

JESUSONIAN MAGAZINE--THE RESTATEMENT OF THE RELIGION OF JESUS

INTRODUCTORY EXPLANATION

The Urantia Book is a firsthand restatement of the religion of Jesus of Nazareth free from fear and guilt. This little-known spiritual resource is a modern vision of a timeless teaching. This fresh biography--the almost day by day chronicle of his personal and public ministry--is a celebration of his God-revealing life and not an admonition about his tragic death. The life and teachings of Jesus in the Urantia Book is the record of the celestial beings who attended his mission on earth. The book contains the first complete presentation of the gospel which reveals the depth and clarity of Jesus' undistorted message: The universe is filled with the love of a personal God and that as children of this perfect friend and parent we are naturally related as brothers and sisters in the spirit.

Judge By Content

The biography of the life of Jesus in The Urantia Book is different from anything you may have heard or read about him in that The Urantia Book was written by many universe personalities at the direction of the superhuman planetary government. The life of Jesus was deemed too important to be left to the olden record of Christianity in its present distorted, albeit beautiful form.

The Urantia Book, however, does not rely on its claim of superhuman authorship for its authority or authenticity. Indeed, most people with a healthy skepticism will reject such claims out of hand. That is why I invite you to investigate Part 4 of The Urantia Book purely as literature and see if it rings true in your own heart and mind. I believe that any serious spiritual seeker will not want to leave this stone unturned.

I am not a Buddhist, but if I learned of a revelatory restatement of the life of Gautama Siddhartha (founder of Buddhism) presented first hand from a spiritual perspective, I would not consider my search for truth complete until I had received at least a flavor of the work. And that is my ambition here--to give the reader a flavor of the life of Jesus as he really lived it.

Lucid, Direct And Specific

The religion of Jesus in the Urantia Book is more than a series of vague platitudes about loving one another--the Book is an explicit guide to expanded consciousness and spiritual perspective. It has certainly increased my level of personal reality. The teachings of Jesus in The Urantia Book are not the only way or the only truth. Indeed, The Urantia Book is inclusive and complementary of all paths to God. I even believe that despite its literary grandeur it is not for everyone,

although its basic truths are found in many religions and are universal in their appeal. But even described with the greatest degree of constrained understatement, the fact remains that here in this book is represented the living Christ untombed from the vault of 2000 years of Christian doctrine and dogma. I challenge the reader to honestly examine the story of Jesus in The Urantia Book and decide for herself whether or not it is a "mini second coming."

Overview

The purpose of this issue of the Jesusonian Magazine is to serve as a signpost pointing toward The Urantia Book. But that is all there is, just a book; it can be found in your local library. There is no church or cult or gurus associated with the Book, only a loose-knit international brotherhood of readers from all points of view and walks of life. Those who seek to share the teachings of The Urantia Book rely mostly on word of mouth and one on one contact, which is hopefully how this magazine reached you.

Although The Urantia Book contains over 2000 pages covering an enormous depth of information including: the nature of God and the structure of the infinite universe; a description of the affairs of our "local universe" and the diversity of beings who inhabit it; the complete history and evolution of our planet; and thousands of lucid statements on philosophy, cosmology, physics, the economy, politics, sociology, psychology and, of course, religion--it is the last 700 pages of the Book encompassing the biography of the life of Jesus that is the topic of this publication.

After this introductory overview there follows four essays on:

1. The religion of the spirit
2. Jesus on politics and societal transformation
3. ?
4. ?

This publication is not designed to be a summary or an overview, it is rather targeted at specific topics to give a hint of the detailed nature of this biographic work. This magazine is not a substitute for The Urantia Book. Only by reading the Book can one discover the unique spritual fruits to be found therein. Along the way the magazine will take detours to explain who wrote the book (no human author) and why the revelatory commission chose a book as the vehicle for the updated presentation of Jesus' message. There is also an attempted definition of the word "God" and a chapter outline of Part 4 of The Urantia Book--The Life and Teachings of Jesus, the subject of this "book review."

[art piece with quotation overlay]

THE RELIGION OF THE SPIRIT

The restatement of the religion of Jesus found in The Urantia Book is a new form of religion. I hesitate to even use the word "religion" to describe what might better be called a lifestyle or a worldview. It must be said at the outset, however, that there are as many ways of understanding and living the realities revealed by Jesus' incarnation as there are people. I am thus not attempting here to summarize Jesus' teaching or to even suggest an interpretation that is somehow objective.

Jesus' religion consisted of his personal experience of increasingly knowing God and becoming like him. To follow this religious example is to have, by definition, a uniquely individual experience.

Human Spiritual Experience--What It Is

The religion of human spiritual experience is a technique whereby one ascends into increasing consciousness of the nature of God (see page ___ hereof, for an attempted definition of the term "God"). This expanding awareness of the living reality of God's personality--this knowledge of the source and destiny of our inner spirit--might be called faith. Faith evolves, it is flowing and dynamic, like all living things it must either grow or decay--it cannot remain static.

Jesus advocated a personal relationship with God whom he called "Father." This reference to the Father was meant to underscore the ability of each person to have an individual knowledge and experience of the absolute and universal personality of God. The search for God itself enlarges one's capacity to know God. "Human things must be known in order to be loved, but divine things must be loved in order to be known" (The Urantia Book, p.1118). The emphasis on the individual was one of the main tenets of Jesus' teaching. He taught that "God loves you--each and every one of you" and that through faith you can have an actual experience of this spirit-expanding love which this perfect personality has for each of his/her spirit children.

