

## The Religious Challenge of This Age

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There is a statement in The Urantia Book that has become my mantra, my call to service, my lifelong mission; there is a statement in The Urantia Book that so attracts my soul I have dedicated my life to its accomplishment. And it is this:

"The religious challenge of this age is to those far-seeing and forward-looking men and women of spiritual insight who will dare to construct a new and appealing philosophy of living out of the enlarged and exquisitely integrated modern concepts of cosmic truth, universe beauty, and divine goodness. Such a new and righteous vision of morality will attract all that is good in the mind of man and challenge that which is best in the human soul." [2:7.10]

This statement appears early in the book, in the second paper titled, "The Nature of God." These two sentences appear right after the Divine Counselor laments that the evolution of religion on this planet overemphasized the goodness of God while excluding the truth of science, philosophy, and spiritual experience, and neglecting the beauty of physical creation, intellectual art, and character achievement. This Divine counselor says that the exclusion of truth and beauty in modern religion is why it fails to hold the loyalty and devotion of modern man.

And then the Divine Counselor issues that inspiring call to service: "The Religious challenge of this age..." Not ONE OF the religious challenges, and not in an age to come. The challenge of this age is our challenge, unequivocal and immediate.

And it is a religious one...related to fundamental beliefs and the construction of a new philosophy. This challenge will not be satisfied by the translation, printing and distribution of the Urantia Book; nor will this challenge be satisfied by the creation of a thousand study groups. This challenge will only be satisfied by "far-seeing and forward-looking men and women of spiritual insight who will dare to construct..."

"Far-seeing and forward-looking men and women of spiritual insight..." How would someone qualify for this amazing work. This sounds like the work of visionaries and prophets and yet, the Divine Counselor calls insightful men and women to service, men and women able to grasp the true nature of our challenging life here on Urantia, "...men and women of spiritual insight who will dare to construct" ...something new and appealing.

"Dare to construct..." -- These are the most intriguing words in the entire sentence. This construction must require considerable courage if it can only be accomplished by those who will dare. Why such courage, I wonder? What philosophy of living is so challenging that it becomes daring to attempt its construction?

The Divine counselor tells us that "this new and appealing philosophy" must be constructed out of "the enlarged and exquisitely integrated modern concept of cosmic truth, universe beauty, and divine goodness." Ahhh...this philosophy of living must penetrate the thick ether of a homogeneous heaven, translate the dense mysteries of a mythical universe, personalize the diverse deities of an evolving potential....this philosophy must go (in the words of one modern prophet) "...where no man or woman has gone before..." ....into the cosmos.

Progress always requires an expanding perspective. Consider how far we've evolved already: From the family to the clan, from the clan to the village, from the village to the state, from the state to the nation, from the nation to the planet, which describes our current and still feeble attempts at globalism. What happens when we elevate our perspective from the planet to our system of planets, when we consciously embrace our identity as cosmic

citizens? What happens when we begin to live this truth every moment, without allegiance to current culture, and without dependence upon animal fear?

How do we construct a philosophy of living out of the enlarged and exquisitely integrated modern concepts of cosmic truth, universe beauty, and divine goodness? Well, here is a thumbnail sketch of what this new philosophy could look like: Cosmic truth--we are emerging spiritual beings in material form, just beginning our Paradise ascent, here and now, in flesh and blood. Universe beauty--the vast heavens are not only populated with friendly beings, they have been organized to help all evolving mortals grow towards Paradise one educated step at a time. Divine goodness--the fundamental partnership between man and God, is a constant source of strength and joy, of life itself, from here to eternity. This new philosophy must be simple and profound, modern and transcendent. This new philosophy must encompass the personal and the planetary, the human and the divine.

There has been increasing speculation that our quarantine will soon end and that the universe broadcast system will be reinstated, as evidenced by the seeding of the fifth epochal revelation on Urantia at the close of this millennium. Some think this new development will bring forth a flurry of universe teachers, some think it will be heralded by the coming of a Magisterial Son. I like to speculate that the first step will be something simple and yet earth-shaking; something that is the natural result of increased communication within our system: proof, positive proof, unequivocal proof of intelligent life on a nearby world.

Imagine that! Human life on another planet! You who hold a revelation in your hands, are you thrilled by the prospect of positive proof? Does your heart race with anticipation of this inevitable discovery? And what of your neighbors, your statesmen, your media personalities? Will they be thrilled with anticipation, or scared to death? Will they fear the first voice from beyond this world, or hunger to know what it means that there are others, many others, on inhabited spheres too numerous to count. Have we evolved far enough beyond animal fear to seek meaningful communion with the unknown other, or will we blindly defend ourselves in a foolish attempt to escape destruction? Will we imagine these new beings as children of God, or as godless invaders?

I believe "the religious challenge of this age is to those far-seeing and forward-looking men and women of spiritual insight who will dare to construct a new and appealing philosophy of living" as a cosmic citizen; who will dare to transcend the intolerance of diversity and speak of every resident on this confused world as an actual brother or sister; who will dare to banish the pride of national sovereignty and position this world in all its complexity as one of many in an inhabited system; who will dare to present the enthralling vision of evolving beings from infinite worlds growing towards Paradise with their identities intact.

I believe the religious challenge of this age requires that we find the courage to embrace the reality of cosmic citizenship and then construct a philosophy of living from a system perspective, a true and beautiful philosophy that integrates the truth of science, philosophy, and spiritual experience with the beauty of physical creation, intellectual art, and character achievement. I believe our challenge is to present a stirring vision of an inhabited and friendly universe anxiously awaiting the final dusk of our isolation and the first dawn of our awakening. There are 605 other planets in our immediate system more advanced than Urantia; 605 inhabited planets looking towards the nearby world where the Creator Son actually walked in flesh and blood.

Let's anticipate the opening of the broadcast system, anticipate the discovery of life on another world, and prepare in advance a philosophy that can integrate this evolution into our planetary consciousness. Let's begin to translate the meaning of cosmic citizenship into our lives, into our art, into the mindstream of this world. Let's begin this work fearlessly, without remorse for the beliefs and traditions we will of a necessity have to transcend. After all, the Divine Counselor assures us: "Such a new and righteous vision of morality will attract all that is good in the mind of man and challenge that which is best in the human soul." We are not only challenged to begin this work, we are assured of eventual success.

I want to leave you with one last quote--a statement by the Chief of Seraphim in the paper on Seraphic Planetary Government, that seems like a whisper in our ear, a paragraph set apart by parentheses amid the discourse on the Reserve Corps of Destiny. I hesitate to even speculate on the meaning of these surprising words, but perhaps this whisper from the Chief of Seraphim relates to the Divine Counselor's challenge, so I will dare to whisper these words myself.

In parentheses the Chief of Seraphim says: "(The cosmic reserve corps of universe-conscious citizens on Urantia now numbers over one thousand mortals whose insight of cosmic citizenship far transcends the sphere of their terrestrial abode, but I am forbidden to reveal the real nature of the function of this unique group of living human beings.)" [114:7.10]

Perhaps these are the far-seeing and forward-looking men and women of spiritual insight to whom the Divine Counselor refers; perhaps their function was, and still is, to construct a philosophy of living as a cosmic citizen. And perhaps we have the same assignment...perhaps the realization of this great challenge requires an increasingly active partnership between personal and epochal revelation.

I believe we have been given both the tools and the task. What we need now is the courage. The religious challenge of this age awaits. We who hold the revelation in our hands...do we dare?