



ConjointReader

A Publication of The School of Meanings and Values

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The School of Meanings & Values Breaks New Ground With The “Art of Living” Series

By: Grace Boyett

Breaking new ground SMV presented its first event in the “Art of Living” series early this summer. On June 7th the symposium entitled “Joyous Living” was presented to a mixed crowd of “seekers”, many *Urantia Book* readers and many who were not. The presenters represented a variety of religious faiths and spiritual philosophies including Religious Science and Zen Buddhism. The idea for an Art of Living series was inspired by the Rodan papers, in particular the following UB passage on page 1776:

“Now it is possible, through personality association, to unite these views of temporal existence and eternal prospects. Thus does the mind of one augment its spiritual values by gaining much of the insight of the other. In this way men enrich the soul by pooling their respective spiritual possessions. Likewise, in this same way, man is enabled to avoid that ever-present tendency to fall victim to distortion of vision, prejudice of viewpoint, and narrowness of judgment.”

When I contacted Kermit Anderson to ask him to facilitate the Panel Discussion he said something to me that really resonated with that part of me that needed confirmation for attempting what some had described as a “bold undertaking.” He said and I paraphrase here, with permission from Kermit, “Yes, we need to expose ourselves to other philosophies and religions to avoid the trappings of becoming too insular.” I was delighted! He got it! Further, stated Kermit, “It’s important

that we realize that most of the truths found in *The Urantia Book* predate the book and are imbedded in our culture and history.”

What Kermit understood was that this series is presented for the purposes of promoting tolerance and acceptance of other faiths, religious or spiritual philosophies as well as providing a platform for putting forth, the best of our teachers and leaders in an atmosphere to share their spiritual fragrance. While there are a number of worthy endeavors the School continues to undertake, this one is near and dear to my heart as I believe that sharing the gospel, the “good news” has to be extended outside of our spiritual community. And this new series is generating increasing support for this endeavor to go beyond our own community, and outreach in an innovative way.

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We certainly hope to improve with each symposium, as each presents many opportunities for lessons. Our next event, “Authentic Living” is tentatively scheduled for March 27th, 2004 in the Los Angeles area, and so far we are lining up Gregg Levoy,

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critically acclaimed author of *Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life*. For more information about Gregg if you haven't read his book, see his website at <http://gregglevoy.com/>. Dr. Jeffrey Wattles, a preeminent lecturer and teacher within our UB community (as well as beyond the bounds of our UB fraternity), has agreed to join us once again to give one of his splendidly probing and evocative lectures. We are lining up a prominent Hindu speaker as well as others. As you may know, if you are not able to personally attend, we do professionally video tape these events and they are available at a reduced price if you order an advance copy. In this way, you can help defray the costs for the event.

We do pray for your support in this endeavor to reach beyond *The Urantia Book* community.

Although we have presented the first, "Joyous Living" as a symposium – many speakers speaking to the same topic, and this next one "Authentic Living" may be in the same format, future formats could include seminars, workshops, weekend retreats, etc. This is a work in progress and will "morph" into a variety of formats, I'm sure. We would certainly welcome your thoughts and comments about it.

We do pray for your support in this endeavor to reach beyond the UB community and hope that you can join us at one of these events for a tantalizing experience in tolerance and acceptance!

If you would like to support this endeavor, either by your volunteer energy or your financial support, please contact Grace Boyett at graceboy@adelphia.net, or Gary Reedy at gary_reedy@email.com, or make a contribution at www.school-meanings-values.org

Faith

*Excerpted from "Faith and the Kingdom of God"
By Stuart R. Kerr, III*

Faith is a gift from God.

We may develop by our own accord our own belief systems, but belief is not faith. Belief is founded on our own attempts to rationalize why we choose to see and understand the things the way we do, but faith transcends belief. Faith not only affects how we see and interpret our world, it also adds a unifying insight into the interrelatedness of all things and ideas, adding penetrating layers of meanings and values to those life experiences that belief can only begin to understand. Belief understands the facts of things while faith

comprehends the truth of things. Belief is built on intelligent observation and direct experience, but faith can comprehend things that mind alone fails to grasp. Faith can anticipate underlying relationships beneath the surface of reality – faith can comprehend things without seeing.

For example, even as a very young child I believed that if I drop an object from my hand, it will fall forthwith directly to the ground. My observations always seemed to validate this belief. If I threw a ball up into the air, it always fell to the ground. If I slipped on an icy sidewalk, I always fell to the ground. If I bumped too hard into a side table dislodging a lamp, the lamp always fell to the ground (and most of the time, it broke into pieces as well). I could always find examples to demonstrate my understanding of and control over this phenomenon of earth's gravity acting on falling objects. If you wanted evidence, I was happy to drop a water balloon off the top of a building.

