

*Book file*

A MESSAGE TO THE TRIENNIAL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY - AUGUST, 1973

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FAITH

It has been made forever clear to us that "all souls of every possible phase of mortal existence will survive provided they manifest willingness to cooperate with their indwelling Adjusters and exhibit a desire to find God and to attain divine perfection, even though these desires be but the first faint flickers of . . . primitive comprehension" (447:5).

Why?

What is faith that it should be the only requirement for survival? Why not truth? Or beauty? Or goodness? Or moral living? Why have any requirements at all?

What is the rich significance of faith (1325:6) that separates us from oblivion? Why is it so important? What does it do to us that suddenly makes us worthy of eternal destiny?

These are intriguing questions, and when you search for answers, the questions become even more intriguing.

The URANTIA Book defines love, but it does not define faith. The revelation teaches us to use the word "faith" to describe the relationship between man and God, a living experience which is not subject to precise

definition (1124:4). It also teaches us that "Faith (is) the supreme assertion of human thought," (51:4) the "mobilization of the total powers of (the human) personality" (1097:5). "There is no word in any human language that (fully describes) this 'sense' (or) 'feeling' (or) 'intuition' (or) 'experience' which we (elect) to call God-consciousness" (1130:6). Even the English language suffers mightily because it lacks this conceptual richness.

But we who have become students of the URANTIA teachings have learned that ordinary faith and Urantian faith are different in quality. And the difference we perceive is more than a semantic nuance. What we perceive is a completely different level of spiritual horizon.

Ordinary faith is passive and ritualistic.

Urantian faith is robust and confident (1118:4), dynamic and creative.

Ordinary faith is a religion of the mind.

Urantian faith is a religion of the spirit.

Ordinary faith is based on the assumption that man is an impotent reactor, helpless in an alien universe.

Urantian faith rests in the secure knowledge that man

is an active, responsible agent in charge of his destiny, at home in a universe that is friendly to him.

Ordinary faith is limiting (1114:7), fixating, sporadic, non-unifying.

Urantian faith is expanding (1114:7), liberating, continuous, unifying.

Ordinary faith can be institutionalized; it can be a group possession (1114:6).

Urantian faith is a living organism; it must be personal (1114:6).

Ordinary faith is mere belief, "the acceptance of a teaching as true" (1114:7). It is proclaimed by words and phrases and is usually activated only on holy days, in sacred places, or in moments of personal emergency.

Urantian faith "motivates life and (dominates) the mode of living" (1114:6). It is proclaimed by deed and action. It is a way of life that pervades the total reality of living and touches every thought and action.

Ordinary faith is centered in an intellectual concept of God and is separate from the decision process.

Urantian faith is centered in a personal relationship with the Father (1091:7) and is central to every decision.

Ordinary faith is a safe refuge, an easy path, "a raft onto which the shipwrecked (mortal) clammers . . . to safety" (Ben Hecht, A Guide for the Bedevilled).

Urantian faith is a daring adventure out upon the high seas of unexplored truth. It is like "sails . . . to a ship . . . an addition of power" (1766:4).

Ordinary faith is servitude.

Urantian faith is sonship.

Faith is our "willingness to trust the deepest interests of our present and future to the keeping and direction of (the Father)" (1127:5). Jesus taught that "faith is the open door for entering into the present, perfect, and eternal love of God" (1545:6).

"The indwelling Adjuster unfailingly arouses (within each of us) a true and searching hunger for perfection, together with a far-reaching curiosity which can be adequately satisfied only by communion with God (1119:5).

"Faith is the act of recognizing the validity of (this) spiritual consciousness" (1139:6).



Therefore, faith is a decision, the will to believe, to trust in God, the simple but momentous decision to accept the leadings of the indwelling Thought Adjuster, to reach out for a divine reality "beyond the reach of sensible experience or logical proof" (Oxford English Dictionary). But having made the decision, it suddenly becomes clear that God is the most logical personality in the entire universe.

