Spiritual Fellowship Journal

Volume 1, Number 1 *Premier Issue* Spring, 1991

The Urantia Book and Religious Studies
Meredith J. Sprunger

The Mathematics of Love
Charles E. Hansen

The Urantia Book and Modern Science: Harmony or Discord?
Richard I. Bain

A Faith Adventure

Biblical Appreciation Enhanced

Does It Preach?

Assessing the Ministry Potential of New Media

***The Urantia Book* and Spiritual Renewal**

The Christianization of a Pastor

Book Review: *No Other Name* **by Paul F. Knitter**

The Spiritual Fellowship of Students of The Urantia Book

A Spiritual Leadership Network Interested in *The Urantia Book* as a Resource in Living, Creative Service, Teaching, Preaching, and Writing.

Guiding Network Principles

1. We believe *The Urantia Book* can make a significant contribution to the stimulation of spiritual creativity in churches, synagogues, and other religious institutions and their people.

2. We believe that at the present stage of spiritual development it is wise for ministers, priests, and rabbis to use *The Urantia Book* as a resource for preaching and teaching rather than referring to the book itself or directing attention to it. Almost every concept in *The Urantia Book* can be associated with some theologian, philosopher, or scientist in the past or present.

3. We believe that, although one should not be secretive about interest in *The Urantia Book*, one should use discretion in recommending it to people. The light of enhanced truth can frighten and blind as well as guide and illuminate.

4. We believe *The Urantia Book's* claim to a revelatory source and status is not germane to its usefulness in the presentation of spiritual truth. Truth has an inherent appeal, regardless of its source, and can be used to enrich one's preaching, teaching, and living.

5. We believe the Spirit of God works among us in a differential and evolutionary manner; therefore, we recognize that for whatever reason some clergy may not wish to read and critically evaluate *The Urantia Book*. This diversity should in no way stand as a barrier to our mutual respect, fellowship, and love.

6. We believe the leavening process of creativity stimulated by *The Urantia Book* should be ecumenical in nature.

7. We believe *The Urantia Book* will eventually be recognized by the great majority of the world's religious leaders as one of the most constructive spiritual messages our world has received since Jesus' ministry on earth.

Network Recommendations

1. Read the entire *Urantia Book* to get its sweeping universe view of reality. Many of us started reading the book at Part IV, The Life and Teachings of Jesus. If you should like to get a quick overall view of the book you might read "The Gift of Revelation," a twenty-two page summary of the basic facts and truths of *The Urantia Book*.

2. Have the *Concordex* of *The Urantia Book* available to help in researching topics on which you are preaching or teaching.

3. Use the *Paramony*, which is a parallel and harmony of the Bible and *The Urantia Book*, to locate *Urantia Book* material on the Biblical text you are using in sermon preparation.

The Spiritual Fellowship Journal

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The Spiritual Fellowship Journal is an ecumenical publication published twice yearly by The Christian Fellowship of Students of *The Urantia Book* of Fort Wayne, Indiana, through a grant from the Jesusonian Foundation of Boulder, Colorado.

Subscription orders, changes of address, and editorial correspondance should be sent to:

The Spiritual Fellowship Journal
4109 Plaza Dr.,
Fort Wayne, IN 46806
(219-745-4363)

Annual Subscription rate:
$5.00 U.S.A., $7:00 overseas.

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Spring, 1991 **Volumn 1, No. 1**

Editorials

A Faith Adventure 4
We believe the church will be enriched by initiating a journal to interface with mainline clergy in the study of *The Urantia Book.*

Latent Mainline Potential 4
Mainline Christian churches, in spite of their problems, carry the latent potentials to continue to be the growing edge of the Christian faith.

The Church: A Statement of Purpose and Belief 5
Guest editorial by Everett Sloffer.

Articles

The Urantia Book and Religious Studies 7
Meredith Sprunger presents a critical approach to *The Urantia Book.*

The Mathematics of Love 10
Using mathematics, the universal language of science, Charles Hansen demonstrates that love is an inherent aspect of Reality.

***The Urantia Book* and Modern Science: Harmony or Discord?** 16
The differences between contemporary science and *The Urantia Book* are discussed by Richard Bain.

Columns

❒ **Interface:** Does it Preach? 6
❒ **Empowering the Church** 6
Church Members and *The Urantia Book*
❒ ***The Urantia Book* and Spiritual Renewal** 19
The Christianization of a Pastor
❒ **Hymns in Worship** 20
❒ **Media and Values** 21
Assessing the Ministry Potential of New Media

Departments

❒ **Poems**
Song of The Urantia Book 20
Inner Guidance 22
❒ **Book Review:** *No Other Name* - Knitter 22
❒ **Sermon:** *Arise, Take up Your Life and Walk* 23
❒ **Urantia Book Resources** 24

About the Editors

Meredith Sprunger is a United Church of Christ minister, and college teacher, retired. He served pastorates in the Midwest and taught at Elmhurst College and Indiana Institute of Technology. Merlyn Cox is a United Methodist minister serving in the North Indiana Conference.

Editorials

A Faith Adventure

Some thirty-five years ago a group of United Church of Christ ministers discovered *The Urantia Book*. After several years of critical study we recognized the exceptional quality and far-reaching potential of its teachings. It was also apparent that its expanded spiritual cosmology and claim to revelatory status—even though its approach is not authoritarian—would cause many to summarily reject it without seriously examining its content.

Dr. Robert Moss, professor of New Testament at Lancaster Theological Seminary and at that time President of the United Church of Christ, was asked to examine the book. He met with our group of pastors in South Bend and stated that it appeared to him that *The Urantia Book's* view of Biblical material was in essential agreement with Biblical scholarship. Dr. Moss suggested, however, that the book might disturb some laypersons. We had already discussed this possibility and decided to thoroughly evaluate the book ourselves before recommending it to anyone. Even after an extended period of evaluation in which we verified for ourselves the high quality of *The Urantia Book's* spiritual insights, we have exercised discriminatory judgment in introducing it to parishioners and friends.

During the past quarter century most of us have used the book as a resource in teaching and preaching. We have attempted to quietly share *The Urantia Book* with colleagues. In 1979 The Christian Fellowship of Students of The Urantia Book was organized and over the years a Clergy Network has been established. We think it is now time to initiate a Journal to interface with mainline clergy in the study of *The Urantia Book*.

We are sending the first two issues of *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal* to the ministers in the United Methodist and United Church of Christ in Indiana and other mainline clergy in Fort Wayne, many of whom know both the Editor (U.C.C.) and the Associate Editor (U. M. C.) of the Journal.

We realize that it may be decades before some of our colleagues will feel comfortable in reading *The Urantia Book* and that some may never do so. This is natural and the expected response to a book of this scope. We believe the evolutionary process and group wisdom will eventually establish the worth of *The Urantia Book* in the church.

-MJS

Latent Mainline Potential

Although mainline Christian churches have experienced a substantial loss of membership in the last twenty years, we believe these religious institutions in the center of our historical culture carry the latent potentials to continue to be the growing edge of the Christian faith. Liberal church executives and theologians during the last quarter century became so involved in social issues and action that they have tended to lose touch with the spiritual concerns and needs of parishioners. Mainline churches unwittingly created a spiritual vacuum waiting to be filled. Evangelical and fundamentalist churches emphasizing "the word of God," the saving message of the gospel and loving interpersonal relationships, packaged in effective forms and channels of communication, became the most rapidly growing communions.

In our contemporary hi-tech society, sustained loyalty to religious institutions will be closely related to the scientific and theological quality of the forms in which faith is communicated. The ersatz science and outmoded theology of ultra conservative churches will not be credible to an increasing number of young people attending our colleges and universities. We will always have people who belong to the Flat Earth Research Society and churches which cultivate a similar mentality; however, the religion of the future must be guided by a post modern theology of high spiritual and intellectual credibility.

A fresh and relevant view of universe Reality must have two dominant characteristics: a spiritual emphasis highlighting a personal relationship with God, and an intellectually coherent spiritual cosmology commensurate with our scientific cosmology. These trends are already in evidence. Most mainline denominations have groups promoting spiritual renewal movements, and the writing of scientists like Carl Sagan and Stephen Hawking are laying the foundations for a larger spiritual comprehension of the universe.

These are areas in which *The Urantia Book* can furnish unparalleled resources. The book's extensive portrayal of the essence of religion as a personal relationship with God, along with its expanded description of the life and teachings of Jesus, will bring a fresh spiritual orientation and an enhanced appreciation of Jesus to all who read it. The enlarged spiritual cosmology of *The Urantia Book* is awe inspiring, overshadowing even the enormous and expanding picture of the universe by contemporary astronomy. Because of these and many other insights of *The Urantia Book*, we believe it will be a key factor in the resurgence of mainline Christianity and establish it as the cutting edge of a new spiritual renaissance on our planet.

-MJS

Guest Editorial

The Church: A Statement of Purpose and Belief

This is a statement of a long time Urantia Book reader who was challenged by this pastor to write his view of the purpose of the church.

I believe the church has a high and noble purpose. To actualize this purpose each of us has to find a perspective that simultaneously focuses on the details of the task before us, and the great, creative cosmic framework within which we live, move, and have our being. We must understand the purpose and philosophy of the church and how it applies to the work at hand.

Our statement of purpose must reflect our singular understanding of one fact that is central to the reality of our existence: God's ways are higher than our ways, and always—always—we must seek to discover God's higher ways. Our understanding of these higher ways and ultimate spiritual truths must shape the essence of our statement of purpose; and, if it is to be effective, this objective must focus and mobilize the energies of the church.

The church exists to function in many aspects of ministry, but the greatest of these is to fulfill its mission to spiritually transform human lives. This purpose encompasses and subsumes all other purposes. Through truth, beauty, and goodness communicated in love and exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus, the kingdom of God is established on earth.

The church exists to function in many aspects of ministry, but the greatest of these is to fulfill its mission to spiritually transform human lives.

The moment we say that our purpose is to promote the spiritual transformation of humankind by living the teachings of Jesus, we are in the same breath implying at least three things that are immediate, inherent, and of utmost importance.

First, we are saying that the focus of our activity is outward. The church does not exist in and for itself, but rather it functions to foster a loving, dynamic, and transforming interaction among members and nonmembers.

Second, we are saying that we place the emphasis of our strategy on living the teachings of Jesus, not on preaching about his teaching. Our priorities are not Bible-oriented but are focused on what the Bible was given us to facilitate: spiritual growth through the loving service of humanity.

Third, we are saying that the way we will grow as a church is by means of attraction, not proselytizing. We have the resources to become the yeast to expand the lives of all people. In choosing to proceed primarily by the method of attraction, there is nothing in our approach that should be regarded as intrinsically threatening to any individual or group. Always we will be moving forward from a position of deep faith and internal strength.

Members of the church come from all walks of life and represent a great diversity of experience, interests, points of view, and spiritual condition. But against the backdrop of these great differences, I think there are some general beliefs that unite us in a profound common commitment.

First, I think we are united in believing that at the very center of our existence is the knowledge that God is the loving, heavenly Father of each human being. All that has value in human living originates in this filial relationship with God. The spirit of God—the light that enlightens every man and woman who comes into the world—continuously educates and uplifts each person who accepts this leading to progressively higher stages of being. As sons and daughters of God, we therefore recognize all men and women as our brothers and sisters in a worldwide family of God.

Second, we are united in believing that the love of God has never been demonstrated with greater power and beauty than in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, whom we call Master. The religion of Jesus, the foundation of our religious reality, is to seek the Father's will in every act and decision, to become God directed and service oriented.

Third, we are united in believing that this mortal existence is only the brief and intense beginning of eternal life, an adventure of unimaginable growth to higher states of being. By the technique of becoming more and more like the Father, we will someday come to stand in His presence.

Fourth, we are united in believing that the daily work of every person is conducted not in isolation but in relationship with other human beings. The sweat and grind of our daily work, the frustrations and distractions of living, are the most effective conditions for testing the reality and power of our spiritual resources and stature. Nowhere else can the sweet currents of love and mercy be more fully demonstrated.

