

YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND OUR FUTURE

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Introduction

The fifth epochal revelation of truth has been abroad in the land and available to the mortals of our world for about 24 years. We have had just a few years' experience disseminating these truths; two and a half decades of safeguarding them, and planning for their long-range future. This brief time hardly qualifies us as experts in dealing with such an epochal development.

Yet we are the people -- you and we -- into whose hands have fallen the task of guiding the progress of the most momentous event in 2000 years. I'm sure at times, we each realize our insignificance in relation to The URANTIA Book's mission. Nevertheless, we all recognize the sublime duty that beckons us.

The URANTIA Book was first published in 1955 following the establishment of URANTIA Brotherhood earlier that year. There were many who thought large numbers of URANTIA Books would be snapped up quickly by a spiritually hungry world. Their personal devotion to these new teachings made it difficult to see that, while the world surely needed The URANTIA Book, the world certainly did not recognize this need. After serving the pent-up demand, book sales plummeted from 1700 the first year (1955), to 639 the next year. This demonstrated that the world's readiness had not ripened.

But we have grown, over these 24 years, slowly and soundly, though not spectacularly. Hundreds of study groups have formed. Twelve have matured into URANTIA Societies of the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood has 746 members and the sales of The URANTIA Book have plateaued at slightly over 10,000 per year; total sales since initial publication in 1955 are about 95,000. Maybe we are poised for a dramatic new growth cycle, although it is difficult to estimate our rate of growth in the future.

Our Policy About Advertising

What methods have we used to accomplish this growth? What has been our philosophy, our tools of progress?

Why did we not embrace advertising or use public relations methods? We have all observed the power of these modern media techniques. Were they appropriate for our mission? It did not seem so.

In most circumstances, publicity is an indispensable tool

in the promotion of a worthy cause. For us, it has several disadvantages:

First, the purpose of publicity is to arouse curiosity. This kind of artificially-induced interest produces a temporary faddish growth which could collapse as quickly as it flourished. An excellent example of how a once popular movement can fall out of favor with the public, occurs in Paper 153. You recall there was a sudden and complete desertion of the followers of Jesus after his sermon in the Capernaum synagogue. That was the sermon wherein he reiterated the spiritual realities of the kingdom, thereby incurring their disaffection. This event closely followed the feeding of the 5,000 which, without doubt, had had a wide-reaching public relations impact on his popularity.

Secondly, a public relations campaign for the book or Brotherhood would call us to the attention of the very groups that would assume we posed a threat to their beliefs. This could provoke an unfriendly response, to say the least. The early planners believed, wisely, I think, that we should build a broad foundation of people who were well grounded in the spiritual teachings of The URANTIA Book. We also need people who can apply the lessons of the book to contemporary crisis situations; those who would be able to defend it -- wisely -- against criticism and attacks from the outside.

A third reason for avoiding publicity is that the general tendency of the public is to think of any unorthodox group as a cult or a sect. We want to avoid being labeled as such, at least until the over-all image of these alternative groups improves.

Fourth, advertising is very expensive if used effectively. Our meager funds can better be used for a translation, for copyright protection, or for other programs of more lasting value.

And lastly, there is no guarantee that by advertising the book, you would reach the people who are really hungering for new truth. Advertising techniques are designed to have general appeal; they can't be tailored to the needs of each individual. Only a personal approach can do this.

The Person-to-person Approach

We have augmented our numbers principally by word of mouth. The person-to-person testimony on the value of these advanced truths has been effective! Even if you found the book in a library, you have still benefitted greatly by the reinforcement of human contact -- the give and take -- the exchange of ideas -- the debate and discussion.

Our gentle approach to potential believers appears to fit well with Jesus' methods. He usually preferred to work with individuals and small groups. He spoke directly to the souls of the men and women he encountered. It would seem that you cannot teach men in the depths of their being any other way. Nothing takes the place of this slow, individually tailored appeal to

man's spirit.

