

How the Urantia Papers Came into Existence



William S. Sadler, Jr.

The following is transcribed from a tape recording made in the home of Berkeley Elliott on February 18, 1962. On this occasion, William S. Sadler, Jr., was talking with the study group there assembled. These are comments which he made on this occasion concerning the origin of the Urantia Papers.

Many years ago my parents, who were physicians, had brought to their attention this individual who had some rather strange things happening to him. In one of the books my father wrote, "The Mind at Mischief", he made mention of this case in the last part of the book – in the Appendix which was published in the 1920's. My father had spook-hunting as a hobby. He was an exposer of mediums. He had two running mates – the head of the psychology department at Northwestern University and Howard Thurston, a professional magician. Take a physician, a psychologist and a magician, and God help the medium. There is a book now out of print which my father wrote called "The Truth About Spiritualism" in which he puts so-called spiritualists as falling into one of two categories. There are practicing frauds – deliberately working for gain or for glory – and there are people who are self-deceived. I think in that book he says "with one possible exception."

These two physicians [Dr. and Mrs. Sadler] became interested in this case. This man would go to sleep and he'd talk and what came out was intriguing and different. He was never interested in the lost watch or the stock market or in talking with your Uncle George who had passed on – never anything practical. This was different; distinctly offbeat. About this time a Sunday evening meeting came to be organized at our house. It came about when Pop was giving a commencement address at Ames. I was in High School at the time and he wrote me a letter saying that we were not church people but that Sunday should be productive as well as a day of rest. He asked what I would say if they invited in some friends and they had a discussion group – kind of a forum – and talked about health and history and politics, etc. That group came into existence in, I think, 1922. This group became interested in spiritualism because Pop was writing on that subject at the time.

My dad was mischievous – there was a mind-reading show – vaudeville at McVickers. Pop attended twice. He took a pair of wire cutters and clipped the wires that hooked the guy in the audience with the gal on the stage. At which point she fainted and they asked if there was a doctor in the audience, and Pop had the gall to go back and take care of her. "At about this time I was in Nicaragua so some of what I tell you is hearsay. 1924 to 1928 will be hearsay, but subsequent to 1928 I'll give you direct information. The question came up whether all such phenomena is fraudulent. My dad was an honest guy so he said there was one such case that was a puzzle. So they asked him to tell them about it. So the forum became intrigued with the shorthand notes that had been taken of things this man talked about.

One evening when they were talking to this chap, a kind of an argument came up. They were talking with someone who claimed to be a "Mighty Messenger." They asked if he could prove he was a Mighty Messenger. "No," he said, "but you can't prove I'm not either. If you knew what I know, you wouldn't ask these half-baked questions. You would prepare some of the most deep, searching and far-reaching questions you could possibly imagine."

My father was half English and half Irish and he got kind of mad – they were checking out this phenomena and here they were being challenged. Pop looked at the others in the group and said, "Let's take him up on it."

So the next Sunday when the Forum met the whole group came in on the deal. I was told that approximately five thousand questions were given. Some were silly – how old is God, who created him, and so forth. What happened was this – one day the questions were gone and where the questions were kept was the first of the Urantia Papers and was entitled, "The Universal Father."

I'll tell you how I think this paper was written. And my theory is not one-hundred percent correct. But it's the best I can find. Visualize several places in space – points A, B, C and D. I think the papers were dictated or conceived at point A and had we been there when any of these papers were written we would have seen nothing. A Divine Counselor is presenting his concepts in the language of Uversa. A translator is there who translates it into the language of Salvington. There is another translator there who translates from the language of Salvington to the language of Satania and another translator who translates from Satania into English. You cannot translate from Uversa into English because the languages are too far apart. "I suspect that 99% of the original concept was lost in translation – English is too primitive a language. Take Bantu where they have one, two and then "many" – the end of their numbers – and you want to translate into large number systems, you simply can't do it. See the problem?

Point A was linked by some sort of communication circuit to point B. At point B there would be something to see, but it would be rather dull. It would be a man asleep – doing nothing. Remember the resurrection and the way the stone was moved by the Midwayers? At point C you would see a pencil moving over paper with no visible means of motion. That's where the physical writing took place. Now point D would be where we found the papers. This individual was never seen to write one of these papers – and don't think we weren't wearing gumshoes looking. If he wrote them he was more clever than us – he was never observed to write them.

We tried everything we could think of to see how this was being done, but were baffled. The text was entirely written in pencil – all in the handwriting of this individual who remarked that if they ever wanted to draw on his bank account he'd be a dead duck because the bank would pay on their signature.

Who was this guy? I took an oath not to divulge who he was. That was required of all who know his identity and it was required by the commissioner who sponsored the last of the papers. We think we know why it was required. He would have asked us to maintain secrecy. One of the reasons this chap was picked is that he has a passion for anonymity – a very stable man – the exact opposite of what you think someone associated with this would be like. His head was solidly on his shoulders and his feet solidly on the ground – someone who would be ashamed to be mixed up with something spooky. He doesn't want to be known.

These papers were read to the forum. At the end of each paper was a note suggesting the next title on which questions should be asked. This is how they led us through the first time. They were read to the forum and they generated more questions and over a period of years this book accumulated. And eventually when we had money we published.

In 1950 we completed the preparation of our plates. As money came in we forecast inflation, so we took the money we had and spent it in getting Donnelley to prepare the plates. If you went to Chicago, you'd see that the Urantia Foundation was established in 1950 by the anonymous donation of the plates of The Urantia Book. We got nickel coated plates. If you write to Donnelley, they'll tell you they negotiated with Kellogg. The Urantia Foundation owns the copyright. There are five trustees. In about 1954 these five trustees selected thirty-six people who organized the Urantia Brotherhood. The book was published in October of 1955 and has been spreading ever since.

I was there most of the time. I'm a management man, not the kind of man you would expect to see mixed up in something like this -- and I was very suspicious of all this. I asked myself, "Who is making what out of this? Where's the gold Cadillac in all this?" I checked it out and found that it was going to cost money. I realized there was no commercial end. And, as the book cleared up some personal quarrels I had with religion, I felt it was pretty good merchandise. So I elected to spend my spare time selling this. I don't get paid, but I get a lot of satisfaction. This is a first hand story except for the years from 1924 to 1928. And this is the first time this has ever been recorded.

- [Click here to view Arlie Riddleberger & Winova Jewell's "Origin of the UB" quotes and chart.](#) The chart closely follows Bill Sadler's description of events given in the above talk.