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Essays by students of *The Urantia Book*

Elisabeth Callahan

Sherry Cathcart Chavis

Gard Jameson

Richard Jernigan

Neal Waldrop



About the Journal

The Journal is produced twice yearly and contains essays, articles and study aids by readers and for readers of *The Urantia Book*. To read current and past issues see our website.

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From the Editor

Richard Jernigan

We didn't really plan for this issue to take on the theme of "Contemplation," but that's how it shaped up. Gard Jameson introduced me to the practice of Centering Prayer at a workshop in 2014, as he has with countless Urantia Book readers for over twenty years. Quite frankly, if you ever have the opportunity to attend one of his workshops or any presentation he makes—do it. He's a masterful and inspirational teacher and conveys his topics with great authority and a deep spirituality.

Inspired by Gard's prompting, I began practicing Centering Prayer daily and learned about its background, and an article on its history and practice evolved. Longtime Urantia Book reader and practitioner of contemplative practices, Elisabeth Callahan, offered valuable feedback. But the thoughts and comments she poured forth in email exchanges were worthy of publishing in and of themselves. She enthusiastically acquiesced to expand her thoughts into an article, and after about 50 pages of writing began to realize she was laying the groundwork for a ten-week Urantia University course, for which she serves as Executive Director. You'll see that her article "The Interior Spiritual Practices of Jesus: Prayer – Meditation – Worship" is the first five parts of her thinking, and the remaining five parts will be published in the next Journal edition.

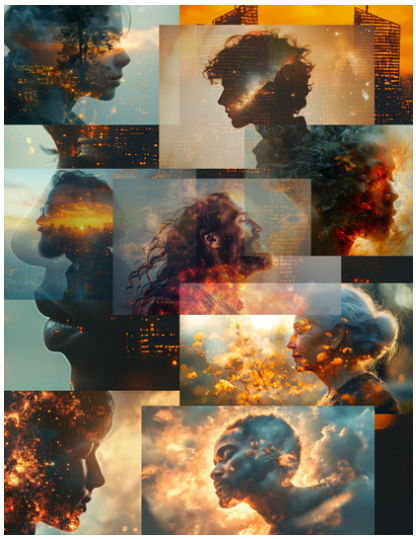
Following my article "On Centering Prayer and The Urantia Book" is an introduction to Centering Prayer by Gard Jameson. We're particularly grateful that he responded to our request to write this concise, personal introduction to the practice. His practice of Centering Prayer grounds him in "dynamic service" manifested in outstanding interfaith work and as co-founder of VMSN.org, the only Free & Charitable Healthcare Clinic in Nevada, which assisted over 14,000 patients last year.

Many of you know Sherry Cathcart Chavis, and she continues the theme of inner growth with her personal article "Living Teachings from the Soul," based on a talk she delivered at International Conference (IC) 2023. Sherry is currently a trustee of Urantia Foundation and demonstrates a loving, steadfast commitment to spiritual growth.

Neal Waldrop's article "Where the Bones are Buried" may strike some readers as bringing up some unpleasant business related to the breakup of Urantia Foundation and Urantia Brotherhood over thirty-five years ago. But rather than "settling old scores" Neal provides wise perspective wrought from years of pondering what's unique about this revelation which became *The Urantia Book*, and what we should consider as we bring these teachings into the world. Particularly intriguing is his synopsis of Christian history and Christianity as a state-sponsored religion, and the core differences between Christianity and some of the initiatives to spread the teachings of *The Urantia Book*.

Finally, Mark Blackham has crafted another Urantia Book-based crossword with which you can test your knowledge and perform a few mind contortions.

Please share your thoughts and opinions with us. We're always interested publishing your feedback and extending the conversation about our articles.


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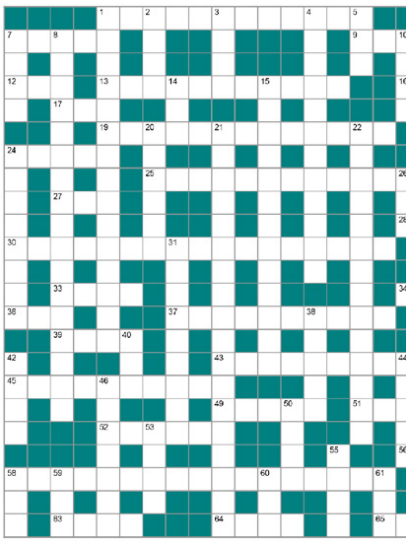

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Mark Blackham, Canada



The Interior Spiritual Practices of Jesus: Prayer – Meditation – Worship

Elisabeth Callahan, USA

Prayer is entirely a personal and spontaneous expression of the attitude of the soul toward the spirit; prayer should be the ***communion*** *of sonship and the expression of fellowship. ...The ideal prayer is a form of spiritual* ***communion*** *which leads to intelligent* ***worship****. 144:2.2 (1618.6) emphasis added*

1. The Unparalleled Religious Life of Jesus

> Of all the extraordinary achievements of Jesus of Nazareth, one of the greatest is reaching the threshold of Adjuster fusion at age thirty-one and a half. We are told that when Jesus "went down into the Jordan to be baptized, he was a mortal of the realm who had attained the pinnacle of human evolutionary ascension in all matters related to the conquest of mind and to self-identification with the spirit." (136:2.2)

This was not a sudden leap in self-mastery. Instead, the Master achieved the state of imminent Adjuster fusion after many long years of progressive transformation of mind and spirit, through many struggles and wide-ranging life experiences.

> On that day in January 26 C.E., following his momentous sojourn on Mount Hermon when he successfully vanquished Satan and Caligastia and "finished the mortal task of achieving the circles of mind-understanding and personality-control" (134:8.4), Jesus "stood in the Jordan... a perfected mortal of the evolutionary worlds of time and space. Perfect synchrony and full communication had become established between the mortal mind of Jesus and the indwelling spirit Adjuster, the divine gift of his Father in Paradise." (136:2.2)

Following this momentous statement, the author then reminds us that all normal beings living on Urantia since the ascension of Michael as supreme Sovereign of Nebadon are indwelt by just such an Adjuster as Jesus had, except that his Adjuster had previously indwelt Machiventa Melchizedek during his emergency mission on Urantia.

A Big Question for Urantia Book students

For many students of *The Urantia Book*, one of the big questions is how the human Jesus attained the threshold of Adjuster fusion in less than 32 years of mortal existence and experience. Other readers may also question the remote possibility of other mortals ever coming close to that achievement in the all-too-brief span of human life.

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The short answer to the big question is well known to students of the Urantia Papers and is found in the book's final paper:

> The secret of his unparalleled religious life was this consciousness of the presence of God; and he attained it by intelligent prayer and sincere worship—unbroken communion with God—and not by leadings, voices, visions, or extraordinary religious practices. 196:0.10 (2088.5)

Notwithstanding this remarkable statement, spiritual communion with God the Universal Father is, by itself, insufficient for completing the seven psychic circles of progressive mortal achievement. Coupled with his faith and unbroken communion with his Father, Jesus reached the brink of Adjuster fusion by wholeheartedly enacting the will of his heavenly Father in the countless material decisions and activities of his challenging daily life.

> Jesus' devotion to the Father's will and the service of man was even more than mortal decision and human determination; it was a wholehearted consecration of himself to such an unreserved bestowal of love. 196:1.1 (2090.2)

From this discussion of Jesus' inner state of readiness for Adjuster fusion, we may infer that the mortal goal of earthly life is to achieve synchrony—continuous temporal alignment and attunement—between the material mind and the indwelling Spirit Adjuster by personality control.

This is another way of saying the goal of mortal beings is to become like God by living the will and way of God in daily existence, starting in this earthly life. The human will and divine will are to become one by self-choosing God's way of living divinely. To live divinely means "choosing to respond to divine leading; sincerely basing the human life on the highest consciousness of truth, beauty, and goodness, and then co-ordinating these qualities of divinity through wisdom, worship, faith, and love." (110:3.7)

This article will examine the *interior* spiritual practices embodied in the secret of Jesus' unparalleled achievement: prayer, meditation, and worship. We will appreciate how the fruits of these divine disciplines were perfectly expressed in his *exterior* life of loving service to everyone he ministered to. In the life of a genuinely religious person, the inner life of communion with God and the outer life of love in active service to others are one dynamic flow like the inhalation and exhalation of the breath.

Altogether, these inner and outer spiritual attitudes, practices, and actions help us achieve the supreme purpose for which we were created by the Paradise Trinity—to find God and become like God, the One who made us.

2. The Purpose of All Spiritual Practice

> *It is like the Persian story of the sage who came to the door of Heaven and knocked. From within the voice of God asked, "Who is there?" and the sage answered, "It is I." "In this House," replied the voice, "there is no room for thee and me." So, the sage went away and spent many years pondering this answer in deep meditation.*
>
> *Returning a second time, the voice asked the same*



question, and again the sage answered, "It is I." The door remained closed. After some years, he returned for the third time, and, at his knocking, the voice once more demanded, "Who is there?" And the sage cried, "It is thyself!" The door was opened.

~ Attributed to various spiritual traditions, including Sufism and Zoroastrianism

The purpose of all spiritual practice is to become like God.

The faith-activated soul has but one goal: finding God, the Universal Father, in Paradise by progressively becoming more like him through ages of transformative experiential living in the time-space universes. One must become like God to find God. The realization of the self as God must fill the consciousness of one who would find God the Father, the Eternal Son, and the Infinite Spirit in Paradise.

> If mortal man is wholeheartedly spiritually motivated, unreservedly consecrated to the doing of the Father's will, then, since he is so certainly and so effectively spiritually endowed by the indwelling and divine Adjuster, there cannot fail to materialize in that individual's experience the sublime consciousness of knowing God and the supernal assurance of surviving for the purpose of finding God by the progressive experience of becoming more and more like him. 5:1:6 (63.4)



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What does it mean to become like God? Surely, it means above all to be filled with God's goodness and love for all his creatures and to become divine love in action. One of the most explicit statements about who God is to us and the whole grand universe of creatures is found in Paper 2:

> Facing the world of personality, God is discovered to be a loving person; facing the spiritual world, he is a personal love; in religious experience he is both. Love identifies the volitional will of God. 2:6.9 (42.1)

When we meditate deeply on the nature of the qualities of God's infinite divine nature, we can further open the door to our inner divine temple—our sacred heart—and *experience* God's bottomless goodness and unceasing love in our inner God-nature. Such contemplative thought can lead to a state of sublime and ineffable worship.

Through constant practice over the years, we can attain a state of God-consciousness, wherein we live, to some extent, in the experience of God's presence most of the time. It is as steady as the rhythm of our breathing.

Enacting the will of God in the flow of our inner and outer spiritual life

Throughout the ages of our personal evolutionary growth toward Godlikeness, our inner Adjuster-fused life is cultivated through faith-trust in God, prayer, meditation, and worship, whose fruits are self-directed outward in a continuous flow of loving service to all God's creatures. These are the techniques of mortal spiritual evolution.

Jesus was a living illustration of faith-trust in God as well as living the will of God. His life of service was a profound demonstration of loving ministry to all people, making real the spiritual family of God. All the goodness and love expressed in our individual and collective lives become an *actualized reality*, contributing to the steady growth of the Supreme Being.

The mortal mind becomes God-conscious through being spirit-taught and eventually spirit-led. (1:3.7) Little by little, by repeatedly choosing to act in ways that reflect God's infinite love, goodness, truth, and beauty, the divine mindedness of the Adjuster suffuses the human intellect. Our material self-consciousness becomes *spiritized*, progressively identified with the indwelling divine spirit, and increasingly identified with the emerging morontia-soul entity. (107:6.2; 111:3.2)

We bring this enlightened God-consciousness into compassionately serving our spiritual sisters and brothers in God's universal family (6:8.1). Living this way makes us increasingly aware of our progressive kinship with the cosmic actuality of the Supreme Being and God's purposes. (110:6.17)

If we desire to achieve personality control over our minds and self-identification with the spirit, then we must exert our divinely bestowed free will to choose how God would act in our place. This requires prayerful thinking, self-examination, meditative reflection on God's nature, and worship of God's goodness, love, and greatness.

3. Practices of the Inner Temple: Prayer, Meditation, and Worship

> Jesus taught his followers that, when they had made their prayers to the Father, they should remain for a time in silent receptivity to afford the indwelling spirit the better opportunity to speak to the listening soul. The spirit of the Father speaks best to man when the human mind is in an attitude of true worship. … **Worship, taught Jesus, makes one increasingly like the being who is worshiped.** Worship is a transforming experience whereby the finite gradually approaches and ultimately attains the presence of the Infinite. 146:2.17 (1641.1) emphasis added

There are many approaches to prayer, meditation, and worship, as well as various ways of defining and interpreting them within different religious and spiritual traditions.

