

The
Urantia
Movement

A RELIGION ABOUT A BOOK

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Christianity is the religion about Jesus.
(The religion of Jesus has not yet been seriously tried.)

The Urantia movement is a religion about a book.
To illustrate this, I will tell you a story.

It's known as the Legend of the Crystal Wall.

The Legend of the Crystal Wall

AS THE STORY GOES, THERE was once a Land of Misery, and a Land of Bliss. The people in the Land of Misery suffered greatly, and they naturally wanted to live in the Land of Bliss. But there was a towering Crystal Wall that separated the two lands and prevented the people from leaving. The wall was so high that only the birds could soar above it and find freedom and peace in the Land of Bliss.

THE GREAT TEACHER

One day a Great Teacher came to the Land of Misery. It did not seem possible, but he claimed that he had come from the Land of Bliss. He began to instruct the people in the Land of Misery that there was a way to defeat the Crystal Wall and reach the Land of Bliss. He claimed that, with a little help, people could actually learn to soar over the wall and escape the Land of Misery. But most people scoffed at this idea. The experts and authorities were especially scornful.

It came to pass that this teacher placed an open box of materials in the central gathering place of the Land of Misery. He told the people, as they gathered round, that with these commonplace materials, and some courage and faith, any ordinary man or

woman could fly over the wall. Some of the elders and authorities looked over the materials. “Hah!” they scoffed. “There is nothing new here,” said one. “This science is hopelessly outdated,” said another. “He has plagiarized the writings of other teachers,” said a third. And on and on.

But the Great Teacher was a patient and determined young man. The people watched as he began putting together the

materials in the box: pieces of sailcloth, cords, sticks, and various fasteners.

When he was finished, he called out: “Follow me.” Several curious people did follow him as he took his strange apparatus to a nearby towering slope near the highest mountain in the Land of Misery. They watched in astonishment as he ran down the slope, and once more called out:

“Follow me!” Then, they gasped as he leaped off into

the air! But, instead of falling, he began to sail effortlessly in the trackless blue sky. Then his paraglider began to rise higher and higher it great wide circles, the way they had seen the birds sailing.

Unfortunately, evil eyes were also watching the aggressive young man. The men who dominated the Land of Misery had



They gasped as he leaped off into the air!

been observing him carefully. They had a plan to set into motion should the self-assured young man get too far out of line.

THE DEATH OF THE GREAT TEACHER

Suddenly, from some unseen place an arrow flew through the air. The people watched in horror as the arrow pierced the heart of the Great Teacher. He had, by this time, risen very high in the sky, and had actually sailed over the Crystal Wall. But now, his body tumbled from his craft and disappeared to human eyes somewhere in the Land of Bliss.

The craft itself continued to sail for a few minutes, and then began to drop. As luck would have it, it dropped within the Crystal Wall into the Land of Misery. Immediately the miraculous craft was recovered by the authorities. And disputes arose about who owned it. The disputing parties were generally divided into three camps, the scientists, the philosophers, and the sages and religious visionaries. The debate raged on and on. After a few hundred years, the scientists issued a press release:

THE SCIENTISTS

“We have come to the conclusion that this craft is composed of commonplace materials. There is no hard evidence that it has actually flown. Superstition has created the myth about the so-called ‘Great Teacher.’ Likewise, we find no proof that there is some mysterious, lifting force that will carry this craft over the Crystal Wall. Our instruments detect no such force, and we cannot accept the claims of those who

gave testimony that they saw the event.” After releasing this statement, the scientists lost interest in the craft. Soon after this, most of the philosophers decided to give up on the strange craft. One said: “Although the existence of this mysterious force cannot be disproved, neither can it be proven. The domain of such perplexing, nonmaterial concepts is really that of the religionists.”

THE RELIGIONISTS

The religionists, sages and gurus had long held sway over the people in the Land of Misery. They held their ground about the powers of the craft, but their influence had grown weaker and weaker. Meanwhile, the scientists were producing one wonderful invention after another. “Science works!” became the mantra of the new scientists. Even so, the scientists still had no clue about how to break through the Crystal Wall and free the people. By now though, it had been in place so long that people took it for granted.

Left alone with the craft of the Great Teacher, the sages and religionists began to argue among themselves. They took the craft apart, analyzed it, and finally they sealed it in a sacred shrine. More than a thousand years went by, and the priests could no longer remember how the craft was configured.

