



THE
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SECOND GUESSING THE SPIRITUAL RENAISSANCE

" 'The persistent preaching of this gospel of the kingdom will some day bring to all nations a new and unbelievable liberation, intellectual freedom, and religious liberty.' " (*1930:7) These words of the Master foretell the coming someday of a great spiritual renaissance, and they invite and enjoin us to assist in bringing about this enlightenment by proclaiming the Master's gospel of man's spiritual sonship with God. We might wonder whether we are not also invited to speculate about the sequence of events whereby this spiritual renaissance may come about by reviewing the information which has been newly given to us in *The URANTIA Book*.

When we speculate about such matters, are we pursuing a unilateral and unjustified advance beyond the frontier of current knowledge, or are we participating in a trend of thought which is as common to universe citizenship as any other mode of thinking? I believe it is the latter. *The URANTIA Book* is replete with the speculations of universe creatures from the superuniverse level right down to the United Midwayers of Urantia. The midwayers tell us in Part IV how Jesus spent an enormous amount of time in communion and consultation with his Father. Jesus must have been then, as we are told he did at other times, working out a wise perspective of expectations as to just how he might expect the progress of the spiritual "kingdom" to proceed among mankind.

Jesus, of course, had the advantages of superhuman insight into such considerations, but we too have been afforded considerable superhuman-level perspectives on the expectations regarding Urantia's future. I believe that we are performing both justifiable and godly tasks when we seek to review and probe further the implications of the revelatory information which has been given to us.

The Human Contribution

Let us begin our consideration of the nature of the spiritual renaissance at the human level, as did Jesus.

The Master said, " 'And this which your eyes now behold, this small beginning of twelve commonplace men, shall multiply and grow until eventually the whole earth shall be filled with the praise of my Father.' " (*1569:5) The spiritual renaissance is envisioned primarily as a human event. The "persistent preaching" referred to in my opening quotation is prophesied to bring about a spiritual renaissance within a human context, within "all nations." Preaching is a spiritual activity carried on by humans, among humans, and for human beings. The midwayers tell us, "A new and fuller revelation of the religion of Jesus is destined to conquer an empire of materialistic secularism and to overthrow a world sway of mechanistic naturalism. Urantia is now quivering on the very brink of one of its most amazing and enthralling epochs of social readjustment, moral quickening, and spiritual enlightenment." (*2082:8) The "empire of materialistic secularism" and the "world sway of mechanistic naturalism" are human situations and contexts. "Social readjustment" and "moral quickening" refer exclusively to the human level; only does "spiritual enlightenment" refer to a possible coalition of human and superhuman personalities and forces.

One consideration relevant to the contemplation of the spiritual renaissance is whether it shall come about as a manifestly human event, planned, promulgated, and responded to by humans working upon divine guidance and evolutionary wisdom within the human arena, or whether we may envision it as a consummated, conscious, cooperative effort participated in by both human and superhuman personalities.

One of my personal reactions to this question is that it might prove to be a more beautiful expression of human devotion if our prodigal planet were induced to return to or to renew its spiritual loyalty to the Father of all by means of the proliferation of spiritual concepts and ideals, the instrumentation of which were conducted by human beings acting upon their own divine guidance, initiative, and resourcefulness. This seems to be the sentiment of the midwayers as well who write, "What a transcendent service if, through this revelation, the Son of Man should be recovered from the tomb of traditional

theology and be presented as the living Jesus to the church that bears his name, and to all other religions!" (*2090:3) Such a happening refers to an event relating people and the fifth epochal revelation as well as the fourth, but does not mention the function of superhuman personalities.

It is well to note that all progressive human activities are closely fostered and somewhat influenced by the ministry of the master seraphim of planetary supervision, by the seraphic guardians, by the Most Highs of Norlatiadek, by the midwayers, by the Father, the Paradise Trinity, and by numerous other personalities and forces revealed and unrevealed. A universe in which not a sparrow falls without divine knowledge thereof certainly displays the interrelationship of the human and the divine. Nevertheless, what I am referring to when I say that the spiritual renaissance can be envisioned as an event taking place within the human arena, is the fact that the vast majority of Urantia's inhabitants do not know of the personal influence or existence of most of the universe's spiritual ministers apart from the Father himself, and that a spiritual renaissance promulgated and pursued by human beings, without easily observ-

able influence from other personalities, would be perceived by most people as a humanly sponsored spiritual movement.