This author honors what each of these means to you, while seeking to distill their meaning and purpose in simple terms congruent with the wisdom of the Urantia teachings.

The effort to impart helpful insights into these spiritual techniques does not mean that one style or approach to spiritual practice is superior or inferior to others. Each of us moves in rhythm with the leadings of our individual Thought Adjusters, the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of Truth.

This article will treat prayer, meditation, and worship as wholly spiritual or religious practices that develop and vitalize our personal relationship with God. Religious practitioners know that prayer, meditation, and worship, when performed with faith-trust in God, are methods of connecting with transcendent realities and becoming God-conscious.

In recent times, ancient meditation practices from the East have been stripped of much of their spiritual dimension when applied to purely psychological and physical goals such as relieving anxiety and lowering one's blood pressure. Nevertheless, even when performed primarily for spiritual reasons, meditation provides numerous health benefits, including sharpened cognitive skills, improved mental health, enhanced immune function, and better focus, attention, and memory.

Simple Definitions of Prayer, Meditation, Contemplation, and Worship

The spiritual practices of Jesus may be defined in uncomplicated terms as:

Prayer is communion with God by talking to God, which can lead to worship.

Meditation is focused thinking about God or sacred concepts, which can lead to worship.

Worship is the inexpressible experience of the soul's longing to love and adore God as a Person, the Universal Father, and resting in God's loving presence.

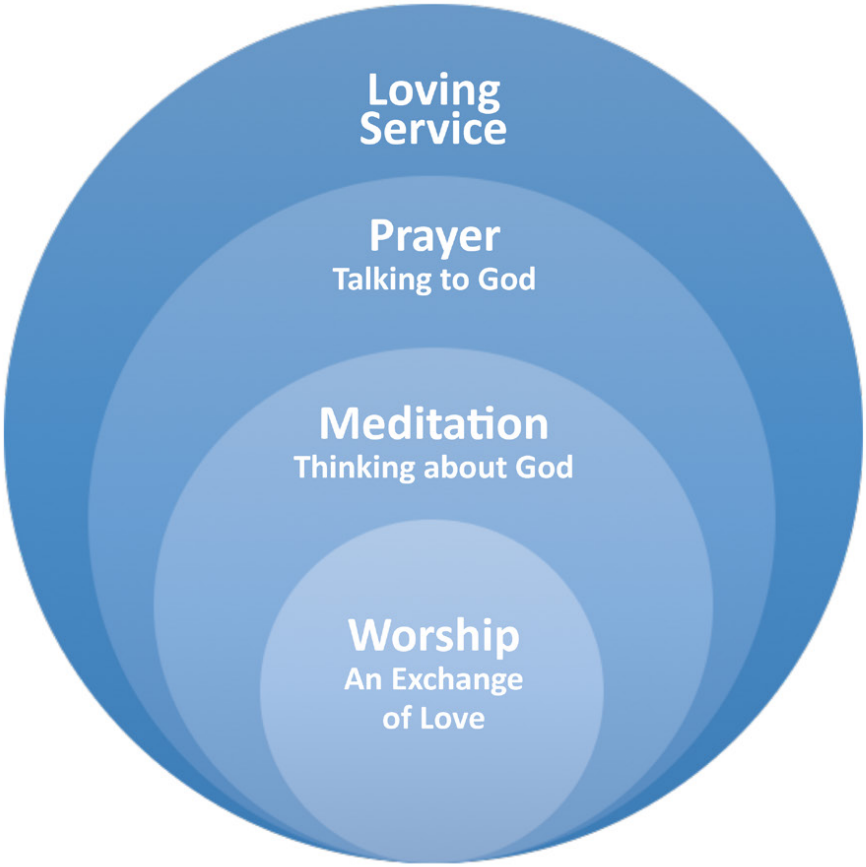
Contemplation conveys the dual meaning of deep reflective thought and transcendent (non-verbal) awareness of God's being and presence.

Inner and Outer Spiritual Practices are Interactive and Complementary

Prayer, meditation, and worship are interrelated, interactional, and ideally complementary. They can be practiced continuously throughout the day. While meditation on God or some aspect of cosmic reality is primarily an intellectual practice, it can also lead to transcendence of thought when it opens the soul to union with God.

and God through the Adjuster. Prayer and worship are acts of relationship meant to bring a person and God closer through an exchange of love and mutual awareness, ultimately leading to union. One prays to God, thinks about God, and worships God as a divine Person.

Their goals are ultimately profound and transformative. The early stages of prayer, meditation, and worship may be simple and subject



Think of these inner and outer spiritual practices as interactional, ongoing, and flowing into one another, as ceaseless as ocean waves.

We can worshipfully serve others in God's love when the ego-consciousness of the self is identified with God in the soul and forgotten in God's presence.

The practice of recollecting the thought of God and maintaining awareness of the divine presence—*being present to the presence of God*—requires a firm intention, focused attention, and the ability to concentrate on the practice in a sustained manner over time, without succumbing to the myriad distractions of the mind and material world. Every person will have their unique experience and *felt* sense of the presence of God.

Each spiritual practice takes place between a person

to frequent distractions, but with regular, sustained practice, they can mature and deepen.

Spiritual practice requires a gentle but concerted effort to focus on God

All three practices require intention, concentration, and devotional *effort* to effectively open humans to communication from God and produce a state of mind that is conducive to worship and receiving God's love.

> By opening the human end of the channel of the God-man communication, mortals make immediately available the ever-flowing stream of divine ministry to the creatures of the worlds. 146:2:4 (1638.4)

The lives of those who have actualized the *presence* of God testify to the importance of sincere, repeated, and persistent efforts to become aware of God's presence within them. We are reminded that Jesus possessed the ability to effectively mobilize all his powers—body, mind, soul, and spirit—to the task at hand, maintaining unbroken communion with God.

> He could concentrate his deep-thinking mind on the one problem which he wished to solve, and this, in connection with his untiring *patience*, enabled him serenely to endure the trials of a difficult mortal existence—to live as if he were "seeing Him who is invisible." 127:3.15 (1400.7)

The Gifts of the Paradise Trinity

> In all our spiritual exertions, we are given immeasurable assistance from the Paradise Trinity in the form of the Thought Adjuster from the Universal Father, the Spirit of Truth from the Creator Son, and the Holy Spirit of the Universe Mother Spirit. These spiritual influences constantly urge us to discover, love, and know God, and to become like God. They function together seamlessly to lead us to higher spiritual truth and consciously realize the faith-fact of sonship with God. (8:5.4; 34:5.7)

We grow through prayerful and worshipful partnership with the Indwelling Thought Adjuster. The more conscious we become of our Adjuster's goals for our eternal destiny, the better we can exert our personal will to unify with God's will for us and all his creatures. In synchronizing our personal will with the Adjuster's premind and prewill to live the way of God, we can move one baby step closer to becoming like the One who made us.

Our task is to develop our capacity to perceive and receive this boundless triple spiritual endowment more fully. We can become more sensitive and attuned to these spiritual influences through prayer, meditation, and worship, learning to recognize the inner prompts and thoughts we receive with our *inner ears and spiritual senses*.

Our spiritual perception (intuition) is enhanced when our mind is relaxed and inner-directed toward God. It need not be said that scrolling through our phone apps is a material distraction that takes us far away from the inner temple where the spirit of God dwells. Would that we share some of the time we spend every day on our devices in a "phone call" to God, who is always happy to hear from us!

> And when such a life of spirit guidance is freely and intelligently accepted, there gradually develops within the human mind a positive consciousness of divine contact and assurance of spirit communion; sooner or later "the Spirit bears witness with your spirit (the Adjuster) that you are a child of God." 34:6.12 (381.6)

4. Some Urantian Perspectives on Prayer Practice

> Jesus said, "Prayer is the sincere and longing look of the child to its spirit Father; it is a psychologic process of exchanging the human will for the divine will. Prayer is a part of the divine plan for making over that which is into that which ought to be." 144:4.9 (1621.8)

Prayer is talking to God. It's as simple as a child confiding in a loving parent. If we don't know how to start the inner conversation with God, all we need to do is think of how we talk to our human parents, or to an older, wiser adult whom we feel loves us unconditionally and whom we trust to listen without judgment to the yearnings of our soul.

We are told in Paper 91 that "Modern man is perplexed by the thought of talking things over with God in a purely personal way" (91:8.8) and usually only calls out to God in emergencies. There's no reason to wait or think it's strange to talk to God privately.

We have every right to talk intimately to God because he is our Father. He has already entrusted a part of Himself to live in us and made it subject to our will.



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This is astounding to contemplate. It should fill us with unspeakable awe and gratitude to have received such a gift of infinite and eternal value. As God lives in us, we live in God in the most holy parent-child relationship.

In the Urantia revelation, we are repeatedly told that our Father in Paradise desires all his children to be in communion with him (5:1.3,5,8). He has given us a direct channel to his omniscient ear and a divine ear to hear him through the Indwelling Spirit. Prayer is that divine means of talking to God.

Communion is a dynamic word, meaning to share or exchange intimate thoughts and feelings with someone, primarily when the exchange occurs on a mental or spiritual level. This exchange of thoughts and feelings with God opens the door to sharing our inner life with him. (111:5.1) Sharing is God-like and enables us to better discern God's will in any situation by discussing things with our loving Parent throughout the day.

Thus, when we read that the secret of Jesus' unparalleled religious life was his consciousness of God's presence in him, which he attained through intelligent prayer and sincere worship—unbroken communion with God—we should realize that Jesus was sharing his intimate thoughts and feelings with his Father in Paradise in all his waking hours. (196:0.10)

Genuine prayer has the power to fuel our spiritual growth, change our attitudes towards Godlikeness, and *spiritize* our material nature through progressive reciprocal spiritual communion with God within us. (1:7.2; 91:8.10)

Prayer ranges from the lowest level of asking God for favors for ourselves, or forgiveness for our wrongs, to higher levels of praying for the welfare of others and expressing awe, love, and gratitude for all our gifts. We should remember that almost all of Jesus' prayers were for the good of his apostles and that "words are irrelevant to prayer; they are merely the intellectual channel in which the river of spiritual

supplication may chance to flow. … God answers the soul's attitude, not the words." (91:8.12)

In Paper 144, we read:

> Jesus taught that effective prayer must be:
>
> 1. Unselfish — not alone for oneself.
>
> 2. Believing — according to faith.
>
> 3. Sincere — honest of heart.
>
> 4. Intelligent — according to light.
>
> 5. Trustful — in submission to the Father's all-wise will.
>
> 144:3.17-23 (1620.15-21)

5. The Long Tradition of Meditation in the West

> *"Through the study of books, one seeks God; by meditation one finds him".*
> *~Saint Padre Pio*

The purpose of meditation as a spiritual practice is to contemplate God's being and the nature of reality, thereby connecting consciously with the Divine.

There is a long tradition of meditation in the Western world, dating back to the ancient Hebrews and the Greeks, centuries before Jesus taught his apostles to pray, meditate, and worship. However, the practice of meditation is far more ancient. Evidence of the oldest known meditation practices in the world is found in the pre-Hindu Indus Valley civilization, which dates to approximately 5,000 to 3,500 BCE.

From its ancient roots in India, meditation spread along the Silk Road, becoming part of the spiritual traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism. Evidence suggests that some Golden Age Greek philosophers, active between the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, may have been influenced by the ancient Vedic yogis and Upanishads.

Christian meditation

There is a long history of Christian meditation practice, dating back to the Desert Fathers and Mothers, who lived from the 3rd to 5th centuries CE. These early Christian monks chose a life of solitude and asceticism in the deserts of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, seeking a deeper relationship with God apart from the world. They devoted themselves to a life of prayer, contemplation, and self-denial, thereby establishing a tradition that greatly influenced the development of Christian monasticism in medieval times, notably among the Benedictines, Irish monastic settlements, and the



Sculpture of Teresa of Avila, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, 1652. Wikimedia Commons

Cistercians, among others.

Following a decline in monasticism in the late Middle Ages, Christian meditation was revived during the 20th century as an ecumenical movement that embraced all Christian traditions. For example, Father Thomas Keating (1923–2018) was inspired deeply by the writings of fellow Trappist monk Thomas Merton to rekindle Christian meditation through the practice of Centering Prayer.

