

# **Spiritual Fellowship Journal**

Volume 10, Number 2

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# **The Spiritual Fellowship of Students of *The Urantia Book***

A Journal Established to Promote Theological, Philosophical, and Polity Discussions Germane to An Appropriate Symbolism and Socioreligious Expression of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

## **Guiding Principles<sup>1</sup>**

An Appropriate Symbolism and Socioreligious Expression of the Fifth Epochal Revelation Should:

1. Be based on the Fatherhood of God and the brother-sisterhood of humankind.
2. Be the outgrowth of love.
3. Foster sentiment, satisfy emotions, and promote loyalty.
4. Facilitate spiritual progress through cosmic meanings, moral values, social development, and personal living.
5. Provide supreme goals of living that are both temporal and eternal.
6. Be based on the biologic, social, and religious significance of the family.
7. Symbolize the permanent in the midst of unceasing change.
8. Glorify that which respects and unifies the diversities of society.
9. Promote higher meanings, beautiful relationships, and the highest values.
10. Embody some masterful mystery and connote some worthwhile unattainable.
11. Be meaningful and serviceable to both the individual and the group.
12. Serve as the skeletal structure for dynamic personal experience.

## **The Purpose of Religious Institutions is to:**

1. Dramatize the loyalties of spiritual experience.
2. Magnify the lures of truth, beauty, and goodness—supreme values.
3. Enhance the service of unselfish fellowship.
4. Glorify the potentials of family life.
5. Promote religious education.
6. Provide wise counsel and spiritual guidance.
7. Furnish and promote group worship.
8. Encourage friendship, neighborhood welfare, and moral values.
9. Spread the gospel of eternal salvation.

## **Religious Institutions Should Avoid Dangers, Such As:**

1. Fixation of ritual and theology.
2. Developing vested interests and secular involvement.
3. Serving the institution instead of serving God and ministering to people.
4. Forming competitive sects and developing a "chosen people" attitude.
5. Developing authoritarianism, dogmatism, and false ideas of sacredness.
6. Venerating the past while ignoring present needs and timely spiritual interpretations.
7. Failing to hold the interest of youth and grow with the times.
8. Losing sight of spiritual ministry and the saving message of salvation.

## **Central Objective**

The central objective of a group of people interested in initiating a new religious organization based on the teachings of the Fifth Epochal Revelation should be to create a polity with maximum flexibility that would function with small groups or large congregations, utilize lay leadership and/or ordained clergy, have cross-cultural adaptability, and broad theological inclusiveness.

Such an institution would be "a gathering of persons who have accepted a common purpose, and a common discipline to guide the pursuit of that purpose, to the end that each involved person reaches higher fulfillment as a person, through *serving and being served* by the common venture, than would be achieved alone or in a less committed relationship."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See U. B. p. 966

<sup>2</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, Paulist Press, New York, 1977, p. 237.

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## On Copyright and Service Marks

There is a sharp divergence of opinion in the Urantia movement on the use of the copyright and the service marks associated with *The Urantia Book*. I have refrained from a full expression of my opinion on these issues because I have close friends on both sides of this controversy and because I prefer to avoid political involvement. Outreach activity and spiritual ministry, in my judgment, are the most important activities needed by our society.

But it may be time to state my opinion on these issues. I believe we are facing a critical period in the Urantia movement and decisions made in the next few years may determine our direction in the next generation, and beyond. It was my privilege and blessing to develop a close friendship with Dr. Sadler, Christy, and many of the members of the Forum. They would certainly regret the division that has developed in the Urantia movement.

### Historical Comments

Dr. Sadler and Christy shared with us many of the papers of instruction received from the revelators which were to be destroyed at the time of their graduation to the Mansion Worlds. They were instructed to get a copyright to the Urantia Papers and were told that most of the danger of the corruption of the Papers would be passed after the first generation of protection.

I believe it was important to have copyright protection during the first generation of their existence. Urantia Foundation and Urantia Brotherhood were created as separate, autonomous organizations. They were expected to operate independently but cooperatively. For a generation this plan worked in excellent fashion. Then, largely due to the legal mind of one of the Foundation trustees, the concentric circle symbol and the word "Urantia" were registered as service marks and societies were required to sign agreements with the Foundation to use them. Through the legal strategy of the service marks the Foundation was able to control Brotherhood policy and action. A struggle for independence and power began which culminated in the Foundation terminating the Brotherhood's use of these service marks and the Brotherhood was asked to move from 533 Diversey Parkway. The power struggle continued with the Foundation's creation of the International Urantia Association (IUA), as well as the Maaherra lawsuit.

During the struggle three of the Foundation trustees resigned and eventually Martin Myers was ejected as a

Foundation trustee. The Foundation began an energetic and commendable policy of publishing translations of the Urantia Papers in other languages, and liberalized permission to quote from *The Urantia Book* and to use the concentric circles. There have been various attempts to promote cooperation between The Urantia Book Fellowship (former Brotherhood), the IUA, and the Foundation. There was some progress made; however, when the Michael Foundation published *Jesus—A New Revelation*, the Foundation filed another lawsuit and concomitantly made new requests of the Fellowship. There are some members of the Fellowship General Council who believe the Foundation's intention is to so cripple the Fellowship that it will be unable to exist as a viable organization. I'm confident the Foundation would deny this accusation. Nevertheless, a critical situation exists in the Urantia movement.

### A Personal Evaluation

In the face of the bitter struggle that has developed in the Urantia movement, I believe it would be better for the Fifth Epochal Revelation if it were in the public domain. More than a generation has passed since its publication and, with almost 500,000 copies in print, there will never be much question about the "inviolable text." In addition, the Foundation will continue to publish its format of the Urantia Papers.

The central reason why I believe it would be better for the Fifth Epochal Revelation to be in the public domain is that it would remove the basic weapon in the power struggle in the Urantia movement. I question the wisdom of using secular laws to control the use of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. My short term human judgment may be in error. This issue, I think, would be an ideal controversy for the Universal Conciliators to settle. Unfortunately, they are not available to us.

Since Conciliators are not available to us, we must use our own legal system. Court decisions on the copyright have fluctuated. Judge Urbom ruled that the Urantia Papers are in the public domain. The appeal court reversed this decision. But the interpretation of the appeal court decision is ambiguous. Is *The Urantia Book* copyright like Bible copyrights, where the text is in the public domain but the specific format is copyrightable? A court ruling may be necessary to decide this ambiguity. The court decision on the legality of the copyright in the Michael Foundation lawsuit, I believe, will be definitive. Whatever the decision, I think it should be accepted in the Urantia movement. We need to accept the legal status of the Urantia Papers and concentrate on outreach activity and spiritual ministry.

I believe it is good for the Foundation to have service marks. But I think it is unfortunate that they chose the concentric circle symbol of the Trinity and the super-mortal name of our planet. This is similar to the Christian Church attempting to control the use of the cross. I would hope the Foundation will choose other service marks and place the concentric circle symbol and the name Urantia in the public domain. My guess is that these marks will be so generally used in the future that they will eventually be lost as exclusive service marks anyway.

It is my hope and prayer that we may have unity of purpose amid the diversity of opinions and activities. We should support the Foundation in its publication of *Urantia Book* translations and study materials. It is my conviction that, in spite of mistakes and controversies, the Fifth Epochal Revelation will make its way throughout the world and transform it in the next 2000 years.

-MJS

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### Ecumenically Challenged

Leaders of the National Council of Churches are seriously thinking about forming a new, more inclusive ecumenical organization that would include Roman Catholics, evangelicals, and Pentecostals. The thirty-five denominations comprising the National Council of Churches account for only about one-third of the Christians in the United States. It is encouraging to see the "mainline" Christian Churches attempting to be more inclusive. The Editor of *The Christian Century* wonders how this could be accomplished as the scope of theological and ideological differences in Christianity is overwhelming.

Students of *The Urantia Book* speculate about an even larger ecumenical challenge: the fraternal relationship of all of the religions of the world. The authors of the Fifth Epochal Revelation present a universe view of reality that embraces the best insights of all religions. In the next two-thousand years our world will be challenged to achieve harmonious relationships among all of the religions of the world. At present we are having difficulty in maintaining cooperative relationships among the various factions in the Urantia movement! We are, indeed, ecumenically challenged. Hopefully, we can find ways in which to work together in the outreach of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. This is one of the most important missions facing our planet in the 21st Century.

-MJS

### How is Society Enculturated?

Probably the major concern of dedicated students of the Urantia Papers is how to effectively share the spiritual enlightenment and supernal wisdom of the Fifth Epochal Revelation with the people of the world. In short, what is the most effective method of enculturating the world with the enlarged spiritual vision of *The Urantia Book*?

The most reliable way to gain insights in laying foundations for the future development of spiritual values and religious activities is a study of historical religious events and development. Such a study reveals two basic insights. First of all, new and enlarged spiritual vision has been unable initially to win the recognition and approval of the majority of the old religious power structure. Secondly, the new spiritual paradigm is unable to enculturate society until it is institutionalized. Although the institutionalization of cultural values and religious practices handicaps spiritual growth, it is a necessary condition of social development and integration.

The Brotherhood constitution provided ordained teachers for the leadership of the movement. Dr. Sadler and I used to discuss the development of a new religious institution stemming out of the Urantia Papers. He ventured the opinion that the unusual origin of the Urantia Papers would provide the "masterful mystery" and "worthful unattainable" of the "new cult" mentioned on page 966.

But very early in the Urantia movement the majority of the power structure of the Brotherhood were people who had negative experiences with institutional religion or who had convictions regarding the danger of institutional religion. As a result the Brotherhood was formulated as a secular organization with educational and religious interests. The directive providing for ordained teachers was removed from the constitution. In the numerous Foundation lawsuits it was repeatedly emphasized that they were not a religious organization. The secular aspects of the Urantia movement became dominant over the religious interests.

During the last ten or twenty years there has developed the realization in many study groups and societies that a bona fide religious organization was needed to serve the spiritual needs of members. This ambiguity in the Urantia movement characterizes our present situation. There will always be students of *The Urantia Book* who prefer personal religious activity and reject any social religious involvement. There are others who see the need for participation in a religious organization. There will, no doubt, be many different religious organi



zations coming into being as the result of the inspiration of the Urantia Papers.