Fifth, we are united in believing that in its deepest sense, religion is a purely personal experience between the individual and God. And we believe this experience can be full and complete both within and without the framework of organized religion. We seek spiritual unity with all, while encouraging lives of individual freedom, dignity, and originality before God.

No matter how high we lift our spiritual sights, the ultimate translation of our potentials into actual achievements will not come to fruition in the abstract. We must act; we must convert our aspirations into actions, our ideals into qualities of being.

-Everett W. Sloffer

Interface: Does it Preach?

Some time ago I was discussing *The Urantia Book* with a fellow pastor and long time friend. After I made some initial positive comments concerning the book, he turned to me and asked, "Does it preach?"

That's an appropriate question, one that for pastors takes on a special meaning. Preaching is a kind of litmus test for the preacher, a test of truth. Regardless of our personal theologies or intellectual grasp of concepts *about* religion, if it does not "preach," then it is not true enough, important enough, or in clear harmony with the Gospels, and can only be of marginal interest to the task at hand.

I thought for a moment, and appreciating the insight of the question, replied "Yes it does." Indeed, I deeply believe so; but this calls for some clarification. By saying, "yes, it preaches," I don't mean that pastors who are readers of *The Urantia Book* should substitute it for the Gospels in the worship and preaching of the church. There is in the church an implicit covenant that our understanding of the Good News, as well as our worship and proclamation, are based on the records of the Scriptures. To use or substitute any other record as authoritative, without clear public acknowledgment and understanding, would be a violation of that covenant as well as less than honest.

This does not, however, leave *The Urantia Book* outside the pale of influence concerning what is so basic and central to the life of the church—far from it. I believe *The Urantia Book* is in such clear harmony with the Good News, and in fact so clarifies and enhances our understanding of it, that *it provides the best single resource available for preaching today.*

I'm quite aware of the import of this statement, and have no hesitation in making it. I am convinced that the almost eight hundred pages on the life and teachings of Jesus, over one third of the book, will be, even for the most skeptical, a simply extraordinary resource to stimulate the mind and enrich the spirit.

I could hardly begin in one initial column to demonstrate the validity of such a claim, but a major concern of the *Journal* in future issues will be to do so, dealing with, among other things, specific texts and issues of Biblical interpretation as they "interface" with *The Urantia Book*, ones of special interest to the preacher.

I hope new readers will test it for themselves. Isn't the final test of truth for all Christians precisely this—that the Spirit bears witness that it is true? As John records Jesus' teaching, the central role of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to bear witness to the truth that the Father has revealed through the Son. (John 16: 13-14) For those who have found this so in *The Urantia Book*, it opens treasures beyond measure.

-Merlyn Cox

Empowering the Church

This feature is written by laypersons active in their churches

Church Members and *The Urantia Book*

New readers of *The Urantia Book* are often so overwhelmed and excited about its contents that in their enthusiasm they may tend to antagonize those with whom they try to share it. The greatest stumbling block to the book's acceptance is the hesitancy of many church members to consider any spiritual truth beyond the Sunday School stories of their childhood. Because of this fearful reluctance to be challenged, we should go slowly in leading them to the insights of the book rather than trying to force it upon them. They need to be given time to evaluate and understand something which is not packaged in the religious forms of their early training.

I am sure it would have been difficult for me if I had been introduced to *The Urantia Book* in my thirties or forties. When it came to my attention, I was in search of something that would answer my questions and satisfy my desire for deeper spiritual truth than I had hitherto been offered. I believe that God never meant for us to leave our brains at the church door when we enter. We have our God-given minds to think, to ask questions, and even to doubt. This is the only way we can grow in wisdom. "Every human being defines religion in the terms of his own experiential interpretation of the divine impulses from the God spirit that indwells him," and a "person can maintain his religious experience in the face of giving up or changing many of his religious beliefs." (*Urantia Book*, p. 1130)

I believe that leaders of the churches should have information about *The Urantia Book*, and as they become acquainted with its high spiritual quality and are convinced of its credibility, they will be able to help others who wish to learn of its inspiring message. When they realize that *Urantia Book* students do not wish to deny the validity or importance of the Bible, but strive to enhance and add to its credibility, they will feel less threatened.

Strength and insight can be gained from sources other than the Christian Bible, and we must keep an open mind and be willing to change as we learn. This is not to say that we must trade one belief for another, but as we grow spiritually, we ought to assimilate new precepts which ring true and can be honestly accepted. Revelation is ongoing, and *The Urantia Book* is an expression of spiritual reality which deserves attention. As Kahlil Gibran in *The Prophet* admonishes us, "Say not, I have found the truth," but rather, "I have found a truth."

Because religion so greatly stirs the emotions, perhaps we have to accept the fact that some will never give credence to the book's validity, but we may look forward to the day when many more people who read it's inspiring pages will say "Hallelujah" with the mind as well as with the heart.

-Isabelle Masel

The Urantia Book and Religious Studies

Meredith J. Sprunger

Paper presented at the American Academy of Religion meeting at Anaheim 11/25/85.

Rarely does one find a book on theology or religion which one feels has the potential of changing the conceptual patterns of our culture. Some thirty years ago I was a member of a small group of United Church of Christ ministers who discovered *The Urantia Book* , which is published by the Urantia Foundation, 533 Diversey Parkway, Chicago, IL 60614 in 1955. We found it a remarkably effective book in stimulating creative thinking in philosophy, religion, and culture. The general consensus among the thousands who have read the book is that it will receive universal recognition. It has extremely broad ramifications, shedding wisdom in almost every area of human endeavor.

This challenging book is not only a fascinating source document for personal spiritual growth and development, it may well become the most important stimulus leading to the revitalization of the Christian Church and the restructuring of theology since the Reformation. The growing number of ministers and other religious leaders now discovering the book are surprised that a publication of this spiritual quality and far-reaching potential could have remained virtually hidden for over thirty years.

This challenging book is not only a fascinating source document for personal spiritual growth and development, it may well become one of the most important sources of information leading to the revitalization of the Christian Church and the restructuring of theology since the Reformation.

A partial answer is found in the fact that those responsible for the publication of the book have initiated no promotional programs. They believe the low key evolutionary process of person to person communication is the wise method of acquainting people with the book. In addition, there are three major factors which have discouraged clergy and other religious leaders from a serious reading of the book:

1. It comes from a source which is not known and trusted by religious and theological groups.
2. It is a large book (2097 pages) and some sections are not easy to comprehend.
3. It claims to be new revelation and, therefore, understandably causes suspicion, if not fear or hostility.

Hopefully, we have left behind those days of cultural naivete when claim or authority have any meaning as a criterion of truth. Revelatory authenticity, therefore, is a secondary consideration. The primary challenge posed by *The Urantia Book* is pragmatic. Does it have something creative and constructive to contribute to our modern philosophic-religious outlook? Evaluated on the basis of spiritual insight, philosophical coherence, and reality-centeredness, it presents, in the judgment of thousands of people who have critically examined it, one of the finest world views of religion available to contemporary humanity.

After more than a quarter of a century of experience in introducing thousands of philosophy students and ministers to *The Urantia Book*, I have found the two major obstacles in getting people to read the book are its size and initial erroneous impressions of "esoteric" or "gnostic" connotations. For those who get past these psychological barriers and read the book, almost all are impressed with its comprehensive grasp of planetary phenomena and most believe it has a substantive contribution to make to religious studies.

A New Vision of Reality

In its two-thousand pages *The Urantia Book* presents a picture of the universe which relates science, philosophy, and religion in a synergistic whole. It presents an integrated and masterful view of Ultimate Reality. Concepts of Deity ranging from that of a personal Universal Father to impersonal Absolutes are so well unified the holistic picture is maintained. The nature and attributes of God are discussed as they relate to the universe and to the individual. The Trinity is conceptualized with greater intellectual and spiritual clarity than in any other description in theological literature. The material and gravitational center of the universe, the Isle of Paradise, is referred to as the place of origin of all forms of reality—spiritual, mindal, and material energy, life, and personality. A marvelously organized hierarchical universe is described which includes millions of inhabited planets in all stages of physical, mental, and spiritual evolution. Mechanistic and vitalistic interpretations of natural phenomena are integrated. Science, philosophy, and religion are seen as partial aspects of a larger unified universe picture.

The Urantia Book presents one of the most realistic and inclusive material-mindal-spiritual cosmologies in the entire field of philosophy and religion. It portrays an eminently reasonable picture of the conditions and nature of immortality. Survival is seen as dependent on the spiritual reality status of the individual. This in turn is determined by our free will decisions toward God—by our loyalty to truth, beauty, and goodness as these values are sincerely understood. Nevertheless, evil, sin, and judgment are stern and sober realities in the universe. Its intriguing picture of life after death, its eschatology, not only appeals to rational intelligence but has the ring of authentic spiritual reality. The interrelationships of body, mind, soul, and spirit are treated with much insight and originality. The central challenge to modern man is to make a well-balanced and sane effort to achieve God-consciousness. Growth toward perfection of purpose and the spiritual nature of being is presented as the fundamental motivation of life. This growth is evolutionary, progressive, and endless.

The book describes the origin and evolution of events on our planet. In addition to the physical development of the planet, including plant, animal, and human biological evo-

lution, it traces the development of civilization, culture, government, religion, the family, and other social institutions. The authors exhibit a superior understanding of planetary history, dynamics, and destiny. The section discussing marriage and the family has a rich and realistic historical appreciation of the relationships of men and women and a balanced assessment of the contributions of both nature and nurture in shaping human life. Papers dealing with the nature and function of religion, the purpose and practice of prayer and worship, and the place of personal and institutional religion in life and society are among the best discussions of these subjects in print. Chapters which describe the loving nurture of the indwelling Spirit of God in the human mind are of exceptional quality and parallel the world's finest insights derived from a first hand experience of God found in devotional literature.

Papers dealing with the nature and function of religion, the purpose and practice of prayer and worship, and the place of personal and institutional religion in life and society are among the best discussions of these subjects in print.

The fourth section of *The Urantia Book* contains a seven hundred page version of the life and teachings of Jesus, which is solidly rooted in the historical New Testament story. This superb presentation of the life of Jesus brings unity and coherence to the sketchy New Testament picture and with it a new authenticity. It has a universal appeal, even when viewed only as a historical novel, for it is unsurpassed in theistic philosophical reasonableness, spiritual insight, and personality appeal. This life of Jesus not only fills in the "hidden years" from twelve to thirty but *The Urantia Book* gives a picture of his pre-incarnation and post-incarnation experience. *It emphasizes the religion of Jesus—the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man—rather than the religion about Jesus, and is, therefore, inherently inclusive rather than divisive. This is an emphasis basically acceptable to all religions.*

The Question of Origin

Probably the most difficult question to answer about *The Urantia Book* is "Who wrote it?" It claims to be written by numerous supermortal beings as a special revelation to humankind living on this world, "Urantia." It purports to be the first major or epochal divine revelation since the coming of Christ to our planet. Such a claim certainly raises doubts in the minds of rational and responsible people. Almost every generation produces a number of people who pose as the bearers of new revelation. What is unique about *The Urantia Book* is that it has almost nothing in common with radical or fanatical movements. It does not advocate a new religion but seeks to undergird the best in all religions. Its viewpoint builds upon the best of the religious heritage of the past and present; yet it is fresh, expansive, and profound. The superior quality of the philosophical-religious insights of *The Urantia Book* is clear to anyone of discriminating mind who reads it.

Obviously, one should read *The Urantia Book* critically and judge it by its content, not by any claim of authorship. Only after a thorough reading of the book and careful evaluation of its message is one in a position to speculate about authorship. One is impressed with the authenticity of its teaching. Its message is balanced and profound. Its approach is open and benign. There are no threats or coercions to "believe." It seeks to work in and through the evolutionary process and within the social institutions of our world.

The Urantia Foundation that publishes the book and the Fifth Epochal Fellowship, a fraternal organization engaged in disseminating the teachings of *The Urantia Book* , are not interested in starting a new religion, organizing a church, or promoting any kind of religious institution. They are primarily interested in the spiritual stimulation and growth of people of all faiths and religions.