* Jesus approached the 32 religious leaders of Rome, quite obviously, because of the positions they held. He determined that they were not "tradition bound". How did he determine that? By knowing them. He met them personally -- face-to-face -- "...never ... more than three ..., seldom more than two, ... most often ... singly." He spent time with them. How much time? "... his spare time for ... six months." "... all night" with Angamon, the Stoic, "day after day" with Mardus, the Cynic, "... many conferences ..." with Nabon, the Mithraic leader. His individualized approach worked, as we know. Thirty of the 32 helped prepare the way for the reception of the later-appearing fuller revelation of Jesus' gospel. (Pages 1455-60)

The personal approach was effective for Jesus; it has been effective for the URANTIA Movement in the past; and I believe it will continue to be the best method of disseminating the true teachings of The URANTIA Book.

Leadership and Charismatic Leaders

There will be a great need for able leadership now and in the future. Our leadership should logically arise from our own ranks; people who are wise in our history, and understanding of the destiny of our mission. We should always try to choose our best people for positions of trust. We need the most experienced, stable, respected men and women who can provide refreshing leadership in keeping with these truths.

Our leaders will have wide-ranging backgrounds and abilities. We need the inspirational person, the planner, the organizer, the coordinator, the intellectual teacher, and the business-oriented individual.

From time to time truly charismatic persons will come along. They may be versatile and of obvious great ability. They could come from among us, or could be well-known political figures, entertainers or even a religious leader who might espouse the teachings and swing his own followers to our cause.

Such individuals could be very sincere and beneficial to us. However, we should debate whether one such individual should have a high degree of control over our destiny. I can see at least two disadvantages:

First, highly visible persons would make splendid targets. He or she could polarize our own people and stimulate the public and other religious groups to identify and categorize us unfairly.

Secondly, such a leader robs others of initiative because he or she is so dominant. There is often an overmuch concentration of power. The approval or disapproval of such a person

exerts a coercive force upon the will and action of others.

Many dedicated students of The URANTIA Book should have the chance to serve. There should be a succession of Brotherhood Presidents. One of our great strengths is that we use group wisdom. If our leadership is diffused, we will, I think, have more appeal to those who are tired of authoritarian religions, and who long for simplicity.

Interpretations

The practice of exchanging one's understanding of the concepts with others creates rich experiences in the dynamics of Society or study group activities. This can lead to a deeper understanding of your own intellectualization of an idea and an appreciation for the views of your fellows. It is the basis for some marvelous discussions and presentations at conferences. Obviously, this is healthy. The book comments on personal interpretation on page 1658:

- * Each of the apostolic teachers taught his own view of the gospel of the kingdom. They made no effort to teach just alike; there was no standardized or dogmatic formulation of theologic doctrines. Though they all taught the same truth, each apostle presented his own personal interpretation of the Master's teaching. And Jesus upheld this presentation of the diversity of personal experience in the things of the kingdom, unflinchingly harmonizing and co-ordinating these many and divergent views of the gospel at his weekly question hours.

While we as individuals should feel free to reflect upon concepts, and express what they mean to us, it does not seem wise for URANTIA Foundation or URANTIA Brotherhood, as organizations, to establish any sort of official interpretations of the truths of The URANTIA Book. Reducing Jesus' teachings to dogma and ritual has been one of the great errors of Christianity. As page 2083 points out, Christianity has been

- * threatened by slow death from formalism, ... intellectualism ... and other nonspiritual trends.

and on page 2084, it states

- * ... theologians ... should be effectively restrained from daring to/ create theological systems of spiritual bondage out of such a transcendental bestowal of God in the form of man.

Even the most well-meaning and lofty of such pronouncements would not stand the test of time. We dare not fix truth by today's standards and rob future students of the great satisfaction inherent in the pursuit of their own understanding

of these eternal truths. Truth must live to be interpreted anew by each generation of believers. No one knows how long this revelation will serve the mortals of Urantia. With the quickening pace we observe in cultural and religious change, we must not jeopardize the spiritual rights of our successors.

Copyright

As I am sure you know, the validity of the copyright to The URANTIA Book, held by URANTIA Foundation has been recognized as a result of a hearing that took place March 7, 1977 in the U.S. District Court, Central District of California -- The URANTIAN Research case.

This favorable decision is of great importance to the future wise dissemination of these new teachings. Without copyright protection The URANTIA Book could be dismembered and used for self-serving ends. Without a copyright in effect the book could be modified to suit the private beliefs of individuals. It could be reprinted with portions left out, with sections added, with parts rewritten, with personal interpretations inserted, with footnotes, with tasteless illustrations, and by numerous other ways a book could be cannibalized. These new truths could become submerged in existing religious thought as were the teachings of previous revelators. The ability of this latest revelation to accomplish its mission of upstepping the religious thought of all mankind would be severely hampered.