Let us at this point define or attempt to sketch what we suppose the nature of a spiritual renaissance might be. I would say that in essence and as a minimum, a spiritual awakening worthy of the designation "renaissance" would imply the general awakening to at least the entertainment of the possibility of the validity of the twin concepts of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. The notion of One Deity and a worldwide spiritual brotherhood of mankind is the concept the recognition of which would constitute the *sine qua non* of a bonafide spiritual renaissance.

Possible Superhuman Influences

Now let's consider the possibilities for the appearance of a major new or returning bestowal personality. Our planet's sequence of bestowal Sons was disarranged from the universe pattern both by the emergency bestowal mission of Machiventa Melchizedek and by the appearance of Michael on his seventh bestowal mission as our bestowal Son prior to the appearance of an Avonal Son on a magisterial mission. Urantia could at the appropriate time be visited by such an Avonal Son. It is uncertain whether such a bestowal might occur before or after the appearance on our world of the Trinity Teacher Sons, whose arrival would signal the commencement of a new planetary epoch.

A Perfector of Wisdom tells us that "...the Trinity Sons even now visit your world for the purpose of formulating plans concerning their projected sojourn on your sphere. They will be due to appear on Urantia after its inhabitants have gained comparative deliverance from the shackles of animalism and from the fetters of materialism." (*231:5) Such a statement does imply that the appearance of the Trinity Teacher Sons is not to be immediate on our planet, but it does not indicate whether or not such a bestowal may occur as a part of a general spiritual renaissance.

Next, there is the ever-present possibility of the return of Michael in his "second coming." Concerning the event, Jesus said, "But the times of the reappearing of the Son of Man are known only in the councils of Paradise; not even the angels of heaven know when this will occur." (*1915:2)

The sequence of the sometime appearance of an Avonal Son, the Trinity Teacher Sons, or Michael is

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likewise not known. A Mighty Messenger relates, "... we find Urantia out of step with its sister spheres in that your Jesus has promised to return. That promise he will certainly fulfill, but no one knows whether his second coming will precede or follow the appearances of Magisterial or Teacher Sons on Urantia." (*598:4)

Next, there is the possibility of the anytime return of Machiventa Melchizedek as Vicegerent Planetary Prince of Urantia. Urantia's Seraphic Chief writes, "There is little likelihood that any marked change will be made in the government of Urantia during the present dispensation unless the vicegerent Planetary Prince should arrive to assume his titular responsibilities. It appears to certain of our associates that at some time in the near future the plan of sending one of the twenty-four counselors to Urantia to act as governor general will be superseded by the formal arrival of Machiventa Melchizedek with the vicegerent mandate of the sovereignty of Urantia. ... Some believe that Machiventa will not come to take personal direction of Urantian affairs until the end of the current dispensation. Others hold that the vicegerent Prince may not come, as such, until Michael sometime returns to Urantia as he promised when still in the flesh. Still others, including this narrator, look for Melchizedek's appearance any day or hour." (*1251:3,4)

To this we may add the possibility of the return of Adam and Eve. A Melchizedek of Nebadon writes, "We well understand how, by his triumph on Urantia, Michael became the successor of both Caligastia and Adam; how he became the planetary Prince of Peace and the second Adam. And now we behold the conferring upon this Melchizedek [Machiventa] of the title Vicegerent Planetary Prince of Urantia. Will he also be constituted Vicegerent Material Son of Urantia? Or is there a possibility that an unexpected and unprecedented event is to take place, the sometime return to the planet of Adam and Eve or certain of their progeny as representatives of Michael with the titles vicegerents of the second Adam of Urantia? And all these speculations associated with the certainty of future appearances of both Magisterial and Trinity Teacher Sons, in conjunction with the explicit promise of the Creator Son to return sometime, make Urantia a planet of future uncertainty and render it one of the most interesting and intriguing spheres in all the universe of Nebadon." (*1025:3,4)

Concerning all these manifold possibilities, the Seraphic Chief of Urantia writes, "No one in the local universe seems to know when the unsettled status of the

planetary administration will terminate. The Nebadon Melchizedeks are inclined to the opinion that little change will occur in the planetary government and administration until Michael's second personal arrival on Urantia. Undoubtedly at this time, if not before, sweeping changes will be effected in planetary management. But as to the nature of such modifications of world administration, no one seems to be able even to conjecture." (*1259:1) A list of Urantia's unusual circumstances is provided by the Seraphic Chief:

1. The life modification status of Urantia.
2. The exigencies of the Lucifer rebellion.
3. The disruptions of the Adamic default.
4. The irregularities growing out of the fact that Urantia was one of the bestowal worlds of the Universe Sovereign. Michael of Nebadon is the Planetary Prince of Urantia.
5. The special function of the twenty-four planetary directors.
6. The location on the planet of an archangels' circuit.
7. The more recent designation of the onetime incarnated Machiventa Melchizedek as vicegerent Planetary Prince. (*1250:4-10)

Another implication relevant to the possibilities surrounding the spiritual renaissance exists in the very completeness of *The URANTIA Book* itself. In Paper 52, "Planetary Mortal Epochs," we learn that higher and higher levels of universe administration and reality are revealed at the commencement of each of the planetary mortal epochs. The revelation of the complete cosmic plan, from Paradise through the outer space levels, is withheld until the inauguration of the final planetary epoch, the era of light and life. Nevertheless, our post-Bestowal Son, pre-Magisterial Son Age planet has been given a revelation disclosing the existence and nature of total sub-absolute universe reality and beyond. This situation implies one of two possibilities: Either Urantia's fifth epochal revelation is designed to function as a spiritual guide through all of the ages which inter-

vene between the present era and the inauguration of the age of light and life, or Urantia is preparing to take an unprecedented and substantial quantum leap forward in its spiritual and civilization achievement level.

Two other universe events, the adjudication of Lucifer and the re-encirclement of our planet, could come simultaneously with a planetary spiritual awakening or just following it. What the likelihood of such events taking place may be is not discussed in *The URANTIA Book*.

Proclaiming the New Revelation

The time of the occurrence of any of these events being unknown to us, let us return to the level of human awareness and activity. It is likely that we may have plenty of time both to develop and to implement techniques of sharing some of the good news and spiritual impetus of Jesus' gospel and possibly of the fifth epochal revelation before the manifest appearance of any superhuman personality occurs on our world. Such a program is suggested and called for by a Melchizedek of Nebadon: "All Urantia is waiting for the proclamation of the ennobling message of Michael, unencumbered by the accumulated doctrines and dogmas of nineteen centuries of contact with the religions of evolutionary origin. The hour is striking for presenting to Buddhism, to Christianity, to Hinduism, even to the peoples of all faiths, not the gospel about Jesus, but the living, spiritual reality of the gospel of Jesus." (*1041:5)

The midwayers give us a similar admonition, "The time is ripe to witness the figurative resurrection of the human Jesus from his burial tomb amidst the theological traditions and the religious dogmas of nineteen centuries." (*2090:3)

In regard to the human proclamation of the gospel of personal religion, Jesus said, "...you should understand that, when this gospel of the kingdom shall have been proclaimed to all the world for the salvation of all peoples, and when the fullness of the age has come to pass, the Father will send you another dispensational bestowal, or else the Son of Man will return to adjudge the age." (*1915:2)

Concerning this project of proclaiming the religion of Jesus, the midwayers write, "Religion does need new leaders, spiritual men and women who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings. If Christianity persists in neglecting its spiritual mission while it continues to busy itself with social and material problems, the spiritual renaissance must await the com-

ing of these new teachers of Jesus' religion who will be exclusively devoted to the spiritual regeneration of men. And then will these spirit-born souls quickly supply the leadership and inspiration requisite for the social, moral, economic, and political reorganization of the world." (*2082:10-2083:1) This pronouncement implies that a great worldwide transformation may be achieved independent of and prior to the manifest appearance or return of a bestowal personality.

With respect to world conditions, the midwayers write, "Although Jesus referred one phase of the kingdom to the future and did, on numerous occasions, intimate that such an event might appear as a part of a world crisis; and though he did likewise most certainly, on several occasions, definitely promise sometime to return to Urantia, it should be recorded that he never positively linked these two ideas together. He promised a new revelation of the kingdom on earth and at some future time..." (*1863:13) What the nature of this "new revelation of the kingdom" may be is uncertain, but it does not explicitly refer to the appearance or reappearance of either Michael nor any other personality.

