

(Written especially for teachers, leaders, and outreach ministries.)

THE WORLD MISSION OF THE URANTIA BOOK

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Civilization changes course when new views of reality shift the thinking of humanity into different channels of growth. We appear to be on the edge of one of these concept transformations. Our society may be on the verge of another revolution in the way we view our world and the universe. The modern era began around the middle of the 17th century when the old scholastic authority system began to break down under the impact of empirical science. Soon even the common person came to realize that we live in a world where things obey scientific laws. For hundreds of years the scientific-technological frame of reference has shaped Western Civilization. We have made significant achievements in scientific development. But in the midst of our electronic wizardry, computers, and space travel something has gone awry; our focus on reality has blurred. There is a great confusion of values and a wide-spread sense of meaninglessness.

The Search for Spiritual Authenticity

A hunger for spiritual authenticity is moving our society toward new religious frontiers. Institutional religion is groping for a new understanding of the various expressions of our historic faith. Evangelical Christianity is unfreezing the dogmatic rigidities of fundamentalism while at the same time attempting to rediscover the spiritual verities which gave stability and power to our forbearers. Mainline Christianity is discovering the limitations of rational thought and political activism and is searching for creative spiritual growth. Our secular society has largely rejected the outmoded dogmas and anti-intellectual emotionalism of conservative churches and the sterile scholasticism and ideological doctrinaire preoccupations of liberal churches. Many of these people are seeking living faith and spiritual substance in other channels. The Spirit of God is at work in these and many other influences preparing us for a new spiritual era.

A New Vision of Reality

Thousands of balanced and perceptive people with diverse religious backgrounds believe the key to bringing about this new spiritual era is found in the

teachings of The Urantia Book. Just as our world two thousand years ago was prepared for the advent of Christ, today we are experiencing another "fullness of time" in which our society is being prepared for The Urantia Book--God's latest epochal revelatory gift to humankind. This new vision of truth confirms and integrates the best of all former revelations and enhances the spiritual truths of the traditional religions of the world.

Interfacing with World Religions

Pioneers of the Fifth Epochal Revelation must learn to relate positively with the peoples of all of the world's religions. Philosophers of religion have long observed that the religions of the world have more in common than they have in exclusive uniqueness. The Urantia Book is the most inclusive revelatory picture of religion to appear on earth. It is appreciative and constructive in its attitude toward all religion and religionists.

As we prepare ourselves to relate to the peoples of the world and their religious backgrounds, we should become thoroughly familiar with the tenets of their various faiths. It is also important to remember that within and among all religious groups there are common polarities: the educated intellectuals versus the unlearned masses, the prophets versus the priests, and the rigid conservatives versus the flexible liberals. In each religious group the educated, prophetic, and open minded are the first to recognize and accept new truth. When we look at the world religions as total entities, it appears that Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism are best prepared to receive the teachings of The Urantia Book. Although Islam is one of the most defensive and reactionary religions, it accepts the prophets of other religions in its sacred scripture and its sufis are quite open to truth from outside sources.

Working in Our Christian Culture

Although we should bring the good news of The Urantia Book to all of the world religions, Christianity is particularly prepared to receive its message. The

Christian Church is the major evolutionary religion rooted in the teachings of Jesus. The authors of The Urantia Book express a special interest in upstepping the Christian Church. They refer to Christianity as the best of the religions of the twentieth century (2083), the best exponent of Jesus' lifework on earth (2085), one of the world's greatest powers for good (2085), the cocoon in which the kingdom now sleeps (1866), and, if enhanced by the Fifth Epochal Revelation, the greatest hope of the world (2086).

Establish Common Ground

There are basic approaches which we should keep in mind when relating to any religious group. We should always start by establishing common ground. All of the religions of the world have much in common with The Urantia Book. We need to emphasize the positive aspects of each religious faith and enhance those spiritual realities which people most need and desire.

Be cautious and tactful in correcting errors when such negative communication cannot or should not be avoided. Highlight service and living faith rather than theology. Engage in fellowship and dialogue with openness while avoiding unnecessary structure and rigidity. Stress spiritual truths and avoid economic, political, and moral involvement. Spiritual truths and principles are universal. The moral and social application of these principles is determined by many environmental and developmental factors.

