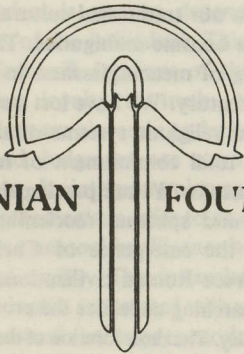


Spiritual Perspectives for a New Age

by

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SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES for A NEW AGE

We are living in one of the great pivotal periods of history. Society has undergone more change in the last one hundred years than the world has experienced in the previous two thousand years. Information is exploding. Some fields of knowledge are doubling every five to ten years. Ninety percent of the scientists who have ever lived are living in our times. We are unlocking the secrets of the microcosmos and beginning to travel in outer space. During this century we have evolved a new physics, a new astronomy, a new psychology, and the beginnings of a new philosophical age.

The planet earth is traveling so fast contemporary society is experiencing future shock. There is a sense of alienation from our traditional cultural values. Our relation to life has become ambiguous. There is a pervasive intuitive feeling of meaninglessness in the civilization of the twentieth century. We have lost our spiritual orientation. The great religious systems of the past no longer command the total commitment of humanity or fulfill their ultimate needs. We are passing through a collective psychological and spiritual reorientation equivalent in magnitude to the emergence of Christianity from the ruins of the Greco-Roman civilization.

A form of searching underlies the erosion of institutional religion in our day. The deterioration of the credibility of traditional social, economic, political, and moral values among our most perceptive youth is building a hunger for a new spiritual vision. The growing lack of relevance elicited by ancient spiritual frames of reference which have their roots in prescientific thought and culture has triggered an explosion of cults, new religions, and psychomystical movements.

Just as in past philosophical-cultural transitions, there is a proliferation of phenomena and movements. In this so called "Age of Aquarius" we have thousands of gurus, astrologers, Tarot Card readers, numerologists, graphologists, and prophets of every sort. Millions of people are pursuing ESP, psychic phenomena, Zen, Yoga, I Ching, Theosophy, Spiritualism, Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, UFO's, and mind altering drugs. Among the dozens of new sects which have sprung up are The Unification Church, The Divine Light Mission, The International Society of Krishna Consciousness, The Children of God, The Way International, and many others.

A New Vision of Reality

There is a search for spiritual reality today which is unprecedented in modern times. What is the meaning of all this yearning for spiritual verities? If we can learn from history, it means that God is at work in our world preparing us for a new spiritual age. Many influences are at work training us for creative approaches to the future. We should like to invite your attention to one of these sources — a book which may play an important role in this new spiritual age. It is *The Urantia Book* published in 1955 by the Urantia Foundation of Chicago, Illinois. *The Urantia Book* is one of the most promising sources of creative thought in philosophy, religion, and culture in our contemporary world. Without promotion or publicity this unusual book has sold more than 175,000 copies. The overwhelming consensus among those who have read the book is that it will receive universal recognition.

In its two-thousand pages *The Urantia Book* presents an integrated picture of the universe which has extremely broad ramifications. The book's observations and insights regarding the arts, the social sciences, and the physical sciences have relevant problem solving implications. Its overarching grasp of the dynamics of civilization and culture shed wisdom in almost every area of human endeavor.

Modern day scientists, philosophers, and theologians have tried to accommodate our growing understanding of reality to traditional ways of looking at the universe. The factual world of scientific knowledge can no longer be explained or understood by the scientific theories which seemed adequate only a few years ago. London University physicist, David Bohm, sees reality in a relational wholeness. Our world of experience, he believes, has its roots in a deeper level of reality which he views as a holographic universe. In a similar manner, Carl Sagan in his book, *Cosmos*, attempts to update our knowledge of physical phenomena and expand our conceptualization of the universe in which we live.

Paul Tillich, the most widely read theologian of the mid-twentieth century, tries to restructure the way we perceive spiritual reality. His description of God as the inescapable "ground of being" adds a new dimension to the religious aspect of life. The British mathematician and philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, enlarges our traditional Deity concepts in his view of the primordial and the consequent natures of God which have been amplified by Process Theology into one of the major theological developments of the twentieth century. Buckminster Fuller, one of the most creative minds of our generation, sees God functioning in the evolutionary process of the

world.

Harvard psychologist, Henry A. Murray, observes the distress, confusion, and alienation experienced by so many members of our contemporary society. He, along with the Swiss psychiatrist, Carl Jung, believes the root cause of this dispirited condition of modern man is an inadequate religious orientation to life. Dr. Murray conjectures that we need a new universe mythology, a vision of ultimates, which will "claim the head and heart" of twentieth century man. British authors, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, recognize this same need and in their writings have attempted to prepare our minds for such an enlarged and inspiring vision of spiritual reality.

