

The Challenges of Faith in the Quest for Cosmic Citizenship

David Kantor

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[1114:2](#) [101:7.4](#) "The great difference between a religious and a nonreligious philosophy of living consists in the nature and level of recognized values and in the object of loyalties. There are four phases in the evolution of religious philosophy: Such an experience may become merely conformative, resigned to submission to tradition and authority. Or it may be satisfied with slight attainments, just enough to stabilize the daily living, and therefore becomes early arrested on such an adventitious level. Such mortals believe in letting well enough alone. A third group progress to the level of logical intellectuality but there stagnate in consequence of cultural slavery. It is indeed pitiful to behold giant intellects held so securely within the cruel grasp of cultural bondage. It is equally pathetic to observe those who trade their cultural bondage for the materialistic fetters of a science, falsely so called. The fourth level of philosophy attains freedom from all conventional and traditional handicaps and dares to think, act, and live honestly, loyally, fearlessly, and truthfully." ... *The Urantia Book*

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Introduction

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Introduction

Everyone reading this study has begun the journey of faith; a journey whose destination we understand to be the presence of the Universal Father whose nature is ultimate reality, ultimate beauty, ultimate goodness, ultimate truth and divine love. While our creative spiritual imaginations provide us with insight into the nature of the goal of our journey of faith, we sometimes find ourselves puzzled and confused regarding the best way to attain that goal.

I would like to share with you a road map of the portions of this journey which we are likely to encounter during our lives here in this world as we progress from infancy to old age. The authors tell us that if we embark upon this journey, ". . . you are sure to encounter, and if you have the courage, to traverse, the rugged hills of moral choosing and spiritual progress."

If we know something about the path ahead, which winds through these rugged hills of moral choosing, perhaps we will be better equipped to deal with the uncertainty and difficulty which *The Urantia Book* guarantees we will encounter.

The Urantia Book refers to this process as the ascent through the psychic circles -- the path which leads from the first moments of self-consciousness in childhood, to a consciousness of universe citizenship later in life. It is important to understand that this ascent through the psychic circles relates to personality integration with the Supreme Being. Hence, growing through the psychic circles involves the attainment of ever more meaningful levels of functional personality integration with the social milieu in which we find ourselves living. We become more real as we achieve increasing integration with the lives and purposes of others in combination with a pursuit of the Father's will.

647:5 56:10.14 "The universe is a whole; no thing or being exists or lives in isolation. Self-realization is potentially evil if it is antisocial. It is literally true: "No man lives by himself." Cosmic socialization constitutes the highest form of personality unification. Said Jesus: "He who would be greatest among you, let him become server of all."

As human beings we each have many concerns which demand our attention in our daily lives. We are concerned about our needs for shelter, food, clothing, economic security for our families, education and health care for our children. We have concerns about social and political matters. We also share some concerns about our spiritual lives and our personal relationships with God.

To help us think about these matters I would like to share some questions with you. These are questions which you should answer for yourself. Your answers will help you gain a deeper perspective on the primary elements of your spiritual life.

Some questions about those things which occupy your attention

1. In daily life, to which tasks do you devote your best time, energy and thinking?
2. What are the causes, dreams, goals or institutions to which you contribute time or creative effort?
3. As you live your life, what power or powers do you rely on and trust?
4. To what or to whom are you committed in life? In death?
5. With whom or with what group do you share your most sacred and private hopes for your life and for the lives of those you love?
6. What are your most sacred hopes, your most compelling goals and the primary purposes in your life?

These questions are intended to help you become more aware of those realities which truly occupy the center of your life and command your creative attention.

Let's try to summarize all these questions with another question -- What is the central value, or set of values, relative to which all of your other life situations are evaluated or subordinated? Stated another way, "What is your ultimate concern in life?"

Do you structure your life around the needs of your job or career? Do you evaluate everything on the basis of how it will effect you economically? Do you base your major life decisions on what you believe people in your community might think of you? Is your life structured around the needs of your family?

That which truly constitutes our personal religious life is the devotion with which we pursue that which is of greatest importance to us -- that which we believe will bring fulfillment and meaning to our life. Our personal religion may be wholly material, social or spiritual, but we each have elements in our lives which we pursue with religious devotion. The task of religious growth as it relates to cosmic citizenship and personality integration, is to make sure that those central values to which we are devoted -- our ultimate concerns -- are truly spiritual in nature and cosmic in scope. The reason for this is to be sure that we don't develop our lives relative to some temporary phenomenon in the universe which will one day collapse and require us to start over.

1100:3 100:6.1 "Religion is not a specific function of life; rather is it a mode of living. True religion is a wholehearted devotion to some reality which the religionist deems to be of supreme value to himself and for all mankind. And the outstanding characteristics of all religions are: unquestioning loyalty and wholehearted devotion to supreme values. This religious devotion to supreme values is shown in the relation of the supposedly irreligious mother to her child and in the fervent loyalty of nonreligionists to an espoused cause."

Carefully evaluating the above questions will give us an idea of how our personal religious life appears when evaluated on the basis of the ideas given in *The Urantia Book*. In *The Urantia Book's* view of personal religious experience, the behaviors in which we engage as we pursue whatever reality we deem to be of supreme value, these constitute our religious life. From a psychological perspective, that to which we are supremely devoted plays the role of God in our lives.

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ur God may be our career, our bank account, our family, our social image, or a role we play in a human institution or organization.

Important as each of these are, if they are treated as the highest center in our lives, they become idolatrous because they take a position in our inner lives which should be dominated by our personal relationship with the Father and the desire to do his will.

I am not suggesting that we sacrifice these important and necessary elements of our personal lives. What is required is that we subordinate them to the pursuit of the Father's will. That is to say, when we make decisions regarding our family lives, our careers, our economic needs, our social roles we learn to make them relative to a sincere seeking of the Father's will -- our consideration of God and our desire to do his will in all things must become our supreme value. Thus our spiritual experience can come to coordinate and integrate all of the other concerns which affect us in daily life.

Given this understanding of the religious life, what is faith? Why is it important? How does it grow and develop over the course of a human lifetime?

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1. Faith as Ultimate Concern

What is faith? For purposes of our discussion today we will consider faith to be our attitudes of devotion to that which is of greatest concern to us in life.

In much of the highly competitive developed world, economic success is the god to which many people are devoted. They may go to church on Sunday and consider themselves to be religious but their ultimate concern is with their economic success. Faith is a state of being ultimately concerned; the nature of one's beliefs is significant in the life of the believer, but it does not matter for the formal definition of faith.

[1780:5](#) [160:5.3](#) "The object of religious devotion may be material or spiritual, true or false, real or unreal, human or divine. Religions can therefore be either good or evil."

[1088:7](#) [99:3.6](#) "Many individual social reconstructionists, while vehemently repudiating institutionalized religion, are, after all, zealously religious in the propagation of their social reforms."

Faith is not an act of the rational mind – it is not a creation of the will. Neither is it an act of the unconscious. But it is an act in which both the rational and the nonrational elements of our being are transcended. Faith exists prior to any attempt to derive it from something else because any such attempt is itself an indicator of the existence of faith.

We are driven toward genuine spiritual faith by our awareness that we somehow belong to the infinite. Faith is similar to love in that we do not own love like a possession, but rather discover it as a quality of our interpersonal relationships. We learn how to enhance love, how to increase its presence through loyalty and devotion. Faith is like this; we cannot own it like a possession but we experience it as a quality of our orientation toward that which is of ultimate concern to us. And, as is the case with love, we learn how to enhance it and increase its power through loyalty and devotion.

