

JOURNAL



URANTIA®

A QUARTERLY NEWS JOURNAL AND MAGAZINE OF THE IUA

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THE REMARKABLE IKHNATON A SUMMARY OF THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

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Few figures of ancient times stir up as much passion and controversy among historians as the Egyptian pharaoh Ikhnaton. *The URANTIA Book* calls him "the remarkable Ikhnaton," credits him with writing twelve Psalms preserved in the Old Testament, and states that his subsequent followers influenced Moses (1047-1049). Still later, *The URANTIA Book* describes how a small group of Ikhnaton's descendants presented the child Jesus' parents with a complete copy of the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures during their stay in Alexandria (1355).

The URANTIA Book's assessment of Ikhnaton's influence on the history of religion has inspired this summary of how historians, archeologists, and Biblical scholars regard this intriguing pharaoh.

Usually spelled "Akhenaten" by most historians, current research places Ikhnaton's reign during an 11 to 17 year period somewhere between 1375 and 1340 B.C. He was originally named Amenhotep (IV), the son of Amenhotep III of the 18th dynasty. As the tenth Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty, Amenhotep IV rebelled against the polytheistic religion of his forebears and advocated a single, monotheistic God who ruled not only over the Egyptians, but all of humanity as well. It was in the sixth year of his reign that he changed his name from

Amenhotep, "Amon is satisfied," to Ikhnaton, "the one who is beneficial to Aton," or "it goes well with Aton." Aton was already a familiar god in the Egyptian belief system; Ikhnaton elevated the term to designate this monotheistic, universal God, replacing the previous regime's national god of many gods, Amon. Ikhnaton's Aton was symbolized by a sun disk, and worship was in the open air as opposed to the dark temples of Amon.

To bring his ideals to complete fruition, Ikhnaton moved the capital of his kingdom from Thebes to a site 300 miles [500 km] north up the Nile river (the Egyptians would say this is "down river"). The new city was called Akhetaton ("the place of glory of Aton"), was located on the east bank of the Nile, and today the site is referred to as Tell el-Amarna. There he continued his revolution, constructing a sophisticated city, commissioning art, and developing a literature which reflected his new ideals of God and humanity. A greater visionary than administrator, strongholds in Syria and Palestine were lost during his reign as he focused attention more on religion and culture than conquest and political power.

Ikhnaton insisted on being portrayed naturalistically by his court artists. Several pictorial presentations show him with his wife (an historical figure more well-known

than Ikhnaton — Queen Nefertiti) and children in day-to-day activities. The naturalism of the art of his dynasty also reveals Ikhnaton as unusual in appearance, with an elongated face and almost feminine hips, which has caused speculation among historians that Ikhnaton was a victim of everything from a progressively disfiguring disease to hermaphroditism.

The URANTIA Book states that Ikhnaton's twelve hymns in the Old Testament are credited to Hebrew authorship; Biblical scholars universally agree that the 104th Psalm is probably based on Ikhnaton's "Hymn to Aton." But there is much debate as to whether Ikhnaton's influence on Judaism extends further, and most historians tend to be conservative in suggesting that Moses' monotheism came from Ikhnaton's monotheism. In his richly detailed *Akhenaten in Egypt*, Cyril Aldred discredits any such speculation, and Frederick Gladstone Bratton, in his *The First Heretic, the Life and Times of Ikhnaton the King*, dismisses the idea by stating that Yahweh was a tribal deity for Israel whereas the Aton was a God for all mankind. J. A. Wilson's entry on Akhenaten in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* rejects any connection between Ikhnaton and Moses on the basis of lack of hard evidence.

Some speculations about Ikhnaton go to the other extreme. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Sigmund Freud hypothesized that Moses was an officer in the court of Ikhnaton, and that Moses was carrying on the monotheism which Ikhnaton had established. One scholar, Ahmed Osman, has even suggested that Moses was Ikhnaton. (*Moses: Pharaoh of Egypt: the Mystery of Akhenaten Resolved*, Harper Collins, 1994). But actual evidence linking Ikhnaton with Moses is currently non-existent. For that matter, it should be pointed out that there is no historical, extra-Biblical evidence of Moses or of the Hebrew exodus. Any speculation among historians that either affirms or denies a connection between Ikhnaton and Moses is strictly conjectural—the physical evidence just does not exist.

