



Journal of The Brotherhood of Man Library, an Information, Telecommunication and Lending Service
Resource for Students of *The URANTIA Book*.

Favorite Places from The Urantia Book

Spiritual Communion

The characteristic difference between a social occasion and a religious gathering is that, in contrast with the secular, the religious is pervaded by the **atmosphere of communion**. In this way human association generates a feeling of **fellowship with the divine**, and this is the beginning of group worship.

Partaking of a common meal was the earliest type of social communion, and so did early religions provide that some portion of the ceremonial sacrifice should be eaten by the worshippers. Even in Christianity the Lord's Supper retains this mode of communion. The atmosphere of the communion provides a refreshing and comforting period of truce in the conflict of the self-seeking ego with the altruistic urge of the indwelling spirit Monitor. And this is the **prelude to true worship—the practice of the presence of God** which eventuates in the emergence of the brotherhood of man.

When primitive man felt that his communion with God had been interrupted, he resorted to sacrifice of some kind in an effort to make atonement, to restore friendly relationship.

The hunger and thirst for righteousness leads to the discovery of truth, and truth augments ideals, and this creates new problems for the individual religionists, for our ideals tend to grow by geometrical progression, while our ability to live up to them is enhanced only by arithmetical progression.

The sense of guilt (not the consciousness of sin) comes either from interrupted spiritual

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*This modern age will
refuse to accept a
religion that is
inconsistent with facts
and out of harmony
with its highest
conceptions of truth,
beauty, and goodness.*

(2083)

communion or from the lowering of one's moral ideals.

Deliverance from such a predicament can only come through the realization that one's highest moral ideals are not necessarily synonymous with the will of God. Man cannot hope to live up to his highest ideals, but he can be true to his purpose of finding God and becoming more and more like him.

Jesus swept away all of the ceremonials of sacrifice and atonement. He destroyed the basis of all this fictitious guilt and sense of isolation in the universe by declaring that man is a child of God; the creature-Creator relationship was placed on a child-parent basis. God becomes a loving Father to his mortal sons and daughters. All ceremonials not a legitimate part of such an intimate family relationship are forever abrogated.

God, the Father, deals with man, his child, on the basis, not of actual virtue or worthiness, but in recognition of the child's motivation—the creature purpose and intent. The relationship is one of parent-child association and is actuated by divine love.

Further Exploring the Mind of Jesus.

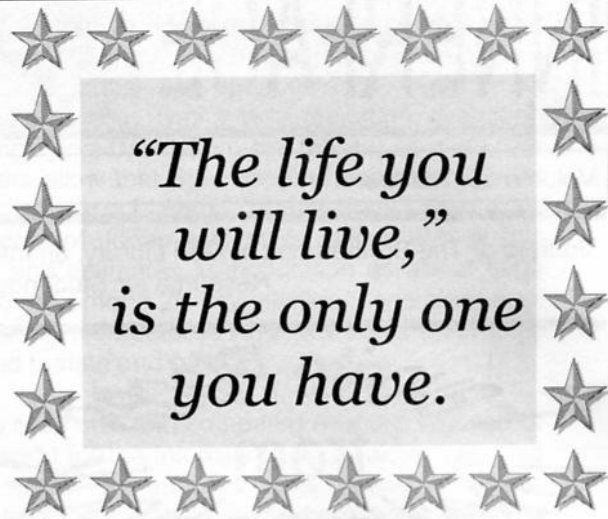
Introduction

Your mission to the world is founded on the fact that I lived a God-revealing life among you;...and it shall consist in the life that you will live among men—the actual and living experience of loving men and serving them, even as I have loved and served you. (2043)

Many times in the Urantia Papers we are exhorted to live as Jesus lived.

Though the wisdom or virtue of one can very rarely make many happy, the folly or vice of even one often makes many miserable.

Samuel Johnson



You may preach a religion about Jesus but, perforce, you must live the religion of Jesus. (2091)

But in no way does this mean that we are to copy the material life of Jesus. It is Jesus' spiritual life that we are exhorted to live—and to do so we have to know the mind of Jesus. Why? So that we might 'sense' how a perfectly spiritualized mind would respond to the ordinary everyday experiences of living.

Our quote from p. 2091 implies that unless we can actually live the spiritualized life we waste our time in preaching about Jesus. What is now needed....

Christianity has indeed done a great service for this world, but what is now most needed is Jesus. The world needs to see Jesus living again on earth in the experience of spirit-born mortals who effectively reveal the Master to all men. It is futile to talk about a revival of primitive Christianity; you must go forward from where you find yourselves. (2084)

There have been many most wonderful lives lived over the past 2000 years by men and women who truly discovered the meaning of "living as Jesus lived." So what was it that they discovered in the Gospels that acted so uniquely as their guiding light?

Along with the earliest of the Christians they were probably all aware of our indwelling by the Spirit of the Father—most often referred to by Paul and by John in verses such as "Know you not that you are the temple of God, that the Spirit of God dwells within you," (1 Cor. 3:16) and "if we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:12)

But their primary source of understanding of the mind of Jesus almost certainly had its foundations in the "Sermon on the Mount," as presented in the Gospel of Matthew, plus some simple parable stories that Jesus used so expertly.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with what have been called:

The Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Arrogance and Humility

In modern times some of the phrasing of these words has acquired an altered meaning from the original translation. In the Urantia Papers, Jesus illustrates the meaning of "poor in spirit" in a story of a wealthy Pharisee who strode into the synagogue declaring his thanks to God that he was not like that miserable publican over there in



the corner, and then followed up with a catalogue of his praiseworthy attributes. In contrast the publican prayed to God contritely in the words, "God have mercy on me, a miserable sinner."

