

URANTIA BOOK

IN-DEPTH STUDY GROUPS



Strategy & Practice

Georges Michelson Dupont

Georges.michelson-dupont@wanadoo.fr

Introduction.

The purpose of this presentation is to share with you several years of experience with conducting IN-DEPTH study groups and seminars and making them attractive based on the revelators' pedagogy.

1. I shall therefore remind the mandate given to the revelators by the universe authorities
2. Analyze the purpose and key point of their pedagogy
3. Suggest an efficient and attractive method of in-depth study in order to develop creative interactions between teacher and participants and go beyond the words to expand our mind frame and make the concepts descend to the experience level.
4. Give some recommendations and illustrate the method with a few examples 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.

Why should we study The Urantia Book?

When you open The Urantia Book to study the revelation you have a “rendez-vous” with God and the spiritual forces that conspire to help you “grasp the reality of spiritual values and to comprehend the philosophy of universe meanings”. This is not a flowery rhetoric, this is an experiential reality : can you really realize its importance ?

A Melchizedek of Nebadon exhorts us to engage in the study of *The Urantia Book* in those words:

“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.” (106:0.1)

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

The Revelators' mandate

The revelators' mandate is clearly expressed in the second paragraph of the Foreword:

**“Expand cosmic consciousness and
enhance spiritual perception”**

This sentence introduces two concepts: “Expand cosmic consciousness” and “Enhance spiritual perception”. We shall examine them later on but a Melchizedek of Nebadon presents this mechanism as a technique of:

Revelation-evolution

Behind this concept lies an experiential reality: The cooperation with our Thought Adjuster; the human mind seeking to do wholeheartedly the will of God and the Thought Adjuster revealing the will of God thus creating a dynamic for mind expansion.

This same Melchizedek writes:

“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)

The first part of the mandate takes place in the intellectual sphere of the human mind, what we may call the “*Quality of mind Education*” in contrast with the second part which is personal, experiential and subject only to human free-will.

“Expand cosmic consciousness”

Consciousness

Let's clarify first what consciousness means?

We find a definition of Self-consciousness as follows:

“Self-consciousness consists in intellectual awareness of personality actuality; it includes the ability to recognize the reality of other personalities. **It indicates capacity for individualized experience in and with cosmic realities**, equivalent to the attainment of identity status in the personality relationship of the universe. Self-consciousness connotes recognition of the actuality of mind ministrations and the realization of relative independence of creative and determinative free will” (16 :8.6)

Expanding our cosmic consciousness increases our capacity to experience the reality of the universe and our relationship with the divine personalities as it is stated in the first paragraph of the Foreword. Consciousness is the arena of choice, the picture of our personal reality created in the mind and more consciousness is enlightened by truth and more the choice is meaningful.

cosmic consciousness

A Brilliant Evening Star states:

“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.” (47 :7.5)

Frankly, the kind of education which is provided to the ascending mortals on mansonia number 5 is precisely what *The Urantia Book* is about. Expanding cosmic horizons, enlarging mind frames, presenting divine and eternal destiny, serving unselfishly, studying voluntarily . . . but this is not taking place on Mansonia N°5, rather here on Urantia and we might stop and ponder why?

Can we speculate that at the end of the present dispensation the spiritual level of Urantia will be elevated to the Mansonia N°5 status?

What an adventure!

Enhance spiritual perception

The second step of the process; more mysterious, being a cooperative spiritual alchemy with the spiritual forces within and around us. This is a personal experience under the loving leadership of the Spirit.

“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”. (101 :6,7)

and

(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. (152 : 6.4)(0 : Acknowledgement)

In addition, 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.” (0: Acknowledgement)

A suggested plan of study

The order in which the papers were arranged and presented by the revelators is purposeful. As to where to start the study we do find suggestions.

