



HARMONY

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WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

by HARRY MC MULLEN

There is widespread confusion in our movement as to the meaning of such basic concepts as "the gospel" and "the kingdom." This confusion arises in part because the terms were used with different meanings even by Jesus himself. In order to make distinctions for the purposes of this paper, I suggest the following strict definitions: "the kingdom" is a state of being, a relationship between man and God; "the gospel" is a word-description of that relationship, and of all the truths which flow from an acceptance of that relationship, such as the brotherhood of man, eternal life, etc. The gospel is a messenger for the kingdom, and as such, can be anything from a canned slogan to a beautifully replete story of God's love for his earth children.

WHAT IS THE URANTIA BOOK?

How then does The URANTIA Book relate to the gospel? It gives us insights into many subjects both secular and sacred, but primarily it is about the relationship of man with his Maker, and as such, is the gospel. Far more than any other writing on earth, it could be called

the whole gospel. It is not the only, but by far the best, messenger for the kingdom. If you are on an elevator and share a spiritual truth with someone between the first and the twentyeighth floors, you have given him the gospel. If you were locked in the same room with him for a year, you could tell him much more of the gospel. But if you gave him a copy of The URANTIA Book, you would be giving him access to far more of the gospel than he could hope to receive from any source short of entering the kingdom itself, entering a relationship with the Father and discovering first-hand what the words stand for. The gospel, in whole or in part, is meaningless apart from an experience in the heart of the person who receives it.

It is true that The URANTIA Book is "second-hand religion," but this should not be considered a criticism because the gospel itself is second-hand. Only one's personal experience with God--the kingdom--is first-hand. "Religion cannot be bestowed, received, loaned, learned or lost. It is a personal

experience..." [U 1095] A person becomes intrigued with the gospel and thereby decides to experience it first-hand by entering the kingdom.

In attempting to interest others in the spiritual life, we may find it appropriate to talk directly about God, in which case our words would be the gospel of the kingdom. Or, we may judge that an indirect approach might stand a better chance of success: to interest the other person in the gospel, which in turn interests them in the kingdom. This is what we do when we talk about The URANTIA Book. It's what Phillip did so effectively when he led others to Jesus by saying, "Come and see." When we lead people to the gospel, we do so in the hope that the gospel will lead them to God. To talk about the book is to talk about the gospel.

What is the relationship between the teachings and the book? The book is that collection of those teachings which our divine overseers judged we most needed to know, more completely and systematically arranged than any human being could have put them in, as well as an unparalleled description of the life of Jesus. The book might be referred to as the complete teachings. While it obviously is not the only place one can find the gospel, much more than anything else available in printed form on earth, the book is the gospel.

Does this mean that The URANTIA Book is the only, or necessarily the best way for a person to encounter the gospel? Of course not; some approaches appeal to certain people, others appeal to others. We should establish the presumption, however, that the high universe personalities who authored the book are capable of explaining things quite well, and should be given the chance to be heard. The fun in telling others about the gospel, however, consists in our opportunity to use personal judgment, and to develop the art of telling others about God without falling into canned formulas. But all other things equal, we should assume that most anyone will profitably find spiritual enlightenment in The URANTIA Book, just as we have, and we should share the book with him in order to allow the Spirit of Truth an opportunity to use the book as a spiritual fulcrum, source and guide for personal enlightenment. Telling others about the book should be the rule, not the exception.

Is it possible for us to make the mistake of creating a religion about the book instead of fostering the religion of the book? It's hard to see how; the only way that comes to mind would be for us to direct others' attention away from what the book says and toward the "miraculous" manner in which the book was received, the Contact Personality, the Contact Commission, the Forum, etc. Some might advise building little velvet shrines for the book in the eastern corners of our living rooms. While anything is possible, such perversions would appear to be laughingly remote. Most importantly, since The URANTIA Book itself is so clear in directing its readers along the proper path of love of God and service to man, errors we might start with will self-liquidate provided only that we read the book. Any guru who tried to make a religion about the book would be put in the embarrassing position of attempting to prevent his followers from actually reading the object of his religion, which would automatically disclose the guru's error and thereby repudiate the religion about the book which he was attempting to foster. That particular movement would have a short half-life! It is highly unlikely that there could ever be a religion about the book which could more than temporarily supplant the saving message of the book. The URANTIA Book itself in readers' hands is the surest way for such errors to be avoided, for the answers are there, waiting to be read.