Faith has been described as "the infinite passion" – it is a passion for the infinite.

In true faith the ultimate concern is a concern about that which is truly ultimate. In idolatrous faith, finite realities are elevated to the rank of ultimacy. The inescapable consequence of idolatrous faith is deep disappointment, a disappointment which penetrates into the very heart of our existence. Idolatrous faith finds its center in something which is more or less on the periphery. Therefore, the devotion of idolatrous faith leads to a loss of the center and to a disruption of the personality. The ecstatic character of even an idolatrous faith can hide this consequence only for a certain time. But finally it breaks into the open.

He who enters the sphere of faith enters the sanctuary of life. Where there is true spiritual faith, there is an awareness of holiness. The human heart yearns for the infinite because that is where our finite nature wants to rest. In the infinite, the finite sees its own fulfillment. The feeling of being consumed in the presence of the divine is a profound expression of our relation to the holy. It is implied in every genuine act of faith, in every state of ultimate concern.

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2. Faith, Doubt, Risk, and Courage

An act of faith is an act of a finite being who is attempting to orient himself with respect to the infinite. It is a finite act with all the limitations of a finite act. Faith is certain in so far as it is an experience of the holy. But faith is uncertain in so far as the infinite to which it is related is understood by a finite being. This element of uncertainty in faith cannot be removed, it must be accepted. And the element in faith which accepts this uncertainty is courage.

In the courageous acceptance of uncertainty, faith shows most visibly its dynamic character. Where there is daring and courage, there is always the possibility of failure. And in every act of faith this possibility is present. The contents of our ultimate concern, whether it be our nation, our material success, or God himself, are concerns whose real nature may not be accessible to immediate awareness. But the risk must be taken.

There is risk if what was considered as a matter of ultimate concern turns out to be a matter of temporary or transitory concern – as for example, the attainment of social status. The risk to faith in one's ultimate concern is that what was considered to be a matter of ultimate concern may prove to be a matter of transitory concern. This is indeed the greatest risk we can take in life. For if it proves to be a failure, if that to which we have devoted ourselves turns out to have been a temporal creation of our imagination, the meaning of our life breaks down; we find that we have surrendered ourselves to something which is not worthy of such surrender.

The most destructive form of doubt is not a doubt about facts or conclusions. Genuine skeptical doubt is an attitude of actually rejecting the possibility that we can be certain about anything. It is a doubt about whether it is possible to understand anything as being true. Therefore it cannot be refuted logically. Such an attitude necessarily leads either to despair or cynicism. And often, if this alternative becomes intolerable, it leads to indifference and the attempt to develop an attitude of complete unconcern. Skeptical doubt may serve an awakening and liberating function, but it also can prevent the development of a centered personality.

[1766:4](#) [159:3.8](#) "Faith is to religion what sails are to a ship; it is an addition of power, not an added burden of life. There is but one struggle for those who enter the kingdom, and that is to fight the good fight of faith. The believer has only one battle, and that is against doubt--unbelief."

But the doubt which is inherent in faith is not skeptical doubt. It is the normal, healthy doubt which accompanies every risk. It does not question whether or not a certain proposition is true or false; but it is aware of the element of insecurity in every concept which we attempt to elevate to the level of that which represents the infinite.

At the same time, the doubt which is a part of faith accepts this insecurity in an act of courage. Faith includes courage. Therefore, it can include the doubt about itself. Any act in which courage accepts risk is an indicator of the existence of faith.

[1223:3](#) [111:7.1](#) "Uncertainty with security is the essence of the Paradise adventure--uncertainty in time and in mind, uncertainty as to the events of the unfolding Paradise ascent; security in spirit and in eternity, security in the unqualified trust of the creature son in the divine compassion and infinite love of the Universal Father; uncertainty as an inexperienced citizen of the universe; security as an ascending son in the universe mansions of an all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving Father.

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3. Faith and Community

In order to explore the content of our faith we need language and stories. The religious language of sacred stories is created in the community of believers and cannot be fully understood outside this community. But within the community, the religious language enables the act of faith to realize a richer content because it embodies the combined experience of many truth seekers. Faith needs its language; without language and stories, faith could not be conscious of itself. This is the reason why faith communities are important.

When we participate in study groups we not only study *The Urantia Book*, but we also become more aware of the experiences and insights of others; we are enriched and we contribute to the strengthening of faith by the manner in which we participate

1094:2 100:0.2 "Spiritual growth is mutually stimulated by intimate association with other religionists. Love supplies the soil for religious growth--an objective lure in the place of subjective gratification--yet it yields the supreme subjective satisfaction. And religion ennobles the commonplace drudgery of daily living."

The problem which arises here is that the community itself, with its own needs and attractions, stands in danger of replacing the life of faith. Communities of believers must evolve in a way which facilitates the relationship between God and each participant. The challenge for the community is to learn how to mobilize faith in the hearts of believers without becoming obsessed with ideology, without becoming an idolatrous replacement for the spiritual faith which originally led to the creation of the community

1487:1 134:4.4-9 "Religious peace--brotherhood--can never exist unless all religions are willing to completely divest themselves of all ecclesiastical authority and fully surrender all concept of spiritual sovereignty. God alone is spirit sovereign.

"You cannot have equality among religions (religious liberty) without having religious wars unless all religions consent to the transfer of all religious sovereignty to some superhuman level, to God himself.

"The kingdom of heaven in the hearts of men will create religious unity (not necessarily uniformity) because any and all religious groups composed of such religious believers will be free from all notions of ecclesiastical authority--religious sovereignty.

"God is spirit, and God gives a fragment of his spirit self to dwell in the heart of man. Spiritually, all men are equal. The kingdom of heaven is free from castes, classes, social levels, and economic groups. You are all brethren.

"But the moment you lose sight of the spirit sovereignty of God the Father, some one religion will begin to assert its superiority over other religions; and then, instead of peace on earth and good will among men, there will start dissensions, recriminations, even religious wars, at least wars among religionists.

"Freewill beings who regard themselves as equals, unless they mutually acknowledge themselves as subject to some supersovereignty, some authority over and above themselves, sooner or later are tempted to try out their ability to gain power and authority over other persons and groups. The concept of equality never brings peace except in the mutual recognition of some overcontrolling influence of supersovereignty."

Another problem faced by communities of believers deals with faith and doubt within the community of faith itself. The question is whether the dynamic concept of faith is incompatible with a community defined by creedal expressions or which relies on shared beliefs for the maintenance of social coherence. Such a situation will lead to problems if it excludes the element of doubt regarding the truth of the shared meanings which define the social boundaries of the community. The concept of the "infallibility" of a creed, shared beliefs, a decision by a council, a bishop, or the contents of a book excludes doubt as an element of faith in those who subject themselves to these authorities. They may have to struggle within themselves about their subjection; but after they have made the decision, no doubt can be admitted by them about the infallible statements of the authorities. Such a faith has become static, a non-questioning surrender not only to the ultimate, but also to its symbolic expression as formulated by the religious authorities. In this way something preliminary and conditional – the human interpretation of the content of faith is treated as if it were ultimate and is elevated above the risk of doubt. This is idolatrous faith because its object is a human formulation which is merely representative of the infinite, but not the infinite itself.

When I speak of the "content of faith," I am referring to the stories, rituals of expression, and other factors which enable us to socialize our faith experience – to share it with other travelers on the journey. The "object of faith" is the infinite; the "content of faith" consists of the stories we tell ourselves and each other about the nature of the infinite and our relationship to it.

