and elitist celebration of the superiority and sublimity of our beliefs. And being a community that lacked a religious process, the faith dimension in our lives was oddly cut off. Our belief in the literal text was like a bulwark against the development of a progressive and adventurous faith. The tribulation attendant upon the reception of a radical revelation was an understandable excuse for hiding ourselves away in secularism and bureaucracy. For a test of this, just ask yourself what would have happened to the apostles had Jesus not bestowed his Spirit on the day of Pentecost?

Where was the evangelism that would, like that of the apostles, turn the world upside down? Where was our Spirit of Truth?

During those years, here's the best we could do in the meantime: In study groups we sincerely tried to mentally fathom the meaning of that word "faith." We were

careful and thoughtful intellectuals, living a religion of the mind while awkwardly trying to fathom the religion of the spirit. We were adept scholars of the arcane corners of the revelatory text. We loved Jesus in our hearts, and were devoted to the ideals he exalted. We debated questions of religious history or theology in study groups, and yes, we fought over the future of the revelation. But our group prayers were perfunctory, our worship sessions uncomfortable and brief; and not many of us were moved to perform service in the community as individuals or *Urantia Book*-inspired groups, much less launch actual religious institutions or spiritual practice groups based on the revelation.

Lacking the needed socio-religious support and inspiring symbolism, we as a body also tended to eschew mysticism, the practice of the presence of God. True, many of us as individuals did seek this mystic presence. But because we were lacking in the guiding hand and inspiration of religious leaders and teachers of our own, the pursuit was an arduous and isolated one. With no dedicated religious organizations to provide shelter and succor for practice, many of us turned for support to outside religious groups where we kept a low profile in order to keep our mysterious belief system from being discovered. "They would never understand," we whispered to ourselves.

The Default to Secularism

Here we were, then, deprived of the inspiring example of religious leaders or spiritual teachers, or a class of mystics or monastic practitioners, who could assist us in deepening our religious practices through secondary works or other means. Indeed, there was very little overt support for secondary or interpretive works in any context—a condition that to my mind has still not changed. So perhaps this all meant that spiritual practices, and specific cultural and social support for them, were not really germane to our work with the revelation. Some Urantians went so far as to interpret the text to be opposed to the engagement of mystic practices. Without a doubt, we as a movement, and many of us as individuals, were caught up in the creeping secularism of Western society.

As we all know, this default to secularism took its toll on the revelation movement. Lacking inspired evangelists, membership did not grow; youth were not easily attracted. (For example, there is an oft-noted gap in our membership in the generation just behind the boomers.) Further, there was little if any contact with other religionists around us, or with contemporary spiritual movements. We voted to not participate in the World Parliament of Religions in 1993—arguably the most important interfaith meeting in history—on the grounds that we were not a genuine religious group but only a "leavening" movement. We went totally unnoticed by the New Age movement, by theologians of every denomination, by virtually all professors of religion, by all book reviewers, and religious journalists. But then, one might say, perhaps that was a blessing. If any of them researched the Urantia movement, they would find that many local societies were little more than perfunctory administrative operations. They were certainly not inspired platforms of truth-dissemination, able to produce apostles and disciples of Jesus, proliferate interpretive secondary works, and inspire the greater society with works of art or architecture. Instead, our leaders were suing one another.

Our difficulties with conflict resolution were strong evidence of this scourge of secularism. Jesus enshrined a religious practice for dealing with offenses by congregation members upon one another, in his sermon on forgiveness. [159:1.1-6] (PP.1762-4) But fearing overmuch the downside consequences of institutional religion, we had no congregations who could act on this rule! Congregation or not, no existing constitution of any local society or study group that I know of incorporates this healthy and sacred practice for dealing with an errant brother or sister.

