

Personal Religious Experience and the Quest for Cosmic Citizenship

Transcript of David Kantor's Video

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Introduction

Welcome to this Forum on personal religious experience and cosmic citizenship.

We're going to review several concepts probably already familiar to you from your reading of The Urantia Book. We'll begin with an overview of personality itself, and then consider elements of personal religious experience that are precursors to cosmic citizenship.

Twenty-five hundred years ago the Greeks discovered the mind. Along with the Biblical canon, this drove philosophical and theological development for two thousand years. But in the centuries following the Reformation a seismic shift began to occur.

Fields such as Biblical criticism, historical and linguistic analysis, studies in evolution, quantum mechanics, depth psychology—all contributed to setting western philosophy, theology, and even science adrift on a sea of relativity and existential uncertainty.

We can see glimpses of a new dawn in Descartes and Kant, and in the work of several twentieth century theologians whose studies have revived interest in trying to understand the personalities and relationships that comprise the Trinity. These evolutionary trends invite speculation that perhaps today, just as the Greeks discovered the mind, the world is in the process of discovering personality.

Personality

If you've studied the Urantia revelation, you've probably given considerable thought to the topic of personality. We accept this miracle of being an experiencing self, as a gift from God.

The book tells us it's the love of the Father that individualizes each one of us. This is not an act of creation that's done and over with. It's continuous. That relationship of love shared by the Father with each personality continuously sustains our existence, and will

continue to do so throughout eternity. And, like any other personality association, it may be cultivated through love and friendship.

Personality comes with free will, and free will makes personality creative. It's creative in a cosmic sense in that every interaction we have with another person, forever changes both the actuals and the potentials of the cosmos.

Given this radical creativity of personality, we can begin to appreciate the significance of aligning our wills with the will of the Father. This is how we become one with Deity. We maintain our individual identities, while merging with a mighty creative will which has a divine singleness of eternal purpose.

Personality and Relationship

There's something else which partakes of this eternity-origin nature of personality and that's the relationships our personalities develop with others. It's in the resulting structure of personal associations that we begin to discover the kingdom Jesus told us could be found there.

Now this is important: When I refer to *personal* religious experience, I'm not talking about something private or subjective. I'm talking about a religious experience that springs from our experience with other personalities, human and divine.

Personality is relational. Our spiritual and religious lives are experienced and lived in a context of relationality—our relationship with God and our relationships with each other.

The grand panorama of a personal universe is first laid out in the Foreword of The Urantia Book. The revelators make it clear to us that eternal life involves a discovery and exploration of the co-creational potentials of personality association.

From the relationships between members of the Paradise Trinity down to those we sustain in our families, everything that comes into existence does so as a repercussion of interactions between persons.

This is a new paradigm of religious thinking and spiritual living. It's a relational model of reality that Jesus tried to communicate to his followers using social terms such as "kingdom," "family," "brethren," "fellowship," "communion." He portrayed the source of reality itself as a loving father.

The spiritual life portrayed and taught by Jesus is all about communion between personalities. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul, and your neighbor as yourself." This is the heart of his relational theology, the religion of personal religious experience.

As we begin to deal with this challenge of being a person in a milieu of other persons, we begin to acquire a cluster of values which we utilize to guide our interactions. When this cluster of values starts to reflect moral insight and spiritual values, it becomes a morontia milieu which we can cultivate through additional personal religious experience. Some people might call it a soul.

The Dynamics of Personal Religious Experience

Being created as a personality initiates an evolutionary process of soul development. The soul is not a pre-existing entity waiting to be discovered. It's not something we consciously create. It evolves around that cluster of values I just mentioned, an accumulating matrix of spiritualized character qualities which survive mortal life as personality attributes.

It's important to remember that "...the human mind does not create real values . . . all that the human mind can do is to discover, recognize, interpret, and *choose*." (And The Urantia Book italicizes the word, "choose").

Think of spiritual values as existing in a morontial environment just outside the range of our consciousness. The Adjuster makes them accessible to the mortal mind, illuminates them for us. But we have to choose between the spiritual values being illuminated by the Adjuster and the natural inclinations of the mortal self.