Another pivotal figure in the revival of Christian meditation has been Franciscan priest and spiritual teacher Father Richard Rohr (born 1943), who founded the Center for Action and Contemplation in New Mexico in 1986. To some degree, these new contemplative movements acknowledge the common ground and techniques they share with certain Eastern scriptures and practices, notably Zen Buddhism. Both Eastern and Western contemplative traditions cultivate a state of being beyond ego-consciousness, referred to as God-consciousness in the Urantia tradition, in which the self is identified with God.

The multiple meanings of meditation

The word "meditation" has multiple meanings and interpretations in the 21st century, depending on the individual practitioner's perspective, the spiritual tradition, or the secular organization. Thus, it can serve as a tool for both secular and spiritual practices.

For example, the secular meditator's goal might be cultivating mental clarity, attentiveness, and calmness. In contrast, the religionist's goal is typically an effort to find God, experience God's presence, and relate to God. It can lead to worship, the wordless act of loving and adoring God.

The Latin term *meditatio* translates to "thinking over, contemplation, or dwelling upon." It's the root of "meditation" in English and French. According to historian Gervase Holdaway, the concept of meditatio emerged in the 12th century among French and Italian monks as part of their spiritual practice.

In the sacred practice of Lectio Divina, meaning "divine reading" in Latin, Meditatio is the second step following the slow reading (Lectio) of a passage from Scripture. It involves heartfelt reflection on the words and the passage, as well as what they mean to the practitioner. The third step is *Oratio*, the prayerful response in which the practitioner seeks divine guidance in applying the meaning of the passage to their life. The final step is *Contemplatio*, resting in God's presence and allowing the sacred meaning and value of the passage to fill one's soul.

The distinction between meditation and contemplation in spiritual practice

Although the terms "meditation" and "contemplation" are often used interchangeably, they are distinct practices in the Western Christian tradition. Think of meditation as the thoughtful preparatory step before contemplation and consider both practices on a continuum of awareness that leads to greater insight.

In religious *meditation*, as opposed to secular meditation, a person attempts to focus their thoughts on God or some sacred scripture, using their intellect, imagination, and higher emotions to deepen their understanding of divine or cosmic reality.

In contrast to meditation, the practice of Catholic *contemplation* in the tradition of St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and the contemporary Christian contemplative movement encompasses a wordless state of being characterized by receptivity, stillness and, at its highest level, union with God. The practitioner rests in a state of knowing awareness of God's loving presence without trying to do or achieve anything. This description of contemplation is akin to the meaning of *worship* in the Urantia revelation as a state of divine restfulness or relaxation. (143:7.3; 160:3.1)

Meditation techniques

In the spiritual sense, meditation is not done for self-gain. Instead, it is the act of the self pondering the Source of the self, the nature of divine reality, or the mind itself. Meditation techniques may vary, but with most contemporary religious meditation, a person gently concentrates on a singular object, be it the breath, a sacred scripture, or even the word "God." This helps to anchor the mind's attention, rather than allowing it to bob along like a cork in a



stream.

The practitioner's focus on the object of meditation is often interrupted by the mind's continuous current of thoughts. This is normal. The remedy is to gently return, repeatedly, to the seed thought of one's meditation. This discipline of regularly returning to the object of one's meditation helps the meditator develop their power of concentration and achieve relative mastery of their material mind. Put another way, the practitioner uses their willpower purposively to strengthen their "mental muscle" and ability to direct their mind's focus on the object of their meditation in a sustained manner.

Effective spiritual meditation mobilizes all aspects of the self—body, mind, soul, and spirit—to achieve its ultimate goal of directly experiencing and living in the presence of God. Frequent or daily practice helps form a strong habit in the early stages of practice. It may take many years of intentional and consistent effort, even for the most dedicated practitioner, to reach the state of consciously *feeling* and living in the presence of God.

Religious habits of thinking and acting

Some of the good habits of spiritual living that contribute to developing God-consciousness are highlighted in this remarkable passage from Paper 100 (I have bulleted the list):

> Religious habits of thinking and acting are contributory to the economy of spiritual growth. One can develop religious predispositions toward favorable reaction to spiritual stimuli, a sort of conditioned spiritual reflex. Habits which favor religious growth embrace:
>
> - cultivated sensitivity to divine values,
> - recognition of religious living in others,
> - reflective meditation on cosmic meanings,
> - worshipful problem solving,
> - sharing one's spiritual life with one's fellows,
> - avoidance of selfishness,

- refusal to presume on divine mercy,
- living as in the presence of God.

100:1.8 (1095.3)

Specific references in Part IV of *The Urantia Book* indicate that Jesus developed the habit of meditating in his childhood. One could say that his serious contemplation of how best to care for his family while preparing for his momentous mission contributed to Jesus' progress in developing unbroken communion with his heavenly Father through prayer and meditation.

> At the end of this eleventh year Jesus was a vigorous, well-developed, moderately humorous, and fairly lighthearted youth, but from this year on he was more and more given to peculiar seasons of profound meditation and serious contemplation. He was much given to thinking about how he was to carry out his obligations to his family and at the same time be obedient to the call of his mission to the world. 124:3:10 (1371.3)

We read of other occasions when Jesus withdrew from the affairs of the material world to reflect deeply on his mission.

> Jesus did not go into retirement [after the Baptism] for the purpose of fasting and for the affliction of his soul. …**he desired to be away for a season of quiet meditation so that he could think out the plans and decide upon the procedures for the prosecution of his public labors in behalf of this world and for all other worlds in his local universe.** 136:3:3 (1512.7) emphasis added

The following passage offers a profound insight into the role that meditative thinking plays in uniting the material mind with the Adjuster's mind. When a person willfully directs their mind to focus without distractions on thoughts of God and divine matters, the material currents of the mind and brain are brought into a state of synchrony with the Adjuster's mindedness such that the Adjuster can communicate through its still voice or super-conscious thoughts or pictures to our ordinary consciousness.

> These forty days were the occasion of the final conference between the human and the divine minds, or rather the first real functioning of these two minds as now made one. The results of this momentous season of meditation demonstrated conclusively that the divine mind has triumphantly and spiritually dominated the human intellect. 136:4.4 (1514.5)

A word about mysticism and inner/outer balance

The 1924 edition of Webster's Dictionary defines **mysticism** as "a doctrine of a direct, intimate union of the soul with God through contemplation or ecstasy." It also describes it as "obscure thought or speculation." I like the definition of mysticism found in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

> "Mysticism is best thought of as a constellation of distinctive practices, discourses, texts, institutions, traditions, and experiences aimed at human transformation, variously defined." [https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mysticism/]

Mysticism is a complex field of study that exceeds the scope of this article, but it is necessary to address it because it is mentioned in *The Urantia Book*. The text provides helpful reminders that mysticism, as a component of meditative or contemplative practice, is a valid technique for cultivating awareness of God's presence. Nevertheless, it also issues warnings about its misuse, particularly when a person strays into religious fanaticism and overly engages in hermetic or extreme rituals.

> Mysticism, as the technique of the cultivation of the consciousness of the presence of God, is altogether praiseworthy, but when such practices lead to social isolation and culminate in religious fanaticism, they are all but reprehensible. Altogether too frequently that which the overwrought mystic evaluates as divine inspiration is the uprisings of his own deep mind. 91:7:1 (1000.2)

On the one hand, intensive periods of meditation can provoke upwellings of thoughts, visions, and voices from one's subconscious mind or animal nature that steer a person away from God-consciousness and

may contribute to self-delusions, just as the use of various hallucinogens can.

On the other hand, profound periods of meditation, such as those Jesus engaged in, can lead to self-transcendence, contact with the divine presence, and mystical union with God. They can also result in enduring states of God-consciousness and mental and spiritual transformation, which gradually yield the fruits of the spirit.

To confirm the importance of meditation and worship, we are urged in the closing paragraphs of *The Urantia Book* to make contact with our Thought Adjusters in our earthly lives through a wholehearted and well-balanced effort:

> The great challenge to modern man is to achieve better communication with the divine Monitor that dwells within the human mind. 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 an experience constitutes God-consciousness, an experience mightily confirmative of the pre-existent truth of the religious experience of knowing God. 196:3.34 (2097.2)

We are taught that progressive spiritual transformation results from maintaining a healthy balance between our inner contemplative life and our outer, action-oriented life of loving service to others:

> 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 (1000.2)

The great religious teachers and the prophets of past ages were not extreme mystics. They were God-knowing men and women who best served their God by unselfish ministry to their fellow mortals. Jesus often took his apostles away by themselves for short periods to engage in meditation and prayer, but for the most part he kept them in service-contact with the multitudes. The soul of man requires spiritual exercise as well as spiritual nourishment. 1:7:2 (1000.3) ⌋

This article comprises the first five parts of a ten-part exploration of Jesus' spiritual practices. The remaining segments will be published in the next issue of The Journal.



Elisabeth Callahan is the Executive Director of Urantia University Institute (UUI), an educational organization dedicated to the in-depth study of the Urantia revelation. She trained for many years as a Zen Buddhist monk in the Rinzai and Soto Zen traditions in the 1970s and 1980s. After finding The Urantia Book *in 1984, she realized it was what she had long been seeking and has devoted herself to intensive study of the text since then. Elisabeth serves as a UUI instructor and long-time leader of a weekly Urantia Book study group, combining a background in transpersonal psychology, religious studies, and transformative spiritual practices.*



Prairie Double Rainbow
Chuck Thurston

This photo captures an experience that could not have been planned or made to happen. I'm just grateful that I was there at that moment, and with a friend who suggested we walk out into the field. And we made that decision BEFORE the rainbow appeared! We landed at the perfect spot—and with perfect timing.



On Centering Prayer and *The Urantia Book*

Richard Jernigan, USA

Within the Urantia Book reader community there is a thread of interest in Centering Prayer. While Centering Prayer is not mentioned in *The Urantia Book*, there are many aspects of prayer various revelators provide us that richly speak to the efficacy of this practice.

The practice is deceptively *unextraordinary*: inner silence for about twenty minutes twice daily.

Centering Prayer as a specific, named practice originates with the explorations of three Trappist priests at St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts in the 1960's: Basil Pennington, Thomas Keating, and William Meninger. Observing the burgeoning interest in Eastern contemplative practices, they brought to the forefront customs of meditation and prayer within their own spiritual and religious tradition.

Approaching God through meditative silence is universal, although it's frequently associated with eastern religions.

In *The Bhagavad Gita* Lord Krishna instructs his pupil Arjuna:

> Those who aspire to the state of yoga should seek the Self in inner solitude through meditation. With body and mind controlled they should constantly practice one-pointedness, free from expectations and attachment to material possessions.
>
> Select a clean spot, neither too high nor too low, and seat yourself firmly on a cloth, a deerskin and kusha grass. Then, once seated, strive to still your thoughts. Make your mind one-pointed in meditation, and your heart will be purified. Hold your body, head and neck firmly in a straight line, and keep your eyes from wandering. With all fears dissolved in the peace of the Self and all actions dedicated to Brahman, controlling the mind and fixing it on me, sit in meditation with me as your only goal. With sense and mind constantly controlled through meditation, united with the Self within, an aspirant attains nirvana, the state of abiding joy and peace in me.[1]

1 *The Bhagavad Gita*. Introduction and translation by Eknath Easwaran. Tomalas, California, Nigiri Press, 2007. pp 140-141

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This 2nd century BCE text was a major inspiration to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of Transcendental Meditation.

Buddhism has a vast history of meditative practices, but one of the main concentrations is in found within Zen Buddhism. During their exploratory process of discovering contemplative awareness, Keating, Meninger, and Pennington invited practitioners of eastern religions. Aware of fellow Trappist Thomas Merton's embrace of Zen Buddhism and interreligious dialogue in general, they participated multiple sesshins (week long intensive retreats) conducted by a Zen master at their monastery for nearly a decade. Another of these Trappist's colleagues, former monk Paul Marechal, "had become a TM teacher and offered to instruct us in the practice. Many in the community wanted to experience it."[2]

Setting Centering Prayer apart from eastern religion practices was Keating, Meninger, and Pennington's embrace of *A Cloud of Unknowing*, an anonymous fourteenth century text that parallels eastern contemplative practices, but framed within the Christian theology of that time. Most translations of *A Cloud of Unknowing* include a later text written by this anonymous monk (some historians have postulated the anonymous writer might have been a nun), *The Book of Privy Counseling*. This companion text succinctly describes the practice:

> When you go apart to be alone in prayer, put from your mind everything you have been doing or plan to do. Reject all thoughts, be they good or be they evil. Do not prayer with words unless you are really drawn to this….See that nothing remains in your conscious mind save a naked intent reaching out toward God. Leave it stripped of every particular idea about God (what he is like in himself or in his works) and keep only the simple awareness that he is as he is.[3]

The term "Centering Prayer" was coined by a group of laypeople during a retreat in the mid-1970's led by Basil Pennington. According to Thomas Keating:

> Fr. Basil gave the first retreat to a group of provincials, both men and women, of various congregations at a large retreat house in Connecticut. It was they who suggested the term "Centering Prayer" to describe the practice. The term may have come from their reading of Thomas Merton, who used the term in his writings.[4]

Within the Urantia Book reader community are multiple practitioners of Centering Prayer or similar forms of meditation. Gard Jameson is certainly the evangelist of the practice, and has conducted numerous workshops since the 1990's. I attended one of his workshops at a Urantia Book conference held in Arlington, Texas in 2014, and have been a continuous daily practitioner since (see Gard's article in this edition of the Journal, "What is Worship? An Introduction to Centering Prayer").

