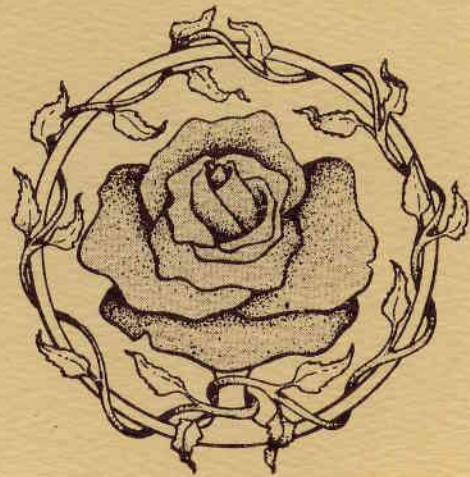

TEACHING JESUS' GOSPEL TODAY

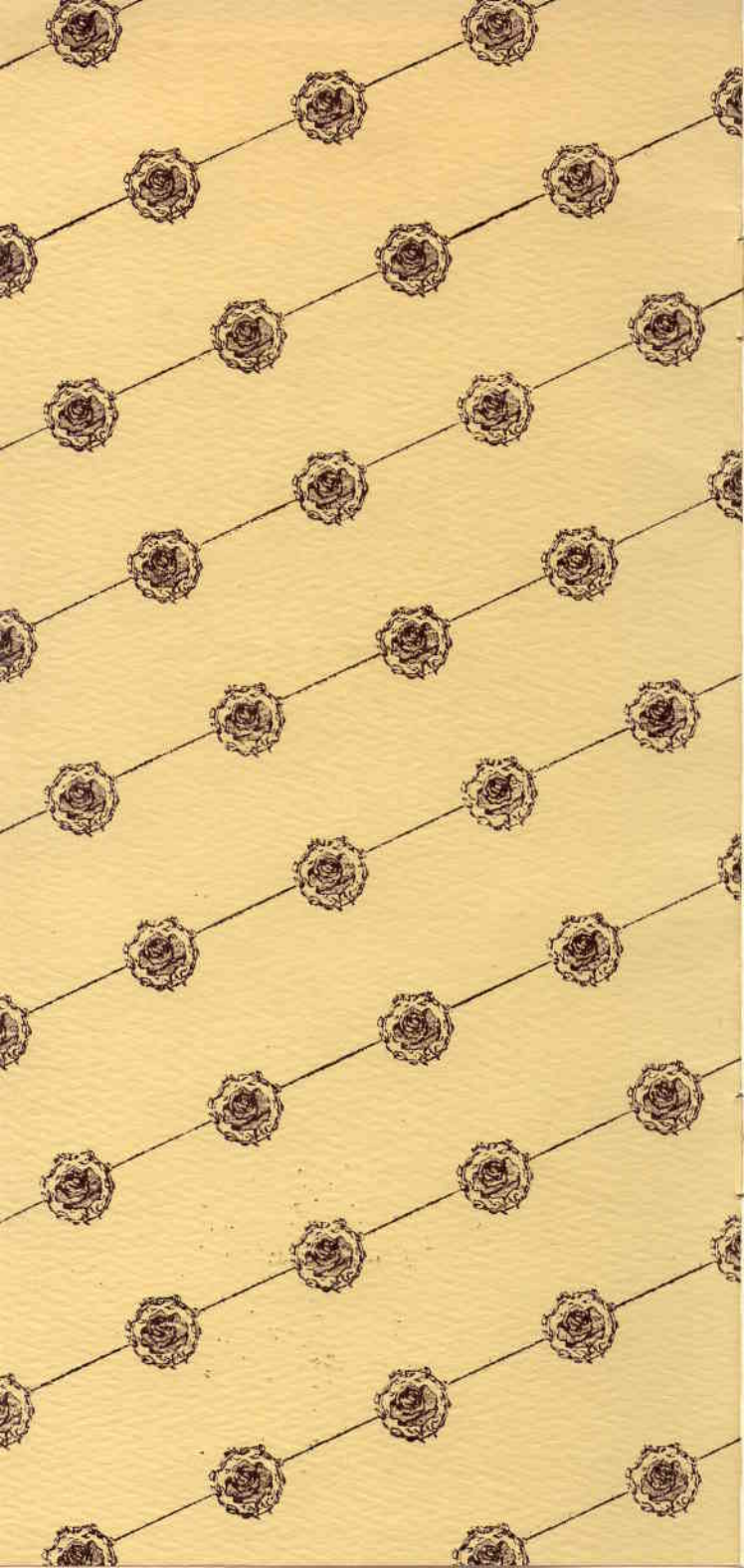


SPIRITUAL RENAISSANCE PRESS

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Graphics: Chappell Holt

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BY JEFFREY WATTLES



The gospel is the many-faceted, saving truth of our relationship with God. More than a noble philosophy, truth is a living experience; no creed or intellectual system can capture it. The concepts you are about to encounter — about the gospel message and the way of a teacher — can only do their job in an experience that transcends these words; but that is the work of the Spirit.