The basic question remains: How will the Urantia Papers' paradigm of spirituality enculturate society? In my judgment, this will only occur through the institutionalization of its teachings. If this is correct, we should currently be spreading the vision of *The Urantia Book* through various means of communication, public discussion, and the formation of study groups. And at the same time we should be engaged in preparation for the formation of religious groups or institutions by promoting theological, philosophical, and polity discussions germane to an appropriate symbolism and socioreligious expression of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

-MJS

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## Mustard Seed Beginnings

Universal Father, we thank you for your marvelous plan for the finite creation.

Here everything has mustard seed beginnings, all entities start as germs of potentiality.

On the finite level experience is required, risk and courage are involved, effort and suffering are in digenous.

Your Incarnate Son is the divine embodiment of your plan and the living assurance of your constant love and never ending guidance.

Here in the small, the weak, and the unknown are hidden the potentialities of divinity.

In the babe of Bethlehem resides the Sovereign of a universe.

Through his matchless life, your light and your truth shine in purity and power.

In him we see the latent possibilities of human nature.

The Master of Life has opened our consciousness to a new and higher level of living.

We who are born into the earthly kingdom of animal drives and material mindedness are invited to accept a new status as your children in the higher kingdom of the spirit.

His Spirit of Truth leads us to transcend the dominance of our physiological conditioning through the spirit mastery of our material minds to achieve a new identity and soul consciousness centering in the realities of your kingdom.

We thank you for your Supreme plan of love for your finite creation. We rejoice that we are your children in time and eternity.

# Interface

## Can We, Should We, Get Organized?

I recently attended a workshop on "Leadership in the 21st Century."<sup>1</sup> It was led by church growth specialists who have been studying for many years the way thriving churches (about 10%) operate, versus those who are not (about 90%). It was a provocative and stimulating event, filled with insights that could benefit most organizations, especially churches and other nonprofit organizations.<sup>2</sup>

They found that thriving churches share a dramatically different way of thinking about the church's mission, and also organize and operate in a fundamentally different way. Thriving churches share a purpose and vision of the future that "leads with the heart" and challenges people to identify and use their gifts. Most ministry in thriving churches is done by individuals and small cell groups gathered around them, rather than by committees that have been organized along the traditional lines of dividing ministries into outreach, mission, education, etc.

Such churches (or other religious or nonprofit organizations) will look rather chaotic to those used to—or addicted to, as these leaders argue—the traditional way of doing things.<sup>3</sup> Creative, thriving organizations, rather than being fixated on issues of control, are motivated by issues of empowerment. They are organized with an emphasis on "proscriptive" thinking—setting clear boundaries beyond which one cannot go, but within which anything is permissible, versus "prescriptive" thinking—telling everyone what they can and should do, and setting up myriad, redundant controls to monitor them. Organization structure in thriving churches tends to be organic, functional, and flexible—shaped and reshaped by its overall goals.

Its primary concern is, how do you help people discover their gifts, and then train and empower them to use them to their best abilities? The bureaucratic maze of most churches and nonprofit organizations stifle and discourage creative initiative, and reward those who conform to the status quo. Serving the Kingdom of God, for many in mainline churches, becomes the same as serving the organizational institution of the church, a tragic and widespread misidentification, I believe, that most churches and denominational leaders fall into, despite their protests and rationalizations.

What does this have to do with the Urantia movement? We are clearly at the stage where organizations of

many different kinds are beginning to emerge, and will continue to do so. The question for most is not *if* we should or will organize for a shared purpose, but *how*. Many have experienced the enervating effects of church or other religious organizations, and, embarrassingly, we now face the same “control issues” among organizations within the movement.

We should not have to be reminded of what Jesus stated so clearly—that we will never achieve uniformity of thinking; we can only strive to achieve a unity of spirit. We will not be able, nor should we try, to control the outreach of the growing Urantia movement through a central, bureaucratic organization—the Urantia community is too diverse, creative, “chaotic.” We should instead strive, I believe, for structures that are flexible, shaped by clear purpose, with wide, but clear, boundaries—structures that will allow and encourage individuals and groups to find their “calling” within the movement. We can recognize and rejoice that the Father has the infinite capacity to adjust according to the needs of each of his creatures, in each and every circumstance, and trust his Spirit to do his work as we do ours.

<sup>1</sup>Bill Easum and Thomas Bandy of Easum, Bandy, and Associates. For more information on their books, resources, and workshops, see [www.EasumBandy.com](http://www.EasumBandy.com).

<sup>2</sup>Many of these insights are based on the work of John Carver, whose best selling books on public organizations have become required reading for many governing boards around the country.

<sup>3</sup>*Kicking Habits: Welcome Relief for Addicted Churches*, Thomas G. Bandy, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1997.  
-Merlyn Cox

*Jesus was truly a master of men; he exercised great influence over his fellow men because of the combine charm and force of his personality. There was a subtle commanding influence in his rugged, nomadic, and homeless life. There was intellectual attractiveness and spiritual drawing power in his authoritative manner of teaching, in his lucid logic, his strength of reasoning, his sagacious insight, his alertness of mind, his matchless poise, and his sublime tolerance. He was simple, manly, honest, and fearless. With all of this physical and intellectual influence manifest in the Master's presence, there were also all those spiritual charms of being which have become associated with his personality—patience, tenderness, meekness, gentleness, and humility.*  
p. 1589:6

# Creative Outreach

## Your Favorite Part of the Revelation

The Garden of Eden fascinates a large number of Urantians. From my own perspective, having far less religious training in my youth than most people, the story of the Garden was relatively uninteresting. This has changed in recent months. A friend and fellow Urantian, Behzad Sarmast, passionately began to tell Joan and I about his research and discoveries into the legends and myths that are rooted in the true Urantian story of the Garden. He disclosed some astounding things. Virtually every civilization has a version of the Garden story, with threads that reach into the distant past and then seem to fade away and disappear. The parallels between these legends are uncanny.

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*Under the sponsorship of The Urantia Book Fellowship, Behz has completed a preliminary manuscript about the Garden, its aftermath, and its abiding legacy as human myth. The scope and originality of Behz's work is a remarkable achievement, fully documented and richly illustrated.*

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The centerpiece of the sacred myths is remarkably similar, “Behz” explained to us. A heroic god and a beautiful goddess miraculously appear on our planet (populated but still in a savage state), and teach humankind the arts of civilization. Behz can make a very convincing case that one of science’s most perplexing mysteries can be explained by the Adam and Eve revelation as depicted in the Urantia Papers. Scientists know that thirty-five thousand years ago there was an astounding upsurge in human evolution, and the Cro-Magnon humanoid (modern man) suddenly emerged as we know it today. Under the sponsorship of The Urantia Book Fellowship, Behz has completed a preliminary manuscript about the Garden, its aftermath, and its abiding legacy as human myth. The scope and originality of Behz’s work is a remarkable achievement, fully documented and richly illustrated.

Yet, Behz told me, there still remains an immense amount of research to be done on the subject of the Garden and the history of Adam and Eve. One evening, not long ago, his eyes aflame with excitement, Behz said that a “hundred scientists could spend a hundred years following the threads in the Urantia Papers and never complete the task.” I turned this remark over in my mind

several times. Then, as luck would have it, another Urantian said almost the same thing to me about an entirely different theme in *The Urantia Book*.

A day or so later, my wife Joan brought up her favorite subjects: prayer, worship, service and the inner life. Joan can get very excited about the significance of these factors. To her it is very clear: the Urantia Papers tells us that "Of all human knowledge, that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it." Next, the Papers tell us: "The secret of his unparalleled religious life was this consciousness of the presence of God; and he attained it by intelligent prayer and sincere worship—unbroken communion with God." Taken together with: "Worship is the highest privilege and the first duty of all created intelligences," it is clear that we need to spend a great deal more time cultivating our inner lives.

What is the most efficient way to achieve enlightenment? Through meditation? No! Joan quotes the book again: "The contact of the mortal mind with its indwelling Adjuster, while often favored by devoted meditation, is more frequently facilitated by wholehearted and loving service in unselfish ministry to one's fellow creatures." Joan believes we have a clear and persuasive series of admonitions. So, much of Joan's outreach consists of persuading people to take the time to cultivate their inner lives with prayer and worship.

Joan augments her study of the inner life with books such as "The Spiritual Guide" (Molinos), "The Seeking Heart" (Fenelon), and "Practicing His Presence." (two books in one - Laubach and Lawrence). The remarkable thing about these books is that all but Frank Laubach's were written in the 17th century. Yet they all interface wonderfully with the teachings in the Urantia Papers. Joan says there was such a rich treasure of information in the Urantia Papers about prayer and worship, we could not exhaust it a hundred years. Naturally, Joan's comment made me think about what Behz had told me.

Then, I began to consider my own favorite parts of the Urantia Papers. The concept of values as presented in the Papers came to mind. The information about values is so original and intriguing I have spent years on it and have not scratched the surface. The meta-values of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness are valuable to me when I work with business management. Although the concept of God cannot be presented in most business situations, the concept of meta-values can. Truth, Beauty and Goodness easily translate to modern business concepts of integrity, excellence, and benevolence. It happens that experts now believe that virtually every business built to

last must address these core values. Integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness are table stakes in modern business. Next, Beauty translates into self-expression, or excellence. To succeed in business today, you must be superior in how you perform. Finally, benevolence, the "people element" is requisite to success in business. You must genuinely respect, appreciate and acknowledge all people—including customers, associates, vendors and stockholders.

Yet I have not come close to using much of the information in the Urantia Papers. The Urantia Papers carry the concept of values beyond the common parameters of philosophical thought. There is so much information there, and it is so condensed, that a single lifetime could not begin to explore it. My point in all of this is the idea that each of us has at least one segment of, or a theme of, *The Urantia Book* that we find especially engrossing. We love to think about it, and we enjoy talking about it. Your own favorite may translate into modern terms and you may be able to link with common ideas to reach people with your own special knowledge from the Papers.

