



THE  
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### A THEOCENTRIC MODEL OF THE UNIVERSE

Every rational mind carries with it a sense of reality and cosmology, an inner image of the universe and the individual's place within it. For many people, their "world view" is a disorganized mass of facts, beliefs, traditions, and superstitions with the ego at the center of their vague and amorphous internalized universe. The egocentric model of the universe extends beyond the individual's self concept; it can grow to shape his created institutions into the distorting service of self. Egocentricity is most tragic in the formulation of religious institutions since those organizations operate under the pretext of advocating spirituality and selflessness.

The *URANTIA Book* represents a radical shift in man's view of the universe and the place of the individual within it. More than just a new cosmology, this revelation portrays a universe where the individual ego must alter its perception of itself within this new model of the universe and undergo changes in the personal concept of his origin, purpose, and destiny. The *URANTIA Book* uses its cosmological framework to help draw individuals out of their isolated, and often lonely, inner world. It gradually and gently induces the self to effect changes in the religious life, the inner life, where the creature can establish a meaningful relationship with the Creator.

If a term could be applied to the "world view" portrayed in *The URANTIA Book*, it might be a "theocentric" model of the universe. The universe of the fifth epochal revelation is not a boundless mass of random, chaotic stars and gasses; rather, it is a well defined association of concentric space levels with a geographic center. At the heart of this center is the dwelling place of the eternal God. All reality exists in relation to, and is ultimately controlled by, God and his magnificent residence at the nucleus, Paradise.

How does an external theocentric model of the universe in the cosmological sense affect the internal religious life of the individual? While the technique is

not identical for every reader, for some individuals there is a subtle and somewhat unconscious process which is observable over time. Through the simple act of reading, the universe (cosmology) as portrayed in *The URANTIA Book* may be gradually duplicated in the mind of the reader. In the subconscious, a living mental image of the "book" is imprinted in the brain by the protoplasmic memory process and eventually a visualization of the universe portrayed by the book illuminates the mind. A new perception of the universe, at some time, takes the place of the old model. There are numerous reasons why the book is written from the sequential and Father-centered perspective and the internalization of cosmology is one important reason to read the book from beginning to end at least once.

If you are a new reader, do not be discouraged by the fact that you may not understand what you are reading. Some insights will come as you read; others will manifest themselves during the second or third time through. There are levels upon levels of meaning in many sections which no man can speak of with authority. Remember that the book is more than an encyclopedia or a collection of proverbs and beliefs. Instead it is a revelation of the Paradise pattern, and it is meant to be understood in its entirety and as an ongoing process. Forget not that, "It requires time for men and women to effect radical and extensive changes in their basic and fundamental concepts of social conduct, philosophic attitudes, and religious convictions." (1705:1)

#### Spiritualizing the Mind

The discipline is to read the book. Read it again. Then read it some more. The imprinting process whereby new patterns of thinking become habitual requires repetitive reading. In my experience, the sentence structure and the very way the book is written are as much a part of the revelation as the information it contains. The Divine Monitor within requires spiritualized patterns of thinking in order to suggest alternate behaviors. Habitual, spiritualized techniques of thought are more long-lasting and usable in decision-making than jumbled



facts and information. Spiritualizing the mind is a life-long project which can be fostered by regular, if not daily, reading from the text.

Like many other readers, you may be interested only in the Jesus papers and the parts that ease the mind and soothe the soul. I know, when I first began reading, I was not looking to comprehend a new world view, much less expend the effort to change my carefully protected, self-centered view of reality. The importance of "the book as a whole" entered my mind most dramatically when I first read the section describing the teaching techniques of the Trinity Teacher Sons on page 215. This section outlines the reasons for adopting a personal cosmology which begins with the infinite rather than the finite and the errors of thinking that come from a finite-centered view of reality.

This section, along with other themes on the importance of offering to the Father the gift of the human will dedicated to doing the Father's will, helps to convince the intellect to accept its new place in the universe. Rather than an ego death, the process is more like an "ego-relocation." Over time, the Adjuster gives

preference and a sense of "reality" to this new God-centered model of the universe.

In a sense, we have created an internal residence for the Almighty to dwell, a residence inspired by the Paradise pattern itself. Eventually the individual finds himself living with God at the center of his inner universe, the very place where his ego was firmly entrenched some time before. He finds himself with a new mind, a new perspective, and a new sense of well-being in an orderly and friendly universe.