However, as I grew older and more experienced, I learned that this belief had to be modified and qualified. I discovered that if I dropped a balloon filled with helium, it not only failed to fall to the ground, it actually did just the opposite by rising high into the air and on upward towards the clouds. In studying elementary physics in school, I learned that falling objects fell with a predictable accelerating speed that could be predicted using mathematical tools. At least this understanding was predictable if such an event were occurring in a vacuum and in close proximity to

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a sufficiently massive object such as the earth. Otherwise, things became much more complicated. I have recently discovered that I can drop a metal ball into a properly oriented magnetic field of sufficient strength and it will fail to hit the ground. Rather, it will fix itself suspended in the magnetic field indefinitely. In other words, I have learned to dismantle and rebuild my beliefs as the volume of my experiences and observations increase. I have learned to modify and evolve my beliefs over time as I progressively expand my experience with such phenomena.

Faith works a little differently than does belief. For example, I have evolved a faith that I will survive the

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I was amazed at the breadth and depth. Joyous Living is a benchmark for future events. — Stephen Zendt

I was really moved and captivated! I hung on every word. — Polly Friedman

This program was wonderful and very uplifting. We look forward to your next conference. — Larry & Donna Whelan

Excellent! THANK YOU!! — Samantha Crisp

The following are a just few of the inspirational speakers included on this 3 videocassette set (6 hours.):

Dr. Jeffrey Wattles — Author, professor of philosophy and religion, Kent State University, Ohio.

Stephen Zendt — President, Golden Gate Circle for Readers of the UB

Rev. Greg Marshall — Religious Science minister and motivational speaker

Dr. Ruth Holtzman — Founder of The Institute of Holistic Health

Tony Grosso — Zen Buddhist, author, public speaker

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Stuart Kerr on The SUPREME

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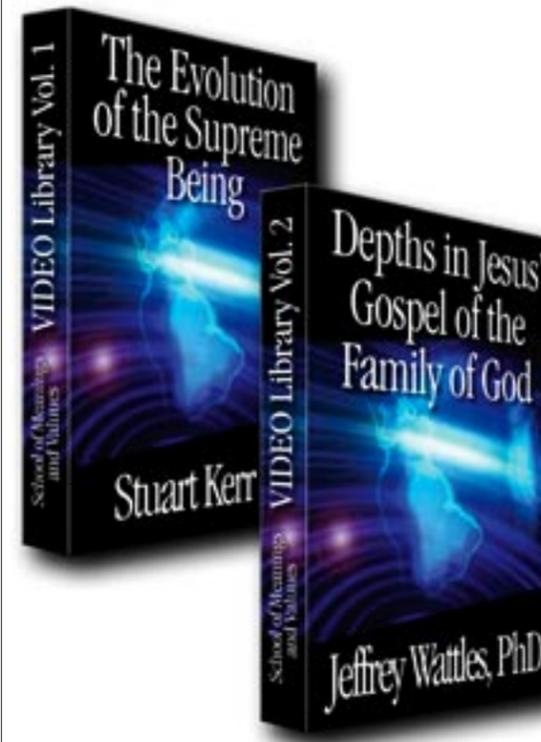
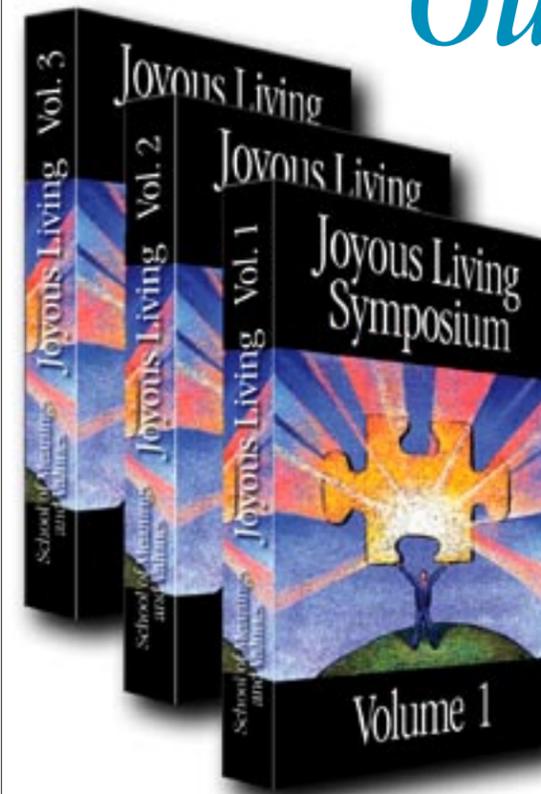
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death of my body, that my life will persist beyond the eventual disintegration of my physical vehicle of identity. How do I know this? I would certainly have a heck of a hard time demonstrating this assertion of faith. I would be hard-pressed to convince many people who fail to share this same faith. The graveyards of the world are filled with the physical remains of the dearly departed, but we have no solid evidence of life-continuation for the deceased (spurious ghost sightings and séance-generated contacts excepted). We cannot firmly point to someone who has either returned from the dead (except for possibly Lazarus, although we have to take the historical testimony of this event as an act of faith). Nor can we without question recount an irrefutable instance where someone who once lived in this world has contacted us from the beyond. Nevertheless, my faith in this regard is firm and unshakeable. I am resolute in my expectation of an afterlife, and my faith in the afterlife has broad influence on how I live and interpret my life.

