

# STUDY GROUPS

## Concept & Implementation

### The Urantia Book Study Group Symposium

*June 11 – 15, 2014*

Georges Michelson Dupont

(1162.1) 106:0.1 IT IS not enough that the ascending mortal should know something of the relations of Deity to the genesis and manifestations of cosmic reality; he should also comprehend something of the relationships existing between himself and the numerous levels of existential and experiential realities, of potential and actual realities. Man's terrestrial orientation, his cosmic insight, and his spiritual directionization are all enhanced by a better comprehension of universe realities and their techniques of interassociation, integration, and unification.

# The purpose of this presentation

The purpose of this presentation is to share with the audience several years of experience with conducting study groups and seminars based on the revelators pedagogy. I shall therefore:

- Analyze the purpose and key points of the revelators' mandate and pedagogy
- Suggest an efficient and attractive method of interaction between teacher and participants to go beyond the words of The Urantia Book
- Give some practical examples and recommendations to make study groups interactive and attractive.

Much from the revelators expertise can be learned and applied in study groups and seminars. It is understood that study group participants have read the book at least once.

# The Revelators' mandate

“Expanding cosmic consciousness & enhance spiritual perception”

A Melchizedeck of Nebadon presents this mechanism as a two-step process:

## A revelational-evolution process

“Revelation teaches mortal man that, to start such a magnificent and intriguing adventure through space by means of the progression of time, he should begin by the organization of knowledge into idea-decisions; next, mandate wisdom to labor unremittingly at its noble task of transforming self-possessed ideas into increasingly practical but nonetheless supernal ideals, even those concepts which are so reasonable as ideas and so logical as ideals that the Adjuster dares so to combine and spiritize them as to render them available for such association in the finite mind as will constitute them the actual human complement thus made ready for the action of the Truth Spirit of the Sons, the time-space manifestations of Paradise truth — universal truth.” (101:6,7)

# “Expanding cosmic consciousness

The first step, what we may call “*Quality of mind Education*” in contrast with the second step which is personal and subject only to human free-will. A Brilliant Evening Star writes:

*(537.5) 47:7.5* A real birth of cosmic consciousness takes place on mansonia number five. **You are becoming universe minded. This is indeed a time of expanding horizons. It is beginning to dawn upon the enlarging minds of the ascending mortals that some stupendous and magnificent, some supernal and divine, destiny awaits all who complete the progressive Paradise ascension, which has been so laboriously but so joyfully and auspiciously begun. At about this point the average mortal ascender begins to manifest bona fide experiential enthusiasm for the Havona ascent. Study is becoming voluntary, unselfish service natural, and worship spontaneous. A real morontia character is budding; a real morontia creature is evolving.**

Frankly, this is precisely the mandate of the revelators, expanding cosmic horizons, enlarging mind frames, presenting divine and eternal destiny, serving unselfishly, studying voluntarily . . . but this is not taking place on mansonia N<sup>o</sup>5, rather here on Urantia and we might stop and ponder why? At the end of the present dispensation are we going directly on Mansonia N<sup>o</sup>5 after being repersonalized?