For a reader of *The Urantia Book*, the term Centering Prayer may be a misnomer, as the practice is closer to the text's references to *worship*:

> Worship is for its own sake; prayer embodies a self- or creature-interest element; that is the great difference between worship and prayer. There is absolutely no self-request or other element of personal interest in true worship; we simply worship God for what we comprehend him to be. Worship asks nothing and expects nothing for the worshiper. We do not worship the Father because of anything we may derive from such veneration; we render such devotion and engage in such worship as a natural and spontaneous reaction to the recognition of the Father's matchless personality and because of his lovable nature and adorable attributes. 5:3.3 (65.5)

The practice of centering prayer aligns with this definition of worship. In Centering Prayer, as in other contemplative practices, one sits quietly and comfortably for a set period of time—twenty minutes is common—and attempts to suspend all thinking. A word is often used to "re-center" the practitioner.

2 Keating, Thomas. *Intimacy With God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2017.) (xi-xii)

3 *The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counsel*. Translation by William Johnston. New York, Random House, 1973. pp 137-138

4 Keating P. xviii

Referring again to the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*:

> If you want to gather all your desire into one simple word that the mind can easily retain, choose a short word rather than a long one. A one-syllable word such as "God" or "love" is best. But choose one that is meaningful to you. Then fix it in your mind so that it will remain there come what may. This word will be your defense in conflict and in peace. Use it to beat upon the cloud of darkness above you and subdue all distractions, consigning them to the cloud of forgetting beneath you.[5]

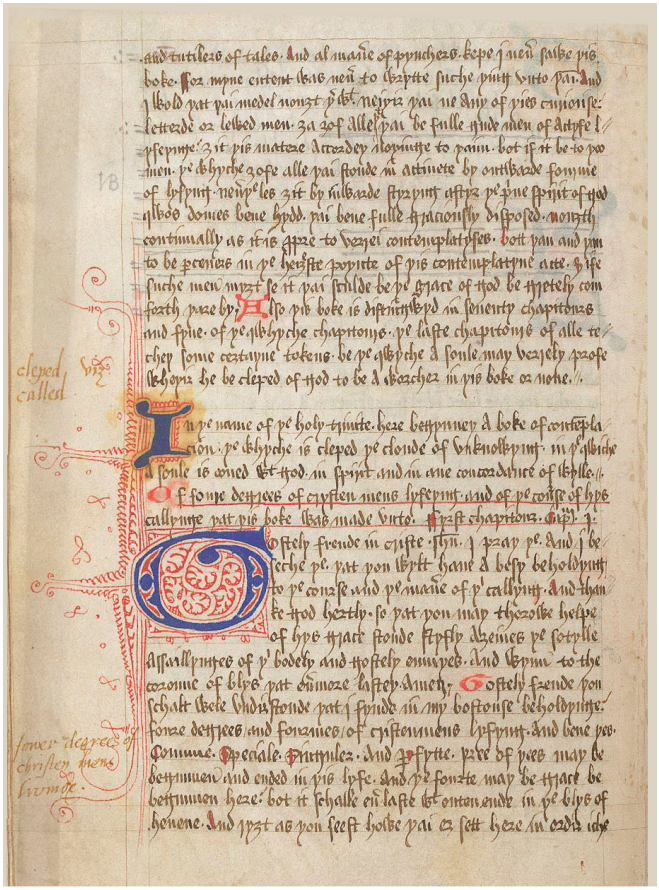
This notion of the "cloud of forgetting" is essential. During your session you are attempting to empty your mind of all thoughts. Anyone who engages in Centering Prayer knows that there is a constant tendency to begin "thinking." In fact, the practice of Centering Prayer develops an awareness of how much you are constantly in thought: planning, remembering, imagining, judging, interpreting, fretting, regretting, arguing. The great beauty of Centering Prayer is you do begin to develop an ability to genuinely clear your mind, while being 100% actively awake and conscious. This is what Cynthia Bourgeault in her in-depth study *The Heart of Centering Prayer* refers to as "emptying," and specifically ties into the "emptying" Jesus made in coming to this world, and in his death on the cross.[6] The Greek word for this "emptying" is kenosis (κένωσις), the word used in this passage from Philippians:

> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **but emptied himself**, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Philippians 2:5-8 (emphasis added)

As Urantia Book readers we can appreciate the deep "emptying" Jesus volunteered to do by appearing on our world as a helpless babe. He arrived with no consciousness of his vast life as Michael of Nebadon, and only slowly regained consciousness of this pre-existence as he grew from infancy to late childhood.

When we practice Centering Prayer, we attempt to go into something of a "reset" of our consciousness, placing one's constant train of thought into the "cloud of forgetting," and embracing that vast realm of reality of which, if we're honest with ourselves, we know nothing: "the cloud of unknowing."

As Urantia Book readers, we may succumb to the pride of thinking that we know many things about God, heaven, and the universe. But Centering Prayer is an attempt to forget all that. Yes, all that we think we *know* about God we humbly place into that realm of the "cloud of forgetting." One sits in silence for 20 minutes or so, not only closing off one's regular inner chatter, but also all the things we *think* we know about



First page from early Middle English edition of *A Cloud of Unknowing*. *c. 1450* Wikimedia Commons

5 *The Cloud of Unknowing* p. 48
6 Bourgeault, Cynthia. The Heart of Centering Prayer. Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Press, 2016. p. 33.

God and Jesus, and truth, beauty, and goodness. We sit in silence. And *let God be God*. As mentioned earlier from *The Cloud of Unknowing*: "Reject all thoughts, be they good or be they evil…stripped of every particular idea about God (what he is like in himself or in his works) and keep only the simple awareness that he is as he is."

As one practices Centering Prayer (or an equivalent contemplative practice) there is a gradual ability to attain a condition in which one is able to put away thinking and sit quietly in a state of simply "being with God." This may be but a few seconds out of many prayer sessions, or sustained over several minutes in a single session. At least this has been my experience. And in my experience, it occurs as a result of a certain conscious "consecration of will," (111:5.5) and a certain humility to the reality of God.

In Paper 100's section on "Conversion and Mysticism," a Melchizedek of Nebadon speaks to the "mystical state": when it is an embrace of true spiritual connection—and when it is not. He expresses caution:

> There is great danger associated with the habitual practice of religious daydreaming; mysticism may become a technique of reality avoidance, albeit it has sometimes been a means of genuine spiritual communion. Short seasons of retreat from the busy scenes of life may not be seriously dangerous, but prolonged isolation of personality is most undesirable. Under no circumstances should the trancelike state of visionary consciousness be cultivated as a religious experience. 100:5.8 (1099.6)

Centering Prayer can be a vehicle for "genuine spiritual communion"; it is a "short season of retreat from the busy scenes of life"; and it is not a "trancelike state of visionary consciousness."

This last item is critical and one to which I've given much thought, and have received input from other practitioners of Centering Prayer and other meditative practices. Urantia Book reader Elisabeth Callahan and a practitioner of Zen meditative awareness (zazen) since the late 1970's offers this:

> Regarding the meaning of a "trancelike state," it's easy to understand why the Melchizedek



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of Nebadon warns against it, and why we're told elsewhere that it is spiritual thinking that leads us to God. The 1930 Oxford English dictionary describes a trance as an unconscious or insensible condition; "a swoon; a faint; a state characterized by a more or less prolonged suspension of consciousness and inertness to a stimulus; a cataleptic or hypnotic condition; and an intermediate state between sleeping and waking."

Such a state does not bring us to God! It is more like a **delta brain state** which is most common during deep, dreamless sleep, but which can also occur during profoundly deep meditation. However, such a brain state derails us from an intimate personal encounter with the indwelling Spirit of God because the self is not conscious.

I would say a worshipful state correlates with the **theta brain state**, which is associated with creativity, intuition, and problem-solving (think worshipful problem-solving!). The theta brain state is also correlated with meditation, prayer, and spiritual awareness. The meditator is at once awake, alert, and relaxed, able to consciously encounter and worship the Spirit of God within.

Although the study of brainwaves like delta, theta and gamma can provide helpful insights into the neural processes underlying prayer and contemplation and how they can facilitate a calm mind and enhanced sense of peace and well-being, it's important to remember that brainwaves are merely a physical measurement of what is essentially a religious experience involving mindal and spiritual levels of reality – God-consciousness.

My experience of coming to a state of deep focus is not a "trance-like condition," as it can be dismissed at will. In fact, it requires a certain suspended but active concentration to attain. There definitely can be a sense of euphoria when attaining that state, but to call that a "trance" is misleading, partly because of the efforts required to go into that state: humility and patience for me, the *humility* of dismissing one's thoughts that continuously come forth when one sits quietly. And *patience* with the blank nothingness, that seems somewhat contrived, until one accesses the "space." I'm no expert on any of this but those are a couple of my personal observations.

In Paper 101 we read that "It is your thoughts, not your feelings that lead you Godward." (101:1.3) "Thoughtfulness" is key to doing Centering Prayer. It is a conscious activity. It also recalls another statement which may seem contradictory to this:

> Religion must continually labor under a paradoxical necessity: the necessity of making effective use of thought while at the same time **discounting the spiritual serviceableness of all thinking**. 102:3.1 (1121.3) emphasis added

This "paradoxical necessity" is confronted and experienced within Centering Prayer. A thoughtful consecration of will initiates one's Centering Prayer session, but there is an experience which can occur during the session in which *thinking* is counterproductive of a deep, suspended period of spiritual communion. The best comparison I can summon is that of surfing. I'm not a surfer, but I can imagine that moment of serene balance as one rides a wave in which "thinking" can be antagonistic to maintaining that exquisite balance between body, board, and wave. In these moments during Centering Prayer, the struggle to "fight off" intruding thoughts ceases. The sense of communion, connection, whatever one chooses to call it, takes preference over one's desire to be thinking, interpreting, analyzing. It is a peace "which passes all understanding." Perhaps this is the state of being in Hinduism called Samadhi. It's a gift brought about through a certain unpretentious humility, *love* that "asks nothing and expects nothing."

Technique

The practice of Centering Prayer is personal and adaptable to one's preferences. I offer my experience with the practice only as a suggestion.

A quiet space. Particularly in the beginning it is critical to find a quiet space with minimal distractions. Doors closing and the murmur of people in other rooms can be de-focusing. Sometimes I practice Centering Prayer


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on my back porch, and I've learned to be able to ignore distant traffic, birds singing, our chickens clucking, and jets passing overhead. But that has taken some time to properly ignore. Lately there has been nearby construction with heavy equipment, so I've taken my practice back inside to a quiet room. I definitely do not recommend music or artificially generated noise.

Breathing. Basic to Centering Prayer is establishing a pace of breathing that provides the most calmness. My preference is about eight seconds of inhaling and eight seconds of exhaling. Some people may want to do shorter breaths. It is my recommendation to establish a pattern of breathing and then try to forget it—allow it to occur more or less unconsciously.

Posture. I don't believe Centering Prayer is about "extraordinary practices." I prefer a straight back chair with a comfortable seat. I sit feet flat to the floor with palms resting on my thighs. If I get an itch I scratch it. If my seat feels a little uncomfortable I adjust. Discomfort can be a distraction, and Centering Prayer is not a test of physical endurance; it is about focusing one's mind.

A centering word. As mentioned earlier, the writer of *A Cloud of Unknowing* recommends a simple word to use when you've found thoughts intruding and your mind wandering. The writer recommends "God" or "love," although I've heard of others using "light," "flame," "peace," "silence," etc.