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 major obstacle and frequent source of abandoning the 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.*

Being conscious of the difficulties the Divine Counselor writes:

“Because of this conceptual poverty associated with so much ideational confusion, I have been directed to formulate this introductory statement in explanation of the meanings which should be attached to certain word symbols as they may be hereinafter used in those papers which the Orvonton corps of truth revealers have been authorized to translate into the English language of Urantia.” (0 :0.1)

In the Foreword, the Divine Counselor engages in :

1. *clarification* of the Papers terminology.
2. *Expansion* of the meaning of existing English words.
3. *Introduction of new terms* when the English terminology doesn't provide for.
4. *Correction of confusions.*
5. *Development* of concepts and explanation 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. As an additional statement, the Divine Counselor writes:

“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.*”

“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.” (19 :1.12)

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.

This presentation is logical, coherent and progressive. It is like a puzzle where the pieces are assembled to create the final picture. It provides the student with a comprehensive approach that inspires faith and enhance highest ideals.

The revelators provide the elements which lead to expand our cosmic consciousness and enhance our spiritual perception. All we have to do is to study with courage, enthusiasm and perseverance the revelation. Part IV, the life and teachings of Jesus, will inspire our mind and feed our soul.

Study Group Concept

When attending a study group, you share a spiritual banquet prepared by the divine personalities with your fellow truth seekers. The celestial food is abundant, served with love and devotion by the authors of *The Urantia Book*. Your Thought Adjuster and the Spirit of Truth may help spiritualize those intellectual achievements.

Following is an extract of the “Publication Mandate” called “The Timing of *The Urantia Book*”. It is like a “road map” with specific recommendations:

“. . . 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 »*)

This document called “The Timing of The Urantia Book” is like a road map given to us by the revelators. Although this document is not part of *The Urantia Book* as such, the recommendations included are logical and rational. While departing from Urantia, Jesus gave personal instructions to his apostles for the unfolding of their mission on earth as well as to the apostolic corps. Therefore, it is natural that with the deliverance of the Fifth Epochal Revelation, a set of practical advices would be provided, study groups being one of them.

What is a study group?

A Urantia Book study group is composed with individual willing to study in-depth and share in a fraternal and spiritual atmosphere the teachings in order to practice them in their daily life. As a matter of fact, they have read at least once the entire book.

The study group location should be conducive to the study and sharing. The frequency is fixed and the time table stable in order to avoid delays.

The length of study is variable but experience shows that a full day is very productive, generally during a week end.

A study group should have a moderator, the host for example, and a “teacher” or someone with a long-time experience and good knowledge of *The Urantia Book* which role is to assist participants with a spirit of loving service and conduct discussions and sharing.

A study group should have a person in charge (a designated individual or the host or the teacher) to manage the group and audit the new readers in order to make sure of their motivation to participate to the study group.

Finally, a set of rules accepted by everyone should be available during the study. It is essential, for the sake of the study that everyone accept a kind of auto discipline and do not jeopardies with monopolizing the floor.

Why Study groups?

Although religion is a personal experience the natural outcomes are social.

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 friendly and private atmosphere of study.

Urantia Book Study groups are essential for at least the following reasons:

- *Study groups* are the place where religionists can share, in all discretion and privately, their faith with others and build the social brotherhood of believers by intimate association. The progress of one benefit to the all group and the progress of the group benefit to each individual.
- *Study groups* offer a friendly and secure environment to welcome new readers and study the content with other participants.
- *Study groups* are a place where team spirit is fostered and creative team work is exercised.
- *Study groups* develop a dynamic for growth, a cross-fertilizing of ideas and ideals favorable for training teachers and leaders.
- *Study groups* are essential and mandatory for a secure dissemination of the revelation worldwide providing they are attractive.
- *Study groups* represent the next progressive stage in the evolution of religious socialization, moving beyond sectarian institutionalization led by trained clergy who administer religious doctrines, to a socialization process more consistent with the revealed truth in *The Urantia Book* that each personality is a child of God with the gifted and indwelt ability to directly experience and perceive religious truth and spiritual values.”

