# The Pilgrim

A Tennessee Voice for the Fifth Epochal Readership

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# **Decisions Decisions**

#### by Bruce McCoy

If there is a psychology in <u>The Urantia Book</u>, and I believe there is, its cornerstone is the process of sincere decision making. It is through sincerely deciding to follow the Father's way that we grow our souls, learn survival, and realize eternal life. When we look closely, however, it's not exactly clear how the decisions of each daily moment relate to the overall process of personal growth and evolution. How definitive is each momentary decision — especially considering the instability and inconsistency which characterize them?

All of us change from day to day. We may decide for the father's way in the morning and against it in the afternoon. Certainly it's not unusual to reverse ourselves from one day to the next or one week to the next. The UBK (p. 1242A) gives the impression that there is some basic level of decision making that forms a stable, sort of summarized representation (at any one time) of our decision(s) to be committed to God. It is thus, definitive vis-a-vis our survival status. How are momentary decisions related to this more general or basic level of decision making?

#### Unconscious decision making

I believe this bottom line level of our decisions is mostly unconscious. It forms the background or context of our minds. It is made up of some kind of qualitative accumulation of our conscious momentary decisions even though this underlying level may sometimes be radically changed or consolidated in a particular ("special") moment. I'd like it to be clear that technically this material may be more accurately called "preconscious material" since it can be brought into consciousness if we pay attention to it. In classical and precise Freudian terminology the preconscious is a part of the unconscious. I prefer to call this

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The Urantia Book makes a very clear and, I believe, generalized statement that; "One is free to choose and act only within the realm of one's consciousness" (p. 377C). Therefore I think all decision making must involve material that is at least available to consciousness. I focus on this material as unconscious because in our daily experience that's what it is and recognizing this unconscious quality highlights that we are not usually fully aware of the true color of our decisions. This reveals the importance of self study. This basic unconscious level of our decisions determines and is determined by our established values and attitudes.

The unconscious exists in a reflective relationship to the conscious. It is an accumulator. It gathers and organizes our conscious decisions. It makes up the things we assume as true, particularly about ourselves. Within its precincts the self evolves — the structure which Jesus taught and encouraged us to master. The self gives us historical continuity. It provides a context of accumulated experiences and decisions which we form into values, attitudes, fears, prejudices, vanities, preferences, etc. This context constantly surrounds our conscious awareness influencing and directing the here and now decisions we make.

Unconscious decisions are, I believe, the ones which determine our final position but, at any one time, they are usually partial. They are not constrained to be logical and consistent like conscious decisions are. They can be partially for something and partially against it at the same time and these partial circumstances do not automatically equal intense internal conflict or turmoil. From His position in eternity, God accepts this partiality and disunity as a part of the natural processes of time. He understands us as merely passing through a section of our evolutionary, pilgrim path. We are in process and it is best for us not to hurry or pressure ourselves too much toward premature closure. That is what creates painful conflict and turmoil. It is usually best for us to take our time and sit with a not fully integrated decision on some matter until we are fully ready.

Of course, our momentary (conscious) decisions are the beginning. They are the contributions which we make to our unconscious decisions and they produce movement at the unconscious level but they are not always of the same quality. Often our conscious decisions are founded on several motives? Maybe we don't see the selfish ones ... only the altruistic ones. It's often easier to keep the God seeking motives in our awareness. Or what if we simply have an inaccurate picture of what is true? Any time we make decisions there are a limited number of alternatives for us to choose from because of our self structure (our values, attitudes, and prejudices). We can only decide among the things we know (or think we know). There are usually quite a few alternatives that aren't even possibilities because we're sure they're wrong. But what if we're wrong? What if what we think is wrong is not? Or what if the real truth, the way our Father would most truly have us go, is outside our list of possibilities. Maybe we haven't even conceived it or maybe we know about it but we just really don't think it's remotely possible that this is the right way. When we're wrong we lean on God's mercy and proceed by faith toward the eventual truth discernment which will correct our errors.