Time. I do twenty minutes each morning, and am trying to add a twenty-minute session in the late afternoon. Twenty minutes is fairly standard for many practitioners. Less may not be too satisfying, and more is good on occasion.

Preparation. I like to read a section from *The Urantia Book* before I start my timer. Anything particularly inspirational to you is a good way to prepare for your session.

Group Centering Prayer. I've participated in many group Centering Prayer sessions. The overall inner experience is no different in my opinion, but group sessions are especially helpful for beginning practitioners, and for comparing experiences.

> Doing the will of God is nothing more nor less than an exhibition of creature willingness to share the inner with God—with the very God who has made such an inner life of meaning-value possible. 111:5.1 (1221.2)

This powerful statement from Paper 111 "The Adjuster and the Soul" is striking in its simplicity. And Centering Prayer is one way to "share the inner life with God." It's a profound respite for both good times and challenging times.

And just maybe, this practice can be a way to encounter "a religious experience so personal and so sublime that it could be realized and expressed only by 'feelings that lie too deep for words.'" (99:5.9)



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What is Worship? An Introduction to Centering Prayer

Gard Jameson, USA

The worship experience consists in the sublime attempt of the betrothed Adjuster to communicate to the divine Father the inexpressible longings and the unutterable aspirations of the human soul —the conjoint creation of the God-seeking mortal mind and the God-revealing immortal Adjuster. Worship is, therefore, the act of the material mind's assenting to the attempt of its spiritualizing self, under the guidance of the associated spirit, to communicate with God as a faith son of the Universal Father. 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. True worship, in the last analysis, becomes an experience realized on four cosmic levels: the intellectual, the morontial, the spiritual, and the personal—the consciousness of mind, soul, and spirit, and their unification in personality.
5:3.8 (66.4)

The above quote provides the clearest expression of "the worship experience" that I have found in the revelation of *The Urantia Book*. My personal journey toward that experience began in 1972 when I learned Transcendental Meditation (TM) as a college freshman, and spent a summer at Humboldt State University in Northern California, listening to talks by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the nature of consciousness, and meditating a lot! It was at that event that a friend and I asked Maharishi about *The Urantia Book*. His response: "The world is not yet ready for this book." Meditation opened my mind to the universe of consciousness and its levels of progressive attainment, and the realization that progress on this planet requires each of us to take responsibility to "advance the borders of self-consciousness." (196:3.34)

About 10 years later, I became familiar with the work of Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating who were teaching Centering Prayer. I quickly realized that Centering Prayer was more in alignment with the revelation's understanding of "worship" than TM, because of the "personal" dimension. "Personality, in the supreme sense, is the revelation of God to the universe of universes." (1:5.13)

Centering Prayer draws upon an ancient spiritual tradition known as "Lectio Divina," that suggests that there are four centers of intelligence within the human personality: the heart, the mind, the body, and the soul, addressed by four levels of prayer and four yogas in the traditions of India. This understanding has been supported by modern neuroscience, biology, and psychology. Each center of intelligence has a unique role to play in the discovery of reality, even absolute reality. For purposes of this article, I shall focus upon the contemplative level of the soul and its relation to God through worship.

Centering prayer is a method which does exactly what the above quote suggests is the approach to the personal spiritual experience of God through worship. The mind consents, the immortal soul craves and initiates worship, the Indwelling Presence of God conducts that worship in behalf of the mortal mind and the evolving immortal soul.

There are four simple steps (one can imagine that God did not want the approach to be complicated):

Choosing a sacred word (love, peace, glory) as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's Presence and Action within.

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.

When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.

At the end of the prayer period (usually 20 minutes), remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

When I conclude my time of worship (centering prayer), I take that time to pray for others using what is called Loving Kindness Meditation (LKM), to pray for the wellbeing of others, family, friends, students, teachers, co-workers, the people of the day, people with whom there may be tension, people who are suffering, and people who have made the transition to the next level of existence. For me, it is a lovely way to commence and conclude the day. I worship at least twice a day, and sometimes more, being aware of the divine presence more and more on a moment-to-moment basis. Occasionally, I take a retreat (a vacation with God) wherein I practice many times a day, dwelling in the Divine Presence, allowing the Furnace of that LOVE to heal the wounds of a life time, and to transform my soul.

What does transformation look like? It is a movement from being acquainted, to friendliness, to abiding friendship, to eventual union (fusion) with God. Like any relationship, it requires time, intention, and attention. When I miss my worship time, I can feel the consequences, dysregulation of the emotions, a bit of confusion and distress. When I take the time daily to worship, I can feel the consequences, a sense of Divine Presence, all the time, the realization of fellowship with what is most real, warm and tenderheartedness toward creation and all beings. I have come to appreciate that both healing and transformation is the Action of God within.

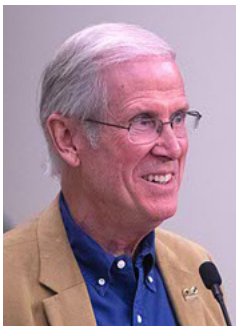
Such healing and transformation continues throughout a lifetime!

Centering prayer, worship, is a process of interior transformation, a conversation initiated by God and leading, if we consent, to friendship, and eventually, divine union. Our perspective on reality, on events and relationships, changes in this process. A restructuring of consciousness takes place, empowering us to perceive, relate, and respond with increasing sensitivity to the divine presence. Our capacity for receiving and giving divine love grows, our capacity to be compassionate and to foster compassion enhances our ability to encourage hope in a world that is confused, distressed, and craving hope.

What I can report is that the journey of healing and transformation is a lifetime project!

What I can report is that the experience of assurance grows and grows, with a sense of awe, the experience of wonder and amazement, everywhere I turn.

Wishing you well in your journey toward the Divine Unconditional LOVE that abides, even now, within you!



GARD JAMESON *has been a trustee for Urantia Foundation for over 25 years. He serves on the board The Charter for Compassion, the Children's Advocacy Alliance, and the Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada. He is the Founder of CompassionateLV.org, and Co-Founder of VMSN.org, the only Free & Charitable Healthcare Clinic in Nevada, serving over 14,000 last year. He is the Founder of SpiritOfUbuntu.US, along with Pato Banton, serving three nations in Africa with Education, Healthcare, Music, Gardens, Play, Social Justice, and Spirituality.*

The Compassionate Gardens of Boulder City, Nevada.
"The Garden is the soil of Love, Compassion, and Hope."





Living the Teachings from the Soul

Sherry Cathcart Chavis, USA

As I share my personal understanding of spiritual living, I invite you to hold this quote in mind:

> "…and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength." 174:4.2 (1901.2)

The question is: what does it look like to live from the soul? And what does it mean to really live?

Practically everything we need to know about the ideal life was beautifully demonstrated by Jesus while on earth, and Rodan, the philosopher of Alexandria, lays out a beautiful case for purposeful living based on higher realities.

The thrust of Rodan's perspective is that mortal life provides us with an opportunity to convert our natural, human urges into a refined social and artistic practice, challenging us to elevate our desires for self (self-gratification, self-perpetuation, and self-maintenance) to higher longings that will fulfill us everlastingly beyond the "simple urges of living."

Rodan cautions us against the temptations of material wealth, social status, and power *if these hinder spiritual growth*. He directs us towards spiritual and intellectual maturity, surrendering transient desires for eternal goals. Leading a fulfilled and purposeful life involves balancing our material needs, spiritual pursuits, individual freedom, and responsibilities to our brothers and sisters.

He encourages us to embark on a transformative journey of self-discovery, self-mastery, and spiritual growth. Rodan invites us to pursue the religion of the ideal, where we may be empowered to embody love, compassion, and service, aligning our actions and values with divine purpose.

The courage to transform and a hunger for righteousness offer boundless possibilities for spiritual growth and deep love and connection to our brothers and sisters. I was dissatisfied with life, as I pursued it like most humans—completely focused on material pursuits. But that way left me with emptiness—nothing seemed to fill me up.

As we know worship and prayer are fundamental, Rodan states, to living artfully. Only through daily communion with the Father are we empowered to live artfully.

Related to this shift of living with divine purpose rather than selfishly, it has taken me many years to recognize in my mind and heart what my soul had long ago experienced and internalized: While I sat one Saturday morning with my classmates at our graduation ceremony at Duke University, I was overwhelmed with thanksgiving. I remember

Hibuscus, geranium, and dahlia. Adobe Stock.

that day because, for one, Oprah was there! I saw her pull up to the stadium while we soon-to-be graduates waited for the processional to begin.

My gratitude to the Father in heaven for the opportunity to overcome some personal barriers, which enabled me to complete a graduate degree, caused me to reflect deeply at that moment. The next day, I thought about the ceremony and Oprah and realized I should have paid more attention to her message. So I called my mother—what was Oprah's message? What do you remember? "I have no idea," she said. "I only remember what you



said yesterday. The three of us were walking to the car, and you said, Mom, I've made a decision. I've decided to prove by my life that love is the greatest thing in the universe.' "Never mind about Oprah," Mom continued. "I will never forget what you said." This was 14 years ago.

We are called to strive for higher ideals and ideas—not to live just for ourselves. This choice-decision is, like other decisions of spiritual import, one that takes *practice* to effect and time to recognize that what the "true son desires and the infinite Father wills IS." (146:2.7)

The ideal life is a life of loving service.

Do you remember the quote? "… love the Lord your God with all your heart and *with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength*."

Let us now turn to the teachings.

On Teachings

The Urantia Book contains countless facts and religious truths, integrated in a manner designed to emphasize the spiritual values contained therein. Each personality responds to these divine values uniquely; once internalized, we express these values uniquely.

One teaching that especially resonates with me, especially since it caused me such confusion early on, is "The Invitation." On the first page of Paper 1, we're told that the Universal Father desires to help us "become in reality and eternally the perfected sons of God" [Paper 1:0:6]. The perfection mandate—"Be you perfect as I am perfect."

Our Father calls us to become one with him, to allow him to become the hero of our lives. This partnership with the Father and our journey toward spiritual completion propels us to grow and progress, slowly acquiring divine love's nature and character attributes as it is expressed through goodness, truth, and beauty.

But *how* do we live out this teaching and align ourselves wholeheartedly with the Father's will? Let us consider the example of the human Jesus. Even at age 6, Jesus responded to the divine Spirit's prompts by seeking personal communion with the Father, craving intimate contact with the Heavenly Father beyond formal family prayers. To become like the Father, we, too, must genuinely thirst and hunger for him, desiring him above all else.

To do the Father's will, we must wholeheartedly dedicate our human wills to aligning with his divine plan. We embark on a transformative journey by subordinating our desires, urges, needs, and wants to the Father's way, trusting in his guidance.

Sincerely desiring to do the Father's will holds cosmic significance; each decision to do the Father's

will opens the door to unlocking our spiritual potential and shaping us into spiritual characters.

Regardless of how we come to the Father, the question remains: Do we *love the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our souls, with all our minds and with all our strengths?*"

Lastly, let us turn our attention to the soul.

On Soul

Some weeks ago, as I was watering and pruning my flowers, I noted the various stages of growth of each flower; my dahlias are enormous, with giant flowering heads of off-white; my hibiscuses are glorious reds, with mid-size blooms; the geraniums are hearty and constantly blooming.

As I thought about what needed to be done for each plant, an insight came: each flower is a unique expression of its best self, thriving when it is uniquely tended to. Likewise, you and I have developed a soul uniquely formed as a product of environment, personal circumstances, and personal desires, all of which shapes their growth. Each soul, like each personality, is a unique expression—never to be duplicated anywhere, at any time, ever in all the universe.

Some time ago, a renowned entertainer passed away suddenly. As my daughter and I spoke on the phone and expressed our respective sorrow and joy about the singer's gifts that thrilled the world, I recall Erica asking me, "Mom do you know what he was doing on the stage, what he was actually doing when he performed?" She said, "I think he was praying." And I agreed; he was expressing his adoration for God. I was stunned at the insight of this twenty-something. She experienced this artistry as "a gift of thanksgiving to God himself." I have always remembered this. Wherever you and I go, our souls show up. Whatever we say, do, think, and feel, our souls express themselves. These expressions are unconscious manifestations because they represent values we have internalized—that have become part of us. Nothing can come out of us that has not first been inside us.



And yet, we are entirely unaware, as unaware as the gardenia is incapable of appreciating its splendid scent until we have become conscious of the moral idea aligned with that divine value.

