

Personal Account of Finding the Urantia Book

By Meredith Sprunger PhD

Circa 1960 (copied from hand written paper 4/8/97 D Kantor)

Like most people who are introduced to the Urantia Book and told that it is written by celestial beings and materialized on our planet, I was highly, if not completely, skeptical of such claim when a lawyer friend presented me with a copy of the Urantia Book in the early spring of 1956. Both to humor my good friend, who, to the best of my knowledge, had always carried an unusual reputation for sound judgment as a lawyer and judge, and to show my appreciation for his fifteen dollar gift, I decided, after skimming the contents of the book, to read a couple of chapters in the section on the Life and Teachings of Jesus and thus be able to talk knowingly about the book the next time I saw the Judge.

As I read, I searched in vain for the esoteric mysticism which I was sure must pervade the book. Instead, I was increasingly intrigued by the spiritual insight, philosophic coherence, and scientific relevancy of its message. A couple of months later when I finished the last of its 2097 pages, I knew the Urantia Book was one of the most significant books of our age.

Then I went to the Judge with the persistent question so many people since that time have addressed to me, "Now, I want to know who really did write this book! Who are the people responsible for its origin?" My central activity for the next several years involving many, many trips to Chicago and elsewhere was in gathering first hand evidence which might shed light on an accurate answer to this question.

Here, in condensed form, is the story of the historicity of the Urantia Book. Every aspect of the story was checked by first hand, critical observation of those persons directly involved in the story. I am personally convinced of the absolute integrity of the personalities involved.

Much to my surprise, I discovered that Dr. William S. Sadler was the leader of a small group of people in Chicago who received and eventually were responsible for publishing the Urantia Papers. Dr. Sadler is one of the most highly respected psychiatrists in the country and is in some circles called the "Father of American Psychiatry." For many years he taught in the post-graduate Medical School at Chicago University and for almost thirty years was a lecturer in Pastoral Counseling at McCormick Theological Seminary. Dr. Sadler's wife, Dr. Lena Sadler, also a physician, shared in the leadership of this group.

Dr. Sadler, as a physician, in 1911 first came in contact with the individual who was used in some way in the production of the Urantia Papers. Being especially skeptical of esoteric and spiritualistic phenomena, he did a great deal of research examining mediumistic personalities and came to the conclusion that all such persons were either fraudulent or self-deceived by subconscious psychic abnormalities. These findings he reported in a book entitled, *The Mind at Mischief*, published by Funk and Wagnalls in 1929. In this book he calls attention to one case which does not fit this pattern.

During the period between 1911 and the mid-twenties, Dr. Sadler had an opportunity to observe, examine, and test the contact personality in various ways which helped to establish his confidence in the reliability of the information received through the contact personality. He became thoroughly convinced that the "subject" who was later associated with the Urantia Papers was in no way similar to any other well-known type of psychic performance--such as automatic writing, channeling, clairvoyance, telepathy, trances, spirit mediumship, or multiple personality.

Both Dr. William and Dr. Lena Sadler were in great demand as speakers and Dr. William Sadler was a prolific writer during most of his medical career. As a result of this public contact they built an extensive circle of friends who were interested in discussing medical, psychological, and religious questions. To meet this demand the Sadlers opened their home to a Sunday afternoon discussion group. This group became known as "The Forum," and consisted of all types of people--doctors, lawyers, ministers, teachers, housewives, secretaries, and common laborers.

Eventually one of the members of the Forum asked Dr. Sadler what he thought about mediums. Sadler replied that his investigations convinced him that they were either frauds or self-deceived people, but there was one case he hadn't figured out yet. The group asked him to tell about this unusual case, and in this manner the Forum's central interest was eventually shifted to the Urantia Papers.

About this time, they were told at a contact session that if they realized the high quality of their source of communication they would stop their mundane investigations and start asking some real questions about the nature of things in the universe. Accordingly, Dr. Sadler asked members of the Forum to hand in questions regarding things they would like to know.

Among the first questions asked was, "Is there a God, and if so, what is he like?" In answer to this question five papers were received. These papers were then read and discussed at the Forum meetings. This procedure continued as they went through the questions submitted by the Forum.

Early in the proceedings the superhuman personalities supervising the contact sessions had selected a small group from the Forum known as the "Contact Commission" who were charged with the responsibilities of safe-guarding the papers, putting them in typewritten form, and acting as a liaison committee between the "revelators" and the Forum. The original manuscripts were in handwritten form. After typewritten copies were made and checked by the contact commission, the original papers in the locked safe in Dr. Sadler's office disappeared.

About this time, instructions were received from the revelators to form a closed group. From time to time new members were admitted after being interviewed by the officers of the Forum. Every member of the closed group were requested to sign pledges which read: "We acknowledge our pledge of secrecy, renewing our promise not to discuss the Urantia

revelations or their subject matter with anyone save active Forum members, and to take no notes of such matter as it is read or discussed at the Forum sessions, or make copies or notes of what we personally read."

When questions presented by the Forum were answered there were fifty-seven papers. The revelators then suggested that since the Forum, as a result of the first fifty-seven papers, could now ask more intelligent questions, they would undertake to enlarge the revelation in accordance with a new list of questions. This procedure was followed over the next few years and by 1934 resulted in the 196 papers now found in The Urantia Book.