Relation to Contemporary Theology

The Urantia Book builds upon and enhances the concerns of contemporary theology. It affirms the insights of neo-orthodox and secularization theologies in presenting a holistic picture of Reality, free from the "two-story" dualism of classical Christianity. God is in the midst of life and the "ground of being" as well as a transcendent Reality. Experience-based thinking is substituted for authoritarianism and dogmatism.

The book reinforces and amplifies the evolutionary foundations of the process theologies. In its concepts of the Absolutes and the Supreme it parallels the Whiteheadian views of the "primordial nature of God" and the "consequent nature of God." Although *The Urantia Book* accepts the factual realities of the diversity of gender, race, and economic systems, it stresses the importance of equality of opportunity, dignity, freedom, and justice emphasized by the liberation theologies.

Even while solidly rooted in the ontological and evolutionary realities of the past, *The Urantia Book* is methodologically oriented toward the future as are the contemporary theologies of hope. It contains the most elaborate and intriguing picture of eschatology in religious literature which is both horizontal and vertical in nature. The illusions of secularism, reductionism, and naive utopianism are challenged with a breathtaking view of the future based on the hard realities of spirit conditioned evolutionary development.

The authors of *The Urantia Book* emphasize the importance of reversion activities, play, humor, relaxation, and creative artistic expression, which are frames of reference held in common with the contemporary theologies of play and story. The narrative quality of the life and teachings of Jesus and the interesting accounts of the heroes of the past found in *The Urantia Book* are among the most inspiring stories in religious literature.

Some contemporary theologians, however, will be disturbed by *The Urantia Book* because it goes beyond the horizontal dimensions of reality and the linguistic analysis of

meaning. Even though it affirms their concern for the horizontal aspects of life, it reemphasizes and tremendously expands and enhances the classical metaphysical conception of Reality. It integrates a hierarchical and transcendent conception of Deity and Reality with an indigenous and creative immanence in a new and inclusive holistic picture. The dynamics of this cosmic drama come close to Teilhard de Chardin's visualization of Cosmogenesis and Christogenesis meeting in God, where the two trajectories of time and eternity blend into one all encompassing Unity-Reality.

I have been contemplating this question for more than thirty years and I consistently come to the conclusion that The Urantia Book has the greatest potential for stimulating new vitality in religious studies of any religious book or event in recent times.

The new pluralism of belief-systems and life-styles is a permanent condition of our world. The attempt by religious and political fundamentalists to draw within their own comfortable belief beds and pull the covers over their heads, pretending the rest of the world does not exist, or exists only as an aberration, is no longer tenable. The polysymbolic religiosity of our day is, I believe, the evolutionary foundation upon which a new and higher vision of reality will be built.

The Urantia Book, in my judgment, has the potential of cleansing the windows of perception that we may catch a vision of the wonder of ourselves and the universe in a new and expanded visualization of reality. Its message will bring what Joseph Campbell calls a "remythologization of consciousness" freed from the reductionism, dichotomies, and static symbols of the past. This fresh, epochal mythology, this new organizing metaphor of reality, will retain the wisdom of the past, make meaningful the challenge of the present, and give humankind a vision of the future which will inspire and energize their minds and souls. Once again we will have generations, prophetically visualized by Roger Shinn, who have metaphysical confidence, comprehensive vision, and living faith.

Stimulating Creative Studies in Religion

The basic question which *The Urantia Book* poses for those interested in promoting scholarship in religious studies is, what is its potential for stimulating creative thinking in theology and religion? I have been contemplating this question for more than thirty years and I consistently come to the conclusion that *The Urantia Book* has the greatest potential for stimulating new vitality in religious studies of any religious book or event in recent times. I am confident that scholars in religion will gradually discover what a rich mine of religious research it contains. It has already been the source of one doctoral thesis. Dr. Jacques Rheaume at the University of Ottawa entitled his study "An Analysis of a Revealed Text: *The Urantia Book*" (Analyse d'un Texte Revele: *The Urantia Book*) which was completed in August of 1983. This is the first of what I predict will be a long line of masters and doctoral dissertations based on *The Urantia Book*. Some of the possible topics probed by these studies are suggested below:

"A Hypothesis Concerning the Authorship of *The Urantia Book* Based on an Empirical Examination of Its Content"

"Biblical, Scientific, Historical, and Logical Errors or Discrepancies in *The Urantia Book* Based on Contemporary Scholarship"

"Deity Concepts in the Religions of the World Found in *The Urantia Book*"

"Similarities and Differences of *The Urantia Book* and Traditional Christian Trinity Concepts"

The Urantia Book Description of the Supreme Being Compared with Whitehead's Concept of the Consequent Nature of God"

"*Urantia Book* Spiritual Cosmology Contrasted with Christian Eschatology"

"The Nature of Religion Described in *The Urantia Book* Compared with Contemporary Theological Views"

"The Concept of the Thought Adjuster Contrasted with Contemporary Views of the Superconscious and Transpersonal Psychology"

"The Religion of Jesus Contrasted with the Religion about Jesus"

"*The Urantia Book* View of Jesus' Concept of Man Contrasted with the Pauline Understanding of Human Nature"

"The Doctrine of Salvation: *The Urantia Book* and Mainline Christian Theology Compared"

"*The Urantia Book* View of Christianity and the Gospel Compared with that of Adolf von Harnack"

These are only a few of dozens of topics which are inspired by the stimulating and innovative material found in *The Urantia Book*. When scholars of religion finally discover the rich mine of religious material in *The Urantia Book*, the creative parameters of research will be greatly expanded. Kenneth Boulding in *The Meaning of the Twentieth Century*, Alvin Toffler in *The Third Wave*, John Naisbitt in *Megatrends*, Fritjof Capra in *The Turning Point*, and many other prophetic voices have pointed out that we are entering a major transitional change in the history of our planet. We desperately need spiritual foundations which are large enough, solid enough, and have the visionary potential to give stability and guidance to the new age which is struggling to be born. I believe *The Urantia Book* has the greatest potential for serving in this capacity of any philosophical-religious resource now available to humankind. ♦

The Mathematics of Love

Charles E. Hansen

This article is a condensation of a chapter from a forthcoming book which will define the abbreviated references. We hope to review the book after it is published.

We frequently encounter the proposition that God runs the universe with love. This may sound good to many of us; but, in scientific terms, to suggest that love is the logical foundation of all reality would seem a bit much. In fact, love has little basis in scientific theory of any sort. Currently, love is not even the backbone of any major school of philosophy. Even in the religion of love, Christianity, love seems to frequently sit "second pew" behind issues such as "economic and social justice" or other concerns of doctrine and theology, much of which seem far removed from the simple example of love set by its founder.

The small hold that love does have seems to be bound up in our innermost subjective experiences: those with our intimate few family and friends, and our personal relationship with divinity, whatever it may be. Love is not without its private and public advocates, but in the wider scope of things, love seems to be without much foundation. One modern psychologist suggests that "love may be like a crutch, impeding the development of the new social forms so important for the development of a better and more satisfying human condition..." (SOL, p. 51) To such thinkers "love" is simply a superfluous hangover of our family and tribal evolutionary development—an emotion that must gradually diminish in importance as greater social organizations unfold. Doctors now recommend, for example, that working parents get their children into day-care before extensive bonding of love takes place—it makes "separation" less stressful.

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This does not suggest that parents are cold-hearted, but only that they are dealing with the practicalities of modern life in a professional and scientific manner. Even in these more intimate matters we tend to follow the lead of scientific thinking much more that we usually realize. And although we all welcome the experience of love, the cold fact is that love has no demonstrated scientific or logical foundation in our civilization. As one thinker expresses it: "it would be a mad romantic [to propose that] love can be the energy of the social order"—the major influence of social, business, economic, and political organization. (ANAJ, p. 59) As another summarizes the case: "the value of love has yet to be demonstrated." (SOL, p. 27) And without a foundation of scientific usefulness, love is, as Jesus seems to have expressed it, "the stone the builders have rejected."

Science is the search for logical foundations, the search for consistent or unchanging principles, the search for "foundation stones," so to speak, that underlie our life experiences. Science is, as Einstein defined it, "methodical thinking directed toward finding regulative connections between our sensual experience." (I&O, p. 50) Since love seems to be a "sensual" experience, something we actually can discern by our senses, it would also seem that love could be scientifically studied to see if we can find in it any such"regulative connections,"consistent causes, or"logical foundations." The key to such a scientific study of love would be to find a way of observing love as we actually experience it rather than trying to bring it into the laboratory, killing it, and dissecting it. Perhaps it could be observed in "everyday life" where it seems to occur; and perhaps would *meet* scientific standards, for , as Einstein observed: "The whole of science is nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking." (I&O, p. 290)

For several years now I have been involved in such a "scientific" study of love, and I would like to share some of the findings with you. The first thing an observer notices about love in everyday life is that it is something that seems to occur between an individual and another person or object. And it can only be *observed* if some action takes place between the two. I am not saying that love consists only in action, but that love *manifests* itself only in action. This is akin to saying "Love without works is dead," which, of course, is nothing new. But what is somewhat "new" is that the actions of love can be classified into a limited number of distinctly separate categories; there are only so many ways to love someone or something.

This means that regardless of what goes on mentally or emotionally, and there is a lot of mental and emotional processing involved in love, the *actions* of love occur in certain clearly definable and consistent patterns; patterns which I term *love's action elements*. These action elements form the major expressive component of love termed *care*; and behind *care* with its action elements there are many other mental components and elements crucial to love: *respect* with its elements such as recognition and admiration; *knowledge* with its elements such as patience, humility and forgiveness; and *responsibility* with its elements such as trust and loyalty. But regardless of all of the mental elements vital to love, it all gets down to *action*. Actions are the only things by which we can observe the experience of love in a scientific manner.

So our first lesson in the mathematics of love begins with: "How do I love you? Let me *count* the ways." And if we do count the ways, we find (so far) that there are only *ten ways* we can express love regardless of how much we may love someone—eleven ways if we include a zero-action element. Keep in mind that these elements can be combined or mixed in any particular instance of love.

First, we can express love by paying attention to another; this is called *attentiveness*.

Second, we can express love by *listening*. And here listening is defined as conscious assimilation of all sensory data by ears, eyes, touch, smell, or whatever. Students of Jesus will

recognize that he always listened first to those he loved: "What is it that you seek?" "What is it that I should do unto you?"

Third, we can express love by *thanking*—something as simple as "Thank you."

Fourth, we can express love by *encouraging*. Encouraging means to "spur on" or to "inspire" as when we send someone a card. Or it may take on the form of simply being present. Jesus' "I will be with you always" is a form of encouraging, as is his suggestion to visit the sick, the widowed, the orphaned, and the prisoner.

Fifth, we can express love by *praising*—by expressions intended to commend or approve. At its highest intensities praising becomes glorification or worship.

Sixth, we can express love by *comforting*. Comforting traditionally means "consolation" to someone in distress; but here comforting is used in its more expanded meaning, that of "providing or increasing contentment or security"; usually by means of direct physiological contact, that is, by direct touch or by tool. This is more along the lines of the use of the term when we refer to a comfortable chair. Most touch associated with love falls in this element, including that of a sexual nature, or even that of the casual handshake. One also may "comfort" inanimate objects, as a sculptor may with clay or a musician may do with an instrument, or as any workman doing any task may do whenever a tool or a product is touched.

Seventh, we can express love by *assisting*. Assisting is direct energy expenditure made in alignment with another's effort, such as "lending the helping hand" to help someone change a tire.

Eighth, we can express love by *sharing*. Sharing is a temporary or permanent transfer of direct or invested energy to another with some reciprocal arrangement usually implied. When you share your lawn mower with your neighbor you expect to get it back. When you share your ice-cream cone you expect the sharee might do the same with his or her ice-cream cone next time, and so on. Lending is a form of sharing, even when, as Jesus suggests, you sometimes lend expecting nothing in return. But even if you do not expect a return, sharing always allows for a reciprocal.

