

[Up]

SHARING *THE URANTIA BOOK* IN ACCORD WITH ITS TEACHINGS

Jeffrey Wattles, April 2001

Recognizing *The Urantia Book* as a wonderful gift, we naturally want to introduce the book to others. The coming of the book is good news, and the book gives the good news of the gospel of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man in a way that is in some respects ideal. We are called to proclaim the gospel to all the world. Shall we therefore do the same with *The Urantia Book*? Some call for aggressive promotion of the book, while others adhere to the tradition of a quiet and gradual approach. Can we find guidance from the book?

There are three possible ways to use the book on controversial questions.

1. The one-sided warrior combs the book for quotations that can be taken out of context to support a particular ideology.
2. The pluralistic pacifist, reacting against the ugliness of the battle of the one-sided warriors, draws the sophistic conclusion that since "each side" can fabricate proof for its own position, the result is a draw, and anyone should feel free to opt for any policy in good conscience, safe in the belief that the book itself does not lean one way or the other. The pacifist looks down with condescension on the entire debate and appeals to loving tolerance as a substitute for sustained inquiry.
3. The seasoned scholar attempts to discern a guiding framework by reflecting on key passages in the light of a coordinated study of the book as a whole. The book thus does not leave us at sea without a star chart.

Though passages may be used to support opposing policies, a few clear distinctions unlock a coherent interpretation. Clarity dawns if we distinguish goals from methods, the book from its teachings, and exclusively spiritual revelations (to be proclaimed to all the world) from spiritual-and-cultural revelations (which spread in a gradual, evolutionary way). The book contains and implies many lessons that delineate a ballpark. No one will be perfectly accurate in calling foul balls. Some naturally hit to right field and some to left field. But some ideas are not even in the ballpark.

The main word of wisdom on this topic has been stated by Jesus:

When you enter the kingdom, you are reborn. You cannot teach the deep things of the spirit to those who have been born only of the flesh; first see that men are born of the spirit before you seek to instruct them in the advanced ways of the spirit. Do not undertake to show men the beauties of the temple until you have first taken them into the temple.
(1592.6)

Even this wisdom, however, does not completely instruct those who share the book today, and we need further study to gain the balance that we see in the Master's life.

Sharing truth as a normal part of personality relationships (31.6). It is also a sacred trust; Solitary Messengers regard the assignment to reveal truth as "the highest trust of their order" (260.2). And, as we know from experience, no matter how much we labor in "natural, ordinary, difficult, and trying methods," sharing truth is a delight (1521.2). For those who aspire to "walk in the clear light of living truth" and who would heed the principles of prayer before "surrender[ing] every wish of mind and every craving of soul" in quest of divine guidance, we should have been industrious, and this includes making a thorough study of the book itself for what guidance it offers (1571.5; 1002#9).

This essay includes many references for study and discussion. A study group years ago went through an earlier version of this essay. Initially they disagreed with these conclusions, but weeks of study and discussion convinced them otherwise. Because the present generation of readers seems, *on average*, hasty in sharing the book and tardy in sharing selected teachings--and since this is an essay on sharing the book--this essay places greater emphasis on the theme of gradual, evolutionary growth. It is my prayer that readers of differing views can sustain spiritual unity while considering this sometimes contentious issue. This essay will be in vain, however, if those who cherish book's wisdom use it as a rationale for fear, elitism, inaction, and failure to adapt lessons from earlier times to changing present circumstances.

Obviously *The Urantia Book* does not give precise policy details for any one generation of readers. It would betray the creative tensions deliberately introduced into the book itself to pretend to summarize everything too easily. Since the guidance from the book on this topic is largely indirect, since the historical situation continues to develop, and since individuals find themselves at times in exceptional circumstances, it would be unreasonable to pretend to derive an inflexible and dogmatic policy. Let me emphasize that the interpretations and conclusions offered here are mine alone and represent no official position whatsoever.

I. Gathering perspectives from a review of Parts I - IV

The perspective of Part I transcends the specific sequence of planetary epochs. It announces a process underway which began long ago and whose fulfillment is countless generations into the future.

The revelation of the truth about God is appearing, and the human race is destined to know the Universal Father in all that beauty of character and loveliness of attributes so magnificently portrayed by the Creator Son who sojourned on Urantia as the Son of Man and the Son of God. (60.6)

Among the many principles of sharing truth expressed in Part I, we note that those charged with the task of revealing universe truth are genuinely qualified for their work. They do not overreveal, and they give preference "to the highest existing human concepts" in their efforts to reach the human mind (330.2; 144#1; 207#1; 16.7; cf. 17.1; 1343).

Part II sets forth the normal pattern of evolution in which a planet receives a sequence of epochal revelations (576#5 and Paper 52). In "Urantia's Postbestowal Age" (597#6), Part II's most direct and relevant discussion of our topic, the author avoids any definite reference to *The Urantia Papers* themselves. Instead, after noting the importance of religious revelation, the author simply says that

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Jesus has shown the way, and goes on to call for various "personal transformations and planetary adjustments"--social fraternity, intellectual cross-fertilization, ethical awakening, political wisdom, and spiritual insight.

Part III helps us to distinguish wise, evolutionary methods from revolutionary methods by telling the stories of the successes and failures of the first three epochal revelations. At times the authors give general statements that are *directly applicable* today, while they more often present instructive narratives which we must *judiciously adapt* to present problems. Why are we given such detail about previous epochal revelations? If the purpose were merely to explain why the planet is in its present condition, less detail would be needed. It rather seems that we have an opportunity to gain wisdom by understanding past successes and failures, described in terms that invite judicious application by readers of the book. Except for occasional universal statements, such as the warning against short cuts (846.4), most comments on epochal revelation management are tied to the particular revelation in question and can only be extended with discrimination to a discussion about policies for sharing *The Urantia Book*.