What the possible interrelationship of these three aspects of world circumstances—the preaching of the gospel, the possibility of a world crisis, and the appearance of superhuman personalities—may be is a matter of conjecture. However, I am of the opinion that the spiritual renaissance will take place primarily within the private and personal arena of the individual minds and hearts of people.

It is noteworthy that the greatest and most purely divine influence and source for ideas, ideals, and energy for the transformation of individuals and the subsequent reorganization of the world is found within the hearts of individual men: It is the planet's inhabitants' indwelling Thought Adjusters, those fragments of absolute divinity, of God himself. Could we but induce human minds to become attentive and responsive to such inner human guidance, I believe a true spiritual renaissance and a global transformation is possible independent of the manifest agency of bestowal personalities. Nevertheless, such a course of events may not be most divinely wise. Thus, we remain uncertain as to whether such personalities may play a part in Urantia's spiritual awakening.

Are there hints of wisdom for us, finding ourselves in such an uncertain situation, to be found in *The URANTIA Book*? I believe that there are. First, we may recall the Master's oft repeated phrase, "My hour has not yet come." We should expect and accept that there is a divine

will and order for the progress of the spiritual illumination of our world. The Master admonished his apostles, "Possess your souls in patience." And concerning the return of the Master, the midwayers counsel us, "The children of light are all destined to see him, and it is of no serious concern whether we go to him or whether he should chance first to come to us. Be you therefore ever ready to welcome him on earth as he stands ready to welcome you in heaven." (*1919:5) And again the midwayers advise, "Neither make the fatal mistake, in looking for the age manifestation of the kingdom, of failing to effect its establishment within your own souls." (*1863:12)

Thus, while we should appraise the revelatory information given to us respecting the human and super-human possibilities for the spiritual renaissance, we should not allow such considerations so to preoccupy us as to generate an anxiety which would diminish our effectiveness as kingdom builders. Said Jesus, "Give no thought to those things which foster your anxiety, but at all times be concerned only with the doing of the Father's will." We are told that "...uncertainty is the secret of contented continuity..." (*438:2) and that "Uncertainty with security is the essence of the Paradise adventure..." (*1223:3)

—David Glass
Bradenton, Florida

URANTIA REVELATION, CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT, AND THE SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION OF MANKIND

Revelation, *The Urantia Book* tells us, is designed to bridge the gap in human experience between the material and the spiritual. Through our reason we ascertain facts, the knowledge of science. Through our faith we apprehend values, spirit realities presented to our super-conscious mind by the divine Thought Adjuster within. And through the logic of philosophy we try to coordinate and integrate the material knowledge of science and the spiritual truths of religious experience. But this philosophic effort of integration is doomed to fall short. Between the spiritual and the material is a reality level which humans do not know, a reality level which *The*

URANTIA Book calls "morontia." During his life in the flesh man lacks the mota of morontia with which he will later be able to apprehend morontia realities. *The URANTIA Book* says, "Revelation authoritatively clarifies the muddle of reason-developed metaphysics on an evolutionary sphere." (*1136:4) Further, "Revelation is evolutionary man's only hope of bridging the morontia gulf." (*1137:4) And "Revelation is a compensation for the frailties of evolving philosophy." (*1140:6)

We are also told that "It is the mission of revelation to sort and censor the successive religions of evolution. But if revelation is to exalt and upstep the religions of evolution, then must such divine visitations portray teachings which are not too far removed from the thought and reactions of the age in which they are presented. Thus must and does revelation always keep in touch with evolution." (*1007:1)

The Foreword of *The URANTIA Book* says that "Successive planetary revelations of divine truth invariably embrace the highest existing concepts of spiritual values as a part of the new and enhanced co-ordination of planetary knowledge." (*17:1) In this article I will discuss some noteworthy examples of contemporary thought and philosophy. In our examination we can expect to find some of the frailties and fallacies of evolutionary thought which require illumination from revelation. At the same time we can hope to find, in man's noblest expressions, sublime thoughts which, like *The URANTIA Book* itself, point the way to our spiritual transformation.

Religion and Science

Since the task of philosophy is to harmonize the differing worldviews of religion and science, it may be revealing—no pun intended—to discuss an article in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* titled "Religion and Science." This article, written by J.J.C. Smart and published in 1967, purports "to discuss the present relations between religion and science and to examine respects in which they may be held either to conflict with or to support one another." Smart proceeds to find several areas of conflict, all of which, in his view, reflect unfavorably on religion.