While Aldred and Bratton disregard the Ikhnaton-Moses connection, both observe that Ikhnaton had an influential mother, Queen Tiye, as *The URANTIA Book* points out. Likewise they note the presence of a court priest, Meryre, who promoted the concept of the Aton as "the father and mother of all thou hast made" (Cf. 1047:1, and 6.) The identity of *The URANTIA Book's* "Salemite physician" is elusive, although Aldred describes one loyal member of Ikhnaton's court, Pentu, as "the King's physician," but Pentu returned to the worship of Amon after the end of Ikhnaton's reign, which makes him an improbable candidate for the role of the Salemite physician who was keeping Melchizedek's teachings alive.

Ikhnaton's reign ended mysteriously around 1310

BC. Ikhnaton had taken an apparent son-in-law, Smenkhkare, as his co-regent, who was permitted to return to Thebes. At Thebes Smenkhkare paid some homage to Amon, possibly to salvage the troubled empire and to maintain peace with the Amon priesthood. But Ikhnaton had vowed never to leave the city of his God, and remained for the rest of his life at Akhetaton. Another son-in-law, Tutankhaton, made the full surrender, changing his name to Tutankhamon, returning to Thebes and "doubling, tripling and quadrupling" the property of the Amon priesthood. Unlike most Egyptian pharaohs, no tomb of Ikhnaton has been discovered.

King Tutankhamon reigned briefly, followed by Ay, an elderly member of the family. Then Horemheb, a general of the army, completed the counter-revolution and made every attempt to erase Ikhnaton and his "heresy" from history. It was not until the 1820's that knowledge of Ikhnaton began to re-emerge from the remaining ruins, hieroglyphics, tombs, the famed "Amarna letters," and other artifacts. By the early part of the twentieth century, archeologists and historians had pieced together an extensive picture of Ikhnaton and his dynasty.

Certainly there are more pieces in this puzzle to be found, and further discoveries of the remarkable Ikhnaton are awaited. *URANTIA Book* readers interested in egyptology and biblical history should particularly watch for evidence of a connection between Ikhnaton and Moses, Ikhnaton's eleven other hymns which were adopted into the Hebrew Psalms, the identity of the "Salemite physician", and the presence of followers of Ikhnaton's teachings up to the time of Jesus.

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Mary's Sister Mary

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Close by Jesus' cross were standing his mother and her sister as well as Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. (Translated from the latest version of the Finnish Bible.)

This piece of text, some two thousand years old, is an unceremonial record of the four women who witnessed Jesus' death on the cross. In its emotional charge it must be one of the most thrilling single verses in the New Testament. Of the four evangelists, only John was able to tell us that near the cross there were Jesus' mother and her sister, and that present was also his "most beloved disciple."

It is somewhat embarrassing that this emotionally charged verse of the Fourth Gospel (John 19:25) has proven to be very problematic for the Bible translators and the exegetists. The core of the problem is the original Greek text which is subject to multiple interpretations.

The problem does not limit itself to translation techniques; what is more essential is the interpretation that any translation of this passage should receive. Let us have a look at what the problems are.

Cousins to One Another

In the words of the Apostle John, there were four women close by the cross: Jesus' mother and her sister, as well as Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. The names of the two first women are not given. Other pericopes, though, reveal that the name of Jesus' mother is Mary. But who was the sister of Jesus' mother, and by what name was she known?

An answer to this question has been sought in comparing the information provided by Mark and Matthew, two synoptics, in their records of the same event (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40). The two evangelists mention three of the women who were present at the cross, and two of these recorded women are identical in the two synoptic Gospels, viz. Mary of Magdala and Mary, the mother of both James and Joseph. Matthew asserts that the third woman was

the mother of the sons of Zebedee. In the words of Mark, she was Salome. If we combine these pieces of information, we may conclude that Salome, the wife of Zebedee, was sister of Mary, Jesus' mother. Accordingly, if the "beloved disciple" was John, one of Zebedee's sons, it follows that John must have been Jesus' cousin.