# Enhance spiritual perception

*A spiritual alchemy which ultimately leads to spiritual enhancement:*

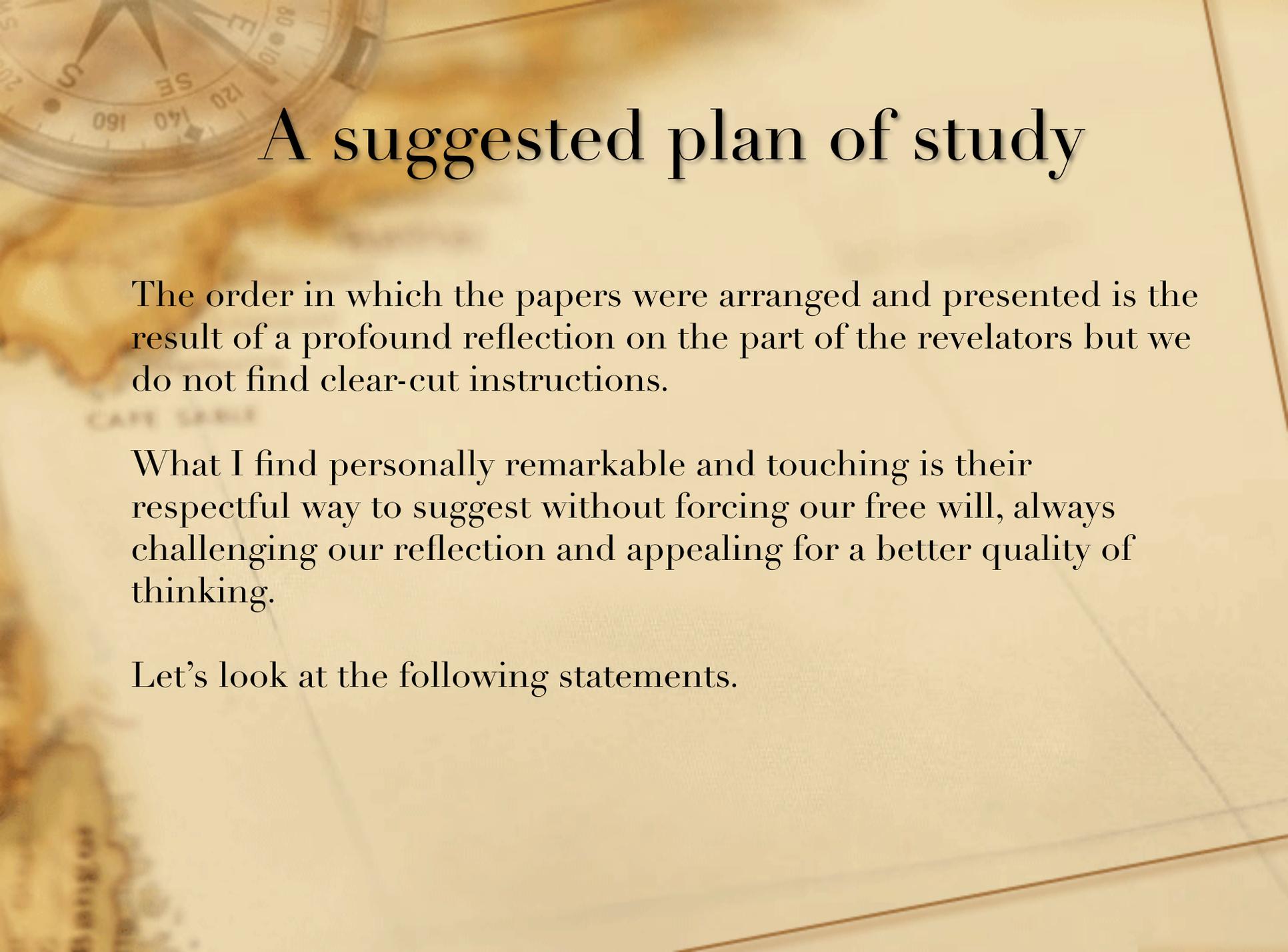
Those ideas and ideals are combined and spiritualized by the Thought Adjuster as to render them available for the action, in the mind of the transforming effect of the Spirit of Truth: the universal truth.

(1705.4) 152:6.4 Jesus . . . designated the mind thus aroused and quickened as the gateway to the soul, where there resides that spiritual nature of man which must recognize truth and respond to the spiritual appeal of the gospel in order to afford the permanent results of true character transformations.

The Divine counselor acknowledges the following:

“that there dwells within the human mind a fragment of God, and that there sojourns with the human soul the Spirit of Truth; and we further know that these spirit forces conspire to enable material man to grasp the reality of spiritual values and to comprehend the philosophy of universe meanings. But even more certainly we know that these spirits of the Divine Presence are able to assist man in the spiritual appropriation of all truth contributory to the enhancement of the ever-progressing reality of personal religious experience — God-consciousness.”

This is the domain of the religious personal experience.

The background of the slide features a vintage-style map with a compass rose in the upper left corner. The compass rose shows cardinal and ordinal directions (N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW) and degree markings. The map itself is partially visible, showing some geographical outlines and text like 'CAPE' and 'MOUNTAIN'.

# A suggested plan of study

The order in which the papers were arranged and presented is the result of a profound reflection on the part of the revelators but we do not find clear-cut instructions.

What I find personally remarkable and touching is their respectful way to suggest without forcing our free will, always challenging our reflection and appealing for a better quality of thinking.

Let's look at the following statements.

# Starting with the Foreword

In the Foreword, the Divine Counselor makes the basic observations:

“ . . . there exists great confusion respecting the meaning of such terms as God, divinity, and deity”. Human beings are still more confused and uncertain about the relationships of the divine personalities designated by these numerous appellations. (0:0.1)

Indeed, the most sticking point and frequent source of abandonment of reading *The Urantia Book* is the language and the ideational confusion of readers.

Therefore, starting with *a careful study of the Foreword with the effective support of an experienced teacher will greatly speed-up clarification and expand comprehension of subsequent papers.*

In the Foreword, the Divine Counselor engages in :

- *clarification* of the Papers terminology.
- *Expansion* of the meaning of existing English words.
- *Introduction of new terms* when the English terminology doesn't provide for.
- *Development* of concepts and clarification of relationships.

