



HARMONY

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The URANTIA Book And Religious Studies

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Rarely does one find a book on theology or religion which one feels has the potential of changing the conceptual patterns of our culture. Some twenty-nine years ago I was a member of a small group of United Church of Christ ministers who discovered The URANTIA Book published by the Urantia Foundation, 533 Diversey Parkway, Chicago, IL 60614 in 1955. We found it a remarkably effective book in stimulating creative thinking in philosophy, religion, and culture. The general consensus among the thousands who have read the book is that it will receive universal recognition. It has extremely broad ramifications, shedding wisdom in almost every area of human endeavor.

This challenging book is not only a fascinating source document for personal spiritual growth and development, it may

well become one of the most important sources of information leading to the revitalization of the Christian Church and the restructuring of theology since the Reformation. The growing number of ministers and other religious leaders now discovering the book are surprised that a publication of this spiritual quality and far-reaching potential could have remained virtually hidden for over thirty years. A partial answer is found in the fact that those responsible for the publication of the book have initiated no promotional programs. They believe the low key evolutionary process of person to person communication is the wise method of acquainting people with the book. In addition, there are three major factors which have discouraged clergymen and other religious leaders from a serious reading of the book:

1. It comes from a source which is not known and trusted by religious and theological groups.
2. It is a large book (2097 pages) and some sections are not easy to comprehend.

3. It claims to be new revelation and, therefore, understandably causes suspicion, if not fear or hostility.

Hopefully, we have left behind those days of cultural naivete when claim or authority have any meaning as criterion of truth. Revelatory authenticity, therefore, is a secondary consideration. The primary challenge posed by The URANTIA Book is pragmatic. Does it have something creative and constructive to contribute to our modern philosophic-religious outlook? Evaluated on the basis of spiritual insight, philosophical coherence, and reality-centeredness, it presents, in the judgement of thousands of people who have critically examined it, one of the finest world views of religion available to contemporary humanity.

After a quarter of a century of experience in introducing thousands of philosophy students and ministers to The URANTIA Book I have found the two major obstacles in getting people to read the book are its size and initial erroneous impressions of "esoteric" or "gnostic" connotations. For those who get past these psychological barriers and read the book, almost all are impressed with its comprehensive grasp of planetary phenomena and most believe it has a substantive contribution to make to religious studies.

A NEW VISION OF REALITY

In its two-thousand pages The URANTIA Book presents an integrated picture of the universe which relates science, philosophy, and religion in a synergistic holism. It 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 place of origin of all forms of reality--spiritual, mindal, and material energy, 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 reli-

gion are seen as partial aspects of a larger unified universe picture.

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 judgement are stern and sober realities in the universe. Its intriguing picture of life after death, its 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 of purpose and the spiritual nature of being is presented as the fundamental motivation of life. This growth is evolutionary, culminating, and endless.

The book describes the origin and evolution of events on our planet. In addition to the physical development of the planet including plant, animal, and human biological evolution, it traces the development of civilization, culture, government, religion, the family, and other social institutions. The authors exhibit 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.

The fourth section of The URANTIA Book contains a seven hundred page version of the life and teaching of Jesus which is

Is Life Really Like Climbing A Single Mountain?