This kind of conclusion seems very logical and natural; and there hasn't been much polemics in refutation of such an interpretation. Gospelic information on many an episode is scant, and every piece of knowledge must be used to the fullest.

This conclusion, however, leads up to a grave problem in making us wonder, did Jesus make himself guilty of nepotism? Nepotism in Jesus would seem most implausible in the light of what the synoptics report Jesus to have replied to his mother and his brothers: "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?.. Whosoever does the will of my Father is my brother and my sister and my mother." (Mark 3:31-35; cf. *The URANTIA Book* 1722:1). Jesus' reply was a shock, more so than we perhaps can comprehend. We should remember that in Jesus' days family was the groundwork of society. The families of the old were considerably larger entities than

today. The Hebrew or Aramaic word for 'brother' could mean both a step-brother and a cousin, or even other male relatives.

The notion of Jesus' mother and Zebedee's wife to have been sisters must be questioned. It does not seem plausible that Jesus, the advocate of brotherhood of man, had, in addition to Peter, selected James and John Zebedee, two close relatives, as his most trusted apostles. Moreover, had there been any reason to call attention to the circumstance that Jesus, before his death, entrusted the care for his mother with

one of his close relatives?

Our analysis has so far failed to reveal the name of the sister of Jesus' mother, who was seen near by the cross. So let us go on with our scrutiny. Let us first go and find out how far the tools of the exegetists will take us, and then have a look into *The URANTIA Book* for

Standing near the cross at one time or another during the crucifixion were Mary, Ruth, Jude, John, Salome (John's mother), and a group of earnest women believers including Mary the wife of Clopas and sister of Jesus' mother, Mary Magdalene, and Rebecca, onetime of Sepphoris [2008:3]. This passage seems to indicate that Mary's sister was another Mary. Can it be true that Mary's sister was another Mary? Lauri Korpelainen explores this problem in his article which was originally published in Heijaste, and is reproduced here in a slightly shortened wording.

more enlightenment.

Translation and Interpretation

Writers of the antiquity made practically no use of punctuation, neither were words separated by spaces. A papyrus roll, which could maximally hold one Gospel, was awkward to handle, and the material was very brittle. New rolls had constantly to be copied in replacement of the worn-down rolls, and old, worn and torn rolls were not usually preserved. This explains why most of the papyrus literature of the Early Church has been completely lost; only occasional fragments remain and have been detected in the sands of Egypt.

The New Testament texts came to be preserved for later generations in parchment books, codexes, with the most ancient of the extant ones having been copied around A.D. 300. Scholars have been struggling with the difficult task of detecting, and as far as possible, of correcting the many mistakes which were committed in the incessant copying of these texts.

The Fourth Gospel, with the discussed verse, makes no exception in all this. The Greek text of the very verse of John 19:25 reads like this in a word-by-word translation:

And [there] were standing by the cross Jesus' mother his and sister of mother his Mary of Clopas and Mary Magdalene.

This is a faithful, non-interpretative, rendering of the original Greek wording which has come down to us. If you find the translation complicated, so is the original. It is very unlikely that we shall ever come to know how the wording looked like in John's formulation. No linguistic analysis of the phrase can ascertain how many women there were present: two, three, or four.

One thesis suggests that only two women were present. Such a conclusion is possible if we read the sentence like this: "his mother, and his mother's sister, viz. Clopas's wife Mary, Mary Magdalene." Since it seems unlikely that John had identified Jesus' mother with Clopas's wife Mary, this interpretation has been considered the least plausible.

Another theory has been suggested expounding that there were present only three women. For this postulate to be truthful, we have to read the phrase like this: "his mother, his mother's sister (Mary of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene." Even if this interpretation is grammatically possible, it has been considered highly implausible. How could it be that Jesus' mother had a namesake for a sister?

Tatianus (Tatian), one of the early Christian theologians, in late second century, was so convinced of the women having been four that he amplified the text in

adding the words "as well as" in the phrase. He made the text read: "his mother, and his mother's sister, as well as Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."