This initial court decision, plus others that may follow, will greatly assist the Trustees and all other true believers in the essential task of maintaining the integrity of the teachings. They must remain in their revealed form so that present day readers, and future generations can study these concepts, and formulate their own interpretations. Thus, truth will continue to live.

The copyright law imposes definite duties on the Trustees in return for the protection it affords. It requires us to take certain precautions concerning the use of quotations. The Board of Trustees will continue to work closely with the Brotherhood, Societies, and study group teachers and leaders on the use of passages from The URANTIA Book. Most of you are familiar with the pre-permission forms used for conference speakers, for example. We know you can understand the need for normal attention to this area of our work and will keep the Trustees informed. Even if derivative works do not include quotations, URANTIA Foundation must approve them for publication if they are based on the book. The Trustees are most appreciative of the cooperation of authors of proposed literature that we have generally received. It will pay handsome dividends to our progeny.

If, unfortunately, future deliberate infringements occur, I can assure you that URANTIA Foundation will always act to preserve the integrity of this revelation to the maximum of its ability and resources.

Marks

URANTIA Foundation has registered the word URANTIA and the Concentric Circles Symbol as trademarks, service marks, and membership marks. The Trustees have put forth a great deal of effort and expense to protect our rights to the marks.

Why are they so important? Well, first of all, no one wants to see a URANTIA Gas Station or a URANTIA Pool Hall. More important, though is a positive futuristic reason. Fortunately, under present statutes, our rights to these marks will continue on indefinitely if we keep them healthy. After the copyright to The URANTIA Book expires, our successors might be unable to prevent tampering with the text. However, they will be able to certify the genuine URANTIA Book and official organizations by using the marks as badges of integrity. The pure unadulterated fifth epochal revelation will be readily identifiable.

As with copyright, in return for legal benefits, we also have responsibilities. We must therefore endure under the prevailing legal climate that surrounds marks. We intend to keep our umbrella of protection in good repair. Although our marks have a lofty mission, the courts consider them to/just like any other trademarks. All mark owners must oversee the use made of them whether it is a soft drink or an epochal revelation.

Our legal counsel has advised us that we should confine the use of the marks to The URANTIA Book, URANTIA Foundation, URANTIA Brotherhood, the chartered Societies and their activities. Incidentally, in the case of URANTIA, we are not protecting the name of the planet, but rather the entire, all inclusive concept of this latest revelation of truth.

The Foundation has been in the process of concluding Licensing Agreements with the Brotherhood and the Societies. Fears and objections were raised by these effort, but the law is very clear in that mark owners must fully document permission to use the marks. We really have no choice. The Trustees want to encourage use of the marks by these official organizations, under the proper conditions, of course. Marks are strengthened by wise, safeguarded use.

The Trustees have been able to stop such infringements as URANTIAN Research, URANTIA Health Massage, URANTIA Trading Company, URANTIA Cocktail Lounge, URANTIA Produce, and others. Our initial approach is to write to the infringer to educate him of our rights, and to appeal to him to help us safeguard our marks. If these efforts fail we have to take action. This is a very expensive and time consuming process. We have found that it costs about ten thousand dollars just to get to the courthouse steps.

Throughout this part of the discussion I have referred to the "Trustees' rights" in the marks. But truthfully, all Brotherhood members share these rights and have as much at stake as the Foundation in seeing to it that our beautiful symbolism retain its distinctive character.

Americanization

This new revelation was born in an American setting and is still heavily centered in the United States. However, in the last few years we have seen the teachings of The URANTIA Book take root in other countries. There are active study groups in Canada, Finland, France, Holland, Colombia, Belgium, New Zealand, Spain, Australia, and no doubt in other countries as well. There is a group in Saudi Arabia which I understand is composed of transplanted Americans. This internationalization is very gratifying, but is, after all, to be expected. It is a tribute to the quality of the message, and to our efforts, so far, of keeping the dissemination of these teachings unencumbered by ties to existing institutions or national attitudes. This must continue.