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*The Urantia Papers carry the concept of values beyond the common parameters of philosophical thought. There is so much information there, and it is so condensed, that a single lifetime could not begin to explore it*

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Consider that David Zebadee was the first spiritual Internet. How can we expand upon his noble service in these days of turmoil and confusion? The feminine component of God may interest you: how can that factor be presented to the benefit of young women in the Urantia Movement? Imagine what a service it will be if you could translate the Rodan Papers into a modern philosophy of practical living! Whatever parts of the Papers are of special interest to you, think about ways to present them in an original and creative outreach effort. "The religion of the spirit leaves you forever free to follow the truth wherever the leadings of the spirit may take you. And who can judge—perhaps this spirit may have something to impart to this generation which other generations have refused to hear?" (p, 1731)

So many Urantians may answer this question, "Who, me?" Abraham Maslow liked to challenge his college classes by saying: "Who in this room is going to be the next great leader, or writer, or scientist, or artist, or poet?" After a few moments of embarrassed silence, with no sound but a few muffled giggles, he would then ask: "If not you, then who?"

-Larry Mullins



# The State of the Urantia Movement

Annual Report of the President of The Urantia Book Fellowship—July 2000

Janet Farrington Graham

This will be my final annual report as president of The Fellowship. Although there are many exciting projects in progress, I will leave it to the next president to share the good news with you. There are a few times when it is appropriate for a president to share personal feelings about the state of the "union", and I hope this is one of them. The statements below represent my opinions, not necessarily those of the people with whom I have served. However, I feel a responsibility to share the insights gained during my three years as Fellowship president.

I believe the revelation community is at a crossroads. Our major organizations are facing the choice of reform or failure, a choice brought about by the natural evolution of a human system that has exhausted the potential of its infancy. Fifty years ago a small group of dedicated religionists labored to bring forth an epochal revelation, and they designed an organizational system to facilitate the emergence of a new social/religious movement. This may have been the best possible system for its time, but throughout most of a fifty-year history, the organizations comprising this system have been mired in power struggles and political strife. There have been lawsuits and rumors of lawsuits. Millions of dollars of valuable capital and countless hours have been invested in maintaining or challenging the status quo. Relationships have been damaged and volunteers have become discouraged. Long-time readers are frustrated over the state of the movement, and new readers are dismayed. "How did a spiritual community dedicated to an epochal revelation find itself in such a mess?"

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Individual believers, feeling the need for independent action, have initiated projects designed to transcend the influence of unresolved conflict among the leadership, and perhaps this is the next evolutionary step: a network of private foundations dedicated to specific projects, a grassroots seeding of revelation services independent of any umbrella organization. While this alternative may be acceptable, I believe we must also examine, carefully examine, what has transpired during the past fifty years

and make a reasonable effort to design an organizational structure that can serve the community during the next hundred years.

I often wonder what our spiritual supervisors think about the state of the Urantia movement, and I long for the advice of the Resident Governor General. Are these power struggles necessary? Can we invest our talents more wisely? Have we overlooked the forest for the trees? Imagine, for a moment the elevated perspective of the spiritual administration on Urantia. These experienced celestial personalities are able to see the unfolding of trends far into the future. They know, for example, how electronic communication will change the legal status of intellectual properties and change the lives of human beings previously isolated; they recognize the potential inherent in the paradigm shifts brought about by advancing technology. In fact, I believe they anticipated this shift and provided our community fifty years to adjust to the shock of epochal revelation, and to prepare for the future.

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Are we prepared? I think the escalation of conflict, the struggle for control of the book, is evidence that we are not prepared. Further, I believe that if we continue down this road our organizations will eventually become obsolete, and may unwittingly institutionalize a religion **about** the book.

There are no ready solutions. In our best moments, we dream of a unified community, free of the struggle for control of the text, sharing the fruits of the spirit with a struggling world. In our most insightful moments, we envision an active partnership with the planetary government, providing administrative support in preparation for the next spiritual age. In our most private moments, each one of us sincerely seeks greater service to our Creator Son, and to the Supreme.

There is no doubt in my mind that our community is hungry for brotherhood. Although we know that social brotherhood is an evolution born of struggle, spiritual brotherhood can be attained now. "Always we may have diversity of intellectual comprehension and interpretation, even varying degrees of socialization, but lack of

spiritual brotherhood is both inexcusable and reprehensible." (p. 1866)

Perhaps it would help to shift our focus from secular ends to spiritual means. Conflict is inevitable, the result of diverse human minds and committed wills; conflict illuminates the potential for personal growth. Resolution is creative, the result of spiritualized minds discovering the Father's will; resolution indicates the realization of spiritual growth. "Mutual understanding and fraternal love are transcendent civilizers and mighty factors in the world-wide realization of the brotherhood of man." (p. 598)

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*There is no doubt in my mind that our community is hungry for brotherhood. Although we know that social brotherhood is an evolution born of struggle, spiritual brotherhood can be attained now. "Always we may have diversity of intellectual comprehension and interpretation, even varying degrees of socialization, but lack of spiritual brotherhood is both in excusable and reprehensible." (p. 1866)*

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And perhaps it would be helpful to shift our focus to a universe perspective. "Urantia is the sentimental shrine of all Neadon, the chief of ten million inhabited worlds, the mortal home of Christ Michael, sovereign of all Neadon, a Melchizedek minister to the realms, a system savior, an Adamic progressor, a Son of Man in the likeness of mortal flesh, and the Planetary Prince of Urantia. And your record tells the truth when it says that this same Jesus has promised some time to return to the world of his terminal bestowal, the World of the Cross." (p. 1319)

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*What we need is the courage to resolve our inevitable conflicts, to reform our outdated organizations, to revitalize our spiritual community.*

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The eyes of the universe are upon us. The planetary government is dedicated to our success. We have angels working by our side. What we need is the courage to resolve our inevitable conflicts, to reform our outdated organizations, to revitalize our spiritual community.

I retire from organizational service for a time, to more fully embrace a community perspective and to explore the potentials for revelation service. I am grateful for these three years as Fellowship president, and my nine years as a General Councilor. And I have faith that the next President and General Council will serve the membership to the very best of their abilities.

## Goals Not Creeds: Worship and Service

Rosey Lieske

*"But the great difficulty of finding a new and satisfying symbolism is because modern men, as a group, adhere to the scientific attitude, eschew superstition, and abhor ignorance, while as individuals they all crave mystery and venerate the unknown." (p. 966)*

Every person must decide for themselves what the central message of the revelation really is. Some point to *The Urantia Book* as the potential bridge between science and religion, and others to the awesome map that provides us with our first real glimpse of the length and breadth of creation. For me, the central message is much simpler than any of these. It's the message of the aborted gospel of the Master—of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man—and of their realization through worship and service.

At first, being the refugee of a confusing religious upbringing, that message was too couched in religious terms. I preferred to embrace God as an intellectual. In fact, after a long and fruitless search, the Urantia material had finally presented me with concepts that were worthy of God—and God as an idea was welcome enough for a long time.

### Early Impressions

I came across the Urantia Papers as a young girl. I was twenty-three. Now, twenty-five years into my experience as a Urantian, more than half my life has been spent pursuing and serving both God and revelation. After all this time, I find myself in a kind of crisis, as my purely religious experience is seeming to veer from the trajectory of the movement as a whole.

Like a lot of people, I'm finding it harder and harder to relate to the current trappings of the Urantia movement. Time spent in the presence of the Father, stripped down to my essential self in his loving and infinite presence, has made me less interested in conjecturing about the Father—and more interested in pursuing a relationship. He's also brought the Master into my life and made him real. The true gospel is full of new dimensions and promise now. I no longer hear the "religious" voice as a negative one. In fact, it is the only real directive—from any corner of the spectrum of the movement—that I'm either interested in or capable of hearing.

Yet I feel myself surrounded by an atmosphere that seems unrelated, if not subtly hostile, to these more universal religious tendencies. Why? If the religious life is a struggle between faith and fear—then what fears

have conspired to create a movement so subversively at odds to the natural outworking of religion—of simple worship and service—among us? Why all the jaded Urantians who appear to occupy center stage and scoff at “the peace and love stuff?” Why the free use of the word “politics” in all our collective pondering? Why the current doldrums as the voices of dissent and criticism grow louder and more shrill? Where, exactly, is our collective faith? Why is our sense of spiritual community so elusive?

### Grocery List of Fears and Blunders

These are questions I’ve sincerely been posing, not only to myself but to others. What has emerged is a kind of grocery list of fears. Though the human powers that be have carefully kept “religion” at arm’s length, allowing the movement proper to remain secularly and socially self-defined, these are fears that definitely pertain to ourselves as religionists.

1. We’re afraid we’ll “default.” This is a tough one, as no one can seem to agree on exactly what actions would result in this default. Though the general consensus is that default would have something to do with impatience.

2. We’re afraid we’ll create a Urantian church. Many of us are “religious refugees,” marked by negative experiences with churches and cults. We’re much more at peace with the idea of pursuing God on our own terms, while the Urantia movement remains organizationally driven.

3. We’re afraid that we’ll be confused with traditional Christianity. Many of us also have mixed feelings about being identified with Jesus, especially since the pathways to praise of the Master have all too often been lined with people who pronounce Jee-ee-zuz with three syllables and wear funny hair. (I personally think the Master would understand.)

4. We’re afraid that we’ll turn off both old and new readers if we espouse the importance of group worship, meditation, or prayer. We’re all right with some emphasis on these things. But we continually accede to the discomfort levels of the more intellectually, less “religiously,” driven among us.

5. We’re afraid that, no matter what we do, we’ll somehow do it wrong. It’s all very dear to us—our book, our skewed history, our potential. We’ve an awesome thing in our midst and only the example of the apostles to look to. The apostles missed the boat by focusing on the creation of a church. We know this. We don’t want to make the same mistake.

We’ve honestly thought that by adhering to more objective, organizational formats we could avoid these pitfalls. We’ve thought that if we kept the focus of the movement on the fact of the book and its importance to the world, we’d avoid religious extremes and failure.

The problem with all this is that it forces our truer religious drives underground. It subverts all the drives pertaining to our genuine spiritual hunger to experience God at our center—to put him first and to collectively, as well as individually, come to him. Even to know ourselves as a community that *can* follow Michael to God and service on more universal levels.