As Erica's insight revealed, some of us are aware of what we see. I often think about what Steve Dreier said in one of his talks—that some people looked at Jesus and kept on going—nothing to see here—while others looked at Jesus and *couldn't take their eyes off him.*

The revelators define the soul in the Foreword:

> The soul of man is an experiential acquirement. As a mortal creature chooses to "do the will of the Father in heaven," the indwelling Spirit [Thought Adjuster] becomes the **Father** of a *new reality* in human experience. The mortal and material mind is the **mother** of this same emerging reality…the immortal soul is destined to survive mortal death and begin the Paradise ascension. 0:5.10 (8.10) emphasis added

The soul, therefore, is our spiritual mirror image—it



is a culmination of divine values we have intimately experienced through our moral choices and decisions. It takes shape when we, at a young age, make the conscious choice to act unselfishly for the benefit of another. These moments mark the arrival of our Thought Adjuster, the Spirit of the heavenly Father, and the soul is conceived and grows in proportion to our moral choices and decisions. Rather than being nurtured by material sustenance like a human embryo, soul growth *thrives on divine values and moral meanings*.

We consciously choose; we unconsciously grow. We understand the idea related to that growth after that because we have chosen, experienced, and demonstrated in that choice the highest value, *which is love*. Remember the phrase, "The Father's will is consciously desired but unconsciously done?" What an impossible sentence to understand as a new reader—I hadn't experienced the truth of this statement yet, which is why it was so difficult for me to grasp.

The soul *is* the child of God. The divine Spirit, the mother of the soul, teaches and nurtures our minds in partnership with the Holy Spirit. As we learn, we may consciously reflect on the fruits of the Holy Spirit and unconsciously display them in our life reactions. These fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. We can trust the father to teach us about these fruits—his same spirit surrounds our souls. We can thus live this life as Jesus lived his. We can trust and have faith in the Father and in our brother Jesus.

The soul, then, is the product of the spiritual ideas, ideals, meanings, and values we learn and progress with throughout our lives. It shapes our existence, reflects our best spiritual selves, and secures our eternal salvation as our minds become spiritualized and capable of achieving a conscious oneness with the Father.

Here again, is the question: Do we *love the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our souls, with all our minds and with all our strength?*

Do you remember when Jesus walked with the apostles two by two before he left? He asked them: "Do you love me?" "Do you trust me?" "Do you serve me?" "Do you obey me?" "Do you believe in me?" Repeatedly, the apostles answered in ways that expressed their souls.

And Jesus said, well then…love others as you have experienced my love; and serve your brothers and sisters with loving service, unselfish devotion, courageous loyalty, sincere fairness, enlightened honesty, undying hope, confiding trust, merciful ministry, unfailing goodness, forgiving tolerance, and enduring peace.

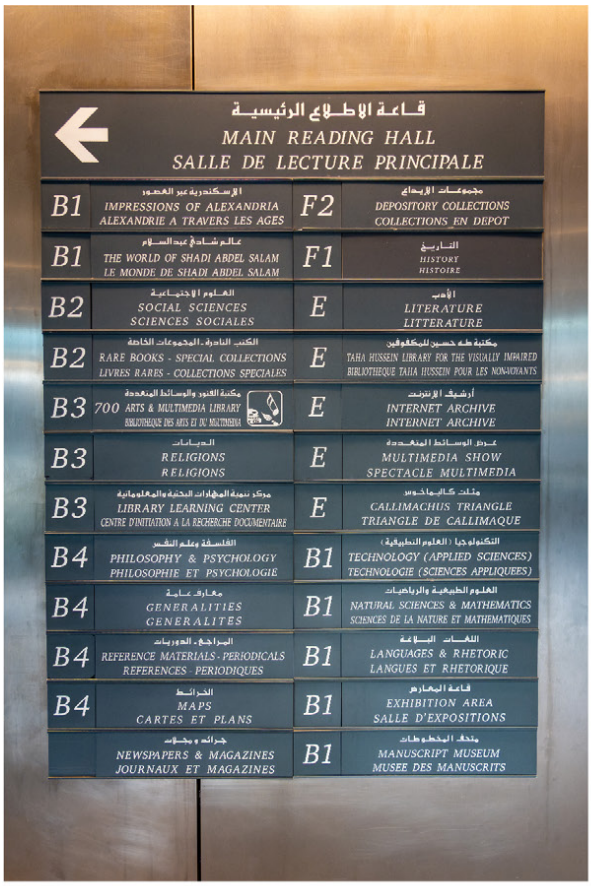
To live from the soul is to embody the Spirit of Jesus in our words, thoughts, feelings, and actions. This Spirit has been generously bestowed upon us all, me and you.

Yes, Lord. I love you with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind. Yes, Lord. Yes!]



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The Library at Alexandria Today

The library at Alexandria, Egypt figured prominently in the life of Jesus in *The Urantia Book*, and was likely a regular destination for Rodan of Alexandria. Destroyed by fire nearly two millennia ago, the library has emerged from it proverbial ashes as a stunning facility of learning.



Where the Bones Lie Buried

Neal Waldrop, USA

My provisional title for this essay was "A Perfect Storm," but I ended up rejecting that for two reasons that I find cogent and convincing: (1) there is nothing in this story that is perfect in a substantive sense; and (2) the events in question were not the onset of a storm during which lightning and thunder suddenly burst forth on some afternoon or evening. To the contrary, we are analyzing an extended process that encompassed many layers of meaning, strands that were disparate, interlocking, and interwoven.

The requirement for analytical coherence and clarity compels me to describe each factor individually, arranging them in an order that seems logical. On the other hand, this standard approach to analysis tends to imply that the tumultuous events of the summer of 1989 were preordained and inevitable in the ways they unfolded. Not so, even though it is reasonable to believe that certain structural factors had effectively guaranteed that there would be a crisis at some moment—some series of unpredictable events that would compel Urantia Foundation to revise its policies and chart new paths.

Intermingling and overlap

The pattern of activities that occurred during the 1950s and 1960s appears to indicate that the great majority of early leaders had roots in the Forum and knew each other well, sharing a common commitment to the fifth epochal revelation that tended to blur the functional differences that distinguished Urantia Foundation from Urantia Brotherhood. This undoubtedly seemed natural to them at the time, for they trusted each other. In the long run, however, this intermingling and overlap — patterns that often involved individuals moving back and forth from one organization to the other—tended to undermine the healthy principle that I shall paraphrase as "stay in your lane."

In other words, the Trustees of Urantia Foundation often believed that the work of Urantia Brotherhood was their work too, and the leaders of Urantia Brotherhood tended to imagine that they should have a voice in how Urantia Foundation operated. These mutual illusions, although partly natural, were counterproductive and dangerous. Managerial responsibilities and social activities are distinct and must remain separate.

Concentric circles flag at Urantia Foundation, Chicago

Management decisions that were profoundly unwise

At some point that may have predated my active personal interest in the fifth epochal revelation (from November 1973 onward), the Trustees of Urantia Foundation made two management decisions that were profoundly unwise—decisions that ultimately proved to be catastrophic. In effect, the Trustees abandoned crucial responsibilities of the Foundation, assigning them to the Brotherhood instead. Urantia Brotherhood thereby became:

- The exclusive agent for selling, marketing, and promoting *The Urantia Book*; and also
- The exclusive agent for raising funds for both organizations.

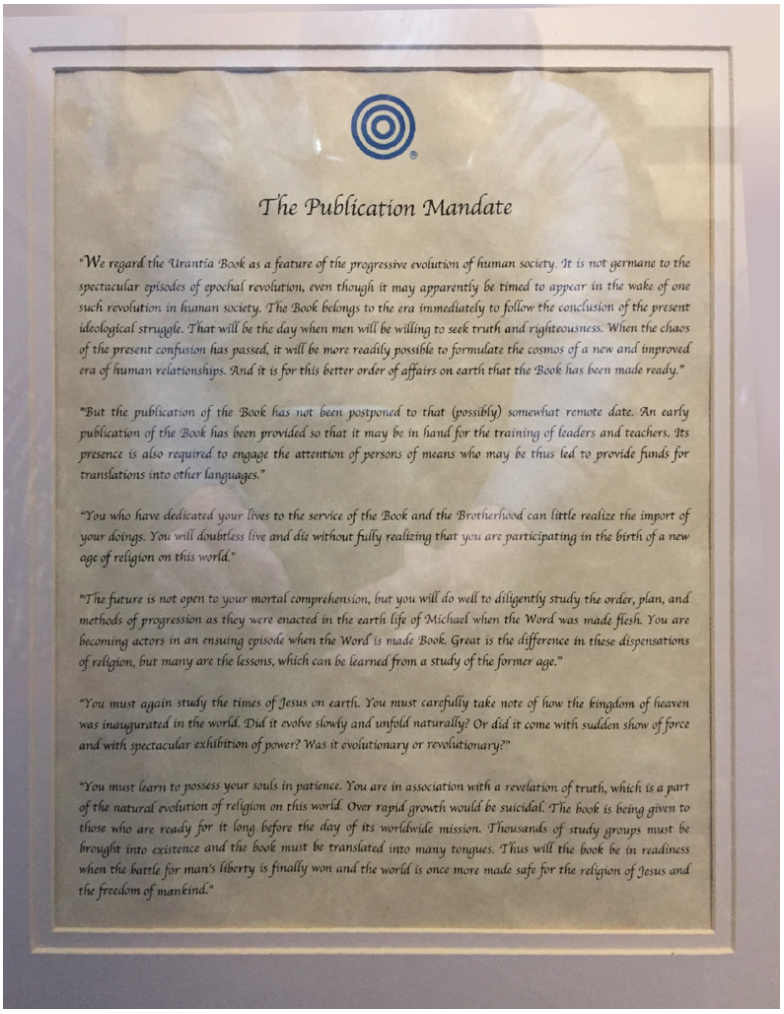
If we interpret these decisions in colloquial terms, they meant that the Foundation placed all its eggs in someone else's basket (i.e., the Brotherhood's). Since the Foundation's very existence was at stake, the Trustees were compelled to watch that basket with intense attention, scrutinizing everything the Brotherhood did and intervening energetically against adoption of any action or approach that seemed likely to have adverse effects.

This practical necessity set up a psychology of surveillance and implicit subordination that, in the long run, the leaders of Urantia Brotherhood were likely to find invasive or even offensive—perhaps sufficiently so that they would eventually decide to rebel. In essence, this is what happened in the summer of 1989.

Concentration of power

Here I am referring to structural defects of the original constitution of Urantia Brotherhood, the fact that it failed to divide authority sufficiently, embody appropriate checks and balances, and ensure respect for pluralism and diversity. In effect, the Brotherhood's constitution enabled a small elite to entrench itself in the Executive Committee and exercise power in ways that were essentially autocratic, without being obliged to obtain the General Council's approval in important matters—much less the consent of a majority of the members of the Brotherhood. When the leaders of the Executive Committee decided to challenge and confront Urantia Foundation in the summer of 1989, there was no way for anyone else in the Brotherhood to prevent that, nor even to counsel prudence and caution.

In contrast, Urantia Foundation is essentially a proprietary structure for owning and managing intellectual property. The question of dividing power and employing checks and balances does not apply with equal force, although every group of Trustees should certainly guard against a situation that permits any single Trustee to accumulate so much power and influence as to be able to dominate the Board—thereby operating in the authoritarian, dictatorial, and tyrannical fashion that prevailed during the entire three years I served as a Trustee (from August 1989


The Publication Mandate

"We regard the Urantia Book as a feature of the progressive evolution of human society. It is not germane to the spectacular episodes of epochal revolution, even though it may apparently be timed to appear in the wake of one such revolution in human society. The Book belongs to the era immediately to follow the conclusion of the present ideological struggle. That will be the day when men will be willing to seek truth and righteousness. When the chaos of the present confusion has passed, it will be more readily possible to formulate the cosmos of a new and improved era of human relationships. And it is for this better order of affairs on earth that the Book has been made ready."

"But the publication of the Book has not been postponed to that (possibly) somewhat remote date. An early publication of the Book has been provided so that it may be in hand for the training of leaders and teachers. Its presence is also required to engage the attention of persons of means who may be thus led to provide funds for translations into other languages."

"You who have dedicated your lives to the service of the Book and the Brotherhood can little realize the import of your doings. You will doubtless live and die without fully realizing that you are participating in the birth of a new age of religion on this world."

"The future is not open to your mortal comprehension, but you will do well to diligently study the order, plan, and methods of progression as they were enacted in the earth life of Michael when the Word was made flesh. You are becoming actors in an ensuing episode when the Word is made Book. Great is the difference in these dispensations of religion, but many are the lessons, which can be learned from a study of the former age."

