

Pioneers in the New Age

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6/7/86 Revised 1/25/87

I should like to call your attention to a statement made by the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk (1:5), "Look, there is work being done in your days which will astonish you and which you will not believe when it is told to you." We are again living in a time when amazing things are being accomplished by the spirit of God in our world.

We are living in an age which is experiencing the exhaustion of the spiritual creativity of the renaissance and the reformation. Scientifically and conceptually we have left behind the horse and buggy technology and the geocentric universe view of our forefathers. It is generally recognized by the prophetic voices of our day that we are at the beginning of a new age. We are standing at the edge of tremendous potentials for human growth and human destruction.

The most creative minds of our generation are meeting with perplexity and frustration in attempting to solve the growing complexity and seriousness of our contemporary problems ranging from environmental pollution to human misery and destruction. The significance of the crisis of our age is seen in the fact that the spiritual supervisors of our planet have recognized the need for a new epochal revelation to restructure our planetary and universe views of reality and inspire us to new levels of material and spiritual growth. As a result we have the Fifth Epochal Revelation in the form of *The Urantia Book*.

Importance of Outreach

One of the most important responsibilities and opportunities of our world today is bringing this new vision of reality to the peoples of the world. Each person who discovers *The Urantia Book* and recognizes its significance must decide what his or her role should be in this many faceted outreach mission. The Fifth Epochal Revelation can only exercise its transforming power in our world if we have able, wholehearted dedication in this outreach ministry.

Paul in his letter to the Colossians says (3:23), "Whatsoever you do, put your whole heart into it as a service to the Lord, not just to humankind." On page 1780 of *The Urantia Book* we read, "If you are not a positive and missionary evangel of your religion, you are self-deceived in that what you call a religion is only a traditional belief or a mere system of intellectual philosophy." We are told on page 279-80, "In the universal regime you are not reckoned as having possessed yourself of knowledge and truth until you have demonstrated your ability and willingness to impart this knowledge and truth to others." On page 556 we are admonished, "The weak indulge in

resolutions, but the strong act. Life is but a day's work—do it well. The act is ours; the consequences God's."

Living Spiritual Truth

I should like to challenge you to act on the spiritual leading which you have for service. I would invite you to ascend the seven-step ladder of outreach ministry. *Step one* is the level of living the teachings of *The Urantia Book*. This is basic and elemental. None of the other steps of outreach service will be effective until we have reasonably mastered the principles of inspired spiritual living. Without honesty, integrity, sincerity, trustworthiness, loving attitudes and action directed by experiential spiritual wisdom, no outreach service will be effective. With these qualities of behavior, our lives are an eloquent message, and we have the opportunity to share the great truths of the Fifth Epochal Revelation that have inspired us.

Sharing Spiritual Truth

Most of us then take step *two* and begin sharing these enhanced spiritual realities with our fellows. We usually begin by relating these insights without revealing the source because, for one reason or another, we do not wish to publicly announce that we are readers of a strange new book that we believe is the Fifth Epochal Revelation. This bootleg ministry is constructive and good but lacks forthrightness and power. I would encourage you, when you are ready, to take the critically important *third* step in outreach ministry: summon that level of openness and courage where you become a discriminating herald or salesperson of *The Urantia Book*.

Now you are not only able to present insights which may be appropriate to specific situations but you are sharing a veritable library to truth and wisdom where people can find an entire philosophy of life and a new view of universe reality. As you wholeheartedly pursue the task of introducing people to *The Urantia Book*, you have become a missionary in the traditional sense of the word. When you inspire others to engage in such outreach work, the effect is geometric in nature.

Social Groups and Cultural Influences

All this is good but very soon we become aware of the necessity for the *fourth* step in outreach activity: the cultivation, organization, and direction of study groups. There are now several hundred Urantia study groups in existence. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, we will have thousands of study groups throughout the world. Study groups are basic to the socialization of religion but they are partial and incomplete. These groups spring up, have an up and down history, are limited in the number of people they attract, and sometimes die out. At best the study group is a temporary and limited social-historical phenomenon.

Every serious and dedicated person engaged in outreach ministry in the Urantia movement faces the limitations of individual and study group evangelism and longs for the permanence and broad cultural depth of institutional wholeness and stability. To satisfy this hunger for a deeper relationship with society and realizing the greater potentials of cultural involvement, we take the *fifth* step in outreach ministry: participation in quasi or limited institutional activities such as forming Urantia Societies, placing books in libraries, introducing the study of *The Urantia Book* in educational institutions and professional societies, or getting involved in growing edge movements like environmental improvement, holistic studies, peace demonstrations, and futurist activities.