Many intriguing justifications have been presented in defence of this latter interpretation. That it is possible to interpret Salome, Zebedee's wife, to be a sister of Jesus' mother, was discussed above. It has also been thought that tradition required the names of Jesus' mother and aunt to be ignored. In substantiation of this view the fact is quoted that John never reveals his own name or that of his brother. A reference has also been made to the Johannine literary style: four women believers standing by the cross, opposite to four unbelieving soldiers.

There is some interest also in the supposition presented by Eusebius but originating in Hegesippus, that Clopas might have been Joseph's [Jesus' father's] brother, and that Clopas' and Mary's son Simeon, who was the successor of James the Righteous as the leader of the Jerusalem church, consequently, had been the Lord's cousin. With Simeon's family ties with the "Holy Family" being thus established through Clopas, it was no longer needful to presume his wife Mary to have been a sister of Jesus' mother.

Our conclusion at this stage is that when it comes to the verse John 19:25, the crux is not in its translation but rather in its interpretation. This verse was found in need of interpretation as early as in the second century. The interpretation which involves four women is currently so firmly established that only the most sophisticated literature makes any reference to the problems in the interpretation of the verse. Even this literature fails to give any thought to the apparent nepotism. The assumed kinship of Jesus and the sons of Zebedee is always presented in the best possible terms.

Latest Knowledge

Readers may find a discussion about the name of Jesus' aunt and on his family ties highly irrelevant. The authors of *The URANTIA Book* seem to have thought otherwise. They did find it imperative to rectify the Johannine verse to read:

Standing near the cross at one time or another during the crucifixion were Mary, Ruth, Jude, John, Salome (John's mother), and a group of earnest women believers including Mary the wife of Clopas and sister of Jesus' mother, Mary Magdalene, and Rebecca, onetime of Sepphoris. [2008:3]

This record reveals more names than does John's report. Most of these names are known from other contexts. The first to be mentioned by name is Jesus' mother, Mary. Ruth is Jesus' youngest sister, and Jude is one of his younger brothers. John is undoubtedly one of

the sons of Zebedee, and John's mother, Salome, must then be the wife of Zebedee. Mary Magdalene we know well from earlier contexts, and who could be forgetful about Rebecca, the eldest daughter of Ezra, who in her late teens wanted to become one of Jesus' followers. But *The URANTIA Book* is silent about Clopas's wife Mary except for the above brief mentioning. What makes her such an important personage that she finds a place in this very context?

Our riddle is approaching its solution. In the quoted passage, Mary has two attributes: "the wife of Clopas" and "sister of Jesus' mother." Only one conclusion can be made: **Mary's sister was Mary.** This explains why the wife of Clopas is mentioned by name as one of the persons who were standing by Jesus' cross.

Mary's Sisters

In Israel of Jesus' days, Mary (in Hebrew, 'Mariam' or 'Miriam') seems to have been an overly preferred girl's name. There has been a great deal of disagreement as to the etymology of this name. One recent explanation avers that 'Mariam' means 'gift of God.' But does this suffice to explain how two girls in one and the same family could have been called by identical names?

The URANTIA Book is somewhat enigmatic when it comes to the names of the sisters of Jesus' mother. In the passage recording Mary's visit to her parents during her expectancy of her first child, her two brothers are mentioned, along with her two sisters. One of the sisters was Salome, and it was to her that Mary confided her secret. (1347:1)

The name of the other sister is disclosed in the record on Jesus' burial:

The women who thus tarried by the tomb on this Friday evening were: Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas, Martha another sister of Jesus' mother, and Rebecca of Sepphoris. [2013:6]

We now have three names for Mary's sisters—Salome, Martha, and Mary. But we were informed at an earlier stage that she had only two sisters. We may, thus, conclude that one more daughter was born to Joachim and Hannah after their eldest daughter had been married to Joseph.

