

Keynote Speech at Triennial Delegate Assembly, August 17 & 18, 1979

THE URANTIA BOOK, THE WORLD, AND US
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When I was asked to give this talk, I was told that the main theme of the assembly would be somehow related to the subject of The URANTIA Book in the world. I began to wonder how we, as a group, might approach both The URANTIA Book and the world. This approach is very important because, to a large measure, it determines what we do--our methodology--or how we do it.

I am reminded of the student in sociology who there learns much about the family unit and then returns home to one and forgets all of the constructive things he has learned about the family. His approach has been totally objective and the family unit is observed as a thing, an object, in which he has no stakes or participation. It exists in theory, a level of knowledge, an abstraction, for use by the intellect but not as a lived or living experience of the student.

So at the outset, I must raise the question of what does the world mean to us: is it a thing or is it a part of us, and we a living vital part of the world. If we are the latter then we must realize that we have to find out what the real world consists of for a real pragmatic reason. We cannot relate The URANTIA Book and the world until we have an adequate understanding of what the real world is, how it operates, and how we can function in it. For instance, what are its dominating power structures in philosophy and theology. Why this? Because the URANTIA Revelation has so much to give to world philosophy and theology. But, in order to do so it must achieve academic respectability in these areas--a task we have sadly neglected. Why neglected? Because we have had neither the trained personnel nor the knowledge--with but one exception to go ahead and do this. The first question scholars will ask: Where is its bibliography? How would you answer this question? But, scholars and theologians are like the Cabots and Lodges, they only talk to one another and God. Our people have to be developed to the point where we can talk to scholars. Not as book salesmen--heaven forbid--to be able to talk to scholars as scholars. I started a personal project in this area one year ago. Only in the past few weeks have some things begun to develop which seem promising. I'll tell you more about them later. Now I can say that one professor of religion and philosophy and the head of the history department at the University of W. Florida are reading The URANTIA Book. I hope I am slowly developing academic respectability on that campus. I expect to have a Masters Degree next Spring--the first step. Other steps, including a doctorate, are in prospect. This is how I am living in the world.

It is wonderful to contemplate 95,000 book deliveries--where are they? Who has them? Are they in the hands of the maladjusted, the misadapted, the recluses, the loners, the introverted seeker? Wonderful--if it gives real comfort, spiritual strength and emotional sustenance to their lives. What do they do with it? Do we know? How many leaders come from their ranks?

All of these and many more are questions we need to ask ourselves. Our only chance is to learn to view the world as it really is, not as we would wish it to be--that is unreality--the world is reality itself. This is what we have to cope with. As we are now in the opening phases of the 6th Triennial Delegate Assembly, it is appropriate that we pause for a few moments to examine our individual modes and techniques of thought. The importance of an appraisal of this nature cannot be over-emphasized. Your thinking will determine the decisions you arrive at and thus shape the final outcomes of this conference.

The URANTIA Brotherhood, when seen against the background of the menagerie of other organizations, comes into focus as a very unique group. Excepting organization for administration and a stated purpose, it stands out from the field by reason of its differences from the general run of organizations. The greatest point of divergence is found in the methodology it uses to achieve its stated purpose.

All organizations have a purpose and one of their first efforts is the expenditure of great energy in the construction of a public image. Its creators are convinced that public image will greatly enhance the implementation of the purposes of their organization. And so with new organizations one of their first moves is to hire publicity and public relations experts often trained in mass and social psychology, whose job it is to thrust a new image upon a public already over-burdened with public images. They use their techniques of manipulation upon whatever media are available--many of which are waiting to be manipulated--for their own reasons.

The URANTIA Brotherhood, charged with an implied responsibility to future generations of unknown magnitude and of qualitative and quantitative dimensions beyond our knowledge, has elected to remain aloof from the methodologies of other organizations and maintain a profile of very low key. We find no fault with this decision and can see no apparent justifiable reasons in the near future to attempt to alter this policy in any manner. In a word, we support it.