Something very important takes place when we make this decision, when we let our faith come alive--so important that the quality of faith we are able to achieve as Urantians will place us into special divisions which will persist even on Paradise.

It has been a thrilling revelation to learn that our isolation as a planet gives us a "unique opportunity for . . . the development of a peculiar quality of confidence in cosmic reliability which is not dependent on sight or any other material consideration" (578:6).

If these were ordinary times, we might today be eligible to visit Adam and Eve at their home and planetary headquarters in the garden. We would be able to see in the flesh and exchange conversation with these magnificent living representatives of worlds and values almost beyond

our comprehension. However, this cannot be. Because of their default, we have been left with the status of biological orphans--orphans of a tragic impatience.

We are known as "agondonters . . . evolutionary will creatures who can believe without seeing, persevere when isolated, and triumph over insuperable difficulties even when alone" (579:1).

Great difficulties are always great opportunities. Even now, our greatest misfortunes are yielding our greatest blessings. Jesus spoke of the tremendous spiritual possibilities in each of us which are unlocked by the littlest key of faith (1653:2).

But why faith, and faith alone?

The answer to this seems to be centered in the fact that each of us was born for a purpose so important (1459-60) that God has offered to join with us forever in its fulfillment.

To fulfill this purpose, it is necessary that we grow in spirit, that we begin in this lifetime to take those first few fumbling but mighty steps toward Godlikeness.

Spiritual growth is not possible without God-consciousness. And God-consciousness is not possible without faith (1124:8).

And because faith is the only contribution we make to our own growth (1097:5), the logic of the necessity of faith becomes obvious.

Faith is the only pathway to the discovery of divinity (1116:5), the philosophic miracle by which we who are mortal and finite recognize God who is eternal and infinite (27:3).

Across the enormous gulf of spiritual differential that separates us, the Father has built a bridge. And this bridge connects the land of ignorance--ignorance as to the fact of God--with the land of experience--experience of the truth of God (1125:2).

The Father has already given us the gift of faith (1621:2), but it is not a completed gift until we accept it (1610:3 and 1838:2), until we walk across the bridge He has built for us. All other pathways lead to unreality, oblivion.

Although we will not have to depend on faith forever, it will be the major technique by which we progress for a long, long time. There are three distinct levels of growth in our faith progression. At the material level, there is faith itself. Little by little, as we continue



in the morontia journey, faith diminishes in proportion, and in its place there rises within us a sense of assurance that is greater than faith. This is the assurance of truth, which carries us right into the spirit level of existence. And once we begin the journey of the spirit, the assurances of pure spirit insight begin to operate in the place of faith and truth, or, rather, in conjunction with, and superimposed upon them (1111:4 and 221:3).

The unifying thread that runs through all levels, that enables the progression from one level to the next in gradual and orderly degrees--is comprehension. Through our faith and truth hunger, the Thought Adjuster gradually and continually enlarges our comprehension. Ability to comprehend is the mortal passport to Paradise (290:5).

"The progressive comprehension of reality is the equivalent of approaching God" (2094:3).

The concept of levels of reality comprehension is very important. It is the concept that enables us to understand that we can enter the kingdom of God right now, and begin to live the will of God today, even though the outward appearance of the reality around us has not altered.



"Men all too often forget that God is the greatest experience in human existence" (1289:3). He is not hiding somewhere in the far-off skies (64:2 and 7). He is here within us, disclosing all that we can comprehend of his nature. The experience of God is limited only by our capacity to comprehend (1289:3). And our comprehension is directly connected to the quality of our faith.

But "it is not so much what we comprehend as what we desire to comprehend that ensures survival" (1216-17). "What (we) are today is not so important as what (we) are becoming day by day and in eternity" (1217:1).

Jesus said the important thing is not the rapidity of our progress, but rather its certainty. Our actual achievement is not so important as the fact that the direction of our progress is Godward (1653:1).

Every waking moment of our lives--from the moment of birth until the loss of mortal consciousness--we are dealing with reality as we perceive it. There is no way of escaping this fundamental confrontation. Every decision we make is founded on a reality concept, a reality level.