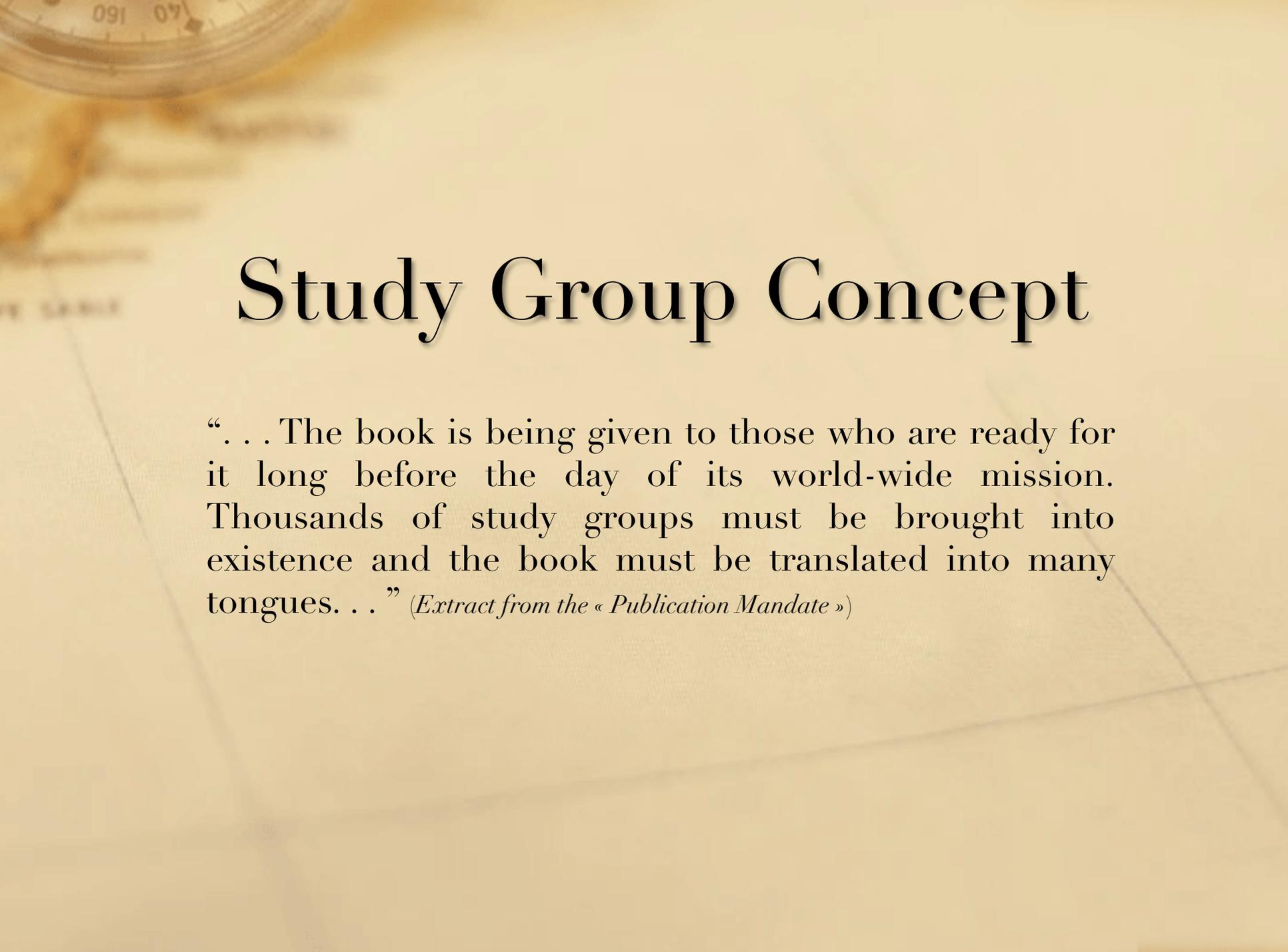
# Continuing with the subsequent papers

We like to listen to a symphony from the beginning and not from the middle and *The Urantia Book* is a symphony. A Divine Counselor writes:

(215.2) 19:1.5 For example: The human mind would ordinarily crave to approach the cosmic philosophy portrayed in these revelations by proceeding from the simple and the finite to the complex and the infinite, from human origins to divine destinies. But that path does not lead to *spiritual wisdom*.

(215.9) 19:1.12 Therefore, because of these and for still other reasons, do we employ the technique of approaching man and his planetary problems by embarkation on the time-space journey from the infinite, eternal, and divine Paradise Source and Center of all personality reality and all cosmic existence.

Indeed from origin to history and destiny. This is how the authors sorted, organized and presented the revelation from Paper 1 to paper 32 (*God and the central and superuniverses*), then from paper 33 to 56 (*the local universe*), and finally from paper 57 to 118 (*the history of Urantia*) with the last 4 papers (115 to 118) introducing the future and our destiny.