We are pretty used to dealing with our American fellows. Our culture is familiar, even allowing for regional variety. Other nations will be a challenge to us in that we will encounter differences in historical and religious backgrounds. Their economic and political systems and social customs may make us uneasy at times. We must respect these differences and recall that this revelation is intended for all peoples, all races, all nationalities.

Some of us who have traveled are aware of language barriers. Some very fundamental misunderstandings can result from too casual translations of discussions on important points. The need for believers here and abroad who are fluent in more than one language will be increasingly apparent.

People in other countries are sometimes suspicious of Americans. They might see us as trying to dictate to them, or control them. It will be important for us to stick to the teachings of The URANTIA Book, to even handedly and consistently administer the requirements of the Brotherhood Constitution and the necessary precautions of the Foundation. And we must not impose any American cultural conditions upon our international brethren.

Along these lines, we should consciously scrutinize each activity we engage in -- conferences, newsletters, business methods, art work, study aids -- to insure that we are not putting the American/Christian/Caucasian stamp on the revelation. Heed these words from page 2064:

- * The manifestation associated with the bestowal of the "new teacher", and the reception of the apostles' preaching by the men of various races and nations gathered together at Jerusalem, indicate the universality of the religion of Jesus. The gospel of the kingdom was to be identified with no particular race, culture, or language. This day of Pentecost witnessed the great effort of the

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spirit to liberate the religion of Jesus from its inherited Jewish fetters. Even after this demonstration of pouring out the spirit upon all flesh, the apostles at first endeavored to impose the requirements of Judaism upon their converts. Even Paul had trouble with his Jerusalem brethren because he refused to subject the gentiles to these Jewish practices. No revealed religion can spread to all the world when it makes the serious mistake of becoming permeated with some national culture or associated with established racial, social, or economic practices.

The best hope of spreading the teachings to the greatest number of people is to keep them free from any apparent connection with any one religious group. To identify The URANTIA Book with one system of thought will close the doors of acceptance to those holding opposing views. Page 1011 reminds us that:

* (Christianity) has passed through many phases of evolution since the time of Paul and has become so thoroughly Occidentalized that many non-European peoples very naturally look upon Christianity as a strange revelation of a strange God and for strangers.

* Page 1032 talks about the "Occidental dogmas and doctrines" that have "...tended to make..." "... the original gospel of the Son of Man ..." "...a white man's religion."

I also wonder, as others do, whether it is wise to create a large body of secondary literature, material heavily based upon The URANTIA Book, that purports to explain what the book is saying. Some of this material may tend to obscure The URANTIA Book in time, and readers may consider its interpretations to be doctrinal. Such works may also put a stamp, "Made in America" on them or appear to be Christian-related. This could interfere with the acceptance of these new teachings by people of different backgrounds.

Avoiding Association With Temporal Institutions

The URANTIA Book gives us a perspective on our social and political institutions, their history and shortcomings. It offers suggestions for rectifying their ills which most of us recognize are very real.

We are all familiar with the Urmia lectures, the papers on marriage and the family, Paper 72, Government on a Neighboring Planet, and other papers dealing with civilization and contemporary institutions.

These areas of the book will inspire efforts toward the purification of material life on our planet. Some students of the book will try to initiate programs to upgrade our political, social, and economic life. This is all to the good. This is good, that is, if these programs are carried forward by individuals who do not try to directly involve The URANTIA Book or the

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organizations.

It is essential that The URANTIA Book, URANTIA Foundation, URANTIA Brotherhood and URANTIA Societies not become directly identified with, or integrated into, any efforts to materially upstep the world. This latest revelation must not be used as leverage to bring about institutional change. I believe this would be a tragic misapplication and a betrayal of its spiritual mission. These worthy projects should instead be the pursuit of the individual on his own.

You can imagine the disruptive effect on the Brotherhood of an attempt to use, or involve, The URANTIA Book in politics, for example. We can all usually agree on spiritual matters, but efforts at institutional change would surely polarize us. No two people view our material environment the same way.

It is interesting to observe that while Jesus did give the Urnia lectures, he made no attempt to implement these teachings. Page 1580 clarifies his mission with regard to temporal matters:

* Jesus was not, therefore, a political reformer. He did not come to reorganize the world; even if he had done this, it would have been applicable only to that day and generation. Nevertheless, he did show man the best way of living, and no generation is exempt from the labor of discovering how best to adapt Jesus' life to its own problems. But never make the mistake of identifying Jesus' teachings with any political or economic theory, with any social or industrial system.