First, he points to the anthropocentrism of religion, especially traditional Christianity, which places such importance on the earth and on the centrality of man in creation. Such self-centeredness, Smart says, was

understandable in the old days when the earth was literally regarded as the center of the universe, with heaven on top, and hell below. But now, hasn't science shown that man has no special place in the universe? The earth, science has discovered, is one of several planets orbiting a medium-sized star, which is on the fringe of a galaxy of countless stars, which, in turn, is one of probably millions of galaxies. Furthermore, scientific knowledge about how life evolves suggests that there must be life on numerous other planets in the universe. The earth is relatively young, so there are probably many planets with species much more highly evolved than homo sapiens. "Therefore, is it not presumptuous of the theologian to claim that man is made in the image of God and that God became incarnate in man?"

Smart goes on to tell us that modern theoretical biology "is beginning to guess how life could have arisen naturally from inorganic matter. Most modern biologists, he says, would take exception to the view expressed by Anglican theologian E.W. Barnes that "the emergence of life must be regarded as a sign of creative activity."

Another religious idea which Smart considers on shaky ground before the discoveries of science is the belief in immortality. Many philosophers, Smart tells us, doubt that there is a dualism between mind and body. Even if there is such a dualism, "The empirical evidence in favor of an invariable correlation between mental states and brain states is extremely strong. . . . In the face of all the evidence that is being accumulated by modern research in neurology, it is hard to believe that after the dissolution of the brain there could be any thought or conscious experience whatever."

Next, Smart discusses the religious tenet of the efficacy of prayer. As long as phenomena like the weather, disease, and human actions were little understood, says Smart, it is easy to see how people could accept the notion that prayer could effect the real world. But now that science has found, or is finding, natural explanations for the once mysterious weather, disease, and human activity, praying seems pretty superstitious.

Science, Smart asserts, is "omnicompetent as a cognitive activity." It follows that if the views of a scientist and the views of a religionist conflict on any point, then the scientist must be right. Religion can avoid the ever-advancing death-grip of science only if it considers its assertions as not implying anything necessarily factual, but as myths to inspire a certain kind of behavior. But if religion dares to assert a proposition such as the existence of life after death, then it is subject to the censorship of science, the only sure guide to reality.

How is a student of *The URANTIA Book* to react to Smart's philosophy? Regarding his attack on religion's anthropocentrism in contrast with science's large world-view, one can't help wondering what Smart would think of the cosmology of *The URANTIA Book*: the giant central universe of Havona encircled by 700,000 local universes, each containing, or destined to contain, 10 million planets inhabited by evolving freewill creatures, not even to mention the incredibly vaster outer space levels. And at the same time, of course, *The URANTIA Book* gloriously affirms that each moral will creature on all these 7 trillion planets is indeed made in the image of God—that is, indwelt by a Thought Adjuster—and is loved by God with an infinite love, and that all of these planets will be blessed by the incarnation of a Paradise Son of God. Interesting, too, would be Smart's reaction to *The URANTIA Book's* portrayal of purposeful evolution, which harmonizes the discoveries of science with the truths of spiritual overcontrol and the spiritual origin of all life.

I will not comment specifically on Smart's arguments regarding immortality and prayer. I only wonder why he failed to report science's verdict on the question of the existence of God. I suppose that research project hasn't been completed yet. According to *The URANTIA Book*, "When the philosophy of man leans heavily toward the world of matter, it becomes rationalistic or *naturalistic*. When philosophy inclines particularly toward the spiritual level, it becomes *idealistic* or even mystical. When philosophy is so unfortunate as to lean upon metaphysics, it unfailingly becomes *skeptical*, confused. In past ages most of man's knowledge and intellectual evaluations have fallen into one of these three distortions of perception." (*1137:5) Smart's error is clearly naturalism, in accordance with the prevailing bias of the times. He assumes that the scientific viewpoint is the only valid one, and like someone who always wears red glasses, all his perceptions are colored by that monochromatic lens.

As for the spiritual transformation of mankind, for Smart, apparently, there is no spirit, only matter, and the only transformation to be expected is the dropping of man's silly religious superstitions in the face of the all-encompassing march of science.