The first was full of his own arrogant self-importance and puffed up with conceit and pride. The second was humble before God, he was teachable, and anxious to do better. It is in the publican that we find the meaning of "poor in spirit."

Likewise the meaning of "those who mourn" is seen in those who feel genuine sympathy for the unfortunate or distressed, while "the meek" are those who are the opposite of arrogant, bullying, dominating.

Ask yourself what a perfect God, the epitome of love and compassion, would be like and interpret Jesus' beatitudes accordingly—and you'll never be far wrong. Jesus continued:

You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the feet of men.

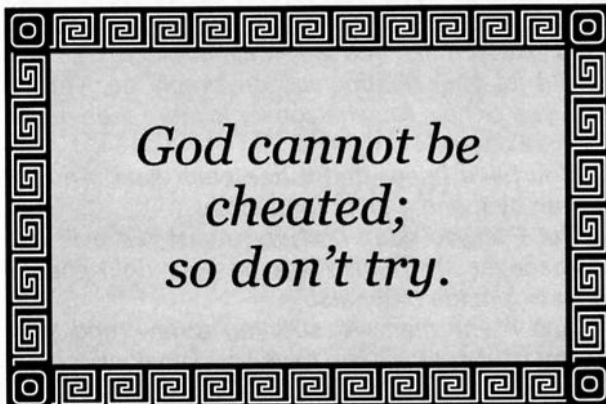
The Sea of Galilee was famous throughout the Roman Empire for its salted fish. Salt from the Dead Sea area could vary in quality and so could affect the salted fish trade disastrously.

Let your Light so Shine

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel-cup, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.



Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

For verily I say to you, Till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot shall pass from the law, until all be fulfilled.

Whosoever therefore shall break even the least of these commandments, and teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do, and teach them so, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The law was originally given to lawless Bedouin tribes whose understanding of spirituality was minimal. Today our societies still stand in need of a strict, even severe but just, system of law. In contrast, those who are truly spiritualized have no further need of law.

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

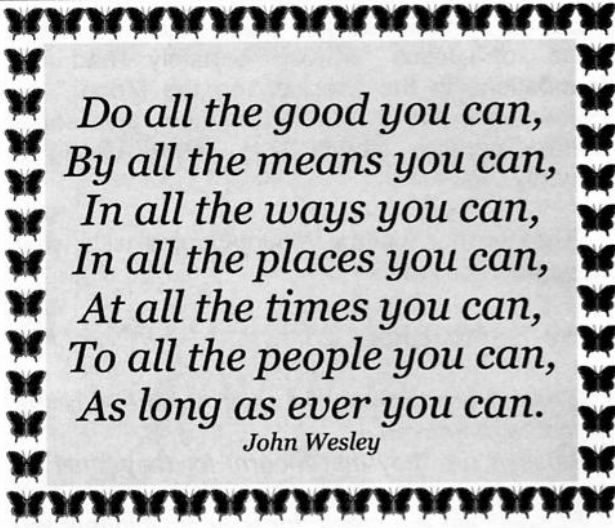
[The scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus' day are representative of those who today manipulate power and the law for their own selfish gain.]

You have heard it said

You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be brought to trial: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (idiot), shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of judgment.

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and



then remember that your brother has ought against you; leave your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Agree or Disagree

Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in accord with him; lest at any time the adversary delivers you to the judge, and the judge delivers you to the warden, and you are cast into prison.

Verily I say to you that you shall by no means come out thence, until you have paid the utmost farthing.

If your right eye offends, pluck it out, and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that only one of your members should be lost, and not that your whole body should perish.

And if your right hand offends, cut it off, and cast it from you also: for it is more profitable for you to lose this one member, and not your whole body.

Again, you have heard that it has been said by those of old, You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths:

But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne. Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool.

Neither shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.

But let your communication simply be, yes or no, yea or nay, for whatsoever is more than these comes of evil.

You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

But I say to you, That you resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any man will sue you at law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel you to go a mile, go also the second mile.

[note: the Roman soldier had the right to compel civilians to carry his baggage for approximately one mile, but not more]

To Give or to Receive?

Give to him that asks, and from him who would borrow from you, turn him not away.

You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.

But I say, 'Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if you love only those who love you, what reward do you deserve? do not even the publicans and thieves do the same?

And if you greet only your brethren, what do you do more than others? do not even the pagans do so?

Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Take heed that you do not do your alms before men, to be seen of them. For, lo, you have your reward.

When you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men.

But when you are doing your alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does. That your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly.

*When you pray, imagine
God's love cascading over
you like pure, white light.
It surrounds, fills,
protects, blesses, and
heals you—for your
highest good and the
highest good of others.*

How to Pray

And when you pray, be not as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly.

And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Therefore be not like them; for your Father knows what things you have need of even before you ask him.

In this manner you should construct your prayer:

*Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.*

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

To Forgive or not to Forgive

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses.