Having established this premise, I would now have you think with me about some conditions which can be an inherent part of our own methodology. Let us examine their desirability as effective aids to the implementation of our stated purpose--the dissemination of the teachings of The URANTIA Book.

Before proceeding further, I must refer to something I am convinced you must keep in mind while carrying on the deliberations you will shortly enter into. This is ideology, and its potential effect upon all kinds of thinking and the tremendous impact it can have upon the thinking of organizations hence upon their conduct.

What exactly is ideology? There are several definitions which essentially say the same thing but in different ways. Synthesizing these, we can define ideology as: a systematic body of concepts especially about human life and culture which results in a manner or content of thinking, characteristic of an individual, a group or a culture. When the concepts are unified they appear as integrated assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a socio-political program.

The following are all examples of ideologies: Conservatism, Liberalism, Republican, Democrat, Capitalism, Communism, Socialism, Christianity, Buddahism, Human Rights, Pro or Anti Abortionism, Enviornmentalism. The list is of great length and all fit the definition just given.

Philosophers such as positivists tend to regard ideologies simply as a device for the purpose of keeping data in order and easily tracked down. They are assumed to have value as means of facilitating human thought.

I am concerned about all thinking which has any ideology as its base because its base is human; thus finite. Even the broadest of them are limited. They all exhibit two interesting properties: precision and scope which are mutually contradictory. Let's take two examples for a very brief examination and comparison--Liberalism and Conservatism. Liberalism is characterized by broad scope and a low level of precision. Conservatism shows the opposite and according to F. C. Hearnshaw holds that (1) a divine intent rules society (2) civilized society requires order (3) distrust of sophisters and calculators, (4) change and reform are not identical and there are more. The Liberal holds: (1) That man is perfectable in the human estate (2) Contempt for tradition-experiential wisdom is ruled out (3) total democracy regardless of inherent abilities (4) Economic levelling. I use these two to point out the relative precision and smaller scope of conservatism and the broad scope and lower precision of Liberalism.

The main point I am driving at is that at our level of evolutionary development we apparently cannot have both precision and scope in any one ideology and this helps to point out their limitations. We can verify all ideologies as being incomplete. It is self-evidently true that any person who weds themselves to any ideology has given up at least a portion of their freedom of thought; because they will automatically turn to their ideology for direction in any situation where alternatives are not clear. This very often results in inconsistencies at the least and very ludicrous contradictions at the worst.

What position is taken by those who have given much thought to the matters of truth, theory, hypothesis, reality and so forth from the point of view of a rational approach to propositions of any kind? The answer is--partial skepticism. Partial skepticism means to maintain a positon of a linear scale between total skepticism on one end and dogmatism and authoritarianism on the other. This position is one that says "give me the facts--give me the cognitive reasons for your position on any proposition." It rejects dogmatism as a position of one whose belief exceeds his cognitive grounds for belief. It rejects utter skepticism as total denial even to the person of the skeptic himself. It treats tolerance lightly in regarding it as the position taken by a dogmatist who says "you have a right to your beliefs, his own remaining unaffected."

A point which is implied so far, but is one which is most important to the kind of thought which I hope you will achieve in your deliberations, is simply that it is not easy to think clearly. To do so we have to shed our ideologies, our prejudices, some of our education and then hope that we and our Thought Adjusters are in high gear together. The problem is, when we are not, the gears do not squeal. I do beg of you, though, to shed your ideologies as far as you are capable to so doing.

I want to turn now to our own ideology. The ideology of the URANTIA Brotherhood which has been in the process of development for over twenty-four years. No ideology can justify itself that cannot stand self-inspection and self-criticism. Only by honest self-examination can we obtain a clear understanding of ourselves and our problems.

Our own ideology is low key public profile--a very simple root metaphor to describe conservatism. And we are conservative to our roots.

One of the problems often associated with conservatism is a narrowing of viewpoint. This need not be a problem at all, if it is carefully guarded against. There is nothing in conservatism that says--this has to be so. It develops because conservatism often has to say "no," rather than "yes," and habituation being a character trait very easy to develop in human personality by repetitive situations, tends to make the same answer automatic. Of course, the same thing can happen to "yes." This "yes" is usually what happens in Liberalism.