It is useful to be reminded, as *The URANTIA Book* says, that "In reality, true religion cannot become involved in any controversy with science; it is in no way concerned with material things. Religion is simply indifferent to, but sympathetic with, science, while it supremely concerns itself with the *scientist*." (*2076:7)

Man vs. Machine

The disease of materialism has recently developed a new and particularly virulent form, due to a totally egregious interpretation of advances in computer science.

In the 17th century when Blaise Pascal designed a primitive machine which could do arithmetic, Thomas Holmes asserted that "Brass and iron have been invested with the functions of brain, and instructed to perform some of the most difficult operations of mind. . . . In what matter so ever there is place for addition and subtraction, there also is place for reason and where these have no place, there reason has nothing at all to do; for reason is nothing but reckoning (that is the adding and subtracting of consequences). . . . When a man reasoneth, he does nothing else but conceive a sum total from addition of the partials. . . ." Pascal himself, interestingly, did not share this view. He said "A calculating machine achieves results that come nearer to thought than anything done by an animal. But it does nothing that enables us to say it has a will."

The debate between these contrasting points of view—the reductionism of Hobbes which sees the entire universe, man included, as reducible to a mechanism, and the view of Pascal that man contains an aspect or aspects (mind, will, or soul) that no machine can ever have—has continued to this day.

The spectacular successes of computer technology have given a new succor to the mechanists. They believe that computers have achieved an "artificial intelligence" which, as computer science advances, may well outstrip the intelligence of man. Consider the following statement by Robert Jastrow, a prominent scientist, in a recent magazine interview: "(Computers) are new forms of life. They react to stimuli, they think, they reason, they learn by experience. They don't, however, procreate by sexual union or die—unless we want them to die. We take care of their reproduction for them. We also take care of their food needs, which are electrical. They are evolving at a dynamite speed. They have increased in capabilities by a power of ten every 7 years since the dawn of the computer age in 1950. Man, on the other hand, has not changed for a long time. By the end of the 20th century, the curves of human and computer growth will intersect and by that time, I am confident, quasi-human intelligences will be with us. They will be similar in mentality to a freshly minted Ph.D.: very strong, very narrow, with no human wisdom, but very powerful in brute reasoning strength. They will be work-

ing in combination without managers, who will be providing the human intuition. Silicon entities will be controlling and regulating the complex affairs of our 21st century society. The probability is that this will happen virtually within our own lifetime."

The debate over machine intelligence is no mere academic contest, for computers are being used in more and more areas of our life, and the mechanists are proposing that even psychiatrists and judges should be replaced by computers, if not now, then in the foreseeable future. John J. McCarthy, a leader in the area of computer science that has been given the name Artificial Intelligence, asked in a debate several years ago, "What does a judge know that we cannot tell a computer?" For him the answer is "Nothing."

Fortunately, there are those in the computer community who are shocked by such ideas and who are contending with the mechanists. There are computer scientists, like Joseph Weizenbaum of MIT, who know and argue that there are things that computers cannot do, and things which humans should not allow them to do. There are scientists who know that, as *The URANTIA Book* tells us "Matter knows not truth, neither can it love mercy nor delight in spiritual realities. Moral convictions based on spiritual enlightenment and rooted in human experience are just as real and certain as mathematical deductions based on physical observations, but on another and higher level." (*2077:8)

The Literary View

Now I would like to sample another mode of contemporary thought, literature. One of the most praised writers of our day is Donald Barthelme. In 1975 he published a novel called *The Dead Father*. The Dead Father, which Barthelme always spells with an upper case "D" and an upper case "F" is "Dead, but still with us, still with us, but dead. No one can remember when he was not here in our city positioned like a sleeper in troubled sleep, the whole great expanse of him running from the Avenue Pommard to the Boulevard Grist. Overall length, 3200 cubits. Half buried in the ground, half not. At work ceaselessly night and day through all the hours for the good of all. He controls the hussars. Controls the rise, fall and flutter of the market. Controls what Thomas is thinking, what Thomas has always thought, what Thomas will ever think, with exceptions. The left leg, entirely mechanical, said to be the administrative center of his operations, working ceaselessly night and day through all the hours for the good of all. In the left leg, in sudden tucks or niches, we find things we need.