by JEFFREY WATTLES

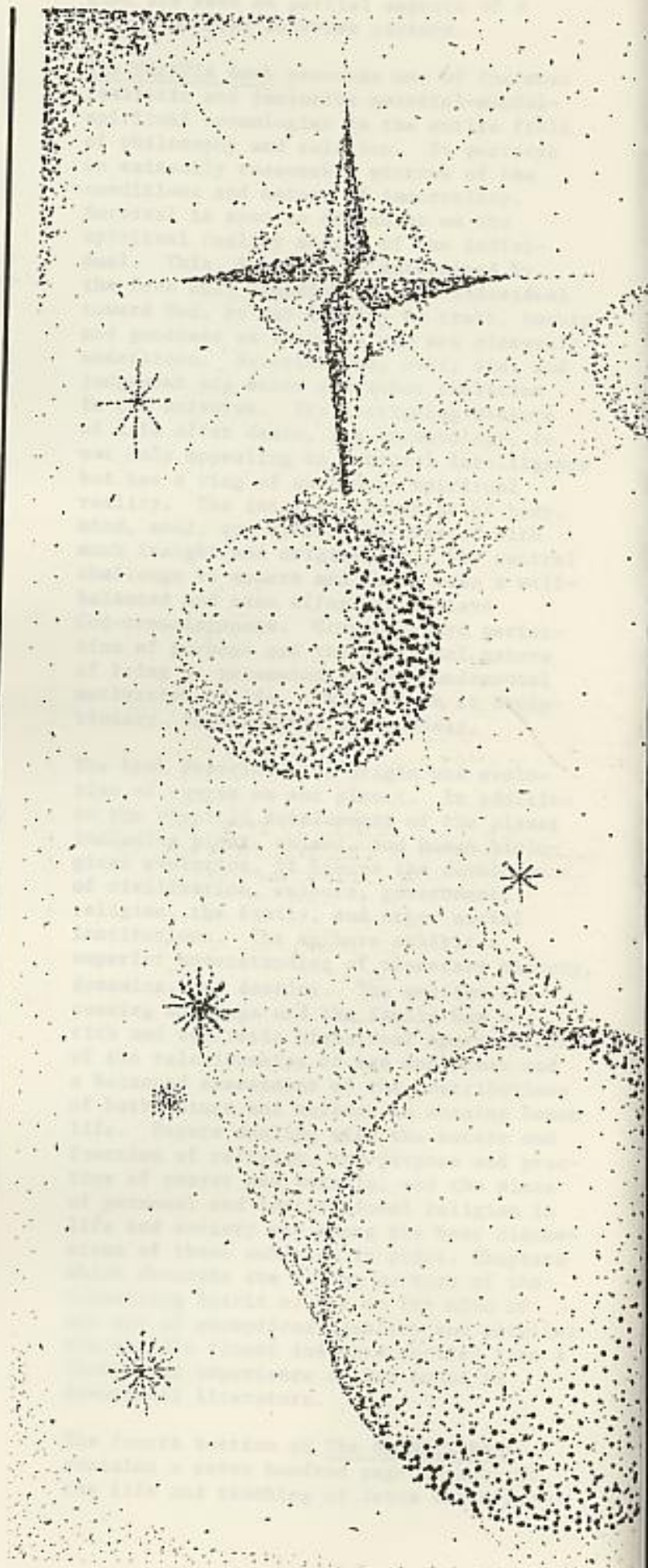
Mind, evidently, strives to unify. Strives too hard at times. Harmony does not mean compressing a fugue into just a melody.

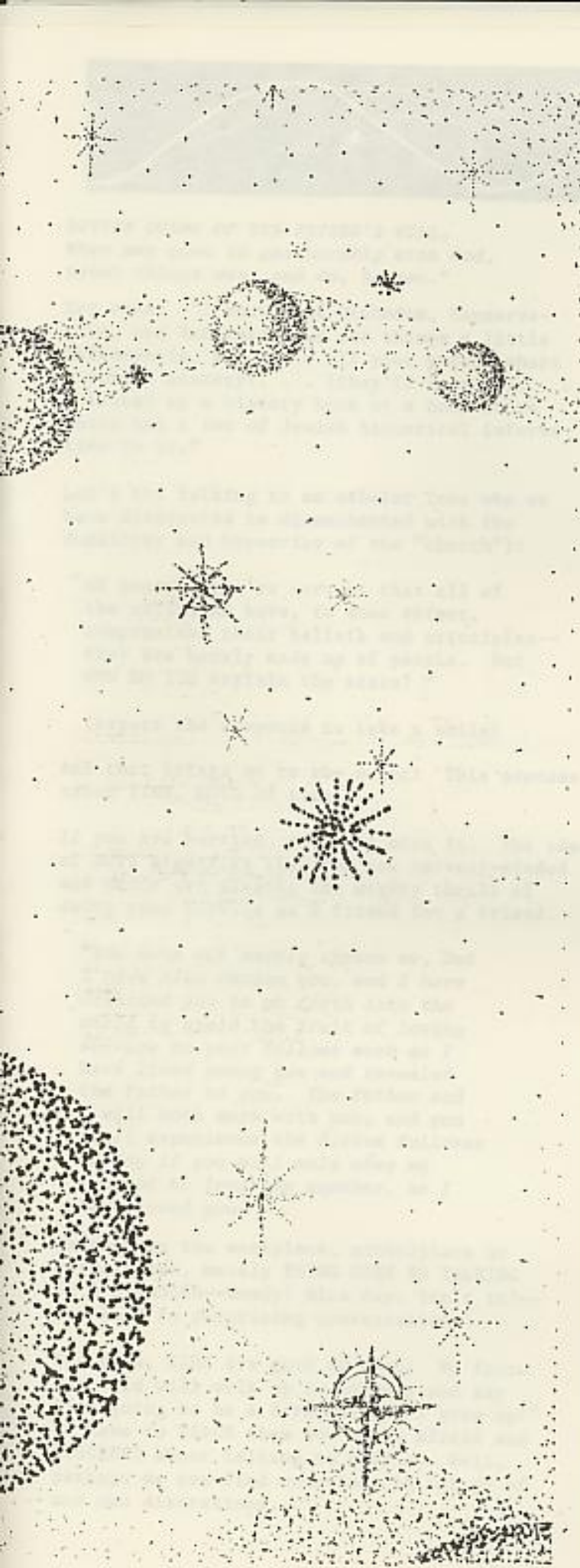
I had been thinking about four great spiritual priorities. It's so wonderful to think about priorities. It's tempting to think of spiritual priorities as always having the first claim on our energies. But think a moment. If on every possible occasion we preferred to pray instead of to eat, we wouldn't get to help answer very many of our prayers. And if Jesus hadn't seen that immediate obligation takes precedence over sublime opportunity, we might have stories of a brilliant first-century teenager who left his desperate mother and his hungry sibs in order to proclaim the glad tidings of faith fellowship in our heavenly Father's family.