How important is The URANTIA Book? What does it do for us that nothing else can? Most importantly, it gives us a full and accurate account of Jesus' life, available nowhere else. This alone makes it absolutely irreplaceable. As important as the teachings are to our spiritual life, they are not of remotely comparable value to a knowledge of Jesus' life. The teachings do not have the power to inspire men to the dedication of the lives that an understanding of Jesus' life does, and therein lies the book's unique contribution. Even Jesus' teachings, which are readily available from thousands of other sources, are nowhere stated with the accuracy, beauty, and philosophical consistency that is found in The URANTIA Book.

By giving us the details about how this struggling and valiant mortal overcame obstacles and actually did the will of God in the flesh, The URANTIA Book is our only means of understanding how Jesus was

both man and God. Jesus considered this principle of the uniting of the divine and human natures in the human experience so vital that he told Peter, "...upon this foundation will I build the brotherhood of the kingdom of heaven." (U 1747) If we accept the importance Jesus attached to this concept and its unavailability outside the book, we must accept the urgency of active measures to help make the book available to all who might desire to have it.

Alone among religious systems, The URANTIA Book gives its readers a consistent picture of the interrelationship of science, philosophy, and religion. This is an incalculably valuable service to the philosophically minded and to the skeptical.

Is The URANTIA Book just an unusually good book? Are there any substitutes which the spiritual seeker may use without undue jeopardy to his welfare? While many things in the book are available elsewhere (if one looks hard enough), in three areas it has no substitute, listed here in descending order of importance:

1. It tells us about the life of Jesus, by far the most effective way for us to learn about God, which has the power to save our souls;
2. It arranges and synthesizes the story of God's relationship to man, filtering out and fitting together facts, ideas and spiritual truth so as to give us an intellectual sense of the symmetry of God's dealings with his mortal children; and
3. It gives us authoritative and essential advice in several areas of human civilization, most notably about the family, politics and genetics.

Is The URANTIA Book mandatory to our mission of spreading the gospel? Of course not; God has always loved us, and wherever men have talked about that, the gospel has been preached. While in theory there is nothing so special about this particular arrangement of ink on paper, in practice it is essential to spreading the "whole gospel." If we preach the gospel and leave out the symmetrical understanding of God's nature which is only available to us by means of the book, and leave out the story of Jesus' life, the gospel is rendered lame, halt and partial compared to how it otherwise would be.

Again, what can take the place of the book? If we share one or two or twenty of the teachings with another person, optimistically he might become inspired enough to seek and find God, which is our objective. But unless he has The URANTIA Book as a continuing source of enlightenment for his mind and nourishment for his spirit, he may join some group in which his continuing search for truth may become hampered by the confusion of irrational or incomplete teachings. Such an experience is far better than never having heard the teachings, of course, but far worse than being able to progress in an understanding of God by the inspiration of the "whole gospel" and the revelation of God which the book provides of the life of Jesus.

IMPORTANCE OF THE LIFE OF JESUS

By the inspiration of the Spirit of Truth, millions of people have met Jesus through the New Testament, but it is only "meagerly Jesusonian" (U 2091) and it "almost wholly lost sight of the struggling and valiant human Jesus of Galilee." (U 2092)

"What an awakening the world would experience if it could only see Jesus as he really lived on earth and know, firsthand, his life-giving teachings." (U 2083)

A curious "theological" error of the URANTIA movement has been the misplaced emphasis of the teachings of Jesus as the best description of the kingdom, to the neglect of his life. The book makes clear that it is Jesus' life, and not his teachings, which is of paramount value. A knowledge of Jesus' life is what stands the best chance of saving and inspiring our souls. (Best of all, of course, is to be able to see the interaction of both his life and teachings, which is available only in the book.)

