

1. The spirit of the endeavor

Viewed from the outside, this world of ours is almost entirely material. Viewed from within human consciousness, our world is almost entirely emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. And if we attune to all dimensions at once, it is our minds that unify human experience and enable us to operate in a material world pervaded by a myriad of ideas, ideals, and spiritual values.

Human society is not a conceptual abstraction. To the contrary it is the condensed accumulation of practical, day-to-day patterns of behavior — the tangled skein and the taut sinews of courtesy, custom, and habit — the ways we treat each other, writ large. These inherited attitudes and practices permeate our lives and help us endure, for human beings mainly prefer to operate on autopilot. That saves us the energy and aggravation of examining and contemplating every step we take.

Yet custom can also be a dungeon and torment, especially if it remains inert and static. For society to evolve and progress, custom must be subjected to constant experiment and reinvention, in ample awareness that innovations will seldom be successful solely because they are new. To the contrary, many innovations fail — and should.

Sudden transformation is not possible, neither for individuals nor for civilization as a whole. On the other hand, stagnation is not an option either. Everyone who observes our world with objectivity and candor realizes that the scientific and technical progress of the last several centuries has enormously outstripped the limited and glacial advances of the human spirit — thereby far surpassing our growth in humanity, kindness, mutual respect, and brotherly love. Just as God nurtures each of us with benevolence and affection, so also must we learn to distill unity from diversity, triumph over any frictions that arise because of divergent perspectives, and extend the utmost respect to every brother and sister who seeks to contribute to the progressive growth and development of civilization on our highly imperfect world.

As the human mind shakes off inertia and fear, as we link continents and bridge oceans with our mechanical inventions, as we cumulate generations and centuries with written and electronic records and then supplement them with artistic images and musical harmonies, we must discover new techniques and values that enable us to cooperate more effectively — so we can act on our highest aspirations in fraternity and friendship, transcending any lingering impatience, suspicion, or jealousy. And since uplifting the paths that humanity pursues will require the utmost patience, persistence, and determination, we ought to do everything we can to encourage, stimulate, and inspire each other.

a. Fostering growth

Growth is a living and organic process that shapes and reshapes every human being from birth, both as an individual and as a contributor to social and cultural evolution. To be sure, personal growth is much better understood than the growth of civilization, which requires far greater effort to influence or even envision. Nonetheless, when individuals strive to foster and promote the progressive growth and development of human society, they also create very stimulating opportunities for their own growth and advancement. Thus the challenges of reform and renewal inspire not only those sincere strivers in society who seek to uplift the fields they know, but also every dedicated individual who serves the cause of progressive growth by devoting substantial insight and energy to the work of the Global Endeavor.

Since it is the fairness and fitness of interpersonal relationships that permit civilization to evolve in ways that are humane, thoughtful, and wise, the endeavor's twin implications interpenetrate and reinforce each other. Even so, neither individuals nor society can expect to savor personal or collective advances seamlessly or smoothly, as if they had stemmed from some imaginary metamorphosis catalyzed by visionary impulses and idle dreams. Quite to the contrary, for fundamental and lasting advances in either character or civilization require effort, create controversy, and, on occasion, stimulate or even initiate conflict.

Any actual conflict, however, ought not to be violent, selfish, or cruel. One of the foremost challenges on the path of progressive growth is the task of converting unavoidable conflicts into opportunities for understanding, respect, and reconciliation. After all, the most meaningful forms of personal and social growth compel thinking human beings to review and revitalize their ideals, while also reinterpreting their spiritual values and rededicating themselves to humanity's highest and most altruistic aspirations.

Goals, not creeds, unite us. No one who seeks to promote the progressive growth and development of human society has a right to dictate beliefs or promulgate doctrines, nor even to insist on intellectual theories. We must extend to each other the tolerance, tact, and respect that the Father grants us all. Yearnings, not dogmas — intent, not interpretations — are the paramount paths to social, cultural, and spiritual ascent. Just as the disappointments we endure each day can help illuminate and inspire our personal efforts, so also should patterns of unfairness and injustice spur humanity onward toward the beacons of harmony and brotherhood that glimmer on distant horizons.

Mankind is not an evolutionary accident. Our fears, loves, longings, and beliefs are not just a casual artifact of the physical and chemical interactions of atoms and molecules. Our inspirational genius and devotional labors are not doomed to extinction by death, neither as individuals nor as the human race. To the contrary God's providence destines us to far greater achievements and distinctions, both as individuals who will someday continue our labors in the next world and as those descendants and heirs of ours who will carry on

current efforts and eventually bring forth an enlightened and much more just society, while promoting its further evolution toward the highest human concepts of truth, beauty, and goodness. In all these strivings God is and will be an active partner, for he did not design the universe and then disengage for all eternity.