But there are times when we have choices to make, when we have energy to allocate, and when we seek inspiration for our choice from the best sources we know. Those are times when we may want to know not merely what is a good thing to do, but what the planet needs most. These may also be times when we are seeking not so much what is the Father's will for our lives as much as in what project the wealth of angelic support may be especially flowing. At such times we canvas, perhaps, our favorite scriptures. There were four from The URANTIA Book that were roughly in my mind:

"The great challenge to modern man is to achieve better communication with the divine Monitor that dwells within the human mind" (from a secondary Midwayer - 2097:2)

"The religious challenge of this age is to those farseeing and forward-looking men and women of spiritual insight who will dare to construct a new and





appealing philosophy of living out of the enlarged and exquisitely integrated modern concepts of cosmic truth, universe beauty, and divine goodness." (from a Divine Counselor - 43:4)

"The great hope of Urantia lies in the possibility of new revelation of Jesus with a new and enlarged presentation of his saving message which would spiritually unite in loving service the numerous families of his present-day professed followers." (from a Midwayer - 2086:2)

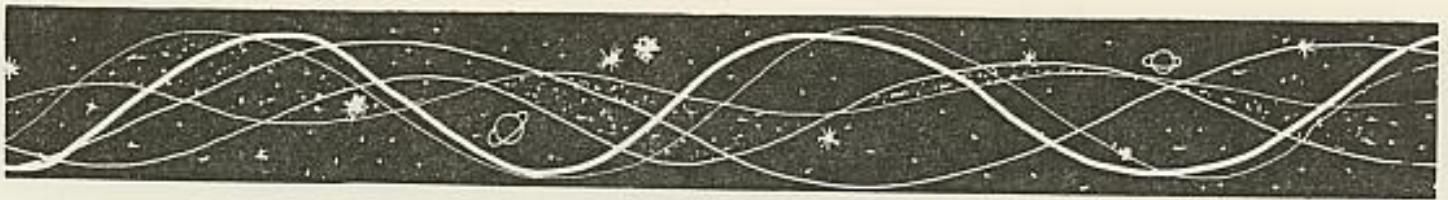
"That which the world needs most to know is: Men are the sons of God, and through faith they can actually realize, and daily experience, this ennobling truth." (Jesus - 2052:4) "The persistent preaching of this gospel of the kingdom will some day bring to all nations a new and unbelievable liberation, intellectual freedom, and religious liberty." (from a restatement of Jesus' teaching - 1930:7)

I wanted somehow to fit all these into a grand scheme, a hierarchy, a system that I could stuff into an idea and put into my back pocket, and never feel tension any more between these complementary but somewhat different pulls. And then, on a pleasant afternoon in the Colorado Rockies, walking along the eastern shore of Gold Lake, I lifted my gaze beyond the western shore and noticed four snowy, angular mountain peaks. The multiplicity of destiny. Peace and harmony. I don't need to see myself and others through the lens of a linear list. All the four are equally resting in the distance, equally inviting and wonderously challenging to the eye and the hear.

Does that mean that there are no insights that help organize a series of inspirational ideals? No. There is a relevant comment about timing in teaching: "Do not undertake to show men the beauties of the temple until you have first taken them into the temple." (1593:1) And there is a relevant comment about how we proclaim the gospel:

"You are all to proclaim this gospel of love and truth by the lives which you live in the flesh." (2044:4) But all of a sudden, looking at that mountain range, the series acquired an organic unity which it could never have found in a mind dominated by the quest to allocate to each supreme project its proper place on the ladder of sanctity. Maybe someone could get the same peace by reflecting on seeing just one indescribably shaped mountain.





DIVINE DOING OF THE FATHER'S WILL.

When man goes in partnership with God, great things may, and do, happen."

Try this: "I know that Orthodox, Conservative, and Reformed Jews see things a little differently, but don't all your groups share a common history? . . . (they'll respond). . . I picked up a history book at a book store which has a lot of Jewish historical information in it."