The first epochal revelation ministered to the full range of human needs--spiritual, intellectual, and material. The Planetary Prince's staff had an early phase of gathering their associates, organizing their headquarters, and establishing their ten councils for service (575#4; 749#6). *They enjoyed 300,000 years of success by following the classic policy of evolutionary revelation:*

None of the Prince's staff would present revelation to complicate evolution; they presented revelation only as the climax of their exhaustion of the forces of evolution. (747.4; cf. 1002.8)

"Sometimes error is so great that its rectification by revelation would be fatal to those slowly emerging truths which are essential to its experiential overthrow" (554-55). Though word of the arrival of the Prince's staff spread slowly, very significant changes occurred under their influence (743.10). Although the college of revealed religion was slow in functioning and was thoroughly integrated with the program of the entire staff (747.3-6; 748.7), they went forth proclaiming a bold gospel of personal initiative to challenge the tradition-bound tribes of the day (749.4; 767.4).

There is a successful way to present spiritual truth within the context of a spiritual-and-cultural revelation, and Hap's college of revealed religion is our classical example. His teaching was thoroughly integrated with the program of the entire staff (743.4; 747.4-7; 748.7). In other words, the college of revealed religion did not go out proclaiming their message ahead of the rest. You were not ready to meet Hap and his associates until you were ready to meet all the other councils of the Prince's staff. The analogy for today--to whatever extent one wants to shape policy on the model of the First Epochal Revelation--is this: that one does not go forth advertising e.g., Part IV in ways that would be unwise regarding the other parts of the book.

Describing policies of gradualism in 749#6, the author notes--with the aid of a twentieth-century example--"the confusion and dismay which always result" as a result of **overteaching and overenlightenment.** One of their cardinal methods of "*slowly and naturally*" advancing their goals was that "the Prince's corporeal staff continuously gathered about them the superior individuals of the surrounding tribes and, after training and inspiring these students, sent them back as teachers and leaders of their respective peoples" (743.9). Their epochal revelation collapsed when some of them let pride and false freedom overturn the plan they had been given.

The second epochal revelation was also a ministry to the full range of planetary needs. An Adamic bestowal typically moves through two major phases, from limited contact with the planetary population to full interaction (585.6). However, although their training had given our Adam and Even "a full realization of the folly of attempting to achieve planetary advancement independently of the divine plan of progression" (830.6), progress was so slow and their situation seemed so desperate, that they became impatient to see some immediate results, and so they fell victim to "the insidious propaganda of personal liberty and planetary freedom of action" (840.2; 846.3). The lesson is sobering and universal, and it pertains to personal growth as well as to epochal revelation management. **"Never, in all your ascent to Paradise, will you gain anything by impatiently attempting to circumvent the established and divine plan by short cuts, personal inventions, or other devices for improving on the way of perfection, to perfection, and for eternal perfection"** (846.4). One of the most important lessons of the default is that the Luciferian sophistries of personal liberty and planetary freedom of action can infect even those who believe in the Universal Father and are working for a high planetary destiny.

The third epochal revelation was of a new type--an exclusively spiritual mission.

Like Jesus, Melchizedek attended strictly to the fulfillment of the mission of his bestowal. He did not attempt to reform the mores, to change the habits of the world, nor to promulgate even advanced sanitary practices or scientific truths. He came to achieve two tasks: to keep alive on earth the truth of the one God and to prepare the way for the subsequent mortal bestowal of a Paradise Son of that Universal Father. (1018.4)

Please note that the comparison of Melchizedek with Jesus establishes *a type of revelation in contrast with the earlier type*. Melchizedek's mission, however, also went through phases, not moving into high gear until after winning over Abraham.

Part IV tells of another exclusively spiritual epochal revelation, the life and teachings of Jesus. Jesus' strategy and tactics were neither impulsive or compulsive, since his spontaneity was grounded in decisions made in the light of thorough reflection. As an adolescent, he painstakingly thought through the forest of problems associated with his mission (1389#3). Later, after fully consecrating himself and formally beginning his public career, he took forty days in the wilderness to formulate the great decisions that would be his policies of epochal revelation management. He began by thinking over "the whole span of human life on Urantia, from the days of Andon and Fonta, down through Adam's default, and on to the ministry of the Melchizedek of Salem" (1514.6). The leading theme of these decisions was his carefully articulated resolve not to use the full revelatory powers at his disposal; in addition, he would rigorously avoid compromise with evil and would subordinate his inclinations on all other matters to the Father's will (1516-23). Jesus was "always torn in his human heart" between his strong desire to win the world and the Father's way (1515.1-2). Refusing false generosity and the cheap thrill of fascinating people with an overdose of revelation, Jesus chose "natural, ordinary, difficult, and trying methods" (1521.1). Once provisioned with such superbly clarified policy decisions, he could wholeheartedly go forth as the master teacher he was--focused, responsive, positive, free, vivid, and trusting. In these early days of the fifth epochal revelation, it is well for students to do likewise--to take the time required for patient problem-solving, for a thorough review of planetary history, and for careful policy-making.

