

HOW THE URANTIA BOOK HELPS US UNDERSTAND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

WHAT COMES NEXT?

by

Meredith J. Sprunger

URANTIA BROTHERHOOD
Summer Study Session
July 21 and 22, 1972

The attached speech, while perhaps based on the Urantia teachings in one way or another, should not be interpreted in any way as necessarily representing an official or unofficial pronouncement of the views or philosophy of the Urantia Brotherhood School, Urantia Brotherhood, and/or Urantia Foundation.

The author of this speech is solely responsible for the ideas and subject matter presented herein.

Direct quotations and all other material from the URANTIA Book (Copyright © 1955 URANTIA Foundation) which are used in this paper are by permission of the URANTIA Foundation.

WHAT COMES NEXT?
by
Meredith J. Sprunger

A. Urantia Book Background

1. The Urantia Book structures the past and future of our planet.
 - a. Makes our contemporary world meaningful by placing us in a historical, universe and reality setting which makes sense out of the chaos of the past and gives high purpose for development in the future.
 - b. The Urantia Book is the first totally relevant religious ideology since the advent of the age of science. It is, therefore, a basic frame of reference in understanding our contemporary world.
2. We are isolated and out of step in our planetary development.
 - a. *"Religious revelation is essential to the realization of brotherhood on Urantia." (p. 497) Spiritual transformation is a pre-requisite of true social progress. Urantian concepts appear to be our greatest hope for the spiritual transformation of contemporary man. Therefore, the Urantia Book is basic to the growing edge of our society.
 - b. We are handicapped by the problems of disease, degeneracy, war, racism, inferior education, multilingualism, and the absence of an inspiring ideology. *"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." (p. 2084)
3. Two basic things are necessary for our planet to move forward into one of the greatest epochs in human history.
 - a. A more complete revelation of the life and teachings of Jesus - an adequate religious philosophy to inspire all people.
 - b. Creative human thinking and action. We cannot depend on the heroes of the past. We must have the courage, wisdom, and inspiration to begin the creation of a new age. *"It is forever true: The past is unchangeable; only the future can be changed by the ministry of the present creativity of the inner self." (p. 1212) We need to exercise this ministry. Where we should apply this ministry is most clearly seen if we understand what is happening in the present.

B. Where Are We Now?

1. Ending romantic illusions about the past.

a. Because we lack historical perspective we often think of the "good old days" as serving greater human values than our contemporary society. This is a romantic illusion.

(1) Few would question the superiority of our material existence over that of the past.
American pioneers took months to cross the United States; today we go to the moon in a week.
The wealthy and powerful had fewer comforts than the ordinary worker today.
Life expectancy has jumped from 35 to around 70 today.

(2) It has been asserted that our technological age and mass society has deprived man of privacy and individualism. Human beings are mechanized and alienated. The fact is that there is greater concern and freedom for the individual than at any other time in history.
The pre-technological society structured everyone into the same pattern of living and anyone who did not conform was punished or made an outcast.
In the pre-technological society it was dangerous to be innovative and creative. The parameters of all behavior were set and rigidly enforced. The same patterns were followed generation after generation. The elemental freedoms concerning life style and career determinations which almost everyone has the opportunity to make were usually made by parents or other authorities in the pre-technological society.
The authoritarian societies of the past set rigid boundaries between parents and children, officials and people, supervisor and worker, men and women, and various categories of social strata. At no time in history have there been fewer boundaries and less structured alienation in society.

(3) It has been said that our age is dominated by violence. In spite of the irrationalism and violence in our world, people are less violent psychologically today than at any other time in history. Until recently we glorified war and nations promoted it as a legitimate way of life. Napoleon's army lost nearly 500,000 men and killed one million Europeans. In the Traiping rebellion in China 20 million people were killed.
In 1965 the pre-technological people of the Celebes Islands killed 350,000 people in two months. The Balinese smile and say, "A family affair, best forgotten."
The large cities of Europe until recently had execution squares where thousands of people were entertained by public hangings. In 18th century England women and ten year old children were hanged for petty theft. More than 300 crimes were punishable by death. Until recently the abolition of capital punishment was unthinkable.

Of Rome's 30 emperors 20 were assassinated. Almost half of Ireland's 78 kings were murdered. Until 200 years ago slavery was accepted throughout the world.