The Urantia Book integrates and structures all of these contemporary prophetic views in science, philosophy, and religion in a unique holistic cosmos. The book is divided into four parts. The first section describes the nature of Ultimate Reality and the astronomical or cosmological nature and organization of the universe. This picture is essentially in harmony with our present astronomical knowledge and parallels the Swedish astronomer Charlier's concept of a hierarchical universe.

The second section of *The Urantia Book* relates to our local galaxy or local universe and its interrelationships where the loving and effective ministry of Christ is the central universe reality through which everything else finds meaning and purpose. The third section of *The Urantia Book* narrates the story of the origin and development of our world whose universe name, we are told, is "Urantia." The interesting material in this account coincides with the best of our scientific and historical knowledge. The fourth section of *The Urantia Book* contains a seven hundred page version of the life and teachings of Jesus which is solidly rooted in the historical New Testament story. This superb presentation of the life of Jesus brings vibrant coherence to the sketchy New Testament picture and with it a new authenticity. It is basically acceptable to all religions, emphasizing the religion of Jesus which is unifying rather than the religion about Jesus which tends to be divisive.

The Exceptional Quality of *The Urantia Book*

A more detailed description of the different sections of *The Urantia Book* may be helpful. Part I, The Central and Superuniverses, and Part II, The Local Universe, would be philosophically classified as metaphysical in nature. That is, these sections portray the ultimate nature of things. *The Urantia Book* presents an integrated and masterful view of Ultimate Reality. Concepts of Deity ranging from that of a personal Universal Father to impersonal absolutes are so well unified the holistic picture

is maintained. The nature and attributes of God are discussed as they relate to the universe and to the individual. The Trinity is conceptualized with greater intellectual and spiritual clarity than any other description in theological literature. The material and gravitational center of the universe, the Isle of Paradise, is referred to as the nuclear source of all energy, matter, life, and personality. A marvelously organized hierarchical universe is described which includes millions of inhabited planets in all stages of physical, mental, and spiritual evolution. Mechanistic and vitalistic interpretations of natural phenomena are integrated. Science, philosophy, and religion are seen as partial aspects of a larger holistic universe.

The Urantia Book presents one of the most realistic and inclusive material-mindal-spiritual cosmologies in the entire field of philosophy and religion. It portrays an eminently reasonable picture of the conditions and nature of immortality. Survival is seen as dependent on the spiritual reality status of the individual. This, in turn, is determined by the free will decisions of the individual toward God, by our loyalty to truth, beauty, and goodness as these values are sincerely understood. Nevertheless, evil, sin, and judgment are stern and sober realities in the universe. Its intriguing picture of life after death, an area which theologians refer to as eschatology, is not only appealing to rational intelligence but has a ring of authentic spiritual reality. The interrelationships of body, mind, soul, and spirit are treated with much insight and originality. The central challenge to modern man is to make a well-balanced and sane effort to achieve God-consciousness. Growth toward perfection is presented as the fundamental motivation of life. This growth is evolutionary, culminating, and virtually endless.

Erich Fromm observes that our technological civilization is experiencing a revolution of hope. The editorial board of *World Perspectives* declares that we are in the process of developing a new consciousness. There is an ecumenical power of mind and heart which is enabling man to re-create his life and become aware of this divine destiny. Many are contributing to this new age. The American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, has directed our attention to the importance of "meta-needs" or "Being Values" which make up the spiritual foundations of human nature. The Italian psychiatrist, Roberto Assagioli, speaks of the fundamental significance of transpersonal qualities and the Spirit Center of human consciousness. The Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, calls modern man to rediscover the all important "I-Thou" relationship of life. Humanistic Psychology

and Holistic Medicine see human nature as an integration of body, mind, and spirit which is distinctively shaped by the higher human values. The writings of the French priest, Teilhard de Chardin, discover and illuminate the hand of God in the entire evolutionary process. Teilhard believes we have entered the greatest period of change the world has ever known. Humanity, he says, is moving toward the "Omega Point" of mental-spiritual awareness.

British churchmen, Leslie D. Weatherhead and John A.T. Robinson, have eloquently described the decadent theological formulations of current day Christianity which have their roots in the prescientific thinking of the Middle Ages and have called for a new spiritual renaissance. The American Academy of Political and Social Science in one volume of their *Annals* have documented the radical changes which have taken place in American religion since the 1960's. Public opinion research scientist, Daniel Yankelovich, says there is a form of searching underlying all of American life today. And George Gallop reports in a talk at Princeton Theological Seminary that "Americans today appear to be on a spiritual quest of major proportions . . . the final two decades of this century could, in fact, represent a unique chapter in the history of religion in the United States."