"You, as did his apostles, should the better understand Jesus' teachings by his life. He lived a perfected life on Urantia, and his unique teachings can only be understood when that life is visualized in its immediate background. It is his life, and not his lessons to the twelve or his sermons to the multitudes, that will assist most in revealing the Father's divine character and loving personality." (U 1581)

"It was not so much what Jesus taught about the balanced character that impressed his associates as the fact that his own life was such an eloquent explanation of his teaching." (U 1674)

"When you study the career of the Master, as concerns prayer or any other feature of the religious life, look not so much for what he taught as for what he did." (U 2088)

"Of all human knowledge, that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it." (U 2090)

"You learn about God from Jesus by observing the divinity of his life, not by depending on his teachings. From the life of the Master you may each assimilate that concept of God which represents the measure of your capacity to perceive realities spiritual and divine, truths real and eternal. The finite can never hope to comprehend the Infinite except as the Infinite was focalized in the time-space personality of the finite experience of the human life of Jesus of Nazareth. ... You can know God, not by understanding what Jesus said, but by knowing what Jesus was. Jesus was (sic) a revelation of God." (U 1856)

The argument is sometimes raised that instead of showing others the book, we should let people see Jesus live in us. But even Jesus--God incarnate--went to the people with his message, and for us to sit back with beatific smiles trying to be spiritual, waiting for others to ask why we are such fine people, would be a pathetically passive and inexcusably naive approach to spreading the gospel.

IS THE WORLD READY FOR The URANTIA Book?

Every reader of The URANTIA Book has had so many unfruitful experiences in attempting to share the book with others that he may be tempted to quickly answer, "No, the world is not ready." But this answer totally misses the point, for new truth has never been readily received. Results are always in God's hands; ours is the obligation to try.

A "do nothing, fear everything" attitude toward the outreach of The URANTIA Book has transmogrified Jesus' principle into the lame rationalization for inactivity of "don't do anything now because people aren't ready." Jesus rather taught us to proclaim the gospel everywhere, but not to become disappointed when everyone doesn't respond.

Whether he or she will receive it or not, everyone should have the opportunity to be exposed to the most recent revelation of truth for our planet. We have no right to decide, in advance, that a certain person or class of persons probably would not be receptive, and therefore, should not be allowed to hear about the book. Jesus gave an equal opportunity to all.

SO WHAT?

Even though I believe it's exceedingly unlikely that any measurable negative reaction would result from a more active outreach program, for the sake of the argument let's assume that it would occur. So what? The fact that there might be resistance doesn't change the necessity for us to be about our mission in the slightest.

"He directed them all to seek God for guidance and to carry on the work of the kingdom regardless of consequences." (U 1720)

"Fear no man when you proclaim the saving truths of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven." (U 2049)

"Fear not the resistance of evil, for I am with you always, even to the end of the ages." (U 2042)

WHEN SHOULD A MORE ACTIVE POLICY OF BOOK DISTRIBUTION BEGIN?

In a word, now.

"The time is ripe (in 1935) to witness the figurative resurrection of the human Jesus from his burial tomb amidst the theological traditions and the religious dogmas of nineteen centuries. What a transcendent service if, through this revelation, the Son of Man should be recovered

from the tomb of traditional theology and be presented as the living Jesus to the church that bears his name, and to all other religions!" (U 2090)

And, this quote sums it up:

"I tell you the fields are already white for the harvest."
(U 1615)

The URANTIA Book in the hands of a spiritually hungry world would do as much as anything to advance the cause of the kingdom. If we do not more seriously address this need, future eras may consider us to have been inexcusably complacent in our duty to God and to our brothers who need to hear his words of good cheer, comfort and inspiration. For The URANTIA Book to transform the world, the world must learn of its existence.

"The funny thing is my ideas about the best way to share the book changed completely within the last six months. If I were doing the same article again, I would do it quite differently. It isn't that I no longer believe that advertising might serve some purpose, it is rather that I have become increasingly convinced that the most effective outreach is personal. One of the main reasons for this belief is due to the necessity for the sharer to be intimately involved in the process."