Jesus' public career unfolded in an unforced rhythm of phases, with different reasons for the activities

and corresponding restraints appropriate at each step. In the first phase, Jesus made every effort to salvage the pre-existing religion--quietly and gradually to take over the work of John the Baptist (1626.2), before a phase of more aggressive, public work, oriented primarily, but not exclusively, to the Jews, with persistent efforts to win over the religious leaders. Until the last phase of his earth career, the epochal fact of Jesus' combined nature was concealed. In seeking instructive analogies between Jesus' ministry and the outworking of the fifth epochal revelation, recall that Jesus' earth career stretches over a few decades, while that of *The Urantia Book* is projected for a thousand years (330.2).

As a consequence of the specific nature of his project, and in accord with Immanuel's instructions (1329.5), Jesus excluded certain topics from public discussion.

He cautioned his apostles to be discreet in their remarks concerning the strained relations then existing between the Jewish people and the Roman government; he forbade them to become in any way embroiled in these difficulties. He was always careful to avoid the political snares of his enemies, ever making reply, "Render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's and to God the things which are God's." He refused to have his attention diverted from his mission of establishing a new way of salvation; he would not permit himself to be concerned about anything else. In his personal life he was always duly observant of all civil laws and regulations; in all his public teachings he ignored the civic, social, and economic realms. He told the three apostles that he was concerned only with the principles of man's inner and personal spiritual life. (1580.4)

Jesus, as previously noted, also imposed a second sort of restraint on his gospel messengers, based on his knowledge of the psychological laws of spiritual growth: we should not give advanced teaching to those not yet born of the spirit (1592.6).

We can infer from Jesus' strategy the principle to **act so as to avoid or delay an epochal confrontation** until it is unavoidable and imminent. Look how the youthful Jesus handled the shock of witnessing the Jerusalem temple scene for the first time. He repeatedly retired for meditation; he engaged the religious teachers in questions that imparted teachings, but he remained free of any attempt to win victories (1377ff). Note that after Jesus' public career was underway, even the opposition in Jerusalem (1605.3) and the Nazareth rejection (1686) did not justify the change of tactics of Jesus' epochal sermon (1709). Only the organized opposition of the religious leaders signaled him to declare open warfare (1708.2). Again, to delay epochal confrontation does not mean to avoid all controversy. Rather the wise teacher proclaims just that truth with the greatest leverage for people's growth at that time.

The two concluding Papers of Part IV review history since Pentecost and provide an invigorating and balancing conclusion for Part IV and for the book as a whole. They also say several things, to which we will turn presently, that directly address our present question.

II. Principles of method

1. Be patient.

Attitude is the foundation of method. Is an attitude of patience one extreme along a spectrum of http://www.personal.kent.edu/~jwattles/index.htm/share_ub.htm

reasonable attitudes, or could patience possibly be the very golden mean itself? A passage in Part II describing the Quickeners of Morality presents patience as the mean between stagnation and overrapid growth. Impatience, we recall, is "a spirit poison" (557.4). True patience is not passivity. It is an active attitude infused with enthusiasm for the cosmic rhythms in which we participate as we farsightedly actualize destiny (1295.6). Patience is compatible with properly focused aggressive action.

2. Distinguish goals from methods.

We can be enthusiastic about goals while heeding wisdom about methods. The papers contain many clarion calls alerting the reader to goals. For example, at the close of Paper 94, Melchizedek Teachings in the Orient, the author speaks about twentieth-century Buddhism, asks how it will respond to "the presentation of new concepts of God and the Absolute" (possibly by those who carry the teachings as well as by the book itself).

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)

And there are other clarion calls signaling urgent planetary needs for truth. The traditional religious records are "untrustworthy as guides for religious living or as the source of true information about the Universal Father" (59.7). Moreover, "revelation is the only technique for atoning for this deficiency in the conceptual data which man so urgently needs in order to construct a logical philosophy of the universe and to arrive at a satisfying understanding of his sure and settled place in that universe" (1137.3). Moreover we live in turbulent times; "And such times of great testing and threatened defeat are always times of great revelation" (2082.9).

If we take these statements of goals out of context of the book as a whole, they might seem to justify revolutionary policies of sharing *The Urantia Book*. Or we might feel that they stand in tension with other statements in the book which talk about wise, evolutionary progress. But so long as we distinguish enthusiasm about goals from wisdom about methods, we can be inspired by these statements without becoming confused. Our concern about methods should channel, not block, our enthusiasm.

3. Give advanced spiritual teachings only to those who already know God.

The clearest and simplest principle, quoted earlier, is this one of Jesus.

"When you enter the kingdom you are reborn. You cannot teach the deep things of the spirit to those who have been born only of the flesh; first see that men are born of the spirit before you seek to instruct them in the advanced ways of the spirit. Do not undertake to show men the beauties of the temple until you have first taken them into the temple" (1592.7-1593.1).

Jesus presented this requirement without qualification, not as a lofty ideal to be gradually approached, nor as a high standard for apostles as distinct from disciples. How then shall advanced truths be promulgated? Jesus wanted his messengers to learn to live the truth, so that people would then seek

after them for additional teachings (1726.3; 1592.4; cf. 507.4; 2084.1). Today we tend to regard that ideal as unrealistic. Or are we the ones who are unrealistic? There is such wisdom about the laws of growth and the ways of teaching imbedded in this teaching that it is worth considerable inquiry. Melchizedek followed the same policy, presenting advanced teachings only to those who could handle them (1916-17). *The Urantia Book* presents the beauties of the temple. So we should present the book only to those whom we know to be born of the spirit.