The background of the slide features a faint, sepia-toned image of a globe with a compass rose overlaid on it. The globe shows latitude and longitude lines, and the compass rose has some numbers like '091' and '07' visible. The overall aesthetic is that of an old, historical document or map.

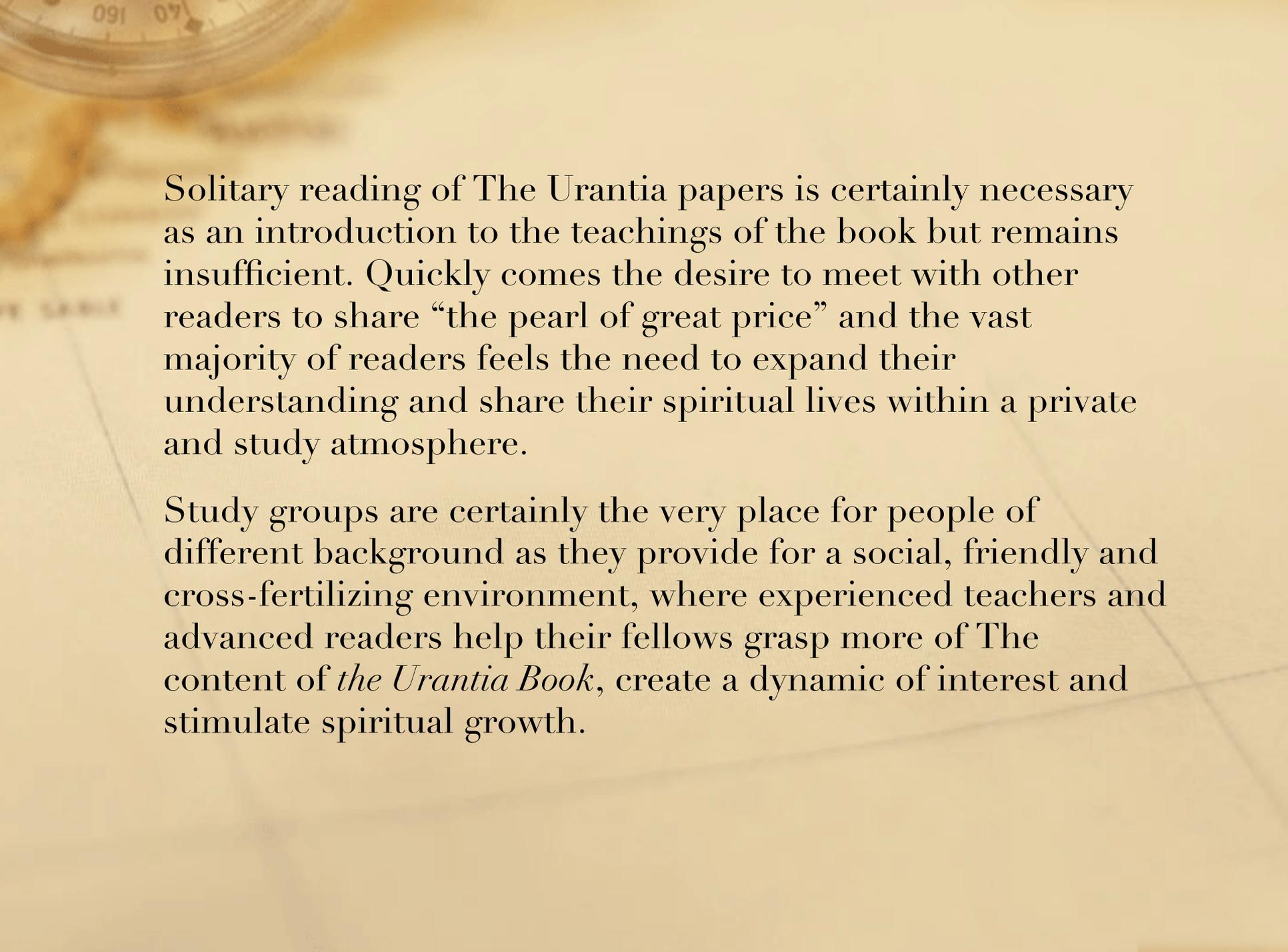
# Study Group Concept

“ . . . The book is being given to those who are ready for it long before the day of its world-wide mission. Thousands of study groups must be brought into existence and the book must be translated into many tongues. . . ” *(Extract from the « Publication Mandate »)*

# Why Study groups?

Religion is a personal experience but the natural outcomes are social and expressed in communities. Urantia Book Study groups are essential for at least the following reasons:

- Study group is the place where religionists can share, in all discretion and privately their faith with others and built the social brotherhood of believers.
- Study group offers a friendly and secure environment to welcome new readers and study the content with other participants.
- Study groups are essential for the dissemination of the revelation worldwide providing they are attractive.
- Study groups offer a positive alternative to the churchification of communities which would be a disaster for the worldwide long term spreading of the teachings of the revelation.