All human decisions can be examined from the point of view of whether they are fear-inspired or faith-inspired, because fear and faith are the two fundamental techniques by which we deal with reality.

Both techniques are compensatory, provided by our creators to make up for something we don't have. Both are necessary for survival.

Fear is the technique by which man has overcome the loss of animal instinct. Without fear, man could not have survived.

Faith is the technique by which we deal with the reality of God. Without faith, we cannot survive.

Over and over again in The URANTIA Book there is a connection made between faith and fear. This is a fundamental point. Our origin and our destiny are intertwined in every decision, until we learn consistently to go forward instead of backward. There is a terrific tension in the mind until this struggle is won, because faith and fear are incompatible. One is not possible in the presence of the other.

Fear casts a dark shadow, which is hate (1632:3). Faith casts a beautiful illumination, which is love.

"Suddenly is a key word throughout the History papers. Life plods along and then suddenly it is forever different. This same thing is true in the life of the individual. The moment he achieves faith, suddenly his fear is gone. The amount of fear that vanishes is in direct proportion to the amount of faith he has achieved.

The only thing that inhibits faith from becoming a living reality is fear. A state of faith is equivalent to an absence of fear. And absence of fear is equivalent to a sudden and profound transformation within the self.

But while the achievement of faith may be sudden and revolutionary, the growth of faith is evolutionary, and proceeds directly in proportion as we give up fear.

Like all techniques, faith can only be perfected by use. Techniques require practice and effort--exercise. You have to use it. And the more you use it, the more its power becomes available to you. Jesus spoke of faith as a power presence (1438:1).

And who can deny that the grinding experiences of daily life and the occasional traumatic levels of experience we all encounter are but the proving ground of faith.

Faith must be challenged from time to time to make it stronger. Jesus taught that for those who enter the kingdom, there is but one struggle, and that is to fight the good fight of faith.

"The believer has only one battle, and that is against doubt--unbelief" (1766:4).

In his instructions to teachers and believers, Jesus said: "Believing in the gospel will not prevent getting into trouble, but it will insure that you shall be unafraid when trouble does overtake you. If you dare to believe in me and wholeheartedly proceed to follow after me, you shall most certainly by so doing enter upon the sure pathway to trouble. I do not promise to deliver you from the waters of adversity, but I do promise to go with you through all of them" (1767:1).

Fear inhibits faith. But faith destroys fear. Faith simply crowds fear out of the mind. And having done that , it then proceeds to become the wonderful enabler of all manner of life-giving qualities.

For example, it enables worship. There is no way to worship without it. Without faith, <sup>the concept of</sup> God is an empty abstraction, incapable of generating our spontaneous wonder and love and awe in moments of sublime contemplation of what we comprehend Him to be.



It leads to self-mastery (1609:6), which is God-centered, faith-led. Faith helps the Adjuster pilot us through life (1205:7), and this inevitably leads toward mastery of the animal impulses that so often cry to dominate us. And this is a vastly different thing from self-denial, which is self-centered and a fear reaction (1609:6 and 1610:4).

It leads to the possession of truth. "This is true because (our) thoughts, wisdom, ethics, and ideals will never rise higher than (our) faith, (our) sublime hope" (1459:5). The mind must ever know less than it can believe (Ref.). Faith is what pulls it forward, Godward. And this in turn pulls our behavior little by little to ever more perfect levels. In a very real sense, faith is the engine of the soul.

And this is the simple reason why moral living, in and of itself, has no survival value. It is quite possible for a man intellectually to deny God and yet be morally good, loyal, filial, honest, and even idealistic. But this experience is devoid of survival values, God-knowingness, God-ascension. Only social fruits come from this experience, not spiritual fruits (1126:4).

Jesus said it is "better by far to have a small but living and growing faith than to be possessed of a great intellect

with its dead stores of worldly wisdom and spiritual unbelief" (1653:2).

