

A Course of Action for the Urantia Movement

by Mo Siegel

The time has come for believers in The URANTIA Book to unite into the most dynamically serving team of religionists since Jesus and his early followers set the world alive by sharing the liberating gospel of the Master two thousand years ago. **Today, mankind languishes in a spiritual void which will remain largely unfilled until courageous and aggressive URANTIA Book believers act upon their faith.**

We have been entrusted with the Fifth Epochal Revelation, the most complete soul saving message this world has. The Urantia Revelation is not one more religious activity amidst other equally important activities. The URANTIA Book and its saving message is the # 1 priority to aid in the spiritual advancement of humanity. What we do with the Revelation is relevant, we can make a difference. We are our Father's hands on earth, we are the living tools of the angels needed to progress this world spiritually forward.

Our Paralyzed Central URANTIA Movement

In general, our Urantia movement's central leadership style has slipped into a drifting state often characterized by fear, introvertedness, gossip and stagnation. Over intellectualization and second guessing has replaced Dr. Sadler's daring leadership style that encouraged Urantians to try new ideas while working together in a trusting fellowship of dedicated servers. Fortunately, regional URANTIA Societies, individuals and other non-profit foundations are progressing while our central Brotherhood stumbles along without any formal plan or agreed upon mission. All too often, doing nothing has become safer than doing something because we don't know where we are going.

Jesus never told his believers to go slow or fast. The "go slow" mentality is as wrong as the "go fast" psychology. We need to "go correctly" with a profound sense of commitment to the necessity of our work.

What we need is a positive "can do" attitude. We need to lose ourselves by filling spiritual voids, healing hurts and fostering an environment conducive to inner spiritual growth with outward manifestations of love.

Some level of failure must be accepted as a natural part of progress. Our fear of making mistakes with the Revelation must be replaced with courage and faith. Risk must be assessed wisely while mistakes safeguarded by teamwork. Leaders need to be fostered, developed and encouraged to carefully move the Revelation forward.

The Future

Whether our URANTIA Brotherhood is destined to become a book club or the most dynamic world religious movement since Christianity is yet to be determined. Regardless of which organization, which form of organization (centralized or decentralized) or which individuals do the work, the Revelation has a life of its own. There are between 10,000 and 20,000 URANTIA Book readers out of a world population of 4.5 billion people. It is my belief that there are at least one million people alive today who are totally ready and earnestly looking for the Revelation. The task at hand is to share this Revelation with those people. **Major world progress would be made if the Revelation believers grew from 15,000 to one million readers in the next 50 years.**

To grow from 15,000 to just 50,000 readers is a major task that will take all the hard work, encouragement, teamwork, thinking, planning, courage and commitment that we are able to muster. Ironically, if we concentrate on increasing our numbers (head hunting) our vision will slip away. **By filling spiritual needs we will unconsciously grow as large as our giving permits us.**

A Five/Ten Year Plan

The following plan is being presented as a working document to be improved through group wisdom and evolved by action.

Five major objectives are being identified as the critical priorities that, if worked upon, would result in the immediate tangible advancement of the Revelation. After each stated objective are sub-objectives and strategies to accomplish the major objective. The objectives presented here are worthwhile accomplishments for any organization or individuals who want to serve the Revelation in the most effective way. As in most of life's activities, 80% of the results will come from doing 20% of the tasks. Since the sub-objectives and strategies

are numerous, it would require many years to accomplish the needed work. The wheat hangs heavy, it is now time to harvest.

Objective One: Facilitate, encourage, promote and foster the personal religious experience of the individual with our Heavenly Father.

Our first responsibility is to help one another experience our Heavenly Father in a personal way. This implies an outgoing attitude of sharing the joy and upholding the responsibility of knowing God. Even though knowing God is a personal experience, there are actions that groups can take to facilitate this experience. Some are:

A. Group Worship services are conducive to knowing God. The book is clear that the evolutionary act of group worship must be available to us.

B. Crisis often produces the most dramatic changes in individuals. If we provided spiritual counseling services, people may be steered to God for the solutions to their life's problems. Jesus was always helping others with their problems. His amazing listening ability coupled with his spiritual advice freed so many confused people.

C. We must be forthright with our faith. We should never hide our love and faith in God. Our willingness to share our faith with family, friends and strangers will inspire their own hopes of eternal life.

There are as many ways to reach this objective. Most are personal, quiet and as numerous as there are believers.

Objective Two: Spread The URANTIA Book throughout the world.