And page 1087:

* Religionists must function in society, in industry, and in politics as individuals, not as groups, parties or institutions. A religious group which presumes to function as such, apart from religious activities, immediately becomes a political party, an economic organization, or a social institution. Religious collectivism must confine its efforts to the furtherance of religious causes.

The previous page, 1086, says:

* Religion achieves its highest social ministry when it has least connection with the secular institutions of society.

Conclusion

The world doesn't realize it now but the advent of this revelation on our planet will someday be judged the event of this century. The URANTIA Book will undoubtedly function as

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the spiritual anchor on our world for hundreds of years. Its success will be due in part to its loyal adherents who will exemplify, disseminate, and safeguard these truths.

It is a privilege to have come in contact with these soul-saving concepts and we must be conscious of our peculiar place in history. We bear a great responsibility before the world, for it will be by our conduct and bearing that men will know from whence we came and will affirmatively judge our purpose. We early believers and leaders must keep this movement on a wise course to set a standard for those who follow.

Conservatism in these early years will not inhibit the acceptance of this revelation in the long run. If indeed the world in general is not ready for these advanced truths, and that seems to be the case, then lets accept that, and build carefully today for the time when large numbers of our fellows are ready for the pursuit of eternal realities. Each generation will play a key role in the eventual success of these new teachings. It looks like our task is one of solid building for the future -- not spectacular, but very significant.

We have a great deal of important work to do. Lets continue to introduce our friends and acquaintances to the truth of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. This is our single most important priority. Page 208⁴ inspires our effort:

* Modern culture must become spiritually baptized with a new revelation of Jesus' life and illuminated with a new understanding of his gospel of eternal salvation.

We are mortal selectmen of the Supreme, truly a challenged generation. We will give this effort all we have -- this incomparable episode of God's downreach to mortal man -- as it unfolds before our eyes. Think of the memories you will have in the ages to come.

We must negotiate the tightrope between the successful spread of this gift entrusted to us, and its protection from harm. Working together we can, and will pass this test to the approval of our superhuman observers.

So far we have gotten along together fairly well. This must continue, or improve, if we are to appeal to others. We will be challenged as the teachings find their way through the world aided by our efforts on their behalf.

There will occasionally be those, however, who will refuse to work in harmony with us, or whose perception of the mission of this revelation and our necessary organizational requirements is faulty or astigmatic. We had best bid such folks Godspeed

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as they go their separate ways while we take the precautions that seem appropriate for the protection of this epochal gift, and for its supporting organizations.

We must be living examples of this new revelation individually and collectively. The URANTIA Book tells us on Page 2085:

* The non-Christian world will hardly capitulate to a sect-divided Christendom.

Neither, I submit, will our fellow mortals readily accept the teachings of The URANTIA Book if they are being sponsored by a Brotherhood which is somehow divided or whose members have become self serving, status seeking, and political.

We should work selflessly, not expecting dramatic results in our lifetime; our earthly rewards should consist in our personal satisfaction in being involved in the success of an epochal development. Page 2052:

* I admonish you ever to remember that your mission among men is to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom -- the reality of the Fatherhood of God and the truth of the sonship of man. Proclaim the whole truth of the good news, not just a part of the saving gospel. ... Sonship with God, by faith, is still the saving truth of the gospel of the kingdom. You are to go forth preaching the love of God and the service of man. That which the world needs most to know is: Men are the sons of God, and through faith they can actually realize, and daily experience, this enobling truth.

From page 1569:

* Whosoever would become great in my Father's kingdom shall become a minister to all, and whosoever would be first among you, let him become the server of his brethren. But when you are once truly received as citizens in the heavenly kingdom, you are no longer servants but sons, sons of the living God. And so shall this kingdom progress in the world until it shall break down every barrier and bring all men to know my Father and believe in the saving truth which I have come to declare. Even now is the kingdom at hand, and some of you will not die until you have seen the reign of God come in great power.

And finally, from page 1569:

* And this which your eyes now behold, this small beginning of twelve commonplace men, shall multiply and grow until eventually the whole earth shall be filled with the praise of my Father. And it will not be so much by the words you speak as by the lives you live that men will know you have been with me and have learned of the realities of the kingdom.