Lacking in social support for this practice, individuals who had been hurt or offended by others in a Urantian group had little choice but to turn to strictly worldly methods for resolving the problem—a resort to gossip that sometimes descended into emotional blackmail and ostracism that would lead all too often to splits in study groups and societies and to the flight of many members from participation. In the secular environment of the times, no grouping in the Urantia movement made itself subject to this requirement for resolving conflict. It is thus no surprise that this would eventually lead to the specter of brothers "going to the law against one another." Such phenomena are the most indicting evidence we have of the cost of secularism; our famous divisions and spectacular litigations are the bitter harvest of our inability to make actual religious practices the center of our community life. Let's remember: *"When a group engages in community prayer...they are all made better because of participation....Confession, repentance, and prayer have led individuals, cities, nations, and whole races to mighty efforts of reform and courageous deeds of valorous achievement."* [91:5.2](P. 998)

Fellowship conferences have often been a rare bright spot for such group exercises of worship and the prayer of faith. And in certain pockets, inspired individuals championed the idea of creating religious congregations that were separate from the Urantia societies and study groups. Others have engaged in fruitful interfaith activities. The evolution of the Retreat Network and of an annual Florida conference called Celestial Nights are also most encouraging in this connection.

Reviving the Rich Potentials of Practice

After a generation of secularism, having learned our lesson well, the Urantia movement seems to be on the verge of exchanging a *"religion of the mind"*—i.e., one characterized by *"feelings of authoritative certainty"* in the text of the revelation, to one based on *"the assurances of the spirit of adventurous and progressive faith"* (see the first and second discourses on religion). [155:5&6] (PP. 1728-33)

A wide variety of other religious movements on the world stage that are organized in such a way as to bring specific religious practices into the lives of their adherents have expanded to fill the vacuum left by the near-default of the carriers of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. But the pendulum is now swinging the other way, I believe. Into the religious vacuum in our own community's spiritual life have come new, and I think promising, trends toward a full engagement with religious processes and practices similar to the way that Jesus engaged his followers. I would cite only two of these with which I am personally familiar, although there are many others in this encouraging trend. These two are the controversial Teaching Mission (TM) and the nascent ministry of the evangelist Rob Crickett, now known as RCIM (Rob Crickett International Ministries). I have less direct knowledge of the new organization called the Spiritual Fellowship, founded by Meredith Sprunger, but am encouraged by its ambitious and far-seeing plan to provide suitable institutional religious settings for reader-believers.

Whatever one may think about the Teaching Mission, it is without doubt a movement of people dedicated to consistent and daily spiritual practice. Imagine approaching a TM group to observe it like an anthropologist. Here you will find a diverse collection of individuals and groups that are being led by "celestials" who instruct them in how to engage with spiritual forces through a variety of specific religious practices. As for literature, you would discover thousands of pages of transcripts from a score of locations, mostly focusing on instructions in prayer, worship, meditation (or "stillness") and service. You would observe that each new teacher session would provide yet another tutorial on how to deepen these practices.

This is the practice of stillness—a relaxed, conscious and meditative submergence of the whole personality in the consciousness of divinity.

After participating in a TM group in Oklahoma City, I felt a deep conviction that this phenomenon needed to be documented. In 1998 I published a book that lists many of the central religious practices of the TM: 132 lessons that the coeditor Fred Harris and I believe constitute "the spiritual heart of the Urantia revelation." Yes, this is just one interpretation of the revelation, and this approach is certainly not for everyone, but I believe it is a step in the right direction in that it staunchly emphasizes religious practice. We need many more compendiums like this book, and groups dedicated to religious practices, coming from whatever direction. It is my prayer that many such secondary works will someday flood the shelves of bookstores, articulating the rich potentials for spiritual practices that are contained in the revelation from the standpoint of a practicing group of *Urantia Book*-inspired individuals. It is also my hope that the Fellowship, for its part, will do much more to support the growth of the secondary works community, now that it is publishing its own edition of the revelation text.

Although it may appear so from the outside, the religious practice of the Teaching Mission is not the activity of receiving transmissions from teachers and the dissemination of transcripts. Rather, the "teachers" have consistently and in thousands of teaching situations over the past ten years enshrined a particular daily practice as central. This is the practice of stillness—a relaxed, conscious and meditative submergence of the whole personality in the consciousness of divinity. Without this sacred practice of daily contact with the indwelling spirit, according to the celestial teachers, it is difficult to bear spiritual fruit. Indeed, without such practices that transcend the intellect and go beyond a mentally controlled religion of the mind, it is unlikely that we could ever shake the secular mindset. A variety of TM adherents

have started organizations to promote the practice of the new teachings. The pure essence and real intent of the Teaching Mission, as I understand it, is to produce self-reliant practitioners of a mighty religion in the exalted lineage of our master, Jesus of Nazareth.