When we admit the possibility of the development of automatic or knee-jerk reflexive responses we are in great danger of becoming very precise and thus risk loss of a very desirable factor, scope. When the scope of an organization's efforts is reduced then so are all activities admissible to it. I recently have seen some proposals for revised standards proposed by the Charter Committee. I hope they re-think them.

It is in the area of scope that I wish to direct your attention for the balance of this talk--but please--don't lose sight of what has been said about ideologies.

I am now going to refer to the scope of the activities of the URANTIA Brotherhood management and administration without in any manner suggesting or hinting that we alter our key low-profile. What I am going to suggest is that we examine the potential size of the scope of our activities to determine whether we are doing as much as is really possible--without changing our non-existent public image. Which way is our scope moving--out or in? If it is moving outward--perhaps we can encompass the world in our activities. If it is moving inward then the inevitable and final result is nit-picking and the loss of both local society autonomy and societies themselves. We should thoroughly investigate to determine much more accurately what we can do within the perimeter of our established policies.

Among several areas which appear to be worth evaluation are, first, our apparent growth by reaction only. By this I mean we have grown mostly by response to activity generated originally outside of our own organization. We apparently have interpreted our low profile to mean all we have to do is to sit tight and wait for things to happen--then respond. This is all very well until something arises we are totally unprepared and unable to cope with.

Example. A fundamentalist group enlists the aid of a respected theologian of national reputation to challenge the theology of The URANTIA Book. Because of his national standing our free press, long adept at thriving on controversy, prints several articles of dubious accuracy but of provocative nature about The URANTIA Book. We do not have here a question of logic answering error. What we have is a glaring need for someone of equal national standing to arise to our defense because the ground rules for debate will not be of our choice. The person himself could be a nationally known scientist, educator, psychologist, philosopher or another theologian--but where is he? We lost Sir Hubert Wilkens years ago by death.

We concern ourselves much over Jesus' very evident compassionate interest and regard for the common people. This is an emotionally satisfying affect to identify ourselves with the common people. Jesus, however, taught and spoke in the Synagogue until it was denied him. The three years the apostles had with him was graduate seminar work of a high level. It eventually showed, despite error.

That Jesus had full awareness of the value of the learned people of those times is evidenced by his performance in Rome. We find the story related on pages 1455 and 1456.

We are told that the chief reason Jesus consented to make the journey to Rome was his desire to study and mingle with the mixed population of Rome. We are told that the most valuable of all the manifold experiences of his six months stay there was his contact with the religious leaders there and his influence upon them. Before the end of the first week in Rome, he had located and made acquaintance with the worthwhile leaders of the Cynics, Stoics and the Mystery Cults, particularly the Mythraic group. Let us place this in a relative context. First, appreciate the fact that Christianity did not exist at that time. Therefore, the Mystery Cult leaders were also the leading theologians of their day. The Cynics and Stoics were the leading philosophers of their day. It would be today a similar event if Jesus would appear unannounced not in Rome, but at Union Theological Seminary, Boston College or elsewhere where noted theologians were in residence, thence to fly to London to talk with British Empiricists and Linqustic Analysts and then to the Continent for talks with Phenomenologists.

In your reading about these events, note particularly that he spent much of his spare time for almost six months in intimate association with these religious teachers. Remember, that out of 32, 30 remained faithful-- a batting average of .9375! Note also the following quote from page 1465, "We who view human activities from behind the scenes and in the light of nineteen centuries of time, recognize just three factors of paramount value in the early setting of the stage for the rapid spread of Christianity throughout Europe, and they are:

1. The choosing and holding of Simon Peter as an Apostle.
2. The talk in Jerusalem with Stephen, whose death led to the winning of Saul of Tarsus.
3. The preliminary preparation of these 30 Romans for the subsequent leadership of the new religion in Rome and throughout the empire.