Various factions sprang up. They speculated a great deal about the “Great Teacher,” about who he was, where he really came from, and what really happened to him. The craft, and the message, “follow me” was all but forgotten. No authority dared to actually attempt to fly the craft. In fact, many religious experts came to a remarkable

conclusion. They decided that it was not necessary to risk a flight over the wall anyway. The Great Teacher had already accomplished that. These experts claimed that all one had to do was to believe that the Great Teacher had died to free the people of the Land of Misery. If an individual declared this belief according to a proper ritual, he or she would be saved. When such a person died, they would wake up on the other side of the Crystal Wall in the Land of Bliss and be with the Great Teacher.

There were hundreds of other ideas about the Great Teacher. A few interesting ideas even developed around the components of the craft he had built. But almost nothing was said or taught about the craft itself, or how it was used. In the meantime, the craft and the “follow me” message of the Great Teacher were all but forgotten. Like a magnificent butterfly, it seemed to be waiting for a time when some future generation of men and women would reassemble it and dare to use it. Two thousand years went by, and nothing much happened. Then, a small group of people made a monumental discovery.

THE STRANGE BLUE BOOK

They found a mysterious Blue Book somewhere in the Land of Misery. No one really knew for certain where it came from. The book itself claimed to have been authored by beings from the Land of Bliss. Moreover, the book declared that it contained the original information about how the craft of the Great Teacher was put together! This revelation pointed out the errors of the

religionists who had lost the message of the Great Teacher: “Follow me.”

The remarkable book told how these well-meaning believers had created a religion ABOUT the Great Teacher, and lost the religion OF the Great Teacher. The people who found this book were overjoyed. At last the revelation of the Great Teacher could be given to the people of the Land of Misery. At last the people could be free of the bondage of superstition, and materialism, and the tyranny of self-proclaimed gurus and special people with secret information!

But, alas, these well-intentioned individuals with this wonderful revelation for humankind had different ideas about who had authority over the Book, who owned it, and how best the new revelation should be presented. They began to break up into still more factions.

NEW FACTIONS DEVELOP

First, there were the *Slow-Growthists* who believed the world was not ready for the book. Then came the *Bookists*, who believed everyone needed a copy of the Blue Book so that *they* could learn about the message of the Great Teacher and *they* follow his teachings. There were the *Buriests*, who wanted to bury the Blue Book so no one could change its great message and future generations could follow the teachings of the Book. Then came the *Channelists*, who claimed to be in contact with celestial government that ruled the earth. They wanted to add new information they claimed they were getting from on high that would complete the revelation. There were also the *Bashists*, who claimed that a human

had obviously edited the Blue Book and made changes, so we had to pick and choose what parts of it we could believe. Another group was the *Nitpickists*, who spent untold hours finding what they perceived were factual errors in the Blue Book. There were a large body of *Insularists*, who were in an endless conversation among themselves in associations called study groups. And, of course the *Antiplagiariests* who claimed the Blue Book was simply a compilation of material stolen from other sources. Finally, there were the *Anything-Gozers* who embraced anyone and everyone who happened to carry a Blue Book around.

In fact, all manner of self-proclaimed special people sprang up, and *soon a religion about the Blue Book was established*. Unfortunately, few people in the Land of Misery were interested in this strange religion about this strange book and all the strange BlueBookists who were constantly fighting with each other.

THE RELIGION OF JESUS

Now, I don't want to imply that I have all the answers, nor that any of these factions are wrong in what they believe. I have no idea whether what they believe is true or not. It doesn't really matter what we believe. Did I just write that? Yes.

It really doesn't matter what we believe.

For a long time nearly everyone believed the world was flat. That didn't change anything. What matters is how we live. Because the religion of Jesus, according to the Urantia Papers, is not something to be believed. It is not something to be discussed

and read about, or amended by celestial decree. The religion of Jesus is something that can only be lived. Think of Mother Teresa. I believe she had a lot of her theology all wrong, I believe mine is better. But Mother Teresa lived the Religion of Jesus far better than I could ever dream of doing. I have always loved her wonderful decree, "We cannot do great things, we can only do ordinary things with great love." It is said that once a business man told her, "You couldn't pay me enough to do what you do for the poor." To which Mother Teresa answered: "Me either."

This distinction between what we say we believe and the way we live is very important. Because, if the religion of Jesus is something to be believed, or read, or talked about, it would not be so difficult. However, if the religion of Jesus is something to be lived, it becomes a very different proposition. If we are to actually pick up our individual crosses and follow the Master, then we are confronted with a very different question. But how is it that so many Urantians have come to create comfortable religions about this amazing Book? And, how is it possible to create a religion about a Book when the Book itself declares that the religion of Jesus is the religion of personal experience and it cannot be taught, it must be lived? A book that urges us to follow Jesus, not to just read and talk about him. "This world has never seriously or sincerely or honestly tried out these dynamic ideas and divine ideals of Jesus' doctrine of the kingdom of heaven." [1863] [170 4.5]

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