Our determination to leave religion out of it, so to speak, and put the book itself in the middle has created a very strange situation. Because our religious fears cannot be examined in the light of collective faith, we’ve become stalled and stilted, prone to some of the very religious bugaboos we fear. “Bad religion” has come our way, regardless. It turns out that we don’t even need to create a church to experience it, because *bad religion* has everything to do with unreligious activities being done within a spiritual community. “To become fetishes, words had to be considered inspired, and the invocation of supposed divinely inspired writings led directly to the establishment of the *authority* of the church, while the evolution of civil forms led to the fruition of the *authority* of the state.” (p. 970)

The revelators themselves tried to save us from the misstep of giving birth to a Urantian religion of authority by emphasizing that the book is not a divinely inspired work. Yet our own deeply embedded fear of default has led many of us to imbue the Foundation’s “mandates” with the quality of divinity. The book tells us, in the quote above, that this kind of religious psychology is fetishism. But since we’ve thought ourselves immune to such things by virtue of investing in organizations rather than churches, we’ve unintentionally fallen victim and enabled a small group of individuals to invoke these “divine mandates,” subsequently forming a very effective little orthodoxy, an orthodoxy which lost no time in attaching itself to the secular institution of the government. Now, we have one of the oldest religious bugaboos of all in our midst—a conservative and fearful minority empowered by secular law to control other religionists—a Urantian religion of authority. (Look Ma—no church!)

### The Danger of Political Strategies

We’ve invited other potential disasters into the mix as well. The beautiful glimpse that the book has given us into the workings of celestial governments has subtly invited a notion of imitating this celestial democracy. And while it may be perfectly acceptable to utilize



democratic processes in a religious group, and most certainly to advocate for the growth of democracy as a method of government in the secular world, it would be terribly unwise to unconsciously fall back into our evolutionary tendency to enjoin sociopolitical patterns with religion, thereby fomenting the notion of "holy democracy." We humans have a real tendency to do that and there's a distinct reason why the Master worked so hard to promote attachment to transcendental, spiritual action—worship and service—above attachment to sociopolitical philosophies regarding the outworking of religion.

It's only through the act of worship, as individuals, groups, or organizations, that we enjoin God in either our individual or collective processes. Creature will must be free to approach God spontaneously. The Father always waits for an invitation and will only act upon it. Government and governmental processes, even in heaven, pertain to temporal problem solving and are designed to fade as Spirit gains dominion. They cannot be relied upon to initiate the perfecting dynamic of the Father himself. That must always start with the individual. Even in our collective formations, the Father responds to us as an aggregate of individual believers. He's that respectful of our will.

The Urantia Papers tell us to keep church and state separate. They say that church and state separation on earth was "the peace move of the ages." Nowhere in the book do they tell us to ape the governments on high in our religious groups, or to put the emphasis among us on political forms and processes—while in dozens of places we're told to put the emphasis instead on worship and service. Worship and service *is* "church"—and just because we've adopted organizational formats doesn't mean we're immune to the birthing of sociopolitical forms inappropriately wed to spiritual principle. We really need to watch it.

The fact that we hear so much about "politics" in the movement only means we've already gotten off on the wrong foot in terms of attaching these temporal means to spiritual ends. The presence of this political psychology inappropriately wed to a religious subtext has defined much of our group experience. While the words "church," "religion," and "ministry" strike fear in our hearts, "politics" and "power plays" barely register a flinch. We don't see the trap we've fallen into. It all feels so natural. Of course it does! It arose from the very evolutionary muck and mire we've come from!

We tend to forget that the Master was neither surprised or upset by the formation of a church or a religion in the wake of his bestowal. The unpleasant surprise for

him was that the organized church, with him as its "head," became such a complete substitution for the spiritual kingdom. Surely, the further substitution of our strangely secular organizations—contaminated by an acceptance of "religious politics" and with *The Urantia Book* itself as our sole focus—would hardly relieve him of his 2000 year old burden, the undelivered message of the gospel.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not in the business of promoting an idea of Urantian churches—but neither do I desire to suppress it. Nor do I want to see the organizations disappear, though I would like to see those of us involved in them rethink our emphasis. A lot of good has been done through them and will continue to be. Let God be in charge. What I do want to see, though, is a broader community that will open itself up to an honest examination of how the movement has developed and why. And to an exploration of real worship and service across "political" boundaries—even in the presence of all these fears pertaining to religion.

### **Worship and Service the Only Antidote**

Worship may be at the heart of religion—but it isn't the thing that causes religious warring. Worship on ever-broadening levels is the only real antidote. If I were a doctor, writing a prescription for spiritual health and unity to improve relations between our most divided family members, I'd first prescribe a full two to three years of focus solely on shared worship. I'd then prescribe, again, between those most divided, along with shared worship and service together in pathways having nothing to do with Urantia outreach. Urantia outreach needs to be done in the company of those who have earned your trust. But other pathways could provide us all with the opportunity to exercise sincerity and earn trust, provided we can expand our thinking regarding service itself.

We also need to be more willing to accept responsibility regarding the gospel message of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. This message is universal, potent, and, according to the Urantia Papers, still undelivered. We really need to become interested in surrounding ourselves and our outreach efforts with the essential spirit of this message and to allow the Fourth and Fifth Epochal Revelations to work together. The gospel, still dormant after 2000 years, actually needs to precede the revelation in many parts of the world. "What you can do or dream you can do, begin it! Boldness has vision, power, and magic in it!" (Goethe)

We are told that someday "goals not creeds" will unify religionists. The main problem with the gospel is that it's deceptively simple. We agree with it; therefore we think

we've already explored it. Worship and service, emphasized and truly put into action among us, would dynamically shift our focus. For one thing, we might begin to see how far from the mark we really are in terms of connecting with its potential. Yes, it's a simple two-part approach—but the Master wasn't stupid. He knew that the simpler the approach, the more universally it could be applied. He wants it to be universally applied, starting with us. We'd have a lot to learn. We'd need to leave room for the Father to put people together for service. We couldn't have it all worked out ahead of time, with ourselves pre-aligned according to shared opinions. We do need to broaden our outlook on service, too. The Master viewed all service as valuable—not merely that which pertained specifically to spiritual or religious work.

Look how the angels are organized for planetary service on page 1255. The universe concept of service is truly broad. What would it mean to us and the revelation to consciously embrace this more universal approach to both worship and service and align with it. It would open us up! People in the movement proper, struggling to serve God just as they are, would receive much more familial support. People on the outside would come to associate all kinds of lovely efforts with the Urantia movement, coming in droves to see what is inspiring us, instead of witnessing the vicious little family squabble we're into now, and therefore staying away.

We need an emphasis on goals and more goals, as individuals, small groups, and organizations, as a spiritual family. We need worship, meditation, and prayer goals, along with service goals, made and met in a million combinations among us, with the Father smack in the center and in the broad light of day. We need worship and service bulletin boards for the public posting of these goals. We need worship and service resources also, listings of the myriad of efforts already in motion in the world, to aid us in connecting with our larger family of spiritual siblings.

We need not wait for an artificial alignment between organizations to initiate the birth of spiritual community among us. Human organizations can never do what the Father can. We only need to give ourselves permission to come together in the midst of our mess and put the emphasis on these deceptively simple lines—listening to the Father to guide us. It's already starting to happen among us anyway: in spite of all our limitations, prejudices, and immaturities; in spite of our history and preconditioning—and even in spite of our morbid fear of messing up. (We will mess up!) It's already happening. We just need to help it happen more.

## The Mythology of *The Urantia Book*

*Jesus once said, "...the truth never suffers from honest examination." ( p. 1711C)*

Richard Bain

Yes, it is a provocative title. Sometimes when people think of mythology, they think of the stories of the Greek gods and Homer's epic tales, and they may equate such myths with fables. But it's not necessarily so. We know the fable is a fictional story; a myth may or may not be factual. A fable may have a moral, but a myth is more inclusive and broader in scope. In the words of Rollo May, "A myth is a way of making sense in a senseless world. Myths are narrative patterns that give significance to our existence...myths give us our sense of personal identity... make possible our sense of community...undergird our moral values....mythology is our way of dealing with the inscrutable mystery of creation..."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the point of the myth is not to give a set of facts, but rather to explain the phenomena in our lives and our world. Insofar as the myth is derived from facts, it is factual; but the value of the myth does not lie in its factuality, but rather in its utility in making sense of our lives. How does it do this?

A well-known myth is the story of Job in the Bible. We could argue endlessly about whether there really was a Job and the idea of God willingly afflicting Job to prove a point. The point of the story is that Job's faith did not depend on the circumstances of his life. This was a valuable insight for the Jewish people, who were often conquered and frequently oppressed. Myths are a feature of most cultures. For example, almost all cultures have some sort of creation myth. But lest we think that myths are the sole province of only unsophisticated and prescientific peoples, consider the Big Bang theory. The ancients observed a volcano erupting and tried to figure out why; they came up with an anthropomorphic explanation. When a person becomes angry, he or she may explode in an angry outburst. Therefore, someone or something in that volcano is angry. How to stop the volcano? Give the volcano god something very valuable, such as someone's child. Just as the ancients observed the volcano and formed a hypothesis, astronomers observed the heavens and fashioned a myth based on their observations. From their observations, astronomers have concluded that the universe is expanding. If we run the cosmic expansion film backwards, the Big Bang appears to start out as a point in space. Therefore, in the eyes of the astronomers, there was a "Big Bang" at the beginning of time that started the expansion of time and space. The astronomers believe so strongly in this scenario that anyone who tries to cast doubts on this theory may find it hard to get a job in astronomy or funding for research projects; they are sacrificed to the Big Bang god. Whether or not it's true, the Big Bang myth provides an explanation for the

universe and its expansion. It provides the framework *The Urantia Book* tells us we need to explain the universe. (p. 1260A)

Supposedly, the scientific method was used to generate the Big Bang theory, but it is nearly impossible to eliminate bias from such an enterprise. The scientist is supposed to be an impartial observer, but too often emotional involvement gets in the way of his or her objectivity. I am sure that when people in our Urantia community try to be impartial observers of our community and our mythology we suffer the same problem. How might an impartial observer see our mythology and us?