Our foundations for building belief systems are very fragile. These foundations can slowly and easily be dismantled through methodical argument and counter-experience, and sometimes these foundations can be shaken so severely and traumatically as to completely shatter the supporting structure leaving us very little to stand on. Seeing is believing, and believing can easily be influenced by experience and circumstance. Faith, on the other hand, cannot so easily be shaken. Rather, it tends to expand and grow as we ourselves expand and grow as individuals. Faith builds on the secure foundation of our soul. In many ways, our spiritual development goes hand-in-hand with the growth of our faith.

The gift of faith is given to us once we accept the indwelling of the Father's spirit presence.

My faith that the universe is organized and friendly rather than chaotic and impersonal allows me to "see without seeing" that divine love permeates all of creation, that the heartbeat of the cosmos flows with the Father's love. I can give and share testimony of this faith, I can affirm my personal faith-experience with the Father's love, but I cannot demonstrate this faith-reality to someone who does not share in this faith. I cannot convince those without such faith that this is still true in the face of their denials and protestations and counter-arguments.

Faith is a gift from God. Our faith is not of our-

selves, but rather it becomes a reality in our lives once we have been graced with the indwelling presence of the Father's loving spirit. If we ask for the Father's presence, we can be assured that he will indeed enter intimately into our lives. He will indwell us to the very depths of our souls with a fragment of his divine spirit, the divine Thought Adjuster. This is our true re-birth, the virtual transformation of mind and spirit that accompanies our entrance into the fellowship of the Father's kingdom and our realization of living sonship.

The gift of faith is given to us once we accept the indwelling of the Father's spirit presence. This gift of faith leads to soul expansion and spiritual progress, and this newfound spirituality is an outgrowth of the insight born of the activity of the divine presence. The "eyes" of a faithful mind perceive the presence of the Father's divine nature and the resulting communion of man with God leads to true spiritual insight.

The presence of the Father's spirit in the deepest part of our mortal being provides limitless possibilities for personal growth and prayerful communion.

"Faith acts to release the superhuman activities of the divine spark, the immortal germ, that lives within the mind of man, and which is the potential of eternal survival...The human soul (personality) of man survives mortal death by identity association with this indwelling spark of divinity, which is immortal, and which functions to perpetuate the human personality upon a continuing and higher level of progressive universe existence. The concealed seed of the human soul is an immortal spirit. The second generation of the soul is the first of a succession of personality manifestations of spiritual and progressing existences, terminating only when this divine entity attains the source of its existence, the personal source of all existence, God, the Universal Father." [The Urantia Book, P.1459 - §6]

The presence of the Father's spirit in the deepest part of our mortal being provides limitless possibilities for personal growth and prayerful communion. However, these potentials for spiritual communion and survival potential are conditioned by "the manner of your own choosing, in the decisions of your minds, and in the determination of your wills" since the Father has decreed that man should be given full liberty to exercise his freewill choices.

"And the Deities are ever true to the ebb and flow of their spirits in meeting and satisfying the conditions and demands of this differential of creature choice, now bestowing more of their presence in response to

a sincere desire for the same and again withdrawing themselves from the scene as their creatures decide adversely in the exercise of their divinely bestowed freedom of choice. And thus does the spirit of divinity become humbly obedient to the choosing of the creatures of the realms." [The Urantia Book, P.150 - §4]

Religious experience must first take origin in the mind of man through his efforts to discover and recognize the truth, beauty, and goodness of God's creation. As man then attempts to interpret his experiences and to discern their moral meanings and values, he provides the fertile soil for the combined spiritual influences of the Father's indwelling Adjuster and the living waters of Jesus' promised Spirit of Truth. These attuned spiritual presences effect their divine influence and transformations on such a faith-pilgrim.

The indwelling Adjuster offers spiritualized counterparts for these variously interpreted meanings and values, but man must decide whether or not to select and incorporate these sorted and unified interpretations into his mindset.

The indwelling Adjuster offers spiritualized counterparts for these variously interpreted meanings and values, but man must decide whether or not to select and incorporate these sorted and unified interpretations into his mindset. The human mind discovers and makes personal choices of action and interpretation while the indwelling divine spirit reveals the higher manifestations of human comprehension and anticipated divine impact. Each time man volitionally chooses God's way in things, he creates a bolder, more spiritually elevated universe framework in which to continue in his efforts to follow the Father's will.