For some individuals whose religious identity is closely associated with their cosmological perspective, these world view shifts can sometimes be very threatening. Such an occasion was caused by the Copernican revolution. In the sixteenth century, Copernicus succeeded in changing the cosmological model of the universe from a geocentric image (the perception of the earth as the center of the universe) to a solar system model which stated that the planets, including the earth, revolved around the sun.

The churches resisted this advanced concept because it challenged the notion that God was concerned with the welfare of earth to the exclusion of all other activities. If the planet were not at the physical center of the universe, it followed that perhaps it was not at the spiritual center either. Some religious teachings still resist the notion of other populated worlds; their concept of God lacks a cosmic perspective. Institutional religions have been known to persecute individuals over seemingly insignificant cosmological details.

The egocentric religion is characterized by an emphasis on personal matters, such as "what is in it for me" rather than the divine perspective, "what can I do for others." This view is discussed in the section entitled "The Meaning of the Death on the Cross" on pages 2016-2017. "All this concept of atonement and sacrificial salvation is rooted and grounded in selfishness. Jesus taught that *service* to one's fellows is the highest concept of the brotherhood of spirit believers. Salvation should be taken for granted by those who believe in the fatherhood of God. The believer's chief concern should not be the selfish desire for personal salvation but rather the unselfish urge to love and, therefore, serve one's fellows even as Jesus loved and served mortal men." (\*2017.4)

Woven throughout these complex religious issues is a thread intertwining the formulation of religious insitutions with ego satisfaction. The shallow and self-centered forms of religious expression are ultimately incompatible with the higher types of religious experience, but they often persist due to a cultural time lag as one

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form of religious comprehension is gradually replaced by a new and higher form. We are told that "Until the races become highly intelligent and more fully civilized . . . large numbers of men and women will continue to show a personal preference for those religions of authority which require only intellectual assent..." (\*1729:3)

There are further admonitions: "If vanity be enlarged to cover pride, ambition, and honor, then we may discern not only how these propensities contribute to the formation of human associations, but how they also hold them together, since such emotions are futile without an audience to parade before." (\*765:7) Our friends continue, "Real trouble, lasting disappointment, serious defeat, or inescapable death can come only after self-concepts presume fully to displace the governing power of the central spirit nucleus, thereby disrupting the cosmic scheme of personality identity." (\*142:1) And moreover, we read "Only with revealed religion did autocratic and intolerant theologic egotism appear." (\*1012:4)

Jesus was free of these eccentric and egocentric religious tendencies. The midwayers comment that, "... in all his intense mission and throughout his extraordinary life there never appeared the fury of the fanatic nor the superficial frothiness of the religious egotist." (\*2088:4) Then, the Master tells us, "Therefore do my disciples show wisdom in that they do not bring too much of the old order over into the new teaching..." (\*1655:5)

#### Purpose of Religious Organization

If it can be understood that *The URANTIA Book* represents a wholistic approach to Deity and reality, that it portrays a theocentric model of the universe with the individual existing within a larger reality, that selfless service, not ego-gratification, is the objective of the religious urge, then we can more clearly understand the purpose of religious organization and guide the new religious assemblies toward better ideals of religious undertaking.

To further illustrate this important cultural transition, I wish to draw from the life of Stephen, the first person to be martyred for his faith following the death of Jesus. His life is recognized by the midwayers as being one of the most significant factors in the evolution of the Christian faith.

Stephen was introduced to the gospel through the work of Rodan and the Greek believers. "These able Greeks did not so much have the Jewish viewpoint, and

they did not so well conform to the Jewish mode of worship and other ceremonial practices. And it was the doings of these Greek believers that terminated the peaceful relations between the Jesus Brotherhood and the Pharisees and the Saducees." (\*2068:2)

Peter and his early church had taken great pains to keep from antagonizing the Jews, portraying the new revelation as a harmless subset of mainline Judaism. Together with a practical desire to keep from being martyred, the Jerusalem believers were endeavoring to maintain the cultural traditions of their Jewish members. Rodan, Stephen, and the Greeks were not predisposed to create a religious institution, much less conform to the practices of an existing one. Greece had no organized religion as such during that era, and the more intellectual Greeks understood more clearly than Peter, the preacher, the international and nonsectarian nature of the Master's true gospel.

While Stephen was killed for antagonizing the Jewish leaders, he was also challenging the Jesus Brotherhood to pursue ever wider avenues of religious expression outside of their cultural conditioning. Had it not been for the dramatic public teaching of Stephen, Peter's minor subset of Judaism might have disappeared into oblivion, a mere footnote in the history of the Jews rather than becoming the international faith that helped foster the modern civilized era.

