

***INTERFAITH DIALOGUE***

***AND YOU***

## INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

"It is a fallacy for any group of religionists to conceive of their creed as *The Truth*; such attitudes bespeak more of theological arrogance than of certainty of faith. There is not a Urantia religion that could not profitably study and assimilate the best of the truths contained in every other faith, for all contain truth."

*The Urantia Book 92:7.3*

Interfaith dialogue and the development of mutual appreciation between the world's great religious traditions is of paramount importance to the future of the planet. We are global villagers, and, as such, must learn to appreciate the variety of faith expression that we find surrounding us.

With the advent of the nuclear age and more than 100 wars on the planet since the end of World War II, the development of new modes of personal interaction are of critical importance. The ability to dialogue with another person in a manner that promotes mutual respect and a desire to cooperate is a skill to be learned by all of us. With cybertravel making communication globally instantaneous, we are challenged to adopt the attitudes which promote interfaith understanding.

"Have we not all One Father?  
Hath not *One God* created us all?"

*Malachai 2:10*

## THE ETHICAL BASIS FOR DIALOGUE

Each of the great religious traditions provides the context for interfaith dialogue in its expression of the golden rule.

### *Hinduism*

*"This is the sum of duty: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you."*

*Mahbharata 5:1517*

### *Judaism*

*"What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the entire Law: all the rest is commentary."*

*Talmud, Shabbat 31a*

### *Buddhism*

*"Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."*

*Udanavarga 5:18*

### *Confucianism*

*"Is there one maxim which ought to be acted upon throughout one's life? Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you."*

*Analects 15:23*

### *Christianity*

*"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the word of the Law and the Prophets."*

*Matthew 7:12*

### *Islam*

*"No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself."*

*Sayings of Muhammad*

The golden rule calls for a higher level of relationship between personalities. It calls for an understanding appreciation of the infinite value of personality and the sacredness of our relationships. It calls us to relationship, to experience the spiritual value and fullness of each and every relationship that we have while sojourning on this planet.



## DIVINE LOVE AS THE BASIS FOR DIALOGUE

The Urantia Book describes the depth of God's love for each and every person on the planet:

*"The love of the Father absolutely individualizes each personality as a unique child of the Universal Father, a child without duplicate in infinity, a will creature irreplaceable in all eternity. The Father's love glorifies each child of God, illuminating each member of the celestial family..." 12:7.9*

The Urantia Book also makes it very clear that divine "love can become real to mortal man *only* by passing through that man's personality as he in turn bestows this love upon his fellows." 117:6.10

Knowing how much God does love us and with our desire to bring peace to the planet, we are called to enter into an intimate relationship with God wherein we experience the fullness of God's love for us, and then share that love with others. Jesus calls us to love our brothers and sisters with a *fatherly love, loving each other even as Jesus loves us.*

Such love requires a genuine interest in the dialogue partner, a recognition of that person's integrity, as well as an empathetic appreciation of their faith stance. Inherent in such loving regard is the sincere desire to find a higher level of unity in the course of the dialogue that will result in an enhanced relationship between the two dialogue partners.

*And so I give you this new commandment: That you love one another even as I have loved you. And by this will all men know that you are my disciples if you thus love one another."*

*The Urantia Book 180:1.1*

## THE INTERFAITH ATTITUDE

Understanding the need for dialogue and the ethical basis upon which it is grounded, it is important to understand some of the attitudes that either inhibit or promote dialogue. In as much as these attitudes affect our experience with each other they affect our experience with the divine.

### AN ATTITUDE THAT INHIBITS DIALOGUE

This attitude responds to another person as being of lesser value, outside of God's intimate circle of believers, due to their different faith stance. This attitude tends to be exclusivistic; it exists within the great traditions as well as between them. In this attitude the religionist conceives of "my faith" as *The Truth, the One and Only Truth*. It contains more pride than faith and tends to mask a certain degree of fear under the guise of "the one true faith".

### AN ATTITUDE THAT PROMOTES DIALOGUE

Jesus' faith was anchored in the experience of God's love; he was confident, but not proud; he was God-assured, not self-assured. He was wholly consecrated to a manifestation of God's living love. He could express such profound faith precisely because his faith was tethered firmly to the living experience of God's love.

Jesus understood that "there is not a Urantia religion that could not profitably study and assimilate the best of the truths contained in every other faith, for all contain truth." 92:7.3 That is why he visited the library in Alexandria to study the world's religions; that is why he participated in the interfaith lectures at Cymboyton's temple of religion on the shores of Lake Urmia.



Jesus taught that what is important in our faith relationships with God and each other is the attitude that we bring to them. If we are to avoid dogmatic intolerance we must examine our faith attitude. A proper attitude is born out of our relationship with God and finds its destiny in that relationship. Jesus taught specifically that there are four faith attitudes that must be reflected in our lives if our faith is to prove real and effective. It is within these faith attitudes that we find the pathway to genuine interfaith as well as intrafaith dialogue. The discussion of these attitudes is to be found at paper 140, section 5 of The Urantia Book.