The selection of a name for a child was a very serious issue for the Jews of those days. In likeness with other peoples of the old, the Jews regarded a name to have a kind of supernatural power. The name had an effect on the character and destiny of its bearer. Maybe Joachim and Hannah, despite their doubts, had some sort of precognition of the role of their daughter Mary as the mother of the "divine messenger." Otherwise, why should the youngest daughter have been given the same name of great promise. The elder Mary being married, there was no danger of confusing the two Marys in their home. The name did prove to be a portent, at least in that respect that Jesus' mother's baby sister became a believer in Jesus while he was still alive.

The URANTIA Book tells us that Zebedee was a friend of Jesus' father (1419:5). Salome, Zebedee's wife, is reported to have been a relative of Annas, the onetime High Priest in Jerusalem (1420:2). These notions exclude every possibility that the Zebedee family had had blood ties with Joseph's family. This is contrary to what was traditionally believed in the early churches, and this belief may have had its origins in the fact that one of Jesus' aunts was Salome, a namesake with Zebedee's wife.

A similar confusion regarding family relations seems to have happened in the case of Clopas. His son, Simeon, was positively known to have been one of Jesus' cousins, and hence to have belonged to the "Holy Family." But there was some reluctance to regard his wife Mary as one of the sisters of Jesus' mother, and that is why a legend had to be conceived expounding Clopas as Joseph's brother.

METHINKUS TO AGNOSTICUS ON THE REALITY OF GOD

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Methinkus is having a conversation with Agnosticus about the reality of God. Agnosticus is not convinced that there is

such a thing as God and wants Methinkus to explain the understanding or revelation that led him to believe.

Agnosticus: I am still not personally convinced. Methinkus, how have you come to the conclusion that there is a God or Creator? What proof or explanation can you give me so that I may see the one you refer to as God to be a reality?

Methinkus: Well, Agnosticus, I must preface my explanation with a statement: to man, *all things must have a beginning save only the ONE UNCAUSED—the primeval cause of causes.* Is that not so?

Agnosticus: Yes.

Methinkus: Let us look at the fact that we, mankind, are self-realized. As my good friend says "I think— therefore I am." Following that path let us now understand the connection of man's mind and through its activity, our recognition of self.

Just as the sculptor beginning a new work must visualize in his mind what it is he is trying to sculpt and see it in the slab of marble first, and the carpenter who designed the beautiful chairs we now sit in visualized them in his mind before they could be also, would you not agree that this is the normal process of man's ability to create?

Agnosticus: Yes. We must first conceive an idea before it can be put into form or action.

Methinkus: Exactly, Agnosticus, it was this discovery that led me to follow through in the process of the same realization of Divinity and the inevitable delineation of Divine mind and Divine energy that led to the necessity of our being.

Agnosticus: The necessity of our being, why do you say necessity, Methinkus?

Methinkus: Agnosticus, do you not agree that in perfection there is no experience?

Agnosticus: Yes, I suppose that is true.

Methinkus: Well, Agnosticus, Source—or God—or the UnCaused is perfect, and because of that perfection even though complete, there was no experience. So in order to have experience vicariously, he had to divest himself of all activities (save the initial cause) involved in the manifestation of that experience in order to participate in it. God then witnessed the probable shattering of himself into unique facets of his own personality and set them in existential motion. This induced a time space condition and made room in the Absoluteness of perfection for the evolving existential facet of his being. Therefore we were the necessary and inevitable outcome of his desire to have

experience.

Agnosticus: Yes, I suppose I could agree with you on that also.

Methinkus: Ok, then in that agreement you must concede that all of man's reality, the reality witnessed by mind, must have been conceived by ultimate mind. Contained in that conception lies the world of forms, the pattern of everything that could be is just waiting for our recognition of it. This is part of the grand scheme, and the impetus to dare to conceive through the recognition of form, the source of all form.

Now, bear with me and try to understand further. Let us imagine that when God first became self-aware he said at the moment of recognition, as you or I might have said under the same circumstances,—“I am!” (Methinkus said expressing in motion and expression, complete amazement) but God being the source of all recognition, simultaneously witnessed that observation and simultaneously with that, confirmed the observation of the observation—simply = I am, —You are,— Yes.