Pride and fanaticism are the unmistakable symptoms of doubt which has been repressed. Doubt is overcome not by repression but by courage. Courage does not deny that there is doubt, but it accepts doubt as an inevitable expression of its inability to fully grasp the infinite. Real courage does not need the safety of an unquestionable conviction or belief. Real courage enables us to live with the risk without which no creative life is possible. Living faith is not a matter of doubtless certainty, but rather a matter of daring courage which accepts the possibility of failure.

When we talk about the possibility of failure in relation to faith, it is important to understand that the real risk of faith is in the domain of what we have chosen to believe is true about reality as a result of our experience of the presence of the infinite. There is always the chance that our beliefs have been constructed upon erroneous assumptions, or that they have been created by unmet needs of our unconscious minds.

Without an element of doubt we lose the power to have a faith capable of powering an unending quest for truth which includes constant critical evaluation, discarding of illusions and restructuring of the content of faith. Thus we are equipped to pursue the quest for the infinite itself, rather than becoming paralyzed by centering our lives on a set of beliefs which merely represent the infinite.

Communities of faith must be sure that they include a means for criticism and self-correction. *The Urantia Book* notes that "Religion can be kept free from unholy secular alliances only by . . . a critically corrective philosophy." In this same section the revelators suggest guarding against fanaticism "by the compensations of the scientific mental attitude."

One of the great dangers in the formation of religious communities is a paralysis of spiritual growth which occurs when members of the community construct their social identities out of the roles they imagine themselves to be playing in the community. This difficulty is compounded when those social roles are reinforced by other members of the community. Genuine spiritual growth will eventually demand the abandonment of identity based on roles played in human social systems.

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4. Faith and Belief

One of the most ordinary misinterpretations of faith is to consider it an act of knowledge that has a low degree of evidence. In this situation, we are speaking of “belief” rather than “faith.” Often this takes the form of a type of knowledge which not only has a low degree of evidence, but which is supported by religious authority. In this case, an act of will by the believer is supposed to compensate for the lack of evidence to support the belief.

The Urantia Book has a whole section devoted to this topic with additional material on page 1108. I encourage you to review this important material as part of this study. These selections contain some of the clearest commentary about the nature of faith and belief in *The Urantia Book*.

[1114:5](#) [101:8.1](#) "Belief has attained the level of faith when it motivates life and shapes the mode of living. The acceptance of a teaching as true is not faith; that is mere belief. Neither is certainty nor conviction faith. A state of mind attains to faith levels only when it actually dominates the mode of living. Faith is a living attribute of genuine personal religious experience. One believes truth, admires beauty, and reverences goodness, but does not worship them; such an attitude of saving faith is centered on God alone, who is all of these personified and infinitely more.

"Belief is always limiting and binding; faith is expanding and releasing. Belief fixates, faith liberates. But living religious faith is more than the association of noble beliefs; it is more than an exalted system of philosophy; it is a living experience concerned with spiritual meanings, divine ideals, and supreme values; it is God-knowing and man-serving. Beliefs may become group possessions, but faith must be personal. Theologic beliefs can be suggested to a group, but faith can rise up only in the heart of the individual religionist.

"Faith has falsified its trust when it presumes to deny realities and to confer upon its devotees assumed knowledge. Faith is a traitor when it fosters betrayal of intellectual integrity and belittles loyalty to supreme values and divine ideals. Faith never shuns the problem-solving duty of mortal living. Living faith does not foster bigotry, persecution, or intolerance.

"Faith does not shackle the creative imagination, neither does it maintain an unreasoning prejudice toward the discoveries of scientific investigation. Faith vitalizes religion and constrains the religionist heroically to live the golden rule. The zeal of faith is according to knowledge, and its strivings are the preludes to sublime peace."

[1108:3](#) [101:3.4](#) "Through religious faith the soul of man reveals itself and demonstrates the potential divinity of its emerging nature by the characteristic manner in which it induces the mortal personality to react to certain trying intellectual and testing social situations. Genuine spiritual faith (true moral consciousness) is revealed in that it:

1. Causes ethics and morals to progress despite inherent and adverse animalistic tendencies.
2. Produces a sublime trust in the goodness of God even in the face of bitter disappointment and crushing defeat.
3. Generates profound courage and confidence despite natural adversity and physical calamity.
4. Exhibits inexplicable poise and sustaining tranquillity notwithstanding baffling diseases and even acute physical suffering.
5. Maintains a mysterious poise and composure of personality in the face of maltreatment and the rankest injustice.
6. Maintains a divine trust in ultimate victory in spite of the cruelties of seemingly blind fate and the apparent utter indifference of natural forces to human welfare.
7. Persists in the unswerving belief in God despite all contrary demonstrations of logic and successfully withstands all other intellectual sophistries.
8. Continues to exhibit undaunted faith in the soul's survival regardless of the deceptive teachings of false science and the persuasive delusions of unsound philosophy.
9. Lives and triumphs irrespective of the crushing overload of the complex and partial civilizations of modern times.
10. Contributes to the continued survival of altruism in spite of human selfishness, social antagonisms, industrial greeds, and political maladjustments.
11. Steadfastly adheres to a sublime belief in universe unity and divine guidance regardless of the perplexing presence of evil and sin.
12. Goes right on worshipping God in spite of anything and everything. Dares to declare, "Even though he slay me, yet will I serve him."

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5. Faith, Love, and Action

The concern of faith is identical with the desire of love; union with that to which one belongs and from which one feels estranged. We could even ask, "Is there such a thing as love without faith?" There is certainly love without the acceptance of doctrines; faith as a set of accepted and defended doctrines does not produce acts of love. But faith as the state of being ultimately concerned implies love – the desire and urge toward union with that from which we feel separated. The more love is present, the more faith has conquered its demonic-idolatrous possibilities.

An idolatrous faith which gives ultimacy to a secondary concern stands against all other secondary concerns and excludes love relations between the representatives of contrasting claims. The fanatic cannot love that against which his fanaticism is directed, for "love is the desire to do good to others." Idolatrous faith is also confronted with the challenge of repressing the doubts which always characterize the elevation of something secondary to a level of ultimacy.

Lastly we must understand that faith as a state of being ultimately concerned reaches out into the world as action. This is faith which seeks to transform and unite with God all that which appears to be separated from him.

[2047:6](#) [192:2.2](#) "If you love me, Peter, feed my lambs. Do not neglect to minister to the weak, the poor, and the young. Preach the gospel without fear or favor; remember always that God is no respecter of persons. Serve your fellow men even as I have served you; forgive your fellow mortals even as I have forgiven you. Let experience teach you the value of meditation and the power of intelligent reflection."

[1780:5](#) [160:5.3](#) "If something has become a religion in your experience, it is self-evident that you already have become an active evangel of that religion since you deem the supreme concept of your religion as being worthy of the worship of all mankind, all universe intelligences. If you are not a positive and missionary evangel of your religion, you are self-deceived in that what you call a religion is only a traditional belief or a mere system of intellectual philosophy."

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6. The Element of Religious Concern – The Content of Faith

Again, when I speak of the “content of faith” I am referring to the beliefs, stories, rituals of expression, and other factors which enable us to socialize our faith experience – to share it with other travelers on the journey.

Faith is never experienced in isolation from some form of content. It is experienced in, with and through it's content -- the ideas, language, stories, and rituals of a faith community. An analytic mind can understand the content of faith as being something different from the the spiritual experience of faith.

