

AN ACCREDITED COLLEGE COURSE ON THE URANTIA BOOK;
PERCEPTIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

by

Philip Calabrese

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I Introduction and the Course

1. There are several items I would like to touch upon today and the first of these should be our college course on the URANTIA Book: During the first quarter of the 1972-73 academic year at California State College, Bakersfield, a one credit hour course entitled "An Introduction to the URANTIA Book" was conducted by Dr. Robert Hunt, chairman of the mathematics department and myself, also of the mathematics department. The course consisted of a total of five two-hour sessions during which we attempted simply to tell our students of the existence and nature of this book that purports to be a new book of revelation authored by super human and non human personalities.

The first introductory session was designed to set the framework for the rest of the course and to explain that we did not intend to proselytize or defend the religious, scientific or philosophic credibility of the 196 URANTIA Papers but only to give an account of their content.

The next four sessions were devoted in turn to a) the reality of the religious experience (papers 99 - 103 specifically); b) the cosmology of the URANTIA Book (planetary hierarchies, Paradise, Havona, infinity, eternity, space, time, matter, spirit, and the unity of all reality as portrayed in the URANTIA Book and as interpreted by the instructors); c) a cursory account of the history of URANTIA, indicating the relative time periods dealt with in the URANTIA Book; d) the life and teachings of Jesus.

2. Many people have asked me about the URANTIA course, about student reaction to the course, about future plans for such courses, etc. Well, although the students listened attentively, paradoxically there was not much reaction to the course. There weren't very many questions asked during our sessions and the written comments on the student questionnaires handed out at the end of the course were anticlimatic. The reaction of the campus community was muted. I am somewhat at a loss to explain just why this was true considering the potentially sensational aspects of the book. In the final analysis, perhaps we succeeded too well in playing down any sensationalism. My attitude was 'here is a book that says...'

3. At the present time there are no plans for another URANTIA course. However, we have been conducting some study sessions with students who were enrolled in the course and who evidently take the book seriously. Thus there is that good to report. We also managed to sell about 20 books! If there are any other questions in your minds about the course I would be glad to take them up later. Just now I'd like to talk about the URANTIA Book itself.

II The URANTIA Book

1. With regard to this marvelous book, I would like simply to state that I believe it to be exactly what it purports to be - a communication from super-mortal and

non-mortal minds. Almost miraculously, I have found the URANTIA Book consistent with and supportive of my best scientific, religious and philosophic intuitions. At the same time those who have studied the book know that this does not mean that the URANTIA Book is my religion or my faith, although it has evidently become a part of my creed.

2. I am most fascinated by the URANTIA Book's treatment of the relationship between science and religion. In paper 103 (entitled The Reality of the Religious Experience) section 7 (Science and Religion) pages 1137-40, the grand panorama is spelled out: "But as ascending man reaches inward and Paradiseward for the God experience, he will likewise be reaching outward and spaceward for an energy understanding of the material cosmos." (page 1138, paragraph 2) "God is spirit, but Deity is unity, and the unity of Deity not only embraces the spiritual values of the Universal Father and the Eternal Son but is also cognizant of the energy facts of the Universal Controller and the Isle of Paradise, while these two phases of universal reality are perfectly correlated in the mind relationships of the Conjoint Actor and unified on the finite level in the emerging Deity of the Supreme Being." (same paragraph) "The union of the scientific attitude and the religious insight by the mediation of experiential philosophy is part of man's long Paradise-ascension experience." (page 1138, paragraph 3) "From outward, looking within, the universe may appear to be material; from within, looking out, the same universe appears to be wholly spiritual." (page 1138, paragraph 5)

3. Starting with a discussion of this subject, it seems that literally no topic is tangential. Now the next topic on my list today is general communication of the message of the URANTIA Book.

III Communication

1. There are two main aspects of this issue. One is the external dissemination of the URANTIA Book to "non-Urantians", so to speak. The other is the internal communication between those who espouse the URANTIA Book. Concerning external dissemination, reflection and experience have made it clear to me that a person is either ready for the URANTIA Book or not. If he is ready, it is quite easy to interest him in the book; if he is not ready, it is practically impossible to do so. I'm reminded of the thoughtless pagan that Ganid and Jesus met near Rome. Said Jesus: "The man was not hungry for truth... he was not ripe for the harvest of salvation... He must be allowed more time for the trials and difficulties of life to prepare him for the reception of wisdom and higher learning. Or, if we could have him live with us, we might by our own lives show him the Father in heaven, and thus would he become so attracted by our lives as sons of God that he would be constrained to inquire about our Father." (page 1466)

2. But although there is much spiritual starvation in 1973, there does not seem to be much spiritual hunger. Thus as I see it our fellow earthlings will gradually recognize the URANTIA Book as they exercise the faith necessary to possess greater truth, as they become more spiritually hungry; less effective (and perhaps even dangerous) would be missionary attempts by Urantians to get earthlings to espouse the teachings of the URANTIA Book. The book is visible to those who have the eyes to see it. It should be made readily available to all interested persons, but it should not be regarded as a religious cure-all. If the living Jesus

was not a cure-all to the thoughtless pagan, how much less the dead print of any book. In this view, the URANTIA community will gain loyal new members only as more and more people realize the intellectual and spiritual need for the URANTIA Book's message. And this process is mostly personal not social; it will take its own sweet time. But the acquisition of new URANTIA Book devotees is only half of the issue. There is also the spreading of the teachings of the URANTIA Book among the members of the URANTIA Community.