And now, the New Zealand-born spiritual teacher Rob Crickett has injected a different set of practices into the still-gaping vacuum left by the secularization of the Urantia movement. His innovative approach shows the diversity of religious expressions that are possible. His teaching on religious practice draws from a wide range of sources: his own deep experiences of sonship, the praise-filled Pentecostal Christian movement in which he has been a participant, and possibly his earlier practices as a Chaan Buddhist monk living in Asian monasteries. A number of new congregations have quickly evolved from the weekend Sonship Conferences that he has been presenting all over the U.S. and even in many foreign countries.

As a founding member of one of these congregations, the Church of Christ Michael of San Rafael, California, I have come to see Rob's work as an important part of the answer to my own prayer for the spiritualization of the Urantia movement and its further expansion out of its elitist isolation. For me, the motivation for outreach is crucial. Rodan is represented as saying: *"If you are not a positive and missionary evangel of your religion, you are self-deceived in that what you call a religion is only a traditional belief or a mere system of intellectual philosophy."* [160:5.3](P. 1780) Sane and spirit-inspired evangelism is a crucial religious practice in itself, as well as a fruit of religious practice.

Our congregation in San Rafael is experimental and progressive. A core group meets weekly to seek divine guidance for the purpose of expanding and improving the religious practice of each individual in the congregation; it also provides moral support for our minister Elianne Obadia and assistant ministers Peter Hayman and Doug Childers as they look toward the next Sunday's service. Peter runs a study group that is sponsored by the church; his mission as leader is to help set the tone for a spiritualized approach to the study of the text, beginning and ending each meeting with singing and prayer, and relating the readings back to the spiritual path of participants. The church is also planning to initiate "home cell groups" to help reinforce the spiritual practice of congregants at the neighborhood level.

The liturgy of our church varies each week, but the emphasis is almost always on singing and prayer as a gateway to silent worship and moments of group praise and thanksgiving. There are readings from the text and a short homily. We immediately follow the service with a time specially set aside for spiritual healing. This is led by the ministers; but it is in essence a refreshing group exercise for experiencing in a variety of ways a sacred energy field of healing and blessing. We invoke and we sense the profound presence of our divine parents.

I cite this as just another instance of the way religious practices are entering the Urantia movement in unprecedented ways. *"There is a real purpose in the socialization of religion."* [99:6.2](P. 1092) But the practices of the religious groups, though indispensable as a support structure for individual spiritual practice, should never substitute for personal religious experience, personal progress toward Adjuster fusion, and the enhancement of individual soul-powers for self-transcending service to humankind. It is my prayer that our little church be little more than a means toward that end.

It all really does come down to the truth-hungry individual standing nakedly before God. As the archetype of our religious practice, we can do no better than to remember that *"the greatest of all methods of problem solving,"* according to Rodan is: *"that which* [Jesus] *so consistently practices... the isolation of worshipful meditation, this habit of going off so frequently by himself to commune with the Father in heaven..."* [160:1.10](P. 1774) It is this sort of consistent religious practice, varying no doubt in accord with the presence of courageous religious leadership, and in line with the culture and the temperament of an individual, that will lead us reader-believers into that efflorescence of service, love, and truth-dissemination that befits the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

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"The characteristic difference between a social occasion and a religious gathering is that in contrast with the secular the religious is pervaded by the atmosphere of communion." [104:4.1] (P. 1133)

The Gift of Tolerance

By Karen Lee Larsen, Goshen, NY

The Urantia Book teaches us that free will is one of the greatest gifts Father has given to all of his creatures. *"No other being, force, creator, or agency in all the wide universe of universes can interfere to any degree with the absolute sovereignty of the mortal free will, as it operates within the realms of choice, regarding the eternal destiny of the personality of the choosing mortal. As pertains to eternal survival, God has decreed the sovereignty of the material and mortal will, and that decree is absolute."* [5:6.8] (P. 71)

With all of this free will available to most of the six billion people on this planet, it is no wonder that acceptance of one another and the choices that are made have caused adversity and chaos since the beginning of our evolution. Man's ego, which seeks acceptance and also craves to do things *his* way, is another factor in the equation. Add the basic animal instinct to "survive" and our challenge is even greater. The human of animal origin has a great adventure ahead of him, but also a long struggle and challenge to overcome his lower nature of human physiological make-up and to adapt and replace some of it with the higher levels of spiritual ideals.