Authentic Religious Institutions

This progression of outreach experience, along with planetary religious history, leads to the realization that these five basic steps in missionary activity are but preliminary and partial phases leading to the only abiding form of the socialization of religion: the formation or reformation of religious institutions. It is the paradox of religious history that the institutionalization of religion increases the potential for evil and hampers growth but is a necessary requisite for religious enculturation and survival. (p. 1083)

The solution to this paradox, as the authors of *The Urantia Book* point out (p. 1076), is not the eradication of religious institutions but in creating more perfect, spiritually attuned religious organizations. All outreach activity which has survival value, therefore, must culminate in some form of institutionalization. Religion must have an appealing symbolism incorporated in ritual which encourages and enhances individual and group worship, undergirds the values of the family, and furnishes fellowship and spiritual care for all of life from birth to death. The initial five steps of outreach ministry are good and necessary steps to the only social vehicle and methodology which can carry the Fifth Epochal Revelation to the peoples of the world. It must be incorporated in religious institutions. All wholehearted and thorough outreach ministry based on revelatory and historical wisdom must come to grips with this elemental fact.

Leavening Traditional Religions

There are two basic ways in which this can be done. The first takes us to step *six*: the study and incorporation of the teachings of *The Urantia Book* in the religions of the world. Here in Western Civilization this means creating an interface with Christianity. Christianity has tremendous latent potentials. The authors of *The Urantia Book* regard it as "the best of the religions of the twentieth century" (p. 2083) but it "is only the larval stage of the thwarted spiritual kingdom." (p. 1866)

The Christian Church has great reserves of evolutionary historical wisdom and has organizational roots throughout the entire world. No one knows to what spiritual heights it may rise when reformed and transformed by the Fifth Epochal Revelation. It is imperative that we

exercise the courage and wisdom to build an interface with Christianity as well as with all other religions of the world.

A New Religious Movement

The authors of *The Urantia Book* visualize one more step for the outreach mission of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. They point out that every new revelation of truth has given rise to a new religious movement (p. 966) and that the enlarged "restatement of the religion of Jesus must develop a new and appropriate symbolism." This prophetic insight and proclamation brings us to step *seven* in outreach ministry: the formation of a new social expression of religion.

Many suggestions are given for the development of this new religious fellowship predicated on the Fatherhood of God and the brother/sisterhood of humanity. Such a religious institution needs an appealing symbolism and ritual which promotes individual and group worship, embodies a masterful mystery, builds on the values of the home, encourages diversity and growth, and provides fellowship and spiritual care for humankind. It is the basic structure that stimulates and supports personal spiritual experience—true religion.

Missionary work at this seventh level, I believe, has the greatest promise for the future. It has the advantage of learning from the experiential wisdom of all of the religions of the world as well as the spiritual insights and universe view of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. Religious organizations working on this seventh level of outreach ministry will eventually establish spiritual fellowships throughout the world. They will head up a religious movement which will become known as the newest of the world's religions and will be a mighty force in ecumenical relationships, facilitating fellowship and unity of purpose among all the planetary religions.

Call to Courageous Service

I should like to challenge and encourage those of you who feel called to dedicate yourself to the outreach ministry of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. This, I believe, is the most important spiritual objective of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and it may be, in perspective, the most crucially significant project now in process on our planet.

This is a many-faceted and diverse ministry that needs to be carried out on all seven levels of outreach service. Strive to determine where your abilities and calling direct you to work and then serve wholeheartedly and dynamically in the spiritual kingdom of Christ Michael and the Universal Father. This ministry is not and will not be easy. "The religion of the spirit means effort, struggle, conflict, faith, determination, love, loyalty, and progress." (p. 1729) Even as Jesus spoke to his apostles of the first century, he is speaking to his contemporary disciples, "Are you fearful, soft, and ease-seeking Are you afraid to trust your future in the hands of the God of truth whose sons you areWill you go back to the easy path of the certainty and intellectual settledness of the religion of traditional authority, or will you gird yourselves to go forward with

me into that uncertain and troublous future of proclaiming the new truths of the religion of the spirit, the kingdom of heaven in the hearts of man " (p. 1730)

Each of us must find the answer to this question in the quietness of our own soul. And then we must act on this guidance.