Study group leaders and teachers

Teachers and leaders are long-time experienced individuals with the teachings and doctrines of *The Urantia Book*, who desire to serve the readership by virtue of their loving attractiveness and wisdom without imposing his/her point of view. In no way he/she is a “guru” or a “master” with self-appointed authority seeking for self-gratification or a paid position. His motivation is a natural outcome of having found God and willing to serve his companions :

“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.” (102 : 3.4)

Study groups for whom?

It is a common error to believe that *The Urantia Book* is accessible only to highly educated people. Experience shows that when the teachings are gently and progressively approached, with an effective plan of study, a method of mind expansion with the support of an experienced teacher, it requires only brotherly dedication and loving good will. The student must have found God first and this is a prerequisite condition to participate to a study group. It is also true that it requires courage, patience, open-mindedness 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 God only reveals himself to his children at the times 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 required.

The study group strategy

A methodic approach of the teachings of *The Urantia Book* is essential to the progress of study group participants. The teacher uses a strategy to attract intellectually the participants and create a dynamic of interest in order to change the reader into a student. This is the difference between a reader group and a study group.

The study groups strategy is grounded on the following principles:

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

What does that means and what are the benefits ?

Questioning

After the reading of paragraphs, the teacher might ask question if necessary to enter more in the subject and expand the concepts by thought-provoking interrogation and stimulate the discussion.

- *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.
- *Questioning* allows the participant to discover the solution for himself and by himself. It becomes a personal achievement of a great value.

Questioning about what?

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

“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. . .”

“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” (101:4.1)

Again, expanding cosmic consciousness is the first part of the revelators’ mandate.

These 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.

Sharing

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

1. *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
2. *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.
3. *Sharing* personal interpretations enhance comprehension of the material.
4. *Sharing* supports and enhances the interest and attention of the attendees for hours. In addition, the spiritual presence of our unseen friends, Thought Adjusters and the Spirit of Truth contribute to making the spiritual transformation an experiential reality and participants are not tired at the end of the day.

From concepts to experience

Expansion of concepts is an intellectual process, the first part of the revelators’ mandate. Very often, high intellectual concepts lose their significance because the participants do not connect them with their day-to-day life. During the discussions, the teacher will make all efforts to associate the intellectual concepts with the real life of the participants by bringing the teachings to the experiential level.

In order to illustrate this approach, let’s take the following example: the concept of “mind spiritualization” is somewhat vague in the mind of participants.

First, using thought-provoking questions the teacher brings the participant to the realization that it is a day-to-day exercise of choice between the egoism of the animal nature and the altruism of his spiritual nature, the resolution of tensions between different levels of values and the formation of human character.

Second, once the concept is linked with the daily life of the student, it becomes an experiential reality. The teacher will expand the concept/experience from the individual to the universe level by discussing the consequences and cosmic responsibilities of the participants choices toward God the Father and the Thought Adjuster, for Michael of Nebadon and God the Supreme and their sovereignties. The teacher will finally give a name to this process as being “Supremacy”.

Cross-referencing

To enlighten or illustrate the content of a paragraph it might be necessary to cross-reference with other paragraphs referring to the subject and addressed in *The Urantia Book* resulting in a cross-fertilizing process and clarification.

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 (in red) and the cross-referenced paragraphs. After a having read the above paragraph, the teacher may undertake to bring more illumination or insights to the discussion by cross-referencing.

“**those adjustments of the human will**” refers to the innate capacity of choice of the personality’s free-will between the relative right and wrong. By reading **16:6.4** the participants find additional explanation of the mechanism of the Cosmic Mind in personality. Going further to **16:8.8**, he finds the different situations in which the Personality’ free will is involved.

