

Center of Study and Reflection
in Human Destiny

Study Group of the URANTIA Book
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LETTER No 11

During the "International encounter" at the Montvillargenne Castle, we had the opportunity to live with great intensity, moments of deep, sincere and unforgettable brotherhood. Relationships transcended the material and intellectual levels and were established as deep as the soul level.

We lived not as students and teachers but only as individuals in search of other individuals in order to understand and love each other. Everyone was so different, but still gathered together with a common denominator : the consciousness of being children of a unique and loving Father and the desire to live this sonship and the consequent brotherhood which follows. Each person added their own unique contribution, always acting with sincerity.

In fact, it was easy for us to live like this. The participants, some of which had travelled very far, brought an extraordinary will to know, learn and share. The morning prayer/meditation brought our souls closer together. We were like seeds in a pod, protected and huddled the one against the others. " *Spiritual growth is mutually stimulated by intimate association with other religionists. Love supplies the soil for religious growth. . .* " (U.B. 1094). Each one of us, as we returned back home, felt a pull, a yearning to prolong this state of grace. For most of us, after this warm bath of brotherhood, we will go back and submerge ourselves in the cold waters of everyday life and find ourselves in our ordinary social surroundings.

How brotherly, kind, and loving was this society in which we lived for a week !
When will Urantia reach such a social level of brotherhood ?

What we have been able to realize between us, why not try to realize it around us ? It behooves each of us, in our own everyday surroundings, to enter into this process. Open wide the seed pods and spread the leaven of love around us. If we are conscious of being the loved daughters and sons of the Universal Father of love, then we are conscious that all men and women are our brothers and sisters, not only those who read The URANTIA Book. Jesus said :

" *Ganid, no man is a stranger to one who knows God. In the experience of finding the Father in heaven you discover that all men are your brothers, and does it seem strange that one should enjoy the exhilaration of meeting a newly discovered brother ? To become acquainted with one's brothers and sisters, to know their problems and to learn to love them, is the supreme experience of living.* " (U.B. 1431)

Through the daily worship of our Heavenly Father, let us draw the strength we need, and then kindly we look at our surroundings, we approach men with tolerance, and they will answer with tolerance. Let us try to understand their motives and in return they will understand ours. Let us love them and , first a friendly, and then a brotherly relationship will soon appear.

" *If each mortal could only become a focus of dynamic affection, this benign virus of love would soon pervade the sentimental emotion-stream of humanity to such an extent that all civilization would be encompassed by love, and that would be the realization of the brotherhood of man.* " (U.B. 1098)

The C.E.R.D.H.

EXCERPTS FROM THE ENCOUNTER
OPENING ADDRESS

" In the experience of finding the Father in heaven, you discover that all men are your brothers, and does it seem strange that one should enjoy the exhilaration of meeting a newly discovered brother ? To become acquainted with one's brothers and sisters, to know their problems and to learn to love them, is the supreme experience of living " (U.B. p.1431)

How are we going to try to live by the spirit of this quotation ?

- By learning how to listen to the others with our heart.
- By dropping our judgmental attitude.
- By trying to understand, behind their words, our fellows true motivation.
- By having the constant desire to do good to the others.

We open our arms and our hearts to welcome each one of you.

Jésus is the way which leads to the Heavenly Father; he is invisible in our conference, but his spirit is here with us, in us.

All during our stay here, let us seek to feel his presence in our hearts. For it is through a deep and sublime relationship with him that we can begin to have a taste of our sonship with our Heavenly Father. Every moment our Elderly Brother can make us aware of the truth of this sonship.

We all have become acquainted with this marvellous Book of revelations. It has satisfied our intellect by giving us a simple and logical understanding of life phenomena by revealing the law of cause and effect where we saw only chance and fate. It has given us a better, deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of the life. It has shown to us that a meaningful, happy life is a life of service.

Now, during our "Conference" , we would like to give less emphasis to the theories and concepts expounded in the Book in favor of live application of these concepts. Together we will attempt to define the behaviour of a believer who seeks to live fully his sonship with his heavenly Father.

We plan to consider the best ways to come to grasp with certain difficult problems such as suffering, old age, and death, problems inherent to our earthly life but amplified by the living conditions particular to Urantia.