### Seeing Ourselves as Others See Us

Let us imagine that an anthropologist from another inhabited planet came to study the cultures of our world. How would such an anthropologist view the Urantia community and its mythology, *The Urantia Book*? Would he or she see any difference between the Christian community and ours? We both have our holy books that give us a framework wherein we can interpret the world and the universe. Of course, those of us in the Urantia community would be quick to point out that the Christian Church is an organized religion with all the trappings of such a religion such as a priesthood, altars with candles, a stock market portfolio, etc, and, of course, the Urantia community isn't a religion (yet). And we would be quick to point out that *The Urantia Book*, with a few minor exceptions, such as the Big Bang theory, integrates science and religion in a way that the Bible doesn't. Certainly, the anthropologist would notice that the mythology of *The Urantia Book* is a much more complete picture of our universe and more in harmony with 20th century science than is the Bible. But just because the picture is more comprehensive, that doesn't make it factually correct. If our anthropologist is a pragmatist, he or she might try to determine the efficacy of our mythology on the basis of how it affects our lives. If students of *The Urantia Book* have a superior philosophy, then they ought to lead superior lives. Do we? Are we more beneficial to humankind than a Christian or a Buddhist? Do we live more peaceably among ourselves? Perhaps our community is too young to judge based on these criteria. And it would be a mistake to assume that everyone in our community accepts all of *The Urantia Book* as a revelation, free from flaws. But even those who accept the book as a divine revelation may be forced to modify their idea of what revelation is, and therefore what *The Urantia Book* is.

Many of us have heard the story of the young Christian man or woman who goes off to college and becomes an atheist. We may shake our heads and ask ourselves, "What happened to their faith?" What we observe in this case is a sudden evolution of the person's point of view due to expanded horizons. They may have believed what they were taught as children and never questioning it. But in

college they are taught to question things. They hear exciting new ideas and points of view that are a revelation to them. They begin to see the narrowness of their childhood religion. They may view their previous naivete with distaste and resolve to reject the religion of childhood. But at some later time, they will often begin to experience a hunger to be a part of some sort of spiritual community, and may even begin to explore their religious roots. They may come back to the religious community of their childhood, but with reservations about the theology of that religion. I believe that this story of acceptance, rejection and reconsideration has some relevance to students of *The Urantia Book*.

One metaphor I have used previously to describe our relationship to the book is that of the falling-in-love phenomenon. Infatuation is often the first stage of our relationship. We see the beloved as flawless, because we have known them but a short time and know very little about them. After a few weeks or months, we are likely to enter into a new phase of the relationship. We may begin to notice a few annoying idiosyncrasies in our beloved. The relationship begins to lose some of its luster. But if we persist, and if we are able to love each other, warts and all, we may proceed to the next phase: engagement and marriage. After the marriage, the real work of having a good relationship begins. Idiosyncrasies that were just annoying may become maddening. After a few years, when we begin to know each other much better, we may decide that we made a mistake and decide to end the relationship. Or, we may be willing to compromise, accept each other's limitations, and build a strong lifelong relationship. It seems to me that many of us pass through some similar phases in our relationship with the teachings of *The Urantia Book*. Some people never get past the infatuation stage; they would be the last to admit that there are problems in the book. For some of us, the discovery of a few flaws in *The Urantia Book* may lead to a period of disillusionment; does this need to end by our rejecting the book? To answer this, perhaps we need to look at mythology: what it is, and what it is not. What should we expect from our mythology? Should we demand perfection in a quite imperfect world?

### What is Truth?

When Jesus told Pontius Pilate, "... everyone who loves the truth hears my voice," Pilate replied, "Truth, what is truth—who knows?" (p. 1991C) As we look at areas in *The Urantia Book* that are a problem for us, we might well ask the same question, "What is truth?" When Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan, was he telling a "true" story? Was this an incident that really happened? Many will protest that everyone knew that Jesus' stories were parables, and everyone accepted that the stories were invented to illustrate a point, not to relate the facts of some incident.



Whether or not the story actually happened is irrelevant. The parable is just a vehicle to convey some truth even though the story may not be true in the literal sense. The same could be said about metaphors or Aesop's fables. But what about the stories in the Old Testament? Many are told as if they are the recounting of an actual incident, yet they strain our credulity. Consider the story of Jonah and the whale. Some Christians accept that a large fish actually swallowed Jonah and spit him out on dry land; other Christians label the story a flight of fancy. But those who argue over the factuality of the story miss the whole point, which is that God forgave the people of Nineveh and spared them because they did heed Jonah's call to repent. This was the truth of the story. In such cases, perhaps we should ask ourselves, "Which is more important, truth or fact?"

Truth often has a deeper dimension than fact. We have to deal with cold, hard facts, but it is the truth that sets us free. Facts are registered in our intellect, but truth rings in our hearts. Factuality is more a function of external objective reality; truth tends to be more of an inner and therefore subjective reality. Factuality is a knowing of the mind; truth is a knowing of the heart and soul.

### **When Your Myth Loses Its Luster**

Many of us who are long time students of *The Urantia Book* have found things in the book that we realize just aren't so, facts that don't fit in with our present knowledge, especially in the area of astronomy and science. But the authors did warn us that concepts in the book would need revision as our scientific knowledge advanced. I have heard it said that forewarned is forearmed. So perhaps we are not justified in being indignant when confronted with errors, considering that we were warned about such errors by the authors. But what about the non-cosmology areas? Should we expect that everything other than the cosmology and science is factual? Should we feel betrayed if it isn't?

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*Truth often has a deeper dimension than fact. We have to deal with cold, hard facts, but it is the truth that sets us free. Facts are registered in our intellect, but truth rings in our hearts. Factuality is more a function of external objective reality; truth tends to be more of an inner and therefore subjective reality.*

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Consider the Rodan papers. I have read them many times and always found many concepts that resonated with me. It has a different flavor than the other Jesus papers, but it sounds like an authentic encounter. A while back, I began wondering if there were any historical records that mentioned Rodan. I asked people in the Urantia community about this, and no one knew of any such records. However, Matthew Block, intrepid investigator of sources used in the

book, surprised me when he told me that he had found the human source of the concepts in the Rodan papers. I was a bit crestfallen. I remember picturing the Apostles and Rodan wrestling with the idea of God as a person and being gratified that the Apostles were able to convince Rodan that God is indeed a personal being. I decided to research the name "Rodan" on the Internet. The only origin I could find was that it first appeared as a surname in England several centuries ago. Matthew Block said that "Rodan" was the name the Hebrews gave to the Isle of Rhodes. Matthew said that he will present his findings on the Rodan papers in a forthcoming publication.

### **The Fundamentalist Response**

I remember a conversation with a fundamentalist Christian about the factuality of the Bible. I noted several suspicious things in the Old Testament. His response was something like this: If you disbelieve anything in the Bible, then you might as well throw it away because you can't trust anything in it; I know there are a few folks in the Urantia community who feel the same about *The Urantia Book*.

So, why did the authors include the Rodan papers? I suspect there were certain ideas contained in the source work used in the Rodan papers that the authors felt weren't covered elsewhere in the Jesus papers, so they inserted this information as a story. And after all, there were Greeks coming to see Jesus, and they certainly would have been familiar with Greek philosophy. Perhaps the Rodan papers give the story of the philosophical struggle these Greeks had in reconciling Greek philosophy with Jesus teachings. Should we feel annoyed that the authors didn't give us a hint that Rodan might be a fictional character? Is this yet another "time bomb"?<sup>2</sup>

Surely, the authors knew that some time someone would research the matter, and find the actual source of the ideas in the Rodan papers. Considering that this is an incident not reported in the Bible, it stands out as something to be investigated. Also, where else in the Jesus Papers is there such a dialogue between the Apostles and one individual? But all this does not destroy the truth carried in the Rodan papers. The concepts are just as true whether Rodan existed or not. And the concepts are those of one of our fellow mortals. There are several thousand such inclusions in the Jesus papers, according to the acknowledgement on page 1343 of *The Urantia Book*. Now we can read the papers without wondering who really wrote them; we know the human source of much of the material in the book. Perhaps we should be grateful to the authors for rescuing these thoughts from the trash bin of time and giving them back to us.

### **The Fruits of Study**

*The Urantia Book* provides us with a mythology to live by; a mythology that gives satisfying answers to many of

our serious questions about life here and hereafter. It provides a powerful vision of our potentials in this life and the next. Myths give us a sense of community, of belonging to something larger than ourselves, a sense of being connected to some group that has ideas and ideals in common. Our mythology can provide us with what I call a core purpose, as when Jesus told his apostles to go into all the world to spread the gospel, an admonition known as the Great Commission. For many of us, a core purpose for our lives is spreading the teachings of *The Urantia Book* to all of those who will receive them. The mythology of this book gives us a clearer vision of who we are and our relationship to God. Most of us in the community cannot conceive of life without *The Urantia Book* as a stabilizing force, a source of words of comfort in a sometimes unkind world. But, as we grow spiritually, I believe it is inevitable that we will begin to view the book in a different light.

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*Because The Urantia Book has such comprehensive answers to questions about life and death, it is a powerful mythology. While we may be mesmerized by its powerful truths, its power should be not to seduce our minds but to lead us to a closer relationship to God.*

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Liberal Christians have long since ceased to view the Bible as a history or science book. Perhaps we in the Urantia community need to adopt the same point of view about *The Urantia Book*. Liberal Christians long ago learned to winnow the wheat from the chaff as they study the Bible; do we have some things that belong on the threshing floor instead of in the grain bins? I believe it's time to view the Fifth Epochal Revelation as a useful tool, as a series of guideposts on the eternal path rather than an infallible document.

Because *The Urantia Book* has such comprehensive answers to questions about life and death, it is a powerful mythology. While we may be mesmerized by its powerful truths, its power should be not to seduce our minds but to lead us to a closer relationship to God. We need to remind ourselves that *The Urantia Book* isn't an end in itself. Rather it is the doorway to a larger reality: the "eternal adventure." (p. 21B)

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<sup>1</sup> Rollo May. *The Cry for Myth*. New York: Norton, 1991, Chapter One.

<sup>2</sup>"Time Bomb" is a concept I introduced in an article by the same name. Time bombs are concepts the authors included in *The Urantia Book* that are found to be incorrect or inaccurate as human knowledge and understanding expand. I theorized that the authors included such time bombs for us to discover, as time goes by, to counteract our human tendency to idolize so-called holy books.

## Planetary Ecumenism

Jay Newbern

*"God is One, and likes unity." (Hadith, Islam)*

Our planet is in a state of emergency. The threat is quite genuine and is causing spiritual transformation. Ringing alarm bells on Spaceship Earth are not just sounding in our dreams. Massive denial cannot silence them. As the Third Millennium dawns, we have received our wake-up call. "Stewardship!" the spiritual Klaxon announces with increasing urgency.

