



# THE URANTIAN®

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## Journal of URANTIA® Brotherhood

### TOWARDS HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

#### Editorial Viewpoint

There appears to be a growing involvement among readers of *The URANTIA Book* in the process of education, as manifested by the recent appearances of such educational endeavors as the EDUCATION UPLIFT Newsletter and THE BOULDER SCHOOL for Students of *The URANTIA Book*. When added to the ongoing summer workshops sponsored by the Education Committee of URANTIA Brotherhood, these efforts seem to signify the taking of concrete steps toward the socialization of concepts of education presented in *The URANTIA Book*.

The characteristics of what might hopefully be a more enlightened approach to education are varied, and will require continual exposure to trial and testing. Many of these characteristics have already been discussed and experimented with at the summer workshops and have found their way into the planning of dedicated groups in a variety of settings. It is truly exciting to see these concepts being actualized—to witness the growth of understanding as it is shared through the educational process.

An important concern, however, is that past experience be allowed to shed light on the pitfalls which have traditionally accompanied the art of teaching. For example, there has been a regrettable tendency toward the establishment and defense of pet educational theories similar to the historical crystallization of religious truth, giving rise to a sectarianism in education which rivals the divisions of the church.

Hopefully, our realization of the legitimate diversity of religious expression will carry over into a tolerance for differences of opinion concerning the best way to promote individual progress. Perhaps one contribution which we all, as devoted students of *The URANTIA Book*, can make toward the advancement of education is to utilize the best of our understanding of the Father's purpose in expressing, through the medium of education, a relationship with each other that takes us one step closer to Light and Life. The articles which follow represent two of the pieces in this effort to develop a mosaic of human understanding through spiritual insight.

—Peter Laurence  
Armonk, New York

*The following talk was given at the 1981 General Conference in Snowmass, Colorado.*

### A FRAMEWORK AND PHILOSOPHY FOR EDUCATION

One of our missions as students of *The URANTIA Book* is to integrate its spiritual truths with the secular realities we constantly encounter, thereby uplifting the ideologies and practicalities upon which our everyday lives are based.

We all do this in our own realms as our life styles, environments, talents, and interests indicate, and as our Father's will guides. For many of us a particular interest is education, both in our homes and in the schools. We have shared our ideas for years — along with our experiences, dreams, and problems — and we have come to be aware of the strong spiritual strains being woven through our daily contact with children. We've also begun to see how intimately the principles and purposes of education, as expressed in *The URANTIA Book*, have influenced us. Many are feeling a very strong commitment to consciously UPLIFT EDUCATION in our homes and communities so that the minds of children may seek values and meanings which will allow them to think more clearly and problem-solve with expanded awareness; so that their bodies may be trained and allowed to experience peak usefulness; so that their souls may be enriched through incorporating the harmonies of the universe with the patterns of daily living; so that we — as parents-to-be, parents, educators, and friends of children — do all we can to help them maximize their God-given abilities.

#### Integrating Education with Divine Reality

In order to progress with these desires it would seem useful to look toward truth, beauty, and goodness to provide a philosophical framework for further thinking and action. If we base educational philosophy on these three concepts we will be integrating the principles of education with divine reality. "Truth, beauty, and goodness are divine realities, and as man ascends the scale of spiritual living, these supreme qualities of the Eternal become increasingly co-ordinated and unified in God, who is love." (\*43:4) We, as parents and educators, cannot provide the actual unification of truth,



beauty, and goodness — "The unity of truth, beauty, and goodness can only be realized in the spiritual experience of the God-knowing personality." (\*2096:1) — but we can be clear in our minds as to the purpose of all universe education so that we can arrange and incorporate methods, techniques, attitudes, and curriculum into environments which are conducive to this unification. Particularly helpful are the following statements.

"All truth — material, philosophic, or spiritual — is both beautiful and good. All real beauty — material art or spiritual symmetry — is both true and good. All genuine goodness — whether personal morality, social equity, or divine ministry — is equally true and beautiful. Health, sanity, and happiness are integrations of truth, beauty, and goodness as they are blended in human experience. Such levels of efficient living come about through the unification of energy systems, idea systems, and spirit systems.

"Truth is coherent, beauty attractive, goodness stabilizing. And when these values of that which is real are co-ordinated in personality experience, the result is a high order of love conditioned by wisdom and qualified by loyalty. The real purpose of all universe education is to effect the better co-ordination of the isolated child of the worlds with the larger realities of his expanding experience. Reality is finite on the human level, infinite and eternal in the higher and divine levels." (\*43:5,6)

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Weaving a Balanced Fabric

*Balance* is an essential aspect of a philosophy based on truth, beauty, and goodness, as they provide the loom upon which are woven the daily individual experiences and insights which produce the strong fabric of wisdom and understanding. "Truth is the basis of science and philosophy, presenting the intellectual foundation of religion. Beauty sponsors art, music, and the meaningful rhythms of all human experience. Goodness embraces the sense of ethics, morality, and religion — experiential perfection-hunger." (\*647:2)

Living truth must embrace wholeness and a living spiritual reality. Likewise does this ideal throw light on patterns in education: with the whole child, the child's whole environment, the child's unique personality, special abilities, genetic make-up, and the home and family life. We must allow the child to integrate and unify through his own explorations and experiences with Truth.