Moreover when you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto

*You can't blame the past
for what you are today.
That's like blaming
gravity for the glass you
broke. Just clean up the
mess and get another
glass from the cupboard.*

men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

But you, when you fast, disfigure not your faces but rather wash so that you do not appear unto men to fast; and your Father who sees you fast in secret, he shall reward you openly.

Where your Treasure is

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through nor steal:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light.

But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

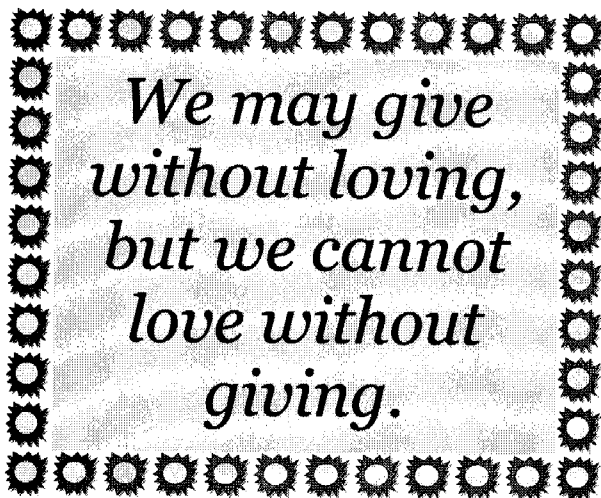
No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more precious than they?

On Thinking

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?



**We may give
without loving,
but we cannot
love without
giving.**

**Build yourself a
sanctuary—an inner
retreat—in your
imagination. It can
contain anything or
anyone whom you choose.
Just make sure you choose
your indwelling God-
Spirit.**

And why do you take thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

And yet I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all other needs shall be added unto you.

Take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Judgment is Mine

Judge not, that you be not judged.

For with whatsoever judgment you judge others, so shall you be judged: and with what measure you mete out, so shall it be measured to you again.

And why do you behold the speck that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the splinter that is in your own eye?

How will you say to your brother, Let me remove the speck from your eye; and, behold, a splinter is in your own eye?

Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

Be Kind to your Children

For what man is there of you, who, if his son asks for bread, would he give him a stone?

Or if he asks for a fish, would he give him a serpent?

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give good things to those that ask him?

Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Enter in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be that take that path;

But strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads unto life.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, while inwardly they are ravening wolves.

You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

On Bearing Fruit

Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree can only bring forth bad fruit.

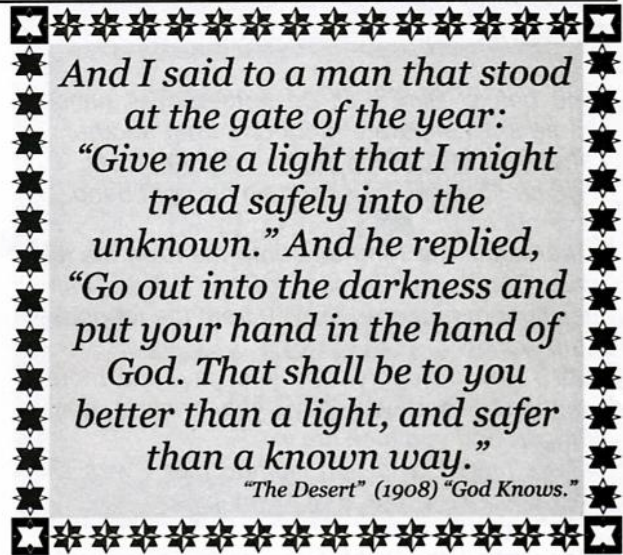
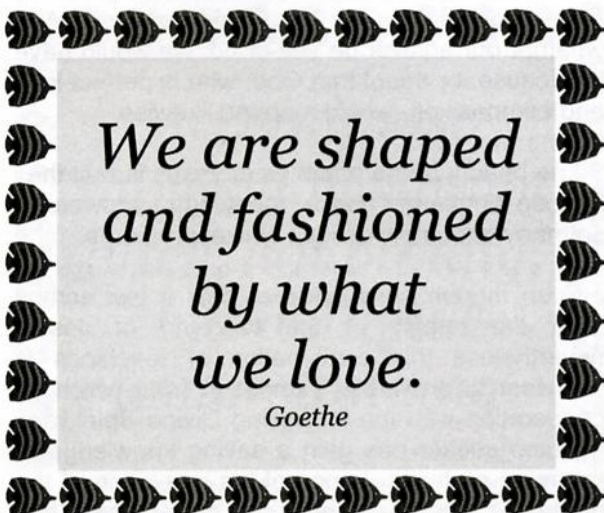
A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

By their fruits you shall know them.

Not every one that calls unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name and in your name cast out devils and done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity.



Anti-Gravity

Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it.

It came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

A great virtue of Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" is that it is condensed into a single unit. But whereas it is not meant to be used as a set of rules for living, taken overall, it does provide a means for comprehending Jesus' indefinable selflessness that can lead us to mind spiritualization and God-knowingness.

The Parables

In addition to the Sermon on the Mount, our understanding of the mind of Jesus can be enhanced if we have a good knowledge of his parables—among them, "The Laborers in the Vineyard" (Matthew 20:1-16) that illustrates the compassion of God; "The Good Samaritan" (Luke 28:25-37) that outlaws racial prejudice; "The Lost Sheep" (Matthew 18:12-14) that tells of God's care for sinners; and "The Sheep and the Goats," given below, that illustrates the loving and serving nature of divinity:

To Do

And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats:

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

For I was a hungry, and you gave me meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in:

I was naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to comfort me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry, and fed you or thirsty, and gave you drink?