Ninth, we can express love by *contributing*. Contributing is a permanent transfer of direct or invested energy with no reciprocity intended. In fact, the ultimate contributing is performed in secret, as Jesus suggests, making reciprocity impossible. We also, of course, contribute many things to those who know where they are coming from, especially to children, with no direct, immediate reciprocity intended.

Tenth, we can express love by *protecting*. Protecting is the direction of action or energy so as to oppose potential or immediate threats. There are both "passive" and "active" modes of protecting; but we should keep in mind that the same individual who suggests that one "turn the other cheek" was speaking of a "smite from one's neighbor" not a battle ax swung at one's head; and that the same Jesus appears to have warned us to always be ready to "sell our garment and buy a sword." Protection is a crucial action element of love, even if not always recognized as such.

Finally, we can express love toward another by not doing anything, by simply "letting them alone". But this can be an element of love in the fullest sense.

So these are the ten action elements of love: *attentiveness, listening, thanking, encouraging, praising, comforting, assisting, sharing, contributing*, and *protecting*. Usually, several of these elements are involved in any particular "event" of love, and occasionally one deliberately "leaves someone alone" or opts for love's zero-action element.

Without the intent-to-please, love simply does not seem to occur. But with the intent-to-please, any of the preceding action elements, even the zero-action element, falls within love's domain. Jesus describes it perfectly with his statement: "I do always those things that please the Father."

But even the zero-action element of love is made up of something very vital. And this something we can always sense, or discern, when love is present: it is what I term the *intent-to please*. Some might wish to term it goodwill, but it is actually not a general notion as goodwill is usually considered to be. It is more directly tied to our needs sturcture. The intent-to-please is a very specific *assertion* toward another person or object. To help clarify this, I point out that your pet dog probably does not possess a *conception* of goodwill toward you, yet the intent-to-please can be discerned in its actions. This example does not trivialize the intent-to-please but rather demonstrates that its existence probably extends deeper in reality than we might suspect. When incorporated into action, it occurs right at the "impulse to action" and becomes a recognizable part of it. It becomes embodied within the action itself. Without the intent-to-please, love simply does not seem to occur. But with the intent-to-please, any of the preceding action elements, even the zero-action element, falls within love's domain. Jesus describes it perfectly with his statement: "I do *always* those things that *please* the Father." The intent-to-please becomes loves *common element*. It must be there every time all the time, whether direct action is taken or not.

I stress that the pleasing aspect of the intent-to-please should not be confused with simple pleasure, any more than a parent pleases the child by offering the pleasure of perpetual ice-cream cones. In mathematical language, the intent-to-please is a *higher order integration* than pleasure or pain; that is, it includes a much greater spectrum of information. Even that which is painful, like a good athletic workout, can be pleasing. And that which is pleasurable can be far from pleasing, especially in retrospect.

Now this may all seem quite simple, and it is, but let us look at what has been accomplished. From all of the reported experiences related to love, out of all of the countless actions that humans use to express love toward one another, or toward anything, we have reduced love's possible expressions to just

ten simple categories (or eleven, counting love's zero-action element.) In so doing, we have achieved what science first attempts to achieve when it focuses on any phenomenon. *We have recognized some underlying consistencies in love's everyday experience*. And this is far from trivial, for what we now have is a format of eleven action elements, including a zero-action element, which define love's expression whenever and however it may occur—whether the individuals and/or objects involved are young or old, of the present era or of the ancient past; regardless of geographic location; and regardless of the language, or educational or cultural context. In any situation, the general association of these ten action elements, with the ever-necessary common element, the intent-to-please, can be recognized as love, or what I call the *system* of love.

True, some of these elements may take on countless different expressions and many different forms. Some may even be couched in ignorance—such as the attempts by early physicians to comfort patients by bleeding them. Nevertheless, the observed presence of the action elements of *attentiveness, listening, thanking, encouraging, praising, comforting, assisting, sharing, contributing*, and *protecting* directed from one person toward another means only one thing. It means love—so long as the intent-to-please is there also. As already mentioned, there are other mental components and elements of love which are necessary, but if science is to deal with love, it must deal primarily with *observables*, the simplest of which have just been summarized as love's action elements.

Each action element of love constitutes a real energy expression, a real "energy event" that has a certain sense, a certain direction, and an amount or magnitude of energy. In mathematical terms, such an energy event is termed a vector.

These observable action elements of love, and the discernible intent-to-please, can now be looked at from a more logical or mathematical perspective. The mathematical perspective is not so much concerned with numbers, as it is concerned with the search for "relationships of relationships," as one mathematician (von Neumann) explains it.

Each action element of love constitutes a real energy expression, a real "energy event" that has a certain *sense*, a certain *direction*, and an amount or *magnitude* of energy. In mathematical terms, such an energy event is termed a *vector*. A whole event of love may embody many such vectors, but let us keep it simple here.

Let us first take a closer look at a vector, an "energy event" embodying *sense, direction, and magnitude*, and see just how accurately this mathematical language fits the action elements of love.

The *sense* of a vector means just what it says: you can "sense" when someone's action is *listening*, or when someone's action is *thanking*, or *sharing*, or *protecting*, and so on. Similarly, you can sense whether, within the very core of the action impulse, there is an "intent-to-please." It is vital to keep in mind that *any vector that may constitute love can have a sense which is clearly not of love*. There can be a loving thank-you or a very spiteful thank-you; there can be a sharing out of love or sharing out of fear, assisting out of love or assisting out of fear or coercion, and so on—the same general profile of an energy event but with an entirely different "sense."

The *direction* of a vector also means just what it says; you can direct the energy of any action element at yourself, for example, or toward another person or object.

The greatest relative magnitude of a vector of love is also described by Jesus; "to lay down one's life for a friend."

And the *magnitude* of a vector also means just what it says; but it is a *relative energy amount*, not one we can measure precisely in absolute terms. Jesus makes this clear when he observed of the widow's last mite going into the donation box, "She has given more than all the rest." The greatest relative magnitude of a vector of love is also described by Jesus; "to lay down one's life for a friend." There is no more energy that one can give, and the *direction* is totally aimed at another. Jesus thus defines the maximum magnitude for a vector of love's action. Whether such a maximum vector might be one of *assisting*, or *protecting*, or some combination involving love's other vectors, we would usually term this high magnitude of love *devotion*. Right beneath it would be the level of *nurturing*, and below that *consideration*, then *kindness*, and finally, love's vector of least magnitude, that of *courtesy*. I will not elaborate on these various magnitudes, but this simply shows how all of the language fits, and stresses that love's action elements can be observed across a wide range of magnitudes appropriate to various situations. A simple, courteous thank-you is an appropriate magnitude of love in some instances, just as a devoted sacrifice of self may be an appropriate magnitude in another instance.

By the way, if vectors and love seem a strange mix of language, keep in mind that it was Jesus who first used the concept that any mathematician will instantly recognize as the language of vectors: "Give and it will be given back to you... for with the measure you mete it shall be measured back to you again." Jesus is speaking about the *general sense, direction*, and *magnitude* of love's "energy events."

When we mention science or mathematics, however, we do not normally think of Jesus, but of someone like Albert Einstein, generally considered the greatest scientist of our times. Einstein set in place an entirely new framework by which observation of the universe—and everything within it—can be conducted. We usually term this framework *Relativity Theory*. Unfortunately, his framework has been somewhat misunderstood by most of us. His essential Principle of Relativity is not even close to what cultural or moral relativism has come to mean—the justification of various opinions and diverse perspectives. Einstein used the term *relativity* to mean "Seek and you will find", not "Just look and you will see." For Einstein, relativity described the search for, and validation of,

the invariants, the constants, the things that do not change, the things that are "absolute and reliable *despite* the apparent confusions, illusions and contradictions" that occur with changes in, or diversity of, perspective. (EU, p. 2) His was the search for the basic principles whose objectivity can be demonstrated regardless of the perspective or viewpoint of the observer.

It would be helpful to note here that Quantum Theory is sometimes cited as a rebuttal of Einstein's basic framework of relativity, but this is not so. Although the two theories do not merge perfectly, the fact is that Einstein helped lay the foundation of Quantum Theory, and it is an error to suggest that he rejected it. He was, however, critical of it. His fundamental argument with Quantum Theory was that its probabilistic nature, its foundation of chance, could not be the ultimate logical foundation of reality. Thus his famous statement: "God does not play dice with the Universe."

Einstein's kind of thinking is so profound that, as one fellow scientist observed as early as 1936, "In him philosophy, logic, theology, physics, and mathematics become reunited." (IQOM, p. 33) Einstein held that consistent principles that do not change must underlie the whole of reality and must be objectively describable... preferably in the language of mathematics.

By finding that love manifests in terms of a consistent, objectively describable set of action elements that can further be defined as vectors, we have taken the first step in finding something about love that does not seem to change even as our perspective changes. We have taken a small step along Einstein's route. Thanking will always appear locally as something unique, but any observer should have little trouble defining it as a thanking vector regardless of the perspective of culture, time, or situation. With its intent-to-please, no one could misinterpret a thank-you of love for a vicious thank-you whose intent was to harm. So a *thanking* vector, just like a *praising* vector, a *comforting* vector, an *assisting* vector, or a *sharing* vector, has its unique consistent language of sense, direction, and magnitude regardless of the perspective of the observer or the particular context of the event. This unique, consistent, underlying language of vectors is the most universal of all language, that of mathematics—the ultimate language of science.

Anything that demonstrates consistency, or an unchanging nature irrespective of the viewpoint, is said, in mathematical terms, to possess *symmetry*. The great breakthrough of Einstein was to realize that the laws of nature, specifically the laws of physics, had to be symmetrical for the known universe; they had to be experienced everywhere the same, unchanging and equally applicable. Since Einstein's demonstration of symmetry at the foundation of physics, modern physicists have found over and over again that symmetry holds the keys to the laws and operation of the universe. Modern physics has become essentially a search for ever greater symmetry, ultimately expected to be found in one fundamental principle, much as Einstein predicted, a principle that is unchanging, invariant, and constant under all circumstances regardless of the perspective of the observer. Einstein held that such a principle would extend far beyond the realm of physics to include all of life—including intelligence and human personality.

Coincident with Einstein's Relativity Theory and the search for such symmetry, a new branch of mathematics has evolved and has proven to be specifically geared for defining the presence of symmetry in complex phenomena. This mathematics is called the Theory of Groups. Sounds simple enough, but as one mathematician described it, it is "a super mathematics in which the operations are as unknown as the quantities they operate on and [in which] a super-mathematician does not know what he is doing when he performs these operations." (TTOG, p. 1559) Fortuneately this can also be stated in plain English: it enables one to take a collection of vectors that seem to operate as a system, like the "system of love," and test it for invariance under all possible transformations, that is, for all possible manifestations or conditions and from all possible perspectives. If the action elements of love with their common element can pass this test, if they possess the "group" property, then we are no longer talking about simple consistency of these elements among various cultures, timespans, and contexts; we are reaching far deeper into some type of fundamental symmetry that emerges from the very nature of whatever love is. *And this would mean that love is not simply a subjective experience, but is profoundly, objectively real.*

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How does love perform under this test of relativity, the test of group theory?

The first test of a group is to see if its elements, when combined or mixed, stay *within* the group. If we combine or mix the vectors of love, such as *thanking* and *listening*, for example, or if we combine *attentiveness* and *protecting*, or *assisting* and *contributing*, or any other of these action vectors, can we stay within the domain of love or do we generate something else, something *outside* of love? The answer is that any combination, or mix of the action elements, or vectors of love, remains within the group defined as love. This holds for even its zero-action element, which is also a vector— it has love's sense and direction, but with zero-magnitude.

The second test of a *group* is a little more complex: We must see if the rule of combination of elements is *associative*. This means: If you send someone a gift *(contributing)* with a thank-you note *(thanking)* and then have them over for dinner *(sharing)*, is the result different than if you change the manner of combination slightly by sending them a gift, *then* inviting them over to your home, then thanking them, and then having them for dinner? The answer is no. There is no essential difference: the message stays the same as you combine one element with any combination of other elements. Love's vectors can be

arranged in any combinations, without changing the love content itself.