"Beauty, rhythm, and harmony are intellectually associated and spiritually akin. Truth, fact, and relationship are intellectually inseparable and associated with the philosophic concepts of beauty." (\*507:3) Beauty, art, music, rhythms, and harmonies *must* be integrated into educational systems. They are a part of the basics of universe education. Within this framework an archangel admonishes us as to how to better prepare ourselves for the morontia worlds, saying "Even now you should learn to water the garden of your heart as well as to seek for the dry sands of knowledge." (\*554:6) And a Mighty Messenger discloses that "Universal beauty embraces the harmonious relations and rhythms of the cosmic creation; this is more distinctly the intellectual appeal and leads towards unified and synchronous comprehension of the material universe." (\*647:1)

The finishing prong of the loom upon which to weave an educational philosophy and structure is goodness. We, as educators and parents, must *be* good, we must realize that the children *are* good by basic nature, and we must develop an environment within which children may *do* good — to know and understand that "the good effort of each man benefits all men." Perhaps we can measure our educational attitudes in the home and community by asking ourselves if we are providing our children and their children's children with "good experiences," for which Jesus gives us some exalted criteria. "An experience is good when it heightens the appreciation of beauty, augments the moral will, enhances the discernment of truth, enlarges the capacity to love and serve one's fellows, exalts the spiritual ideals, and unifies the supreme human motives of time with the eternal plans of the indwelling Adjuster, all of which lead directly to an increased desire to do the Father's



will, thereby fostering the divine passion to find God and to be more like him." (\*1458:3)

— Sara L. Blackstock  
Albany, California

## UNDERSTANDING ISLAM TODAY

The spiritual renaissance on our planet is like a series of four waves on a lake, emanating from a common center, expanding to realize the brotherhood of man. A freshened quest for truth, beauty, and goodness ripples through the experience of many a humanist. Strong currents of monotheistic devotion stir the souls of countless spiritual descendants of Melchizedek's gospel. Many Christians are seeking and finding the water of life, the true spirit of the Master's gift to us. And the movement of students of *The URANTIA Book* carries the potential to integrate these concentric circles of realization. The purpose of this essay is to enhance our understanding and our brotherhood with Muslims.

### The Characteristics of Islam

If the steps in the growth of love are understanding, service, and wisdom, we may begin with the question, what is Islam?

The first associations that come to mind include holy wars, polygamy, the subjugation of women, taboos on pork and alcohol, fanatic revolutionary movements, and the politics of oil. We have heard of sufi mystics identifying with God and of extreme legalists, such as the pious scholar who refused to eat a watermelon because he could not determine from scripture how the Prophet would have eaten one. We know that the union of religious and political authority is a pattern based on the life of Muhammed and is common in Islam today.

The word Islam connotes peace and denotes submission, namely, to the will of God. Islam teaches a God of justice to be feared and a God of mercy to be loved. It has a concept of the brotherhood of all humankind, but emphasizes primarily the brotherhood of the followers of Islam. To get to the root of this tradition, we must grasp the meaning of its monotheism. Ask a Muslim what he believes, and four times out of five you will get this reply: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammed is his prophet." While, for an articulate monotheism, the oneness of God is capable of including diversity, for a simple monotheism, the unity of God flatly excludes multiplicity. In Islam, God has ninety-nine names and performs multiple actions—he is The Exalter and The Abaser, The Expediter and The Delayer, The Giver of Life and The Creator of Death, The Manifest and The Hidden—but God, as a Creator personality, is alone.

The alert student of *The URANTIA Book* will recognize here the heritage of Melchizedek's revelation, and

he will be delighted to discover that salvation in Islam is grasped as the reward of faith. What the alert student might not understand at first is that the proclamation of the one God is intended to deny the divinity of Christ as much as it is intended to deny every obvious and subtle form of polytheism and idolatry.

The Qur'an teaches that Allah has neither father nor mother, neither brother nor sister, neither son nor daughter. The original motivation for this denial is obvious when we imagine the polytheistic climate of seventh century Arabia into which the prophet Muhammed burst. The point of insisting on the unity of God is that (1) God needs no helpers in creation; (2) the universe is not run by a committee but directed by a single will with a unified purpose; and (3) no being, visible or invisible, powerful or lowly, can act independently of God. I have yet to meet the Muslim who can grasp that what I believe about Jesus is compatible with the essential thrust of their teaching of the one God.