The Urantia Book contains stories about reality which help us understand our experience of faith as it relates to a personal universe -- a universe structured around relationships between personalities and personality systems. For most of us, these stories form a significant part of the content of our faith. Many people in our world use stories from the Bible or some other sacred text to accomplish the same spiritual purpose -- the illumination of the values which enable us to progress in our moral and spiritual lives.

What is important to appreciate is that the goal of our experience of faith is infinite, while the stories with which we attempt to understand and to socially express this experience of faith are finite. Therefore we should be aware from the beginning that our stories, our understandings, our sacred texts, our revelations, are always going to fall short of fully expressing that to which they point. It is a fact that, because of our extreme finitude as human beings, any way in which we attempt to symbolize the infinite is going to be very limited.

The Urantia Book refers to the paradigms within which we do our thinking and choosing as “universe frames and we find a brief overview of the topic on page 1260. The revelators comment that,

[1260:2](#) [115:1.1](#) "Partial, incomplete, and evolving intellects would be helpless in the master universe, would be unable to form the first rational thought pattern, were it not for the innate ability of all mind, high or low, to form a universe frame in which to think. If mind cannot fathom conclusions, if it cannot penetrate to true origins, then will such mind unfailingly postulate conclusions and invent origins that it may have a means of logical thought within the frame of these mind-created postulates. And while such universe frames for creature thought are indispensable to rational intellectual operations, they are, without exception, erroneous to a greater or lesser degree.

"Conceptual frames of the universe are only relatively true; they are serviceable scaffolding which must eventually give way before the expansions of enlarging cosmic comprehension. The understandings of truth, beauty, and goodness, morality, ethics, duty, love, divinity, origin, existence, purpose, destiny, time, space, even Deity, are only relatively true. . . . Man must think in a mortal universe frame, but that does not mean that he cannot envision other and higher frames within which thought can take place."

Farther on in this study, when we discuss the stages of faith, we will see that the ascent through the psychic circles involves moving through a series of universe frames. We live within each one for a season, learning and growing. These are paradigms, frames of reference constructed of meanings and values. But sooner or later there comes a breakdown of our conceptual scaffolding, our universe frame, and we must move on to a more expanded one within which we can experience further growth.

One of the great dangers of religious life is that we can easily mistake a particular “universe frame” for reality itself and become arrested in our development. This is the basis of religious conflict and religious wars. When we have an experience of the presence of God, this experience may be made possible because of a relationship we have with a book, with a person, with a group, with a place, with an object, with a piece of music – almost anything is capable of mediating the presence of God to us. The problems begin when we mistake the medium through which the presence of God is experienced for the experience itself.

These concepts should help us understand the nature of doubt. Once we have embarked upon the journey of faith, that which is at risk when we find ourselves doubting, is the content of our faith. We might find ourselves asking, “Does *The Urantia Book* really contain the truth about reality?” Or we might ask, “Does the Bible really contain the truth about reality?” We may have doubts about whether or not a particular book is a faithful guide which can be trusted to lead us to our goal. But the fact that such doubts disturb us is proof in itself that faith is operating in our lives – we are ultimately concerned even when we are experiencing doubt about the way in which we understand or express our involvement with that ultimate concern.

If we understand this, and if we understand why *The Urantia Book* warns us about “the relativity of concept frames,” we can more easily appreciate why a ruthless quest for truth must ever be our guiding principle. If we are truly growing in our faith experience, we will move through a number of “universe frames” during our mortal lives, each providing a conceptual environment within which we can experience growth, but each of which stands in danger of becoming an idolatrous substitute for the transcendent goal of faith -- an idolatrous substitute which can prevent further growth.

The remainder of my presentation will be devoted to sharing with you the road map of the faith journey which I mentioned earlier. We’re going to review the various stages of faith through which we pass on our mortal journey. We will also consider the psychological and spiritual crises which characterize the transitions between these stages.

[1097:6](#) [100:4.2](#) “Religious perplexities are inevitable; there can be no growth without psychic conflict and spiritual agitation. The organization of a philosophic standard of living entails considerable commotion in the philosophic realms of the mind. Loyalties are not exercised in behalf of the great, the good, the true, and the noble without a struggle. Effort is attendant upon clarification of spiritual vision and enhancement of cosmic insight. And the human intellect protests against being weaned from subsisting upon the nonspiritual energies of temporal existence. The slothful animal mind rebels at the effort required to wrestle with cosmic problem solving.”

We will find that meaningful growth demands a willingness to experience difficulty.

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7. Introduction to the Stages of Faith Development

In a study of The Urantia Book, it becomes possible to construct a model of spiritual development in which there are specific stages through which we pass on our journey from infancy to old age.

In paper 180 we're told about the four levels of the Golden Rule. In paper 101 we're told about four levels of philosophy. Hidden away in paper 5 is a discussion of four levels of the realization of values. And in paper 110 the seven psychic circles are described as "progressive levels of consciousness of experiential relationship to the Supreme Being -- cosmic citizenship."

If we attempt to find some correlation between these developmental stages, a model emerges which fits nicely with developmental stages of psycho-social growth identified by Erick Erickson, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and James Fowler.

Please note that not everyone fits into the pattern which is described here. Some people move through all the stages; others move slowly through some of the stages but not all of them; the majority of people find equilibrium at a particular stage and never move on at all.

It is also important to appreciate that these stages refer to faith attitudes which dominate the decision-making processes of the personality. For example, we may be in intellectual accord with the idea that all men and women are our brothers and sisters, but this does not mean that we have yet reached the place of social or spiritual maturity where we make our all our value choices relative to this idea.

These stages of faith may be understood as paradigms within which our lives as persons take place. We'll consider each of these stages to be conditioned by five factors which are:

1. Personal values
2. Social values
3. Supportive stories
4. Faith experience
5. Faith challenges

We will proceed this morning by looking at each stage of faith and the changes which occur in the five elements as we progress through life.

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8. Primal Faith: The personality foundations of the faith adventure

There are some important precursors to faith which develop between infancy and the beginning of language acquirement.

Fundamental faith attitudes are established almost exclusively as a result of the relationship between the newborn child and its caretakers. *The Urantia Book* refers to parenthood as “the supreme responsibility of human existence.” Jesus “exalted family life as the highest human duty.” I refer you as well to the conversation which Jesus had with John Mark about the importance of early home life in Paper 177.

In this early stage of life the seeds of trust, courage, hope and love must be nurtured in an environment in which fears of abandonment, inconsistencies and deprivations may be present. The quality of personal interaction, the strength of trust, autonomy, hope and courage developed in this period support all that comes later in faith development.

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Stage 1 Faith: Intuitive/Projective Faith

The faith experience at this stage consists of the attitudes which we form toward our interactions with our primary caregivers.

Stage 1 Personal Values

In this stage personal values center completely around the needs of the self.

Stage 1 Social Values

In this stage we learn how to manage life by imitating our primary caretakers. We are powerfully influenced by their examples, moods, actions and the characters in the stories they tell us.

Ideas of justice and fairness are viewed in terms of punishment and reward.

We assume without question that the experiences and perceptions we have of life represent the only available perspective and that this perspective is identical to that which is held by everyone else.

Stage 1 Supportive Stories

Imagination, stimulated by stories, gestures and symbols, and not yet controlled by logical thinking, combines with intuition and feelings to create long-lasting images that represent both the protective and threatening powers in our life.

Stage 1 Faith Experience

We experience faith as trust in primary care givers. Our beliefs are unconsciously assimilated from the basic beliefs and attitudes of family members.

Stage 1 Faith Challenges

The challenge of this period results from the emergence of rational thinking combined with the arrival of a Thought Adjuster. At the heart of this transition is a growing concern to know how life works and to clarify for ourselves the distinctions between what is real and what only seems to be real.