The background of the slide features a warm, golden-brown color palette. In the upper left corner, there is a close-up, slightly out-of-focus image of a compass rose, showing numbers like '091' and '07'. Below the compass, the pages of an open book are visible, with some text and a diagram or map-like structure faintly discernible. The overall aesthetic is that of a study or a journey, fitting the theme of the text.

Solitary reading of The Urantia papers is certainly necessary as an introduction to the teachings of the book but remains insufficient. Quickly comes the desire to meet with other readers to share “the pearl of great price” and the vast majority of readers feels the need to expand their understanding and share their spiritual lives within a private and study atmosphere.

Study groups are certainly the very place for people of different background as they provide for a social, friendly and cross-fertilizing environment, where experienced teachers and advanced readers help their fellows grasp more of The content of *the Urantia Book*, create a dynamic of interest and stimulate spiritual growth.

# Study group leaders and teachers

Teachers and leaders are long-time experienced individuals with the teachings and doctrines of *The Urantia Book*, desirous to serve the readership by virtue of their loving attractiveness and wisdom, not by self-appointed authority. The role of teacher and leader is not special, it is a natural outcome of finding God in their personal experience:

(102.0) 102:3.4 Religious desire is the hunger quest for divine reality. Religious experience is the realization of the consciousness of having found God. And when a human being does find God, there is experienced within the soul of that being such an indescribable restlessness of triumph in discovery that he is impelled to seek loving service-contact with his less illuminated fellows, not to disclose that he has found God, but rather to allow the overflow of the welling-up of eternal goodness within his own soul to refresh and ennoble his fellows. Real religion leads to increased social service.

# Study groups for whom?

It is a common error to believe that *The Urantia Book* is accessible only to highly educated people. When the teachings are gently and progressively approached, with an adapted plan of study, a method of mind expansion with the support of an experienced teacher, it requires only brotherly dedication and loving good will. But it is also true that it requires courage, patience, open-mind and effort to undertake such a transforming adventure and we should accept that not everybody is ready for it. However, it should be the goal and ambition of every study groups to offer that opportunity to all.

One should remember that only God reveals himself to his children of times as they *wholeheartedly* desire to know him regardless of their intellectual education. It is a relationship of love between two personalities and not an intellectual accomplishment even if a normal mind, enlightened with truth, is an obligatory path.

# The study group pedagogy

It is essential to the progress of study group participants to have in place a methodic approach of the content which the teacher can use to conduct the study, stimulate reflection, expand mind frame and inspire higher ideals. This is the difference between a reader group and a study group.

The study groups pedagogy is grounded on the following strategy: that constitutes a “guidelines”.

- 1. questioning,**
- 2. sharing,**
- 3. From concepts to experience**
- 4. cross-referencing**

What does that means and what are the benefits ?

# Questioning

- *Questioning* transforms a passive reader into an active seeker. “Seek and you will find, ask and you will receive” is a universal law. The Thought Adjuster and the Spirit of Truth have the opportunity to participate.
- *Questioning* is non-invasive, non-coercive, non-destructive and non-interpretive. It is respectful of participant’s free will and does not force nor control the mind.
- *Questioning* opens new fields of exploration and expands mind’s consciousness to new perspective.
- *Questioning* stimulates a friendly dynamic among attendees and encourages sharing and brotherhood.

(Further explanation about the nature of questions later on.)

# Sharing

(1094.2) 100:0.2 Spiritual growth is mutually stimulated by intimate association with other religionists. Love supplies the soil for religious growth

- *Sharing* answers and exchanging ideas provides for mutual opportunities to listen to other's point of views, promotes a better appreciation of each other and inspires good will and loving relationship.
- *Sharing* spiritual matters and experiences with others combined with the support of the Thought Adjuster and the Spirit of Truth fosters a vibrant, powerful, stimulating and dynamic process of ideals and soul growth.
- *Sharing* supports and enhances the interest and attention of the attendees for hours. In addition, the spiritual presence of our unseen friends, Thoughts Adjusters and Spirit of Truth contributes to make the spiritual transformation an experiential reality and participants are not tired at the end o the day.

# From concepts to experience

Expansion of concepts is an intellectual process, the first part of the revelators' mandate. The second part is the enhancement of spiritual perception.

During the discussions, the teacher will make all efforts to connect the intellectual concepts with the real life of the participants by bringing the teachings to the experiential level.

For example the concept of “mind spiritualization” is somewhat vague in the mind of participants.

*First*, the teacher will bring the theory on the practical level : mind's spiritualization is the choice between egoism and altruism. It is a daily experience in the lives of participants.