#### Sincerity

What if we want God's will a whole lot? Is that automatically good? What if we want it too much? Is that possible? Maybe we have an urgency or pushiness that is incompatible with His will? What if we're intensely wanting to be well known for wanting God's will, but it's really very much a personal desire that we don't see as such because we've convinced ourselves that our motivation is all a pure seeking of God's way? Maybe we want to be at the front line of God's work for the status and power of it. Or maybe we greatly desire the recognition that accompanies being a disciplined meditator or a wonderful loving soul. We know the apostles had a great proclivity for "materializing" Jesus' work and competing among themselves for the best positions in his projected earthly organization. Is it possible for us to be deluded about what we think we're doing for our heavenly Father?

The way I feel about this question practically demands that I ask an accompanying question about whether it is possible for any of us to be completely free from delusion about what we think we're doing for our heavenly Father. I don't think so and it seems that this delusional aspect of our usual motivations (our imperfect knowledge of ourselves) is directly

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#### Beyond honesty

I have a somewhat painful story to tell about seeking to know and follow God's way. It has to do with a slow developing series of interactions which took place between me and a priest at my church. In the course of normal church attendance I began to find myself listening to him more and more closely. I was encouraged. I thought his insight and focus on the true, eternal, positive, and mature aspects of the religious life were remarkable and encouraging to be someone trained only in conventional christianity. Perhaps that was an arrogance that marked the beginning of my downfall. But what is most relevant to the matter of discerning God's way is that I still don't know how wrong or right I was in choosing the path I took in relating to this man. After doing my best at being honest with myself and sorting out all of my selfish motives, I'm still uncertain about which way was God's best way. I may still have not been honest enough with myself. I may have been too honest with him. No matter how clearly I see, the uncertainty is still there.

I went slowly. I began saying things to him after presentations he made at church. I always tried to formulate my comments in response to some topic or notion he had opened up. A near dialogue began to develop between us. At first I was dead set against the idea of ever mentioning The Urantia Book to him but, in fact, I ended up doing exactly that. He began to say things to me that I found encouraging. For example, he told me on two occasions that I was changing his life. Another time he said that he thought he should listen to me. One thing led to another and I began to have this thought that if I could just get him to look, he would see.

Then one Sunday he came down from his high pulpit and walked back and forth in front of us. I think this was to symbolize a desire to get closer to us. What he said that day was a plea for us to tell him the things that we normally keep from him. He wanted us to tell him the "hard" things. Now I knew he wasn't primarily talking to me. I'm sure he had some other people more in mind and some things he wanted them to tell him that were more political than spiritual. But I took it as a signal. I decided to tell him some things he really didn't expect.

I planned a meeting in which we actually read a paper from the book, I presented a short introduction to the book, and I asked him to agree to meet with me for five two hour sessions so we could really consider this thing adequately. I made the point very clearly that an unusual thing about this book is that it takes an amount of exposure that most people don't normally find easy to do in order to give the book an adequate consideration. At the end of that first meeting he agreed to spend the five sessions with me but, almost a week later, he called and angrily discontinued any further meetings or discussions. To this day I still believe if he would just look he would see.

During this period of time, which lasted quite long (at least six months), I prayed intensely to know my Father's way. Sometimes I thought I heard the adjuster's voice but I never became convinced because, at different times, He seemed to be speaking on both sides of the issue. At times I remembered Jesus' desire to teach his followers courageous action and I felt showing him the book was the right thing. At other times I remembered the general nonintrusive guidelines so scrupulously followed by celestials and the fact that Jesus "never followed them up" (UBK p.1875) and I thought I should not show the book to this man for whom it was so impossible to get far enough out of his framework to give a reasonable consideration.

In my struggle I wrestled with many selfish subtleties in my motivation. I wanted to be the one to facilitate a breakthrough in this man's thinking. It could significantly revitalize the whole church. I knew it should go slowly however, and I planned to encourage him not to share the book with others without sufficient precautions. On the other hand I struggled with the fact that I wanted this man for a friend and I would lose that opportunity if I revealed my involvement with the book and he rejected it. Discussion is the property with the book and he rejected it.