"Spirituality becomes at once the indicator of one's nearness to God and the measure of one's usefulness to fellow beings. Spirituality enhances the ability to discover beauty in things, recognize truth in meanings, and discover goodness in values. Spiritual development is determined by capacity therefor and is directly proportional to the elimination of the selfish qualities of love." [The Urantia Book, P.1096 - §1]

We of little faith should take heart in the assurance that the Father will always respond even to the "faintest flicker of faith". Sometimes even the weakest faith "amounts to little more than an intellectual conformity to a passive attitude of assent to religions of authority" [The Urantia Book, P.1733 - §5], but the Father still responds. Just think of what that means! Even if I feel

completely lost in my faith, if I would simply act as if I had such faith, then such an act can help to establish a behavioral pattern. The continuance of this behavioral pattern reinforces the established response, and this reinforcement provides the fertile ground for the Father to offer the insights of his truth for inspiring newfound faith through our experience of his grace. The gift of sonship is grounded in such seedling faith, and the Father's bountiful love and mercy will always bolster even the smallest show of faith.

"But truth can never become man's possession without the exercise of faith. This is true because man's thoughts, wisdom, ethics, and ideals will never rise higher than his faith, his sublime hope. And all such true faith is predicated on profound reflection, sincere self-criticism, and uncompromising moral consciousness. Faith is the inspiration of the spiritized creative imagination." [The Urantia Book, P.1459 - §5]

The indwelling spirit of the Father teaches and leads to truth, thus elevating man by his faith from his animalistic origins to his higher spiritual nature. This spiritual rebirth inevitably brings mortal man to "actually bear the noble fruits of the spirit" and promises everlasting joy within the kingdom of heaven. Living faith is always personal, and it displays a child-like trustfulness in the goodness of God. Living faith brings about a tranquil experience of supreme and unquestioned trust in God. At the same time, it adds the thrill of living in the very presence of the Father.

"Without God the soul is a prisoner; to know God releases the soul. By meditation on God, by union with him, there comes deliverance from the illusions of evil and ultimate salvation from all material fetters." [The Urantia Book, P.1449 - §2]

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Faith sweeps away spiritual doubt. Faith leads to the certainty and security of the guidance and protection of the heavenly Father. Salvation-through-faith is the gift of the Father to the faithful. His Sons reveal the truth of this. Faith makes such a believer a spiritual son or daughter of this same Paradise Father.

July 10, 2003 by Stuart Kerr, III
Stuart.Kerr@us.rhodia.com

“Joyous Living” Conference

Report by Lee Loots

“We believe all paths in the pursuit of Truth lead to the same destination and that is God. We also understand that each of our individual understandings of God can and do differ, but in this understanding, there is a common goal, and that common goal is a desire and a longing to know our Creator.” With these remarks in a welcoming packet to all participants, Grace Boyett, SMV Executive Director, established the tone for the “Joyous Living” conference on June 7, 2003. The stage was set for a day of inspiration and interfaith outreach. The event drew an eclectic and packed audience, and because I was a speaker, I found the turnout to be especially encouraging.

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Within moments of Dolores Nice’s opening remarks, I was eased into divine focus, and rapidly felt myself being reconfigured for worship. Dolores artfully wove in wisdom from many sources, including *The Urantia Book* and her personal experiences. Her gift to me was her unmistakably devout attitude, which I found to be contagious.

Dr. Jeffrey Wattles, with his usual brilliance, then proceeded to endear himself to us with his charm and wit. Jeff presented the fruits of decades’ long grappling with principles of truth, beauty, and goodness, in the endeavor to create a new philosophy of living. He made us laugh while teaching us, and we all appreciated that!

Rev. Greg Marshall picked up with humor where Jeff left off, submitting wry observations of how we humans engage in non-thinking. We couldn’t help but howl in self-recognition! More fullness of life and joy of living are available, if only we will do the mental work. Therefore, Greg, through his speaking style and personal presence, motivated me to do the work of focused thinking even more than I do.

Dr. Ruth Holtzman, a therapist, departed from her planned remarks, paying attention to inner guidance

to speak to the audience at hand. Her gift to me was her example (conveyed in her life story) of bringing joy out of chaos by persistently following the path of transformation. Though Ruth is not a *Urantia Book* reader, nevertheless, her story reminded me of the passage which says that “...the highest happiness is linked with intelligent and enthusiastic pursuit of worthy goals....”

Miyuki Harley, a musician whose spiritual path includes her art form, offered the kind of spiritual respite that music uniquely provides. Her various artistic contributions all through the event were particularly appreciated and welcomed at an occasion fueled mainly by words.