*Second*, the teacher will expand the concept/experience from the individual to the universe level by discussing the consequences of human choices for God the Father and the Thought Adjuster, for Michael of Nebadon and God the Supreme sovereignties.

# Cross-referencing

To enlighten or illustrate the content of a paragraph it might be necessary to cross-reference with other paragraphs. The teacher asks a participant to read them thus leading to clarification and further discussions.

For instance the following paragraph explains very clearly the survival technique which is so important for human beings but the complexity of the terminology makes the paragraph somewhat difficult to understand for many participants.

(26.1) 1:3.7 In the inner experience of man, mind is joined to matter. Such material-linked minds cannot survive mortal death. The technique of survival is embraced in **those adjustments of the human will and those transformations in the mortal mind** whereby such a God-conscious intellect gradually becomes spirit taught and eventually spirit led. This evolution of the human mind from matter association to spirit union **results in the transmutation of the potentially spirit phases of the mortal mind into the morontia realities of the immortal soul.** Mortal mind subservient to matter is destined to become increasingly material and consequently to suffer eventual personality extinction; mind yielded to spirit is destined to become increasingly spiritual and ultimately to achieve oneness with the surviving and guiding divine spirit and in this way to attain survival and eternity of personality existence.

The teacher has selected in advance the key elements and the cross-referenced paragraphs. Having read the given paragraph, the teacher asks a participant to read the cross-referenced paragraphs and the ensuing discussion might be:

**“adjustments of the human will”** refers to the innate capacity of choice of the personality’s free-will between the relative right and wrong described in 16:6.4 and the diverse situations in which the relative freewill is involved in 16:8.8.

**“transformations in the mortal mind”** refers to the acceptance of the mortal mind to become sensible, to cooperate with the leading of the Spirit, enlightened by truth and “spiritualized” through repetitive choice of right versus wrong, the altruistic urge versus the egoistic inclination as described in 110:3. & 111:1.

**“the transmutation of the potentially spirit phases of the mortal mind into the morontia realities of the immortal soul.”** refers to the transfer mechanism of the spiritual content of human thoughts and actions generated in the human mind toward the morontia soul by a spiritual counterpart created by the Thought Adjuster leading to soul growth as it is so exquisitely explained in 108:6.5.

# Questions about what?

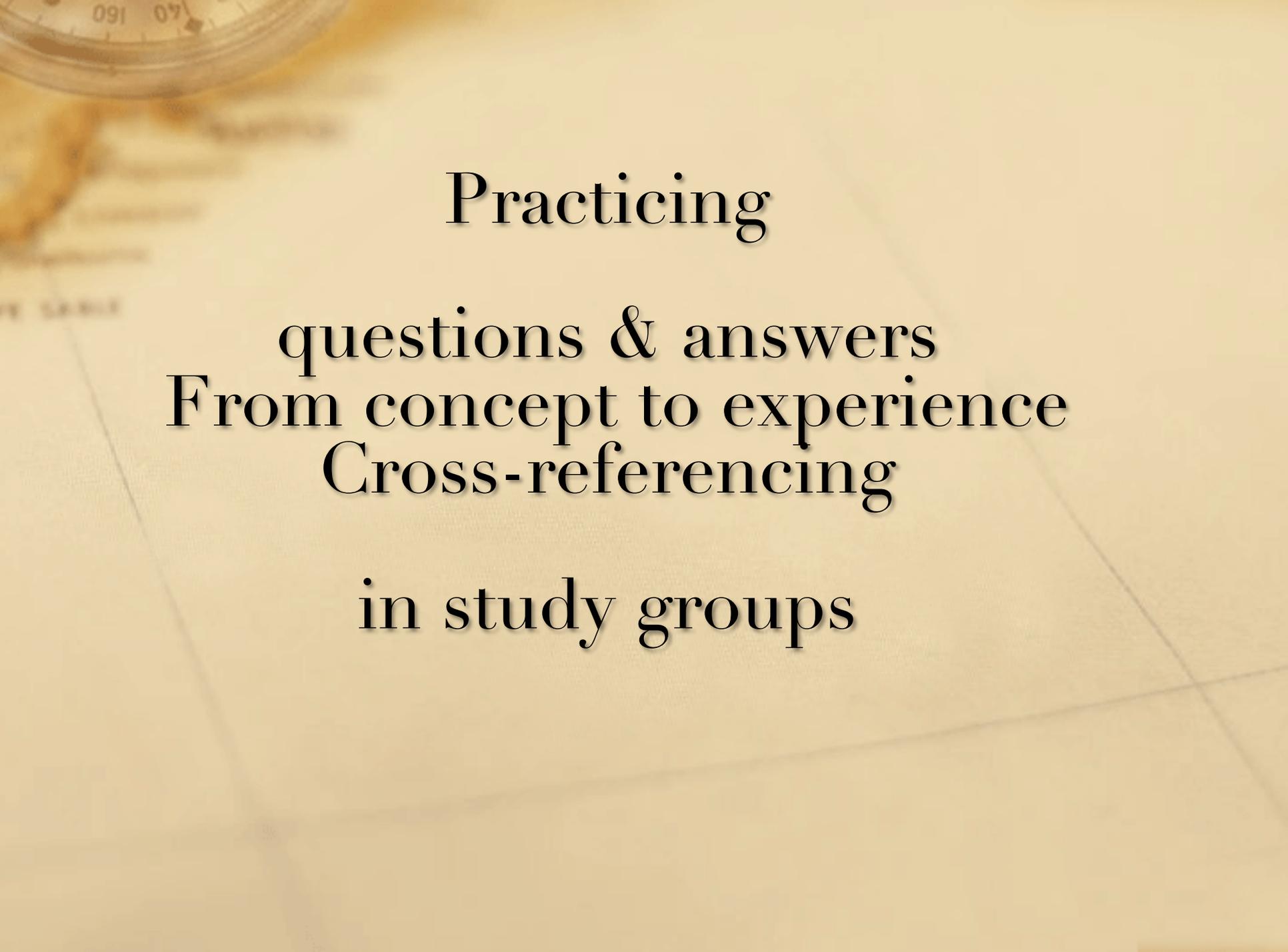
One more time, in full discretion, the revelators bring to our attention the following in the words of a Melchizedeck of Nebadon:

(1109.2) 101:4.1 “Because your world is generally ignorant of origins, even of physical origins, it has appeared to be wise from time to time to provide instruction in cosmology. . .”

(1109.6) 101:4.5 “While statements with reference to cosmology are never inspired, such revelations are of immense value in that they at least transiently clarify knowledge by:

1. The reduction of confusion by the authoritative elimination of error.
2. The co-ordination of known or about-to-be-known facts and observations.
3. The restoration of important bits of lost knowledge concerning epochal transactions in the distant past.
4. The supplying of information which will fill in vital missing gaps in otherwise earned knowledge.
5. Presenting cosmic data in such a manner as to illuminate the spiritual teachings contained in the accompanying revelation”

Again, expanding cosmic consciousness is the first part of the revelator’s mandate. Those 5 statements are the basic elements used by the revelators and constitutes, for us, a taxonomy, a grid of questions, a framework for discussion to use during study group.

The background of the slide features a faded, sepia-toned image of a map with a compass rose in the upper left corner. The map shows some geographical outlines and text, though it is out of focus. The compass rose has numbers like '091' and '07' visible.

Practicing

questions & answers  
From concept to experience  
Cross-referencing

in study groups

Long before the date of the study group session the teacher has some homework to do:

1. He prepares several thought-provoking and stimulating questions based on the grid of 5 basic clarification and expansion of knowledge,
2. He prepares a list of words to be explained during the session (if necessary).
3. He selects cross-referenced paragraphs related to the material to study,
4. He makes a list of intellectual concepts to be discussed on the experience level.
5. He recommend the participants to read the text in advance and prepare questions if necessary. It is a good idea to bring a common dictionary.

- The study group starts with 2 or 3 minutes of meditative silent. Optionally, one of the attendee may address few words of gratitude and appreciation in behalf of the group to the Spirits and to our unseen friends.
- Then, a moderator is designated. The role of the moderator is to give the floor in an orderly manner to the individuals during the discussion and sharing. He insures that each attendees has the opportunity to speak.
- The teacher invites a participant to read the first paragraph, pause and comment about what he/she just read. Next, the teacher (or the moderator) invites other participants to add their comments and ideas. It is essential that all attendees participate to the discussions.
- According to the subject the teacher make sure that all participants have a clear understanding of the terminology. Again, it is not a shame to clarify the meaning of words.
- The teacher stimulates the conversation with the questions he prepared in advance and the cross-referenced paragraphs.

# Some examples

*The reduction of confusion by the authoritative elimination of error.*

(21.1) 1:0.1 . . . By the Sons of God were the universes made. . .

The Bible quote shows no “s” after Son: Here, Sons is in plural mode thus rectifying the concept of Jesus being the only Son of God.

(22.5) 1:1.2 The Universal Father never imposes any form of arbitrary recognition, formal worship, or slavish service upon the intelligent will creatures of the universes.

The Divine Counselor corrects the evolutionary and false religious believes that God requires sacrifices, slavish services or formal worship.

(4.0) 4:5.4 The barbarous idea of appeasing an angry God, of propitiating an offended Lord, of winning the favor of Deity through sacrifices and penance and even by the shedding of blood, represents a religion wholly puerile and primitive, a philosophy unworthy of an enlightened age of science and truth.