### Ecological Disaster

*The Great Turning* is how Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy describes the vast planetary revolution that is now underway because our way of life cannot be sustained.<sup>1</sup> The material base of this crisis is seen in our industrial avarice and ecological jeopardy. Destruction caused by the Industrial Growth Society (corporate globalization) extracts finite resources beyond Urantia's capacity to renew, and spews out wastes faster than Earth's capacity to absorb. Even the globe-spanning oceans and seas of our world are being poisoned. Transnational corporations ("persons" according to the United States Supreme Court) plunder our common heritage at will for their profit. A few plutocrats (ruling monied elite) get richer and richer but many humans sink below the poverty line. What does it profit a corporation to win the whole world but lose its existence in planetary disaster?

The world's southernmost continent of Antarctica is the canary in the planetary mine shaft. It was over the South Pole that the British discovered a hole in the ozone layer that continues to expand as humans continue to flush chemicals into the atmosphere, wiping out nature's protective filter that shields us from the sun's harmful radiation. And global warming has now caused Antarctica's ice shelf to calve another break-off iceberg, this one three times the size of Rhode Island. Man has fouled his own nest. He has polluted the well upon which he depends. Human beings rabid with greed have ravaged and despoiled God's magnificent creation on this sphere. During our lifetimes, more of the world's resources have been consumed than in all of our previous human history. And now E-commerce on the Internet is accelerating this devouring rate of consumption.

The cultural historian Thomas Berry addresses our grave planetary condition and the human instinct for survival in his *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*. He labels our present time of greenhouse effect and nuclear menace as the Cenozoic Era, where corporate pollution threatens habitability of the planet. "So severe and so irreversible is this deterioration," he declares,

"that we might well believe those who tell us that we have only a brief period in which to reverse the devastation that is settling over the Earth. Only recently has the deep pathos of the (planetary) situation begun to sink into our consciousness."<sup>2</sup> In addition to ozone depletion and melting polar ice caps which will raise sea levels, we are facing deforestation of the rain forests, desertification, collapse of ocean fisheries, plummeting water tables, nuclear waste storage, acid rain, and the greatest mass extinction of animals since the dinosaurs. The emerging Ecozoic Era, Berry says, is characterized by the rapidly evolving green awareness where human beings are present on the planet as fellow members of the Earth Community.

### Spiritual Repercussions

These multiple threats of disaster have resulted in *The Great Turning* in which we are now searching for authenticity, a reawakening to the sacredness of life itself, a taking of responsibility for our spiritual lives, and a reconnection with sacredness in order to embody it ourselves. Macy reports that the Turning is happening in every spiritual tradition—the Jewish renewal movement, the Gaia concept of creation, a resurgence of the Wicca nature religion, women's spirituality, and an interest in the teachings of ancient indigenous peoples. There are also charismatic Catholics, gay spirituality, Jews for Jesus, Urantians, and many others. The consciousness pendulum is swinging from transcendence (out there) to immanence (in here). Numerous mortals are rapidly realizing that two of the most important words in the English language are "within" and "now."

In December, 1999, just before all four digits on the calendar changed, two different planetary events occurred which signaled heightened awareness of the need for unity among the world's eleven major religions. The first happened during the initial week of the month—the Parliament of World Religions meeting in Cape Town, South Africa. The second indicator of new ecumenism of the worldwide interfaith movement occurred around New Year's Eve before 2000—the 72 Hour Project coordinated by United Religions International (URI). It was a planetary event!

These two global occurrences involving the hopeful unification of contending religions are significant—they took place within three weeks of each other, just before the celebration of a new year/decade/century/millennium. It does not matter that the 21st Century and Third Millennium will not arrive until 2001 (No zero year between B.C. and A.D. since the Arabs did not use "0" until the 6th Century.) Perception and willingness to try

to come together on our common lifeboat are what is important.

Only a half-dozen years separated the latest Parliament of World Religions from the previous one held in Chicago in 1993. Before that the hiatus was 100-years-long. Acceleration applies even to spiritual conclaves. The Chicago Parliament in '93 was vociferous in condemning "economic disparities that threaten so many families with ruin." It also strongly blasted religion-based violence: "Religion is often misused for purely power-political goals, including war. We are filled with disgust."<sup>3</sup> This conference went on to endorse an inspiring, life-affirming ethic.

More than 7,000 religionists from 80 nations assembled in Cape Town in '99 to issue a softer proclamation. This Parliament called upon the world's social and cultural institutions to redefine their roles for the new century. Organizations and individuals were asked to offer gifts of service to the planet, from reconciling a troubled community or family to engaging in personal prayer and meditation.

The second flagship event just before the "great turning" of the calendar was known as the 72 Hour Project. Coordinated by United Religions International utilizing high-tech communications, the project empowered one million participants to march, sing, and pray in 160 separate, locally organized events. In Pakistan, a peace caravan pleading for interreligious understanding traveled across the entire country and was witnessed by hundreds of thousands. At San Quentin Prison, north of San Francisco, inmates on Death Row prayed for peace in 90-minute shifts for three days.

New Year's Eve before A.D. 2000 was quite special indeed. The incredibly spectacular light show at the Eiffel Tower in Paris may have been a truly seminal signal from the City of Light. Virtually the entire weary world witnessed it on television. As the fireworks erupted and dazzled above Paris, people were praying in prison, marching in Pakistan, and singing/chanting around our blue-white sphere. In Rio de Janeiro our Brazilian siblings raised their hands to the heavens, in Korea (with its own translated Urantia Book) the various denominations gathered to pray for reunification of North and South, and in Ethiopia an African peace pole was dedicated by Orthodox, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant leaders. God only knows the entire outpouring of spiritual awareness.

Religion is a universal trait found throughout humanity, and the one commonality which all mortals share is God's inner spirit that resides within all normal persons. Accepting this species-wide familiarity provides a uni



versal foundation upon which to focus on human commonalities rather than differences. Surely the spirit of unity leads in this direction. The differences which have divided us in the past are really no more than uniqueness, that wonderful diversity which God has designed in his creativity.

Mutual respect and common acceptance among the various religions must begin with the world's three great monotheistic faiths because they already agree on so much. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam realize there is only one God; mere semantics separate them. Jews know him as Adonai Elohim (Yahweh), Christians call him Father (Universal), and Muslims refer to God as Allah. These three religions all revere Abraham as an ancient (4,000 years ago) spiritual titan. They generally do not realize that he received his enlightenment on monotheism from Melchizedek, God's third epochal revelation. Melchizedek missionaries then spread this truth throughout most of the world.

A second similarity the three faiths share is that each claims a holy book as its foundation. For Jews the sacred Scripture is the Torah, for Christians it is the Bible, and for Muslims the Qur'an (Koran). And for revelational Jesusonians, of course, it is *The Urantia Book*.

All planetary religions form a mosaic like a stained glass window, glowing with every color in the light spectrum. There are many colors but only one sun that illuminates them. Each contains truth. These differing doorways to God are like blind men describing an elephant via partial touch. But basically they all share this: the Golden Rule rests at the spiritual heart of each one. Virtually all religionists know that we are called to love others as we love ourselves and to treat others as we would have them treat us. Greater than any of these similarities, however, is the unifying Spirit of Truth from the Godman of Urantia. Even Newsweek has reported on the bridges connecting the three monotheistic faiths:

"There are, of course, important commonalities among these three religious traditions. All three believe in one God who has revealed his will through sacred Scriptures. They all look to an endtime when God's justice and power will triumph. And they all recognize the figure of Abraham as a father in faith. What is often overlooked, however, is another figure common to the three traditions, Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>4</sup>

To Christians the human/divine Jesus is the only Son of God. To Muslims our Christ is a prophet and messenger of Allah. To Jews Joshua ben Joseph was a teacher and reformer—"one of us." Even Buddhism, which is actually a philosophy with no God, accepts Jesus; the Dalai Lama recognizes Christ as a figure of great com-

passion, much like the Buddha. To other Buddhists Jesus is a bodhisattva, a perfectly enlightened being who vows to help others. Pope John Paul II has said this about Jesus: "Christ is absolutely original and absolutely unique. If He were only a wise man like Socrates, if He were a prophet like Muhammad, if He were enlightened like the Buddha, without doubt He would not be what He is."<sup>5</sup>

Of all the world's religions, Islam—the most recent—is most closely allied with Christianity as concerns Jesus. Not only do Muslims believe in his alleged virgin birth but they also honor his mother Mary in a singular way. In Islam Christ is known as Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary); she is the only woman mentioned in the Qur'an.

"...the Muslim Jesus enjoys unique spiritual prerogatives that other prophets, including Muhammad, lack. Only Jesus and his mother were born untouched by Satan. Even Muhammad had to be purified by angels before receiving prophethood. Again, in the Qur'an Muhammad is not presented as a miracle worker, but Jesus miraculously heals the blind, cures lepers, and 'brings forth the dead by (Allah's) leave.' In this way Jesus manifests himself as the Messiah, or 'the anointed one.'"<sup>6</sup>

Hinduism, the planet's oldest religion, shares with Christianity the concept of a trinity. Many Hindus are drawn to Jesus because of his compassion and his devotion to nonviolence. Their legend has Christ journeying across Asia as a teenager and learning yogic meditation; he then returned home to become a guru or teacher to the Jews. *The Urantia Book* reveals that Jesus traveled nearly to India as a young man.

Also in Asia was the religious leader most often compared to Jesus, Gautama Siddhartha, who became the Buddha. Although Christ is really incomparable, he did share many analogous parallels with the founder of Buddhism. Both were allegedly born to virgins, both left home for the wilderness where they were tempted by a devil figure, and both returned enlightened to challenge their respective religious establishments with their teachings. Both Jesus and Buddha attracted disciples and were betrayed by one. They each preached compassion, unselfishness and altruism. And both created movements that bear the founder's name. So again we observe the commonalities among religions.

### **Hope for the Future**

The critical condition on our planet has engendered in the minds of many insightful people of our world that we have come to *The Great Turning*. We observe that the major religions of human kind have many commonalities and leaders with ecumenical aspirations. The Fifth Epochal Revelation has come in "the fullness of time" to

build upon these foundations. Thomas Berry in his prophetic view into the future points out that we are now in a moment of grace with a window of opportunity to change.