The confirmation of the observation of the observation is the reflection of the Divine Trinity—Father, Son, Spirit—or thesis, antithesis, synthesis. From that eluded to, but non-existent point, came the recognition of the possibility of all that is—the world of forms was then manifested simultaneously. And beyond that there are too many between God and man to digest and explain, and my attempt to do so would only boggle and confuse this initial and fragile understanding you are just grasping.

Agnosticus: Yes that is true, Methinkus, I believe I am beginning to understand the down-stepping of personality and mind and the basis for the necessity of our existence.

Methinkus: Then, Agnosticus, would you not agree that this concept of God is *a philosophic concession which we must make because of the time-bound, space-fettered, finite mind of man,* and because of the *impossibility of creature comprehension of those eternity existences—nonbeginning, nonending realities and relationships?*

Agnosticus: I believe I can agree with you on this Methinkus, but let us sit here just a moment while I catch my breath and equilibrium of mind.

Methinkus: Certainly, Agnosticus, but let me make one more observation for you. Since we are persons, we must invariably recognize in God—*the source of personality*—and acknowledge that he is the Father of personality and the Father of all that is. At the same time we will *conceptualize this philosophic value-level as the I AM—the Father—* and also *instruct all creatures that*

the Eternal Son and the Infinite Spirit are coeternal with the Father; in other words, that there never was a time when the I AM was not the Father of the Son and, with him, of the Spirit.

Agnosticus, I would have to say that in much of the confusion in of all orders of beings, high and low, in their efforts to discover the Father-Infinite, the only hindrance is their limitations of comprehension. The absolute primacy of the Universal Father is not apparent on subinfinite levels; therefore is it probable that only the Eternal Son and the Infinite Spirit truly know the Father as an infinity; but to all other personalities, such as the likes of man, this entire concept represents the exercise of individual faith.

Agnosticus: Ahh, that it does, Methinkus. But now that I am able to grasp the source of your faith I have to further question the motive of our Father when I look at the state of mankind today, so far from that perfection center of love and see it through the evil, pain, suffering and imperfection of society. Why must man live in such an imperfect state if he is the child of a perfect Father?

Methinkus: That is somewhat explainable, Agnosticus, but again I must preface my explanation with the statement that—in the formula of all experience, free will is paramount—and it is that free will of man which has created such a state. It is only the free will of man that can eliminate the source of his confused state.

Consider this: *The uncertainties of life and the vicissitudes of existence do not in any manner contradict the concept of the universal sovereignty of God. All evolutionary creature life is beset by certain inevitabilities.*

Agnosticus, *is courage—strength of character—desirable?*

Agnosticus: Why? Yes.

Methinkus: *Then must man be reared in an environment which necessitates grappling with hardships and reacting to disappointments.*

Agnosticus: Yes, I suppose he must.

Methinkus: *Is altruism—service of one's fellows—desirable?*

Agnosticus: Yes again.

Methinkus: *Then must life experience provide for encountering situations of social inequality.*

Is hope—the grandeur of trust—desirable?

Agnosticus: Yes.

Methinkus: *Then human existence must constantly be confronted with insecurities and recurrent uncertainties. Is faith—the supreme assertion of human thought—desirable?*

Agnosticus: Yes.

Methinkus: *Then must the mind of man find itself in that troublesome predicament where it ever knows less than it can believe.*

Agnosticus: Definitely yes to that.

Methinkus: *Is the love of truth and the willingness to go wherever it leads, desirable?*

Agnosticus: Of course.

Methinkus: *Then must man grow up in a world where error is present and falsehood always possible.*

Agnosticus: Unfortunately yes again.

Methinkus: *Is idealism—the approaching concept of the divine—desirable?*

Agnosticus: Yes.

Methinkus: *Then must man struggle in an environment of relative goodness and beauty, surroundings stimulative of the irrepressible reach for better things.*

Is loyalty—devotion to highest duty—desirable?

Agnosticus: Yes.

Methinkus: *Then must man carry on amid the possibilities of betrayal and desertion. The valor of devotion to duty consists in the implied danger of default.*

Agnosticus: Yes truly.

Methinkus: *Is unselfishness—the spirit of self-forgetfulness—desirable?*

Agnosticus: Always.