Stephen Zendt, a trained stage actor, brought his beautiful resonant voice and exquisite sense of timing to the reading of poetry and drama, presenting pieces to point us to the spirit. Stephen thus made a “right-brained” contribution in a day of left-brained offerings. He invited us into spiritual reflection both with his readings, as well as with the meditation time he led afterwards.

Ann Rea, a Practitioner of Religious Science, was inspirational as well as thought-provoking. Her grasp of transformational issues was apparent, and so was her ability to reach into the minds of listeners, and spur them on to better things. As far as audience reaction, I wasn’t often situated to hear the comments of people during breaks, but after Ann’s presentation, I did happen to hear a very positive buzz.

As for Tony Grosso, well, please forgive me, but I was absent during that talk! From polling various listeners, however, I learned that Tony offered a relevant grounding in Buddhist thought. Buddhist practices are worth exploring for any seeker, of course, because they can be utilized in mental formation for any path. People who heard him commented on “what a neat person” Tony is. How excellent it is when an evolved or higher being state leaves behind a positive, lingering impression.

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The Tai Chi Chu’an demonstration by Xueli Fu and Tony Grosso which followed Tony’s talk was terrific not only for its instruction, but also for the chance to get up and move! At that point, it had been a long and intensive day, and personally speaking, my brain already felt on overload! (Thank goodness for the videotaping!)

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Your Financial Contribution Is Needed To Help Continue This Important Work. . .

The Mission of The School of Meanings and Values

The School of Meanings and Values:

- ❑ Provides a forum for individual and group spiritual exploration based on the principles and teachings of the fifth epochal revelation
- ❑ Fosters the integration of these teachings into the practical lifestream
- ❑ Offers in-depth study of “*The Urantia Book.*”
- ❑ Trains teachers and leaders in the ideals and philosophy of Jesus for worldwide service.

Organization of the School

- ❑ **Board of Directors:** The Board is self appointing and oversees the operation of the School; appoints members of the Advisory Council and the Teaching Staff; cooperates with the *Urantia* Foundation and their affiliated groups such as the International Urantia Association (IUA), the Fellowship for Readers of *The Urantia Book*, and their Societies.

- ❑ **Advisory Council:** Coordinates with study groups; facilitates in implementing projects endorsed by the Board; survey needs of the *URANTIA* community; facilitates fund raising efforts; offers computer and clerical support; and generally functions to provide service opportunities within the School.
- ❑ **Volunteer Staff:** Aably assists Directors and Advisors in accomplishing goals and objectives of the School; supports teachers in conducting courses, and provides support services to meet the basic needs of running the School, workshops, seminars and other School presentations and projects.
- ❑ **Teaching Staff:** Dedicated soldiers of the circles who design, conduct and work to meet the educational and spiritual guidance needs of the planet.
- ❑ **Students:** The teachers and leaders of tomorrow.

We welcome and encourage your participation. Please direct your tax-deductible contributions and correspondence to:

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PO Box 3324
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www.school-meanings-values.org

SAVE THE DATE!

Don't Miss The “Authentic Living Symposium” March 27, 2004 in Los Angeles



If you attended the most recent School of Meanings and Values Symposium, Joyous Living, you know how powerful, moving, and inspirational this upcoming, day-long (and professionally videotaped) event promises to be!

Stephen Zendt said of our last event: *I was amazed at the breadth, the depth, and the powerful potential. (This program is) a benchmark for future events.*

The School of Meanings and Values is breaking new ground for outreach beyond *The Urantia Book* community. Authentic Living will feature these and other speakers: Gregg Levoy, author of “*Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life.*” (Hailed by *Booklist* as “*Ravishing!*”) — Dr. Jeffrey Wattles — Dr. Manzoor Massey: a Hindu turned Christian speaking of the religions (Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Christianity) that have helped shape India.

Mark your calendar now! Plan to attend!

Come See What The Buzz Is About!

For info or to add your name to our E-mail list, visit: www.school-meanings-values.org

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The panel discussion was a welcomed interactive time. Once again, we relaxed in laughter over various responses. I actually think that many more questions had been asked that day than just the ones to which the camera bore witness, because I noticed that each speaker was eagerly sought out after her/his presentation. One of the delights of a spiritual conference (and it was certainly true again here) is that mingling and fellowship deepen, expand, and complete the experience.

My contribution was the final one. At one point during the day, I had left the seminar to go to my room to pray for guidance. I recall that time vividly. I came to the podium after this preparation wanting to speak not only from head knowledge, but also from a place of actual experience with the topic at hand. As I began my talk, I was surprised and flustered at an initial sense of being emotionally overwhelmed. (Yet, I know this can happen to me when I speak sincerely. My voice has, in fact, cracked in many a sermon!) Soon, however, balance returned, and I was able to continue with conviction. How privileged I felt to have the loving attention of many, and their support fed me. *The Urantia Book* was my textual resource throughout. However, just like with every other speaker that day, the Spirit of Truth was my living resource. Revelation is continuous, and God does gladly communicate to all with eyes to see and ears to hear.