--Harry Mc Mullen
1986



Be not discouraged; human evolution is still in progress, and the revelation of God to the world, in and through Jesus, shall not fail.

U 2097

HARMONY

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EDITOR

Dana Poole, Griffin, GA

DESIGN

David A. Smith
Rutherfordton, NC

DISTRIBUTION

Christopher Reed
Douglas, AZ

CONTRIBUTORS/ADVISORS

Jim Mills, Tallahassee, FL
Carolyn Griffin,
Cumming, GA
Les Lutrell, Griffin, GA
Janet Bartlett,
Fayetteville, GA
Jack Kane, Northglenn, CO
Richard Bain, Tampa, FL
Jeff Wattles, Concord, CA
David Glass, Ft. Worth, TX
Charlene Burns, Savannah, GA
Harry Mc Mullen,
Oklahoma City, OK

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(U 507:3-5) (U1591:3) (U 1592:1)
(U 500:2) (500:6)

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Universal Brotherhood

by DAVID GLASS

Greetings to you my octillions of brothers
in Supremacy!

Do you look up of an evening
and wonder about our fate
as we do of yours?

Do you wonder if you could comprehend
our way of life
as we labor
to dissolve and eradicate
the repercussions of Rebellion?

Can you imagine our divergence from the norm
with our Rebellion, Betrayal, and Default
now being routed by aggressive love?

We project science fiction
as tales of galactic war

And is not our actuality
a science fiction story for you--
something which almost
never could have happened?

Yes, we are the world that murdered God
and even though we are forgiven
can you comprehend such multiplicity,
such diversities of modes of living
as those in which we do here engage?

The mild-minded manner of a majority of men
is an actual goal for us
despite the contrasts and confusions of today.

To you, our cosmic siblings,
it is to you and to mansonia
that we look for the ideals of tomorrow.

And yet, to this tiny world
how many of you are planet-gazing
and wondering of Michael's bestowal world?

Despite all relativities
of nation, culture, creed and race

We who do seek, as you do,
the Father of all Blessings

And who look into the future toward
the sunrise of spirituality
on our world

Do join you as we scan the heavens
and peer into the Eternal Center

Finding therein that ONE
who is the unity of the many.

We send you love!

You Have To Become A Cup

by CHARLENE BURNS

I have often heard it said that the one common denominator among The URANTIA Book readers is that of life experience. It seems that the person in whom the book is most likely to take hold is one who has explored many facets of life and, perhaps, taken more than the average number of "hard knocks."

In The Empty Mirror: Experiences in a Japanese Monastery, Jan van der Wetering recounts an event which helps to illustrate my meaning. Having just been accepted as a disciple in a zen monastery, Wetering asked the Master about the meaning and purpose of life. The Master replied:

"I could answer your questions but I won't because you wouldn't understand the answers. Now listen. Imagine that I am holding a pot of tea, and you are thirsty. You want me to give you tea. I can pour tea but you'll have to produce a cup. I can't pour tea on your hands or you'll get burnt. If I pour it on the floor I shall spoil the floor mats. You have to have a cup. That cup you will form in yourself by the training you will receive here." (page 9)

The cup into which The URANTIA Book can be poured is formed by life experience. Spiritual hunger, the thirst for understanding, is the cup. The more one has experienced and grown from the stresses of life, the stronger and more solid is the cup into which answers may be poured.

Those who have experienced little of life's pain, who have been sheltered from life, have no cup, or a fragile one at best. A fragile cup can be cracked if the tea poured into it is too hot, and a cracked cup cannot accept tea again until it is repaired. A cracked cup can also result in damage to the tea, in that tea which has leaked from the cup is lost.





The Mercy Process

by JEFFRY WATTLES

Dietrich Bonhoeffer counseled a couple on their wedding day, "Forgive each other every day from the bottom of your hearts." The daily practice of mercy keeps weeds from springing up and choking out the flowers in the garden of our relationships. The URANTIA Book teaches that mercy is a process, a profound spiritual exercise, the completion of justice, and a joyful experience of partnership with God. In my experience, the passage of greatest social value in the book is the description on p. U 315 of that mercy process. The more one practices the five steps, the more meaningful they become, and the more their power is evident.