Because of the dual nature of Jesus' person--his pre-existent divine personality (as explained and described in The Urantia Book) and his new and evolving human personality--he was able to reveal in one lifetime the universal plan for spiritual growth. God reaches down to man investing in him the seeds of spiritual growth. Man feels this spirit seed germinating in his soul and begins the quest for an enlarged understanding of the source and nature of this fragment of God. This process of the whole seeking the part and the part seeking the whole was personified in the life experience of Jesus of Nazareth. In his life the part became one with the whole and the nature of the whole was revealed in a form that people could understand and

relate to.

Jesus' religion of the spirit, as presented in The Urantia Book's biography of his life, involves the human effort of developing a personal relationship with God (that fragment of God resident in the human spirit) and by thus getting to know God, beginning the quest to become more like him/her. The practice of the religion of the spirit involves the channeling of God's love through one's own personality as one in turn seeks to love and understand her fellows. This great circuit of love from God to man, through each person as they in turn love others, and thus back to God is the essence of the religion of the spirit and the way in which God's love is revealed on earth. And this "tuning in" to the infinite flow of fraternal affection was perfectly demonstrated by the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Religion Of The Spirit--What It Is Not

Jesus distinguished the religion of the spirit from the religions of authority which evolve as institutions within civilizations. Jesus explained that there was no "one way" or one version of the truth and that all religions are good to the extent that they bring God to man and man to God. Jesus defined religion as the relationship of each person with the Universal Father, and by this definition, there are as many religious paths as there are people. The religion of Jesus does not contain strict rules of behavior or sacred taboos. There is no catalogue of sins or outdated "do's and don'ts."

The original religion of Jesus' life experience, as distinguished from the later appearing religion about him, was not characterized by autocratic and intolerant theologic egotism. The world was not viewed as fundamentally evil by Jesus. The doctrines of original sin and atonement were added later by Christian theologians. The religion of Jesus in The Urantia Book complements modern Christianity but it also seeks to correct its errors and misconceptions. All religions could greatly benefit from the study and assimilation of the best truths contained in every faith. The religion of the spirit borrows from the best rather than denouncing the worst of the world's existing religions.

The religion of Jesus, however, is not a mere synthesis or some form of pantheism. The only "set belief," if you will, is in the fatherhood/motherhood of God and the brotherhood/sisterhood of humanity. The religion of the spirit allows for a diversity of beliefs requiring only a unity of experience and a uniformity of destiny.

The arguments over supposed "theologic facts" engaged in by the adherents to the various religions of authority are in direct contradiction of religion's task of fostering faith--because faith is personal and inwardlooking, not external and objective.

In practicing the religion of the spirit "it is not so important that you should know about the fact of God as that you should increasingly grow in the ability to feel the presence of God" (The Urantia Book, p.1733).

Jesus did not threaten unbelievers with the consequences of

going to hell. The concept of hell is totally inconsistent with the loving and merciful Father-God revealed by Jesus. The evolution toward God--the source of reality--is the process of becoming more real. The conscious choice to be ungodlike--the embrace of evil--results in diminution of personal reality, isolation and eventually the cessation of identity existence. But this scheme of personality progression hardly involves the eternal punishment of some fictitious wrath which condemns a person for a moment of weakness or ignorance.

Jesus taught that the Father "will ever respond to the faintest flicker of faith" even if it "amounts to little more than an intellectual conformity to a passive attitude of assent to religions of authority" (ibid.). Salvation is not conditioned upon fidelity to a particular group or belief in an essential creed. Jesus did not teach that one must profess belief in him or his divine nature in order for one's personality to survive the dissolution of their physical body.

Modern Christianity's focus on the "glorified Christ" loses sight of the human Jesus. And it is the human Jesus' sublime demonstration of living, by faith, in the presence of God which so beautifully personifies the religion of the spirit.

Human Spiritual Experience--What It Does

The religion of the spirit is a way of living and a technique of thinking. The broadened perspective that a person achieves by realizing her "universal citizenship" brings poise and problem-solving ability. Faith (the experience of getting to know God) produces new energy and a balanced sense of confidence and humility.

The practice of the religion of the spirit requires effort. It is not something accepted but rather a way of being that is gradually discovered. The most thrilling and inspiring of all human experiences is the spiritual discovery which comes into being unique and anew in the unfolding of the life of each person who senses the reality of God and sets out to find God within herself.

Through the practice of the religion of the spirit it is possible to lead an idealistically spiritual life in the very midst of a realistic world. Increasing understanding of our creator-source allows us to see God more clearly in the people around us. This recognition of our fellows as our brothers and sisters in the spirit results in an increasing desire for unselfish service. And as one renders service to her sisters and brothers, she experiences increasing happiness.

Speaking for myself, over the years that I have been actively fostering my inner spiritual growth and attempting to apply these insights in my daily life, I have experienced increasing personal power and energy. I am more calm and self-assured and I think my sense of humor has become more keen. I have not become some glassy-eyed "Jesus freak," but rather my sensitivity to, and interest in, all spiritual practices has expanded. And most of all, the practice of my own version of the religion of the spirit has given me an understanding of the

meaning and value of love which is beyond all words.