The third test for a *group* is to see if the system of love contains an identical member or common element such that, if it is combined with *listening*, let us say, then the result remains that of *listening*, or, when combined with *assisting*, the result is still *assisting*. The intent-to-please is just such an identical member. It also might be considered the zero-action (zero-magnitude) vector and its embodiment does not change the essence of an action vector. It also works either way; you can combine the intent-to-please with *thanking* or combine *thanking* with the intent-to-please. In each case it makes no difference. No matter how you add the intent-to-please, like yeast in bread, it permeates the whole "energy event."

The fourth and final test for a *group* is to see if there exists a reciprocal for each of the elements such that, when combined with the element itself, the result is the identical member, or the *common* element. As the system of love necessarily includes both a subject and object, this would mean that if you gave someone a book for Christmas, an act of *contributing*, and if they just happened to give you a copy of the exact same book, a perfect reciprocal, then while the vectors of *contributing* exactly canceled each other in terms of energy, the intent-to-please survives and is experienced in perfect condition. There is no vector of love that does not have such a possible reciprocal and from whose combination the intent-to-please does not survive unscathed.

What all this means is that love seems to satisfy the mathematical or logical conditions of group theory, and it therefore must possess an inner symmetry: love remains invariant, unchanging under all conditions and from all perspectives—regardless of place, time, culture, language, age of those involved, or context of the immediate situation. And even more revealing, its most unchanging element is its common element, the intent-to-please. However we express love in any particular event, and in any of its manifestations, whether listening, thanking, sharing, protecting, or any combination of these or love's other action elements, the intent-to-please remains completely invariant—much as Jesus suggested with his statement, "I do *always* the things that *please*..."

Actually, this means much more than simply finding symmetry, something that does not change regardless of how we look at it. *Why* is symmetry so important to an Einstein or to any modern mathematician or physicist? It is not because symmetry always seems simple, elegant, or even beautiful, as well as unchanging. Science has different interests. "Science is swayed only by *efficient* causes", the American philosopher and scientist Charles S. Peirce has reminded us. Science is interested in what works, and in what works with the least energy expenditure—*efficiency*. So here we find the reason scientists pursue symmetry; that which is inherently symmetrical is inherently efficient. Symmetry and efficiency are somehow related in the universe. The sphere, or globe, for example, is symmetrical from any perspective and is perfectly invariant in relation to its center. It is also the most efficient use of energy-matter to provide the minimum surface area and/or the maximum volume.

So, by finding an inherent symmetry within the system of love and by demonstrating this symmetry in the mathematical language of group theory, something most significant has been accomplished. We have crossed over the line of looking at love as something that is just simple, elegant, even beautiful. We have crossed over into the world of science itself, the world of efficiency. As another well known mathematician observed, "...if and whenever you ascertain the group of all the transformations that leave invariant some specified object or objects of thought, you thereby define perfectly some actual (or potential) branch of science..." (TGC, p. 1546) We have just defined such a group of all possible transformations consisting of the action elements of love with its common *always* unchanging element, the intent-to-please. Indeed, we have defined the New Science of Love.

The language of love, then, is not only that of looking and feeling nice, it is the language of the "easier yoke and the lighter burden"—across the board of purposeful human activity, precisely as suggested by Jesus.

Will this change things? I believe it will. If we were just demonstrating that love looked and felt nice, it would be of little significance. But we have done more than that. This "new science" means that love's inherent symmetry is most probably linked to the paths of highest efficiency for needs-filling human action. The language of love, then, is not only that of looking and feeling nice, it is the language of the "easier yoke and the lighter burden"—across the board of purposeful human activity, precisely as suggested by Jesus.

Indeed, this should change things, for it constitutes a scientific basis for all the human and social sciences. The group of love's vectors provides a format which should demonstrate the most efficient profile of any interaction of information and exchange of energy in all of its forms among humans. There is no other known invariant principle that can presently demonstrate such symmetry, with its implied efficiency, for the full range of purposeful human action—across time, place, culture and situation. I add here that from this work it has been possible to soundly demonstrate the actual linkage between efficiency and love in measurable, needs-filling human activity, which I cannot go into here in any depth. But I will say that if you study the Japanese, you will see the emergent results of love's symmetry reflected in the raw efficiency of their entire social order—their psychology, their sociology, their business, their economics, their justice, and even their government. I do not mean to suggest that the Japanese are perfect, but the embodiment of love's elements in their entire culture—simply loving one another—is such that it now puts any other society on this planet almost to shame. And with love's gentle efficiency, they are busily inheriting the Earth, much as Jesus predicted.

Nevertheless, when all the logic and evidence is weighed, it means that the system of love, actually a group in mathematical terms, defines a unique logical foundation for all of the human and social sciences, psychology, sociology, economics, and politics, all of which, unless they can find a fundamental principle of symmetry and efficiency of their own, must eventually bow to the symmetry and inherent efficiency of love. For humans will ultimately take the easier way, the most consistent, simplest, and most efficient path in everything they do,in all of their "energy events." And the logical foundation of moral philosophy must bow to the same path. So the long sought for objective basis of morality appears to be found here also, exactly as suggested by Jesus.

And there is more. For ages now, humanity has searched for a principle that might unite both the natural and human sciences, as well as philosophy and religion. Following Einstein's lead, such a principle would have to reflect the ultimate symmetry and efficiency. In this quest, we sometimes like to separate human experience from the rest of reality, to search for principles that apply to science but not to humans, or to humans but not science. Actually, Einstein with his "unprecedented universality" finally ruined this game whether we recognize it yet or not. *There is only one reality* according to Einstein, much as Jesus seems to have observed, one continuum, alpha to omega. This means that the energy events of human action, the vectors of love, for instance, fall *within* reality, not outside of it. So what we have encountered is a group composed of real vectors, not imaginary ones, and this means that love is a manifestation of an invariant that must penetrate all of reality. At the core of love's symmetry, then, resides its unchanging common element, the invariant *intent-to-please*, which must penetrate all of reality as we experience it.

Now it is the nature of the *intent-to-please* to be only persuasive; there is no coercion possible in this invariant. Its pure attraction could be said to include an *absolute persuasion toward efficiency*. It was Einstein who revealed that gravity, whose law sets the general conditions "which regulate physical phenomena" of the energy-related or natural sciences (Whitehead), is actually not a force at all, but is more of a *persuasion* toward paths of highest efficiency. So here, we encounter the first merging of a principle that offers to unite hard science with the invariant we have just defined. In fact, just such a principle was proposed almost a century ago by a man who is increasingly recognized as one of America's greatest thinkers, Charles Peirce. A scientist, philosopher, and mathematician, he termed the merging principle of all science, philosophy, and religion, *evolutionary love*. Although too ill to complete his writings, in an apparent reference to this integration, he stated that his proof would be "surprisingly simple", that it would change our understanding of Natural Laws and "free will", and that it would change certain matters of religious *faith* into *logical conviction*. Unfortunately, he left us before demonstrating his philosophy in rigorous logic. But it seems that the merging of all science, philosophy, and religion cannot be far from this. Love, with its absolute persuasion toward efficiency, demonstrates an objective basis with which gravity, as well as all human needs-fulfilling experiences, including values, morality, and aesthetics, seem to align. And while it does not define God, of course, or prove that He exists, it can be said to reflect a most friendly, if not loving nature, penetrating all of reality. *Indeed, it seems Reality does intend to please with an invariant as constant as the speed of light and as pervasive as gravity.* Perhaps Einstein's great intuition foretold this solution when he stated; "There is only one important question for scientists, namely, Is the universe friendly?" (John Kiley, NR, Apr. 24 87, p. 39, Poem YES)

As Alfred North Whitehead observed in 1925: "We are entering upon an age of reconstruction in religion, in science, and in political thought. Such ages, if they are to avoid mere ignorant oscillation between extremes must seek truth in its ultimate depths. There can be no vision of this depth of truth apart from a philosophy which takes full account of those ultimate abstractions whose interconnections it is the business of mathematics to explore." (S&MW, p. 39)

Accordingly, the mathematics of love sets the logical foundation in place by which construction of a new age may begin. Love, of course, cannot be understood as simply a matter of mathematics, of vectors. It is understandable only in terms of the whole personality—from which the vectors of *attentiveness, listening, thanking, encouraging* and the rest emanate. The wholeness of love must find its understanding in the role model of personalities who love. And unbeknownst to many of us, Einstein himself referred to Jesus and his teachings as the ultimate model for humans to follow. (TWAISI, p. 111) America's greatest scientific philosophers, Charles Peirce and Alfred North Whitehead, reached the same conclusion. (ITPOCSP, p. 462) It has long been recognized that religions tend to center on the loving, role model personality of their founders. By adding the scientific foundation to what these personalities have demonstrated, we only clarify their essence. But this also means that from the perspective of science, philosophy, and religion, the stone the builders have rejected is soon due to be recognized as the cornerstone, assisted by a language which the builders cannot ignore: the universal language of science— mathematics, the mathematics of love.♦

The author notes that the invariant defined by the Mathematics of Love appears to be that specifically defined on page 137 of The Urantia Book: "There is operative throughout all time and space and with regard to all reality of whatever nature an inexorable and impersonal law [invariant principle] which is equivalent to the function of a cosmic providence."

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Charles Hansen is an economist and businessman with a special interest in human performance, productivity, creativity, and innovation. In addition to publishing various papers in these areas, he is completing a book entitled The Technology of Love.

The Urantia Book and Modern Science: Harmony or Discord?

Richard I. Bain

The Bible is a collection of books. *The Urantia Book* is a collection of papers. Both books speak of the origin of mortals on this planet. Both discuss our relationship with God. Both contain some information about Jesus' life and teachings. In the view of many Christians, the New Testament is just an update to the Old Testament. Some who read *The Urantia Book* may regard it as a supplement to the Bible or see it as a "third testament." From a spiritual point of view this may be true. A critical evaluation of both books, however, indicates they are written on different conceptual levels. One obvious difference is that the Bible is a prescientific document. It was written by people who believed the world was flat and who had no idea that the stars are distant suns. *The Urantia Book*, on the other hand, is in harmony with both 20th century science and the teachings of Jesus.

The Urantia Book speaks of Jesus' mission here as the Fourth Epochal Revelation to our planet. The book identifies itself as the Fifth Epochal Revelation. Thus, the book could be considered in a certain sense a supplement to the teachings of Jesus. It should be noted, however, that the teachings Jesus presented to the people of his time were in their idiom, using examples primarily from their herder/agrarian culture to teach them eternal spiritual truths. He did not attempt to enlarge their concepts of the material nature of the universe. First of all, his was a spiritual mission; secondly, the people were not ready for such an expansion of knowledge. But now, nearly 2000 years later, we are in the midst of a continuing scientific revolution and it is appropriate to have an expanded revelation that treats the material and spiritual natures of the universe in a holistic fashion. This is exactly what *The Urantia Book* does.

What is needed in the 20th and 21st centuries is a philosophy and reality view that will restore the credibility of the spiritual, while at the same time recognizing the validity of the theories and observations of science.

In the past several hundred years, science and religion have not always had a cordial relationship. The church attempted to cling to the outdated concepts of a prescientific era while trying simultaneously to suppress the sometimes disturbing new insights being forced upon them by science. But science was not to be denied. As soon as religion lost the power of the state to enforce its edicts, science bloomed and prevailed. The scale has tipped so far in the direction of science that it is nearly a religion in our materialistic age. Many today look to science for answers to questions such as the origin of life or how to prevent or end suffering. The realm of the spirit is suspect. The atmosphere that was once full of angels now contains only such things as radio waves, visible light waves, and satellites. What is needed in the 20th and 21st centuries is a philosophy and reality view that will restore the credibility of the spiritual, while at the same time recognizing the validity of the theories and observations of science. Such a view of reality should not only elevate science and religion, but should also show their interrelatedness. *The Urantia Book* offers such a view. Further, it delineates how the two pursuits can be balanced and harmonized by philosophy.