When did we meet you as a stranger, and took you in; or see you naked, and clothed you?

Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and came unto you?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.

Or Not to Do

Then shall he say to those on his left hand, Depart from me. For I was a hungry, and you gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and you took me not in: naked, and you clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and you visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to you?



Experience is something that we can create, it is something we must undergo.

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you did it not to the least of these, you did it not to me.

Also there are three short verses in the "Sermon on the Mount" that merit parable status:

For what man is there of you who, if his son asks for bread, would he give him a stone?

Or, if he asked for a fish would he give him a serpent?

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give good things to those who ask?

These simple verses are among the most important in the whole of the New Testament—for they provide the sincere individual with the means to gain personal insight into mind of God.

For any problem confronting us that needs a moral or ethical yes or no judgment, we can ask ourselves how the finest and most loving earthly father conceivable by us would respond. And whether our answer be yes or no, we would have little cause for doubt that God, who is perfect love and compassion, would respond likewise.

The beauty of the parables of Jesus is that they provide simple but deeply meaningful answers to so many extremely difficult ethical problems.

Even though constituted of only a few scraps from the totality of the teaching of Jesus, nevertheless this combination of teachings is sufficient to provide a foundation from which, in cooperation with the indwelling Divine Spirit, any genuine seeker can gain a saving knowledge of the mind of Jesus, hence of his revelation of the nature of God. And, over two millennia, it has

been the guiding source for a multitude of dedicated Christians to achieve that end.

However, what must be avoided at all costs is that we convert any of this foundation material into rules, commandments, or creeds.

All matters moral, ethical, or spiritual are situational and relative. Therefore they cannot be generalized. Each such occasion of experience is unique and cannot occur in exactly the same way again. But once converted to rules and creeds, they can take on an absolute and rigid status

In reality, such matters are unique for the individual. Hence judgment and decision making belongs uniquely to the individual and the Spirit of the Father who indwells each one of us.

[Societies though, are different. Because of the imperfections of individuals, a society cannot be truly stable except there be rules of behavior to which members are required to subscribe—under duress, if necessary.]

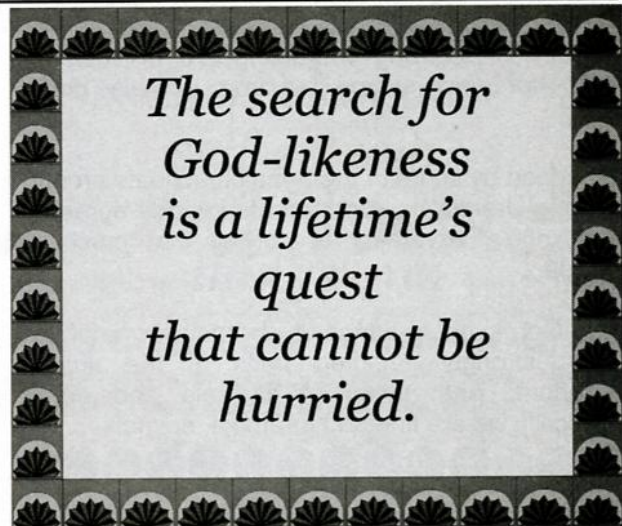
Once we gain a good knowledge of the mind of Jesus and have also come to rely upon a feeling of “at oneness” with our indwelling Father—Spirit, then we, too, will commence to live our lives as Jesus lived his—in accord with the will of God and under the guidance of the God-Spirit-Within.

Quite remarkably, when in the public gaze, we will also cease to “act a part” by attempting to convince others of our holiness—and expecting, hoping, or demanding that they should be what we were only pretending to be.

In fact, even the thought that our lives are, or even should be, examples to the non-initiated will cease—and we will simply “be” what we really



Accept those things you cannot alter, not blindly, but with full understanding.



The search for God-likeness is a lifetime's quest that cannot be hurried.

are, knowing that nothing else is reality—and nothing but our reality is acceptable to God.

“Agree with your Adversary”

This piece of advice from the Sermon on the Mount is qualified by the injunction to do so quickly while still in communication with your adversary. It is followed up by a whole set of mostly positive injunctions:

Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite you on the right cheek, turn to him the other cheek.

If any man would sue you at law and take away your coat, let him have your cloak as well.

Whosoever would compel you to go a mile with him, go the second mile.

Give to whoever asks. Do not turn away those who would borrow.

Countermanded are traditional attitudes such as an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, plus an injunction to love your neighbor but hate your enemy. Instead we have:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who spitefully use you, and persecute you.

The “Ordination Sermon” given to the apostles in the Urantia Papers deviates very little in principle from the “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew’s gospel. And the Papers also take a strongly positive attitude:

The major error of modern religions is negativism....Strong characters are not derived from not doing wrong but from actually doing right.

Judged by some of the e-mail that floats around among Urantia Book adherents, quickly agreeing with one's adversary is not all that much in vogue.

In fact, to do so brings us up against one of the most strongly inherited traits of the animal kingdom. And, when all is said and done, basically we are first and foremost, animals.