How privileged I felt to have the loving attention of many, and their support fed me. *The Urantia Book* was my textual resource throughout. However, just like with every other speaker that day, the Spirit of Truth was my living resource. Revelation is continuous, and God does gladly communicate to all with eyes to see and ears to hear.

After the event concluded, a friend of Miyuki's (along "just for the fun of it") expressed enthusiastic interest in acquiring *The Urantia Book*. I found this exciting and encouraging. Joyous Living is, after all, directly related to finding a path which assuredly moves us along to richer and deeper spiritual destinations, and *The Urantia Book* is the best map I know of for that aim! However, no matter what path we choose, may each of us be blessed and receptive to all truth in our spiritual pursuits. May we travel—separately or together—always in the spirit of fellowship.

Our First Urantia Conference

By Cheryl Boyles

It was a beautiful morning in late spring when we left our home in sunny Victorville, California, heading down to The School of Meanings and Value's "Joyous Living" seminar. My husband, Thomas, was in the driver's seat. As usual, I was navigating, which accounts for all three of the U-turns we made before eventually pulling up to the Claretian Renewal Center in Los Angeles. Before arriving, however, and even

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before the U-turns, I glanced down at the unassuming blue book jostling on the seat between us. I marveled to myself how much it had changed both of our lives since we were first introduced to it by our very dear cyber pal, Jeff Wattles, less than three years earlier. And now we were on our way to our first URANTIA based event, and would be meeting some of our new URANTIA friends in person for the first time. Other than the occasional, "I think we were supposed to turn back there," we mostly rode along in silence.

Thomas was a bit nervous; I could tell. He grew up entirely without religion or religious influences other than a brief stint in vacation Bible school when he was about seven. He had no real frame of reference for this sort of thing. I was mildly apprehensive for my own reasons; I was raised Pentecostal – tent revivals and the whole enchilada – and could hardly imagine a religious (or *spiritual*, if you prefer) gathering where one actually has a jolly good time. Somehow the teachings of *The Urantia Book* had managed to unify, coordinate, and integrate my husband's and my dissimilar spiritual paths, but would the same be the case between the two of us and other readers? And what about the topic, *Joyous Living*? In all honesty, I was joyously looking forward to the experience of fellowship in a URANTIA setting every bit as much as I was anticipating the teachings on the event's theme.

Allowing for my navigational deficiencies and traffic's consistent inconsistencies, we arrived at the center with about half an hour to spare. Grace Boyett's ear-to-ear smile as she waved to us from the building's doorway assured us that we were in the right place. Soon we were settled into our comfy accommodations, greeted and seated, and rejoicing in "the day that the Lord has made," per invitation by the first presenter, Dolores Nice.

It soon dawned on me as I listened to the various speakers that some of them were not themselves *Uran-*

tia Book readers; a number of the specific ideas, therefore, deviated a bit from the teachings of The Book. As some of these viewpoints were expressed, I stiffened in my seat and shifted my glance around the room apprehensively (you can take the girl out of church, but it is another matter indeed to wrest church out of the girl). How reassuring it was to note that no one seemed the least bit perturbed. In fact, the air was rife with open-armed encouragement and expectancy; I was reminded of a passage from page 2085: "The true church – the Jesus brotherhood – is invisible, spiritual, and is characterized by unity, not necessarily by uniformity." This is all well and good in theory, but I had never before witnessed it in practice in my entire life – that is, until this day. And lo and behold, I settled in and began to have myself a jolly good time!

The ability and the willingness to transcend this nature is a powerful testament, a most powerful testament to the truth in, and of, and through the religion of Jesus we can share with the rest of the world.

At lunch we sat with a lovely gentleman, Kermit Anderson. Any residual reservations or apprehensions we had carried with us into the dining room fell with our breadcrumbs (along with a stray olive or two) onto the floor. Soon our entire round table – it really was round – joined into our lively discussion. Who are you? How did you come to be here today? There was something so refreshingly genuine about the whole thing; words are sort of failing me here. Those of you who are *not* new to the URANTIA movement, those of you who have been on this path for many years, those of you who may at times wonder where all of this is going and if it is ever going to get there, let this newcomer assure you, there is something fresh and promising, something tangibly beautiful and palpably blessed when we gather under the banner of Christ Michael of Nebadon.