Despite its importance, even this teaching is not an absolute guide for us today. If we were to apply it mindlessly, we would cease discussing the book on websites or placing it in bookstores and libraries (though presumably the purpose of making the book publicly available is not to grab the attention of passers-by, but to enable those who are receptive to find it). Nevertheless, Jesus' principle greatly guides our quest for wisdom as we design projects and policies.

4. Living interaction normally precedes presenting the whole revelation.

It is clear that revelation is to come partly by the lives we live: "The world needs to see Jesus living again on earth in the experience of spirit-born mortals who effectively reveal the Master to all men" (2084.1). Of course the book itself is to play an important role. "The great hope of Urantia lies in the possibility of a new revelation of Jesus with a new and enlarged presentation of his saving message which would spiritually unite in loving service the numerous families of his present-day professed followers" (2086.2). "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) It is a lot easier to hand someone a book than to impart the gospel, and a higher achievement still to love someone in a way that incorporates the gospel and the book in due season.

5. It is perfectly legitimate to present the teachings of an epochal revelation without disclosing the epochal fact.

If the only tool you have is a hammer, you'll treat everything as if it were a nail. If we make *The Urantia Book* mandatory in our ministry, we fall into this elementary blunder. It would destroy sagacity and good taste to feel honor-bound to reveal your source every time you mention a truth that you found in *The Urantia Book*. This is not to deny the book can achieve results that human efforts cannot. The practice of presenting revealed teachings without mentioning the fact of epochal revelation is sometimes called "bootlegging," connoting something devious. Nevertheless the previous two epochal revelations did precisely that. Melchizedek did not initially announce the epochal fact--that he was superhuman--and he departed when he began to be regarded with superstitious awe. He did not overteach, but presented what the listener was capable of receiving and assimilating (1016.6-8) (note the high marks given to Ikhnoton and Moses for judiciously adjusting high teachings to the receptivity level of their hearers [1047.6; 1056#4]). When the epochal fact was prematurely announced by Anna and Simeon (1353), the baby Jesus was murderously pursued (1353#10). Notice how Jesus managed his epochal revelation for most of his career. He prepared the teachers in Rome for a message that would come to them only later. He often taught without disclosing the fuller package and greatly delayed announcing his divine Sonship, and he insisted that the gospel not be upstaged by the epochal fact (1670.5; 2052.4.) **Why did Melchizedek and Jesus defer mentioning the epochal fact? They knew that attention would focus less on the main message than on the fascinating, extraordinary source.** When the proper sequence of gospel truth and advanced teachings was inverted, the religion *of* Jesus was turned into a religion *about* Jesus (2086.1). It could happen again with this book, just as unconsciously, and with intentions just as good.

In most situations, it is wise to disseminate the teachings of *The Urantia Book* without mentioning the book itself. As a scholar writing for publication, I cite *The Urantia Book* in a footnote as required by integrity and professional ethics. I recall, however, that years after publishing an article in which I cited a major debt to *The Urantia Book*, I was asked by a fellow scholar who read it about my interest in the book. In his mind, my connection with the book upstaged what I had to say. Therefore, I often try to write with enough originality and enough engagement in current discussions so as not to need to cite the book as a major source. The issue calls for good judgment, and I continue to seek it in particular cases.

Some people object to presenting the teachings of *The Urantia Book* without presenting the book itself because it seems somehow secretive, and many people feel uncomfortable about that. In each Part of the book, however, the authors speak with respect of certain kinds of secrets. In evaluating the ethics of omitting or delaying giving certain information the following points may be considered. There are secrets for various reasons (144#1; 207#1). The information may be incomprehensible (for the time being or forever) (79.1; 144.4; 145.1; 219.3); there may be a violation of personal intimacy (208.4; 208.5) or of reverence (603.3). The information may be irrelevant to someone's work (144.6; 147.5; 149.6; 350.6) or even harmful to someone's work--it might "confuse and handicap" the person (145.1; 148.5; 149.6) or stifle the imagination (330.2).

As Jesus grew, he disclosed less information about himself (1391.4-5). He dissociated the phases of his career (1423.5-8). He restrained talk of the voice at his baptism (1545.4). He restrained public preaching during the early phase of kingdom work (1538.3). He forbade denunciations of Caesar or his servants and told the apostles to stay out of political, social, and economic tangles (1542.5; 1580-81). He tried to keep his healings quiet. He presented his teachings in parables, partly as a defensive measure to confuse superficial hearers (1749.4). He gave special teaching to those (e.g., Nathaniel) who were ready for it and who promised not to share it with others (1767.4). He restricted some meetings for counsel and planning to those who were tried and tested disciples (1717.4). Note further his selective answering of questions in his trial (1979.3; 1982.7,9; 1983c; 1984.2; 1986.3; 1990d; 1992.5; 1996.1). And note the contrast between the Master's discretion and the evasion of Peter's denial. Jesus recommended that our real prayers be in secret (1640.2). We are cautioned not to waste our time trying to unravel the mysteries of his incarnation (1317.2) and excarnation (2021.4-9).

What shall we conclude? At the very least, we need not be haunted by guilt if, in many a situation, we do not disclose our reliance on *The Urantia Book*, but rather simply tend to others' immediate needs.

