



THE URANTIAN®

Journal of URANTIA® Brotherhood

The following was adapted from an address given at the Allenberry Conference of URANTIA Book readers, Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania, in May, 1984.

DISOWNING THE PAST

In the late forties or early fifties of our present era, the Apostle Paul journeyed to Jerusalem, so as to confer with the Apostle Peter and with James, the younger brother of Jesus. Paul had been laboring among the Greek-speaking inhabitants of Syria and Asia Minor, but in Jerusalem there had arisen an angry hue and cry: "If those pagans would follow Jesus, let them first conform to the Law of Moses!" Waxing heated and eloquent, Paul ended the debate triumphant.

Just as the truths of Jesus' life could not be confined to the Hebrew people, so it is that the truths of *The URANTIA Book* — a restatement and expansion of Jesus' real teachings — cannot long remain encumbered by Judeo-Christian traditions!

The URANTIA Book tells us that "...Christianity is a mighty religion," (*2086:4) "...the product of the combined moral genius of the God-knowing men of many races during many ages..." (*2085:5) *The URANTIA Book* also states: "Jesus did not found the so-called Christian church, but he has, in every manner consistent with his nature, fostered it as the best existent exponent of his lifework on earth." (*2085:2)

If we truly live up to *The URANTIA Book's* ideals, someday our movement — together with the rivers of spiritual sustenance that spring forth from it — will attract the world's attention as a dynamic and inspiring exponent of Jesus' lifework. But we have not yet reached that point, and we therefore have good cause to speak softly and humbly.

* * *

In this context, how shall we develop our strategy for outreach?

In seeking to organize our thoughts, I believe we might best divide this question into three parts:

- Our own personal ministry.
- Our movement's supporting framework.
- Our mutual goals and ideals.

1. Our Own Personal Ministry

Our own *personal* ministry is, and must be, highly individual. Each of us must use methods which are suited for him or her, and which are keyed to the needs of the other person. Last September's statement from URANTIA Foundation and URANTIA Brotherhood puts it this way:

No single method of introduction is effective for everyone, hence the importance of knowing the book, and understanding the needs of your friend... Become spiritually fragrant so as to better attract people to you and to these supernal teachings. When you have exhausted your "supply" of friends to whom you have already introduced the book or the teachings, expand your circle of friends, and never become discouraged.

In all of this we only follow in the apostles' footsteps:

"Jesus knew men were different, and he so taught his apostles. He constantly exhorted them to refrain from trying to mold the disciples and believers according to some set pattern. He sought to allow each soul to develop in its own way, a perfecting and separate individual before God." (*1582:8)

And in sending the apostles and evangelists forth, Jesus gave them explicit information about spiritual attraction:

"If you, by truth co-ordination, learn to exemplify in your lives this beautiful wholeness of righteousness, your fellow men will then seek after you that they may gain what you have so acquired. The measure wherewith truth seekers are drawn to you represents the measure of your truth endowment, your right-

eousness. The extent to which you have to go with your message to the people is, in a way, the measure of your failure to live the whole or righteous life, the truth-co-ordinated life." (*1726:3)

Nevertheless Jesus sent them forth, just as today he sends us forth also.

2. Our Movement's Supporting Framework

What is the framework which supports our movement's growth? The obvious, reflex response would be to point to *The URANTIA Book* itself, as well as to URANTIA Foundation and URANTIA Brotherhood.

But that answer is *much too material-minded*.

The primal and primordial framework for our movement's growth is *God's spiritual nourishment*:

- The ministry of the Thought Adjusters.
- The watchcare of the guardian seraphim.
- The inspiration of the Spirit of Truth.

Neither should we overlook the plans and policies of many spiritual governments on high, beginning with the seraphic planetary government here — but extending to the spiritual administrations of Jerusem, Edentia, Salvington, and *beyond*.

Spiritual sustenance comes from *spiritual sources*; material manifestations are only their ephemeral reflections.

And if we follow this train of thought where it truly leads, we will then be moved to ask: Why do we suffer from such a fixation on our human groupings, as if *their* shape or content were the engine of growth?

The midways tell us that

"To Jesus the kingdom was the sum of those *individuals* who had confessed their faith in the fatherhood of God, thereby declaring their wholehearted dedication to the doing of the will of God, thus becoming members of the spiritual brotherhood of man."
*(1865:1)

In contrast, traditional Christianity has been based on:

1. *Authority* — the view that God's true word flows in certain recognized channels, and that the cumulative conventions of the collective are superior to the personal experience of the individual.
2. *Dogma* — the view that it is crucial to be taught and accept certain intellectual interpretations which are described as "fundamental doctrines" or "revealed truths."
3. *Rules of behavior* — the view that observance of specified moral and ethical norms is a sign of high spiritual standing, and is also a requirement for attaining heavenly bliss.