Let's try talking to an atheist (one who we have discovered is disenchanted with the duplicity and hypocrisy of the "church"):

"Of course, you're correct that all of the religions have, to some extent, compromised their beliefs and principles-- they are merely made up of people. But HOW DO YOU explain the stars?"

(expect the response to take a while)

And that brings me to the point: This process takes TIME, LOTS of time.

If you are hurried, you will miss it. The idea of DUTY signifies that you are servant-minded and hence are missing the mighty thrill of doing your service as a friend for a friend.

"You have not merely chosen me, but I have also chosen you, and I have ordained you to go forth into the world to yield the fruit of loving service to your fellows even as I have lived among you and revealed the Father to you. The Father and I will both work with you, and you shall experience the divine fullness of joy if you will only obey my command to love one another, as I have loved you."

Whether in the workplace, schoolplace or marketplace, merely BEING OPEN TO TALKING TO A STRANGER--Howdy! Nice day, isn't it?-- may lead to surprising conversations!

You know, KIDS are good at that! My four-year-old will walk up to anybody and say "I'm going to be a fireman when I grow up!" We have to TEACH them how to be afraid and DISCREET about talking to people. Well, perhaps we can find occasions to let go of our own discretions.

**BUT WHAT DO YOU DO IF THEY RESIST?
WHAT DO YOU DO IF THEY HAVE IDEAS OF THEIR OWN?**

Remember the old popular song from the 50's:

*"You gotta accentuate the positive,
eliminate the negative. . ."*

Addressing an individual at the appropriate level means that we can stand in their shoes and get into their point of view, if only for a moment, and only IN PART.

It can work like this:

Suppose you strike up a conversation at the bus stop, and then you discover that this person is a Fundamentalist Bible-belt Baptist. What can you say about The URANTIA Book to such a person?

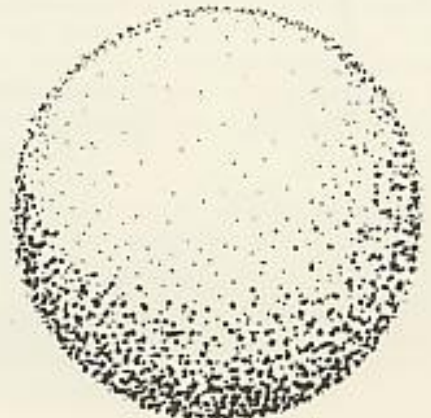
Well, what do we have in common with Bible-belt Baptists? RELATIONSHIP! OK, they have a relationship to Jesus! We have a relationship to God the Father by means of our Adjusters, BUT THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP IS THE SAME! So we can say:

"I'm interested in cultivating my relationship with God also. Jesus said a lot about being one with the Father, and I also look for ways to feel His Presence every day. And you know, a lot of books can be helpful in that regard. . . to show the way. . ."

SEE, how easy?

Well now, what about a Jewish person? How can THEY be introduced to The URANTIA Book?

Well, what do we have in common? THE HISTORICITY OF GOD! He is a historical personality, and He does this and this and this.



More Harmony . . . from our readers

"My personal experience with the U-Book is that it (1) confirmed many ideas that I had and (2) it opened many new channels of thought. Because it is so logical and consistent I feel that it is the truth that it claims to be. Because it is infinitely complex and yet perfectly simple I feel that it certainly must be from a higher source. Because it is so divinely beautiful it surely cannot originate in evil. So, I accept this as my guide for now.

As for exposing the book to others it seems that the degree of openness of mind reflects the degree of acceptance. People who are happy with their concepts of atonement, evolution or whatever, invariably reject the book (usually before they see it.) Others with more open views ask a few questions.

Of the two hundred or so people that I know fairly well, maybe 10 seriously look at the book. Of these, one young lady has sent two books to Australian friends. Another is very much interested and 3 or 4 read the book regularly. This leaves 95% of the folks with whom I am fairly well-acquainted blocked by strong pre-existing concepts. My thought is that about half of these folks are incapable of thinking through these concepts (quart of knowledge in a pint bottle). The others simply are happily blocked and really too busy with the problems of everyday life to worry about it."

--Gene Curtiss
Benton, Kentucky



Two Truths In One

*Creationism: Is it not quite true
That God our Father did this world design,
Fashion in His Mind that 'neath the blue
Bright sky of our own world a life divine
In origin would find a lush array
Of forms of life in great proliferation?
Did he not plan the coming of that day
In which a man, with no exaggeration,
Appeared on earth though destined for the stars?*

*And Evolution: Is it not a fact
Our Perfect Father reaches wide and far
To live through all creation--such an act
As mystifies both those of high ascent
As well as natives of God's firmament?*

by DAVID GLASS