It may not be directly analogous, but it appears to me that the ongoing tendency to formulate a religious institution along the lines of the Christianity model is similar to Peter's attempt to fit the teachings of Jesus into the context and the format of Judaism. Many current book readers come from a largely Christian experience and their natural tendency is to make the fellowship associated with *The URANTIA Book* revelation another subset of Christianity. This attitude may be described as the "putting new wine in old wineskins" syndrome.

This proclivity is very understandable and seems proper on the surface, but if it is left unchecked, it may make the spread of the fifth epochal revelation more difficult in the years to come. Some guidance relating to the future spread of revelation is found in paper 185: "These various groupings of Christians may serve to accommodate numerous different types of would-be believers among the various peoples of Western civilization, but such division of Christendom presents a grave weakness when it attempts to carry the gospel of Jesus to Oriental peoples. These races do not yet understand that there is a *religion of Jesus* separate, and somewhat apart, from Christianity, which has more and more become a *religion about Jesus*." (\*2086:1)



For non-Western religionists, former agnostics, and the numerous disillusioned former churchgoers who are among the ranks of book readers, a forum for religious egotists will not serve their new united purpose of fostering a living and selfless world faith which is centered in each individual's inner life. Perhaps sufficient wisdom will develop and evolve among all readers to shun the ambitious institution-makers enabling the democratic assemblies to weed out the egoistic tendencies as they appear.

It may be that the need for a dramatic awakening of *The URANTIA Book* reader community, like Stephen provided the early Christian church, will not be necessary. The evolution of group religious experience can proceed gradually and progressively without the sudden upheaval of a dramatic crisis. We are cautioned that "It is all too true that such a church would not have survived unless there had been men in the world who preferred such a style of worship. Many spiritually indolent souls crave an ancient and authoritative religion of ritual and sacred traditions." (\*2085:7)

As I see it, two organizational tasks of any religious democracy are to balance the egotistic ambitions of charismatic leaders and to continually recognize and remove the retrograde tendency to substitute the outer institution for the inner spiritual experience as it may appear. When formulating creeds or religious belief statements, we need to continually emphasize the fact that religion is a personal matter between man and his Creator. Family religion must be encouraged and the home-based study group fostered. My personal suggestion is that institutional religious activities should be deemphasized until the new home-based religious movement evolves and has had the opportunity to create its own forms and activities.

Jesus predicted these emerging shifts in the social world view when he said, "And now we are about to enter upon a deadly conflict with such a religion [of authority] since we will so shortly begin the bold proclamation of a new religion — a religion which is not a religion in the present-day meaning of that word..." (\*1730:1)

While *The URANTIA Book* represents a new age dawning for cosmologists who seek harmony between the theories of evolution and creation and for those believers who relate to religion unselfishly by placing God in his rightful place at the center of reality, this new model of the universe is not for everyone. For example, we read, "Only when man has become sufficiently disillusioned by the sorrowful disappointments attendant upon the foolish and deceptive pursuits of selfishness, and subsequent to the discovery of the barrenness of formalized religion, will he be disposed to turn wholeheartedly to the gospel of the kingdom, the religion of Jesus of Nazareth." (\*2083:4)

It is not enough to believe in *The URANTIA Book* or any of its supernal teachings. It does a soul little good to simply agree that God lives at the center of the cosmos. Similarly, oversimplifying the religious nature by relegating it to a mere catch-phrase can delude even well-meaning persons into settling for something less than a personal experience with the living God. Two of the purposes of the celestial authors as stated in the Foreword of *The URANTIA Book* are "... to expand cosmic consciousness and enhance spiritual perception ..." (\*1:2) The material and the spiritual *can* come together into a unified faith without the one becoming dominant over the other.

If the mind can be directed by the personality to resist belief fixation and to be open to life-integrating and liberating truth levels, the "theocentric" model of the universe as presented in *The URANTIA Book* presents a slow but effective process whereby the egocentric individual can be freed from the limitations of self through progressive identification with Deity as provided for in the ascension plan.

As individuals, we are enjoined to seek salvation *from* rather than *for* self and to find in God that inner peace and more noble type of courageous living that comes from dedicating the will to the doing of the Father's will. As Jesus taught, "He who loses himself in me shall find everlasting life."

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*"All religions teach the worship of Deity and some doctrine of human salvation. . . . The religion of Jesus is salvation from self, deliverance from the evils of creature isolation in time and in eternity." (\*67:4)*

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