Can the contrast with the ideals of Jesus be any more obvious? Rather than ask its adherents to engage in an active and enthralling inner quest so as to become a *living* expression of God's love, traditional Christianity has tended to settle for *outward conformity*.

Traditions, after all, can be accepted passively; they require relatively little effort. And traditions *protect* those who *prefer* to remain detached. But let us once again listen to the midways' voice:

"Thinking man has always feared to be *held* by a religion. When a strong and moving religion threatens

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Of the overall population, how large a portion is that?

Can URANTIA Book study groups, in and of themselves, attract the interest or attention of as many as one-fourth or one-third of our fellow countrymen, without even applying the question to an equal share of all mankind?

No. In isolation, study groups are clearly insufficient.

I am not saying that study groups should be discontinued. Quite to the contrary, for I believe that study groups should be *reinforced*, and that study group members should *strengthen, deepen, and expand* their personal relationships.

But I am saying that study groups, whatever their type, are *not enough* to bring about "...the more general acceptance of the real religion of Jesus" (*2086:4), and that other kinds of spiritual observances *need to be evolved* — gradually, over an extended period of time.

I have no set formulas or pat answers, but a Brilliant Evening Star offers us some intriguing comments. For example, he declares that "Regardless of the drawbacks and handicaps, every new revelation of truth has given rise to a new cult, and even the restatement of the religion of Jesus must develop a new and appropriate symbolism." (*966:2)

Perhaps we should pause here for a brief clarification concerning the word *cult*. Webster's New World Dictionary defines it as "a system of religious worship or ritual." Thus the Brilliant Evening Star's remarks have nothing to do with the extremist sects which have received inordinate publicity in recent years.

Noting that "...a religious cult cannot be manufactured; it must grow" (*965:7), the Brilliant Evening Star tells us that

"The old cults were too egocentric; the new must be the outgrowth of applied love. The new cult must, like the old, foster sentiment, satisfy emotion, and promote loyalty; but it must do more: It must facilitate spiritual progress, enhance cosmic meanings, augment moral values, encourage social development, and stimulate a high type of personal religious living." (*966:3)

Emphasizing the importance of basing the cult "...on the biologic, sociologic, and religious significance of the home," the Brilliant Evening Star calls for the cult to "...recognize true meanings, exalt beautiful relations,

and glorify the good values of real nobility." (*966:4) "But," he says,

"a cult — a symbolism of rituals, slogans, or goals — will not function if it is too complex. And there must be the demand for devotion, the response of loyalty." (*966:6)

These profound ideas deserve considerable reflection.

When approaching the question of a cult, we must remember that what is intended is very different from what we normally experience in study group meetings; in the latter we seek spiritual insight by means of the intellect, whereas a dynamic and progressive cult affords its spiritual solace "...by fostering and gratifying emotion." (*965:5)

Yet our study groups, too, afford us an opportunity to rise above Christianity's traditional patterns of spiritual observance. Again, I believe that relationships between study group members can and should be strengthened, deepened, and expanded.

In discussing the seven psychic circles of mortal progression, the Solitary Messenger points out that

"The psychic circles are not exclusively intellectual, neither are they wholly morontial; they have to do with personality status, mind attainment, soul growth, and Adjuster attunement. The successful traversal of these levels demands the harmonious functioning of the *entire personality*, not merely of some one phase thereof." (*1209:4)

In Paper 100 a Melchizedek offers us a provocative and inspiring analysis of personal growth. In part, he states that

"New religious insights arise out of conflicts which initiate the choosing of new and better reaction habits in the place of older and inferior reaction patterns." (*1097:6)

What I am proposing is that study group members help each other deal with and overcome these inevitable conflicts, attempting to foster personal growth along every possible path. Once again I have no pat formulas to offer; but in any case, this is something which each study group should work out for itself.

* * *

to dominate him, he invariably tries to rationalize, traditionalize, and institutionalize it, thereby hoping to gain control of it. By such procedure, even a revealed religion becomes man-made and man-dominated. Modern men and women of intelligence evade the religion of Jesus because of their fears of what it will do to them — and with them. And all such fears are well founded. The religion of Jesus does, indeed, dominate and transform its believers, demanding that men dedicate their lives to seeking for a knowledge of the will of the Father in heaven and requiring that the energies of living be consecrated to the unselfish service of the brotherhood of man." (*2083:3)

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Those of you who are longtime readers of *The URANTIA Book* are familiar with these passages. And perhaps you are wondering why I bothered to cite them.