A direct denunciation of many religious believes, specifically the Christian doctrine of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for the remission of our sins.

*The co-ordination of known or about-to-be-known facts and observations.*

21.2) 1:0.2 The myriads of planetary systems were all made to be eventually inhabited by many different types of intelligent creatures, beings who could know God, receive the divine affection, and love him in return.

Our modern astronomy is now discovering thousands of planets with possible life conditions. At the same time the Divine Counselor reveals the purpose of the universe, offering to human beings the hope of an eternal career.

(80.0) 80:2.1 The early expansion of the violet race into Europe was cut short by certain rather sudden climatic and geologic changes. With the retreat of the northern ice fields the water-laden winds from the west shifted to the north, gradually turning the great open pasture regions of Sahara into a barren desert. . .

The modern explanation called the “Pump theory” about the Sahara becoming a “barren desert” concur with the revelator’s statement.

(34.0) 34:4.13 The four points of the compass are universal and inherent in the life of Nebadon. All living creatures possess bodily units which are sensitive and responsive to these directional currents. . . These bodies were first observed on Urantia about the time of this narration.

Scientists discovered some ferromagnetic particles in the neck of pigeons and fishes thus confirming that animals use the earth magnetic fields to find their ways during migrations.

*The restoration of important bits of lost knowledge concerning epochal transactions in the distant past.*

(101:4.2) . . . the historic facts and religious truths of this series of revelatory presentations will stand on the records of the ages to come, . . .

History is like a linear chain of events. When links are missing, truth is incomplete and the direction is lost. Restoration of important bits of knowledge is crucial to understand that the process of evolution is intentional and premeditated and contributes with efficiency to the appreciation of our Creator's loving care and universal wisdom.

For instances:

- The Planetary Prince episode and the Dalamatia culture.
- The six Sangik races, their history, struggle and amalgamation.
- The Adam & Eve real purpose on earth and the dissemination of the violet race.
- The Melchizedeck incarnation and the spreading of the missionaries,
- The theory of evolution and its purpose.

*Presenting cosmic data in such a manner as to illuminate the spiritual teachings contained in the accompanying revelation”*

(21.2) 1:0.2 The myriads of planetary systems were all made to be eventually inhabited by many different types of intelligent creatures, beings who could know God, receive the divine affection, and love him in return. The universe of universe is the work of God and the dwelling place of his diverse creatures.

This two-way loving relationship between the Creator and his manifold creatures is presented in a cosmic surrounding which is spiritually inspiring and comforting for readers.

1.3) 1:0.3 The enlightened worlds all recognize and worship the Universal Father, the eternal maker and infinite upholder of all creation. The will creatures of universe upon universe have embarked upon the long, long Paradise journey, the fascinating struggle of the eternal adventure of attaining God the Father. . . From the Universal Father who inhabits eternity there has gone forth the supreme mandate, “Be you perfect, even as I am perfect.” In love and mercy the messengers of Paradise have carried this divine exhortation down through the ages and out through the universes, even to such lowly animal-origin creatures as the human races of Urantia. »

This paragraph puts in a cosmic perspective God’s universal injunction as the spiritual career of all creatures and beings.

# Conclusion

(1008.2) 92:4.9 *The Urantia Papers*. The papers, of which this is one, constitute the most recent presentation of truth to the mortals of Urantia.

(591.3) 52:2.3 Each dispensation, each mortal epoch, receives an enlarged presentation of spiritual truth and religious ethics. The evolution of the religious capacity of receptivity in the inhabitants of a world largely determines their rate of spiritual advancement and the extent of religious revelation.

In order to fulfill their mandate, the authors declare having collected, sorted, adapted, and coordinated more than a thousand human concepts as a base of the papers preparing for the presentation of new concepts and truths thus making the teachings accessible to everyone who would *wholeheartedly* study *The Urantia Book*.

The revelatory commission delivered the best possible revelation in conformity with its obligations and restrictions, *long in advance*, with the hope that individuals would be attracted, transformed and finally become the living disseminators of the teachings worldwide.

I hope I have not been too monotonous and boring, I am conscious of not being a good speaker. Nevertheless, my purpose was to attract your attention about some techniques as a results of my experience in leading study groups and seminars.

We, who's cosmic consciousness has been expanded and spiritual perception enhanced thanks to the study of this epochal revelation, are actively involved in our communities of readers. We have received freely and generously. It becomes our responsibility to foster and promote a worldwide proliferation of efficient and attractive study groups wherever and whenever we can.

Again, study groups are a privileged place for education and dissemination of the teachings of the revelation, the melting pot in which the expansion of cosmic consciousness and enhancement of spiritual perception may develop harmoniously and socially.

Finally, study groups are also the crucibles for the construction of our communities of believers from which the gospel of Jesus will spread out into the world: The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men.