### Concepts of the Fatherhood of God

Muslims have associations with the term Father that are most important for us to understand. Once, after a humanities class in which I referred to the Fatherhood of God, a Muslim student came and asked, "What picture of God do you have in your mind?" I tried to come up with a helpful answer, but could only say, "I really don't have a picture in my mind at all." He said, "Oh, we were told that westerners think of God as an old man with a beard, and when you referred to Allah as Father I thought that's what you meant." I said, "When I call God Father I mean to indicate God's sourceness, personality, and intimacy." He advised, "You should definitely explain that when you use this word." To him the word Father sounded anthropomorphic.

Muslims assume when they hear Christians or near-Christians refer to God as Father they mean the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, difficult for a student of our book to avoid bringing up the issue of the nature of Jesus when speaking about the Father with Muslims. But I take hope from the following experience: I was invited to dinner with other Muslims at the home of a student from Saudi Arabia. At dinner his wife, an American convert to Islam, said to me, "Don't you think it spoils the unity of God to think of him having a son?" Referring to her husband, I said, "Do you think the unity of Bakr is spoiled if he has a son?" There was silence all around the table, and no one made an objection.

Muslims think that Christians think that God quasi-physically impregnated Mary. They insist that Allah is not a Father. Mary was a virgin, they say, but she became pregnant merely by divine command. God says, "Be!" and the thing is. Jesus they respect as a prophet of



Islam, more ascetic and militant than the gospels show. He did not die on the cross—a person who resembled him was substituted for him. Jesus was taken directly to heaven, and we will see him again on Judgment Day. Jesus was God's messenger to his specific time and place. Muhammed's prophethood is declared to be universally valid for all time.

#### Islam in Transition

For Islam to survive as a major world religion, it must make continued progress towards a liberal option. Many sufis are beacons of God-consciousness who respect no dam of cemented tradition on the river of love. In Turkey, religion no longer dominates politics, though conservative religious parties are strong; and women are politically liberated. The Iranian teacher Ali Shari'ati presented the clearest concepts of the meaning of human freedom, the equality of men and women, and the brotherhood of all humankind. I have even heard of a group called Muslims for Jesus.

This is a time of great testing for Islam. The religion is currently tied to a legal system which is tied to the social structure of Arabia 1400 years ago. Many Muslims who enjoy a glass of wine and no longer pray five times a day are ceasing to regard themselves as Muslims. The prayer ritual is often devoid of true prayer. It is probably safe to say that a majority of professed Muslims are unwitting secularists. The sudden wealth of the OPEC countries and interaction with the West have encouraged both apostasy and a strong defensive reaction.

The augmented power of the Islamic peoples in the twentieth century has revived a popular ambition to conquer the world. They have been making converts among every race, especially in Africa. Once there were twice as many Christians as Muslims in Africa; in twenty years there may be twice as many Muslims as Christians. Islam has four great strengths as they compete with Christianity today: (1) Muslims have an excellent record on race. The Qur'an recognizes the equality of all

peoples of whatever color or class; one of Muhammed's wives was black. (2) They are not associated with western civilization, which they regard as corrupt and dying, reaping the harvest of political and economic greed. (3) Their teaching about God and Jesus is easy to understand. (4) They are preaching the one God with vividness and clarity and power.

What can we offer to Muslims? The more we learn of history, the more we appreciate the genius of the revelators in highlighting the concept of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. The evolution of Islam, I think, will require (1) recognition of the experience of sonship with the universal Father of all humankind; (2) a clarified distinction of the essence of religion from ritual, (3) the gradual separation of religion from politics, and, (4) a modified regard for the Qur'an analogous to the regard for the Bible among liberal Christians.

More than advanced understanding of religion, we can offer the hand of fellowship to our monotheistic brothers. It is unavoidable that each group regards its beliefs as superior. What distinguishes the true believer is how those beliefs are practiced.

Finally, let us refresh our sense of brotherhood with sincere Muslims with some quotations from the Qur'an: "Give glory to Allah morning and evening. Praise be to him in the heavens and the earth, at twilight and at noon.

"We created man. We know the promptings of his soul. We are closer to him than the vein of his neck.

"As for him that desires the life to come and strives for it with all his soul, his endeavors shall be rewarded by Allah.

"Have we not given him two eyes, a tongue, and two lips and shown him the two paths? Yet he would not scale the Height. Would that you knew what the Height is! It is the freeing of a bondsman; the feeding, in the day of a famine, of an orphaned relation or a needy man in distress; to have faith and to enjoin fortitude and mercy."

—Jeffrey Wattles  
Berkeley, California

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*"The brotherhood of man is, after all, predicated on the recognition of the fatherhood of God. The quickest way to realize the brotherhood of man on Urantia is to effect the spiritual transformation of present-day humanity. The only technique for accelerating the natural trend of social evolution is that of applying spiritual pressure from above, thus augmenting moral insight while enhancing the soul capacity of every mortal to understand and love every other mortal. Mutual understanding and fraternal love are transcendent civilizers and mighty factors in the world-wide realization of the brotherhood of man." (\*598:2)*

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