Sitting here writing this, I am going over in my mind the things I learned about joy and joyous living from each speaker, but all of this fabulous information is available on the tape series – which I highly recommend. And I cannot any better restate what the presenters have each already said. So I will instead focus the remainder of my comments on what I (we) gained from the experience of being there. What a joy to finally meet Jeff Wattles, Lee Loots, and SMV's own Grace Boyett in person! And so many others – some whose names were familiar, and some not. The diver-

sity, religious and otherwise, was apparent, as was the acceptance and the love. And these things are not often found comfortably sharing the same space. A few years ago Thomas and I visited a certain museum, and one exhibit in particular stuck in our minds. It housed a real stagecoach, which had, in bygone days, carried weary travelers over arid lands of yucca, rattlesnakes, and tumbleweeds. As part of the authentic looking scene an old wooden sign was posted warning prospective passengers in no uncertain terms not to "discuss politics or religion" while on board. Either of these topics, or God forbid the combination, apparently precipitated our earliest form of road rage.

This, I realize, is human nature, or is at least typical of our baser inclinations at this particular stage in our evolution. The ability and the willingness to transcend this nature is a powerful testament, a *most powerful* testament to the truth in, and of, and through the religion of Jesus we can share with the rest of the world. That we truly *live* this living truth is imperative. It is so obvious that some might be tempted to answer me with a rousing, *duh?* But I am new to all of this and have no affiliations (only friends) so I think I might get away with stating that the house of URANTIA should most especially take care that it aims to transcend fetters of lower human tendencies and not do as the bawdy pioneers in the stagecoach, raising such a ruckus over who stands for what that they interfere with the ability to stay the course. The course is far too precious. And this transcendence is what I saw and felt and experienced at the *Joyous Living* seminar, and this gives me hope, and yes, also substantial cause for joy!

I have read *The URANTIA Book* in its entirety, which I have often thought to myself, is *really* something.

I have read *The Urantia Book* in its entirety, which I have often thought to myself, is *really* something. After the SMV seminar, and after talking with people like Kermit Anderson, Richard Omura, and Jeff Wattles (who not only knows The Book cover to cover, he understands what everything means AND remembers what page it is on!) I recognize that my personal feat, though big in the small picture, is sort of small in the big picture. I'm mentioning my brief history as a reader, then, with modest intentions – to share how it was that when I got home from the seminar I began reading *The Urantia Book* with renewed zeal all over again. And Thomas, who had been reading it sort of piecemeal, picked it up and read Part IV straight

Continued on next page

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through in a few short weeks. He is now deeply into Part III, and I can hardly get him to put the thing down. And by the way, we are still having ourselves a jolly good time!

Moreover, it is true that a habitually sourly person should not expect to attend a seminar, any seminar, and come away suddenly transformed into a jolly soul. But it is equally true that a person who earnestly seeks joy will surely find it. Along with other seekers who congregated that weekend in L.A., we did indeed receive and absorb a plethora of pertinent pointers on the path to joyous living. Pointers that, though expressed in words, might have fallen flat if not for the authenticity of experience out of which each presenter shared. We not only heard, we came away infused: Joy is a virtue; joy is a choice; there is joy in integrity, joy in forgiveness, joy in attending to duty, joy in living a life predicated upon truth, beauty, and goodness. Lee Loots, the last presenter of the day, recapped some of these various levels, applications, and connotations of joyous living. Then she added her own punctuation (which I loved, and so I will borrow it and use it to punctuate my own ending) by sharing that, according to her understanding, there is yet a higher level of joy, which she described as “feeling like I am acting upon my highest loyalties to the Divine.” Lee went on to say; “And when I can act upon those very high loyalties, that level of joy is extremely deep... It is deep, and it’s memorable, and it’s memorable because... it’s connected to eternity.” May we each grow in the desire to seek such an exalted, yet wholly obtainable level of joy!

Thank you, SMV, for making our first URANTIA experience both meaningful and valuable – and warm, comfortable, and inspiring to boot. We would, in fact, do it again. Only next time we might consider taking a bus.

The Joy of A Study Group

By Polly Friedman

PERSONAL HISTORY

Before *The Urantia Book* was published only a few instructions were given for disseminating the teachings. And the one that has remained undisputed is the directive to form “thousands of study groups.”

During my forty years with the Blue Book: I have either belonged to a group, or hosted one in my home. This has made a difference in my life, a personal and profound difference with benefits of making new

friends, bringing people together, plus the advantage of group wisdom in grasping the teachings. The first group I started was the very first study group in the San Fernando Valley in California, in the early 70’s. There were only six or seven of us but we became close friends to this day. A rich bonding occurred, probably because of the uniqueness of our material at that point in time.

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The group I host now is 3000 miles from California in Rhode Island... When I moved here in spring of 2002, I was determined to bring readers together, even if I could find only 2 readers. The first meeting was last November ’02, before Thanksgiving and it was a joyous occasion with five men and myself besides a turkey with all the trimmings! At first I wondered how many would stick with the group, the majority being new readers, but we now have ten regular members on the Roster, and usually an attendance of 6 to 8.. The atmosphere of warmth, openness and tolerance has reached a place of contagion where guests like to return. I have found success primarily when the planning is minimal and democratic with the readers making their own choices. Keeping the evening simple but stimulating is one of the keys. How can individuals find excitement through simplicity? The content is so complex it naturally cries out for discussion, opinions, and clarification. With various discussions, all present become acquainted with the personalities and unique viewpoints of each individual. So, besides insights and eye-openers, there is the forming of spiritual kinship.