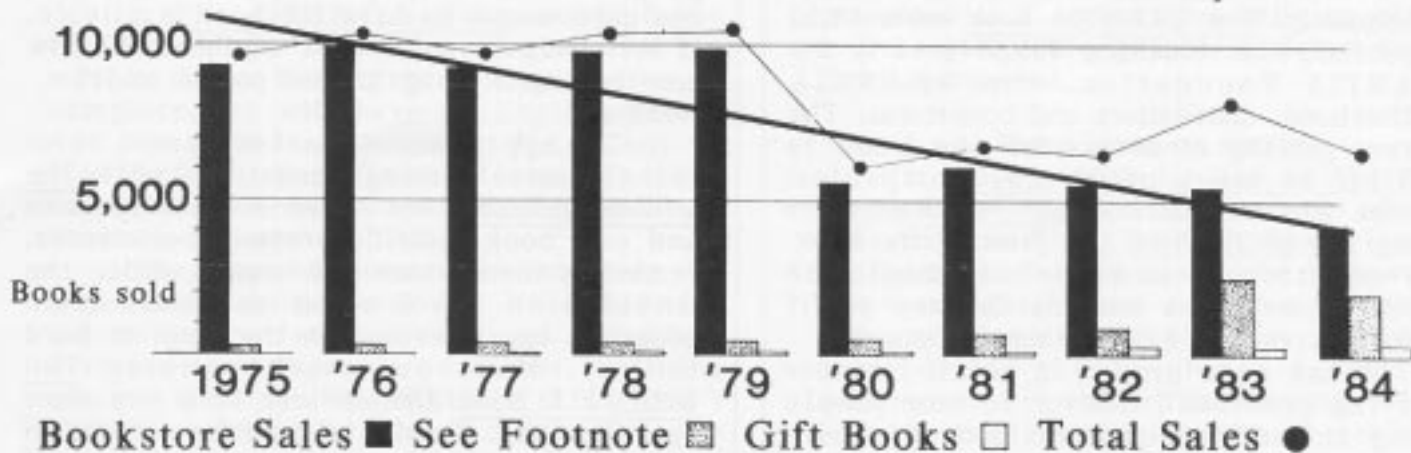
We all know that The URANTIA Book is not the destination, it is a service station. Yet it is the most powerful service station we have. There can be little doubt that in our own personal search for God, the Revelation has aided us dramatically. Most of us wouldn't be where we are today without the Book. We should not be afraid or ashamed of our Gospel, we should not be ambivalent about our belief in The URANTIA Book.

Spreading The URANTIA Book is our duty. There are basic material channels that must be used correctly if we are to succeed in this task. The following graph dramatically portrays the problems we are having sharing The URANTIA Book.

URANTIA Book Sales 1975 - 1984

(English Translation)

\$34.00 Price: 33% Sales Drop



"The price increase came in 1980. The result was a 40% sales drop."

Footnotes: A. 1984 numbers are the current estimates of sales; B. Bar two represents an approximation of sales to individual Urantians or Societies who are either acting as book distributors or giving away books; C. 1983 sales numbers include at least 1000 books bought for safekeeping in case of a world disaster. D. The straight line is a mathematical regression analysis showing the sales trend from the Brotherhood to distributors and stores.

Observations on the facts: A. Our book store sales have dropped dramatically in the 1980's. B. Urantians are taking the problem of book sales into their own hands and becoming book distributors. Approx. 3.8% of book sales in 1976 were through Urantians selling books. Approx. 30% of 1984 sales were through Urantians selling books. This trend is alarming because a central sales function should be much more effective and efficient than a decentralized sales function. Is it healthy to turn believers and Societies into salesmen? C. Giveaway books were .003% of sales in 1976, they represented 4.6% in 1984.

Solutions to the problems:

A. Admit we have a problem and start correcting it.

B. Lower the price of The URANTIA Book from the current bookstore price of \$34.00 to a new price of \$19.95 while making books available to Societies for \$12.95. This action should be implemented immediately. The URANTIA Book costs \$8.50 to publish, the remaining \$25.50 goes to the URANTIA Foundation, the URANTIA Brotherhood, distributors and bookstores. The current pricing structure of the book is similar to most publishing companies' policies. The Brotherhood and Foundation are taking fair profit from the sales of the book. The question is whether we should be covering expenses and making any profit from new readers. I don't think we should.

It has been proven in retail business that the greatest inhibitor to new people trying an unknown product, book or service is the initial purchasing price. The Bible is available for \$4.95, yet The URANTIA Book costs \$34.00. The high price turns away marginally interested readers. It takes committed readers to pay the high price. It

has been debated whether we want marginally interested people buying the Book. I say we do. A somewhat interested reader today could become totally committed two years from now.