Jesus taught that "childlike trust secures man's entrance into the kingdom of heavenly ascent, but progress is wholly dependent on the vigorous exercise of the robust and confident faith of the full grown man" (1118:4).

Having entered the kingdom, having willed to do the will of God, we must then grow in grace to the full stature of spiritual adulthood (1682:5). We must begin to show the fruits of the spirit (2054:4).

But while "faith is the price (we) pay for entrance into the family of God, (Jesus also taught that) forgiveness is the act of God which accepts (our) faith as the price of admission. And the reception of the forgiveness of God by a kingdom believer involves a definite and actual experience and consists in . . . four steps--the kingdom steps of inner righteousness" (1861-2).

1. We personally experience God's forgiveness, and His forgiveness is actually made available to us just insofar as we forgive our fellows.

2. We will not truly forgive our fellows unless we love them as ourself.

3. Thus to love our neighbor as ourself is the highest ethics.

4. Moral conduct, true righteousness, becomes, then, the natural result of such love (1862).

Jesus taught that once we "become self-conscious of the assurance of the divine presence, such a faith will expand the mind, ennoble the soul, reinforce the personality, augment the happiness, deepen the spirit perception, and enhance our power to love and be loved" (1766:8).

Jesus asks us "not only to believe what he believed, but also to believe as he believed" (2089:4), to "trust God as he trusted God, (to ) believe in men as he believed in men" (2091:2). "His faith was so real and all-encompassing that it absolutely swept away any spiritual doubts and effectively destroyed every conflicting desire" (2087-8). Not once did he ever doubt the certainty and security of the guidance and protection of the heavenly Father (2089:2). Never before in the universe of Nebadon had faith become such a living reality (2087:3). In fact, the faith of Jesus "approached the status of a universe absolute" (1113:3).

Let us not be stunned by words like universe absolute. Let us not sit back in splendid awe and say, but he was Jesus, the human incarnation of Michael of Nebadon,



a Creator Son of God. He was these things. But he was also Joshua ben Joseph, a young man born into the violent atmosphere of an unruly planet, and who had no more reason than you or me to perceive from his surroundings that he was the son of an unseen and merciful Father who loved him with an infinite love.

Very few who follow after him live up to the faith they really have. Ideals progress by geometric leaps, but behavior takes the slower route, and moves forward in arithmetic inches (1132:2). All of us must know a lot more about truth, beauty and goodness than we feel our lives demonstrate. But the Father gives us time.

Some years ago I was told the story of a meeting between George Fox and William Penn. George Fox had founded the Quaker movement in England, and William Penn was busy founding the State of Pennsylvania. Penn had always been a swashbuckling type, but he found himself attracted to the simplicity of the Quaker beliefs. He was giving serious thought to becoming a Quaker, but he was concerned about their belief in non-violence. So when he met with Fox, he asked: "If I become a Quaker, how long may I carry my sword?"

Fox's reply was: "As long as you can."



Ever since I heard it, I have felt this is really a Urantian story, because it reminds us that God gives us all the time we need to gain our spiritual momentum.

But in the final analysis, faith must be judged by its fruits. As we gain our momentum, as we more and more sense our sonship with God and the joys of the human brotherhood, faith begins to show definite new dimensions in our behavior. And The URANTIA Book provides us with some very specific yardsticks for measuring the reality and quality of the faith we have.

A moment's digression: Because of the prevalence of certain notions in human society, a word should be said about what Urantian faith is not. It is not fanaticism. Faith and fanaticism don't mix. It is not snake-handling to prove how holy you are. Faith is never ungodlike. The Father does not require that his children show him proof of their love. The fact of their love is sufficient.

Urantian faith is modeled along the perfected lines of the faith of Jesus, and in his example there is not the slightest hint of recklessness or presumption (1673:5). Like Jesus, we feel "the tremendous thrill of living, by faith, in the very presence of the heavenly Father" (2087:3).

"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 . . . is revealed (in our lives to the extent to which):

(1) It causes ethics and morals to progress despite inherent and adverse animalistic tendencies.