Our civilization and its world cultures are threatened, as well as the ecological basis of survival. But as grim as all that is, Berry leaves us with reason to hope: "Even as we make our transition into this new century we must note that moments of grace are transient moments. The transformation must take place within a brief period. Otherwise it is gone forever. In the immense story of the universe, that so many of these dangerous moments have been navigated successfully is some indication that the universe is for us rather than against us. We need only summon these forces to our support in order to succeed. Although the human challenges to these purposes must never be underestimated, it is difficult to believe that the purposes of the universe or of the planet Earth will ultimately be thwarted."<sup>7</sup>

That which appears impossible to mortals is, of course, possible with God. He sends his Word of Truth to us to encourage us in our great struggle. Two examples follow, one from divine revelation, the other from Islamic sacred scripture:

"The religions of pessimistic despair seek to obtain release from the burdens of life; they crave extinction in endless slumber and rest. These are the religions of primitive fear and dread. The religion of Jesus is a new gospel of faith to be proclaimed to struggling humanity. This new religion is founded on faith, hope, and love." (U. B., p. 2063)

"Take firm hold, all of you, on the rope of God. Do not break up into divisions. Be mindful of the grace of God to you, how you were formerly enemies, and He united your hearts in mutual bonds, so that by His grace, you became brothers." (Qur'an 3:103)

Amen. (So be it)

<sup>1</sup> "The Great Turning" Sarah Ruth Gelder, *Yes! A Journal of Positive Futures*, Spring 2000, pp. 34-37

<sup>2</sup> "Moments of Grace" Thomas Berry, *Yes! A Journal of Positive Futures*, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> "Speaking Peace" Carol Estes, *Yes! A Journal of Positive Futures*, p. 6

<sup>4</sup> "Visions of Jesus: How Jews, Muslims and Buddhists View Him." *Newsweek*, p. 51

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> *Newsweek*, March 27, 2000; p. 56

<sup>7</sup> "Moments of Grace" p. 16.

## REVELATION AND PATIENCE

Stephen R. Johnson

In reading *The Urantia Book*, or in pondering remarks made by fellow readers, I often ask myself two questions: (1) What methods are desirable in spreading the teachings? (2) What are reasonable expectations concerning the pace of growth of readership? Note that it is inevitable that some people will be exposed to certain or various phases of the teachings without direct contact with the book. Nevertheless, fostering study groups is basic and very important, since these study groups comprise a core educational experience for serious readers. In addition, library placements of the book, making sure the book is available in or through bookstores, and demonstrating the book at book fairs and expositions are indeed all very helpful. Making quality translations of the book available is another fundamentally important activity. And there are other methods of dissemination, such as the text of the book in electronic form made available on compact disk or even online for Internet users, with search engines included.

However, with respect to the two questions posed, some underlying principles can be delineated which may assist us at both an individual and a group level in our sharing of *The Urantia Book* and its superlative teachings. Such things as forbearance, understanding, patience, forgiveness, kindness, and love are each important in general, and are certainly very pertinent when attempting to share revealed truth. Wisdom must be mentioned, especially that wisdom which reflects to us the receptivity and readiness of our fellows with whom we would share. It is well known that light can blind as well as guide. Though the given list of principles, or attributes, is not exhaustive, I wish to center the ensuing discussion around the issue of patience. Perhaps looking back at some previous epochal revelations will be instructive in gaining insights into patience with regard to sharing revealed truth.

### Historic Patience

The Planetary Prince's staff was comprised of graduates of the Satania mansion worlds. But the book states: "These wise beings knew better than to undertake the sudden transformation, or en masse uplifting, of the primitive races of that day. They well understood the slow evolution of the human species, and they wisely refrained from any radical attempts at modifying man's mode of life on earth." (p. 749:5) Advancement was approached *slowly and naturally*. Notwithstanding the acceleration of the evolution of human society brought about by these Dalamatia teachers, "Their motive was

progression by evolution and not revolution by revelation." (p. 750:1) These beings purposed to work within the fundamental modus operandi of growth on our planet's evolution to achieve desirable changes over time. Overtaching and over enlightenment result in confusion and dismay, and tend to rob the recipients of what enlightenment they do possess. Often we must patiently await further experience to accrue for the requisite receptivity to ripen in our fellows before sharing certain gifts of truth and understanding we ourselves possess. In this regard we might remember: "Whet the appetites of your associates for truth; give advice only when it is asked for." (p. 556)

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Patience was clearly a problem for Adam and Eve. They began their mission under difficult and complex circumstances. The planet is described as experimental, rebellion-seared, and isolated. This Material Son and Daughter had unenviable tasks confronting them, since it is stated: "No Adam of the planetary service was ever set down on a more difficult world; the obstacles seemed insuperable and the problems beyond creature solution." (p. 839:4) Words such as "tremendous sense of loneliness" and "consternation" are used to describe their condition. However, success would have come to Adam and Eve "had they been more farseeing and *patient*. ...they were not willing to settle down to the long, long endurance test." (p. 840) How many of us stand here from time to time with the fires of the truths of the Fifth Epochal Revelation burning in our hearts! Perhaps endurance is another facet of dealing with and wisely sharing revealed truth. The quality of the believers rather than the quantity seems to be comparatively more important in building a foundation for subsequent long-term steady and stable growth. Jesus well knew this principle, and it was borne out in his experiences before and after he fed the five thousand. Even though there are few if any short-term solutions to the manifold problems of our planet, it's probably helpful to remember that "The acts of today are the destiny of tomorrow." (p. 557)

In a paper on Machiventa Melchizedek it is stated that "You who today enjoy the advantages of the art of printing little understand how difficult it was to perpet

uate truth during these earlier times." (p. 1022) However, the observation is also made that "A new revelation is always contaminated by the older evolutionary beliefs." (p.1022) This statement is made without qualification as to whether the revelation is in printed form or not. Paul spearheaded the early and rapid spread of Christianity and the gospel about the risen Christ. He was a shrewd theological trader. We are told that "The New Testament is a superb Christian document, but it is only meagerly Jesusonian." (p. 2091) The fact that we have a copyrighted book for the Fifth Epochal Revelation is a clear advantage, but this doesn't necessarily guarantee the purity of its application over time. Human beings are adaptive, and they will often take a good idea and bend it so that it will more "comfortably" fit within their existing belief structure and conceptual framework. But the quality of the lives of those who sincerely and honestly pursue the teachings of *The Urantia Book* will strongly tend to demonstrate the authenticity of its truths. Lives that are inspired by Jesus' life and how he lived it, and loyal lives, are the only external "proof" of the integrity, veracity, and goodness of this newest epochal revelation. After all, Jesus taught that if we love one another as he loves us, then all persons would know that we are his disciples. If we can temper our enthusiasm with patience, we will be the more wise, and probably be able to achieve a better understanding of and love for our fellow mortals. This would lead to the growth of peace, notwithstanding any lack of philosophical uniformity. I doubt that revelation is an end in itself, but rather a means to help bring about progress and growth at an individual level, a planetary level, a system level, and so forth.

### Viewing the Future

Assume, for the sake of argument, that the readership of *The Urantia Book* will have a constant growth rate of 50% every twenty years. This rate of growth might seem conservative. It is interesting to note, however, that given this growth rate, there would be approximately 1.8 billion readers in the world by the year 2500. (This calculation is based on an estimate of the number of readers in 1986.) These, of course, are just numbers. There are many imponderable factors and considerations not accounted for in this simple calculation. In a paper entitled "Personalities of the Grand Universe," it is pointed out that not all personalities are revealed. The Mighty Messenger states: "Such conceptual expansion would hardly be desirable as it would deprive the thinking mortals of the next thousand years of that stimulus to creative speculation which these partially revealed concepts supply. It is best that man not have an overrevela



tion.” (p. 330) One might deduce from this that there’s ample time for the growth and spread of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. Also, we are reminded that the Planetary Prince’s staff eschewed overteaching and over enlightenment in the comment about “overrevelation.” In terms of revealed truth there seems to be a “law of readiness” which applies to both individuals and worlds, and it seems to be highly correlated with the evolutionary process.

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And finally, in a paper entitled “Planetary Mortal Epochs,” it is stated: “The only technique for accelerating the natural trend of social evolution is that of applying spiritual pressure from above, thus augmenting moral insight while enhancing the soul capacity of every mortal to understand and love every other mortal.” (p. 598)

### Epilogue

We have embarked upon the so-called information age. Many segments of society have been significantly impacted by the availability of rapidly advancing computer and communications technology. However, it should be kept in mind that a parcel of information doesn’t necessarily comprise or contain true knowledge. Further, these technologies and their associated applications are not the actual *engine* of social evolution. True intellectual achievement and genuine spiritual attainment are much more basic to the progressive evolution of human society. Many techniques can now be employed using computer and communications technology in a clever manner to present or impart material that may or may not be of value. Regardless, cleverness is usually not a substitute for thoughtful and enlightened wisdom.

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*Stephen R. Johnson has an undergraduate degree and considerable graduate work in mathematics. Most of his working career was spent in a large aerospace firm as a programmer and system analyst, dealing with areas of computer aided design and computer aided manufacturing. He has been a student of The Urantia Book for over twenty four years.*

## There Is A Better Way

Rev. Gregory Young

It was a beautiful summer day and Clarence was enjoying rowing the boat with his lovely girlfriend, anticipating the picnic they would have when they got to the island in the center of the lake. These were the days when young men and young ladies wore more than shorts and t-shirts out in public.

Clarence had donned a spiffy suit with a high shirt collar, and his girl companion had on a long dress with billowing petticoats underneath. Clarence manfully pulled on the wooden oars as his date sat coolly under her parasol. Though the steamy heat of the summer day began to wring sweat from him, he was so hypnotized by his girlfriend’s beauty he was not troubled. Finally he reached their location, dragged the boat onto the shore, and helped his girlfriend out of the boat.

He placed all of their supplies beneath a spreading shade tree, and as he prepared to sit down and enjoy the coolness of the shade, the girl said gently, “Honey, you forgot the ice cream.” “Ice cream” stammered Clarence, recalling that the two had planned an ice cream dessert. So the suitor got back into the boat and stroked his way back across the lake. He found a grocery store, bought some ice cream, and headed back for the cool shade where his date sat.

Upon arriving at the island once more, his girlfriend had another friendly reminder; “Clarence, honey, you forgot the chocolate syrup.” Clarence was in love. So he got back into the boat, grabbed the hot oars once more, and set sail for the grocery store on the shore. He bought the syrup, returned to the boat, and once again began rowing in the hot afternoon sun. But this time the frustration of it all got to him, and half way to the island he put up the oars and began to think. *There must be a better way.*

By the end of the afternoon, Clarence Evinrude had decided to invent the outboard motor. The girl whose reminders had inspired his creativity became his wife, and the company he started used the above story in it’s first ads for the revolutionary new outboard motor.