- b. Our technological progress had laid the foundations for social progress. No society which has not progressed through the industrial revolution can bring about the next step in social-religious evolution. The United States and Western Europe are the only nations where a super-industrial society is possible.

2. Man and society are being restructured today.

- a. Various scholars point out the present historical movement represents nothing less than the second great divide in human history, comparable in magnitude only with that first great break in historical continuity, the shift from barbarism to civilization.

Boulding observes that "as far as many statistical series related to activities of mankind are concerned, the date that divides human history into two equal parts is well within living memory."

Sir Leon Bagrit insists that automation by itself represents "the greatest change in the whole history of mankind."

- b. We are experiencing an accelerative thrust in every aspect of life. Our durational expectancies are vastly shortened. We are being conditioned to accept transience as a way of life. In our throw-away society, obsolescence is quickly attached to clothes, cars, houses, and even religion. We tend to be a nomadic society filled with many subcultures and a diversity of life styles. Alvin Toffler speaks of evolving into a super-industrial society; Brzezinski calls it the Technetronic Age.

- (1) Garry Wills analyzes some of the more radical experimental subcultures as anti-intellectual, anti-rational, substituting aesthetics for ethics, and in flight from ideology. They want no content, no interpretation, and no real organization. The movement is characterized by:

- (a) A constant need for fresh experience.
- (b) A need to be involved, to participate, to feel.
- (c) A tendency toward shocking life styles.
- (d) A revision to superstition, magic, astrology, fortune-telling, tarot cards, I Ching, witchcraft, and mysticism.
- (e) An interest in community - group groups, be-ins, feel-ins, festivals of life, Esalen Institute, Om circles, group therapy, and communes.
- (f) A taste for irrationalism and violence. They speak of "therapeutic rage".

- (2) Daniel Yankelovich in a survey of personal attitudes held by today's college students says there is a real value revolution unfolding. The main themes of this survey are:

- (a) A challenge to authority.
- (b) The search for substitutes for traditional religious values, particularly those that reflect the "Puritan Ethic."

- (c) A new sexual morality.
 - (d) A questioning of war as an instrument of policy and of patriotism itself.
 - (e) A search for cooperant rather than competitive life styles.
 - (f) Dissatisfaction with marriage in its traditional form of a one family house and two children.
 - (g) A shifting from the extrinsic rewards of career (money and status) to its inherent satisfactions.
 - (h) A change of emphasis from achievement via hard work to living in closer harmony with one's peers and with nature.
 - (i) The elevation of nature and the natural to the place of the highest good.
- c. A number of thinkers have pointed out that the most fundamental restructuring of our culture is basically religious. We are experiencing a religious revolution. Revel sees the basic issues of the revolution as: "a radically new approach to moral values; the black revolt; the feminist attack on masculine domination; the rejection by young people of exclusively economic and technical social goals; the general adoption of noncoercive methods in education; the acceptance of the guilt for poverty; the growing demand for equality; the rejection of an authoritarian culture in favor of a critical and diversified culture that is basically new, rather than adopted from the old cultural stockpile; the rejection both of the spread of American power abroad and of foreign policy; and a determination that the natural environment is more important than commercial profit." (p. 200)
- His conclusion is: "Today in America...a new revolution is rising. It is the revolution of our time. It is the only revolution that involves radical, moral, and practical opposition to the spirit of nationalism. It is the only revolution that, to that opposition, joins culture, economic and technological power, and a total affirmation of liberty for all in place of archaic prohibitions. It therefore offers the only possible escape for mankind today: the acceptance of technological civilization as a means and not as an end, and - since we cannot be saved either by the destruction of the civilization or by its continuation - the development of the ability to reshape the civilization without annihilating it." (p. 242)

C. What Comes Next?

1. Toffler points out that seventy percent of the world is living by hunting, fishing, food-foraging, and agriculture. They are the people of the past. Twenty-five percent live at the level of our industrial society. They are the people of the present. Five percent are experimenting with technological and cultural change. They are the first citizens of a world-wide super-industrial society now in the throes of birth. They are the people of the future.