In a new group the emphasis from the facilitator is best when there is guidance rather than formal instruction, plus encouragement that invites everyone to speak.

APPROACHES TO STUDY

There are two basic formats that I have noticed with many variations:

The first is reading consecutive Papers starting from the beginning of one of the Parts. I prefer to begin at the VERY beginning of Paper I as the Book suggests because there will be fewer questions on Proper nouns, who is thus and so, and explaining new concepts such as the numerous Creator Sons etc. There are few papers that can stand alone; among them are the papers on the meaning of true religion.

The second format is one of doing Topical Study which involves a topical theme and a leader. This is great for experienced readers, who have some background and know where to go. It also shares leadership. Those who volunteer are assigned a particular date and can prepare a lesson on a topic well in advance. I belonged to one group that each week studied one of the “fruits of the spirit.” It took all year to fill the fruit bowl. Our hostess ended up making a form a group. One man met a friend of mine on a plane going to LA and he discovered the friend was a UB reader. He lives near Providence and had the Book for five years and always wondered where it came from. I phoned a few from a Chicago list, then there is a friend of a friend, who lived in NYC and one found me... And so it goes.

Think of starting a group as an important project, water, and feed it and you will harvest one of the biggest crops of joy in your life through giving the best of meaningful gifts to others.

9/9/03 – Pauline Friedman, PollyM707@earthlink.net

How I Found *The Urantia Book*

Isaac Bwalya, Zambia, Africa

I came to hear about *The Urantia Book* from one of a good friend. He used to read some selected quotes from the same book for me. This usually used to happen whenever I visited him and when he visited me.

Gradually, I developed interest in knowing more about the book, because the same selected quotes made me to think more about a lot of things which affect our daily lives as individuals and as human beings generally.

It is so wonderful to be set free, free from the fetters of fear, doctrines, religion, ecstasy, taboos.

Moreover, the great news was that this same friend (Chita Nonde) received *The Urantia Book* in February 2003 year, making our study of it more exciting and interesting. I am also therefore, looking forward to having a personal copy of *The Urantia Book*, so that whenever we meet together we can discuss certain topics that are of interest and need to us.

Namukale Kaliwanda, Zambia, Africa

In June 2000 to 31st March 2001, a friend of mine started writing letters to me. From November 2000 to March 2001, he almost wrote to me on a daily basis.

Early 2001, he told me of a big book in the library, unfortunately some pages of the book were missing. One day he showed me the book and I sat down to

go through it. Having checked the contents, I went straight to paper 90 “Shamanism – Medicine Men and Priests.” This paper was of interest to me because of my uncertainties on diseases. Later on, I came across familiar words such as Melchizedek, Adam and Eve, which led to other findings such as origin and nature of Thought Adjusters, Midway creatures, the seven mansion worlds, personality survival and many more.

When I imagine and think of what *The Urantia Book* is to me, with tears in my eyes I shout “Oh what joy!”

When I went to school (2002) in another city (Kitwe), I came across *The Urantia Book* in the school library. It was great joy to discover the Jesus papers, 120 to 128 which were missing in the other *Urantia Book* (in Ndola).

I have not finished reading the entire book, but whilst reading I always rejoice to come across the statement my friend (Chita Nonde) wrote in his letters. The more I read the Book, the more I come across the statements in the letters. It’s also some kind of an adventure.

It is so wonderful to be set free, free from the fetters of fear, doctrines, religion, ecstasy, taboos and all those things that distract from spiritual progress. I look forward to that time our universe will be settled in light and life and the attainment of the supreme.

Chita Nonde, Zambia, Africa

I discovered *The Urantia Book* in Ndola Public Library in 1998. I used to go in the morning 09:00 am to 14:30 pm. One day I took *The Urantia Book*, and looked at the contents. I was especially moved by the titles. The Central and Supper Universe, the Local Universe and the History of *Urantia*.

Every study break after was dedicated to reading *The Urantia Book* and now things were becoming clear and my mind free. I did not realize how my mind was expanding, concepts, perception on life changed as I advanced though understood not.

It was a joyous time such that I thought it best to start from page 1 so as to understand everything properly. And I did just that.

Its not easy to compose (for me) what *The Urantia Book* is to me, perhaps the above story could dictate what it is to me. But all I could say I am free, free indeed, free at last ! However, to myself when I imagine and think of what *The Urantia Book* is to me, with tears in my eyes I always shout “Oh what joy! *Urantia!*” The greatest joy is that I have begun.



ConjointReader

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