When considering the science and cosmology of the book, it should be noted that the authors had certain restrictions placed on them regarding what they could reveal to us. On page 1109 we are told by the revelators, "The laws of revelation hamper us greatly by their proscription of the impartation of unearned knowledge....We are not at liberty to anticipate the scientific discoveries of a thousand years." So, what can they tell us in this area? The authors inform us that they can discuss known or about-to-be-known facts. Of course, "about-to-be-known" implies a relatively short time period for us, but how long is it for beings who existed before mortals appeared on earth? The authors of the papers seem to imply that this time period is less than a thousand years. We can get some idea of how far the authors were permitted to project by comparing the concepts that they have included in the papers with current theories of our scientists. The inclusion in the book of scientific concepts that will soon be outdated raises a serious question. Does the credibility of science in the book reflect on the validity of the spiritual concepts in the book?

The authors of *The Urantia Book* make it quite clear that the cosmology and science in the book are in a quite different category than are its spiritual concepts. On page 1109 we read, "The cosmology of these revelations is *not inspired*...While divine or spiritual insight is a gift, *human wisdom must evolve.*" The authors further inform us on the same page, "...within a few short years, many of our statements regarding the physical sciences will stand in need of revision in consequence of additional scientific developments and new discoveries." It is clear that the spiritual concepts in the book must stand on their own merit. But if a portion of the science will soon be obsolete, of what value is that portion to us? On page 1109, the authors tell us that the scientific ideas "are of immense value in that they at least transiently clarify knowledge by:

1. The reduction of confusion by the authoritative elimination of error.

2. The coordination of known or about-to-be-known facts and observations.

3. The restoration of important bits of lost knowledge concerning epochal transactions in the distant past.

4. The supplying of information which will fill in vital missing gaps in otherwise earned knowledge.

5. Presenting cosmic data in such a manner as to illuminate the spiritual teachings contained in the accompanying revelation."

How well does the science and cosmology of *The Urantia Book* fulfill these five purposes? To answer this question, it will be helpful to examine the science presented in the book

and its correlation (or lack thereof) with our present scientific knowledge.

For purposes of comparison, the relationship between the science and cosmology presented in *The Urantia Book* and the theories current in science today can be divided into seven categories. As a preface to what follows, note that the Urantia Papers were received in 1934 and 1935, but the book was not published until 1955.

The first category encompasses scientific concepts that were considered valid at the time the Urantia Papers were received, and are still considered valid. An example of a concept in this category is the presence in space of calcium that has migrated out of stars. Calcium was the first material discovered in free space by astronomers. There are many other examples of concepts in the book in the first category.

The authors of The Urantia Book make it quite clear that the cosmology and science in the book are in a quite different category than are its spiritual concepts.

The second category is science that was outdated quite soon after the book was published but which agreed with scientific theory at the time the Urantia Papers were received. This second category is of special interest because there may be an unrevealed purpose in including this sort of science in the book. There are two good candidates in this second category. One of these is the distance to the Andromeda galaxy. On page 107 of the book we are told that the light we see from this galaxy took one million years to get here, yet today astronomers have good reason to set the distance to this galaxy at over two million light years. At the time the papers were received, however, astronomers believed this galaxy to be only one million light years away. Another example of second category science concepts concerns the planet Mercury. A statement on page 657 informs us that the planet Mercury keeps the same face to the sun as it revolves around it. In fact, Mercury rotates about 1.5 times for each revolution around the sun. This was found in the 1960's by radar studies, but at the time the papers were received and at the time the book was published, astronomers believed that Mercury kept the same face to the sun. Another possible member of the number two category is the "one hundred elements" puzzle. *The Urantia Book* seems to say that there can be only 100 elements, yet today science claims to have found over 120 elements. A few subtleties may qualify the elements above number 100 in a way that excludes them from consideration as elements, but these subtleties have yet to be found by our scientists. It may be possible to explain away the apparent conflict by noting that science had discovered less than 100 elements by the time the Urantia Papers were received. Perhaps the authors were not permitted to go beyond concepts for which a theory or number already existed.

The third category includes science that did not agree with the scientific theory current at the time the papers were received, but which has since been validated by new scientific findings. An example of this category concerns plate tectonics and continental drift. In an issue of the *Six-O-Six* newsletter from Australia, Dr. Ken Glasziou discusses the history of the theory of continental drift in an article entitled "The Second Prediction." He relates that the theory was proposed in 1912 by Wegener, but was generally discredited until the 1960's when examination of geological processes in the sea floor confirmed the concept of continental drift. *The Urantia Book* speaks of the single super continent that some scientists have called "Pangea." The book says that this continent broke apart, forming the continents of today. The book thus supports a theory which was discredited at the time the papers were received.

In the fourth category are scientific facts for which there were either no theories or theories not validated by research before the papers were received, but which have been since discovered and/or validated by scientific research. In another article, "Science and *The Urantia Book*", by Dr. Glasziou, several ideas in this category are mentioned. These are the neutrinos a supernova creates, the strong nuclear force, and neutron stars.

The Urantia Book speaks of the single super continent that some scientists have called "Pangea." The book says that this continent broke apart, forming the continents of today. The book thus supports a theory which was discredited at the time the papers were received.

The fifth category of scientific concepts in the book are those that are part of an ongoing controversy, with some scientists holding theories that agree with the book, and some holding opposing views. The best known of this category is the theory of evolution. Until recently, Darwin's concept of natural selection was the only theory of evolution accepted by most biologists and other scientists. In the past decade, however, a few scientists have been proposing a different idea that they call punctuated evolution. This theory supposes that evolution is not a gradual process of small changes accumulating to create a new species, but rather a process with new species appearing as a result of rapid and profound changes in existing species. In fact, this is exactly the concept that *The Urantia Book* teaches regarding evolution. It has the beauty of explaining the so called "missing links", or transitional forms. They aren't missing; they never existed!

The sixth category of science in the book is closely related to the fifth category. In the sixth category there are concepts that disagree with current scientific theories. The most popular theory of modern cosmology is the Big Bang. *The Urantia Book* presents a quite different concept for the origin of the universe. In the Big Bang scheme, the universe resulted from the explosion of and subsequent expansion of a small, unbelievably dense cosmic egg. If God's hand is seen at all in this, it is only as initiator of the cosmic egg. The only uniformity in the Big Bang universe is the uniform expansion. Everything else happens by random chance. While there is

apparent disorder, the book states that the universe evolves in accordance with a plan. Much as apparently random mutations produced a progression of higher life forms culminating in mortal will creatures, so too is the universe passing through stages toward some state of relative perfection in the far distant future. While the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe seems currently to be on very solid ground, its foundations may not be as solid as they appear.

The key evidence for the Big Bang theory rest on the concept of the red shift. Because of red shift observations, astronomers decided that the universe is flying apart due to some immense explosion that they labeled the "Big Bang." This supposedly happened 15 to 17 billion years ago. If the red shift as evidence of the expansion theory is invalidated, the Big Bang theory is in big trouble. In fact, there are several astronomers who are questioning the idea that the red shift of distant galaxies and other objects is due solely to the speed with which they are flying away from us. The dissenters feel that part of the measured red shift may be due to a cause other than the speed of recession. *The Urantia Book* states quite clearly that part of the red shift observed for distant bodies is in fact due to a cause other than speed of recession. It also reveals that there is some expansion due to a phenomenon known as space respiration. This phenomenon is not due to a Big Bang; it is a periodic billion year long cycle of limited expansion followed by limited contraction. If the few scientists who are examining other causes of red shift prove their position, the field of astronomy will be greatly shaken, and new theories of the origin of the universe will have to be considered. Perhaps these new theories will converge on *The Urantia Book* point of view.

The seventh and final category contains those scientific concepts in the book for which there are no current scientific theories. One of the most significant concepts in this category is that of the ultimaton. We are informed that this particle is more basic than the electron. In fact, the ultimaton is *the* most basic particle, according to the book. If we could dissociate an ultimaton, we would find that it was composed not of smaller particles, but of a primal form of energy. Science currently considers the electron itself to be a basic particle of a group of particles known as leptons. Quarks are considered by physicists to be basic building blocks of other particles such as protons and neutrons. *The Urantia Book* does not mention quarks, but they could conceivably be conglomerations of ultimatons.

On the surface, prediction of the ultimaton and other concepts in this category may seem to be a sort of scientific prophecy. The authors of the papers say that they are permitted to discuss known or about-to-be-known facts. It is possible that we will discover or predict the ultimaton in the next few decades, so it could conceivably be called an about-to-be-known fact. Though much of the particle research today concerns the quark, a few physicists have wistfully wondered when the next smaller particle will be discovered.

There is a temptation to look at facts in the third and fourth categories and cite these as proof of the validity or even the infallibility of *The Urantia Book*. We need consider only the concepts in the second category, however, to see that facts do not support this conclusion. In fact, we might well ask ourselves why the authors opted to include such items as the rotation of Mercury and the distance to the Andromeda galaxy. They don't seem to serve any of the five purposes previously listed. Could it be that the authors deliberately included science and cosmology that would soon be outdated to prevent claims of infallibility for the book? Considering our predilection for undue reverence toward so called holy books, this possibility might be considered.

No doubt the science and cosmology in the book have an importance in their own right, but science is only one third of the interrelated triad which includes philosophy and religion. Historically there has been conflict between scientists and religionists. What is the proper relationship between the two? How can the apparent conflicts be resolved? What is the larger view which will unify science and religion? *The Urantia Book* states their complementary relationship in a number of ways. The most concise description is that science, philosophy, and religion concern themselves respectively with things, meanings, and values. Meanings are derived from things which in turn suggest values; and meanings are also rooted in values which condition things. Philosophy stands as a link between science and religion, as the interpreter of science to religion and religion to science. The important fact is that these three human activities *are* related; they concern themselves with three different aspects of the same eternal reality. The scientist is studying the laws of the universe, which are the habits of the impersonal nature of God. The philosopher is trying to discern the meaning of the universe, which is the meaning with which God endowed it. The religionist attempts to find and establish a relationship with the personal nature of God. All who search for factual laws, philosophic meanings, and personal religious experience therefore search for the same eternal reality-God. On infinite and eternal levels all aspects of Reality are one, but on our finite level diversity appears. Like those who cannot see the forest for the trees, we cannot see the unity existing at infinite and eternal levels because we are finite and therefore have limited vision; but as we grow spiritually and intellectually during our eternal careers, our vision will expand. As Paul said, "For now we see as in a mirror dimly, but then face to face." (I Cor. 13:12)♦

Richard Bain is an electrical engineer and editor of "Cosmic Reflections." He is a long time student of The Urantia Book.

The Urantia Book and Spiritual Renewal: The Christianization of a Pastor

This feature is written by ministers. Since The Urantia Book at this point in time is potentially controversial, names are sometimes withheld so as not to interfere with their rapport in ministry.

I have been in the parish ministry for a decade and am currently serving as a pastor in the United Church of Christ in the Midwest, which I intend to continue for Christ's sake.

I first encountered *The Urantia Book* in seminary. The year was 1979 and I was a second year student. A student friend, a practicing disciple of Sri Chinmoy (a Hindu guru on the contemporary scene at the time), was instructed to quit seminary, two years after he had been told to enroll in the seminary. Mike was selling his library and I picked up his copy of *The Urantia Book* for 50 cents along with other books at bargain prices. I was a student of new religious movements and wanted someday to read it. On several occasions I thumbed through it and read a section or two, but for the most part it sat unread on my bookshelf through my seminary graduation and through my first stint as a local church pastor.

Two years into my second pastorate a kindly old man who worked every year at a community-wide used book sale came to me and asked, "Do you know anything about *The Urantia Book*?" He had discovered a used copy and after perusing the contents found it interesting. I said, "I really don't. I own a copy and have read several sections of it, but I don't really know anything about it." As our conversation went back and forth I remember saying, "Although I'm not well acquainted with it, I have to say that it does not conflict with anything I know in terms of world history, philosophy, or Christianity." I went back and perused it again, read a few more sections, and tried to confirm the appraisal I had made.