6. Spiritual-and-cultural revelations spread gradually.

One may classify epochal revelations in terms of the types of project they promote--or avoid promoting. *The first type of epochal revelation is a spiritual-and-cultural revelation.* Such a revelation includes spiritual teaching and also addresses social, economic, and political matters. The Planetary Prince's staff had a college of revealed religion with a gospel to proclaim; and they also taught how to irrigate fields, trap ferocious beasts, select marriage partners, improve tribal governments, etc. Adam and Eve taught the basics of religion and conducted worship; and they also set up a school system, worked for racial uplift, and promoted cultural progress. *The second type of epochal revelation, exemplified by Melchizedek and Jesus, is a specifically spiritual revelation.* The second type does not set forth or engage in cultural uplift projects.

Roughly speaking, each type of revelation has its proper velocity of propagation. A Mack truck is not

a Ferrari. The motto of specifically spiritual revelation is, "Proclaim this gospel aggressively to all the world." More people are receptive to the simple gospel than to spiritual-and-cultural revelation, and responding to a gospel message entails fewer changes for the recipient (911.5). The motto of spiritual-and-cultural revelation is "gradual and solid growth."

Failure to heed instructions and blindness to patterns and principles doesn't work. You can't drive a Mack truck like a Ferrari, at least not for long. If you drive it around a curve too fast, it tips over. Disaster has followed when spiritual-and-cultural revelations tried to go artificially fast and when specifically spiritual revelations became entangled in social and cultural reforms. After leaders of the first epochal revelation shifted into high gear, the enterprise came to a halt within fifty years (758#5). After Adam and Eve defaulted, Plan A was lost, and they had to improvise Plan B (843#5). Specifically spiritual revelations have had analogous problems. The Salem gospel was progressing well in Mesopotamia until the leader decided to attack a practice associated with the local cult (1043.1-4). Christianity has suffered from mixing religion with other concerns (2069.3; 2086.6; 1087.4-5). Past carriers of epochal revelation who violated their instructions could hardly have predicted the consequences. If someone had warned them accurately of what lurked beyond their proposals, he or she would have been laughed out of their company as a fear-monger. One lesson of the Adamic default is that Luciferian sophistries of personal liberty and planetary freedom of action can infect even those who believe in the Universal Father and labor toward a high planetary destiny. Only hindsight would inform them of what they had done.

How does *The Urantia Book* fit into the preceding classification of types of epochal revelation? Is it a spiritual-and-cultural revelation or a specifically spiritual revelation? Some readers get confused because the book describes both types. However, the fact that *The Urantia Book* includes instructions for the full range of projects puts it in the first category. It presents teachings about spiritual and religious priorities and also about science, eugenics, world government, and other social, economic, and political topics--and it remains important to keep these types of project distinct today, lest religious groups become political parties (1086-89; 2085.5). The fact that *The Urantia Book* is an advanced spiritual-and-cultural revelation implies that the book not be treated as a tool of evangelization; rather the movement of students of *The Urantia Book* should follow the rhythms of solid and sure growth. On the river of truth, the gospel is the ice-breaker; *The Urantia Book* is the cargo ship that follows it.

7. Screening for receptivity and safety is normal in sharing a spiritual-and-cultural revelation.

Epochal revelations are oriented to groups with high average receptivity in order to reach actually receptive *individuals*. The first two epochal revelations sought out superior individuals (575.2; 585.6; 743.10), and analogous factors operated in the third and fourth epochal revelations (1018.7; 1344.2). Jesus gave advanced teachings to selected individuals (1456; 1767#4).

We would like to introduce the revelation to those who are receptive and avoid those who might harm it. Thus some screening of prospects for epochal revelation is appropriate. This is a hard topic, but we all use an intuitive sense of what is appropriate to bring up in a given conversation. To put a big log on a little fire just kindled can extinguish the fire, whereas once it is burning brightly, the big log is just right. There is a danger of elitism and pride in raising the question of who is ready for the book, and we don't want to judge people. Nevertheless, if we want to learn what *The Urantia Book* can teach on this subject, we must consider the topic. Discernment is not judging people, not judging souls. Screening is a matter of being wise as serpents, even as we intend to be harmless as doves.

The screening policies of previous epochal revelations show two basic kinds of screening. The first type is **screening for receptivity**. We who have a complex epochal revelation to share need a complex concept of receptivity. Receptivity to *The Urantia Book* is not the same as the need for new truth or even receptivity to selected ideas from the book. The practices of previous epochal revelations suggest four guidelines for us to consider:

(a) Seek out superior individuals, prospective teachers and leaders. The Prince's corporeal staff continuously gathered about them the superior individuals of the surrounding tribes and, after training and inspiring these students, sent them back as teachers and leaders of their respective peoples. (743; cf. 575.2)

(b) Seek out those with marked religious capacity, particularly those with experience in some religion. The evolution of the religious capacity of receptivity in the inhabitants of a world largely determines their rate of spiritual advancement and the extent of religious revelation (591.3). "The characteristic difference between evolved and revealed religion is a new quality of divine wisdom which is added to purely experiential human wisdom. But it is experience in and with the human religions that develops the capacity for subsequent reception of increased bestowals of divine wisdom and cosmic insight" (1101.5).

(c) Seek out those whose who are mentally flexible and whose ideas already agree substantially with those of *The Urantia Book*. "But it is only foolish to attempt the too sudden acceleration of religious growth. A race or nation can only assimilate from any advanced religion that which is reasonably consistent and compatible with its current evolutionary status, plus its genius for adaptation" (1004.8-1005.1). "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. Always must the religion of revelation be limited by man's capacity of receptivity" (1007.1). Some people are simply not ready yet. Jesus observed of one man that "he must be allowed more time for the trials and difficulties of life to prepare him for the reception of wisdom and higher learning" (1466.2).