We intend to define an ideal behavior which can be applied in our own every day life : family, profession, religion (including the role of evangelist which devolves upon each one of us.)
In conclusion we seek to define the Urantian art of living.

Such is the goal of our workshop.

PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

GOD IS LOVE

The central and primordial theme of Jesus' message is, and always will be, the living expression of the nature of the bonds binding the Creator and his creature. The parable of the prodigal son is in reality the FATHERLY LOVE parable.

Love cannot be defined by words. So, it is through a story, a parable, an image, or a deliberate act, that Jesus suggests a better understanding of the basic nature of God as a FATHER. When Jesus wants to give his disciples a definition of brotherly love, he does not do it with words, he makes himself the servant of all by washing the feet of every one of them.

GOD MAKES MAN IN HIS IMAGE

God's supreme satisfaction is to be loved by his creatures he looks at them as being his sons and daughters. Sonship results from begetting, but its characteristics and manifestations result from becoming aware of this reality. And it is just what Jesus develops in his parable. But the Father's behaviour transcends everything else in the story. You will not find anything more sublime, more thrilling, more stimulating for faith. The most genuine manifestation of Fatherly love is an experience that the prodigal son's Father cannot partake in just by himself. So, he patiently waits till the lost son's mind matures with the lessons given by life and circumstances. For man is like God when the fire of spiritual love inflames his soul.

SONSHIP AND FREEDOM

Most believers adhere to the concept of god as a Father, while remaining prisoners of a thought system that induces them to live as servants subject to their Master. If it is quite natural to respect and stand in awe of a master, a Father is to be loved. Jesus has said to the jews of his time : " You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free ". This message is always actual. The liberating truth brings to the human soul the blooming needed for it to live, as a child in his Father's house.

The experience of the prodigal son could not be shunned. The Father's love linked with his wisdom allow to the son to experience slavery, the only possible method to create in him a thirst for genuine freedom.

IN A REMOTE COUNTRY

The son is far from the house, but the Father's thought does not quit his son. He knows that " all things work together for good ". While facing the emptiness of his soul, the son KNOWS that there is an abundance of bread by his Father's, but it is of no use for him. He KNOWS that there are garments which would allow him to recover his dignity; but, for the time being, his looks are a dishonour to him. He KNOWS he is the son of a respectable Father, but nothing proves it. He KNOWS much about his Father and his house, but so far, he does not know anything about unfathomable depth of Fatherly love. He is rich through

It is just when moral and spiritual darkness is becoming intense that the light is about to appear.

The Heavenly Father never imposes his love, he tries to share it. Eventually, the remote country is but an optical illusion, since the Father is changeless, "He is the same, yesterday, to day, and eternally."

THE GREAT DECISION

"I arise and go to my Father"... it is the only way to envisage covering a new and thrilling stage on the path to eternity. It is the act of faith in the highest sense; any added word is superfluous. The Father is still and ever there. He remembers, he unceasingly loves and patiently keeps waiting.

Too often this parable was considered as a call for the salvation of unbelievers. It is true in a peculiar sense, but, primarily, it is the Father's invitation to his sons. To those who respond to this call, it is the assurance of a supreme blessing whose spiritual flavour appears at once.

MY SON WHO IS HERE

"I am no more worthy to be called your son; only be willing to make me one of your hired servant". . . Without doubt, this is the cry of a heart obsessed by uncertainty and remorse, but at the same time quickened by the hope of a new life. The Father's answer is the cry of a loving and merciful true Father whose heart overflowing with kindness is just totally and perfectly satisfied to contemplating his son discovering he has a FATHER! Henceforth nothing is more important for that Father than the presence of his son in HIS house. The fatherhood experience becomes real, he may cry out : MY SON WHO IS HERE!

Clasped in his Father's arms, his head resting on his breast, the weeping son has nothing more to say; he is EXPERIENCING SONSHIP. In the depths of himself, he is experiencing the divine relation of Fatherly love, and his son's status suddenly acquires a new dimension. Henceforth he KNOWS all about HIS FATHER's heart, because he has just made the PERSONAL EXPERIENCE of it.