Upon reflection I have to say that I really became a Christian only after reading The Urantia Book.

I suppose it was hearing myself say those words that led me to make the commitment to read it from cover to cover. I began in the third year of that pastorate. It took me 15 months to read it, neglecting most other reading during that time. I have not been the same since.

Upon reflection I have to say that I really became a Christian only *after* reading *The Urantia Book*. It helped me to make intellectual sense of several fundamental Christian beliefs, such as the reality of eternal life and Jesus' miracles. That is a strong statement, but for me, it is true. For you to understand this, it may be helpful to briefly recap my own spiritual development.

I was raised in the United Church of Christ, and like many United Church children, I pretty much dropped out of church after high school. After a brief marriage and a tour of Viet Nam, I entered into a period of alcohol and drug experimentation. Barely a day of those five years was I sober. During those years I studied for a degree in philosophy at the local university, which included a fair amount of study of eastern religions.

During those years I came to understand my Christianity in very "Hindu" terms, which I would sum up in two statements: (1) Jesus was a great guru; and (2) eternal life is a kind of personal absorption into the great nirvanic void.

After graduating from college I received a "call" to enter the seminary. My purpose for pursuing a seminary degree was to help build a bridge between the eastern religions and Christianity. I too became involved with a contemporary California guru, whom I truly believed I would serve after graduation from the seminary.

The very language of The Urantia Book filled me with utter awe and genuine respect for its level of spiritual articulation that would, I believe, stand up under the most rigorous contemporary philosophical and Christian theological analysis.

After my seminary graduation I "chanced" upon an opportunity to serve a United Church of Christ church as a pastor. I needed the work—service to the guru was not a paying proposition. A very significant thing happened at this point in my life. The senior minister of this large and influential church trusted me enough to encourage me to take a staff position. His trust changed my life, but not my theology.

Like a good mainline pastor, I continued to believe that Jesus was a great teacher and that eternal life was a kind of absorption into the great void. And that's what I preached! In seminary I had found sufficient theological justification for holding such a belief.

I don't know if my congregations just tolerated me or if they believed as I did. (I suspect the former.) But it was not until I completed reading *The Urantia Book* that I realized that those beliefs were not only not Christian but were simply not true. *The Urantia Book* had thoroughly convinced me that Jesus Christ was indeed God incarnate—in a sense that I clearly had not previously understood or believed.

The very language of *The Urantia Book* filled me with utter awe and genuine respect for its level of spiritual articulation that would, I believe, stand up under the most rigorous contemporary philosophical and Christian theological analysis. I was further convinced of the eternal nature of the soul and the continuity of individual personality after death. It presents a rational articulation of eternal life that sets before

each person the responsibility for spiritual growth in this life and beyond.

It is difficult to condense into a pithy sentence or two the essence of 2,097 pages of the most comprehensive, complex, and complete articulation of the history of human spirituality ever compiled. I can only assure you that reading it is worth your time.

But, you may ask, "Is *The Urantia Book* true?" Again, I don't know how to answer. That question has receded into obsolescence for me. After I read *The Urantia Book*, the issue of it's "truth" seemed almost immaterial. To ask for objective verification is about like asking for proof of Jesus' divinity! Its authenticity must be verified in the heart and mind of the individual. Such questions tend to side-track the usefulness and application of the message. The better question to ask (of Jesus or *The Urantia Book*) is, "Is it helpful for the growth and maturation of your spiritual life?" My reply on both accounts is a resounding "Yes!"

Song of The Urantia Book

A blessed path of knowledge
beside the stream of life,
A Miracle I've come to know and trust.
A vantage place,
A work of grace,
A song above the strife,
A way at last to know the things I must.

The story of the ages,
of God, the past, the plan,
The picture from the highest point of view.
The same loved truths,
The light set loose,
The better way for man,
The love of God proclaimed on earth anew.

My long awaited answer,
My summons from on high,
My value spelled in words of destiny.
My promise now,
My faith shown how,
My way beyond the sky,
My invitation to eternity.

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Hymns in Worship

This column addresses the concern for contemporary aids to worship. We welcome material which you may be inspired to write and share.

Many clergy are faced with a serious dilemma in contemporary worship. With changing social attitudes and a growing restlessness within the institutional church, many see the need to change our worship forms.

One of the most obvious aspects of this dilemma is the concern for sexist language in hymnody. New hymnbooks are being published yearly with notable omissions of traditional "favorites." In many congregations this has increased the tension between the clergy and their parishioners: the desire to change worship forms set against a background of strong and embedded traditions.

This column will explore new worship forms while keeping this tension in mind. The primary emphasis will be on music as we consider the traditional and contemporary hymns, psalms, songs, choral responses, and liturgical settings. We will also examine how insights from *The Urantia Book* can help guide our efforts.

On a practical level any examination of our worship forms may be disturbing to some laity. However, *The Urantia Book* encourages us to continue striving for new discoveries in our worship expressions. It calls us to reflect the need for more *firsthand* religious experience and it encourages the emergence of a new spiritual leadership willing to depend solely on the teachings of Jesus. Its authors remind us that we should not be surprised when new worship forms begin to manifest themselves. These forms, however, should be carefully balanced between the traditional and the contemporary social pressures. It is therefore wise to structure a gradual and evolutionary approach to changes in worship.

This column will seek to support that change and offer encouragement to the ministers who strive to introduce new ideas, new songs, new liturgies, and new directions in the worship setting. To stimulate thinking in this direction, here are some possible future column topics:

"Are we Throwing the Baby Out with the Sexist Bath Water?" Modern attempts at eliminating sexism are removing from new hymnals many old favorites. Is this justified? What insights does the *The Urantia Book* have on sexism?

"New Hymns: New Wine in Old Skins?" Are contemporary hymns really expressing a new message or simply restating traditional theology? A new and global perspective seems to be emerging amidst the traditional language.

"What Hymns Teach our Children" Familiar hymns are powerful teaching tools. Should we examine their theological messages more carefully? How can new theological perspectives be taught through the introduction of new hymns?

"Is This Really a 'New Age?'" Does New Age hymnody make a significant contribution to worship, or should we ignore it?

-Jack Rogers

MEDIA & VALUES

Assessing the Ministry Potential of New Media

Watching MTV one Sunday morning, I was amazed to see a music video that celebrated the practice of prayer. Even more surprising was its creator: the famous rap artist, M. C. Hammer. Hammer's lyrics moved rhythmically through clever rhymes, each ending with glib variations on the refrain, "You've got to pray, just to make it today." The piece was supported by gyrating dancers, sometimes in robes or otherworldly garb, each projecting a glow of wholesomeness. In the finale, a woman in a white robe, with a bright light behind her head, raises her arms to heaven in an attitude of praise and worship, as the music slowly fades.

Here was an astonishing blend of an explicitly spiritual message poured into a rather secular, even banal, art form—MTV rap music. I wondered: Can syncopated rhythms and fast-paced video edits play any part in a valid religious ministry? Didn't the style of the piece cancel out its spiritual message? Quite the contrary. I was uplifted and even persuaded by the video. Strange to admit, I was led to turn off the TV and engage in prayer.

In this example, M. C. Hammer forces home a point that many of us, so disillusioned with televangelism, have overlooked: the untapped potential of electronic media for ministry. Yet most of us are convinced that television and other media are a *detriment* to our ministries, especially those toward young people.

I believe both propositions are true. Commercial television and radio are among the leading corrupter of morals, but nothing intrinsic to electronic media requires that it be used this way. Media arts can just as well serve religious and spiritual needs, as long as its production values are on par *stylistically and technically* with what's produced in the commercial sector.

I also believe that a huge and overlooked audience exists for spiritualized media in all its forms. After all, what was I doing watching MTV on a Sunday morning? If you're like me, you are pining away for convenient access to music, images, or words of religious consolation, something to offset the daily assault of commercialized media. MTV, banal as it is, was *preferable* for me to the "religious" programs that were available that morning.

To stay strong in faith, believers need direct ministry at times other than Sunday morning, and this should be brought to them where they are, in the home, in their cars, even at work. To reach believers in this way, teachers and healers and religious artists of the future will increasingly turn to electronic media as a tool. Otherwise, they may face the consequences of yielding the soul of postmodern men and women to commercial and secular media and its debased values.

Unfortunately, the only religious groups that have so far taken up this challenge, (at least in conventional broadcast media), are the most conservative and narrow-minded elements of the Christian community. Much of their work can be considered no more than a variant on the general trend of media commercialization.

To be fair, it should be understood that mass media is massively expensive, both to produce and distribute. Just to get air time takes very deep pockets, and strong, ongoing backing—and ultimately appeals for funds must come over the air. It's not too long before a kind of corruption sets in, a confusion of means and ends. It would take the guidance of a mighty teaching and outstanding leadership to overcome the seductive power that television holds over its own producers. With few exceptions, the conservative Christian evangelists have not proven equal to the task.

The beacon of a new revelation, which can encourage critical thought at each step of the way, can hopefully go a long way toward addressing these betrayals of the potential of electronic ministry. Critical thinking has infused liberal Christianity, but has failed to generate a body of uplifting, artistic treatments of Biblical or religious themes. (Consider the crushing disappointment of Martin Scorcese's film, "Last Temptation of Christ," one of the few creative interpretations of the Bible to appear in a major Hollywood production.) *The Urantia Book* upsteps the old content enough that the creative energies of media workers will be liberated. And its much needed corrective philosophy, to my mind, will support media producers in retaining their integrity in the face of commercializing temptations.

Even so, we need to guard against the naive idea that a wondrous new world of spiritual media will unfold for those of us with good intentions and a little seed money. My own experience in television production taught me the danger of harboring such illusions. And yet, even if we have the greatest of successes, we must not forget how deeply entrenched are those who stand for the banalization of electronic media. Our attempts to enlighten through truthful art are likely to be dwarfed by those forces for a long time to come.

A more encouraging hope is the decentralization of electronic media implied by new computer technologies. New telecommunications technology that combines the power of computers with fiber optic transmission will allow an increasing range of choice to viewers: video on demand (VOD) will allow viewers to scan menus of educational or entertainment videos or movies, and download these for a fee to home viewing stations. (The same technique would allow ad hoc music selections.) Emerging teleconferencing tools will make it increasingly cheaper for ad hoc groups to meet electronically and to see one another in real time, where they can share in many of the same ways that congregations do when they gather in a church. Computer conferencing software, which allows participants to crystallize and diffuse in an endless array of permutations for communication of information, entertainment, and even ministry, is becoming more ubiquitous. And many other new forms of interactive and broadcast media are on the horizon. In the next Media & Values column we will consider some of these new media technologies and their potentials for supporting enlightened ministry.

-Byron Belitsos

Byron has been a journalist and television producer and is now a consultant in the telecommunications industry.

Significant Books:

No Other Name? By Paul F. Knitter

Orbis Books, 1985, 231 pp.

Paul Knitter focuses attention on our contemporary world view which confronts us with the reality of religious pluralism. Life is rich, complex, diverse, and mysterious. Our entire universe is engaged in an evolutionary process. The physicist, David Bohm, sees that we are part of an "implicate order," an infinitely complex and dynamic web of interrelationships. As individuals we find our identity in the context of other selves. Humanity and religion are moving toward a "unitive pluralism." In order to be good citizens of any one nation, we have to be world citizens. To be good members of any one religion, we must belong to the brotherhood of all people. Increasingly, world citizenship is seen not only as a psychological and spiritual need, but as an economic and political imperative. Religion historically has divided people, but we are now at a point in human destiny when religion may become a unifying force. The Christian church may be on the verge of experiencing a "kairos"of self-transformation, a "third reformation," which will make it a true world church.

Attitudes of our secular culture toward the diversity of religion can be grouped into three general classifications. First, all religions are relative; they take on the character of their historical origins. They are limited by the finite conditions of time and space. No planetary religion can be absolute. Second, all religions have a common essence—living faith and the search for spiritual reality. In this experience and in the perennial philosophy by which humanity tries to understand spiritual encounters, all religions are essentially the same. Third, all religions have a common psychological origin—the human psyche. All people have a superconscious experience whereby they intuit a spiritual dimension of reality.