3. First of all and after all the URANTIA Book is just a book. A physical book must be interpreted by a living person. And the degree of enlightenment produced, although proportional to the amount of fossilized truth contained in the print, is limited by the spiritual and intellectual status of the interpreter of that print. Espousal of the URANTIA Book is not equivalent to its understanding. Insight cannot be had without faith and faith cannot be provided by a book. To quote a Melchizedek of Nebadon: "(Religion) consists not in the discovery of new facts or in the finding of a unique experience, but rather in the discovery of new and spiritual meanings in facts already well known to mankind." (page 1105) So individually, Urantians need to learn the deeper meanings of the facts in the URANTIA Book. And that will take time and study and practice.

4. Related to this subject is the problem of vocabulary. One hundred people may use the same word but mean a hundred different things. Granted that a diversity of opinion on some matters is inevitable, these should be real differences of opinion not just confusions owing to ambiguous terminology.

5. To help Urantians grasp new meanings and clarify their terminology, some new services seem desirable. First, it would be nice if we had some URANTIA newspapers and magazines (dealing with popular topics). It would also be nice if we had some URANTIA journals (dealing with more technical topics both religious and scientific). Such internal communications would be useful right now. Second, within the remaining years of this century I would like to see the expansion of the present URANTIA Societies into URANTIA Study Centers where an on-going living and learning experience could be enjoyed by URANTIA Book devotees with the motive of developing experientially non-secular life styles based on the principles and ideals of the URANTIA Book. At such centers souls could be won for the spiritual brotherhood in the manner suggested by Jesus---by their actual living within a URANTIA Society and seeing how our Father's sons live together.

6. There are other reasons for such developments. On page 2090) a midwayer says, "What a transcendent service if through this revelation, the Son of Man should be recovered from the tomb of traditional theology and presented as the living Jesus to the Church that bears his name, and to all other religions!" But such an effect can only be fostered if the URANTIA community can serve as the unified nucleus of a new and glorified Christian cult and later as the unifier of all individual ideals on URANTIA. The URANTIA Movement must have a good functional unity before it attempts to bring unity to the divided Christian church. Furthermore, although the various Christian churches do not now consider the URANTIA Movement a significant threat to their ideas of religion, as the URANTIA Movement grows and when it eventually is taken more seriously, then we can expect a certain amount of questioning, skepticism, criticism or worse. There are many controversial and difficult-to-understand areas in the URANTIA

Book over which we might become divided unless we have already been self-critical ahead of time. These areas could be openly discussed, tested and resolved through actual life experiences at such URANTIA living and learning centers.

7. Finally, the URANTIA Movement is in its formative stages; basic ideas and practices are being formed which will serve somewhat as a guide for later years. These basic concepts and practices ought to be grounded and tested in living experience rather than based on a simple reading of the URANTIA Book. And to gain such experience we should begin now toward building a true URANTIA Society (or a Society of societies) not just isolated study groups living mostly within contemporary secular society.

8. While there may be certain dangers inherent in such internal organization, the alternative risks seem to me much greater. As always the right path lies in a wise balance.

IV Community Relations

1. Speaking of balance, it seems to me that we early URANTIA Book devotees face a special task of maintaining our balance while we live on a world seemingly overflowing with intimidation, violence, deception, hypocrisy and general injustices. We face problems of humility as we imagine the importance of URANTIA in our local universe, the importance of this epochal revelation to URANTIA, the possible significance and importance of our individual roles in the URANTIA Movement. Subtle types of pride endanger us. We might act just to increase our status rather than out of loving service. Some of us might expect some special reward or presume some special place in the scheme of things. As humans living together, we might succumb to jealousy or the suspicion of jealousy.

2. How harmonious is our URANTIA Movement when we all exhibit the attitude of the Apostle James Zebedee. The URANTIA Book says, "Of all the twelve, he came the nearest to grasping the real import and significance of Jesus' teaching. He, too, was slow at first to comprehend the Mater's meaning, but ere they had finished their training, he had acquired a superior concept of Jesus' message." (page 1552) "He was modest and undramatic, a daily server, an unpretentious worker seeking no special reward when once he grasped something of the real meaning of the kingdom." (page 1553) How beautiful is our URANTIA Society when we live more faithfully Jesus' admonitions to the twelve at their ordination: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and be led to glorify your Father who is in heaven." (page 1572) "...when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Mathew 6, 3 & 4)

3. When we love each other as brothers and sisters we partake of the infinite spiritual wealth of our Father; when we love each other as Jesus loved us, our spiritual wealth is immeasurably multiplied. Each act of love increases our total wealth as well as all individual wealth. Thus with God everyone gains and no one loses. Thank you.