At this point mention should be made of the type of people who were members of the Forum. I expected to find people with glints in their eyes, mystics, and individuals with messianic inclinations. I found just the opposite. The original Forum was made up of intelligent, well-balanced people who exhibit to a marked degree the critical scientific attitude. During this period Dr. Sadler worked with the magician, Thurston, and the noted explorer, Sir Hubert Wilkins, trying to diagnose this unusual situation. Thurston had previously helped Sadler in exploring fraudulent mediums.

They finally came to the conclusion that they were dealing with some type of genuine phenomena and that, in any case, the contact individual was simply incapable of producing the quality of the papers received. Thurston became so fascinated with the content of the papers that he stored his show for a whole year while he made a detailed study of the Urantia Papers. Wilkins took a three month leave of absence from his work to study the papers. Both men before they died had arrived at the conclusion that the papers were, in all probability, that which they claimed to be.

In 1939 the leaders of the Forum in consultation with the revelators decided that it was time to form a class to seriously and systematically study the Urantia Papers. The project was presented to the Forum and seventy persons volunteer to enter upon this study. This class became known as "The Seventy" and communications from the revelators were addressed to the seventy. The seventy were trained up to the time of the publication of the book, with special emphasis placed on the evolutionary nature of the acceptance of new truth and the danger of using broadcast, indiscriminate, or revolutionary methods in presenting the message of the Urantia Papers.

Restrictions of secrecy were gradually released and in 1955 they were given permission to publish the book. They were told that the book does not belong to the present era but to the times which will follow the present ideological struggle. Nevertheless, an early publication of the book was being given so that leaders and teachers could be trained and so that men of means may be found to provide translations into other languages. Although a wealthy member of the Forum was willing to furnish the money required to publish the first edition (\$75,000), and Dr. Lena Sadler had gathered \$25,000 for this purpose before her death in 1939, the revelators requested that members of the Forum should be asked for voluntary contributions to finance the publication.

Before the book was published, the revelators asked members of the contact commission and others who had information, to take an oath promising not to reveal the identity of the individual whose Thought Adjuster was used in some way in the transmission of the Urantia Papers, nor to say anything they might know about the method of the materialization of the papers. They were given three major reasons for making this request. The revelators acknowledged that this request would be a stumbling block in the early years after the publication of the book, but said that it was wise to have no St. Peter or St. Paul connected with the publication a thousand years hence. Secondly, they wished to discourage anything of a miraculous nature being associated with the papers. And finally, they recognized that the book would not be received because of any unusual phenomena connected with its origin, but only by those who recognized the spiritual quality of the message of the book.

Dr. Sadler told me that he probably knows more about the nature of the materialization of the papers than anyone else but that he really does not know how it was done. If he were allowed to tell me everything he knew, he assured me, for every point at which I now had a question, I would have two questions to take its place.

Dr. Sadler conducted many tests in the course of the reception of the papers. For instance, the revelators asked that the questions be put in written form and when the papers arrived the questions always disappeared. So he began placing the questions in his lock box in a downtown bank. They still disappeared but he was eventually told that they wished he would cease such puerile activities because it caused them extra work.

One of the members of the contact commission told me the best hypothesis he had concerning the production of the papers had three points of activity: (1) the celestial being who was the author of the paper, (2) the mind of the human subject, (3) a midwayer (supermortal beings who are very close to material beings and who can engage in physical activities) somewhere taking the dictation. "I knew where point number two was, but we never knew anything about point one and point three." He acknowledged that this hypothesis could be incorrect. Dr. Sadler told me that just about all that is known about the origin of the Urantia Papers can be found at various places in the Urantia Book. As the Forum continued reading the Urantia Papers, Dr. Sadler saw that his wife, Lena, and many others were quite impressed with their content. And so one Sunday he made a speech reminding them that they were a critical discussion group but that he observed some were being influenced by the papers. The general response which he received was to the effect: "We aren't being uncritical. Regardless of the authorship of the papers, they make more sense than anything in this field that we have ever read."

I asked Sadler when and why he finally accepted the papers for what they claim to be. He replied that his professional pride was at stake and so he maintained a critical professional attitude until most of the papers were received. His decision to throw in his intellectual towel came," he said, when they received the paper on the twelve apostles. "I'm a psychiatrist," he said, "and I think I know my business. But this paper gave me an inferiority complex. Even if I had a staff of psychiatrists and years to work on it, I don't think I could prepare a paper of this quality. You almost have to have access to the

interior of the human mind to write such a paper. So I finally decided to admit that we were dealing with superior knowledge."

To prepare for the publication of the Urantia Book the Urantia Foundation was organized and chartered as a nonprofit organization in the State of Illinois. The Urantia Foundation is the publisher, under international copyright, of the Urantia Book.

Knowing that some sort of organization would grow out of the teachings of the Urantia Book, it was decided wise to organize the Urantia Brotherhood as such a fraternal organization and possibly prevent extremists from starting such an organization. The Urantia Brotherhood is not an attempt to start a new church but simply a group of people interested in the teachings of the Urantia Book.

This, in brief, is what I found in my research. And while I am personally convinced in the absolute integrity of the people connected with the origin of the Urantia Book, I wish to emphasize that the fact of their genuineness, proves nothing about the quality or merit of the Urantia Book. This can be judged only by the content of the book itself.

I consider the question of origin and authorship purely a secondary consideration. I am interested in the Urantia Book only because the insights and relevancy of its message is superior to any philosophic-religious point of view with which I am acquainted. But I should also like to emphasize that the book cannot be evaluated until you get its entire philosophical-religious picture.