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One view of honesty said I owed it to my friend to let him know the bottom line on such an important thing as the book. The other view said if he knew about me and the book but rejected the book it would so distort his view of me he could not see me honestly. Soon I began to see that honesty was not the issue. I could either tell him about the book or not tell him and still be honest. It was not a matter of honesty. It was a matter of God's will. To date I do not think I know God's perfect will in the matter.

### Fifth Epochal Revelation:

## Phase Two?

by Bruce McCoy

According to readers in some fifteen different groups now, God is acting formally again here at the beginning of the fifth epoch! Unseen beings, most of whom claim to be ascending mortals from other planets, have contacted these groups through a "channeling" process which involves one of the group members going into a state reminiscent of hypnotic trance (ranging from light to deep) and allowing the unseen being to use his/her mind and voice to speak to and carry on a relationship with a group (usually of established readers).

Now wait just a minute. (pause) Did you hear what I just said? God is giving us a second stage of the revelation here at the beginning of the fifth epoch! Is it really true?

Isn't this something we must all stop and consider very carefully? Doesn't this raise some very important questions which require some very difficult decisions? At this point I am engulfed in indecision relative to these matters. I do not wish to proceed too fast. It may take a while for enough information to become available to make clear decision making possible.

So far the whole affair seems undecidable. There are too many vagaries. Too many things don't add up. It is true that forming an epochal revelation in the shape of a book is very unusual. We know that all of our previous revelations have come to us through beings and that this is the general rule across the universes. Maybe it makes sense for some beings to enter into extant, explicit, verbal contact with us to help us with <a href="The Urantia Book">The Urantia Book</a> and dealing with our present situation. But, would they come to us this way — with just a voice — using a borrowed body — essentially overlapping themselves with a human? The original Caligastia 100 had human helpers but they at least were clearly separate and distinct.

This channeling phenomenon is apparently indistinguishable from basic (ancient) trance-mediumship ... something which the UBK describes as "sordid" (UBK p.865B) and generally seems to disavow. These "teachers" invariably endorse The Urantia Book almost in its entirety and where they differ they simply say things have changed. Is it likely that some of the changes they claim would have been made ... and so soon after the advent of the book? I want to encourage all of you to look into this matter. I think we need some lively discussion. This is not a small or very ho hum problem.

### **Basic Discontinuity**

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## **Basic Discontinuity**

There is a plethora of channelled material in the marketplace at large i.e. outside the Urantia Book movement. Much of it is puzzelingly compelling. Within it can be found many impressive formulations of truth. Many of these formulations are "successful" and continue in the marketplace because they attract followers who keep the channel alive. The Seth material which gained considerable popularity quite a few years is an excellent example of this.

A standard of comparispon which I like to keep in mind is the standard which comes to me when I ask myself what things would be like if our planet had never entered into rebellion. If a loyal Caligastia were still with us and Adam's and Eve's project of biological uplift were proceeding as planned, what would we believe of this channelled material? Or would we even have this channeled material? Taken as a whole this material seems quite noticeably discontinuous. There is overlapping agreement ... generally about basic truth such as the existence of a loving God. But there also seems to be a lot of disagreement about details such as reincarnation and whether\how God involves Himself with the material level. Somehow, I don't think things would be this way if we had never entered rebellion.

I'm sure my scant knowledge makes me unaware of all the changes these "teachers" have made but the major ones I do know are presented below. Keep in mind that these "teachers" (whom listening group members often refer to as father) claim they are part of the same, official, well coordinated, celestial ministration to our planet that the writers of the book were and, therefore, they are in complete harmony and synchrony with the book. So the changes are considered only minor matters that are consonant with normal change procedures. Consider some of the most outstanding ones.

1.) These "teacher" beings assign new "spiritual" names to the members of the group. The UBK says (UBK p. 1188B) we get a new spiritual name at the point in our development when we fuse with our adjuster. The new channelled "teachers" say this has changed.

2.) These "teacher" beings rather flatteringly tell group members that they are new destiny reservists. The UBK (p. 1257) does seem to allow for and even hope for an increase in the planetary reserve corps of destiny, but it clearly says that the great majority of reservists are unaware of their status as such.