1. The first step in the mercy process is to be just. This means at least two things for me:

Remove logs. Is there a log in my eye, some pride or anger that is distorting my moral perception?

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Clarify the violation. Exactly what moral principle or ethical law has been violated? Often I find that I cannot answer this question with anything definite. I am merely irritated by someone else's behavior, and the mercy process is not truly indicated; it is I who need to grow in understanding and love.

In some cases, I need as part of the justice step to initiate the "Jesus grievance procedure" (see The Sermon on Forgiveness, U 1762) by going personally to the individual and lovingly confronting him or her. In some cases, I need to go as far as

involving groups with judicial authority. But I must at least be free of mental poisons, and I must be very clear about what violation I believe occurred. Being just is--as I interpret this paragraph on U 315--the personal virtue governing the experience of "group understanding."

The hardest times are when an individual persistently refuses to acknowledge wrongdoing or to amend his ways. When this occurs, it blocks the ideal completion of the mercy process. Social authority may act, but unresolved issues await a higher stage of universe progress.

In a family, people learn to agree to disagree. If one member insists on the others' meeting his or her own standards, freedom perishes or the family breaks asunder. When is an issue worth insisting on that much? Some issues are worth it. Not many.

2. Next, we must be fair. Fairness means taking into account the antecedents that caused the unfortunate behavior in question. If there was a lapse in the effectiveness of spiritual motives, then it must be possible to understand the material motives whose history helps explain things.

Comprehend the motive. This is the prime requisite in understanding people. It is easy to forget to even wonder why a person did something; and it is easier to postulate motives than discover them. One of the most powerful prayers is, "Please, God, help me love this person."

Praying for someone is more than scanning the individual's name on a prayer list. It means savoring the relationship, waiting for illumination, and preparing to interact. It means sensing what God is doing in that person's life and adding our own finite support for that enterprise. Some readers have stumbled over the recommendation on U 998 about letting others know you are praying for them. It would be injurious to say, "I'm praying that God will help you overcome your obnoxious parenting style." It probably would not even do to say,

"Raising children is a tremendous undertaking, and I pray for divine wisdom and grace for you"; but one could surely manage to express something like, "I have really been enjoying praying for you lately."

This part of the process requires us not only to see the good motives that may have been present in unfortunate behavior; but we also need compassionate regard for the less noble motives that are part of the common heritage of humankind. Fear, vanity, sex hunger, thirst for wealth and power, ease-seeking, problem-avoidance, insincerity--each of us has a portion of these. They have an evolutionary role to play, and overcoming them does not have to be a lonely struggle.

The discovery of motives is not a one way street; mercy is not something that one person does to another unilaterally regardless of the other's knowledge, desire, and cooperation. People who comprehend each others' motives achieve "mutual appreciation". (U 315)

3. Next comes patience. Some faults will take more than a lifetime of work to eradicate. What rate of growth can be reasonably expected?

The word patience comes from the Latin word meaning to suffer. Patience begins in suffering, but it ends in service. Someone said that faith means knowing that the rules of the game are fair and that there are unexpected good surprises ahead.

Patience is an adjunct to "fraternal fellowship" (U 315).

4. Then kindness. We have to interact with people to show kindness. It is so easy to feel forgiving in the middle of a marvelous prayer session with the Father, but quite another matter to actually relate to a difficult mortal. Once I took a seminary course in evangelism. At the beginning of the term, we each selected a person to whom we wanted to present the gospel. One week, our assignment was very simple: love that person. All I will say is that it was a wonderful assignment.

5. Finally, we can show mercy. By the time we experience the flow of kindness,

the normal inclination is to just forget about the original problem. It's so much easier to let bygones be bygones. But mercy summarizes the whole process, remembers all the steps, and in the light of that whole sequence, to extend mercy. That is not the mercy of blindness, but the mercy of the realization of reality--the evolving dominance of goodness. An action that expresses trust, such as giving the person some responsibility, can manifest the conclusion of the mercy process.