"HE WHO LOVES GOD, LOVES ALSO HIS BROTHER"

The "obedient and respectful" son's attitude and reaction also bring up a teaching worthy to be retained. This "obedient" son has not left the fatherly house and however, his presence causes as much emptiness in the Father's heart as the prodigal son's absence. He is a young man full of attention but without foundness; respectful of the rules of good behaviour, but without filial affection; he fears his Father, but HE DOES NOT LOVE HIM. His behaviour does not differentiates him much from the servants. . .

In the spiritual life, an experience does not always imply the extreme lessons lived by the prodigal son. A listening carefully to Jesus' teachings, and the spirit of truth secure assistance, may also lead to experience what human intellect cannot grasp; new relationship establishing a definitive bond from the Father to the son, and reciprocally. One day, Jesus said to his disciples : "I do not call you servant, because a servant does not know what his Master is doing, but I have called you «friends» because I have let you know all that I had learned from my Father . . ."

To discover the Father, is also to rediscover his brother. The prodigal son coming back gives rise to the brother's negative reaction, which gives the Father the opportunity to express once more his genuine nature when saying : "My son, you are always with me and ALL THIS WHICH I HAVE IS YOURS . . ." However, this son lived as a stranger in the house of his Father! At the sight of all that was going on, all the opportunities were given to

Anyway, the school of life confronts man with choices which will contribute, with the blessings of God, to the improvement of his spiritual nature; so, he will be able to bear the marvellous fruits of the spirit including brotherly love, after being conquered by the divine and mighty Fatherly love.

IF YOU DO NOT BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN

... You cannot see the kingdom of God. Jesus is the Father's revelation. He is also a revelation of the most perfect confidence a child is able to have in this same Father. To assimilate such a message, perhaps man has to live hard times, but he may be certain that "all things work together for good to them that love God". A childbirth is always more or less painful; however, Jesus said : " If a man has not re-born he cannot see the kingdom of God". After being back home, is not the prodigal son become a new man, a completely changed man, with quite a new vision of the realities surrounding him, as well as an unprecedented appraising in his way of describing his feelings towards his Father ? Such changes in a man's life become possible only through the action of a living faith. God is SPIRIT, it is therefore essential to have a spiritual faith concretized by a strong decision to understand, at last, the meaning of :

" FOR THIS MY SON WAS DEAD ,
AND IS ALIVE AGAIN ;
HE WAS LOST ,
AND IS FOUND ... "

Charles GUILHOT
Marseille FRANCE

D E A T H

Just imagine you are sitting with friends, discussing of the future. At some point you say : " Then lets talk about death ". There is a good chance that you will soon find yourself alone as a scare-crow in a field.

During the last century we have spoken loud in the praise of reason but, while facing death, our attitude has become quite unreasonable. We cover all risks by insurances, we trouble beforehand for events that might occure, while the only inevitable experience, our death, we refuse to think of.

We know so little about death because we do not dare to face it squarely and we do not dare to look at it for we fear the unknow. We have let ourselves be caught in this vicious circle by our intellectual slothfulness or (and) by the memory of some childish imagery of our youth, taught us by some simple soul unable to perceive any more than simplistic figurations. We can understand the meaning and value of our life only when we understand and value our death. So, what is death ?

Arnaud Desjardin says : "When you ask in the east «what is the opposit of death» the answer will be «birth». The same question asked in the west will bring the answer «life»." This reveales a difference that conditions our whole behaviour.

When we consider death objectively, what do you perceive ? We are carried by a physical body

replaced. Still, the body is aging : It works as a physical organism through chemical and electrical reactions which little by little loose their power. One day, by accident or simply worn-out, our body is unable to continue its physiological function and just stops working. All the energy particles that built it return to the total mass of elements for further creative use.

The type of existance of our body which starts at our birth and ends at our death is not shared by our real being, our personality, for whom the life and death of outer vehicle is just one more event in an undestructible life.

Truly, physical birth and death are nothing more than changes in our level of consciousness allowing us to go through the experience of eternal life in the interval of time-space. We are here and now in this interval to learn all the lessons that circumstances offer. This stage of life allows us to rediscover freely and by our own means our belonging to the oneness of all things. Simultaneously, it gives us the opportunity to participate in the creation of the elements and circumstances in which we will experience these lessons on earth.

