

May I introduce you to a most unusual book?

By Reverend Meredith Sprunger

Written in 1957, while Pastor of the Evangelical and Reformed Church of Christ, Culver, Indiana. Meredith Justin Sprunger was born in Woodburn, Indiana, on 16 April 1914. His degrees are the following: BA Mission House College, 1937, B.D. Mission House Seminary, 1940, Master's in Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1941, Ph D Psychology, Purdue University, 1947. He is a retired pastor of the United Church of Christ, and retired professor and chairman of the Liberal Arts department at the Indiana Institute of Technology. Dr Sprunger lives with his wife Irene in Indiana. They have been married over 65 years.

Every advance in knowledge is a disturbing and painful experience for man. This is true of both quantitative knowledge (science) and qualitative knowledge (religion). Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake for contending the earth was not in the center of the universe. Louis Pasteur was denounced by the learned men of his day when he contended that diseases were caused by germs. When William Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood, most of the physicians of his day who were over thirty-five continued the rest of their lives to believe there was no such thing. Shortly before Wilbur and Orville flew their first plane at Kitty Hawk, N. C. a distinguished scientist wrote a convincing article proving that it was scientifically impossible to fly a vehicle heavier than air. The list could go on and on.

Scientists, however, are not the only people afflicted with this type of myopic vision. Growth in religious insight has been plagued with even greater resistance and suffering. The prophets have been stoned; the saviors are crucified – by religious men and women who believe they are doing the will of God.

The basic error responsible for our historic resistance to truth, both scientific and religious, is mankind's tendency to accept second-hand, once removed sources of reality – usually authoritarianism and tradition. The Bible does not contain the word of God because our theological professors, our pastors or our parents say it does. It is not Eternal Truth because the prophets have seen visions or worked miracles. The ultimate authority of truth is its intrinsic, self validating nature. There is in every man a spark of the Divine which bear witness to the truth. The only way one can know the Bible contains the word of God is through this inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. “When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...and will declare to you the things that are to come.” John 16.13

With this background I should like to introduce you to a book which, at first impulse, you will no doubt reject. After this first impulse passes, I urge you – with all the sincerity and urgency at my command—to read and study this book carefully and critically. Remember that you never need fear truth and falsehood cannot stand careful scrutiny.

This book is entitled The Urantia Book. It was published by the Urantia Foundation, 533 Diversey Parkway, Chicago 14, Illinois, in 1955 and contains 2097 pages. Examining its contents you will discover that it claims to be written by numerous celestial beings as a special revelation to man living on this world, Urantia. It asserts that it contains the first major Divine Revelation since the coming of Christ to our planet. “These paper differ from all previous revelations, for they are not the work of a single universe personality (such as Melchizedek of Salem or Jesus of Nazareth), but a composite presentation of many beings. But no revelation short of the attainment of the Universal Father can ever be complete. All other celestial ministrations are no more than partial, transient, and practically adapted to local conditions of time and space. While such admissions as this may possibly detract from the immediate force and authority of all revelations, the time has arrived on Urantia when it is advisable to make such frank statements, even at the risk of weakening the future influence and authority of this, the most recent of the revelations of truth to the mortal races of Urantia.” Page 1008

The revelation was completed around 1934 and was placed in the custody of a select group of people known as the Forum. You will find these people of the highest caliber and unquestioned integrity. The first group was composed of seventy people under the leadership of Dr William S Sadler and his wife, Dr Lena Kellogg Sadler. They were a national prominent medical team until Dr Lena's death in 1939. As you may know, Dr Sadler was a pioneer in the development of American Psychiatry. He has written over twenty-five books, some of which have been standard text books in medical schools for many years. He was professor in the Post-Graduate Medical School of Chicago University and a lecturer in psychiatry at McCormick Theological Seminary for almost thirty years.

Finally permission was given to publish the Urantia Papers and The Urantia Book was released to the public in October 1955. At this time the Urantia Forum was organized into the Urantia Brotherhood with a constitution and by-laws. This was done largely as a defensive measure against fanatics who might get hold of the Book and attempt to start a new cult. Bill Sadler, Jr is the current president of the Urantia Brotherhood. Mr Sadler is an outstanding business man heading an agency which evaluates business executives and general plant efficiency of industrial institutions throughout North America.

I was personally introduced to the Urantia Book by Judge Louis M Hammerschmidt, a prominent lawyer, churchman, and public-minded citizen of South Bend; and W. F Harrah, president emeritus, and a founder of the National-Standard Co. (a large industrial firm of the US, Canada, and England), a man of exceptional ability, character, and integrity. All of these men and many others have approached the Urantia Papers with considerable skepticism but after careful study have become thoroughly convinced of their authenticity.

One would expect that any authentic revelation would be continuous with and not contrary to previous authentic revelations. Although the New Testament presents a loftier view than the Old Testament, it is continuous with it. You will discover this same parallel between the New Testament and the Urantia Book. Many of the things Bible student have wondered about and yearned to know are clarified in the Urantia Book

The easiest approach to the Urantia Book, but not the wisest, is to start with Part IV—The Live and Teaching of Jesus. A complete reading of Part IV is necessary for a minimal evaluation of the Urantia Book. But a better approach to the book is suggested below.

As you read the Urantia Book try to do so with an open mind and listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It stands or falls on its own inner validity or lack of it. If you only browse through the book, you will in all probability reject it. If you will read the entire book, you will almost certainly understand its immense significance. You will discover that it does not advocate a new religion. It cautions repeatedly concerning the danger of fanaticism. If your religious convictions are mature and if you have grown in reasonable spiritual insight, inspired by the teaching of Christ, you will find that reading and accepting the teaching of the Urantia Book will not change nay of your fundamental religious convictions and it will confirm many things which, through the guidance of the Spirit, you have surmised to be true. You will at last have a religious outlook that is worthy of the superlative teachings of Jesus concerning a loving Universal Father. Although the Urantia Book may not change your fundamental convictions, it will add tremendously to your knowledge of God.

A word of caution—many people are not ready for the Urantia Book. Recommend it to other only when you can do so from personal conviction growing out of a careful study of the book. And then only to those who are ready for it—people with open, progressive, courageous minds and high moral integrity.

Suggestions for reading the Urantia Book

1. For persons with a Christian background who are interested in the field of liberal arts.
Papers 100 – 103; and pages 2075 – 2086.
2. For those whose dominate interest is in the physical sciences:
Papers 41 – 42. (pp 355-484); and Paper 57 (pp 651 – 663).
3. For those whose dominate interest is in the biological sciences:
Papers 58 – 62 (pp 66 – 170).

For all three groups:

Page 215 (2nd paragraph to end of section);
Pages 1007 – 1010 (sections 4 & 5)

Then start at the beginning (Paper 1) and read the book through. Only then will you be in a position to evaluate its tremendous significance. Some sections will no doubt “go over your head” but later you will find that you received more than you realized. Remember that some of the advanced science courses you may have taken seemed incomprehensible at first. Recall that in your elementary mathematics courses you had to accept certain propositions and theorems in order to understand the course. Only much later in your training were you able to prove the validity of the original theorems. You will find this same parallel in studying the Urantia Book. The book can be adequately understood only in its totality.

Don't let the size of the Urantia Book discourage you. If you will average reading it an hour a day, you will finish it in six months. But if it should take you six years, you will no doubt find it the most rewarding study you have ever made. You will probably find that during the reading of the first section of the book, you will have the urge to throw it aside as impossible and preposterous. But if you will read on, one day you will realize what an amazingly consistent, homogenous, and reasonable book it is.