One problem is our territorial-ism—"this is mine, keep out." Another is our dominance behavior—usually very strong in social animals. And further complicating matters is our self-pride, a "rather die than give in," attitude that, more often than not, is quite irrational.

However, if we are ever to come even close to living our lives as Jesus lived his, then for many of us, an extreme change in attitudes is going to be necessary. And that change is going to need to be to "agree with your adversary **quickly**." For us, perhaps "**immediately**" would be an even better injunction.

Nothing would revolutionize our social relationships so drastically and so quickly than for us to become thoroughly agreeable and helpful persons. [But nothing would ensure failure so drastically, so immediately, than our expectation that our adversary should do likewise.]

Think about all those recent occasions when we failed this test. What would have happened if we had taken Jesus' advice? What would we have lost? And would that have been such a dreadful thing?

Consciously be grateful for the good in your life. An attitude of gratitude is a great, full, feeling.

Love is God's unconditional positive regard. Your core—your very being—is love. For God's own indwelling spirit is your real core.

If we are ever to have our indwelling spirit forces take charge in our lives, if we are ever to become useful in the divine program to enhance the spiritual advancement of this planet, then perhaps we have some thinking to do.

"And you are all to proclaim this gospel of love and truth by the lives which you live in the flesh. You shall love one another with a new and startling affection, even as I have loved you. You will serve mankind with a new and amazing devotion, even as I have served you. And when men see you so love them, and when they behold how fervently you serve them, they will perceive that you have become faith-fellows of the kingdom of heaven, and they will follow after the Spirit of Truth which they see in your lives, to the finding of eternal salvation." (2044)

Is the Spirit of Truth visible in my life? In yours?

Christianity and Archaeology—An Update

What follows is an e-mail critique by an ordained minister of the Anglican Church in Australia (herein called AA) of a recently published work by a bishop elect of the Anglican Church in England (herein called AB).

The archaeology upon which the critique is based derives from Israeli scholars who, after the 1967 war, sought to verify biblical evidence supporting Israel's recent territorial acquisitions.

"In his writings, AB puts forward the following profile of the historical Jesus (i.e. this is what he thinks Jesus was actually like in the first century and not just in the later faith of the Church). So Jesus saw his life as:

A first century Jewish prophet announcing God's kingdom/empire
 God breaking into history in and through him
 Summoning other Jews to adopt his vision
 Forewarning that God would destroy both city and temple
 Engaged in a profound clash with the dominant symbol systems
 Understanding himself to be the Messiah

Such a reconstruction of the historical Jesus is actually very close to the Johannine Christ (and thus suspect as the outcome of a historical reconstruction), but it depends in a large measure on the historicity of the Old Testament since AB affirms that Jesus understood himself as the embodiment of biblical hopes and the hope of the ancient prophets.

The problem is (as AB knows very well) that the Old Testament account of ancient Israel and Judah **just does not hold water any more.**

It is not just that the early chapters of Genesis have had to be discarded as literal events, but so has almost every shred of seemingly historical narrative in the Hebrew Bible—along with most of the Gospels, and the Passion narrative in particular, in the New Testament.

There are no longer serious historical debates between biblical scholars on any of the following:

- Patriarchs
- Exodus
- Conquest/Settlement
- David and Solomon

Detailed Israeli archaeological work has shown—doubtless to their chagrin—that Jerusalem was a small walled village prior to the 9th century BCE, and that Judah did not have sufficient population to have any political or

There is nothing you need do to become worthy. You are already worthy. And you are worthy simply because you "are."

Increase your self-esteem? Easy—do good things and remember that you did them.

military influence in the region.

The action was in the North, but even there it was nothing like as glorious as the Bible would have us think. And in any case, there is nothing to suggest that a new people moved into Palestine in the Late Bronze Age. The so-called "Israelite" settlements in the highlands about 1200 BCE are simply Canaanites with a new zip code.

The current trench warfare between the Bible and archaeology involves the minimalists (who suggest no history of Israel/Judah is possible prior to the exile (in Babylon), and the maximalists (who concede everything up to and including the Solomonic empire, but argue for an emerging Judah/Jerusalem in the 9th to 8th century BCE)

If the historical truth lies somewhere between the minimalists and the maximalists, as good Anglicans will be inclined to expect, there are profound theological implications. One of them, as AB must or should know, is that Jesus is not the embodiment of ancient covenant hopes or the fulfillment of divine promises made to Abraham, Moses, David, et al. **Those guys did not exist** and God never made any such promises to them.

We therefore have to make sense of Jesus as people who know something that his earliest interpreters did not even imagine.

The way forward does not lie in defending a pseudo-history just because it is sacred Scripture. We have to face the shocking facts that most of the Old Testament is late Judean propaganda. Second temple Judaism, like Christianity and every other human religion, is a human construction by people seeking to respond to **the God whom we recognize in the person of Jesus.**

We can debate whether Jesus had a bodily resurrection, but what is gained by that, since none of us thinks that Jesus' mortal remains were assumed into a heaven "up there." And a bodily resurrection implies that they must be disposed of in some other, possibly miraculous, manner!