- a. This upper 5% are culturally ready for the Urantia Book. As Alvin Toffler points out they stand in imminent danger of future shock. It is imperative that we find among this group those who are spiritually prepared to receive the Urantia Book. This small leaven of people may be able to furnish the leadership and ideology which will prevent widespread future shock.
2. The need for the Urantia Book to give a temporal-eternal frame of reference and an integrative universe philosophy to the coming age is seen as one reads Toffler's heroic attempt to suggest guidelines for the future in "The Strategy of Social Futurism."
"Technocratic planning is econocentric...short-range...undemocratic." (p.448)
"A new ethos emerges in which other goals begin to gain parity with, and even supplant those of economic welfare." (p. 452)
"We have no measures of the quality of life." (p. 455)
"Today as never before we need a multiplicity of visions, dreams, and prophesies - images of potential tomorrows." (p. 463)
"We also need sweeping, visionary ideas about the society as a whole... Today we suffer for a lack of utopian ideas around which to organize competing images of possible futures...Walden Two, Brave New World, and 1984 now seem over simple...no book, by itself, is adequate to describe a super-industrial future in emotionally compelling terms... We need, therefore, a revolution in the production of utopias: collective utopianism." (p. 466)
"We need to train thousands of young people in the perspectives and techniques of scientific futurism." (p. 469)
"No vision - utopian or otherwise - energizes our efforts. No rationally integrated goals bring order to chaos." (p. 471)
"Today's young radicals...like Messrs. Eisenhower, Johnson, and Nixon, they have been noticeably unable to present any positive image of a future worth fighting for." (p. 474)
"By confronting men and women with the future, by asking them to think deeply about their own private destinies as well as our accelerating public trajectories, it would pose profound ethical issues." (p. 484)
"Today unconscious adaptation is no longer adequate...man must now assume conscious control of evolution itself." (p. 485)
3. The time has come to bring the Urantia Book to the growing edge of society. There is a great need to bring this tremendous resource to those who are shaping the future. Here there is a basic evolutionary readiness. I believe we shall be judged in default of our high responsibility if we fail to carry out this task.
 - a. The greatest single concentration of the growing edge of our society is found in the colleges and universities. We need to organize a multifaceted approach to bring the Urantia Book to college campuses.
 - b. Suggestive alternatives.
 - (1) Publish an article in an intellectually oriented magazine introducing the Urantia Book.

- (2) Present a paper introducing the Urantia Book to professional societies such as the American Philosophical Association.
- (3) In addition to library placement, put the Urantia Book in college book stores on consignment (would possibly require personal contact).
- (4) Place Urantian college students on college campuses and subsidize them in organizing study groups, teach-ins, etc.
- (5) Organize a group of Urantians who would visit local colleges contacting students and faculty, distribute literature, or give oral presentations where opportunity permits.
- (6) Organize a national Urantian Chapter for college students from which local fraternities, sororities, or study groups might evolve.
- (7) Establish a speaker's bureau with relevant topics which would introduce the Urantia Book and circularize dean of students offices, fraternities, sororities, and other social college groups.
- (8) Hire a field representative to coordinate the program and contact colleges throughout the nation.
- (9) Circularize selected faculty disciplines with appropriate literature introducing the Urantia Book.
- (10) Circularize campus ministers or directors of religious activities with appropriate literature introducing the Urantia Book.

*"Western civilization was at this time intellectual, war weary, and thoroughly skeptical of all existing religions and universe philosophies." (p. 2069)

This statement could just as appropriately be written about the present conditions as well as the times of Jesus. If we are wise and zealous in the proclamation of this new and enlarged gospel, we may expect that it will also structure a whole new era of civilization.

Bibliography

- A. K. Bierman & James A. Gould. Philosophy for a New Generation. Macmillan, 1970
Kenneth E. Boulding. The Meaning of the Twentieth Century. Harper & Row, 1964.
Mary J. Dunstan & Patricia W. Garlan. Worlds in the Making. Prentice Hall, 1970
F.M. Esfandiary. Optimism One. Norton, 1970
Erick Fromm. The Revolution of Hope. Harper & Row, 1968
The Futurist. Published by The World Future Society, Washington, D.C.
Robert G. Noreen & Walter Graffin. Perspectives for the Seventies. Dodd Mead, 1971
Jean-Francois Revel. Without Marx or Jesus. Doubleday, 1970
Alvin Toffler. Future Shock. Bantam Books, 1971
"Toward the Year 2000." Daedalus, Summer 1967
Daniel Yankelovich. The Changing Campus Values. Pocket Books, 1972