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Stage 2 Faith: Mythic/Literal Faith

The emergent strength of this stage is the forming of stories of faith; stories which help to explain our role in social systems, and which contain our first symbolizations of the mysterious and the unknown. At this stage we experience entrance into the seventh psychic circle. Cosmic citizenship becomes potential here because the personality has exhibited the capacity to make choices relative to the well-being of other personalities.

Stage 2 Personal Values

In this stage other people are viewed in terms of how they will impact the needs of the self to feel secure, needed, loved, free, important, and esteemed.

A basic form of moral judgment emerges which is based on ideas of reciprocal fairness. "I did this for you, now you must do this for me."

Understandings of God in this stage also take on a pattern of reciprocity. We engage in prayers and acts of praise in an attempt to store up God's good favor against times when special help or forgiveness may be needed -- we try to make "deals" with God.

Stage 2 Social Values

The boundaries of social consciousness in this stage extend to people who "are like us" in familial, ethnic, racial, class and religious terms.

The locus of authority is in the family and the family's immediate community. People in authority roles recognized by the family become authority figures for us. Experiences in school and exposure to mass media create the beginning of awareness that a larger world exists than that of the family and immediate community.

Stage 2 Supportive Stories

If we picture the flow of our lives as a river, this stage tells stories that describe our perspective from the middle of the river. In this stage we do not have the ability to step out on the bank beside the river and reflect on stories about the nature of the river itself.

In this stage we begin to take on for ourselves the stories, beliefs and observances that symbolize belonging to our community.

Stage 2 Faith Experience

In this stage we place full trust in our primary care givers and the values of our significant community. We become idealists and assume that everyone and everything should be perfect -- family, friends, teachers, school, neighborhood and church. "Perfection" at this stage is understood to be conformance to the values of our significant community.

We tend to possess a great degree of certitude; we have complete confidence in our perceptions (things are either black or white) and in our opinions (we are always right).

Stage 2 Faith Challenges

Our transition into Stage 3 begins with the discovery that there are competing stories whose meanings contradict each other. This leads to reflection on those various meanings. The transition to more formal thinking makes such reflection possible and necessary. Previous literalism breaks down and an overconfidence in our own assessments leads to disillusionment with previous teachers and teachings. Conflicts between authoritative stories must be faced. For example, conflicts between the Genesis story of creation and evolutionary theory. The discovery of such conflicts as well as growing awareness of a greater world create the need to find some means of unifying the increasingly diverse content of mind and experience.

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Stage 3 Faith: Conventional and Synthesized Faith

In this stage faith attitudes are synthesized from one's own experience combined with the attitudes expressed within one's significant social communities. The emergent strength of this stage is the forming of identity and the shaping of a personal faith. In many people this stage is sustained throughout life.

Stage 3 Personal Values

In Stage 3, values center on the support of roles which we imagine ourselves to be playing in the social environment. Moral judgment is based largely on interpersonal expectations and implicit understandings reached between people.

Stage 3 Social Values

In stage 3, other persons are known and evaluated in terms of their supposed personal qualities and interpersonal ways of relating.

Our self-image is increasingly derived from roles we imagine ourselves to be playing in our families and in our peer relationships. In a strongly religious person, identity at this stage is usually derived from an imagined role in a powerful mythological story or drama.

Stage 3 Supportive Stories

The forming of a personal myth is a primary element of this stage -- the myth of our own becoming. We create this personal myth by incorporating stories of our past and anticipated future into our understanding of the world.

Because at this stage our religious hunger is for a God who knows, accepts and confirms our deepest self, with its developing myth of personal identity and faith, it is not surprising that many of the images for transcendence that appeal to us in this stage have the characteristics of a divinely personal significant other, such as a personal saint, angel, companion or other divine being.

Stage 3 Faith Experience

In this stage, the growing extensions of social boundaries lead to the synthesis of a world view derived from stories and symbols of the family, religion of the family, peer group beliefs, and mass media.

At this stage, faith must provide a coherent orientation in the midst of an increasingly complex and diverse range of involvements. Faith must unify values and information; and it must provide a basis for temporal identity.

Stage 3 faith typically has its rise and ascendancy in adolescence, but for the majority of people it becomes a permanent place of equilibrium. It is a "conformist" stage in the sense that it is acutely tuned to the expectations and judgments of other people. It does not yet have a sure enough grasp on its own identity and autonomous judgment to construct and maintain an independent perspective.

At Stage 3 we acquire an "ideology," a more or less consistent clustering of values and beliefs, but we have not examined it and in a sense are unaware of having it. Differences of outlook with others are experienced as differences in "kind" of person.

Stage 3 Faith Challenges

At this stage, formal operational thinking, with its new capacity for reflection on our own thought and ways of experiencing, invites us mentally to step outside the flow of life's river and to analyze the process. From a vantage point on the river bank, we can take a look at the flow of the river as a whole.

Faith at this stage is "synthetic" in that it is non-analytical; It develops as a result of choosing various meanings and values which exist in the social environment and which are implemented in the behaviors of significant persons in our social communities.

A discussion of values and beliefs by a Stage 3 person is a means of asserting his or her solidarity with the community which is considered one's own and from which social identity is derived. This person does not discuss values in order to be sure that they accurately reflect cosmic reality. Rather, in discussions he or she seeks to establish a sense of commonality with significant other individuals or members of a significant community. In fact, at this stage intellectual analysis of the elements of faith is often viewed as a lack of faith, a failure of faith, or a betrayal of faith.

The dangers or deficiencies in this stage are twofold. The expectations and evaluations of others can be so compellingly internalized that later autonomy of judgment and action can be jeopardized. Interpersonal betrayals may give rise either to despair about the possibilities of a personal God or to a compensatory intimacy with God which is not really related to practical matters of daily life.

Factors contributing to the breakdown of Stage 3 and to readiness for transition may include: serious clashes or contradictions between valued authority sources, or the encounter with experiences or perspectives that lead to critical reflection on how our beliefs and values have formed and changed, and on how "relative" they are to our particular group, education or background.

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Stage 4 Faith: The Reflective Faith of an Individual

The emergent strength of this stage is the reflective construction of a personal ideology and the formation of a vocational dream with its imagined social identity.

Stage 4 Personal Values

In this stage we become conscious of being an individual with values which may differ from those held by our significant social groups. But we are still not likely to attend to the unconscious factors influencing our judgments, beliefs and behaviors.

Stage 4 Social Values

In Stage 4 we construct a perspective more aware of social systems and institutions.

The ability to function relative to social systems seems to be the key to breaking through the third psychic circle. Just as the making of a moral choice indicates the presence of a personality ready to begin the process of developing interpersonal relationships, so does the ability to function consciously as a living part of a social system indicate potential for functioning consciously as a living part of the Supreme. This means that we have become capable of making moral choices which are simultaneously relative to the welfare of a social system as well as to the welfare of specific individuals comprising that social system. This is the point at which we are assigned a personal seraphic guardian of destiny. This seraphim will then work to guide us through the remaining circles, toward functional identity with the Supreme and true cosmic citizenship.

Many people complete only half of the transition to Stage 4. By virtue of experience, many persons come face-to-face with the relativity of their perspectives on life. But they fail to interrupt their reliance on external sources of authority, -- and may even strengthen their reliance upon them -- in order to cope with the insecurity of this relativity.

Stage 4 Supportive Stories

Rational thinking dominates; symbols and stories which were meaningful in earlier stages are consciously rejected although they inevitably continue to operate unconsciously. The dominant story of this stage is often a vocational dream with its projected identity in the social milieu.

