

COMMUNICATING A SPIRITUAL IMAGE OF THE URANTIA BOOK
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Let me start off with a question. What comes to mind when you think of Roman Catholicism? The pope? The emphasis on ritual? Rosaries? Authority? Heavy institutionalization? Cathedrals? What about Buddhism? Shaved heads? Lotus leaves? Stillness? The point I'm trying to make is that every religion has a public image -- a shorthand -- by which it becomes known to the general public. This shorthand is made up of a very few simple elements.

The same will be true of The URANTIA Book. Those who hear about it, read about it: those without first-hand contact with the book will reduce the whole URANTIA Book, in their minds, to just a few simple concepts.

How does this shorthand public image form? It happens every time a URANTIA Book reader talks about the book to a non-reader. Each time you talk to someone who is curious about the book, a public image is formed to some degree. Granted, talking to the religions editor of Time Magazine would have more impact than talking to your next door neighbor. But each contact plays a part in the formation of the public image.

The question is, what is the best way to present The URANTIA Book to non-readers? I'm not talking about seeking publicity for The URANTIA Book. I believe, as most of you do, that the long range interest of the mission of the book will best be served by avoiding publicity for the book as long as possible. What I am addressing is, what happens when they come knocking on our doors -- when we can no longer graciously avoid the question, "What is this URANTIA Book?"

There are different types of information that could be presented. They fall roughly into three categories:

1. The institutional -- information about the Foundation, Brotherhood, the history of the movement.
2. The non-spiritual content of The URANTIA Book -- cosmology, anthropology, historical, political, and scientific portions of the book.
3. The spiritual content of the book -- everything concerning God and his relationship to man, spiritual values.

It is important to make the distinction that the first two categories are facts, while the third category is truth -- living spiritual truth.

Remember, the public image of The URANTIA Book will be made up of a few simple ideas. It is important that the shorthand image of the book should focus on the third category, the great spiritual truths of the book, rather than the institutional or the non-spiritual facts.

If the president of the World Council of Churches should call you on the telephone next week and ask you about The URANTIA Book, the wisest course would be to impart the spiritual ideas of the book. If he were to ask about the organizations and non-spiritual content, answer briefly and to the point, but always return to the spiritual truths. This is where you should place your greatest emphasis. If the only thing he can remember three days later about his conversation with you is, "God is our Father; we are all brothers", you can count the contact as a success in forming a positive public image.

I would like to talk about two types of non-readers you are likely to encounter. These are religionists from other traditions and inquirers from the public media. With both groups it is important to stress the spiritual content of the book. What is the best way to present The URANTIA Book to these two groups?

The first group are the religionists. Drawing upon my own personal experience of talking with other religionists, I note three things: First the majority of them react very positively to ideas of God as Father to all people; that all religionists are brothers and sisters in God's larger family. We are all on different paths to the same goal -- God. It is hard for them to disagree with this truth. Second, stay with your experiential description of your personal relationship with God. This sits well with most religionists. Try to avoid doctrinal discussions, and intellectual and theological disagreements when you are talking to someone steeped in another tradition. Third, do not try to convert them to The URANTIA Book. Your goal is to convey an image of what the book is all about, not to convert them to it. That would provoke a hostile reaction. When they tell their friends about the book, based on what they have gleaned from their conversation with you, be sure that they received a spiritual, gracious, and positive image.

What are the media people looking for? They are looking for a story; something that is vivid and would grab the public's attention. That is the key to how you will respond to them. Make your spiritual story as vivid and strong as you can possibly make it. The idea, of course, is to avoid publicity as long as possible, but if you can't avoid publicity, then make your pitch as powerful, strong, and attractive spiritually as you possibly can! Again, deemphasize the institutional -- the Societies, the General Council, the Brotherhood, and the non-spiritual. Provide this information only if you are asked for it.

This leads to a very important point, The Boy Scout Motto, "Be Prepared"! If you are going to present The URANTIA Book

to non-readers effectively, you will have to prepare yourself for it. Prepare and organize the institutional information and the non-spiritual content, so that if you are asked, you can present it briefly, simply, and then move on to the spiritual content. Get through it quickly. Practice presenting the ideas informally in conversations, then when you are under pressure, you will be able to present the book in a seemingly spontaneous, yet highly effective, way so that you don't fumble for words.

When talking to a non-reader about the book it is vital to use your spiritual resources. What do I mean by spiritual resources? There are midwayers, angels, our Thought Adjusters, the Spirit of Truth standing by trying to reach us to give us the help we need. Have faith, pray for wisdom and guidance. Ask for help from our unseen friends while you are trying to help your mortal friend. Allow love from the Father to flow through you to the other person. Really love him or her as a brother or sister.

There are two ways to communicate with the other person. That you say to the person is important. But what you are -- how you treat him, relate to him -- leaves a much deeper, more lasting impression about you and about The URANTIA Book. Months later, he may have forgotten what you said about the book, but he will remember how you treated him. He will remember the manner in which he was treated more than what he was told about The URANTIA Book.

Five hundred or a thousand years from now, how will super-human administrators judge whether The URANTIA Revelation has succeeded or failed? I think that if the recognition that God is the loving Father to each of us; that we are all brothers and sisters in his family -- if those become prominent in our civilization -- then The URANTIA Book's mission will be judged a success.

But if these central truths are relegated to some dark corner on the sidelines of civilization, as has often been the case in the past, then The URANTIA Book will be judged as having failed in its mission.

Each time we talk with our fellow human beings about The URANTIA Book we have the choice of emphasizing these central spiritual truths or neglecting them. The success of the mission of The URANTIA Book depends upon our choices. I would like to share with you in closing some thought of the Brilliant Evening Star from Page 966, Lines 4-11, "Regardless"

Let us always seek our Father's guidance in carrying out our responsibilities.