We should conduct a nationwide fund raiser to subsidize the cost of the Book. Since the Brotherhood has \$350,000 of net worth and the Foundation has over \$1.2 million in unencumbered net worth, they should meet the movement halfway in paying for the price decrease for the first three years. After that, both organizations would have to cover the costs. I don't think it is financially advisable for the Foundation or Brotherhood to now pay because of obligations to translations, normal expenses and increased outreach opportunities. The approximate cost to reader/believers based on an average of the last five years of sales would be \$31,162 per year for three years (conservative calculations were used—revenue loss would equal \$9.00 per book based on 1980-1984 sales average of 6925 books per year.) If there are 5,000 active readers, that would be an individual contribution of \$6.25 per year. The Foundation and Brotherhood would have an expenses of \$31,162 per year.

C. Increase The URANTIA Book distribution from our approximate current level of 15% distribution in U.S./Canadian hardback bookstores to 80% of the bookstores. This alone could double or triple sales. 58% of all books are sold to people who go into stores not planning to buy the book they actually purchase. This buying pattern is called impulse purchasing and is one good reason to have the book available. If we don't have the book on the shelf, how are the angels going to lead people to it?

D. Apply basic marketing and sales techniques in serving bookstores with The URANTIA Book. We should continually write and call book distributors and bookstores, reminding them where and how to order the Revelation. A common comment from bookstore operators is that the book is hard to buy. We should make buying The URANTIA Book the easiest task any store operator has. Service should be our motto and we should be the best servers the world has.

We should hire a dedicated Urantia salesperson to make distributor and book chain account calls. This individual would be

responsible for store promotions, mailings, service calls and other associated sales needs.

E. Redo the dust jacket of The URANTIA Book so it is appealing. Since impulse purchasing accounts for the majority of book sales, the dustcover is our best communicator once someone sees the book in a store. The current cover is esoteric and needs immediate improvement. Good packaging works.

F. Increase the distribution of The URANTIA Book in all English and French speaking countries outside the United States and Canada. There is opportunity now for worldwide distribution.

G. Continue our program of providing The URANTIA Book to libraries worldwide.

H. Encourage the development of high quality written study aids for understanding The URANTIA Book. Our service to new readers and our presence in bookstores would be greatly improved if more secondary literature about The URANTIA Book and its superlative teachings were available. Secondary documents increase the credibility of the primary literature.

The most valuable study aid we have is the Concordex by Clyde Bedell. This tool is unavailable in most bookstores. The Concordex ought to be on every bookstore shelf that has The URANTIA Book.

I. The URANTIA Book needs to be translated into the major languages of the world. Once the Spanish translation is complete, we will have an English, French and Spanish translations. So as not to Westernize the Revelation, the next languages for translation should be Japanese, Mandarin Chinese or Hindi.

The expenditures of resources on translations should go slowly. We should take the translations we have and get them into distribution. There is no virtue in filling closets with new translations if we don't have bookstore and library distribution with our current translations. New translations cost at least \$350,000 apiece. A good salesperson would cost \$40,000 a year. Hire the salesperson first, build demand and sales, then do the next translation.

Objective Three: Spread the glad tidings of the New Revelation of the Gospel of Jesus worldwide.

The URANTIA Book unequivocally says that the teachings of Jesus will liberate the world. It says that a new vision of Jesus, unencumbered with 1900 years of Christian dogma and tradition, is needed. It teaches that we need the new Revelation of the Gospel of Jesus.

Consider a few excerpts from the book: "He (Jesus) knew what was in the heart of man, and had his teachings been left as he presented them, ... all nations and all religions of the world would speedily have embraced the gospel of the kingdom." (P. 1670) "Of all human knowledge, that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it." (P. 2090) "Modern culture must become spiritually baptized with a new Revelation of Jesus' life and illuminated with a new understanding of his gospel of eternal salvation." (P. 2084) "The great hope of Urantia lies in the possibility of a 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 believers." (P. 2086) "The common people heard Jesus gladly, and they will again respond to the presentation of his sincere human life consecrated religious motivation if such truths shall again be proclaimed to the world." (P. 2090)

How we share the master's teachings is both an organizational and individual effort. Whether it is in the quiet of a home or presented at a comparative religion class in a University, the gospel of Jesus must be lived and shared.