Inherited beliefs and stories are replaced with stories and symbols of the scientific and philosophical world.

Stage 4 Faith Experience

For those who have previously enjoyed an unquestioning relationship with God and to their fellow worshipers through a set of religious symbols, the Stage 4 translation of the meanings and values of religious symbols into the elements of rational thought can bring a sense of loss, dislocation, grief and even guilt. Of necessity, if we are to make this transition, we must grapple with doubt and we must have the courage to take the risk of moving forward to wherever the unflinching quest for truth might take us.

[1773:5](#) [160:1.8](#) "The solution of life problems requires courage and sincerity. Only honest and brave individuals are able to follow valiantly through the perplexing and confusing maze of living to where the logic of a fearless mind may lead. And this emancipation of the mind and soul can never be effected without the driving power of an intelligent enthusiasm which borders on religious zeal. It requires the lure of a great ideal to drive man on in the pursuit of a goal which is beset with difficult material problems and manifold intellectual hazards."

Stage 4's strength has to do with its capacity for critical. But there is danger in this strength. An excessive confidence in the conscious mind and in critical thought can create excessive self-confidence. At this stage there is usually passionate attachment to the philosophical or metaphysical universe frames which we construct for ourselves.

Stage 4 Faith Challenges

The task of this stage is the construction of an individual world view based on critical, reflective thought.

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Stage 5 Faith: Integrative/Expanding Faith

Unusual before midlife, Stage 5 knows intimately the sacrament of defeat and the reality of irrevocable commitments and acts. Its emergent strength is the ability to live with paradox and to develop a sense of responsibility for the world which spans beyond the attainables of one's lifetime.

Stage 5 Personal Values

Stage 5 involves going beyond the rational systems and clear boundaries of Stage 4 to include our unconscious processes. In this stage we must come to terms with the fact that the conscious ego is not master in its own house. Stage 5 understands that the content of faith, as well as the symbols and stories used to understand and share faith, are all shaped by unconscious processes.

The disrupting trends of our unconscious processes are one of the great problems of religious life. If we fail to consciously establish a uniting center of values, relative to which we attempt to relate *all* of the processes of our inner lives -- including our unconscious needs and desires -- the result can be an uncomfortable failure of personality integration.

By this I mean that we find ourselves functioning relative to different sets of values in different social settings. We have failed to integrate our personality relative to a central core of values. The establishment of such a central core of values results in an orientation of personality which persists across our participation in various social contexts. Achieving this degree of personality integration is a crucial precursor to Adjuster fusion. It is a necessary achievement for the attainment of a functional level of cosmic citizenship.

Moral judgment in stage 5 reaches beyond the interests of the self and one's community and seeks higher principles which are universal in nature.

There is a deepened sense of self as both individual and an integral part of the human community. There is a recognition of oneself as paradox: both gifted and flawed, strong and weak. There may be a revival and expansion of earlier perceptions of the self as defined by a role played in a metaphysical drama.

The tasks of this stage are:

1. The recognition and acceptance of life as having contradictory or inconsistent qualities.
2. A reworking of the image of self and world integrating symbol, story and scientific/philosophic understanding.
3. An understanding that "truth" is found within numerous stories and interpretations, not exclusively within one's own.
4. A claiming and reworking of the meaning and value of one's own life, past and present.

Stage 5 Social Values

The boundary of social consciousness now seeks to become more universal in nature. There is a deepened interest in the values of groups, social classes and traditions other than one's own.

There is an integration of our judgments and experiences with reflection on claims made by others and of various expressions of cumulative human wisdom. We begin to function in more consciously effective liaison with the Adjuster in the choosing of the values relative to which we make our decisions.

Symbolic thinking regains equal value with critical and reflective thinking. The power and logic of the rational intellect is increasingly utilized to identify and integrate unconscious processes. Old symbols acquire a new richness of meaning and value. There is a growing recognition that all "knowing" is metaphoric; there is a readiness for participation in the reality expressed in symbol and myth.

Our world view

is-becomes that of the universe as a living organism of which the self is a living, contributing part. This is not merely an intellectual assent to an idea. Rather does this concept of the universe as a living organism become the central point of value relative to which we choose the moral and spiritual values which are implemented into our behaviors and decision-making processes.

Stage 5 Supportive Stories

At Stage 5, self-selected supportive stories provide symbolic representations of the infinite. There is an openness to meanings and values which might be derived from other stories. There is a recognition that the purpose of stories is to facilitate the choosing of higher meanings and values rather than to authoritatively represent actual reality.

Stage 5 Faith Experience

In the domain of faith there is an increasing effort to live relative to one's best understanding of God's purposes. There is a sense that we are participants in a created, ordered universe; that the Creator is ultimately in control; that our existence contains meaning and is of value in the universe.

Belief at this stage includes a realization and acceptance of the fact that all human ideas and understandings are fallible and destined to change. There is an understanding that God alone is infallible and changeless. A genuine openness to the truths of traditions and communities other than one's own appears.

Stage 5 Faith Challenges

Stage 4 is satisfied with an "either/or", "black and white" view of reality in which concepts are well-defined by rigorous logical thinking. Stage 5 sees both (or the many) sides of an issue simultaneously and suspects that things are organically related to each other.

Stage 5 understands that truth is more multidimensional and organically interdependent than most theories or accounts of truth can grasp. Stage 5 also sees that the relativity of religious traditions which matters is not their relativity to each other, but their relativity to the reality to which they mediate relationship. Stage 5's radical openness to the truth of other traditions is not mere tolerance; it stems from the awareness that the reality of the infinite is greater than any medium of expression.

The new strength of this stage is a capacity to fully accept the most powerful meanings of our personal experience or of our social group, while simultaneously recognizing that these values are relative, partial and inevitably distorting apprehensions of transcendent reality. The danger of this stage lies in the direction of a paralyzing complacency or cynical withdrawal, due to its paradoxical understanding of truth.

1138:5 103:7.7 "What both developing science and religion need is more searching and fearless self-criticism, a greater awareness of incompleteness in evolutionary status. The teachers of both science and religion are often altogether too self-confident and dogmatic. Science and religion can only be self-critical of their facts. The moment departure is made from the stage of facts, reason abdicates or else rapidly degenerates into a consort of false logic."

Stage 5 involves a critical recognition of our social unconscious—the myths, ideal images and prejudices built deeply into the self-system by virtue of our nurture within a particular social class, religious tradition, ethnic group or the like.

Crisis leading from Stage 5 to Stage 6

The crisis leading to Stage 6 is the recognition that loyalty to emerging new meanings and values may require sacrifice -- of our lifestyle, social position, or in some cases, of life itself.

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Stage 6 Faith: Universalizing Faith

Here we begin to participate in “the faith of Jesus” as described in Paper 196. This is also the level of the first psychic circle.

Stage 6 Personal Values

In Stage 6 the center of value is the evolving Supreme Being. All moral values are calculated relative to this central reality and an attempt is made to understand the will of God as a critical determiner of value choices. The self and all others are regarded as children of God.

Stage 6 Social Values

This stage sees the emergence of universal ethical principles. The boundaries of social consciousness are expanded to include personal identification with an evolving universe of personality relationships

Not only does Stage 6 understand its relationship to the Supreme, the Stage 6 individual’s life is dominated by motives deriving from this insight. Stage 6 understands the nature of one’s participation in an inclusive commonwealth of being. While Stage 5 acts out of loyalty to the present order, to its institutions, groups, and compromise procedures, Stage 6 involves becoming an activist incarnation of the imperatives of the great commandment which Jesus gave us -- that we love one another as he loved us.