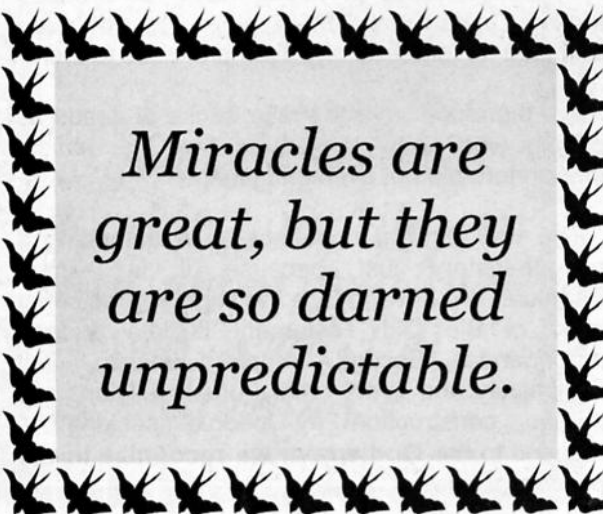
The prior question to the resurrection is, "What happened to Jesus' cadaver?" If we ever solve that, we can begin to ask just what a bodily resurrection might mean in the 21st century as distinct from the 1st—in which dead people were believed often to come back to "this world" or to pass on to "the next world."

On this point, I am with Saul of Tarsus. In 1 Cor. 15 he makes it plain that Jesus was dead and buried (i.e. gone) but then became a life-giving spirit. Paul's own encounter with the Risen Lord did not involve a bodily resurrection but instead, (like all the other such episodes) an appearance—thus asserting the theological principle that flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom of God.

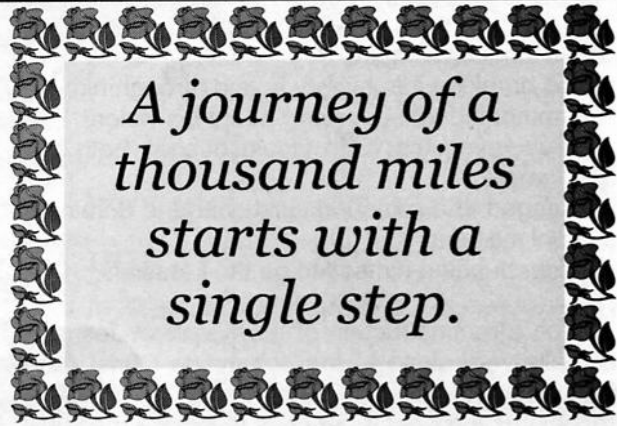
How one can insist on a bodily resurrection in the face of 1 Cor. 15, and given the empty nature of the empty tomb stories baffles me.

If AB wishes to invest his energy into defending such castles of straw, then I wish him well. I prefer to embrace the new information emerging from archaeology, historical research, and the sciences, and then to work at developing a **new theology that sings the Lord's song in this strange land called the third millennium.**

For me, as for many others, the focus falls on forming and sustaining communities where God's righteousness is now experienced in justice, equal opportunity, empowerment, forgiveness, and healing.



Miracles are great, but they are so darned unpredictable.



A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.

Given what they knew, Christians in the first century made sense of God and Jesus as best they could. The result is the new Testament.

Given what they knew, Christians in the fourth century made sense of God and Jesus as best they could. The result is the Trinity.

Given what we know, Christians in the twenty first century must make sense of God and Jesus as best we can. The results are yet to be seen.

Mark's gospel at least had something right when he had the angels tell the women to stop hanging about the empty tomb looking for a body that was not there. They would find Jesus was already ahead of them—in Galilee. He is still way ahead of us, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

AA

Further Reading

Finkelstein, I. and N.A. Silberman (2002). *The Bible Unearthed*. (Touchstone Books, Simon and Schuster, N.Y.)

Herzog, Ze'ev, Professor of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University, Ha'aretz Magazine, 29 Oct. 1999.

[Note: From the above remarks, and from the Finkelstein and Silberman, and the Herzog references, Urantia Book readers will see that, beyond rational doubt, any literal interpretation of the Bible is now unsustainable .

But this also indicates that a literal interpretation of sections of the Urantia Papers is also unsustainable—which is in accord with what the revelators tell us:

"No revelation short of the attainment of the Universal Father can ever be complete. All other celestial ministrations are no more than partial, transient, and practically adapted to local conditions in time and space." (1008)

A key statement from the AA article is, "Given what we know, Christians in the 21st century must make sense of God and Jesus as best we can."

What do Urantia Book readers know that will help to make sense of God and Jesus? There is one critical item of knowledge that Christians already knew well in the first century C.E, but have since lost—despite there being more than twenty New Testament verses to remind them.

Presently, from the point of view of humanity, the single most important item of knowledge existent on our planet concerns the facts of the how, what, and why of our indwelling by the very spirit of our Father-God himself. And because it is lost or forgotten almost everywhere else, by default, such knowledge is close to becoming exclusively the possession of Urantia Book devotees.

What are we to do with this knowledge? Each individual must discover this for him or her self. For certain though, if we put our faith in our God-Spirit-Within and, like the human Jesus, always seek to do the Father's will as it is revealed to us by the Spirit-Within—then "all else necessary will be added unto us."

And perhaps finally: *"When men see you so love them, and how fervently you serve them, they will perceive you have become faith-fellows of the kingdom and will follow after the Spirit of Truth which they see in your lives...."*

[Does the Spirit of Jesus shine forth in my life?
In your life?]

Religion of the Spirit— what could it mean?