In the ecumenical atmosphere of our contemporary world can Christians continue to proclaim Jesus as the only savior of humanity? Different Christian traditions speak to this question from divergent theological perspectives. Conservative evangelicals declare that salvation is the result of the sacrificial death of Jesus "once and for all and for all mankind." Revelation and salvation are obtainable only in Jesus Christ.

Mainline theologians seek a more positive and dialogical relationship with other religions. They believe God is revealed in all cultures and to all people. There is a connection between this general revelation and the revelation of Jesus, but such a general revelation is partial and inadequate. Only in Christ can a person realize that one is saved by faith alone; although, at the end of history all will be granted a knowledge of Jesus and have an opportunity for salvation. A few theologians like Hans Küng and Karl Rahner speak of God's desire to save all humankind and believe that the grace of Christ cannot be confined to Christianity.

A Christian minority position is emerging among thinkers like John Hick, Raimundo Panikkar, and Stanley Samartha which Knitter calls the "theocentric model" of salvation. It affirms there is one Spirit, one Divine Reality, behind all religions. Differences are due to historical, cultural, or psychological adaptations of this reality experience. God is truly encountered in Jesus but not only in Jesus. Panikkar speaks of the universal Christ and the particular Jesus. All religions recognize, one way or another, this Christ. Although the New Testament writers were Christocentric, Jesus himself was theocentric. There is a growing consensus that the church is not to be identified with the kingdom of God. All religions are included in the kingdom and Jesus is seen working within every religion.

The Christian church may be on the verge of experiencing a "kairos"of self-transformation, a "third reformation," which will make it a true world church.

Paul Knitter maintains that Jesus was profoundly theocentric and seeks to establish a theocentric Christology. Such a view is consistent with historic Christianity and harmonious with the signs of the times. Religion grows by seeking truth through ever expanding relationships. This truth is leading us toward a global theology. Jesus of Nazareth is the unifying expression of God's love which will continue to transform our world.

This is a book of first-rate creative theology which will challenge the reader to rethink basic Christian concepts. It should be required reading for anyone who wishes to keep abreast of the growing edge of theological thinking regarding the doctrine of salvation and Christian attitudes toward other religions. Knitter's view is harmonious with the Christology of *The Urantia Book* which presents Jesus as both a unique universe personality and an inclusive mediator for all God seeking people. *-MJS*

Inner Guidance

Merritt C. Horn

Who told you
that my revelation had ended?
that having spoken
I would speak no more?

I tell you
that I shall speak to my children
as they have need of me.
I shall not withhold my spirit
from any of them,

For I hear their cry
and I shall answer.
It is good that you search
the records for my message,
But you should not think
that I speak from them only,
For my spirit lives within you
and I speak to you always.

You know this in your heart.
Listen then, to the spirit.

How long will you look outside,
before you turn within?
Do you hope to find me on a page?
or to discover me upon a stone?

I write upon your heart;
you shall discover me within your soul.

You rely too much
on the thinking of others,
too much on the records of the past.

I require of you that you rely on me;
allow me to guide you
For I am always here,
my guidance is ever sure,
my inspiration is forever true.

Be not so concerned with the words of books
as with the inspiration of my spirit.
I speak to you even now,
yet you search the record for my words.

Am I a man
that I should live once and die?
that I should speak once and fall silent?
that I should reveal myself once and hide?

I have spoken of old.
I speak now.
I shall speak in all the future.

Listen to me.
Follow me.

I am changeless;
my will shall stand forever.
But the needs of my people change,
so therefore do the words they hear.

For my spirit teaches each
according to his need.
My spirit does not change,
but is a perfect teacher.

To each generation
my spirit comes anew—
leading my people into righteousness,
guiding them into truth.

From *The Call of the Spirit,* Copyright © 1984

"Arise, Take Up Your Life and Walk"

Sermon by **Rev. Craig T. McClellan**

Scripture: Mark 2:1-12

Note: I am indebted to a story in Jesus' ministry described in The Urantia Book (p. 1437) which I have reworded and enhanced with the Scripture Lesson.

I'm going to present this morning's sermon in the form of a guided meditation. So, I suggest that you sit in a relaxed way, whatever is comfortable for you in terms of your hands and your legs. If you have anything in your hands, I suggest that you set it beside you. [pause...] I would ask that you would close your eyes, relax in the presence of God, ... and focus inwardly on this story about our Lord Jesus that I want to share with you... Be conscious of your breathing ... as the breath of life, physically and spiritually, ... moves in you and through you. As you feel the breath drawn inward, center down. ... Center down and hear this story of God...

We're going back to the first century in this story—back to the time when our Lord walked this earth. Jesus in one of his journeys came across a young man, barely sixteen years old, who had fled his mother and gone to seek solitude in the mountains. This was not, however, a solitude of spiritual seeking, but of being lonely and lost in life... For this young man had never found his way in life ever since his father died when he was twelve.

He was angry and confused. He wanted to know, why had God taken his father? And why had God made it so difficult to find out his own identity and worth?... He had become sullen and withdrawn, except when he would cry with self-pity, or yell out echoing through the mountains—yelling out for the presence of God. Increasingly, he was able to do only those few things necessary to survive another day...

So, you can imagine how startled he was when Jesus came upon him. Jesus simply said, "Greetings my son, why are you so downcast on such a beautiful day?" But the lad refused to talk. Jesus thought for a moment, seeking another approach to the young man's soul. Now Jesus knew these mountains as well, probably better than the lad; but, to strike-up a conversation, he asked the young man the best way to a nearby town.

At this, the lad spoke readily, and Jesus engaged him at every turn. Then, after some trust had been established, Jesus turned and said, "My Son, just as you have helped me find my way, so I want to return the favor by answering your plea for help out of your darkness of personal sorrow and confusion."

Much to the young man's surprise, he was suddenly near tears. It was as if Jesus had looked straight into his soul... The young man was overcome, but he managed to stammer, "But... but... I didn't ask you for anything!"

"No," Jesus declared, "not with words, my son, but I heard the eloquent appeal for help in your countenance of discouragement and despair. Come sit with me while I tell you of the way which leads from the sorrows of self to the happiness of serving your fellow man, and from confusion of mind to the peace of living in the truth of God."

With this, the young man fell to his knees before Jesus, imploring our Lord to help him. Then Jesus declared: "My friend, arise! Stand up like a man! You may have had many difficulties in your short life, and you may have been set back by heavy obstacles, but know that all the spiritual powers of the universe are with you, are guiding you, and watching over *you*. ... The very sun above rises every morning to salute you just as it does the most powerful and prosperous man on this earth. You are trying to run away from your unhappy self, but it cannot be done. Your problems are indeed real, you cannot escape them. You must face them! You must face them, learn from them, conquer them, overcome them, and move on to the grand and glorious life that God offers you... God has blessed you with a sturdy body and a strong mind. Even more, made in God's image, you have the ability to love your fellow man and to embrace all creation. God has even blessed you with the power to create with Him and in Him. Let this flood your soul and raise you to an awareness that you—yes, you—are born a child of God... So, I tell you to cease living like a paralyzed man. Let go of your sorrow and confusion! Fight the good fight of faith, and let not the trials and tribulations of this world paralyze you. ... So, I say to you: arise, take up your bedroll, and go home! This day, my son, you are to be reborn, reestablished, as a man of faith and courage. You are to be rededicated and devoted to the service of humanity and to the love of God, and when you have become renewed to life within yourself and within the very universe itself, then you are born again—born of the Spirit. Henceforth, your whole life will become one of the victorious accomplishments in God... Trouble will invigorate you; obstacles will stimulate you. Arise, young man! Say farewell to sorrow and confusion! Hurry back to duty and live as a Son of God—as a person of God dedicated to the ennobling service of humanity on earth, and destined to the glorious service of God in all eternity."

And the young man arose, took up his bedroll, and went home. He was utterly amazed, and he glorified God saying, "Never have I been so alive!" ...

Thus, the story is over, but it is not finished—because it is also your story. Each of you has sorrows and confusion, and heartaches and disappointments that threaten to paralyze you. There are times when you feel like all you want to do is to run off and hide. And, yes, there are times when you doubt whether God is with you or even cares about you. But, if you remain faithful, even with all your doubt and pain—if you remain faithful—God comes to you, comes to you even now in the power and peace of Christ, comes to you to heal you and uplift you!

This does not mean that your problems suddenly disappear. But, it does mean that you have a strength and a confidence to face life that you never knew you possessed—that you know does not come from you—but comes from that Power and Love that created you and saves you. In this strength and grace that comes through Christ, you are born again each and every day. And you know there is nothing that you and God cannot face together.

So, in the name of Jesus Christ, I say to you: Arise, take up your life, and walk! ... For you have been given new life, new hope, new strength in God to be alive—alive in the Lord—this day and forever. Amen.

Craig McClellan is a minister in the United Church of Christ serving in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Urantia Book Resources

The rich mine of universe knowledge and spiritual wisdom found in the 2097 pages of *The Urantia Book* tends to overwhelm the reader with its encyclopedic profusion. A detailed table of contents helps make the book manageable, but one soon realizes that reference tools are needed to find information hidden in its pages.

Clyde Bedell (1898-1985), a widely recognized author and speaker in the field of advertising, over many years compiled an index-concordance of words, concepts, ideas, topics, and themes found in *The Urantia Book*. He published the first edition of the *Concordex* in 1971. The third edition came out in 1986 and has over 110,000 references. The *Concordex* is an indispensable research tool for finding passages and studying topics in *The Urantia Book*.

The Urantia Book reader also discovers information in many sections of the book which parallels Biblical material. Numerous young friends of the editor did not become interested in the Bible until they read *The Urantia Book*. The two books are mutually enhancing. Recognizing this close relationship, Dr. Duane L. Faw, Professor of Law emeritus of Pepperdine University School of Law, spent six years compiling a parallel and harmony of *The Urantia Book* and the Bible. The *Paramony* was published in 1986 and contains 25,000 cross-references revealing the similarities and differences between the facts and concepts of these two great books. Dr. Faw has been a teacher of adult Bible classes for 40 years and a certified lay speaker in the United Methodist Church for over 25 years. The *Paramony* is an essential reference tool for studying relationships between *The Urantia Book* and the Bible. A long time scholarly reader of *The Urantia Book* describes the *Paramony* as, "a well-structured volume, indispensable for those engaged in serious hermeneutics, particularly of the gospels."

If your local bookstore does not carry *The Urantia Book*, it can be ordered from The Urantia Foundation, 533 Diversey Parkway, Chicago, IL 60614. The *Concordex* and *Paramony* can be purchased from the Good Cheer Press, 1790 30th Street, #400, Boulder, CO 80301.

The Spiritual Fellowship Journal

Meredith J. Sprunger
Editor

4109 Plaza Dr.
Fort Wayne, IN 46806

Merlyn H. Cox
Associate Editor

Spring, 1991

Dear Colleagues:

We are sending you this Journal because we believe it could introduce you to a source of spiritual insight which has the potential to inspire and enhance your life and revitalize the church. *The Urantia Book* is one of the most promising sources of creative thought in philosophy, religion, and culture in our contemporary world. It has extremely broad ramifications. The authors' overarching grasp of the dynamics of civilization and culture shed wisdom in almost every area of human endeavor.

Although we are confident the church will one day view *The Urantia Book* as an authentic and enlarged source of spiritual truth, we realize that it will only gain such recognition through critical evaluation by laypersons, ministers, and theologians.

The Spiritual Fellowship Journal grew out of the Clergy Network of the Christian Fellowship of Students of *The Urantia Book* organized in 1979. It is designed to interface with mainline ministers who have both the theoretical and the practical background needed to critically evaluate spiritual truth. The recognition of enlarged spiritual concepts and values also requires courage, balance, and open-mindedness.

We invite you to join the vanguard of religious leaders interested in initiating a period of testing for this matchless vision of spiritual Reality.

Sincerely,

The Editors

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