In the final analysis, we owe the energy and momentum of even the most material aspects of human civilization to spiritual aspirations and ideals, especially the intuitions and insights of the giants on whose shoulders we stand. Intelligence may control the mechanisms of society and wisdom may direct them, but it is spiritual idealism that ferrets out new meanings and values and that elevates civilization to ever higher levels of creativity and attainment. Even so, it would be absurd to assert that every innovation amounts to an improvement, for retrogression is a very real possibility in local and limited contexts. The world as a whole, however, does not regress. No, it advances according to God's plan.

b. The spiritual foundation

Just as all human beings benefit from innate drives toward growth and self-realization, so also does the world at large benefit from God's loving ministry, his unceasing and active efforts to promote the progressive growth and development of human society. God chose not to create a perfect world for human beings to live in, for such circumstances would be no credit to us. Instead he offers us the opportunity to cooperate with him by doing all we can to foster the slow and gradual ascent of human traditions toward higher levels of material, intellectual, and spiritual achievement.

In this sense the Partnership for Growth is not only a global undertaking that fosters cooperation among human beings, it is also a partnership with God and with his angels who encourage men and women to act on our highest insights of our own free will, not from any form of compulsion or constraint. Thus in future ages — when our world has attained far higher stages of civilization than we can currently conceive — the crucial innovations and advances will reflect the actions and achievements of human beings, not just the creative impulses of innate perfection.

On a personal level, those who seek to serve others by participating in the Global Endeavor draw inspiration from the spiritual truths contained in *The Urantia Book*, a profoundly moving document of over 2,000 pages that portrays the nature of God, his plans for our afterlife, the nature of matter and energy and the universe we live in, the history of our planet from spiritual and social perspectives, and the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. In part, these illuminating insights portray the right of each individual to develop a personal approach to ideas, ideals, values, and every other spiritual dimension of human life, including philosophy and religion. Because those who serve in the endeavor understand that no human being is obliged to conform to the outlook of others or parrot

their views, the work of participants must honor, promote, and embody these fundamental freedoms. In other words, participants must show the utmost respect for the viewpoints and inclinations of those they serve — whether or not these brothers and sisters share their spiritual values, and whether or not they believe in God. Thus the essential mission of participants is to promote the progressive growth and development of human society by assisting and encouraging fellow human beings regardless of their religious views and philosophic convictions.

All participants devote their own personal ideals, their individual true religion, to the service of human growth and development. Their activities are far distant from institutional religion and certainly do not include formulating, promoting, or observing rote norms. None of the participants can possibly expect to find the answer to each practical question in the specific words of *The Urantia Book*. Instead they are also obliged to draw on other appropriate sources of information and insight and on personal experience — lessons learned and values acquired throughout their entire lives. Every participant is well aware that no great social or economic change should be attempted suddenly, for time is essential to all types of human adjustments.

c. The organizational framework

Participants in the Global Endeavor do not promote specific reforms, nor do they undertake tasks in society at large. Instead the members and associates of the working groups seek to encourage and inspire others to pursue innovations and reforms that they design themselves, based on their own circumstances and surroundings and the diverse social and political environments in which they live.

All participants operate modestly and quietly, refraining from attracting attention to themselves and remaining well in the background. In seeking to serve as resources, catalysts, encouragers, and energizers, they assemble and circulate insightful information about progressive ideas, ideals, innovations, and reforms that individuals and groups are pursuing in society. In contrast, however, participants do not make any public statements — nor, for that matter, issue any public documents — aimed at guiding or counseling the population at large. To the contrary, they provide advice and counsel *only in private*, and only to those individuals and groups that specifically request it.

Regional associations are the Global Endeavor's most important feature, and each one consists of twelve working groups. Two of the twelve are administrative and managerial, carrying out internal functions associated with supervision and guidance. The remaining ten working groups are substantive; they serve and assist individuals and groups in society who wish to promote progressive growth and development in their respective fields. Chapter 4 describes each substantive working group and its responsibilities.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the work of the substantive working groups falls under five general headings:

- a. Information activities
- b. Networking and problem solving
- c. Private dialogue
- d. Meetings and forums
- e. Publications

If anyone asks about *The Urantia Book* or its teachings, the members and associates of the working groups will be happy to provide information.

The endeavor also includes two global bodies that coordinate and unify the work of the regional associations, while seeking to promote inter-regional exchanges of information and insight.

- *The Coordinating Commission* supervises the administrative side of the endeavor, in part by developing policy principles and advisory guidelines that relate to organizational, managerial, financial, and legal aspects.
- *The Consultative Forum* monitors pursuit of the underlying goals, in part by developing policy principles and advisory guidelines that relate to spiritual, philosophic, moral, ethical, and psychological aspects.

The Administrator, the Deputy Administrator, and the Associate Administrator are the Global Endeavor's most senior persons. In a philosophic and spiritual sense, they foster and promote the service and assistance that the substantive working groups provide to individuals and groups in society. They do not have executive or managerial authority over those efforts, but they perform a number of important administrative duties and represent the endeavor in public.

Chapter 2 describes the responsibilities of the Administrator's team and the work of the global bodies.