For whom is the fifth epochal revelation intended? Another clue is to try to discern from the text itself what beliefs and knowledge seem to be presupposed by the authors. That may indicate to what type of reader it is initially--though not exclusively--directed.

The second type of screening is **screening for safety to the revelation**. "Unarmed observers were freely admitted to Eden for short visits. To sojourn in the Garden a Urantian had to be 'adopted.' He received instructions in the plan and purpose of the Adamic bestowal, signified his intention to adhere to this mission, and then made declaration of loyalty to the social rule of Adam and the spiritual sovereignty of the Universal Father" (835.8). The prohibition against arms of course reminds us that visitors could do harm to the Garden inhabitants. The initial screening here is protective. Recall that

Jesus advocated protective screening in the Ordination Sermon: "Present not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample your gems under foot and turn to rend you" (1571.6).

What dangers require screening in our day? Most obviously, we would prefer to avoid bringing the revelation to the notice of those who would become its enemies. Less obviously, it would also be good to screen out revolutionary friends--those whose enthusiasm for the revelation would lack respect for evolution. Revolutionary efforts multiply enemies and precipitate premature conflict.

The Urantia Book takes on the powers of this world. It challenges the nationalism of every nation that regards itself as sovereign, the materialism of every business enterprise that subordinates service to profit, the authority of every religious tradition, and the secularism of any society that tries to live without God. And the response to the book may be proportionate to the book's power, now hardly suspected. Those of us accustomed to centuries of civil liberties may take too much for granted (1302.4). It strains my imagination to think that we readers will never encounter persecution, sometime, somewhere in the world. If and when this becomes inevitable, let us rejoice in sharing the experiences of the prophets before us. But let us not bring down a stormy atmosphere prematurely on others who would otherwise have an opportunity to grow in peace.

The point of this remark is not that we should avoid all controversy. The Planetary Prince's staff, for example, proclaimed "the gospel of individual initiative" within the tradition-bound social groups of that day (749.4). The point is that the most strategic points should be selected whereon controversy is timely.

In practice, how are we to do our screening? We are told that we can never know a person as a result of a single contact (141.3). Moreover, understanding requires knowing the individual's motivation (1098.2). This is a demanding requirement, sometimes too high. In my own experience, there is a qualitative difference between the times when I notice someone who seems "ready" to me, and the times when someone asks a question which is unwittingly but unmistakably a request for *The Urantia Book*. I actually pray that the person will make such a quest as an aid to discerning whether I should introduce *The Urantia Book*. We cannot operate humanely if we take guidelines as absolutes or become anxious about our inability to apply them perfectly. But if we go to the other extreme and refuse to accept the responsibility of discernment, I believe that we let the revelators down.

In sharing truth, some risks are reasonable; some are unreasonable. And those elites who run unreasonable risks do so not just for themselves, but for all of us, and for the fifth epochal revelation. If we do our best in the light of all the instructions we can derive from higher sources, we can truly be content. During this early phase when massive exposure for the book would guarantee nearly universal rejection, if we spend the lion's share of our time on projects that fall clearly within the ballpark indicated by *The Urantia Book* itself, and if we sustain commitments to ethical procedures, we will see a great reduction in energy-consuming organizational controversy and prepare for those anticipated, thrilling planetary developments for which we may be none too ready when the time comes--or which we may not see in our own lifetimes.

In practice, we are normally far more relaxed about mentioning the book with others than were those who had to protect the early epochal revelations, and I believe that this is almost always good. The point of this study, however, is to make us stop and ponder a bit.

8. Our policies should fit the timing of the world-wide mission of the fifth epochal revelation.

One pattern in epochal revelation is that they do not just explode upon the planet. They unfold in stages. The Adamic bestowal exemplifies a two-stage epochal revelation: a phase of partial contact with the planetary population and a phase of full contact (586.6). There is some analogy to this two-stage revelation to be found in other revelations. The Planetary Prince's staff had an early period of gathering their associates (including the procreation of the primary midwayers), organizing their headquarters, and establishing their ten councils for service. Melchizedek's mission did not go into high gear with sustaining drive until he had fully won over Abraham. And Jesus' mission advanced through a series of stages, even after his public career had begun.

How will we know when the times comes to shift into broader public interface with *The Urantia Book*? There is an impressive consensus that we need thousands of study groups plus translations into major languages plus prepared teachers and leaders. We must be ready to handle the intense questioning and confusion inevitable when the gold rush for truth is on. Another criterion is a settled, stable, peaceful world order.

As a teacher, I know that my first job is to "wake up the question"--to get others to ask the question on which I want to focus. If I proceed to give teaching in answer a question that others are not asking, I largely waste my message. I believe that there is also a timed meeting between planetary question and universe answer. What if we pre-empt the rhythm of readiness with premature publicity? The drama of the timed meeting of planetary question and universe answer will be partly lost. Pearl casting precipitates premature rejection and conflict. Aggressively publicizing *The Urantia Book* could result in a step backwards. It has happened before--"the weakening of Vedism through the rejection of higher truth" (1028.5). Note that negligence in failing to reach out appropriately with the teachings and the book can also interfere with the timing. Foolish haste or laziness could abort a great hope--with consequences that we do not imagine. What if we work with wise methods? The heart leaps to contemplate the harvest!