Whenever I have done my best, taking as much time as needed, with each step in sequence, I have found rich rewards.

Let me try to describe an experience of mercy which captures an essential aspect of this process--that it has phases bound together in the unity of a mature act of faith. It does not only involve spiritual awareness, in that it does not focus alone on realities that are divine, eternal, and spiritual. Rather it brings the mortal, temporal, and unspiritual into relationship with the enduring values; it is an act of what I call our philosophic consciousness.

Suppose I am thinking of a person who has wronged me. (For the purpose of this example, I am making the unworldly assumption that there is no question about determining the moral character of the action in question.) As an unspiritual being, my first awareness of this act may be the (psychologic) pain of injury. I may feel anger or sadness, contempt or outrage, intensely or mildly. In prayer, God helps me to regain my perspective on my brother, to see his shining wonderfulness. I dwell in the beauty of that revelation, and my love for him returns in greater strength and radiance than before. I have reached the stage of spirituality. (If we can experience that joy together and practice kindness, we have truly fulfilled the ideal of spiritual communion of step 4.)

But now I go one step further. I recall that ugly shadow of the evil that was done to me. It is jarring to juxtapose that shadow beside the beautiful, indwelt creation that has just been revealed to me more brightly. I think a bit more: there is a reason why that evil act occurred.

Some compulsion of material causes, some immaturity of creature will has manifested. This action is a part of the evolutionary growth of this brother, part of an early chapter of his success story. (I am also assuming for the purposes of this example that the person in question is a believer.) His error exposes part of the subterranean geography that needs adjustment, settling, harmonization. I can apply my prayer for my brother at that exposed spot. I can have confidence in the eventual triumph of my brother--and the Supreme--with regard to this weakness.

By this time, my image of my brother has changed. About the nucleus of the indwelt and divinely bestowed personality, I see the slowly evolving self. I identify with the evolutionary process of progress. I think how glad I will be one day, when we are all so much more loveable, to have begun to know and love this brother in the mortal life. I give thanks for that privilege.

Note: now my awareness is complex, not simple. I see this person neither as a monster nor as an angel, but as growing around a nucleus of God-given perfection. To be able to balance--creatively and progressively--the multiple phases of my brother's reality in my awareness of him exercises a new muscle. Mercy requires the exercise of this muscle. I call it a philosophic consciousness when fact and value are held together in proper balance.

In any human attempt at spiritual ministry the danger of self-righteous condescension is present; but that danger cannot be avoided by refusing to undertake the mercy process. On the contrary, the discoveries and growth to which the process leads are a powerful antidote for pride. It takes humility and faith and an appetite for spiritual adventure to receive mercy. On either side, we grow in partnership with God. Who of us has not needed, does not now need, and will not continue to need to receive mercy and to practice it? "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Lessons From Our Elder Brother

by RICHARD BAIN

Keynote Address, Florida
Conference, Tampa, Spring
1985

I would like to talk about the life and teachings of our spiritual elder brother, Jesus. There is a book called The Imitation of Christ by Thomas A. Kempis. It was written back in the 1400's, and as the title intimates, the ideal of spiritual living is imitating Christ. For many people, this is still the ideal spiritual life, imitating Jesus, sometimes right down to the robe, sandals and beard. Did Jesus live a life for us to imitate? In Immanuel's charge to Christ Michael, he specifically said that Christ Michael was not to lead a life that would be an example to imitate but rather a life to inspire all who heard of it.

I would like to give some attention to how Jesus carried out his ministry to this planet to see what lessons we can learn and apply to our task of spreading the teachings of The URANTIA Book. I believe that it is important to examine how our situation is the same and how it differs from that of Jesus before we can assess which of his methods we can use. Just who and what was he? He was a God-man wholly dedicated to living his life in accordance with the Father's will. His last three years were totally dedicated to training his apostles. He was a Creator Son in the last stage of earning his sovereignty. By contrast, we are a group of people linked together by our study of and devotion to the Fifth Epochal Revelation. We have varying degrees of commitment to the teachings of the book and to the task of spreading it; there are few of us who have given up home and

family to pursue spreading the teachings as Jesus and his Apostles did.