"You must again study the times of Jesus on earth. You must carefully take note of how the kingdom of heaven was inaugurated in the world. Did it evolve slowly and unfold naturally? Or did it come with sudden show of force and with spectacular exhibition of power? Was it evolutionary or revolutionary?"

"You must learn to possess your souls in patience. You are in association with a revelation of truth, which is a part of the natural evolution of religion on this world. Over rapid growth would be suicidal. The book is being given to those who are ready for it long before the day of its worldwide mission. Thousands of study groups must be brought into existence and the book must be translated into many tongues. Thus will the book be in readiness when the battle for man's liberty is finally won and the world is once more made safe for the religion of Jesus and the freedom of mankind."

Publication Mandate displayed at Urantia Foundation.

to August 1992).

I commend and welcome the Foundation's intent to convert itself into a global institution, or at least an institution that incorporates multiple methods for consultation and advice on a global scale. I am confident that this gradual transition will offer many opportunities for the Foundation to ensure that pluralism and diversity are honored and respected.

A power struggle

This factor is so obvious that I do not need to analyze it in detail. By the summer of 1989, the leaders of Urantia Brotherhood were fed up with being bossed around by the Trustees of Urantia Foundation, and were determined that from that point onward, they would be in charge and would start to give orders. Personality conflicts exacerbated these difficulties, but did not cause them. As a practical matter, the long-standing climate of contention and controversy had degenerated into an intense and relentless struggle for power.

Contrasting approaches to the fifth epochal revelation

In substance, the endemic disputes among the senior leaders of the Foundation and Brotherhood were rooted in contrasting approaches to the teachings of the revelators. Many readers emphasized:

> (a) Resemblances to Christianity or, at least, to those aspects of Christian teachings that are psychologically appealing.
>
> Others, however, mainly called attention to:
>
> (b) Much broader ideas that are innovative and conceptually profound—elements that certainly include religion and spirituality, but also many other factors that contribute to the complex interactions of matter, mind, and spirit as the fundamental components of finite reality and as key ingredients of God's plans for us.

Although my own personal views definitely associate me with option (b), I fully accept that a substantial number of readers of *The Urantia Book* prefer option (a). They are entitled to this preference, which tends to be associated with a strong concentration on Part IV and substantially less interest in the complex teachings that the revelators have arrayed in Parts I, II, and III. Further, I agree that the narrative and analysis of the life and teachings of Jesus that the Midwayer Commission provides in Part IV contain a myriad of inspiring insights that can and do stimulate profound reflection—insights that can likewise be a highly productive tool for fostering and promoting personal growth from spiritual perspectives.

On the other hand, in section 6 of Paper 110, a Solitary Messenger informs us:

> The psychic circles are not exclusively intellectual, neither are they wholly morontial; they have to do with personality status, mind attainment, soul growth, and Adjuster attunement. The successful traversal of these levels demands the harmonious functioning of the entire personality, not merely of some one phase thereof. The growth of the parts does not equal the true maturation of the whole; the parts really grow in proportion to the expansion of the entire self—the whole self—material, intellectual, and spiritual. ...
>
> It is to the mind of perfect poise, housed in a body of clean habits, stabilized neural energies, and balanced chemical function — when the physical, mental, and spiritual powers are in triune harmony of development — that a maximum of light and truth can be imparted with a minimum of temporal danger or risk to the real welfare of such a being. By such a balanced growth does man ascend the circles of planetary progression one by one, from the seventh to the first.
>
> Perhaps these psychic circles of mortal progression would be better denominated cosmic levels — actual meaning grasps and value realizations of progressive approach to the morontia consciousness of initial relationship of the evolutionary soul with the emerging Supreme Being. And it is this very relationship that makes it forever impossible fully to explain the significance of the cosmic circles to the material mind. These circle attainments are only relatively related to God-consciousness. A seventh or sixth

> circler can be almost as truly God-knowing — sonship conscious — as a second or first circler, but such lower circle beings are far less conscious of experiential relation to the Supreme Being, universe citizenship. The attainment of these cosmic circles will become a part of the ascenders' experience on the mansion worlds if they fail of such achievement before natural death. [A Solitary Messenger, 1209:3,4 and 1211:1 / 110:6.3,4 and 110:6.16]

With all these relationships in mind, I believe that close study of and appropriate attention to all 2,097 pages of the fifth epochal revelation—Parts I, II, and III as well as Part IV—are more likely to promote and foster whole-personality growth as the Solitary Messenger has described it. On the other hand, this approach to *The Urantia Book* is certainly not a precondition for spiritual growth, nor for our future morontia careers on the mansion worlds. Persons who do not take full advantage of the possibilities for whole-personality growth that are available to us while we are living on Urantia will be able to make up for that during the ascendant life.

For all the reasons I have summarized above and for many other reasons that may be even more convincing, readers of *The Urantia Book* are amply entitled to adopt and pursue their own approaches to the teachings. This, after all, is an intrinsic feature of their free will and of the personal decisions they make. What readers of *The Urantia Book* are not entitled to do, however, is to dictate to other human beings or to insist, "My way or the highway." Unfortunately, both sides of the controversies of the 1980s tended to interpret the actions and opinions of persons in the other camp as evidence of a tyrannical desire to dominate and control.

Strategies for outreach

Many of the practical questions that became controversial in the 1980s can be interpreted as "slow growth" versus "active outreach," but there may be persuasive reasons to paraphrase these alternatives as "patience" versus "impatience." Persons who favor very active strategies for outreach, either then or now, may indeed reject this interpretation, insisting that their impulses and proposals are just rational and reasonable options that take appropriate account of the immensely meaningful and moving ideas and insights that the revelators have enshrined in the fifth epochal revelation, as well as the need for committed readers of *The Urantia Book* to act with commendable energy and enthusiasm. Naturally they do not want to be identified as "impatient," for we are all intensely aware that impatience made very substantial contributions to the catastrophic failures of the first and second epochal revelations.

Since I doubt that semantic disputes over the words "patience" and "impatience" will get us very far, let us examine the practical situation as realistically as we can. On the one hand, almost everyone who encounters the fifth epochal revelation and who finds the teachings moving and inspiring desires to share them with other human beings and help them experience the same spiritual benefits. This is entirely natural, and I reacted that way myself.

On the other hand, immediate personal efforts along such lines almost invariably prove disappointing, and that was certainly what happened to me. Over the next ten years or so, I eventually came to believe that the key criterion is whether or not the other person is relatively dissatisfied with his or her existing approaches to spirituality and the philosophic side of life—the question of whether or not he or she is really searching for more advanced levels of understanding and belief, even if the person concerned is not fully aware of this search and is not pursuing it consciously and deliberately. To paraphrase these conclusions, I became convinced that if the other person was fully satisfied with his or her existing approaches to spirituality and the philosophic side of life, or was just not very interested in these topics, then he or she would not be willing to devote the time, effort, and energy required in order to delve deeply into the teachings of *The Urantia Book* and eventually embrace them with conviction and commitment.

To put the matter simply, these factors are the opposite of "mass marketing" and, in addition, antithetical to the traditional methods of "evangelization" that various strands of organized, institutional Christianity endeavored to apply during the 19th and 20th centuries. These underlying realities were not obvious to everyone, and readers who tended to emphasize resemblances to Christianity found the point difficult

to accept. Although I do not wish to overgeneralize or to interpret every concept for active outreach from precisely the same perspective, I believe that much of the impetus for and advocacy of intensely active public-relations campaigns can be traced back to high regard for the traditional Christian approach to evangelization and "conversion"—along with a desire to replicate these methods and apply them insofar as possible.

Now I realize that my personal attachment to option (b), as described above, tends to lead to the inference that I will automatically criticize and oppose any practice or technique that appears to have roots in the Christian tradition. Well, I submit that my strong preference for option (b) has nothing to do with the psychological factors that I sought to summarize above. Further, I shall venture to offer you the following series of observations, in the belief that they are cogent and highly relevant. You, of course, will have to judge that for yourself, and I encourage you to appraise each of these statements along analytic and reflective lines.



Marble bust of Emperor Constantine, Rome. Wikimedia Commons

Key events extending across the two millennia

—The initial advance of the Christian faith was almost entirely a result of personal contact and persuasion, even though public preaching did occur in some contexts where social practices and political circumstances were favorable. (Although scholars offer different estimates of the proportion of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire who were Christians in the year 313 CE, when the Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan proclaiming religious toleration, ten percent appears to be the upper limit. In contrast, many scholars believe that this estimate is an exaggeration.)

—To make essentially the same point from the opposite perspective, the initial advance of the Christian faith did not stem from intense study of or devotion to a written text. During the first few centuries of the Christian era, the overwhelming majority of persons living in the Roman Empire were illiterate. Further, the New Testament did not exist as a complete, coherent document until the middle of the fourth century — well after the Emperor Constantine and his successors had begun adopting a series of policies that eventually made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire.

—To rephrase this point from a slightly different perspective, it took over 300 years for committed Christians to evaluate and authenticate the exact list of 27 books that compose the New Testament, although a variety of devotional texts had been available in selected locations at much earlier stages.

—At the time when the New Testament really did become available, and for many centuries thereafter, conversion to Christianity was not predicated on systematic study. The fact that the Christian faith had become the state religion of the Roman Empire caused a very high proportion of the population "to go with the flow." Further,

the ranks of priests and bishops suffered a heavy infusion of time servers, opportunists, and careerists. This does not mean that all of them were insincere or that they were indifferent to the underlying religious values, just that material factors and other practical advantages caused a considerable number of human beings to seize the opportunity to benefit from imperial patronage and the government's financial resources.

—After the western half of the Roman Empire ceased to exist in 476 CE, the conversion to Christianity of the tribes and ethnic groups that exercised authority over various segments of western Europe did not stem from personal persuasion or from evangelization in any sense that we would recognize. To the contrary, specific local chieftains, kinglets, and kings decided to convert, and these political decisions of theirs compelled their subjects to trail on after them.

—This general principle is illustrated by the story that the English monk Bede tells in Book II, Chapter 13 of his celebrated work *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. In the year 627 CE, King Edwin of Northumbria decided that Christianity would henceforth be the official religion for himself, for his court, and for all his people, thereby depriving all and sundry of any standing to dissent or take issue with his royal edict. (Although it is reasonable to believe that Bede embellished the story and invented many of the picturesque details, the crucial decision did occur, and the consequences were substantial and enduring.)

—In relation to western Europe as a whole, a considerably more influential event had occurred when Clovis was baptized in the year 496 CE. (Clovis, the chieftain of the Salian Franks, unified all the Franks and became their first king.)

—In effect, the baptism of Clovis initiated a long sequence of events that finally caused the pope to crown the Emperor Charlemagne in the year 800 CE. Around that year, Charlemagne's troops conquered the pagan Saxons (persons living in the region of north central Germany that is still called Saxony), then converted them to Christianity by force of arms.

—Throughout the Middle Ages, the Christian faith was a matter of state policy, not individual choice. Anyone who dissented publicly was actively pursued and, if possible, persuaded to recant. In contrast, however, many persistent dissenters who refused to conform to the united dictates of church and state ended up being burned at the stake.

—As late as the Treaty of Westphalia (1648)—the treaty that ended the Thirty Years War in Germany and thereby ended the entire period of the wars of religion—the operating principle in regard to religion was expressed in the Latin phrase cuius regio ejus religio. In literal terms, this means "whose the rulership, his the religion." If we prefer a more natural and more fluent translation, we can interpret the phrase to mean: "The religion of the ruler shall be the religion of the people."

—For all the reasons noted above, the original tradition of Christianity featured the union of church and state, or at least a strong partnership involving duties and responsibilities that were interrelated and shared. The tolerance and pluralism that now prevail in the West descend from reforms that began in the 18th century, but they took approximately 100 years to be



Frontispiece of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 1563. Wikimedia Commons

adopted in the great majority of countries having social and cultural backgrounds that are predominantly Christian.

—In effect, readers of *The Urantia Book* who have wished to apply the techniques of Christianity in order to promote and propagate the teachings of the fifth epochal revelation are approaching these questions very selectively and with a heavy dose of "presentitis," especially since they have tended to focus almost exclusively on practices applied in North America during the last few centuries.

—Even if we were to disregard all of the above, the plain fact of the matter is that the evangelistic campaigns conducted in North America during the 19th and 20th centuries were heavily influenced by—and largely dependent on—a social and cultural environment that was predominantly Christian.