"Forewarn all believers regarding the fringe of conflict which must be traversed by all who pass from the life as it is lived in the flesh to the higher life as it is lived in the spirit. To those who live quite wholly within either realm, there is little conflict or confusion, but all are doomed to experience a more or less uncertainty during the times of transition between the two levels of living. In entering the kingdom, you cannot escape its responsibilities or avoid its obligations, but remember: The gospel yoke is easy and the burden of truth is light." [159:3.7] (P. 1766)

Our birth as a human only affords us an opportunity to reach for eternal life, it does not guarantee it. Our human birth is the first step in an endless set of steps towards spiritual progress and perfection, steps that must be reached by the *choices* we make, ones that can also be altered by the world in which we live and the choices that others make. Thus, must we grow and learn, live and experience this life, and at major crossroads, change the perspective and point of view that we have been taught, conditioned, and made to accept, again reflecting on the truth that these points of view hold. Our journey entails endless choices based on our understanding and comprehension of our basic moral foundations.

"Moral worth cannot be derived from mere repression–obeying the injunction 'Thou shalt not.' Fear and shame are unworthy motivations for religious living. Religion is valid only when it reveals the fatherhood of God and enhances the brotherhood of men.

An effective philosophy of living is formed by a combination of cosmic insight and the total of one's emotional reactions to the social and economic environment. Remember: While inherited urges cannot be fundamentally modified, emotional responses to such urges can be changed; therefore the moral nature can be modified, character can be improved. In the strong character emotional responses are integrated and co-ordinated, and thus is produced a unified personality. Deficient unification weakens the moral nature and engenders unhappiness." [140:4.7,8](P. 1572)

At the very core of this individual mission to rise above our animal natures and begin the ascension to the higher levels of reality, is acceptance of others, which I believe is *first* discovered in and through *tolerance* of all the other people that travel ahead of us, beside us, and behind us. These freewill creatures all have the same desire we do, to "be ye perfect as our father in heaven is perfect." And page 1573 tells us that *"Every mortal really craves to be a complete person,...and such attainment is possible because in the last analysis the 'universe is truly fatherly.'"* [140:4.11] (P. 1573) Alas, the way we all reach for this perfection, this completion, is very different.

I remember as a child learning a prayer. I didn't learn it in church. It hung on the wall of my father's house, and I must have read it a thousand times or more. It reads "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I can not change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." I can recall reading it and wondering what it meant; it would have seemed like a morontia mota if I knew that term then. It was just some words with hidden meanings that my young and inexperienced mind could not comprehend. The only way I came to somewhat of an understanding was by looking at the meaning of each word. Years later this prayer was my saving grace. It gave me the strength to overcome my own human frailties and begin life anew. Today, I finally understand the content of this wise and eternal prayer, which to me, speaks of tolerance, of acceptance, and of seeing the bigger picture beyond my tiny little view.

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I can not change." Hmm, what can't I change? I can't change the way our planet and our history have occurred; I can't change the past. I can't change other people, nor can I change the way they think. I can only plant seeds of truth from my own point of view. The choice to listen and change their thinking, their attitudes, and their ac-

tions is up to them. So as I plant seeds, I must be able to find serenity in knowing that I have done all that I can, and that the final choice is up to the other person. I have found great serenity in realizing I am not accountable to the whole world and its entire people. I have found peace in knowing that although I wish and want for the world to be different, I can only alter it one person at a time, by loving them and being an example of God's love, by coming to know them, their hidden desires and dreams, their motives in life, and why they made the choices they did, and by being a gardener wherever I go. By being tolerant of the choices that others make, I am free from emotional anger. *"Anger is a material manifestation which represents, in a general way, the measure of the failure of the spiritual nature to gain control of the combined intellectual and physical natures. Anger indicates your lack of tolerant brotherly love plus your lack of self-respect and self-control. Anger depletes the health, debases the mind, and handicaps the spirit teacher of man's soul."*[149:4.2] (P. 1673)