Some ideas on sharing

1. Do our best to live as the Master wants us to live. 2. Prepare simple brochures that explain The URANTIA Book's teachings of Jesus. 3. Prepare pamphlets on how living the teachings of Jesus has changed people's lives. 4. Develop simple slide presentations that portray the teachings to different audiences. Example: The teachings of Jesus and the modern thinker; The teachings of Jesus for the unchurched believer (the majority of religious seekers don't go to church); The URANTIA Book and the Teachings of Jesus; The URANTIA Book and the Christians; Such presentations could be

developed as tools for lay ministers. Why not train 200 people to give such presentations? 5. Go 2 by 2, or 4 by 4 into the churches. Become active members and, if appropriate, slowly and carefully introduce the new Revelation of the Gospel of Jesus to Jesusonian Christians. 6. Set up URANTIA Book clubs at college campuses with the primary focus being on the teachings of Jesus.

I personally long for the day that the new Revelation of the living Gospel of Jesus is shared from the pulpit. Knowing that there is great danger in institutionalized religion, and having read the warning on page 2091, "You may preach a religion about Jesus, but, perforce, you must live the religion of Jesus." I still await the day for The URANTIA Book's "Glad tidings of Jesus" to be shared from the pulpit.

Objectives Four: Provide a favorable climate for the social growth of religious believers in the Revelation.

Many Urantia readers fear the socialization of religion. Many of us came to the Revelation in search of religious truth without vested economic interests, standardization, tradition, ecclesiastical authority, fossilized truth, outdated dogma or constraints to inner growth and outward service.

But we must not ignore the social religious needs of believers. "There is a real purpose in the socialization of religion. It is the purpose of group religious activities to dramatize the loyalties of religion; to magnify the lures of truth, beauty and goodness; to foster the attractions of supreme values; to enhance the service of unselfish fellowship; to glorify the potentials of family life; to promote religious education; to provide wise counsel and spiritual guidance; and to encourage group worship. And all live religions encourage human friendship, conserve morality, promote neighborhood welfare and facilitate the spread of the essential gospel of their respective messages of eternal salvation." (P. 1092) We can provide a favorable environment for growth if we:

A. Form and maintain thousands of study groups worldwide.

B. Provide for the needs of Urantia families through religious education and family training and counseling.

C. Empower and support earnest book readers with channels of service outside the

study groups and society meetings. Take the ministry to the streets. Focus on filling spiritual needs of those outside our Urantia community.

D. Provide for worship and prayer in an inspirational way.

E. Focus activities that mature Urantians in their faith.

Objective Five: Train teachers and leaders to fill the spiritual needs of humanity.

I'm convinced the believers of the Fifth Epochal Revelation will unconsciously become the 12th major world religion. The evolutionary consequence of the Revelation will be the most spiritually rewarding religious movement the world has ever seen.

If we are to fill spiritual needs, then training and education of our teachers and leaders is vital. Instead of fearing leadership, we need to foster leadership. "Religion does need new leaders, spiritual men and women who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings." (P. 2082)

Dr. Sadler experimented with a Urantia school. He talked about giving diplomas for leaders and teachers who completed the necessary training. His ideas sound good today. Some ideas:

A. Establish schools for teachers and leaders. Make the curricula rigorous, and award certificates for various skill development. There could be degrees for study group leadership, ministers, religious educators, family counselors and philosophy teachers.

B. Establish a world center for URANTIA Book readers.

Conclusions

When observing the world conditions, it becomes evident that the Urantia Papers were given ahead of their broad world mission. It is equally evident that **the world is in great need of a new vision of the reality that will only come from The URANTIA Book.**

In order for the Revelation to come to fruition for future generations, we must form into a solid foundation of believers now. The plan outlined advocates growing to 1 million readers out of an estimated world population of 6.5 billion people by the year 2035. That is 1/65th of 1% of the population.

Some well intentioned Urantians are advocating that if we teach and spread The

URANTIA Book or the new revelation of the Gospel of Jesus we will be going too fast. Some even say our purpose is not to save souls or sell books. Those words are spoken by the "chosen few" who have forgotten what they were like before they enjoyed the intellectual comfort of reading about love, faith and the heavenly Father. Humanity yearns for the liberating message of a new revelation and it is our job to prepare the way for The URANTIA Book's world wide acceptance.

Unequipped as we are, the Revelation has been given to us. The time has come to put away our fears and go forward to advance the Revelation with faith, wisdom and unity of purpose. "...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." (P. 556) We must not be afraid, with the Master as our leader and with each other, we can help fulfill the destiny of the Revelation.

If it is not us, then who is meant to serve the Revelation? If it is not now, when will the work be done? If we are not ready, who is? After we get to the mansion worlds we will look back at our earth lives and marvel at the amazing opportunity we were given to serve. Let us make sure we can honestly say we served with our highest level of excellence and commitment while on earth. This great Revelation has been freely given to us. It is our joyous opportunity to pass it on to others. •