

Concord Methodist Church

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MRS. W. ARTHUR MILLER
SECRETARY

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Dear Dr. Sprunger,

By a somewhat devious route a copy of the Urantia Book and your reading guide have come to my attention. I was intrigued to learn what Urantia was all about. I did not, of course, labor through the entire tome, but checked relevant sections here and there. A copy of my judgments concerning Urantia, which I have prepared for one of my church members from whom I got the book, is enclosed. I should be interested in your response to the strictures which I have leveled against the good book.

Sincerely yours,

Robert E. Chiles

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Dr. Meredith J. Sprunger
Culver, Indiana

"URANTIA BOOK"

I. Sources and Attitude

It is frustrating to attempt to criticize materials which purport to be direct revelations. There are no manuscripts to examine, persons to interview, historical situations to investigate. It is so with Urantia. Since it makes frequent reference to the Biblical Faith, it can, however, be judged how far it is true to this faith. There are also some parallels that can be drawn with other intellectual movements. Urantia pleads for openminded, tolerant investigation. However, the God of the Bible, to which it makes frequent reference, is often designated by the Bible as a jealous God whose wrath is made known to his people when they go whoring after false Gods. This will be the attitude of these judgments.

II. Old Testament

In its scheme of development Urantia treats the Adamic story and period as relating to actual history. This, of course, blatantly ignores the results of critical biblical scholarship for the past 100 years. Treating great figures in the pre-Christian Era, persons from China, and India, and Greece, are indicted. Very carefully, however, the prophets of the Old Testament are omitted, the reason being, of course, that they stood in flat contradiction to the scheme Urantia develops.

III. Revelatory History

Urantia reflects a complete misunderstanding of history as it is viewed in the Bible. The Covenant Community Israel, the Acts of God, and events in which he encountered his people - all these things that reflect the scandal of particularity are ignored. For the Bible God is one who acts, not one who publishes inspiring ideas. The Bible gives little ground for the assumption that Revelation is evolutionary and progressive. The God who acted in the Exodus is the same God who delivers his children from the bondage of sin in Christ. The Bible does not encourage people to look for a new disclosure of truth. Its chief injunctions are REMEMBER and OBEY.

IV. Anthropology

Urantia utterly misconceives the Biblical understanding of man. It ignores man's situation as a creature of finite freedom anxious and tempted to self-assertion in order to secure himself in existence. Urantia is almost wholly without a doctrine of sin. There seem to be no hints of the bondage of the will which requires that God act first before man can make the slightest overture toward salvation. For Urantia man is finite and ignorant and enslaved by matter; for the Bible man is anxious, fallen, and spiritually perverse. There is no common ground between these two views.

V. Jesus and the New Testament

Urantia's views of Jesus can be found in a thousand places among rationalistic interpreters of Christianity about 1930. Its anti-Pauline bias has been relinquished by every informed New Testament scholar. The stress upon the teachings of Jesus are another illustration of its outdated position. Urantia ignores the careful study of the Gospels which places question marks after a great deal of the supposed utterances of Jesus. Urantia is not continuous with nor supplement to the New Testament as claimed; but, rather, has a host of affinities with Gnostic tendencies which are violently opposed in the New Testament.

VI. Salvation by Illumination

As a consequence of the positions it holds, salvation, for Urantia, is knowledge, a form of Gnosis, of salvation by secrets, secrets disclosed, in this instance, by souped-up celestial servants. Faith is stripped of the existential characteristics which indelibly mark it in Biblical religion. The atonement is reduced to the vanishing point because man is not sinful and God is agreeable. The incarnation is monstrously extended as a part of a collection of bazaar emanations.

VII. Unblinking Plagiarism

The Urantia book gives little material evidence (in style and content) of being composed by a host of different people as claimed. But much worse, it utterly ignores the religio-philosophic movements of Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, from which obviously it has been stolen. Varying ideologies of the ancient world are surveyed, but oddly, Neoplatonism and Gnosticism are omitted. The most superficial comparison with these heresies discloses that Urantia is just about as new as the New Testament, which is to say, it was alive in New Testament times and marked out in detail by the third century A.D. About all that is new is some cosmological speculation of dubious plausibility and some impossible verbiage that would do slight credit to a cheap science-fiction novel. The easy-going tolerant syncretism of these pseudo-religious movements, and therefore of Urantia, stands at the far pole from the majestic, sovereign demand of Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Urantia is a fraud and a hoax. Of course, much that is true inadvertently appears in it. It would be impossible to write 2100 pages and avoid reality altogether. It unfolds the melodramatic shotgun wedding of second-hand Neoplatonized Gnosticism and slipshod Protestant rationalism to sanctified science-fiction and sheer damn foolishness. The bastard offspring of this union is called Urantia. There is no place for it in the House of the Lord.

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