3.) These "teacher" beings tell group members that Caligastia is no longer functioning on the planet. They say the adjudication of the Lucifer rebellion is now complete and Lucifer, Satan, and Caligastia have become as though they never were.

I don't have a lot of problem with the idea that the policy about reservists has changed although I'm sceptical, and I do think the Lucifer rebellion is nearing an end but it's also noticeable that the revelators gave us such a specific warning about Caligastia still being here, "prosecute his nefarious designs (p. 610A)". The one of these changes that really throws me into such doubt that I just find it impossible to embrace these teachers though is the one about the spiritual names. It seems to me virtually certain that a structure so basic in the patterns of the universe as the one giving us our spiritual names at the point of adjuster-fusion would not be changed at this point in time. And, how likely is it that we would be given names like David, Benjamin, and Martha?

#### Three Possibilities

There are, I believe, three possibilities with respect to these channelled phenomena. It certainly seems right to say, therefore, that each of us faces a decision about which of the three is most likely correct. The three possibilities are:

1.) The channelled beings are who they say they are.

2.) The channelled beings originate in the minds of the people who "receive" them.

The channelled beings are real but malevolent unseen beings perpetrating deception.
 If the first of these possibilities is true then it's clear what we should do.

If the channelled beings are authentic they are a part of an officially commissioned program of uplift (or correction) led by Machiaventa Melchizedek (this is their claim), and, indeed, the fifth epochal revelation has entered a second major phase. Clearly then we should listen to these teachers (their teachings are invariably beautiful and moving admonitions along correct lines of fundamental religious truth about finding, knowing, and listening to our Father who lives inside and following His way) and open our hearts and groups to the possibility that God may want us to participate in this new movement.

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If, however, either the second or third possibilities are true then something is seriously wrong because these unseen "teachers" are creating a confusion and rush of readers into a false direction at a time when we urgently need to avoid such a thing. The second possibility, that the unseen beings really originate in the (unconscious) minds of the people who are the receivers, is the hypothesis that William S. Sadler held about most such psychic mediumship. In his well-known (among UBK readers anyway) book The Mind at Mischeif he outlines this hypothesis that trance-medium material is auto psychic in origin. In our present situation we may say that if this possibility is the explanation, what's the problem? If the messages are true and uplifting, and they are coming from the minds of good, sincere UBK readers, then it isn't all that bad. The only problem is that these "teachers" are then claiming to be beings that they are not and they are also renaming the group members so that they also are becoming people

whom they are not. This possibility also seems unlikely to be the explanation since these "teachers" all appear to be a part of the same project, teach similar material, and show a degree of coordination between groups separated by great geographical distances that would ostensibly speak against the autopsychic explanation.

The third possibility, of course, is the one most sinister and disturbing. If these channelled "teachers" are malevolent, then we are being tricked by a very subtle deception. They are tricking us with the truth. Is this possible? I certainly think it is possible to mix falseness and truth together. The historic church provides us an excellent example of that. We live with subtle mixtures of truth and falseness inside our minds on virtually a daily basis. That is what this whole business of decision making is all about. It is our constant task to sort the truth from error. And nothing blocks the process more than familiarity. It is those old wrongs that are institutionalized in our lives that are hardest to root out and overcome. And isn't that the subtlest and most insidious danger of this third possibility? If it is the correct explanation, these unseen "teachers" are making themselves familiar in the minds and groups of a large number of readers. They are becoming established and intimately trusted. The more this grows over time the more difficult it will be to overcome.

If I were a malevolent (rebelious) celestial being and I wanted to mount an offensive against the Urantia Book and I could get into the minds of readers and gain influence, this is axactly what I would do. I would not change the book much. I would only make a few changes and then generally say things that agree with the major and most fundamental truths the book. And, in the process, I would endear myself to the humans with whom I had gained such access. I would work closely with them on a regular basis using the powerful forces of group identity and cohesiveness to forge an ever strenghtening bond. It certainly is ingenious if its true. One of its most ingenious aspects is that it perfectly circumvents the basic criteria for authenticity discernment which we have come to depend upon so much ... the criterion of face validity.

