

A Response to What Appears To Be a Commentary on  
the URANTIA Movement in a Book Entitled  
"How to Know What to Believe", pages 58-96\_

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It has come to our attention that a number of people hold the opinion that the material contained in pages 58-96 of the book entitled "How to Know What to Believe" represents a thinly disguised commentary about The URANTIA Book and about people and events within the URANTIA movement. If this is true, we make the following response:

The author's report on the URANTIA movement centers primarily on two things: an attack on personalities and a denunciation of the "glaring absence" of involvement with psychic phenomena in The URANTIA Book. Where he does criticize the content of The URANTIA Book, he is either erroneous in his interpretation or demonstrates his unwillingness to affirm widely acknowledged spiritual truths.

The fictional approach expose has been widely used in recent times to enable writers to engage in rumor, innuendo, and distortion without fear of legal prosecution. This particular fictionalized report has many inaccuracies and distortions. The author alludes to the sinister power of the trustees of URANTIA Foundation, "who could vote themselves any salaries they wished, or invest monies received as desired." Obviously trustees of a foundation control its assets, but URANTIA Foundation trustees serve without salary and Foundation finances are regularly audited by the Arthur Andersen accounting firm, and are open to authorized inspection.

Since ancient times men have observed that when your argument is weak, the popular mind can be influenced by attacking your opponent personally. This is known as the "ad hominem" fallacy. The author uses this approach constantly, employing terms like "pudgy" "tyrannical," and "dictatorial." The author obviously was quite frustrated when he was unable to influence the content of the URANTIA papers or the behavior of the group, and this frustration has apparently over the years turned to bitterness. His ad hominem argument is not only objectionable as a logical fallacy; it is a distortion of the character of persons who had remarkable balance and composure.

According to the author, the major deficiency of The URANTIA Book is its inadequate appreciation and explanation of psychic phenomena. It might be observed that The URANTIA Book does not discuss many topics which various human beings consider highly important. It does speak of the danger of confusing psychic experiences with spiritual experiences, and cautions against placing much importance on mystic experiences. The science of psychology is beginning to discover the irrational nature of much of our psychic experience. The revelators, it appears, were on solid ground in not giving psychic phenomena much attention. The author's life-long preoccupation with psychic phenomena is certainly a legitimate subject for study, but hardly a topic for high spiritual concern.

The author's discussion of The URANTIA Book reveals his confused thinking. He says he was only interested in the purity and authenticity of the text, but when the papers did not treat psychic phenomena to his liking, he becomes convinced that the text is not authentic. In another instance, he speaks of the extraordinary nature of the URANTIA papers, acknowledging their high spiritual source. Then he categorizes the papers as occult writing of little value. The author either demonstrates his inability to distinguish the quality of The URANTIA Book from general occult literature, or deliberately employs the "ignoratio elenchi" logical fallacy, in which the technique is to change the proposition to one deceptively like it and then speak to the cleverly misdirected issue. Most of the author's argument does not deal with the content of The URANTIA Book; instead he spends a great deal of time demonstrating that occult phenomena are not reliable, assuming that the reader will include The URANTIA Book in this category.

What the author has to say about occult literature is generally good. It is essentially the evaluation which The URANTIA Book gives to psychic phenomena. The URANTIA Book is not only clearly superior to occult literature, but it does not claim to be "the infallible word of God" as the author intimates. It declares that "no revelation short of the attainment of the Universal Father can ever be complete. All other celestial ministrations are no more than partial, transient, and practically adapted to local conditions in time and space." (p.1000')

The author implies that editorial liberties were taken with the text of The URANTIA Book. This claim is categorically denied by the people most closely associated with the reception and publication of the URANTIA papers. In a letter speaking to this question one of the founders of URANTIA Foundation and Brotherhood affirms, "No human ever edited or altered the papers."

The author does have some criticism of the content of The URANTIA Book, in addition to the fact that it does not have papers devoted to psychic phenomena. He is disturbed because it contains a new life of Jesus when, he says, the first three parts of the book make no mention of Jesus. The URANTIA Book has many references to Jesus in the first three sections. In fact, one of the finest descriptions of the character of Jesus in the entire book, is found on pages 1101-1103.

The URANTIA Book maintains that Jesus of Nazareth is not just another man, but the incarnate Son of God who, following his bestowal life, has been given all power and authority in our universe. His life and teachings are of great importance to all mankind. If this fact or the fuller portrayal of his inspiring life is disturbing to the author, he certainly has the right to voice his objections. This, however, does not alter realities in the universe.

According to the author, The URANTIA Book has no program for individual spiritual development. If by "program" he means a specific, rigid routine like that demanded by some far eastern mystics, he is correct. The teachings of The Book are inimical to any stereotyped approach to spiritual growth. On the other hand, The Book is a superlative source of spiritual principles, attitudes, and goals which stimulate and guide spiritual growth. And it is without peer in its challenge for us to grow toward perfection and in its portrayal of the great spiritual destiny of mankind.

The author further complains that The URANTIA Book does "not deal with mind qualities of human creatures." If he means that The URANTIA Book does not take up a discussion of Freudianism, behaviorism, or extra sensory perception, he is correct. But The URANTIA Book has a more adequate treatment of the origin, nature, and relationship of mind with spirit and matter than any other planetary source. Its discussion of the human mind and personality in its relationships with the indwelling spirit of God and the soul are without parallel in world literature.

Finally, in talking about the indwelling Thought Adjuster, the author says, "the individual could not accomplish survival on his own and was dependent on this indwelling influence. Martha and I could not accept this." (p. 71) Such arrogance toward the indwelling spirit of God is shocking to most theists. One must be charitable and nonjudgmental, for only God can adequately judge the motives of the heart, but to ordinary mortals, such a statement sounds like a dangerously close parallel to the declaration of liberty from the Universal Father proclaimed by various personalities in the history of our planet.

Apparently the author is unable to distinguish the spiritual quality of The URANTIA Book from occult literature in general, and for a confirmation of his opinion he asked a scientist, who believes all revelations add a "burden of compulsory belief" on mankind, and a person knowledgeable in metaphysical literature what they thought about The URANTIA Book. As one would expect, they are not impressed with its message. Just as many intelligent people and religious authorities in Jesus' day were unable to perceive the high quality of his message, it appears that an exclusively intellectual, authoritarian, or traditional approach to spiritual realities in any age is unable to perceive new or advanced spiritual truth.

Certainly one should be sympathetic and understanding of people like the author and respect their right to express their opinions. All of us have a tendency to measure everything by the yardstick of our own experience and preconceived ideas. The last word in this discussion must be: The URANTIA Book speaks for itself. If it does not communicate its unparalleled spiritual excellence to you, then nothing which others might say of its quality will impress you. If you do perceive its high spiritual quality, then nothing others might say about its lack of substance will change your experiential appreciation of it.