The locus of authority is centered on personal judgment informed by the experiences and truths of previous stages, purified of egoistic striving, and linked by disciplined intuition to the principle of being and to the purposes of a transcendent power.

The world is understood as a living part of a universal spiritual creation of a divinely integrated intelligence.

Stage 6 Supportive Stories

Personal and social identity at Stage 6 is experienced as relationship to the Supreme. It transcends forms of social identity projected from roles in social or metaphysical stories which supported faith in earlier stages. Stories may be used to symbolize various truths but the individual is likely to draw upon a larger pool of stories instead of relying on a single story.

In earlier stages our stories provided a means for imagining and projecting identity within the social milieu. Stage 6 identity becomes a repercussion of our fuller participation in the work of the Supreme. It is no longer something we project and try to sustain -- consciously or unconsciously. Someone like Mother Thresea might be a good example of a person whose social identity was a repercussion of her service to the Supreme rather than an artifact created by her psychological processes and projected into her social environment.

Stage 6 Faith Experience

Stage 6 faith is faith in God and in God’s purposes; the dedication of our will to the doing of the will of God to the best of our understanding.

In stage 6, beliefs about God become less important than our personal experience of God as active and present in our life and in the world.

Stage 6 Faith Challenges

The tasks of this stage are:

1. Steadfast and loyal devotion to doing the will of God, as it is best understood.
2. Living a life of service -- to both friends and enemies.
3. Non-resistance to evil
4. Living out, through faith, the highest interpretation of the Golden Rule -- learning to love one another as Jesus loved us.

Stage 6 is exceedingly rare. The persons best described by it have become incarnators and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community. They are powerful in the sense that they create zones of liberation from the social, political, economic and ideological shackles we place and tolerate on human life. Through their decisions and actions they help humanity to experientially know the meaning of living in the presence of God.

[1095:6](#) [100:2.2](#) "Spiritual growth is first an awakening to needs, next a discernment of meanings, and then a discovery of values. The evidence of true spiritual development consists in the exhibition of a human personality motivated by love, activated by unselfish ministry, and dominated by the wholehearted worship of the perfection ideals of divinity. And this entire experience constitutes the reality of religion as contrasted with mere theological beliefs."

Beyond paradox and polarities, persons in this stage are grounded in a oneness with the Supreme. Their visions and commitments free them for a passionate yet detached spending of the self in love, devoted to overcoming division, oppression, and violence.

It is important to appreciate that we are not engaged in the faith adventure alone. God is seeking to find us and to commune with us.

[1733:6](#) [155:6.18](#) "You are my apostles, and to you religion shall not become a theologic shelter to which you may flee in fear of facing the rugged realities of spiritual progress and idealistic adventure; but rather shall your religion become the fact of real experience which testifies that God has found you, idealized, ennobled, and spiritualized you, and that you have enlisted in the eternal adventure of finding the God who has thus found and sonshipped you."

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9. Getting Through the Stages

How do we go about traversing these stages of growth? These stages should not be viewed as levels of achievement, but rather descriptions of stages we will encounter in a natural, evolutionary process. Our efforts should be directed toward the tasks of the stage in which we find ourselves, rather than an effort to force a transition to the next stage.

In our efforts to traverse the psychic circles, we might ask, "What is it that retards our growth and prevents us from moving into the next higher circle?" The answer is "fear." It is fear, *The Urantia Book* tells us, which is the opposite of faith. We are told that one of the great tasks of mortal life is to transmute the fear inherited from our evolutionary origins into the faith of our spiritual heritage.

It is fear which keeps us from progressing -- most often a fear that critical evaluation of our beliefs and assumptions might expose illusions which we have found comforting and upon which we have come to depend for identity. One of the greatest betrayals of spiritual integrity in which we might engage is to use the concept of "faith" as an excuse to avoid critical evaluation. "Unreasoned fear is a master intellectual fraud practiced upon the evolving mortal soul."

The boundary between our present circle of attainment and the next circle is really the boundary between our faith and our fear; the boundary represents unconquered fear. For example, in the seventh circle when the ascender's social consciousness is based on the immediate family and the family's community, it is fear and uncertainty regarding personal relationships outside this boundary which keeps the ascender confined to this circle.

When this fear is transmuted into faith, the ascender's social boundaries expand and it is possible to move into the next higher circle. This higher circle, in turn, has a boundary of fear which must be conquered before additional progress may be made. Thus it is a process of transmuting fear into faith which enables us to traverse these circles and eventually become comfortable functioning as a cosmic citizen. Any time we find that we are dividing people up into "us" and "them" categories and relating to members of the different categories with different sets of values, we can be sure that we are in one of the lower stages of development and that fear -- conscious or unconscious -- is playing a dominant role in shaping our behavior.

The admonitions to spiritual growth which we find in *The Urantia Book* will work at any stage and will faithfully guide us on our path.

These admonitions for growth are:

1. The continual seeking of the Father's will.
2. Worship – evolving friendship with God.
3. Service – the unselfish service of our fellows.
4. The unending quest for truth

One of the beauties of the teachings of Jesus is that if we simply follow his great commandment, which leads to worship and service, we will find ourselves progressing in a natural manner. Jesus was not an administrator who came to give us rules and regulations, he is our creator and he came to tell us how to live progressively and meaningfully within the system which he created.

[1773:5](#) [160:1.8](#) "The wise and effective solution of any problem demands that the mind shall be free from bias, passion, and all other purely personal prejudices which might interfere with the disinterested survey of the actual factors that go to make up the problem presenting itself for solution. The solution of life problems requires courage and sincerity. Only honest and brave individuals are able to follow valiantly through the perplexing and confusing maze of living to where the logic of a fearless mind may lead. And this emancipation of the mind and soul can never be effected without the driving power of an intelligent enthusiasm which borders on religious zeal. It requires the lure of a great ideal to drive man on in the pursuit of a goal which is beset with difficult material problems and manifold intellectual hazards."

[1209:4](#) [110:6.4](#) "When the development of the intellectual nature proceeds faster than that of the spiritual, such a situation renders communication with the Thought Adjuster both difficult and dangerous. Likewise, overspiritual development tends to produce a fanatical and perverted interpretation of the spirit leadings of the divine indweller. Lack of spiritual capacity makes it very difficult to transmit to such a material intellect the spiritual truths resident in the higher superconsciousness. It is to the mind of perfect poise, housed in a body of clean habits, stabilized neural energies, and balanced chemical function--when the physical, mental, and spiritual powers are in triune harmony of development--that a maximum of light and truth can be imparted with a minimum of temporal danger or risk to the real welfare of such a being. By such a balanced growth does man ascend the circles of planetary progression one by one, from the seventh to the first."

These factors, if embraced, can lead us through these stages of growth. Not only do they lead from one stage to another, but they provide for a full realization of the potentials within each stage. Jesus commented to John that he must have ". . . faith in the effectiveness of the supreme human desire to do the will of God--to be like God."

Distribution of Stages of Faith by Age in the Research Sample

Research of Dr. James Fowler

(Stages with two numbers such as 5-6 indicate persons in transition between the two stages.)