In addition to the differences between us and Jesus as individuals, we must consider that the times that we live in are quite different from the times Jesus lived in. The Jews were under the twin yoke of the Roman overlords and a religious hierarchy that encumbered them with a religion of laws and regulations, whereas we live in a land of comparative political and religious freedom. The Jews of Jesus' time lived in a primarily agrarian culture; we live in a culture that has been totally transformed by the industrial revolution and more recently by advances in technology. Ideas and concepts can be sent to every spot in the world at the speed of light, and the ubiquitous computer has touched most of our lives, some with a heavy hand.

Am I trying to intimate by the foregoing that we cannot use Jesus' methods, that we can receive no instruction from how he handled his mission? Not at all. People are, after all, the same creatures that Jesus dealt with; we are different only by virtue of the accumulated culture and progress of 2000 years. The principles which guided Jesus in dealing with groups and individuals will forever be valid, but his methods must be adapted to make them effective and appropriate to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Further, we must bear in mind that we are teaching not only what Jesus taught, but also information about his life and an advanced cosmology.

I am going to compare several periods in Jesus' earth career to periods of the Urantia movement to see how we can profit from studying how Jesus prepared for and carried out his chosen tasks.

In the phase of Jesus' life that embraces his surrogate-father responsibilities for his brothers and sisters, his preparation was learning parenting skills. An important principle that this phase of his life illustrates is that of being a responsible person and having your priorities in the proper order. At the very young age of 14, he willingly took on the responsibility of being a father to his brothers and sisters. He delayed his public work until a brother was able to take over this responsibility; he did not go

off to begin his work leaving his family to fend for themselves. There is a time in most of our lives when family must take precedence even over spreading the good word.

In the next phase of Jesus' life, and to some extent in the previous phase, Jesus learned how people earned a living and he learned about the culture and religion of many of the peoples in his region of the world. During his travels around the Mediterranean Sea, he extended his knowledge in these areas. He also found many opportunities for personal work with many people he contacted. He must have learned or known many languages in order to act as an interpreter for the Indian merchant. Jesus not only learned from all the people he met, he left something of value with them, especially in his visit to Rome. While in Rome, Jesus planted some very important seeds with 32 religious leaders. Many of these leaders later supported the early Christian church.

In some respects, our movement is still in a phase of its evolution similar to this phase of Jesus' life. It is vitally important that we learn of the religions and cultures of the people of our planet; how can we talk effectively to someone about our religion if we are not sensitive to their beliefs? Our thinking is badly distorted if we think that we have nothing to learn from other religious systems just because we have The URANTIA Book. It seems to me that we should take another cue from Jesus; isn't it our time to be planting seeds among leaders of the world's religions? Indeed, people such as Meredith Sprunger have been doing this work for some time.

As I look at what Jesus did in this period of his life, it seems to me that he was receiving self-ordained training in anticipation of his future work. We too are in training, though we may not apply that term to it. I had wondered for a long time what the real value of study groups and conferences was. Of course, we can tell ourselves that we keep learning more about the book, and that we enjoy the social contact with kindred spirits, but is that enough to justify the effort that goes into a conference? As I was thinking about this talk,

it occurred to me that there is a deeper meaning to all of this activity. I was struck by the idea that we are being rehearsed right now. This very moment I am developing my skills at speaking in front of a group. Workshop leaders this weekend are gaining the valuable experience of facilitating discussion and creatively handling differences of opinion among a diverse group of people. Study group participants are learning to socialize with diverse personalities and to be teachers as well as administrators. What is all of this preparation for? The situation that this movement is in today reminds me of the situation of the Finaliters. They are out functioning at various tasks in each Superuniverse, but their preparation has apparently been not just for the tasks that they now perform, but also for tasks somewhere in the next age.

Jesus said that when you see the leaves on the fig trees, you will know that summer is on its way. What are the signs of the times? What do they portend? A prestigious religious organization will be reviewing papers on The URANTIA Book. The light from the Fifth Epochal Revelation like that from the city on the hill can hardly be hidden for long, nor is it intended to be.