Our sincere desire to do things right is met by a wonderful promise. The patient pursuit of wise evolutionary policies may have rapid and dramatic results. "Evolutionary" seems like a synonym for "slow," and as a first approximation, that is correct (749#6). But evolutionary patience does not mean permanent slow motion. If we grow more, the effectiveness of our outreach will multiply. Sometimes evolution moves quickly. "The order of progressive evolution is subjected to sudden and unexpected periodical changes in both the material and the spiritual worlds" (1863.7). "When physical conditions are ripe, sudden mental evolutions may take place; when mind status is propitious, sudden spiritual transformations may occur . . ." (740.2). The teachings and conduct of the newly arrived Prince's staff had a tremendous influence on nearby tribes (743.10). There is a similar, immediate impact from a normal Adamic mission (586.5). And great possibilities are again with us. After assuring us of the long time it will take to obliterate social class differences through racial, educational, and religious progress, we are told that "much social improvement will immediately result from the intelligent, wise, and patient manipulation of these acceleration factors of cultural progress" (793.8). And there is an intriguing possibility: "The social readjustments, the economic transformations, the moral rejuvenations, and the religious revisions of Christian civilization would be drastic and revolutionary if the living religion of Jesus should suddenly supplant the theologic religion about Jesus" (2090.3).

Suppose someone says that in this time of accelerated change, the old evolutionary methods are obsolete. This is like saying that when you hit white water rapids, you can jettison the fundamentals of canoeing. During a period of rapid change, we must still be faithful to the essentials. "And only by adherence to these essentials can man hope to maintain his present-day civilizations while providing

for their continued development and certain survival" (912.1).

We must not panic. The revelators of the Urantia Papers anticipated world war at the same time that they predicted a spiritual renaissance (2082.5,7). Being faithful to essentials blocks foolish and harmful projects but does not stifle the progressively aggressive individual (1027.1).

There are many projects with the *teachings* of the book that fall clearly within the scope of reasonableness, projects that call for public work now.

Evolution is not always slow; but evolution always works. It succeeds where even revelation fails (900.5; 937.6; 990.5). So if we handle our new epochal revelation in ways that squarely align with the tried and true methods of evolutionary revelation, we are sure to be contributing to success. The pursuit of evolutionary methods, however slow they may seem to be, is certain to succeed. Revelation's contribution is fragile; it needs to be handled with wise evolutionary hands.

What is the plan for *The Urantia Book*? Interpretations vary. Here is mine. Recall that the first two epochal revelations had a Plan A, but had to improvise a Plan B; Jesus' Plan A was to win over the Jewish leaders and have the network of synagogues become the distribution channel for the new gospel, while Plan B was to move the center of the gospel movement to the west.

Jesus' teachings are also to function as the foundation of a new and higher civilization (1720.3). This project is in some ways quite unusual. Normally, there is a sequence of revelations, each building upon the previous ones. On the basis of missions that establish the general cultural integrity (educational, familial, intellectual), the spiritual revelation proceeds. The Bestowal Son's spiritualizing mission arrives as the center gem-stone in the lovely ring crafted by the Planetary Prince's staff and the Adamic mission and the intellectual achievements sponsored by the Magisterial Son (591-97). But Jesus arrived to spiritualize a planet whose culture was at best very partial and fragmentary. Because of the rebellion and the default, the relative absence of spiritual-and-cultural revelation on our planet inverts the normal relationship between the kind of epochal mission that serves as the foundation and the kind that thrives on that foundation. Now we are being asked, roughly, to rebuild the culture on a spiritual foundation. *The Urantia Book* can help us to achieve that civilization, giving guidelines to help us make up for lost revelations.

Christianity is in crisis (2082#9). It is the leading world religion, the greatest exponent of Jesus' teachings and the greatest obstacle to them (2085.1-2). The religion of Jesus is guaranteed to triumph (1608.1). Will the great hope of Urantia--for the new revelation to unify the followers of Jesus--be fulfilled (2086.2)?

This epochal revelation is destined to benefit all religions, all peoples; it serves precisely to break down religious barriers, e.g., between those who regard themselves as followers of Jesus and those who do not (1010.4). But Plan A seems to be for *The Urantia Book* to be presented to Christianity in such a way that it gets accepted by a critical mass of believers. If we present the book badly, will it be forced to retire to the libraries and study groups of an enthusiastic minority who wait for another Son to vindicate their loyalty? Our policies and conduct will greatly influence the outcome. I do not mean that readers should focus solely on Christianity or distort their teachings to appeal to Christianity, or join in Christian worship if they have no desire to do so, or regard Christians as "better" than adherents of other religions or as the chosen recipients of the fifth epochal revelation. I do mean that there are some historical street-smarts clearly evident in Jesus' policies that have analogues today.

Readers who arrive at Papers 195 and 196 having digested the lessons of previous epochal revelations are prepared to make wise use of the vigorous and specific directives given there. Plan A for *The Urantia Book* seems to be based on the recognition of the need of Christianity for "a new vision of the Master's life on earth" and the promise of "a new and fuller revelation of the religion of Jesus" to overcome mechanism and naturalism (2082.7).

How is the "great revelation" (2082.8) to become effective?

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 coming 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. (2082.9)

There follows an appeal for "firsthand religion" and a remarkable musing about how dynamic it would be if people could "see Jesus as he really lived on earth and know, firsthand, his life-giving teachings!" (2083.4) If this seeming fantasy is puzzling, suspense is promptly removed: "The world needs to see Jesus living again on earth in the experience of spirit-born mortals who effectively reveal the Master to all men" (2084.1). Talk of revelation refers here primarily to what transpires *in the lives of believers*. In the next passage, such talk seem to refer as much to the lives of transformed believers as to the book: "The great hope of Urantia lies in the possibility of a new revelation of Jesus with a new and enlarged presentation of his saving message which would spiritually unite in loving service the numerous families of his present-day professed followers" (2086.2).