This little story really represents life and the responses we make to it. Some of us are still rowing back and forth and become exhausted, but others—the Clarence Evinrudes of the world—instead of throwing up their hands in futility, say to themselves, “There must be a better way,” and go about finding a solution to the challenge set before them.

These alternatives also apply to our spiritual attitudes, our faith. We courageously struggle to buck the winds of

adversity but often find that our efforts are unproductive and exhausting. Some of us then sit in our "boats" saying, "What's the use, it's hopeless"—and this attitude *is* hopeless. Others of us say, "Let's regroup and think of a creative solution to this situation—there's got to be a better way!"

There is a better way. We have a whole universe of spiritual resources to empower us to more effective living, if we would only draw from them. Having an active faith fuels hope and creativity and opens up a whole new world to us. A strong faith keeps life from closing in around us when the going gets tough. Our Creator designed us to grow in our abilities to meet challenges courageously and creatively.

Many of us live behind a veil of fear that distorts reality. In the famous stage play, "The Man of La Mancha," there is a scene in which Sancho, Don Quixote's side-kick, is seen hanging fearfully from a window ledge. Sancho is terrified to let go because it is nighttime and very dark, and he imagines that it is a great distance to the ground below. Sancho holds all night, and when the veil of darkness is lifted by the dawn's first light, Sancho looks down and discovers that his feet are only a few inches above the ground! Had he experimented by pointing his toes, he would have reached the ground. Often, like Sancho, we are prisoners of our fear. We imagine things are much worse than they, in reality, are.

No matter how difficult our situation may be—when we have exhausted our human resources—the indwelling Spirit of God can lead us in miraculous accomplishments in our lives. We are inspired when we see individuals who have overcome such, seemingly, unsurmountable odds. Byrun Janus, one of the world's great piano virtuosos, is such a person.

Janus was partially paralyzed and scarred from a childhood accident. He cannot make a fist. His right wrist motion is limited to 40%. The little finger of his left hand is numb. The joints on the other nine fingers are fused; there is mobility only in the middle finger of his left hand. In spite of these handicaps, he became a brilliant pianist!

In recent times, he developed crippling arthritis and became incapacitated by fear of losing his ability to perform, which was his great love and sense of identity. He tried anything that might help: acupuncture, allergy testing, biofeedback, faith healing, even a pin in his ear. Nothing seemed to work. But he said to himself, "There must be a better way." In the failure of human resources, he sought God's guidance—no bargains, no begging, he

asked for help and strength and he let go of his anxiety and fear.

A remarkable thing happened to Byrun Janus. Within a brief period of seven months, he learned to cope with his disease and grow in spite of it. His ability to play was restored to a level that he had never experienced before. Looking at his hands, one would never believe that he could play with such dexterity and warmth. When his life really came alive, so did his creative energy and talent.

Through the life and creativity of Byrun Janus, we are given a vision of what the human spirit can accomplish when strengthened by the spiritual resources made available to us by our Heavenly Father. The great psychologist, Eric Fromm, once lamented that many human beings have died before they were fully born. There is a better way—pray that we may be open and receptive to this spiritual guidance and transformation.

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## God's Unfathomable Love

O Lord of all, how majestic and revered is your name in all the cosmos.

Father of Fathers, whose glory is proclaimed from the mortal worlds to Paradise, you are the First Source and Center of all things and beings.

How marvelous it is that you govern the universe of universes by the compelling power of your love!

When I look at the astronomical systems and constellations and contemplate the endless galaxies which you have established, we are but mites in the universe.

Yet you have made us your cherished children! How can I understand your unfathomable love which has a supreme concern for us mortals?

Indeed, you have bestowed yourself upon us, given each of us a Divine Monitor which endows us with endless possibilities for spiritual growth! In this precious gift you have crowned us with glory and honor.

Paradise Father, you have made us stewards over the affairs and resources of this planet; provide us also with the wisdom necessary to co-operate with your forces of creative evolution.

Lead our lowly planet, step by step, to that great era of Light and Life when the kingdoms of this world shall truly become the kingdoms of the Most High.

O Lord our God, how infinite is your wisdom in the plan for all creation!

How majestic and glorious is your name in all the universe!

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

### **When God Doesn't Make Sense**

Lynn E. Rhoderick

When I was drafted into the military back during the Korean War, I tried to live up to my Boy Scout oath of doing my best to serve God and country. I soon learned that Boy Scouts aren't too welcome in the military. That's because the only way you can keep most soldiers content and their morale high is to let them leave their morals at home. I came to the conclusion that the "Pol-lyanna" type of religion I'd been taught in my home town wasn't too practical in the military.

When I got home from Korea and decided to become a preacher, I soon found that people didn't want to hear about the real world. So I decided to become a public school teacher. By the time I graduated from Wayland Baptist College in Plainview, Texas in 1955, I was a full blown agnostic and self-proclaimed deist. By 1963, marriage and fatherhood had led me to conclude that my philosophy was empty. A hunger for a more fulfilling theology led me into the Mormon Church. After more than a decade of study in their theology, I was ready to look elsewhere. In 1976 a friend introduced me to *The Urantia Book*.

My adventure into the teachings of this book brought both challenge and adversity. Within its pages I found answers to the inconsistent dogmas of Biblical fundamentalism. Even while encountering devastating personal experience, the Jesus I found in *The Urantia Book* taught me how to overcome barriers of faith and how to love my Heavenly Father. Within the decade after embracing the Fifth Epochal Revelation, I was excommunicated from the Mormon Church and my wife of thirty-one years asked for a divorce.

I believe *The Urantia Book* has caused the barriers of faith between God and myself to crumble for the following reasons:

1. I now understand the Holy Trinity and its relationship to the organization and administration of the universe of universes.
2. I am comforted that we are not alone in the cosmos and that there are billions of inhabited planets like our own struggling to become settled in "Light and Life."
3. I am sure that God truly loves me and that he has given me two special gifts. These gifts are my unique personality and my personal "Thought Adjuster."

4. I know this Thought Adjuster, my heavenly helper, has led me to wholeheartedly believe the following promise Jesus made to all believers in him:

*Teach all believers that those who enter the Kingdom are not thereby rendered immune to the accidents of time or to the ordinary catastrophes of nature. Believing the gospel will not prevent getting into trouble, but it will insure that you shall be unafraid when trouble does overtake you. If you dare to believe in me and wholeheartedly proceed to follow after me, you shall most certainly by so doing enter upon the sure pathway to trouble. I do not promise to deliver you from the waters of adversity, but I do promise to go with you through all of them. (p. 1767)*

Recently, a friend gave me a copy of Dr. James Dobson's book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. I think it might lay important foundations to help Christians discover the Fifth Epochal Revelation. My only regret is that this book was unavailable in 1955 when I entered Wayland Baptist College. It might have helped me become a successful minister. The thesis of Dr. Dobson's book is that many sincere Christians are being misled and deceived by "fast food religion" designed to solve all human problems. Dr. Dobson believes in the "adversity principle." He proclaims that all individuals make spiritual progress only by courageously embracing the trials of life.

The central concern in my "trials of life" is in finding an effective means of disseminating the Fifth Epochal Revelation. I regret that the injunction to the Education Committee in the Brotherhood/Fellowship Constitution to "find, prepare, train, and ordain teachers of *The Urantia Book*" was removed, and that the Brotherhood School started by Dr. Sadler was terminated. In 1984 I decided to become a public teacher of *The Urantia Book*. I have taught several courses on the book at our community college, and some students have started their own study groups.

Have my efforts earned me the right to call myself an "ordained teacher of *The Urantia Book*?" If so, then why don't I possess the qualifications necessary to teach others to become self-ordained? Why aren't more of us doing this? I would appreciate hearing from anyone agreeing or disagreeing with my position. Send communications to: 101 Birch Ct., Grants, NM 87020.

*Lynn Rhoderick is a long time student of The Urantia Book. Lynn retired in 1994 after teaching thirty-six years in public schools.*



# Significant Books

## **Finding Darwin's God**

*A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution*

Kenneth R. Miller

Kenneth R. Miller is a Professor of Biology at Brown University. *Finding Darwin's God* is a definitive refutation of the creationist description of the origin of humankind. Dr. Miller takes issue with those scientists who claim that modern science precludes the existence of God. He convincingly argues that science and religion offer different, but compatible, ways of viewing the world. Properly understood, evolution adds depth and meaning not only to a scientific view of the world, but also to a spiritual one.

"It is high time that we grew up," Miller says, "and left the Garden. We are indeed Eden's children, yet it is time to place Genesis alongside the geocentric myth in the basket of stories that once, in a world in intellectual naivete, made helpful sense. As we walk through the gates, aware of the dazzling richness of the genuine biological world, there might even be a smile on the Creator's face—that at long last His creatures have learned enough to understand His world as it truly is." (p. 56)

Why do many people reject evolution? Miller's answer: "The reason, I would argue, is not because they aren't aware of the strength of the scientific evidence behind it. Instead, it is because of a well-founded belief

that the concept of evolution is used routinely, in the intellectual sense, to justify and advance a philosophical worldview that they regard as hostile and even alien to their lives and values." (p. 167)

In Miller's detailed analysis and repudiation of creationist views, the nonscientific reader may find that his descriptions get a bit tedious, but generally the book is written with sharp wit and pungent prose. The creationists, he points out, demean the concept of God: "They hobble His genius by demanding that the material of His creation ought not to be capable of generating complexity. They demean the breadth of His vision by ridiculing the notion that the materials of His world could have evolved into beings with intelligence and self-awareness. And they compel Him to descend from heaven onto the factory floor by conscripting His labor into the design of each detail of each organism that graces the surface of our living planet." (p. 268) "In many respects, evolution is the key to understanding our relationship with God." (p. 291)

Thoroughgoing materialism is an untenable position, Miller observes, because quantum physics and the Heisenberg "uncertainty principle" show that reality is nondeterministic. "By recognizing the continuing force of evolution, a religious person acknowledges that God is every bit as creative in the present as He was in the past. That—and not a rejection of any of the core ideas of evolution—is why I am a believer." (p. 258) And that is how Miller finds Darwin's God!

-MJS

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