I have two reasons.

First, any call for an organization's *leaders* to take energetic *action* implies that all others should "follow the leaders" and *obey*. To me that is a long step backward — both ill-advised and dangerous.

Second, I am convinced that traditional Christianity's emphasis on evangelism and conversion pervades our psyches unawares, since our forebears mixed it with the milk we drank as children. Yet we, as readers of *The URANTIA Book*, understand that the Father bestows a fragment of himself to live in the mind of every human being who knows right from wrong, and that the lack of *information* in no way affects the quantity or quality of the Father's love. So why not make the utmost *personal* efforts of our own, but put aside our craving for an intense and unified mobilization of the group? After all, we also realize that there is no "hell" to ensnare the unknowing or unwary!

3. Our Mutual Goals and Ideals

A goal is a vision, a projection on the future. A goal is something sought for which presently is not.

Actuality embraces whatever now is. And that remains true, even though our frame of reference allows us to perceive only a very small portion of what actually now is.

In contrast, ideals relate to attitudes and methods. Our ideals are the tools with which we modify what is,

creating a new synthesis which brings us nearer to our goals.

But the future, like the present and the past, is integral, seamless. Dilemmas arise because our goals often conflict with aspects of the past and present which we cherish, and which we unwisely wish to prolong.

When looking into the distant past we can easily see this sort of contradiction. For example, *The URANTIA Book* informs us that clinging to the mother-family was one of the reasons why the Iroquois federation failed to develop into a full-fledged state. (*800:5)

Yet applying these types of insights to ourselves can sometimes be excruciating. In our minds we grasp the fact that traditional Christianity is approaching obsolescence, but in our hearts we recoil from the implications, realizing that for millions it is comfortable and familiar. The midways portray Jesus' understanding of how strongly human beings resist having to abandon old patterns of thought and behavior:

"Jesus fully understood how difficult it is for men to break with their past. He knew how human beings are swayed by the preacher's eloquence, and how the conscience responds to emotional appeal as the mind does to logic and reason, but he also knew how far more difficult it is to persuade men to *disown the past*." (*1722:5)

But *disown it we must!* For if we are to surpass Christianity, we must *rise above* its traditional practices and outlook.

* * *

To begin with, we must rise above Christianity's characteristic patterns of *spiritual observance*.

A *URANTIA Book* study group: what does it build on, where does it come from?

Can we not trace it back through several centuries of Bible study, originating in the Reformation and continuing even today as an integral part of mainstream Protestant tradition?

And like its Bible-study forerunners, do not *URANTIA Book* study groups mainly appeal to spiritually active individuals who also like to read and think, and who take pleasure in intellectual discussions?

A second aspect of *disowning the past* is rising above Christianity's racial and cultural limitations. This progressive approach primarily relates to international fellowship; but as I reflect on the personal characteristics of those I know to be active within our movement, it is clear that our membership does not even reflect the richness and diversity of our own society. Let us try harder to meet more people of African, Latin American, and Asian descent, introducing them to the teachings of *The URANTIA Book*.

The authors of *The URANTIA Book* are quite clear about the Western coloration which Christianity has acquired. A Melchizedek, describing Christianity as "...a religion well adapted to the social, economic, and political mores of the white races" (*1084:10), states that it "...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." (*1011:17)

But the midwayers provide an even more incisive portrayal of Christianity's disabilities as it struggles to expand among non-Western peoples:

"Christianity suffers under a great handicap because it has become identified in the minds of all the world as a part of the social system, the industrial life, and the moral standards of Western civilization; and thus has Christianity unwittingly seemed to sponsor a society which staggers under the guilt of tolerating science without idealism, politics without principles, wealth without work, pleasure without restraint, knowledge without character, power without conscience, and industry without morality." (*2086:6)

In its original expansion from Palestine, Christianity moved almost exclusively westward. That was an enormous mistake. Declaring that "The teachings of Jesus, as they were held by the Mesopotamian believers of the first century, would have been readily received by the various groups of Asiatic religionists" (*1432:4), the midwayers remark that "...it was regrettable that there was no one like Peter to go into China, or like Paul to enter India, where the spiritual soil was then so favorable for planting the seed of the new gospel of the kingdom." (*1430:2)