The creative design of Paper 196 is instructive. It opens with an invigorating portrait of that very Jesus whom we are to reveal in our lives, and then restates Plan A in the first section. "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) The paper does not end by sending us forth like missionaries shot from a cannon. Instead, it culminates with a section integrating the dynamic vision of religion with the balanced perspective of the book as a whole. The authors note that progress stems from "*revelational evolution*" (2904.14). It seems reasonable to interpret that our (evolutionary) way of living is to be revelatory and our use of the fifth epochal revelation is to be evolutionary. The final paragraphs redirect us to "the great challenge to modern man," achieving better contact with the indwelling spirit, and to the life in the Creator Son, and back to the Father.

Plan A for the fifth epochal revelation seems to have the following features:

1. *The stimulus*. Although not every student of *The Urantia Book* is called to this project, the fifth epochal revelation calls for a vanguard of teachers who adhere to the specifics of the spiritual mission of the gospel movement. Such teachers of Jesus' religion (who need not necessarily know *The Urantia Book*) are to live the gospel so radiantly and with such second-miler service that they reveal the living Jesus to other people (2084.5). The new revelation of Jesus' life and teachings emerges as transformed believers engage in

revelatory living. Recall that Jesus, appearing to Greek and Jewish believers, said, "You are all to proclaim this gospel of love and truth by the lives which you live in the flesh" (2044.3).

2. *A special emphasis.* Although these teachers are to proclaim the gospel to all peoples and to the members of all religions, although there is a certain emphasis on Christianity (1041.4; 2086.2; 2090.3; 1866.4).

3. *A new vehicle of advanced teaching.* Those spirit-born individuals who are found receptive will be introduced to *The Urantia Book*.

4. *The results.* The refreshed, expanded, and reunified Jesus brotherhood will play a major role in the spiritual renaissance, sparking a planetary reorganization.

I infer that putting the lion's share of our energies into participating in this plan directly and supporting it indirectly is the proper way to ensure the success of the fifth epochal revelation. The corollary is that making the book itself our major project is the shortsighted shortcut.

III. Conclusions

Each epochal revelation has its disciplines. Beneficiaries of the first had to return to their native regions as teachers. Guests in the Garden had to give up multiple mates. The primary messengers of the third and fourth epochal revelations had to leave social, economic, and political reconstruction to their hearers. Maybe the students of the fifth epochal revelation are expected to forego treating *The Urantia Book* as a gospel. We tend to want to do it all, to have ourselves or our organizations fill both the functions--the function of spreading a deep and thorough spiritual-and cultural revelation and the function of the kind of dynamism that suits the gospel movement. We cannot drive the Mack truck like a Ferrari. The many urgent calls to proclaim the gospel must not be taken out of context and applied to *The Urantia Book* itself. The book does not precede or accompany the public gospel message, but follows it. From the day of the bestowal of the Spirit of Truth, Peter and his associates inverted the gospel and featured as the leading edge of their proclamation truths which were supposed to be grasped secondarily. As a result, acceptance of Jesus' divine Sonship became the gateway to the Christian proclamation of the Father's love. Countless people naturally stumbled at this gate, and the brotherhood of man has suffered. Today, an overemphasis on the book rather than the realities it discloses unwittingly fosters a religion about *The Urantia Book* (2086.1).

Those who desire to be primarily active in bringing the book to those who are ready for it have many frontiers for fully legitimate and heroic activity. They can move to areas where no study group exists, and get to know people, introduce them selectively to the book, and start a study group. They can get to know individuals in a local religious or other group where they are likely to meet a high proportion of candidates for the book. They can even start up correspondence with internet acquaintances or with authors who have published forward-thinking articles and introduce the book in the context of a flourishing relationship. And many other projects fall within the ballpark delineated by the foregoing principles. We do not have to choose between do-nothing stagnation and risky publicity. There are many superb endeavors that are being largely neglected.

Students who desire to introduce *The Urantia Book* to others in accord with its teachings learn to work with evolutionary resources and to attract prospective readers by revelatory living. Seeking out

groups with high average receptivity, and sharing appropriate truths, they do not confuse the book with the gospel, and they avoid pearl casting. They get to know receptive individuals by meeting together more than once, and they see that the individual is born of the spirit. When they discern cultural as well as spiritual receptivity, they introduce such individuals to the fifth epochal revelation in loyalty and joy and trust.

These ideals are so challenging that it is tempting to pursue an easier path. It is understandable that we err, on account of the complexity of our book, the mistakes of certain leaders, and the material emotions that course through the limited minds of every one of us. But experimenting with unreasonable publicity for the book takes risks for all of us and for posterity; and such conduct consumes precious time on the part of our unseen friends who are obliged to devote themselves to damage limitation.

By the mercy of God we can do better. We can enlist as mortal partners on a great team. We can prepare to reap the mixed seed that has been sown and to lay more solid foundations for the future. Responsible readers experiment *within* the guidelines, not *with* the guidelines. What a gift to posterity to conduct ourselves henceforth in accord with the teachings of the book entrusted to us! We shall broadcast selected teachings, especially with the gospel, and wisely share the book itself with receptive individuals who, for the most part, we find already "in the temple."