EVOLUTION OF THE GOSPEL

Religion helps people deal with the spiritual difficulties of their times. Primitive people needed to be liberated from bondage to tradition, to recognize one supreme God of nature and the spiritual world, to be delivered from fear, and to gain the assurance that faith alone is required in order to receive the gift of eternal life. That original gospel of faith and trust in the one God is always relevant, and Jesus came expanding that truth. The people of his day needed especially to experience the personal character of God's relationship with the individual. Jesus revealed the personality of the Father, and taught that we are the faith sons and daughters of God. He demonstrated the joy and liberty of sonship with God and the spontaneous fruits of living truth in wholehearted worship of God and loving service of humankind. Today we urgently need to realize that God's relation with the individual entails a profound spiritual consequence: the brotherhood of all humankind.

By the supreme decisions of living faith, we can assist in the dawn of a new age. New insights will harmonize scientific facts, philosophic meanings, and spiritual truth; appreciation of the beauties of nature and art will thrive; and morality — the practice of the golden rule — will become the personal philosophy of growing men and women. The great teachers of the coming age will be able to set forth their enlightening and comforting message *without succumbing to the temptation to adulterate their spiritual proclamation with efforts to give timely advice on social, economic, or political matters*. A rebirth of genuine religion, a spiritual renaissance, is destined to transform wastelands of secularism into gardens of a planet blossoming in faith.

GETTING OUT THE MESSAGE:

HOW JESUS DID IT,
WITH NOTES FOR
READING AND DISCUSSION
FROM *THE URANTIA BOOK*



Think how Jesus prepared to teach: communion with the Father, very keen study of scripture, and a fully active, normal human life. Jesus lived a majestic, balanced, love-dominated life (1101#7, 1874#7). He would communicate non-verbally, doing things others wanted done (1438). He would smile upon others (1441) and bestow himself upon others (1419); and he enacted the parable of service by washing the apostles' feet (1938#3).

Jesus initiated conversations by dropping words at work (1430) and tenaciously and artfully refusing superficial rejection (1437). Here Jesus shows the importance of learning how to detect people's unexpressed needs and yearnings. He follows a different rhythm in his casual conversation with Stephen begun while strolling about Jerusalem, which led to the two becoming interested in each other and to a four hour discussion about religion (1411).

The conversation with Nalda shows one type of teaching encounter: a commonplace beginning of conversation, spiritual escalation, confrontation, and transformation (1612#5).

Jesus engaged in public preaching and insisted that none of the apostles' personal ministry be permitted to take the place of proclaiming the gospel (1931).

Jesus organized a team to do the work, and encouraged each one to proclaim his own version of the gospel (1658).

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR MESSAGE

GOD IS OUR FATHER AND WE ARE HIS CHILDREN

Each person may know by faith — experience every day — the *truth* of being a son or daughter of God.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU

The intimacy of our relationship to God is such that we can personally experience God's indwelling spirit presence. And because Jesus portrayed God as a loving father rather than a king, we can say that the family of God is within you!

BY FAITH WE BEGIN ETERNAL LIFE

Our relationships in the Father's family are so much more real than the material bodies that we now use. The earth career is a preparation for our cosmic adventure of growth — ascent to Paradise and eternal service in the grand universe.

THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS REVEAL THE UNIVERSAL FATHER

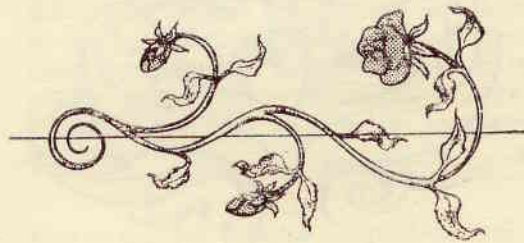
Jesus' robust life of good-humored, down-to-earth living and dynamic evangelism inspires us the more we know of it. Jesus led people to find the Father in heaven and did not aim to create a religion focused on his person; nonetheless it is important to keep sight of the divinity of the Good Shepherd.

THE JOY AND LIBERTY OF SONSHIP WITH GOD

The *beauty* of belonging in God's universal family permeates our feelings. We gain freedom from all attraction to sin, freedom to live spontaneously and creatively, and we go forward intelligently and cheerfully to do the Father's will.

WE ENACT THE GOSPEL BY LIVES OF WORSHIP AND SERVICE

The gospel is not a command to do certain things; it is a proclamation of relationships. But relationships are not static; they are realized in activity. And the *goodness* of the God whom we recognize through the gospel leads us to wholehearted worship of our heavenly Father and loving service in the brotherhood of beings.



THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN— SPIRITUAL FACT AND PLANETARY DESTINY

Because we all come from one Creator Father, we are all brothers and sisters—now—regardless of race, nationality, age, political conviction, or religious attitude. As planetary evolution advances, the practice of the presence of God will eventuate in the realization of the brotherhood of man.

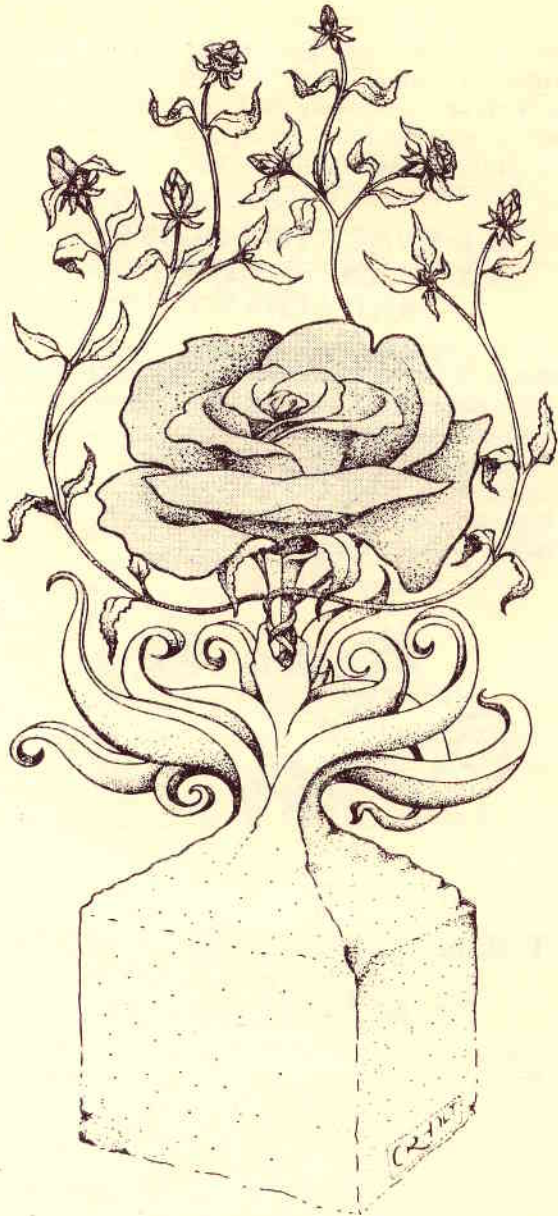
WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF AN EVANGELIST?

centered — on imparting the truth that the other person is a child of God; does not overteach; Jesus "brought someone into the temple" of faith sonship with God before imparting advanced teaching (1592#6). (What implication does this have for the use of *The URANTIA Book* in our ministry?) Jesus spoke to the real difficulties beneath others' questions (1460#4).

responsive — supremely interested in men; accords full respect to the other person; asks questions; listens patiently; (a few words in a "teachable moment" can have a powerful effect); answering questions, Jesus would offer practical suggestions, comfort and consolation, and words of the love of God for his children; Jesus used concepts and terms relevant to the other person's experience (1737#5, 1765#3); and did not grow weary in teaching.

free — natural; little of the professional or well-planned; does not seek personal victory; free of sarcasm, mere curiosity, negativity, dogmatism; teaches from life, not law; teaches without a system or a creed, but as the occasion demands (1672#3).

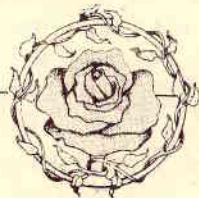
positive — avoids arguing or criticizing the other's beliefs, but finds points of significant agreement and expands on these points so as to add truth; active in doing good to others (1769#5).



vivid — using stories and parables from life relevant to the other person's experience (1474#4); used multiple illustrations and repetition; makes a direct, personal appeal to the hearts of hearers; addresses the whole person by appeal to emotions, mind, and spirit (1632#2; 1691#3, 1705#6); Jesus used the cream of the scriptures, but emphasized not so much quoting them as being a living prophet (1730#6).

courageous — authoritative; fearlessly proclaims the truth (1725#1), strongly defending the ways of faith if they are attacked, without anxiety over one's physical welfare or social image (1929#1).

trusting — has great faith in men; confident that the Spirit will lead the other person into all truth (1951#6); does not present advanced teaching to those who are not yet in the kingdom; there is no need to try to direct, manage, or follow up the other person. All that is needed in this ministry is to sow the seed (1688#1).



All teachers and believers should dwell in spiritual unity, based on the fact that each person is indwelt by a fragment of God; each has a common source and destiny; and each is growing towards perfection (1591#5).

People can cooperate if they practice sympathy and tolerance (1624#6).

The gospel of loving brotherhood generated by the experience of God will be practiced on our planet!

"The spiritual service of today is the spiritual renaissance of tomorrow."