Stage	0-6	7-12	13-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
6								1.6 %
5-6								
5					14.6 %	12.5 %	23.5 %	16.1 %
4-5				3.3 %	18.8 %	21.9 %	5.9 %	14.5 %
4			5.4 %	40.0 %	20.8 %	56.2 %	29.4 %	27.4 %
3-4			28.6 %	33.3 %	8.3 %			14.5 %
3			50.0 %	17.8 %	37.5 %	9.4 %	35.3 %	24.2 %
2-3		17.2 %	12.5 %	4.4 %				1.6 %
2		72.4 %	3.6 %	1.1 %			5.9 %	
1-2	12.0 %	6.9 %						
1	88.0 %	3.4 %						

Suggested reading:

Fowler, James W., *Stages of Faith*, Harper: San Francisco, 1981

Jung, C. G., *The Undiscovered Self*, Penguin: New York, 1958

Tillich, Paul, *Dynamics of Faith*, Harper: New York, 1958

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10. Additional Study: Developmental Stages in the Life of Jesus

The quotes below refer to stages of development in the life of Jesus. Do you think there is any relationship between these stages and those which are described in the material above?

1376:4 124:6.18 Thus ends the career of the Nazareth lad, and begins the narrative of that adolescent youth the increasingly self conscious divine human who now begins the contemplation of his world career as he strives to integrate his expanding life purpose with the desires of his parents and his obligations to his family and the society of his day and age.

1482:1 133:9.6 -- the end of the mission of Joshua the teacher

1749:2 157:6.3 Jesus now entered upon the fourth and last stage of his human life in the flesh. The first stage was that of his childhood, the years when he was only dimly conscious of his origin, nature, and destiny as a human being. The second stage was the increasingly self conscious years of youth and advancing manhood, during which he came more clearly to comprehend his divine nature and human mission. This second stage ended with the experiences and revelations associated with his baptism.

1749:2 157:6.3 The third stage of the Master's earth experience extended from the baptism through the years of his ministry as teacher and healer and up to this momentous hour of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi. This third period of his earth life embraced the times when his apostles and his immediate followers knew him as the Son of Man and regarded him as the Messiah.

1749:2 157:6.3 The fourth and last period of his earth career began here at Caesarea Philippi and extended on to the crucifixion. This stage of his ministry was characterized by his acknowledgment of divinity and embraced the labors of his last year in the flesh. During the fourth period, while the majority of his followers still regarded him as the Messiah, he became known to the apostles as the Son of God. Peter's confession marked the beginning of the new period of the more complete realization of the truth of his supreme ministry as a bestowal Son on Urantia and for an entire universe, and the recognition of that fact, at least hazily, by his chosen ambassadors.

2091:2 196:1.6 Just as men must progress from the consciousness of the human to the realization of the divine, so did Jesus ascend from the nature of man to the consciousness of the nature of God. And the Master made this great ascent from the human to the divine by the conjoint achievement of the faith of his mortal intellect and the acts of his indwelling Adjuster. The fact realization of the attainment of totality of divinity (all the while fully conscious of the reality of humanity) was attended by seven stages of faith consciousness of progressive divinization. These stages of progressive self realization were marked off by the following extraordinary events in the Master's bestowal experience:

Stages of "faith consciousness of progressive self-realization" in the life of Jesus:

2091:2 196:1.6 1. The arrival of the Thought Adjuster.

1425:1 129:4.2 The purely human religious experience the personal spiritual growth of the Son of Man well nigh reached the apex of attainment during this, the twenty ninth year. This experience of spiritual development was a consistently gradual growth from the moment of the arrival of his Thought Adjuster until the day of the completion and confirmation of that natural and normal human relationship between the material mind of man and the mind endowment of the spirit the phenomenon of the making of these two minds one, the experience which the Son of Man attained in completion and finality, as an incarnated mortal of the realm, on the day of his baptism in the Jordan.

2091:2 196:1.6 2. The messenger of Immanuel who appeared to him at Jerusalem when he was about twelve years old.

1398:4 127:2.12 This year (his 17th year) Jesus made great progress in the organization of his mind. Gradually he had brought his divine and human natures together, and he accomplished all this organization of intellect by the force of his own decisions and with only the aid of his indwelling Monitor, just such a Monitor as all normal mortals on all postbestowal Son worlds have within their minds. So far, nothing supernatural had happened in this young man's career except the visit of a messenger, dispatched by his elder brother Immanuel, who once appeared to him during the night at Jerusalem.

2091:2 196:1.6 3. The manifestations attendant upon his baptism.

[See "The Baptism of Jesus," Page 1510, Paper 136, Section 2]

2091:2 196:1.6 4. The experiences on the Mount of Transfiguration.

1513:2 136:3.5 While he tarried on the mountain, talking with Gabriel, the Constellation Father of Edentia appeared to Jesus and Gabriel in person, saying: "The records are completed. The sovereignty of Michael No. 611,121 over his universe of Nebadon rests in completion at the right hand of the Universal Father. I bring to you the bestowal release of Immanuel, your sponsor brother for the Urantia incarnation. You are at liberty now or at any subsequent time, in the manner of your own choosing, to terminate your incarnation bestowal, ascend to the right hand of your Father, receive your sovereignty, and assume your well earned unconditional rulership of all Nebadon. I also testify to the completion of the records of the superuniverse, by authorization of the Ancients of Days, having to do with the termination of all sin rebellion in your universe and endowing you with full and unlimited authority to deal with any and all such possible upheavals in the future. Technically, your work on Urantia and in the flesh of the mortal creature is finished. Your course from now on is a matter of your own choosing."

[See "Plans for Public Work" page 1514, Paper 136, Section 4]

2091:2 196:1.6 5. The morontia resurrection.

[See "The Morontia Transit" page 2020, Paper 189, Section 1]

2091:2 196:1.6 6. The spirit ascension.

[See "The Master's Ascension" page 2057, Paper 183, Section 5]

2091:2 196:1.6 7. The final embrace of the Paradise Father, conferring unlimited sovereignty of his universe.

[See "The Last Group Prayer" page 1963, Paper 182, Section 1]

Parallels between major contemporary theories of structural and psycho-social development

Eras and Ages	Erikson	Piaget	Kohlberg
Infancy (0-1 1/2 years)	Basic Trust vs Basic Mistrust (Hope)	Sensorimotor	
Early Childhood (2-6 years)	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt (Will) and Initiative vs. Guilt (Purpose)	Preoperational or Intuitive	<i>Preconventional Morality: Instrumental Exchange</i>
Childhood (7-12 years)	Industry vs. Inferiority (Competence)	Concrete Operational	
Adolescence (13-21 years)	Identity vs. Role Confusion (Fidelity)	Formal Operational	<i>Conventional Morality: Mutual interpersonal relationships</i>
Young Adulthood (21-35 years)	Intimacy vs. Isolation (Love)		Awareness of social systems; Conscience
Adulthood (35-60 years)	Generativity vs. Stagnation (Care)		<i>Postconventional Morality: Principled social contract; Individual rights</i>
Maturity (60 -- years)	Integrity vs. Despair (Wisdom)		Universal ethical principles

Correlation between contemporary structural-developmental theories and The Urantia Book's structural stages of psycho-spiritual development

Faith Stage	Average Age at Entrance	Psychic Circle (p. 1209)	Progression Sequence	Level of Golden Rule (p. 1949)	Phase of Philosophy (p. 1114)
1	3 years				
2	Arrival of Adjuster	Seventh Circle	Consciousness of Personal Morality	Level 1	Level 1
3	Adolescence to Early Adulthood				Level 2
4	Early Adulthood to Midlife	Third Circle	Consciousness of Social Morality	Level 2	Level 3
5	Midlife	Second Circle		Level 3	Level 4

6	Midlife and beyond	First Circle (The Faith of Jesus)	Consciousness of Cosmic Citizenship	Level 4
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