The Urantia Book submits itself to an internal criterion. It says that in order for us to tell if the U Book is true we should expose ourself to the material in the U Book and submit that material to the witness of the internal adjuster. This is a criterion which all of us have applied for ourselves and have come to know as a basic touchstone for how to tell the truth. If we are indeed dealing with malevolence at work here in the channelling phenomenon then this criterion for telling the truth no longer is as simple and straightforward as it has been.

#### What means violation?

We know that angels do not violate ("invade") (UBK p. 1245B) the minds and wills of men. This is part of the standard protection of our free wills. What exactly constitutes violation or invasion of our wills, however? Isn't this what it boils down to? From what exposure I've had to the readers and groups who have been involved in this channelling phenomenon, I'm sure they are generally not aware of having invited some malevolent being into their minds and lives. But they do believe they have invited someone in.

How should the policy of noninvasion be interpreted exactly? A strict or conservative interpretation would say that an angel (or presumably any other loyal celestial) would not enter the mind of a human even if he\she were invited. A more lenient interpretation might say it's ok. Whatever the case, it sure seems to behoove us all to pay close attention to this incredibly important happening among our brothers and sisters at this crucial time.

### The Stillness

truth from error. And nothing blocks the process more than familiarity. It is those old wrongs that are institutionalized in our lives that are hardest to root out and overcome. And isn't that the subtlest and most insidious danger of this third possibility? If it is the correct explanation, these unseen "teachers" are making themselves familiar in the minds and groups of a large number of readers. They are becoming established and intimately trusted. The more this grows over time the more difficult it will be to overcome.

If I were a malevolent (rebelious) celestial being and I wanted to mount an offensive against the Urantia Book and I could get into the minds of readers and gain influence, this is axactly what I would do. I would not change the book much. I would only make a few changes and then generally say things that agree with the major and most fundamental truths the book. And, in the process, I would endear myself to the humans with whom I had gained such access. I would work closely with them on a regular basis using the powerful forces of group identity and cohesiveness to forge an ever strenghtening bond. It certainly is ingenious if its true. One of its most ingenious aspects is that it perfectly circumvents the basic criteria for authenticity discernment which we have come to depend upon so much ... the criterion of face validity.

The Urantia Book submits itself to an internal criterion. It says that in order for us to tell if the U Book is true we should expose ourself to the material in the U Book and submit that material to the witness of the internal adjuster. This is a criterion which all of us have applied for ourselves and have come to know as a basic touchstone for how to tell the truth. If we are indeed dealing with malevolence at work here in the channelling phenomenon then this criterion for telling the truth no longer is as simple and straightforward as it has been.

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Perhaps the major key to this whole channelling business has to do with a meditational technique taught by the channellers which is fairly well described by its lable. They call it "listening to the stillness". When I first encountered this idea it sounded right to me ... just like what I do a lot in my meditation. I wonder now though. Is it possible that this technique could actually distract some people from communing with God rather than facilitate it? As I have been rethinking this important aspect the one disturbing thing that has occurred to me is that Jesus did not teach anything like this "stillness" to His disciples.

# Channeling and the Urantia Movement

#### by Meredith J. Sprunger

Psychic or paranormal psychological phenomena variously referred to as extrasensory perception, channeling, spiritualism, mediumship, and activities of the marginal consciousness have been rather common throughout human history. Many years ago I made a study of these paranormal communications and found they varied in quality as widely as the capabilities of the human mind. Some of the psychic communications studied present verifiable factual knowledge for which scientists find no reasonable empirical explanation. The great bulk of this material, however, is demonstrably inaccurate and unreliable.

Since the publication of <a href="The Urantia Book">The Urantia Book</a>, there have been many claims by book readers of "special" channeling information or guidance. Some even claim <a href="The Urantia Book">The Urantia Book</a> came through a channeling process although the authors of the book deny the spiritual authenticity of channeling-mediumistic psychic phenomena (pp. 865, 1646). Dr. William S. Sadler, leader of the group receiving the Urantia Papers, after listing every conceivable form of psychic phenomena (marginal consciousness), unequivocally declared: "The technique of the reception of <a href="The Urantia Book">The Urantia Book</a> in English in no way parallels or impinges upon any of the phenomena of the marginal consciousness."