We have talked about all of Jesus' life so far, except for his public ministry. What lessons are there for us in this period of his life? Just prior to beginning his public work, Jesus selected a group of disciples and spent time teaching them about the kingdom of heaven. The public work was a time of training for these disciples, preparing them to function by themselves after Jesus had returned to the Father. You remember that he sent them out two by two to practice spreading the gospel. There are parallel activities going on today out in Boulder, Colorado at the Boulder School. These folks are being trained for a future work of spreading the teachings of the book. I understand that they are doing some lab work at fairs and at the University of Colorado by setting up booths with The URANTIA Book and pamphlets on display. Seems like those folks out there just get bolder and bolder! None of us knows when the skills these folks are learning will be needed,

but wouldn't it be nice to have a trained corps of teachers when the need arises? Shouldn't we all consider that we may be (or already are) called to be teachers of the book in one way or another? Can we be prepared too far ahead of the need?

There are some additional principles and lessons I think that we could learn from Jesus' life work. First, he never let the individual get lost in the press of events. Remember how he let the lad Tiglath go with him when he saw how eager the lad was? Remember how he would stop his dissertation to speak to some children? Another principle he practiced was to not let anyone be indispensable to the work that had to be done, not even excepting himself. His disciples, though at first frightened and shocked at Jesus' death soon snapped out of it and got on with spreading the gospel because Jesus had wisely prepared them for this event. The contribution of each of us is important in this movement, but we should never build organizations around the personality and talents of a single individual. For instance, we know that our government will not cease to function in the event of the President's death because there are contingency plans. Yet another principle that Jesus taught his apostles by way of the feeding of the 5000 miracle was to beware the emotional appeal of "pie in the sky" (or loaves and fishes, as it were.) The people who fell away from Jesus when he refused to be their king were not looking for spiritual nurture, they were looking for someone to give them unearned manna from the sky or someone to miraculously sweep away the Roman armies in their land.

The conclusions that follow may seem a bit dramatic, but recall that 50 years ago we were informed that our planet is quivering on the brink of a great spiritual renaissance. I believe that we are now in the foothills of that renaissance. We have not yet sighted the mountains, but can they be far from the foothills?

We know how the future of the early Christian movement turned out, since we have the benefit of 20-20 hindsight. Once it got a good start, the movement spread rapidly over the western world. Given the present pace of events, the future could roll over us like one of Alvin Toffler's great waves. Will we

try to stand in the way of this wave, be knocked down and be drowned, or will we ride the wave and extract energy from it to do the work that lies before us? These could be some of the most exciting and dangerous times for our movement in its history. Will we have the courage, stamina and devotion to this movement and the revelation to dedicate our time and risk rejection and ridicule in trying to bring the revelation to the world? Can we lovingly but resolutely deal with the critics of the revelation, or will we, like Peter, deny our connection with the revelation? Can we set aside pride and personal ambition to further the task of spreading the teachings of the book to the world? Will we let factionalism rear its ugly head and cancel out the power possible in unity of purpose? Will we let fear paralyze us and keep us from our appointed task? The URANTIA Book tells us that if we do not accept this task that it will be left to other people to carry forward. Just as the Jewish people lost the opportunity to be the standard-bearers for the gospel of Jesus, we could lose our chance to be the means by which The URANTIA Book is spread to all of the world. It is doubtful that we will be called-on to make the heroic sacrifices that many of the early Christians did, but it would be foolish to suppose that everything will fall effortlessly into place for us. If we are entering a period when we will increasingly be noticed by other religious groups, you can be sure that controversy will soon be our constant companion. If we are about to enter a period of rapid growth, you can be sure that confusion will abound. It will require stable and wise leaders to pilot us through these troubled waters. Pray that we meet the test, that we are worthy of the great task with which we have been entrusted. There are many great and noble things to be done on this planet. Spreading the teachings of The URANTIA Book is one of them. Our elder brother has shown us the path, do we have the courage to follow in his footsteps?



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HARMONY
c/o Dr. Dana Poole
621 Forrest Avenue
Griffin, GA 30223