Even in Arabia, far closer to Palestine in geography and culture, early Christianity made little progress. A Melchizedek tells us that "There were numerous centers that might have responded to the Jesusonian gospel, but the Christian missionaries of the desert lands were an

austere and unyielding group..." (*1051:1) The Melchizedek goes on to state that

"Had the followers of Jesus taken more seriously his injunction to 'go into all the world and preach the gospel,' and had they been more gracious in that preaching, less stringent in collateral social requirements of their own devising, then many lands would gladly have received the simple gospel of the carpenter's son, Arabia among them." (*1051:1)

When I read that passage, seven words leap out at me: *collateral social requirements of their own devising*. These seven words contain a powerful lesson, for in another context the midwayers warn us that we should "...never make the mistake of identifying Jesus' teachings with any political or economic theory, with any social or industrial system." (*1580:6)

From all this I would draw three conclusions:

First, we should make energetic efforts to translate *The URANTIA Book* into non-Western languages, so that Christianity's linkages to Western culture and civilization do not rub off on *The URANTIA Book* as well.

Second, we should be flexible in our practical approaches to international fellowship. For example, having study groups meet in private homes works well in the United States, but this custom rests on a complex set of attitudes and outlooks which is far from universal.

Third, we should be broadminded enough to welcome and encourage peoples of different cultures to be true to the noblest aspects of their own traditions, drawing on compatible elements and combining them with their own culture's insights into *The URANTIA Book's* teachings.

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The third and probably most crucial aspect of *disowning the past* is adopting an attitude of loving consideration and tolerant kindness. Leaping from the pages of Christianity's chronicle are countless instances of exclusiveness, rigidity, and dogmatism. Time and time again minority groups put forth variant or divergent views; and time and time again these sincere believers were denounced, condemned, and persecuted, often with a fury that bordered on dementia. Of all the defects which traditional Christianity has exhibited throughout its history, this heinous narrow-mindedness is the most obnoxious and appalling.

Jesus advocated patience and generosity of mind. During the stop at Ramah, he explained to the apostles that

"True and genuine inward certainty does not in the least fear outward analysis, nor does truth resent honest criticism. You should never forget that intolerance is the mask covering up the entertainment of secret doubts as to the trueness of one's belief. No man is at any time disturbed by his neighbor's attitude when he has perfect confidence in the truth of that which he wholeheartedly believes." (*1641:4)

At Amathus Jesus told the apostles to approach their mission with simplicity and forbearance. He said:

"Introduce men to God and as the sons of God before you discourse on the doctrines of the fatherhood of God and the sonship of men. Do not strive with men — always be patient. It is not your kingdom; you are only ambassadors. Simply go forth proclaiming: This is the kingdom of heaven — God is your Father and you are his sons, and this good news, if you wholeheartedly believe it, is your eternal salvation." (*1593:1)

Thus, as the midways tell us, "... in this brotherhood of Jesus there is no place for sectarian rivalry, group bitterness, nor assertions of moral superiority and spiritual infallibility." (*2085:7) Instead of working out creeds and creating tests of religious faith, we must

live out our religion, dedicating ourselves to "... the wholehearted service of the brotherhood of man." (*1091:9) In these efforts we should associate ourselves with others, and actually cooperate "... on the basis of unity of ideals and purposes rather than attempting to do so on the basis of psychological opinions and theological beliefs." (*1091:7)

We must adopt one of the insights which the midways extracted from Jesus' late-night teachings to the apostles and evangelists: "Tact is the fulcrum of social leverage, and tolerance is the earmark of a great soul." (*1740:6)

We must also be spontaneous and natural, avoiding the creation of complex theological concoctions which outwardly appear impressive, but which really conceal an attempt to *intellectualize and control* the personal spiritual experience which wells up within us. We must remember one of the midwayer's cogent comments:

"Jesus was a teacher who taught as the occasion served; he was not a systematic teacher. Jesus taught not so much from the law as from life, by parables." (*1672:5)

And what better inspiration can we seek than Jesus, the incarnate Creator Son who was, and is, and shall ever remain "... the way, the truth, and the life." 'I (242:4)

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*"The teachings of Jesus, even though greatly modified, survived the mystery cults of their birthtime, the ignorance and superstition of the dark ages, and are even now slowly triumphing over the materialism, mechanism, and secularism of the twentieth century. And such times of great testing and threatened defeat are always times of great revelation." (*2082:9)*