DEATH IS NO MORE THAN THE TECHNIQUE WE USE TO ESCAPE FROM THE LIMITATIONS OF LIFE ON EARTH.

Death is at the same time a conclusion and a liberation, it is the most glorious moment of this interval of life.

« Death is only the beginning of an endless career of adventure, an everlasting life of participation, an eternal voyage of discovery » (U.B. 159 D)

One wonders what horned devils, ragged skeletons and ceremonies of lament have to do with this beautiful transition towards the light ? A personal comprehension of the joyful meaning of death is essential to clear-out of our unconscious these absurd images and superstitions which still influence our behaviour. When we serenely endeavour to comprehend the meaning of death, we find new values in our life and that our respons to circomstances become more harmonious.

How, for instance, could we speak to the dying, if we have ourselves not yet understood the meaning of death ? Our own fear resulting from this ignorance is often the unconscious pretext to hide to dying people the seriousness of their state, depriving them in this way of the opportunity to prepare for this transition. They know, themselves, that they are dying and need to talk about it quietly. Often we feel uncomfortable and add to their anxiety our own insecurity. (ref. Books of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross)

It is normal that our body fears the still mysterious event we call physical death, but recent studies based on an impressive number of witnesses are quite reassuring. They prove that the event "death of the body" is neither frightening nor painful but quite the contrary, that it is bathed in an feeling of peace and love.

We all have, of course, human hearts and the departure, even mentally accepted, of a companion on the path makes us quite naturally shed some tears as when a child gets hurt. But lets not be deluded, we are crying on ourselves. What we must keep in mind is the image of the beloved, freed from all pain and suffering. Lets think of the joy of the departed becoming more vividly conscious of the values of truth, beauty and love of which he or she had hear perceived but a faint reflection.

Some time in the future, the departure of our companions will have become a joyous celebration of this first step towards the light, an awakening of consciousness on a higher level on the eternal way to god.

We can now already understand and adopt this attitude. In this way, we will be able to alleviate the suffering that so many of us needlessly go through by simple ignorance of the truth.

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C.E.R.D.H. is a non profit association (Law of 1901 Paris FRANCE), composed of readers of the URANTIA* Book. The objectives of the C.E.R.D.H. are :

- A/- To assure a bond between readers of the URANTIA Book who desire to correspond and/or meet each other and to make known to each other reader from other countries :
- By maintaining currents files alphabetically of readers.
 - By maintaining a file of readers by country and region.
 - By transmitting guidelines and news from the URANTIA Foundation and from the URANTIA Brotherhood.
 - By publishing periodically an issue " LETTER ", with studies by individuals and groups.
- B/- To help the organizing and realizing of study groups.
- C/- To have available, a stock of The URANTIA Book and Le Livre d' URANTIA at the best price for :
- Distribution to bookstores and libraries.
 - To individual purchasers.
- D/- To foster a more intimate and permanent contact with the URANTIA Foundation, the URANTIA Brotherhood, various URANTIA Societies and foreign study groups.
- E/- To provide the link in bringing readers together, and in which they can express individual and group studies in the LETTER .
- F/- To organize meetings and encounters periodically which intent to mature the unity of readers towards enduring relationships.

" THE LETTER "

"The LETTER" is published four times a year. It is meant to be a bond and a means of expression among all readers of the URANTIA* BOOK of all nationalities. It is now edited by the C.E.R.D.H. in french and in english. It is conceived and put together by a team of urantian readers who would be very happy to enlarge the number of its participants. Your financial contribution, as well as your personal participation, would truly help us in our efforts to spread the concepts of The URANTIA* BOOK on a larger scale.

"The Letter" is composed of :

- A/ Articles coming from readers and focusing on The URANTIA* BOOK, its concepts and their interpretations.
- B/ Personal religious experiences of all kind, having their source in the practical application of the URANTIA* BOOK teachings in each one's daily life.
- C/ News coming from all parts of the planet and having to do with the URANTIA* movement, The URANTIA* Foundation, The URANTIA* Brotherhood, its affiliated societies, study groups and isolated readers.
- A/ A section "QUESTIONS-ANSWERS", having to do with the URANTIA* BOOK. It plays the rôle of a "correspondance Study Group". Every subscribes is cordially invited to be a contributor.

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