(2) It produces a sublime trust in the goodness of God even in the face of bitter disappointment and crushing defeat.

(3) It generates profound courage and confidence despite natural adversity and physical calamity.

(4) It exhibits inexplicable poise and sustaining tranquillity notwithstanding baffling diseases and even acute physical suffering.

(5) It maintains a mysterious poise and composure of personality in the face of maltreatment and the rankest injustice.

(6) It 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) It persists in the unswerving belief in God despite all contrary demonstrations of logic and successfully withstands all other intellectual sophistries.

(8) It 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) It lives and triumphs irrespective of the crushing overload of the complex and partial civilizations of modern times.

(10) It contributes to the continued survival of altruism in spite of human selfishness, social antagonisms, industrial greeds, and political maladjustments.

(11) It steadfastly adheres to a sublime belief in universe unity and divine guidance regardless of the perplexing presence of evil and sin.

(12) It goes right on worshiping God in spite of anything and everything, and dares to declare: "Even though he slay me, yet I will serve him." (1108:3).

Jesus taught that "those who are born of the spirit will immediately begin to show forth the fruits of the spirit in loving service to their fellow creatures. And the fruits of the spirit which are yielded in the lives of spirit-born and God-knowing mortals are: Loving service, unselfish devotion, courageous loyalty, sincere fairness,



enlightened honesty, undying hope, confiding trust, merciful ministry, unfailing goodness, forgiving tolerance, and enduring peace" (2054:4).

He said that "if professed believers bear not these fruits of the divine spirit in their lives, they are dead; the Spirit of Truth is not in them; they are useless branches on the living vine . . . (He told us that our) Father requires of the children of faith that they bear much spirit fruit" (2054:4).

But Jesus also left us with an even simpler yardstick for measuring the quality of faith. He said that while we "cannot observe the divine spirit at work in (our) minds, there is a practical method of discovering the degree to which (we) have yielded the control of (our) soul powers to the teaching and guidance of this indwelling spirit of the heavenly Father, and that is the degree of (our) love for (our) fellow men" (1642:3).

All of these measures of faith represent an astounding catalog of human virtues elevated to superhuman levels. But faith so transforms the landscape of daily living that living becomes "an experience in the ascending values of cosmic reality" (1114:5).



All things are possible in the lives of the spirit led. We "question not the power of (our) Father's love, only the sincerity and reach of (our own) faith" (1757:2).

But we who have an unshakable certainty about the source of all values were given the great and fortunate task of living on a planet in which there is a world-wide uncertainty about what is truly valuable. Valuelessness has become the "ultimate disease of our times" (Maslow). The great crisis of this planet is the crisis of faith.

And yet, throughout this darkness--everywhere--men and women go about their daily lives without awareness of the mighty potentials they carry within them. They may think about truth, beauty, and goodness, but they do not hunger for it with all their heart. They may sense the leadings of the indwelling spirit, but they do not pay much attention.

"Most (people) need both . . . (the help of God within, and the help of a loving friend without). A great many (people) never grasp . . . the inner flashes and intimations until some human helper brings a living, personal interpretation which gives a sudden meaning to what was happening within. It is through such souls that God gives the supplemental light" (Rufus Jones, The Friend, 1925)--the light that shines from our faith.

"Love in the abstract means nothing . . . If love is ever to reach and move and transform anyone with its wonderful, impalpable power, it must be a real love, expressed in a real life" (Rufus Jones, ibid.).

"The one really big business in this world is the business of being . . . a transmitter of the love of God, the love of God revealed in (someone just like you)" (Rufus Jones, ibid.).

Jesus asks that we let our faith reveal our light (2043:2) to the children who inhabit the darkness. We need not struggle with their darkness of spirit. Light does not struggle against the dark. Wherever your light is, there is no darkness.

As faith sons, we are all teachers of the most important message in the world: That "men are the sons of God, and through faith they can actually realize, and daily experience, this ennobling truth" (2052:4).

As teachers, our task is nothing less than to awaken man's slumbering spirituality.