"The courage to change the things I can" conveys to me that I am not helpless, nor hopeless, in any situation. I can change things in me. That would be my attitudes, actions, words, thoughts, and deeds. Acceptance and tolerance of other ideas and ideals...I can change me, slowly. I can change my conditioned thinking. I can change the way I see the world around me by my positive hope and undying love for humanity. I can change the presentation of my point of view so it does not offend or harm others. I can always do it with love. I can change the old and rusted ideas of the past set in my mind to a higher level of service and kindness. My selfishness and self-centeredness can be changed by placing others first when their needs are much greater than my own. And even when they aren't.

Has this metamorphosis occurred overnight? Hardly. It is a constant struggle to be courageous and not need to be always right, always the one with the correct point of view. Courage is found in my trust in God, and in knowing that he is always with me, assisting me on my mission. The revelations of growth and change within come occasionally, but they are not as often as I wish they were. That is my humanness, my imperfection. So I keep striving. Today I am beginning to be more tolerant of my own imperfections; thus it makes me realize that other humans *must* have the same struggles that I do. We are all human; we all have much to learn and overcome. This makes the burden lighter and also reinforces the fact that none of us are so different, because we all must grow and learn. We all need greater tolerance and understanding of one another, which is found in learning to love one another.

"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. If you love your fellow men, you must have discovered their values. Jesus loved men so much because he placed such a high value upon them. You can best discover values in your associates by discovering their motivation. If someone irritates you, causes feelings of resentment, you should sympathetically seek to discern his viewpoint, his reasons for such objectionable conduct. If once you understand your neighbor, you will become tolerant, and this tolerance will grow into friendship and ripen into love." [100:4.4] (P. 1098)

"And the wisdom to know the difference." Once I discovered what I could change and what I couldn't change, once I knew my boundaries and my limitations, wisdom began to come easier. There is a saying "everyone has a Higher Power, and I am not it." Allowing this thought to roll around in my mind brought me to a higher level of understanding about this wisdom. I am not accountable to God for making the choices for other people. I am accountable for doing what I can to bear the "fruits of the spirit" in my daily life. Jesus tells us: *"Salvation is the free gift of God, but those who are born of the spirit will immediately begin to show forth the fruits of the spirit in loving service to their fellow creatures. And the fruits of the divine spirit which are yielded in the lives of spirit-born and God-knowing mortals are: loving service, unselfish devotion, courageous loyalty, sincere fairness, enlightened honesty, undying hope, confiding trust, merciful ministry, unfailing goodness, forgiving tolerance, and enduring peace."* [193:2.2] (P. 2054)

I am accountable for striving to reach higher levels of thinking, acting, and living. But we can not forget that there are many that are not ready, some that are not even capable of such spiritual strivings, and still others who choose *not* to seek the love, truth, beauty, and goodness of God. We must of our own free will choose to discover it. *"It is neither tenderness nor altruism to bestow futile sympathy upon degenerated human beings, unsalvable abnormal and inferior mortals. There exist on even the most normal of the evolutionary worlds sufficient differences between individuals and*

Our human birth is the first step in an endless set of steps towards spiritual progress and perfection, steps that must be reached by the choices we make.

between numerous social groups to provide for the full exercise of all those noble traits of altruistic sentiment and unselfish mortal ministry without perpetuating the socially unfit and the morally degenerate strains of evolving humanity. There is abundant opportunity for the exercise of tolerance and the function of altruism in behalf of those unfortunate and needy individuals who have not irretrievably lost their moral heritage and forever destroyed their spiritual birthright." [52:2.12] (P. 592)