Importance of Local Leaders

Outreach work is best conducted by indigenous people. Those who are members of a social or religious group where interface is sought are the missionaries most likely to be effective. Work within the religious institutions of society when possible. Jesus taught within the synagogues of Judaism until he was barred from doing so. Paul was able to communicate meaningfully with the Jews of his day because he was a scholar of Judaism. Work at the point of psychological readiness and do not expect too much change in people. Allow the evolutionary process to determine their rate of growth.

Significance of Social Confrontation

Anyone familiar with the history of religious movements will appreciate the significance of social confrontation. A religious faith and philosophy does not become a force in a society until it enters a period of social challenge. No matter how irenic, loving, and wise a new and advanced religious view of life may be, it does not achieve effective communication and viability in any community or nation until it experiences a time of social confrontation.

The Urantia Book is just beginning to enter this period. The evangelicals and fundamentalists are starting to write literature in which The Urantia Book is singled out as one of the modern heresies. Dr. Sadler used to say, "When the Catholic Church places The Urantia Book on its banned list, get ready to sell a lot of books." The Catholic Church recognized this reaction and discontinued its banned list. Social confrontation is basic to the testing of enlarged spiritual truth and accompanies the growth of all new religious movements.

Rather than fearing this time of evaluation and testing, we should anticipate and welcome it. The Urantia Book can stand the most rigorous examination! And there will be some serious challenges. It will not begin to serve the nation and the world until, in each local community, it enters this period of confrontation. This marks the beginning of its public service.

Laypeople are the Catalysts of Growth

Historically religious professionals have been among the last to constructively recognize and respond to new revelation or major reform movements. For many reasons centering around personal security, institutional preservation, and professional training, ministers and priests will not read the entire Urantia Book or seriously examine it until enough laypersons in their churches or religious institutions are reading it. Although it is ethically important to introduce religious leaders to The Urantia Book early in our outreach ministry, we should realize that, in general, laypersons will be the first to recognize its quality.

Laypersons have been the founders of virtually all of the major world religions. The majority of the great advances in spiritual growth on our planet have been spearheaded by those outside the power structure of religious institutions. Laypersons will also be the key facilitators and the dynamic force spreading the good news of The Urantia Book.

The Imperative of Outreach Ministry

Outreach ministry is the most important need and the greatest latent potential in the Urantia movement today. "A New and fuller revelation of the religion of Jesus is destined to conquer an empire of materialistic secularism and to overthrow a world sway of mechanistic naturalism. Urantia is now quivering on the very brink of one of its most amazing and enthralling epochs of social readjustment, moral quickening, and spiritual enlightenment." (2082) "The gospel of the kingdom must be proclaimed to all the world." (1804)

This great mission depends on dedicated missionaries! We can be disciples who quietly live the enlarged gospel in our personal lives. This is good but not the level of dedication needed to bring this new epochal revelation to our society and the world. Only apostolic work carried out with enthusiasm, wisdom, courage, and dedication will be able to bring this transforming spiritual message to humanity. Such apostles of new truth are inevitably called to serve in the atmosphere of social confrontation. This is why Jesus warned his apostles that as bearers of new truth they would experience rejection in their own families and hostility in society. Growth is a traumatic experience for individuals and society.

Grass Roots Growth Basic

The history of the growth of religious movements teaches the importance of establishing stable groups at the grass roots level of society. Growth does not take place in a grandiose manner. It proceeds through channels of social communication to develop a viable constituency in local communities. In time, centers of influence evolve and gradually the entire culture is permeated with the new stimulus to spiritual growth.

Today we stand at the beginning of the public phase of outreach ministry in the Urantia movement. The first stage of public ministry is characterized by curiosity and indifference which is eventually followed by opposition and social confrontation. The real quality of the spiritual message is then tested by the rigors of individual and social experience. Movements become a social reality when the truths they proclaim guide and direct the lives of people in local communities.

The Challenge of This Century

Pioneering ministry is never easy; it demands vision, courage, wisdom, and perseverance. Each of us has an unusual opportunity to shape the future of our world by introducing this new inspiring revelation to our community and culture. Such a fortuitous opportunity comes to a generation only once in thousands of years. What a happy and challenging historical moment! We are standing on the threshold of one of the most promising and exciting eras of human history. I hope that each of us will respond to this challenge of spiritual destiny and, thereby, find fulfillment and joy in sharing the best "Good News" of this century!

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