Part III of *The Urantia Book*, The History of Urantia, confirms, summarizes, and builds upon these and many other contemporary concerns and developments. It describes the origin and evolution of events on our planet. In addition to man's biological evolution, it traces the development of civilization, culture, government, religion, the family, and other social institutions. *The Urantia Book* exhibits a superior understanding of planetary history, dynamics, and destiny.

The section discussing marriage and the family has a rich and realistic historical appreciation of the relationships of men and women and a balanced assessment of the contributions of both nature and nurture in shaping human life. Papers dealing with the nature and function of religion, the purpose and practice of prayer and worship, and the place of personal and institutional religion in life and society are among the best discussions of these subjects in print. Chapters which describe the loving nurture of the indwelling Spirit of God in the mind of man are of exceptional quality and parallel the world's finest insights derived from a first hand experience of God found in devotional literature.

Part IV of *The Urantia Book*, The Life and Teachings of Jesus, although faithful and confirmative of the gospel

story in the Bible, enlarge and enhance our knowledge concerning the mission of Jesus to our world. This expanded version of the life and teachings of Jesus has a universal appeal even when it is viewed only as a historical novel for it is unsurpassed in theistic philosophical reasonableness, spiritual insight, and personality appeal. This life of Jesus not only fills in the "hidden years" from twelve to thirty but *The Urantia Book* gives a picture of his pre-bestowal and post-bestowal experience. The gospel of John closes with the comment, "There are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

In its seven hundred page biography of Jesus, *The Urantia Book* gives an account of many of the things which Jesus did during his life on earth. One is strongly tempted to relate engaging childhood experiences, events in his heroic struggle to overcome family adversity as a teen-age youth, travels and adventure through which he gained a thorough knowledge of how life is lived on our world, fascinating vignettes of personal ministry, and thrilling episodes of his public ministry. To do so, however, would be a disservice. Not only because abridgment summaries take away from the pleasure of reading a biography, but such episodes isolated from context often give inaccurate impressions and contribute to misunderstandings. You will enjoy reading this captivating story in its entirety. For those who have Christian backgrounds, this may be the best place to start reading *The Urantia Book*. You will find that *The Urantia Book* will give you a much greater understanding and appreciation of the Bible.

The Question of Origin

Probably the most difficult question to answer about *The Urantia Book* is "Who wrote it?" It claims to be written by numerous supermortal beings as a special revelation to mankind living on this world, Urantia. It purports to be the first major divine revelation since the coming of Christ to our planet. Such a claim certainly raises doubts in the minds of rational and responsible people. Almost every generation produces a number of people who pose as the bearers of new revelation. What is surprising about *The Urantia Book* is that it has almost nothing in common with radical or fanatical movements. It does not advocate a new religion but seeks to undergird the best in all religions. Its viewpoint builds upon the religious heritage of the past and present; yet it is fresh, expansive, and profound. The superior quality of the philosophical-religious insights of *The Urantia Book* is clear to anyone of

discriminating mind who reads it. After a judicious and reflective reading of the book, one is impressed by the power of its own authenticity.

Nevertheless, *The Urantia Book* should be read critically like any other book. It should be judged by its content, not by any claims of authorship. Only after a thorough reading of the book and careful evaluation of its message is one in a position to speculate about authorship.

Even though *The Urantia Book* is among the most significant sources of spiritual guidance available to contemporary man, it is not an end in itself; nor is it a necessary means to spiritual enlightenment. Its potentials for individual and social growth, however, are so great it should be highly recommended to all who are interested in the creative possibilities of a spiritual renaissance in our society. Its message is balanced and profound. Its approach is open and benign. There are no threats or coercions to "believe." It seeks to work in and through the evolutionary process and within the social institutions of our world.

The Urantia Foundation who publishes the book and the Urantia Brotherhood which is a fraternal organization engaged in disseminating the teachings of *The Urantia Book* are not interested in starting a new religion, organizing a church, or promoting any kind of religious institution. Those of us who are students of *The Urantia Book* are primarily interested in the spiritual stimulation and growth of people of all faiths and religions. We believe a study of *The Urantia Book* will make church or synagogue members better participants in these religious institutions. *The Urantia Book* has much to contribute to all of the religions of the world.

Kenneth Boulding in *The Meaning of the Twentieth Century*, Alvin Toffler in *The Third Wave*, John Naisbitt in *Metatrends*, Fritjof Capra in *The Turning Point*, and many other prophetic voices have pointed out that we are entering a major transitional change in the history of man. We desperately need spiritual foundations which are large enough, solid enough, and have the visionary potential to give stability and guidance to the new age which is struggling to be born. We believe *The Urantia Book* has the greatest potential for serving in this capacity of any philosophical-religious resource now available to man. All in all, *The Urantia Book* is one of the most exciting books of the twentieth century. It is a seminal source of enlightening spiritual truth. We invite you to discover this resource for yourself.