I see the world around me, the bickering, the power struggles, the need to control the way others live, learn, and love, and I am reminded of this prayer. I am reminded of the intolerance that has brought us to the present in so many different ways. I can see the pain and suffering that intolerance breeds and steals from those who truly strive to do what they believe is right. My heart often aches for the misery we place on our fellow man because of our own needs and wants to keep things just the way they are. Could we but see the world from another time, another point of view, another life experience, we might begin to know their path, their choices, and their life. And we might come to know why they made the choices they did. Walk a mile in another pair of shoes and the world is a new place. See things from the opposite end and you might even wonder a little more why *you* are the way you are. To question ourselves, our moral foundations of right and wrong, should be an ongoing process of progress. To be seeing things from another point of view is part of our mission, part of our task to know the true motives of one another; without such soul searching, we are dormant, stagnant, and dead. Truth is alive and dynamic, and Jesus tells us *"My Father requires all his children to grow in grace and in a knowledge of the truth."* [176:3.5] (P.1917)

The Spirit of Truth is always guiding us to think, to see the bigger picture, and to reevaluate our ideals. And although our ideals grow by geometric proportion, by our own humanness, we also must accept our shortcomings, in realizing them here and now. Alas, it is the striving to find serenity amidst the chaos and confusion. It is the courage to change whatever we can, about how we view the bigger picture. And it is the wisdom, that awakens us, by and through the knowledge, facts, and spiritual insights that we come to know. It is striving and courage and wisdom, which help us to reach for the highest ideals of love, tolerance, and acceptance of all humanity. *"While divine or spiritual insight is a gift, human wisdom must evolve."* [101:4.2] (P. 1109)

Do we have to like all of it? *No.* In fact, we are told that we should *not* be tolerant of sin and iniquity, but that our personal views should always focus on the individual. Jesus *"...did not teach passive tolerance of wrongdoing. And he made it plain on this afternoon that he approved of the social punishment of evildoers and criminals, and that the civil government must sometimes employ force for the maintenance of social order and in the execution of justice.* [140:8.4] (P. 1579) *"He made it clear that indiscriminate kindness may be blamed for many social evils...In all these matters it was the practice of Jesus always to say, 'Be as wise as serpents but as harmless as doves.' It seemed to be his purpose in all social situations to teach patience, tolerance, and forgiveness."* [140:8.13] (P. 1580)

Should we plant seeds of truth wherever we go? *Yes.* Can we change the way we see all life? *Yes!* Tolerance comes in the form of accepting one another as we are. Tolerance allows love to grow and healing to begin. Tolerance gives each of us the freedom to be as we are, to be as perfect as we are, as imperfect as that may be. Tolerance opens up the hearts and minds of all people in all walks of life to the true reality that God dwells in each of us. See first the child of God in front of you, know that the divine spiritual spark pilots their soul, too, and know serenity, that all is as it should be, that no matter what, the revelation of Jesus shall not fail. God's plan will not be altered into oblivion. All are the faith sons of God. Tolerance is the key to light and life on this planet. And if each new day we are a little more tolerant of one another, think how tolerant we will be in eternity.

In closing, I offer Jesus' ideas on maturity and growth: *"As you grow older in years and more experienced in the affairs of the kingdom, are you becoming more tactful in dealing with troublesome mortals and more tolerant in living with stubborn associates? Tact is the fulcrum of social leverage, and tolerance is the earmark of a great soul. If you possess these rare and charming gifts, as the days pass you will become more alert and expert in your worthy efforts to avoid all unnecessary social misunderstandings. Such wise souls are able to avoid much of the trouble which is certain to be the portion of all who suffer from lack of emotional adjustment, those who refuse to grow up, and those who refuse to grow old gracefully."* [156:5.18] (P: 1740)

He calls them "gifts." Perhaps tolerance is more than just "putting up with"; perhaps tolerance is a gift that, when possessed, allows each of us to be fully open to any and all of the diversity that is a part of each individual life, which is a part of the whole. Perhaps tolerance, being a basic moral foundation of family growth, is to be the first thing we learn for such a reason, perhaps because it takes so long to learn.

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"This world is only a bridge; you may pass over it, but you should not think to build a dwelling place upon it."
[156:2.1] (P. 1735)

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