#### Basic error in evaluation

The basic error in evaluating knowledge-especially psychic communication and revelation is to look for verification in its source, author, claim, or "authority." There is a natural human desire for superior, unearned knowledge; we yearn for surety, a "hot line" to higher guidance. This is the source of fundamentalistic, literalist, dogmatic thinking. Claim or authority, however, is never a criterion of truth. The only road to truth is through earned, evolutionary experience. We should always evaluate information by its content, not its claim or supposed source. In our earned experience we have the highest resources to guide and verify our judgment: the Spirit of God (Thought Adjuster), the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Spirit. Our judgments much also always be tested by personal experience, the experience of others, and time.

When measured by these earned, experiential standards over time, the value of channeled communication does not rate very high. We should not, however, allow fear or prejudice to prevent us from honestly and critically examining the content of information received through channeling. We should be open to carefully evaluation all types of knowledge.

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#### A specific case

Recently I examined recordings of "Teachings of Ham" channeled to the Salt Lake Study Group. I found their general quality good. They are of the quality which I would expect from a creative, intelligent student of <a href="The Urantia Book">The Urantia Book</a>. While, in my judgment, they are not in the same league with <a href="The Urantia Book">The Urantia Book</a>, they are basically constructive and insightful.

There are a number of limitations to the above generalizations. I find no empirical-experiential evidence for the claim that the Lucifer rebellion has been adjudicated and that the system circuits are being opened. I question the truth of the claim of giving people their "spiritual" names. The authors of <a href="The Urantia Book">The Urantia Book</a> tell us that we are given a new name only after fusion with our Thought Adjuster (P. 538). I further question the wisdom of this practice. Why is Rebecca more spiritual than Jan, Joshua more spiritual than Thern, or Martha more spiritual than Kathy? This is the kind of technique used for controlling people through "special" or secret knowledge. Many cults use such practices.

Ham discourages a member of the study group from taking an eight week summer course because he will miss these channeling sessions. Even the higher ranking authors of <a href="The Urantia Book">The Urantia Book</a> do no use this style of manipulative control. Why would the Vicegerent Planetary Prince single out the Salt Lake City Group for special attention as they were told? And through this special attention Ham tells them "your are...under...my direction." Group leadership and direction is a common practice, but I see in this kind of atmosphere the danger of acquiescing to uncritical manipulation.

Ham tells the group the spiritual center of the planet is Manitoba, Canada. This differs from the Chicago contact information designating it as at the Grizzly Giant in the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias in Yosemite National Park. When Ham is asked about Norsen, he identifies him as a teacher which is markedly different from the Chicago contact information telling that Norson is the new "take charge" planetary supervisor.

One wonders why people feel a need for channeling guidance which, historically, does not have a very good track record, when they have direct personal contact with much higher sources of truth: their Thought Adjuster, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Spirit? It seems to me that the study of <a href="The Urantia Book">The Urantia Book</a> would be superior to preoccupation with this quality of channeling information. I further see a danger in the possibility of giving the Channelor undue respect as an authority figure which might by-pass higher spiritual guidance. When this happens, cults are formed with a susceptibility to manipulative control.

#### The Bottom Line

The content of Ham's teachings is basically constructive and is no doubt helpful to some people. There are also those who have not summoned the courage and confidence to initiate outreach work who will do so when encouraged by channeling messages. At best such channeling activity can be a supplement to <a href="Urantia Book">Urantia Book</a> study, guidance, and individual initiative; at worst it could be a substitute for it. To become a part of such activity is and should be an individual decision. If you think, after due consideration, this kind of channeling information is important to your spiritual growth and service and it is harmonious with your higher inner guidance, you probably will feel comfortable with these activities. But always be in control of your own thinking and action.

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The Pilgrim is published by the group of Urantia Book Readers in Knoxville, TN.

We welcome your response and comments. Please send them to:

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