As those Adjuster-illuminated spiritual values are chosen and implemented into our behaviors, they transform our character and identity. This is what survives mortal life along with our personality as a nucleus for further experiential growth in the universe.

The Urantia Book outlines a process of cosmic socialization consisting of progression through seven developmental stages, seven psychic circles. The book notes that progression through these stages involves a growing consciousness of progressive kinship with the cosmic actuality of the Supreme Being.

Now this 'consciousness of progressive kinship' is not mere knowledge. It means that we've progressed to the point where the welfare of the kingdom, the Supreme, the cosmic whole, has become the reference point for our moral decision-making processes.

Our personality becomes increasingly real as a creative presence in the universe as we progress through these developmental stages. We become more and more able to function productively in association with other persons for the Father's purposes.

Spiritual Practices

What about spiritual practices for personal religion? The book gives us two.

The first is worship, essential for growing our relationship with God; of becoming sensitive and responsive to the Adjuster presence.

The second is service. Service to other personalities and the welfare of the cosmic whole gradually becomes our primary attitude to reality.

Note that each of these practices immerses us in the dynamics and challenges of personality relationships, human and divine.

And herein lies the uniqueness of the spiritual and religious paradigm of The Urantia revelation. In the Urantian paradigm, true spirituality may be discovered only through the morontia domain of personality association.

Significance of the Remembrance Supper

The revelation highlights the sacrament of the remembrance supper. When we seek communion with the Father, we do so prayerfully. When we interact socially with each other, there's a particular psychological orientation we embody. In observing a remembrance supper we're invited to merge these two divergent frames of reference into an experiential wholeness, catalyzed by a shared appreciation of the Master's life.

Think deeply about the comment with which Jesus inaugurated the remembrance supper. He said,

"Every soul who attains the realization of this united nature of God and man shall live forever. And this bread of life which I give to all who will receive is my own living and combined nature. The Father in the Son and the Son one with the Father—that is my life-giving revelation to the world and my saving gift to all nations."

The sacrament of the remembrance supper was given to us by the Master as a social

context in which it is possible, experientially, to discover the relational model of reality which his followers failed to grasp, and then went out and started a religion about his death and resurrection.

“Where two or three believers are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” That describes a dynamic matrix of personality association. In the remembrance supper, it’s this morontia web of relationships that’s hosting his presence, not individual mortal minds; not the fact of relationship but the living process of spiritualized communion and communication between personalities.

Proclamation of the Kingdom

Now there’s a third element of personal religious experience we can take on for extra credit—it may be the most important—and that is the proclamation of the kingdom. This is a *commission* given to us by our Creator. He *commissioned* us to take his message to the world, to help orient his children to their destiny as citizens of his eternal kingdom.

So let’s briefly consider this kingdom and its relationships to personal religious experience.

We might ask ourselves, if the kingdom was such a big deal to Jesus, why isn’t it developed in The Urantia Book anywhere outside of Part Four? Well, it is—only in The Urantia Book it’s called the Supreme Being. The Urantia Book’s theology of the Supreme Being provides an in-depth cosmological background for Jesus’ gospel of the kingdom.

The kingdom actualizes organically as a repercussion of the growing network of spiritualized personal relationships between God-recognizing and God-serving persons throughout the universe.

We’ve been given a great overview of the spiritual civilization which permeates the universes, the emerging kingdom of Jesus’ gospel, the Supreme Being of the Urantia revelation—all apprehended, experienced, and actualized through personal religious experience, enlightened by worship and informed by service.

Conclusion

This has been a brief overview of what I believe constitutes our fundamental ontological situation as human beings.

Recognizing the relational nature of personality provides an essential foundation. Immersing ourselves in the relational activities of worship and service brings us closer to the ministry of the indwelling spirit.

We have the remembrance supper in which all these factors of personal religious experience may be integrated and enjoyed in their wholeness. And we have a commission to help our fellows find entrance into this kingdom we've been blessed to discover.

All of this constitutes a foundation for a rich, meaningful, productive experience of personal religion, as we begin to orient ourselves to the fact that our universe career as cosmic citizens has begun.