In a dimension beyond that which is worldly and finite, the religion of the spirit defines a

*A journey of a
thousand miles
starts with a single
step.*

*We are the music makers,
We are the dreamers of
dreams,
Yet we are the movers
and shakers,
Of the world, forever it
seems.
Arthur O'Shaughnessy
(or are we?)*

transcendental state that derives its reality from the collective experience of the souls of men and women of all mankind.

Human beings are not singular units. Each of us is bipolar. We have a self pole and a God pole, the latter being an indwelling spirit-fragment of God, the Father-Creator, the First Source and Center of all that is. And it is the joint activities of these two independent entities, the human mind and its embedded God-Mind, that bring about the existence of the human soul—which in its turn, generates those experiences that constitute the body of the religion of the spirit.

In itself the soul consists of selected experience, human experience selected by the God-Spirit-Within because of its content of spiritual meaning and value, the latter being largely determined by its content of selflessness and service-orientated experiential love. During lifetime the soul is the repository of that which has spiritual meaning and value as a result of our life experience. In the after life it is, in many ways, the memory of our earthly existence—for only those experiences that have spiritual value can also have a meaningful existence in a dimension that is purely spiritual.

But what could have meaning or value to a life existent only as a spirit entity?

If we take the example of the earthly human life of Jesus of Nazareth for our model, whether as it was revealed in the New Testament Gospels or in the Urantia Papers, then central to that life was Jesus' determination to live solely in accord with the will of God through his life of loving, selfless service to the spiritual welfare of his Father's earthly children.

And that appears to have been his sole purpose—and his religion of the spirit.

Criticality

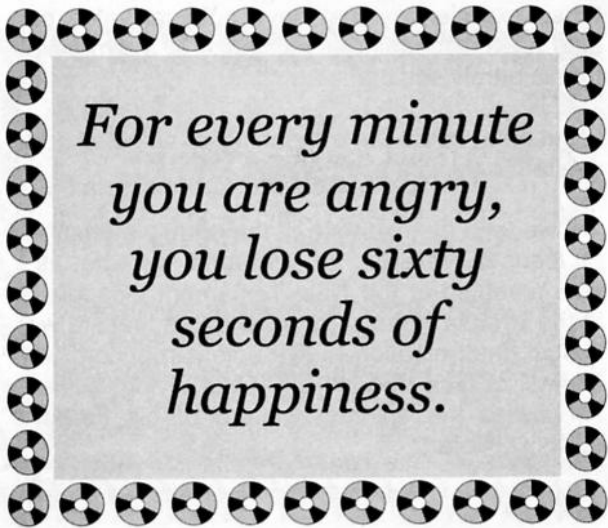
In the not far distant future, western civilization may face a critical period in which traditional Christian religion will have experienced a collapse.

The reason? Traditional Christianity will be unable to escape the consequences of events now occurring in Israel—the recognition that the Old Testament stories about Moses, Egypt and its seven plagues, the escape of the enslaved Israelites, the Red Sea parting, their 40 years of wandering in the Sinai deserts, the conquest of a new homeland across the Jordan, the crashing down of the walls of Jericho, the sun standing still, the fabulous kingdom of David and his heroic deeds, the wealth of Solomon and his temple, all these and much, much more in biblical history were all purely mythical.

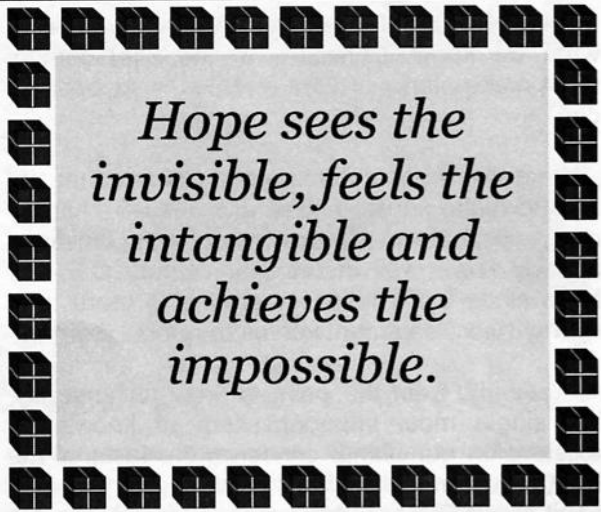
A surprisingly large proportion of the Christian community clings to the belief that although the creation story of Genesis may be mythical or symbolic, the remainder of the Bible is “the word of God,” and is historically accurate.

The shock of having to absorb these quite radical changes, and then to subscribe to a new and different belief system, will surely be too much for many who will simply relapse into total disbelief and perhaps complete despair.

As more and more Israelis themselves accept the evidence of their own archaeological investigations, so the traditional Christian belief system will become less and less tenable.



*For every minute
you are angry,
you lose sixty
seconds of
happiness.*



*Hope sees the
invisible, feels the
intangible and
achieves the
impossible.*

But not only will Christianity be forced to adjust to the new history of Israel, it will need to absorb and adjust to the effect this new history will have on traditional theology, particularly that relevant to Jesus' incarnation.

Jesus himself made no recorded comments or claims about his genealogy. However tradition takes heed of the necessity for him to be of the House of David, even to be born in Bethlehem, the City of David, so as to fulfill biblical prophecy (Micah 5:2, repeated in Matthew 2:5 and John 7:42). The purpose of this was to present Jesus as the Messiah—and the fulfillment of biblical prediction.