This can provide a good object lesson for us, but don't think for a moment it will be easy. A respected philosopher of religion at the University I am now attending, a professor, told me he would not read The URANTIA Book unless I could provide mundane authority for it. Instead of striving with him, I showed him a letter which Meredith Sprunger had written to me remarking on this same professor's latest book, Religion in Planetary Perspective, and concluding with "The URANTIA Book is the greatest synthesis of theology and philosophy the world has ever seen." Signed and validated with a Ph D. The professor said, "maybe I better read this." My reply was, "Why not concern yourself with just an objective appraisal of its contents?" He said, "Yes, I think that is best." That was just a few weeks ago--the jury will probably be out for quite a while. However, since next term I will be doing a directed study under this same professor on the topic of Process Philosophy and Theology, a philosophy which suggests that God is growing right along with us, he said, "How would you like to do your Master's Thesis on The URANTIA Book?" I said, "Let's get a thorough grounding in Process thought first." It is possible, very possible, that my Master's thesis will be The URANTIA Book seen from the context of Process Philosophy.

The plans that Meredith Sprunger is evolving and the quiet methodology he will use will be quite in accord with the maintenance of a low public profile. His work will be mostly at a personal level. I feel we cannot commend him too highly for his foresight, effort, and intelligent planning.

I think we too, as we evaluate our own efforts, must give serious consideration to planning while we explore the possibilities still untouched within our low profile. Jean-Paul Sartre, French philosopher, has noted, "Man is the being who comes to himself on the basis of the future" who "defines himself by his goals." Pierre Therenaz, a young French Phenomenologist, noted, "The goals which I propose to myself or which I project revert backwards to my present position to clarify and transform it." He thus maintains that the establishing of goals gives much more meaning to all present efforts.

None of us can sit down and establish goals in a short period of time. We must begin in a very small manner. What we can do is, instead of just responding to each new situation, is to take that situation and evaluate it for hidden potential. Establish a potential projects file. Examine it on a regular basis to learn if any recurring patterns or trends are showing. Is the same situation appearing in many different places. Or do many different situations appearing in the same place indicate activity there worth investigating. Alertness may provide some surprising results.

While we are on the process of self-evaluation, I suggest we begin to learn the difference between valid constructive criticism and just plain carping. I have seen worthwhile projects fail in several areas because immature criticism was given too ready an ear. The male lion roars but the quiet female gets the job done.

This of course brings us back to ideologies. Of the major problem incidents which the Brotherhood organization has encountered in the past 24 years, I would venture that 80% have been caused by individuals whose ideologies were more important to them than the quiet operation of the URANTIA Brotherhood low profile process. Some of these reflected personal ideologies, others group-induced ideologies.

Let us look at the creative efforts too. Twenty four years ago a group of total amateurs were handed an organization practically as it is today. It early began to demonstrate a very interesting fact of group dynamics. If x individuals band together for one common purpose--complete unity--they will invariably come up with x different ways to get the job done. Each x will be absolutely certain at the outset that his is the only possible way it can be accomplished. Then a long slow process of compromise and cooperation begins and in the process each x begins to recognize and appreciate the special talents, integrity, motivation, and sincerity of all other x 's. Such has been the history of the first 24 years of URANTIA Brotherhood.

As the remnant of the teachings of Jesus provided the driving force for Christianity for 1900 years, which in turn made it the driving force for all Western civilization, pause to consider for a moment the intensity of the driving force behind the URANTIA revelation. It contains the unadulterated teachings of Jesus plus a tremendous cosmology and a theology commensurate with it. Our individual strivings are so pitifully inadequate compared to the potential we are slowly bringing to the world. We all must be exceedingly grateful to have this opportunity to do our part in this effort to carry on the message of the URANTIA Papers. We must never shy away from valid, objective self analysis and the constructive criticism arising from the same. We need not be on the defensive about anything we can justify intellectually, morally, and spiritually, but we must be certain our justification is on solid rational grounds. That is the way of real progress.