Facilities for confession, small booths with sliding doors, people are noticeably freer in confessing to the Dead Father than to any priest, of course! he's dead."

The plot of the novel involves a journey. A man named Thomas, his lover Julie, and about 20 others are transporting the Dead Father to the land where dwells the golden fleece. Through an encounter with the golden fleece the Dead Father hopes to recover the vitality of his youth.

Early in the journey, Thomas and Julie engage in some sexual play. The Dead Father expresses envy, and Julie insults him. Whereupon, the Dead Father storms off and slays a couple of dozen musicians who happen to be nearby. "My anger, he said proudly." Later he talks about having devoured thousands of his children, sometimes including their shoes. Various other incidents during the trip serve to reinforce the unattractive portrayal of the Dead Father's character.

Finally, Thomas announces that they have arrived at their destination, which turns out simply to be a large hole in the ground.

"No Fleece?" asked the Dead Father.

Thomas looked at Julie.

She has it?

Julie lifted her skirt.

Quite golden, said the Dead Father. Quite ample. That's it?

All there is Julie said. Unfortunately. But this much. This is where life lives. A pretty problem. As mine as yours. I'm sorry.

Quite golden, said the Dead Father. Quite ample.

He moved to touch it.

No, said Thomas.

No, said Julie.

I'm not even to touch it?

No.

After all this long and arduous and if I may say so rather ill-managed journey? Not to touch it? What am I to do?

You are to get into the hole, said Thomas.

Get into the hole?

Lie down in the hole.

And then you'll cover me up?

The bulldozers are just over the hill, Thomas said, waiting.

You'll bury me alive?

You're not alive, Thomas said, remember?

It's a hard thing to remember, said the Dead Father. I don't want to lie down in the hole."

But Julie offers to hold the Dead Father's hand if he will lie down in the hole, so he does.

"I'm in the hole now, said the Dead Father. Julie holding a hand.

One moment more! said the Dead Father. Bulldozers."

And so the novel ends. There is no need for me to characterize the level of spiritual vision underlying the story. Indeed, I feel almost impelled to apologize to you for forcing you to listen to such a tale. But my topic has to do with contemporary thought, and this is a novel by one of the most acclaimed writers of our time.

And Now the Good News...

If the picture of contemporary thought I have painted so far is a black one, let me hasten to add some brighter colors. We read in *The URANTIA Book* that "...the worst of the materialistic age is over; the day of a better understanding is already beginning to dawn." (*2076:9) And surely we can all see this dawn as we look about us. People are searching for spiritual values and spiritual experiences. There is an enthusiasm for the religious thought of all cultures, old and new, East and West. A bewildering variety of groups has sprung up with spiritual orientations. There is much that one could criticize in many of these groups. Fallacies of pantheism, exaltation of the authority of the guru, beliefs that religion means practicing some esoteric technique to induce a mystical transcendence of self, an arrogance about the spiritual superiority of my group and my teacher—these impure tendencies may often be observed in the wave of new groups that call themselves "spiritual." But the wave also contains some pure water, and, in general, I think the tide is shifting in a positive direction. At least people are seeking, and we know that Jesus taught that sincere faith and truth hunger will surely lead to the kingdom of heaven.

There are contemporary thinkers with sublime thoughts, people who can be inspiring and even prophetic. I would like to talk about one of these, Martin

Buber. Buber has had a profound influence on 20th century philosophers, on theologians of different religions, and on thousands of students and readers from all walks of life. Reading Buber, one feels oneself not simply presented with a series of intellectual ideas, but also feels addressed by a deeply caring person. One somehow feels, not merely that here is an argument about certain issues which I have various agreements, disagreements, and questions about, but that here is a real person, addressing me and at the same time listening for my response, not simply my intellectual response but my response as a person. The qualities of authenticity and caring shine through Buber's writing, and induce the reader to ask himself, "How can I be authentic and caring too?"

Buber's seminal work was published in 1923, in German, under the title *Ich und Du*. When the book was first translated into English it was called *I and Thou* and that name has stuck. Walter Kaufman published a new English translation in 1970 and argues convincingly that the proper translation is *I and You*. I will follow his example.

Buber says the world is twofold to me depending on my twofold attitude. When I treat the person or situation I am relating to as a mere object, something simply to be used to further my previously established purpose and of no intrinsic value otherwise, then I am in the realm of the I-it. On the other hand, when the person or situation I encounter is not a mere object for my manipulation, but also a subject of unique worth independent of me who in this unique encounter makes some call upon me which I respond to with my whole being, then I am in the realm of the I-You.