—This social and cultural environment is actually a net disadvantage for persons who wish to promote interest in the teachings of *The Urantia Book*, for the fifth epochal revelation includes many aspects disputing and contradicting conventional beliefs that are crucial to the Christian tradition. The atonement doctrine is the most obvious example, the idea that Jesus died on the cross to atone for our sins and appease the wrath of an angry Father.

—Further, persons who seek to promote the teachings of *The Urantia Book* cannot possibly offer the "deal" that has been a prominent selling point for advocates of Christianity for approximately 2,000 years: the claim that becoming a Christian and following traditional Christian teachings will enable the believer "to go to heaven," whereas, as a corollary, someone who refuses to believe or who refuses to conform may be consigned to eternal punishment.

—In contrast, the revelators do not tell us that if someone accepts the teachings of *The Urantia Book*, this ensures that he or she will survive into the afterlife.

The net implications in our era

I realize that I may have tried your patience by subjecting you to a long series of remarks that are predominantly historical. Further, the implicitly "evangelistic" impulses that I have sought to rebut and overcome may be extinct now, and I hope they are. On the other hand, these impulses were not extinct in the 1980s. To the contrary, I believe they amounted to a subterranean factor that implicitly contributed to and catalyzed much of the friction between Urantia Foundation and Urantia Brotherhood during that decade.

Please permit me to conclude this part of our discussion by telling you quite explicitly where I end up: We, the readers of *The Urantia Book*, are operating on uncharted terrain; we cannot rely on or settle for techniques inherited from the traditions of spirituality and religion that have pervaded the Western world for most of the past two millennia.

After all, the horizons of the fifth epochal revelation include spirituality and religion, but they are certainly not limited to these realms. Further, the traditions of evangelism inherited from Christianity were aimed at promoting interest in a much simpler set of ideas, whereas delving deeply into the teachings of *The Urantia Book* and eventually embracing them with conviction and commitment requires far more time, effort, energy, and dedication. As stated earlier , I believe that only an individual who is at least implicitly searching for more advanced levels of understanding and belief will be willing to embark on the extended and arduous quest for personal transformation.

I counsel patience and persistence, mainly continuing to rely on person-to-person contact and other techniques that are consensual and informal. This, of course, can and should include conferences, seminars, courses, study group meetings, and other types of voluntary gatherings, without resorting to mass-market advertising or other forms of publicity aimed at the general population.

In a memorandum dated January 19, 1955, William S. Sadler, Jr. offered recommendations that remain profoundly insightful:

> A cultural chrysalis in relation to parochial and provincial thinking
>
> A chrysalis is an interesting thing. It acts as a sort of social or institutional incubator. The social grouping of the Forum served as a chrysalis for



William Sadler, Jr. with guests at Beverly Shores, Indiana, 1948.

the ensuing Brotherhood. In a much larger sense Protestant Christianity serves as a chrysalis for the Urantia Papers. The function of a chrysalis appears to be inescapable, but the end products are not an unmixed blessing.

For example, Judaism served as a chrysalis for the gospel of Jesus. Without this chrysalis Jesus could not have taught. ... But this chrysalis proved to be in some respects embarrassing, not only to the gospel, but even to Jesus himself....

The present problem: We as a group in the Forum are nurtured in the teachings of Protestant Christianity:. And unless we make a determined effort to do otherwise, we are going to think in a parochial and in a provincial manner....

I think we should make a sincere and prayerful effort to rise above the bias which is inherent in our backgrounds.

Urantia Foundation's intent to convert itself into a global institution is a very positive sign, entirely in keeping with this advice from William S. Sadler, Jr. On balance, however, it is even more important that these intentions harmonize with and honor the inspiring obligations that are enshrined in Article 2.1 of the Declaration of Trust, the Principal Object:

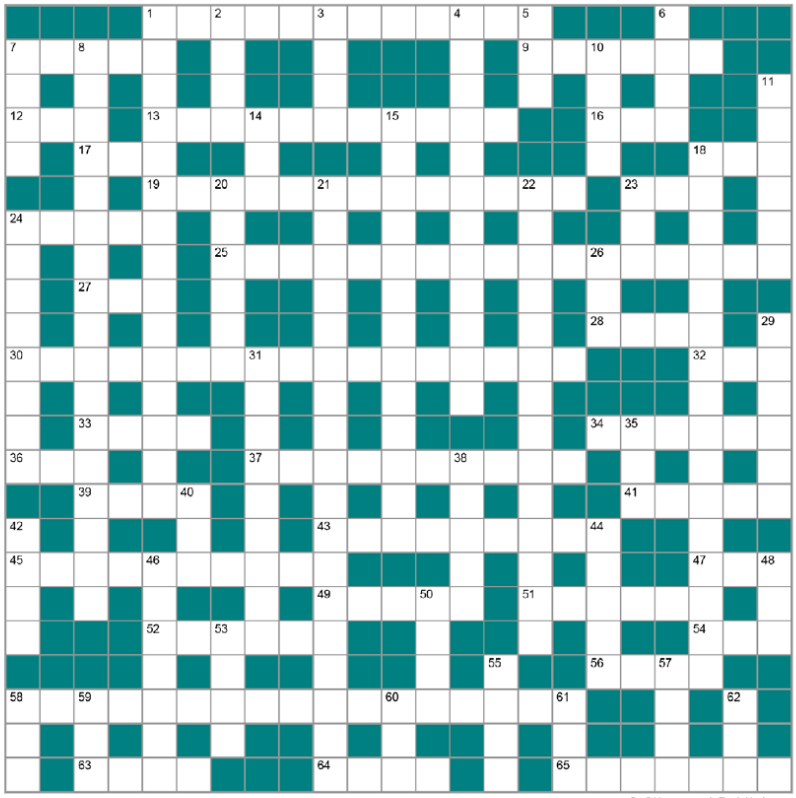
2.1. PRINCIPAL OBJECT: The object for which this Foundation is created is the promotion, improvement, and expansion among the peoples of the world of the comprehension and understanding of Cosmology and the relation of the planet on which we live to the Universe, of the genesis and destiny of Man and his relation to God, and of the true teachings of Jesus Christ; and for the inculcation and encouragement of the realization and appreciation of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man — in order to increase and enhance the comfort, happiness, and well being of Man, as an individual and a member of society, through the fostering of a religion, a philosophy, and a cosmology which are commensurate with Man's intellectual and cultural development. J



NEAL WALDROP *has studied* The Urantia Book *since November 1973. He served as a Trustee of Urantia Foundation from 1989 to 1992 and currently holds the courtesy title of Trustee Emeritus. Since 2004 he has fostered an innovative initiative modeled on the work of the master seraphim, an altruistic project aimed at promoting the progressive growth and development of society and civilization on our troubled planet Urantia (www.globalendeavor.net).*

Urantia Puzzle #2

Instructions: Multiple word solutions are indicated in parentheses. For example, if the solution is Thought Adjuster, the clue will end with (7,8). Hyphenated words count as two words.



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Across

1 100 standard days in Orvonton (8,4)
7 Ambiguous
9 35,000 years ago marks the termination of this geological period (3,3)
12 Unwell
13 One type of humor used by the Reversion Directors on the mansion worlds
16 Scrape by
17 Not a friend
18 Damage
19 The doctrine that God exists independent of the material universe yet dominates it
23 The first part of Lanka
24 Mystery Monitors are divine ____ of God
25 The Interpreters of _____ _____ are one group of Administrator Seraphim (6,11)
27 Curved line segment
28 You (archaic)
30 They serve the Master Spirits on the sacred spheres of the Spirit (7,10)
32 Meadow
33 Fasten
34 Men are, indeed, by nature evil, but not necessarily _____
36 Obtain
37 Offspring of the Adamites and Adamsonites (6,4)
39 Church choir section
41 Jesus made it clear that the world is not to be regarded as an _____
43 Thought to be guilty
45 In Peter's farewell to the seventy, he exhorted them to cherish the virtues of zeal and _____
47 An Old World simian
49 Horse straps
51 Assorted
52 East African country on Lake Kivu
54 Mineral-bearing rock
56 Turned
58 A vocal group of Planetary Helpers (6,2,3,6)
63 Turn yarn into a piece of fabric
64 Ceramic drinking vessels
65 Retirement income

Down

1 After tribal development, these social groups appeared as religious cults or political clubs (6,9)
2 He had a tryst with Laotta the Nodite
3 The Vedic three-headed fire god
4 Jesus ordained this _____ corps of seventy
5 According to the Book of Genesis, God used this part of Adam to create Eve
6 Legendary monster that eats humans
7 Mineral deposit
8 Large bay in northern Australia (4,2,11)
10 An officer of the Sanhedrin who refused to arrest Jesus
11 Small crustacean
14 Electrically charged particle
15 The state of being aware of something within oneself
18 A sevenfold Master Son (7,2,7)
20 To express approval
21 These angels are graduates of the Seraphic Corps of Completion (10,8)
22 Gabriel's role in the local universe (5,9)
23 One of the seven Absolutes
24 Making an estimate
26 Dine
29 Hinnom is one, as is Jordan and Kidron
31 Mount Seraph is the highest _____ on Jerusem
35 Wrath
38 As a babe, Moses was supposedly hidden among these plants
40 Light and life is one
42 The number of revelations given to Urantia
44 Provokes
46 A resident of Haifa
48 Mother sheep
50 A serpentine deity in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions
53 The Kheresa lunatic healed by Jesus
55 Urantia had two of these gardens
57 Funeral pots
58 After the rebellion, he fostered the evolution of the human race
59 Writing fluid
60 Muffle
61 Doze
62 Humor is the divine antidote for exaltation of ____.

Created by Mark Blackham

Solution on next page

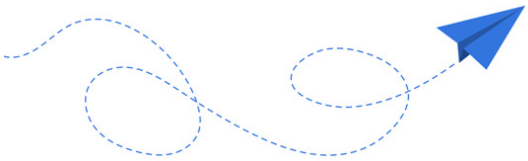
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Beginning with our November 2024 issue, we began publishing reader comments on UAI Journal articles. We look forward to hearing from you. Send your responses to:

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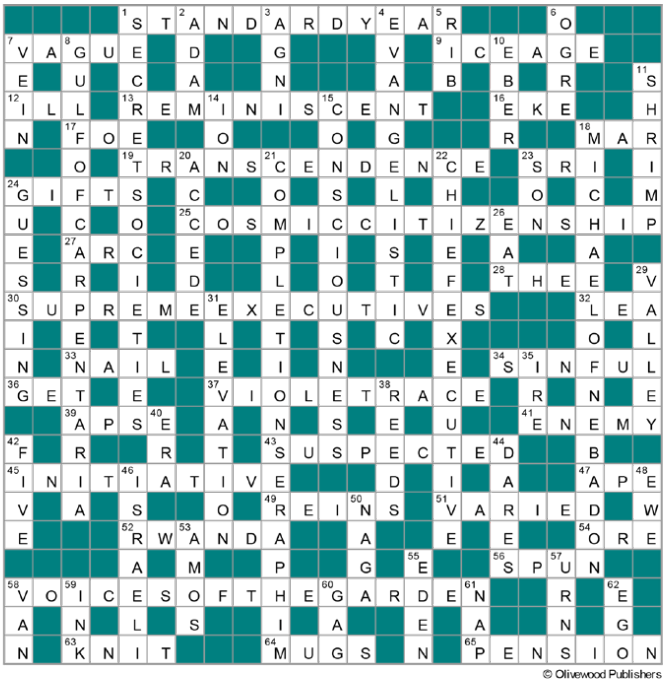


The Journal editorial team welcomes all submissions for consideration for future issues. Personal spiritual experiences, fresh insights, and new perspectives are always of interest, as well as thematic studies and articles that compare, evaluate, or integrate academic research (scientific, social, religious, or otherwise) with the teachings of *The Urantia Book*. Send correspondence or article submissions for the Journal to:

richardjernigan@urantia-association.org.

See our website for submissions policy and formatting requirements.

Answers to crossword



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Urantia Book citation numbers, where applicable.
Across: 1. 15.7.2, 9. **6** 1.7.18, **13.** 48.4.5, **19.** 5.5.6, **24.** 40.5.4, **25.** 39.4.7, **30.** 17.1.0, **34.** 148.4.8, **37.** 78.1.3, **41.** 140.8.3, **45.** 163.4.13, **58.** 39.5.3.

Down: 1. 70.7.1, **2.** 75.5.2, **4.** 163.1.1, **10.** 162.2.9, **18.** 119.8.6, **21.** 39.9.2, **22.** 21.2.11, **23.** 104.3.5, **31.** 46.2.8, **40.** 52.0.1, **53.** 151.6.3, **58.** 67.6.7, **62.** 48.4.15

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