Strangely enough, the motivation for the archaeological work that brought about such a critical reversal originally had quite the opposite intention. It was meant to **verify biblical history**.

The victorious 1967 war that consolidated and extended the State of Israel brought with it a need in the minds of many to seek justification for the occupation of the newly conquered territory.

One group put their faith in God's guarantee of a promised land to belong to the Israelites forever. Another sought their justification through scientific verification of the Biblical Exodus story.

And so, after 1967, a large and enthusiastic body of young, well trained, Israeli archaeologists embarked on their task with the purpose of verifying Israel's biblical history.

Prior to this new venture, nearly all the archaeology carried out in the Palestine region (with forays into Egypt), had the purpose of confirming the veracity of both the Bible and Christianity. And much of the work was conducted by people who were first, men of

religion, and only secondly, archaeologists. But few were well-trained professionals. The confirmation of biblical history was the playground for enthusiastic amateurs.

In contrast, the new group of archaeologists were professional, highly trained, technically competent, and prepared to use all the methods available to modern archaeology.

Whereas almost the sole evidence used for the task of biblical history verification had been excavated finds, the new explorers added the methods of social sciences and anthropology. So alongside excavated artifacts, architecture, settlement patterns, animal bones, seeds, soil analysis, and anthropological models from many world cultures provided additional tools that contributed to the emerging story.

How could animal bones have provided archaeological knowledge? The biblical story of Joseph of the coat of many colors being sold into slavery by his brothers tells how, after casting him into a pit, the brothers saw "a company of Ishmaelites from Gilead with their camels bearing spices and balm and myrrh going down to Egypt." So instead of killing Joseph, his brothers sold him into slavery.

This event would have been around 2000 BCE, according to Bible history.

Using evidence mainly garnered from bones, archaeology tells us that camels were not domesticated as beasts of burden until around 1200 BCE. Nor were they used in that capacity in the Palestine region until 1000 BCE. Furthermore, camel caravans carrying "spices and balm and myrrh" did not flourish until after 800 BCE and as a component of the Arabian trade that flourished in the Assyrian empire in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE.

From the new archaeological approaches also

*We make a living
by what we get,
but we make a life
by what we give.*

*Purpose
is what gives
life
a meaning.*

came the data about the life style of populations of the hill country that constituted both the northern kingdom (Israel), centered on Shechem, and the southern kingdom (Judah), centered on Jerusalem. Evidence for the period in which Saul, David, and Solomon became rulers showed that Judah, for example, remained relatively empty of permanent population right up to the time of David and Solomon, with no major urban centers and with no pronounced hierarchy of hamlets, villages, and towns. At best, Jerusalem was really only a tiny village.

Thus the fabulous stories of the grandeur of David's city, Jerusalem, and of Solomon's temple, supposedly in the tenth century BCE, just do not hold up. Judah, in this period, was composed of about 20 small villages and a few thousand inhabitants. So it is highly unlikely that such a sparsely inhabited region and a small village that was Jerusalem could have become the center of a great empire stretching from Gaza in the south, to Syria in the north, and the Euphrates river in the west (1 Kings 5:4).

Besides the absence of any evidence for David's grand conquests, no trace of Solomon's fabulous temple in Jerusalem has ever been identified—not in Jerusalem or in any place outside of Jerusalem.

So, contrary to these new studies providing an authentic historical biblical background as a basis for legitimizing Israel's claim upon newly captured lands, the opposite occurred. The accumulated evidence demonstrated that the biblical stories arose as the result of desperate efforts by a group of authors to provide a glorious history upon which a new nation could be founded.

However, according to the new archaeologists, production of this written record did not occur during the Babylonian captivity of 586—440 BCE

(as proposed by some Christian investigators), but preceded the captivity by fifty years or more. And the conclusions made about the history of Israel were vastly different from that of biblical history:

"The emergence of early Israel was an outcome of the collapse of the Canaanite culture, not its cause. And most of the Israelites did not come from outside Canaan—they emerged from within it.

"There was no mass exodus from Egypt. There was no violent conquest of Canaan. Most of the people who formed early Israel were local people—the same people whom we see in the highlands throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages.

"The early Israelites were—irony of ironies—themselves originally Canaanites."

What can the Urantia Papers and their readers do to soften the blow for Christians who witness the collapse of their belief system? For that matter, how will Urantia Book readers who take a relatively fundamentalist view of the Papers cope? These Papers treat Moses, the Exodus, the time in the wilderness, Moses' death and the takeover by Joshua as reasonably close to the

biblical account. Modern archaeology says it did not happen.

Likewise with David and Solomon. Although downplaying David from the biblical account, the Papers allow that Solomon had enormous power and wealth. Modern archaeology says the kingdom of Judah was at its lowest ebb at this time and estimates its population as about 5000 scattered among 20 tiny villages. Jerusalem as a major city did not exist. And neither did Solomon's fabled temple and palace.

No area on Earth compares with this tiny part of the world for the intensity of study already carried out. And it appears that even Christian archaeologists and biblical experts have achieved consensus with the Israelis, agreeing that they have got it right for the major details.

It is possible that the Urantia Papers were specifically designed to help humanity through the troublesome times that lie ahead. Certainly their presentation of Jesus and his revelation of the nature of God is light years ahead of anything else. But whether the Papers will help others to cope with impending change depends on us, their readers.

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