“**those transformations in the mortal mind**” refers to the acceptance of the mortal mind to become sensible, to cooperate wholeheartedly with the Spirit through repetitive choice of right versus wrong, the altruistic urge versus the egoistic inclination. By reading **110:3**, the Solitary Messenger explains how to improve the cooperation with the Thought Adjuster and in **111:1** he explains the mind mechanism.

“**the transmutation of the potentially spirit phases of the mortal mind into the morontia realities of the immortal soul.**” refers to the mechanism used by the Thought Adjuster to create and transfer a counterpart of the spiritual content of human thoughts and transfer in due time 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**.

Organizing study group

Preparing the study group session.

The in-depth study of the revelation is something we should take seriously and wholeheartedly. Like with any other learning and training, a self-discipline is require from the teacher to help the participants organize:

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.

Functioning of the study group session.

A well-organized and administered study group lies on discipline and rules of fair conduct accepted by all members. You must have them in writing at your hand during the study group session. You may read them as a friendly reminder when necessary.

The principle of the in-depth study is the systematic in turn reading of paragraphs immediately followed by a period of questions and sharing where every attendees has the opportunity to participate.

The teacher leads the discussion using the questions he prepared in advance based on the grid of 5 elements and the cross-references. Interventions are not limited in time, but the teacher will ensure that they do not drift. He or she shall make sure that each participant has the opportunity to express themselves without monopolizing the floor.

With the help of the teacher:

- Words and terminology are clarified
- Ideas are discussed
- Concepts are analyzed and expanded using cross-references.
- Linked with the personal experience of the participants in order to expand cosmic consciousness and enhance spiritual perception.

Unfolding of study group

The study group starts with 2 or 3 minutes of meditative silence, each participant having the opportunity to ask for the help and support of the spiritual forces during the study and sharing. Optionally, one of the attendees 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.

A 15 minutes pause is welcome in the morning and afternoon session.

Some examples of questions and comments

Let's remember that the Divine Counselor uses 1 000 human concepts.

Reduction of confusion by the authoritative elimination of error.

The following quote from the Bible is erroneous: “**His Son** is the one through whom God made the **universe**. . .” (Son and universe in singular)

The confusion about the Sons of God is rectified by the following quote: “. . . By **the Sons** of God were the **universes** made. . .” (1 :0.1) (Sons and universes in plural)

^{(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 erroneous religious beliefs, 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.

How does this following quote support the spiritual teachings?

“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.” (1 :0.2)

The Divine Counselor reveals the transcendent purpose of the universe that science cannot formulate in order to offer to human beings the hope of an eternal career in a context of cosmic brotherhood and enlightened spiritual and personal relationship with God, his loving Father and Creator.

Conclusion

We Reach the end of this presentation. My purpose was to attract your attention about some techniques as a results of my experience in leading study groups and seminars.

I wanted to present an attractive method and pedagogy to make study group an attractive place where participants enjoy sharing, discussing, find mutual inspiration and build human brotherhood.

In conformity with their obligations and restrictions 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 197 papers of *The Urantia Book*.

The revelatory commission delivered the best possible revelation, *long in advance*, with the hope that individuals would be attracted, transformed and finally become the living disseminators of the teachings worldwide. Are we apostles, disciples, actors or just spectators of the Fifth Epochal Revelation? It belongs to each of us to find an answer to this question in conformity with our personal motivation and desire to participate to this extraordinary adventure.

We, who were exposed to the teachings of *The Urantia Book* are actively involved in our communities of readers. It becomes our responsibility to foster and promote a worldwide proliferation of efficient and attractive study groups wherever and whenever we can but the question is: How do we do?

Well, looking at human living cells, they multiply by division. A study group is like a cell and when the number of participants grows over let's say 12 people, it is the time for division. By the time the study group reaches the “critical mass” teachers or animators are trained and able to create a new study group. Indeed, study groups are like sacs of grain, until the grains are not disseminated, no harvest is possible.

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

Georges Michelson Dupont