*"Happy are the poor in spirit-the humble"*

The recognition of our own spiritual poverty and the need for connection with the divine within our relationships with one another is essential. A humble soul is a "teachable and truth-seeking" soul. This is the first step on the spiritual journey. Humility creates the soul capacity for genuine relationship, both with God and our sisters and brothers.

*"Happy are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness"*

Herein lies the desire for "a living spiritual connection with true spiritual forces" and the expression of divine values. According to the Urantia Book truth, beauty and goodness represent our highest concepts of divine value. We have the opportunity to share these values with others, both as giver and as receiver, through the process of genuine dialogue. It is upon the basis of these values that interfaith harmony will one day prevail. Interfaith dialogue cannot exist merely on the basis of an intellectual appreciation of values; it must rise to the level of an experiential manifestation of those values. It must also be willing to acknowledge these values in others.

*"Happy are the meek"*

Meekness entails the willingness to listen sympathetically and to learn from the other, an openness to the experience of the divine from whatever direction it may come. Meekness "embraces patience and forbearance and is motivated by an unshakable faith in a lawful and friendly universe." This attitude is one of cooperation, seeking the divine will.

*"Happy are the pure in heart"*

Purity refers to the faith which we should have in each other; "that faith which man should have in his fellow man; that faith which a parent has in his child, and which enables him to love his fellows even as a father would love them... always looking for the best in man." 140:5.12 Such faith enables us to look past the color of our skin, the scripture that we read, the holy house that we attend, to the essential commonality of all humankind, realizing that we are truly family.

The above faith attitudes, Jesus taught, promote spiritual insight. It is through such insight, *grounded in the intimate experience of God's love*, that genuine dialogue occurs. It is through such an experiential insight that we truly come to appreciate the magnitude of God's loving regard for all his creation. It is through such insight that we are divinely empowered to interact with our dialogue partner in a manner that is both empathetic and friendly, as a peacemaker. Jesus challenges us to experience the deepest levels of our faith, faith that is capable of making all things new and of bringing peace and goodwill to the planet. The quest for such spiritual insight and the experiential realization of such divine love is the greatest adventure of our short mortal existence.



## INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND YOU

In the course of your daily adventure on this planet you are bound sooner or later to encounter people of other faiths. If you are Christian you will inevitably someday encounter a Moslem and the principles and attitudes of interfaith dialogue will help you in your relationship. In fact, the principles of interfaith dialogue will enrich the fabric of all of your relationships. As you begin to practice these principles, you will learn that dialogue is *always* more effective than debate. In sum, interfaith dialogue simply involves the principles of peace and goodwill, living love in all of our relationships.

The Jewish theologian and philosopher Martin Buber described how each of our relationships contains the key to our divine possibilities and that it is in our relationships we greet and become the divine. To the extent that we deny or depersonalize the other person through an exclusivistic attitude, we depersonalize ourselves and the world; we turn the "divine thou," that "child without duplicate in infinity" into "an impersonal it." Recognizing the uniqueness of each personality, we should embrace a faithful attitude and engage each person along our path as the key to our own spiritual transformation and to an era of light and life on our planet.

"Whether globally or locally, the household provides the context for understanding one another, not as strangers, but as neighbors. Mutual understanding may well lead to mutual transformation, as each of us begins to catch a glimpse of the glory as seen by the other. And above all, it provides the context in which the commitments of our faith can enable us to join with one another to solve the problems of our interdependent world."

*Diana Eck*



Remember Ganid's question to Jesus, "Why do you occupy yourself so continuously with these visits with strangers?"

Jesus answered: "Ganid, no man is a stranger to one who knows God. In the experience of finding the Father in heaven you discover that all men are your brothers, and does it seem strange that one should enjoy the exhilaration of meeting a newly discovered brother? To become acquainted with one's brothers and sisters, to know their problems and to learn to love them, is the supreme experience of living."

*The Urantia Book 130:2.6*

You are encouraged to continue your exploration of the world of interfaith dialogue. You are encouraged to explore the variety of interfaith activities in your own community. For more information on the great religious traditions of the planet and their attempts to create an atmosphere of unity "A Source Book for Earth's Community of Religions", edited by Joel Beversluis, is an excellent resource guide (CoNexus Press, PO Box 6902, Grand Rapids, MI 49516). For information on an interfaith council near to you, contact the North American Interfaith Network (PO Box 1768, Dallas, TX 75221). For more information write to: The Interfaith Committee, % The Fellowship for Readers of the Urantia Book, 529 Wrightwood, Chicago, IL 60614, if you have any questions regarding interfaith activities and resources.

*May God Bless You  
And Your Spiritual Path  
Making you a channel of His Love  
And an instrument of His peace*

(Spiritual).  
Ultimate Practices

1. Living in the Presence of God
2. Manifesting the Fruits of the Spirit

Bro. Lawrence

"Practicing the Presence of God."

Buddhist - mindfulness

Value must have a reflected  
Fact & meaning

Jesus as the divine proportion.