Every man's life, says Buber, consists of the alteration of I-it encounters with I-You encounters. When I am fully present in a meeting with someone else, and respond to the challenge that meeting poses from the deepest part of me, then I am experiencing the world of I-You, and I am becoming what I am meant to be. When I am not thus present, when my response fails to meet the demands of this unique, concrete situation, where no ethical rule fully surfaces to determine the proper response of my whole person, then I am in the world of the I-it.

God, for Buber, is the eternal You, the Absolute person who has placed me in the world and who calls to me through each event of my life, through each person I meet, always challenging me to find the fullness of response to the world's need for me. By making that response I become what God has meant me to be.

In 1952, three years before the first publication of *The URANTIA Book*, Buber published a book called *Eclipse of God*.

"What is it that we mean when we speak of an eclipse of God which is even now taking place? Through this metaphor we make the tremendous assumption that we can glance up to God with our 'mind's eye,' or rather being's eye, as with our bodily eye to the sun, and that something can step between our existence and His as between the earth and the sun. That this glance of the being exists, wholly unillusory, yielding no images yet first making possible all images, no other court in the world attests than that of faith. It is not to be proved; it is only to be experienced; man has experienced it. And that other, that which steps in between, one also experiences, today. . . . In our age the I-it relation, gigantically swollen, has usurped, practically uncontested, the mastery and the rule. The I of this relation, an I that possesses all, makes all, succeeds with all, that I is unable to say, You, unable to meet a being essentially, is the lord of the hour. This selfhood that has become omnipotent, with all the It around it, can naturally acknowledge neither God nor any genuine absolute which manifests itself to men as of non-human origin. It steps in between and shuts off from us the light of heaven.

Such is the nature of this hour. But what of the next? It is a modern superstition that the character of an age acts as fate for the next. One lets it prescribe what is possible to do and hence what is permitted. One surely cannot swim against the stream, one says. But perhaps one can swim with a new stream whose source is still hidden? In another image, the I-You relation has gone into the catacombs— Who can say when the I-It relation will be directed anew to its assisting place and activity.

The most important events in the history of that embodied possibility called man are the occasionally occurring beginnings of new epochs, determined by forces previously invisible or unregarded. . . . Something is taking place in the depths that as yet needs no name. To-morrow even it may happen that it will be beckoned to from the heights, across the heads of the earthly archons. The eclipse of the light of God is no extinction; even to-morrow that which has stepped in between may give way."

Twenty years before writing the paragraphs I just quoted, Buber, who was a Jew, delivered an address to a

conference on Christian mission to the Jews. Here is an excerpt from the talk that Buber, as a Jew, delivered to those Christian missionaries:

"What have you and we in common? If we take the question literally, a book and an expectation. To you, the book is a forecourt; to us it is the sanctuary. But in this place we can dwell together, and together listen to the voice that speaks there... Your expectation is directed toward a second coming, ours to a coming which has not been anticipated by a first... But we can wait for the advent of the One together, and there are moments when we may prepare the way before him together. Pre-messianically, our destinies are divided... This is a gulf which no human power can bridge. But it does not prevent the common watch for a unity to come to us from God, which, soaring above all of your imagination and all of ours, affirms and denies, denies and affirms what

you hold and what we hold, and replaces all the creedal truths of earth by the ontological truth of heaven, which is one."

We who have accepted *The URANTIA Book* as an epochal revelation believe that the expectation Buber talked about has been fulfilled; the cloud has lifted, the divine sun is shining through, the spirit has spoken another word in the eternal dialogue between the Creator and his creatures. And what a word!

The next word in the dialogue is up to us. And the letters of that word are the moral choices we make in our lives, as we encounter our brothers in unique situations calling us to a fresh exercise of living faith. If we respond with the faith of our soul to the guidance of the divine spirit within, then we will stand with our brother as an I to a You. That choice, that faith, that stance, will bring about the spiritual transformation of mankind.

—Daniel Love Glazer
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

*"Science sorts men; religion loves men, even as yourself; wisdom does justice to differing men; but revelation glorifies man and discloses his capacity for partnership with God." (*1122:3)*