Methinkus: *Then must mortal man live face to face with the incessant clamoring of an inescapable self for recognition and honor. Man could not dynamically choose the divine life if there were no self-life to forsake. Man could never lay saving hold on righteousness if there were no potential evil to exalt and differentiate the good by contrast.*

Agnosticus: Yes, I see, Methinkus.

Methinkus: And finally, *is pleasure—the satisfaction of happiness—desirable?*

Agnosticus: Yes, finally yes.

Methinkus: *Then must man live in a world where the alternative of pain and the likelihood of suffering are ever-present experiential possibilities.*

Do you see now, Agnosticus, the wherewithal of my faith, source of my happiness and cause of my freedom? Can you not now understand that my relationship with God, my Father is a personal one, and that personal

relationship with him is just beginning. Through the infinity of God our Father the immortality of personality is possible. It is the ultimate adventure of man to find his Father God. And it is the leap of faith that bridges the gulf between the physical self and spiritual self that takes over that adventure at death.

I must finally concede that man first worships God because he is great. As his knowledge evolves he worships God because he discovers a part of God in himself. And lastly he worships God because he is in God.

(The italicized portions of this paper are direct quotes from *The URANTIA Book*: 6:3; 6:5; 51:4; 51:6—13)

LAO SHOU HSING—GOD OF LONGEVITY

EMMANUEL LOU
Tahiti

And Chinese tradition preserves the hazy record of the evolutionary past... [888:8]

One of the gods of Chinese tradition is the God of Longevity. The Chinese people have an ardent desire for longevity whose divinity, Shou Lao, or, Shou Hsing, resides in the star Canopus in the constellation Argo.

Old-fashioned Chinese families, especially in diaspora, possessed a set of statues of eight immortals (Pa Hsien) which decorated the banquet table on anniversaries. It portrays two children on the backs of water buffaloes, whom they had dispatched to fetch the God of Longevity beyond the hills.

It is believed that this stellar divinity of long life descended to earth in human form. He is represented as a delightful old man with a high and dome-shaped forehead, armed with a rugged staff and bearing in the other hand a fruit from the tree of immortality. This fruit, a peach of immortality (p'ang t'ao) enjoys an enormous popularity in Chinese art. The peach is culled from a miraculous tree which blossoms once in three thousand years and only yields its fruit three thousand years after.

In every case Shou Hsing or Shou Lao appears gentle and smiling, his venerable head, abnormally high on the upper part with white hair and eyebrows, mounted or leaning upon a stag. He wears a yellow robe, and he will be recognised as the supreme disposer of earthly things and the eternal ruler of seasons.

The Emperor Ch'in Shih Huang Ti (246 B.C.), after he had unified China, was induced by the Taoists to build a temple in his honour and the Tang dynasty introduced sacrifices to the Star God at the autumnal equinox.

I have several statues of the God of Longevity in my home since a long time. One day I suddenly rushed to my *URANTIA Book* to find this sentence:

Upon the outbreak of the rebellion it [the tree of life] was regrown from the central core by Van and his associates in their temporary camp. This Edentia shrub was subsequently taken to their highland retreat, where it served both Van and Amadon for more than one hundred and fifty thousand years. [826:2]

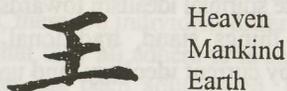
What I had realised so suddenly was that the stick held by the God of Longevity is the shrub of the tree of life to be regrown and the peach of immortality is the fruit of the tree of life. The Chinese legend says he is a stellar divinity from Canopus and descends to earth in human form. Did Canopus mean Jerusem?

Who could better personify longevity than Van who stayed on our planet for more than 450,000 years? I am inclined to conclude that the God of Longevity is a representation of Van. If you pass in front of a Chinese gift shop, please ask the shopkeeper to show you the God of Longevity and remember the fabulous story of "Van the Steadfast".

It was the Taoists in the third century B.C. who had honoured the God of Longevity. Readers of *The URANTIA Book* know how the Taoist and especially Lao-tse had built his teachings directly upon the concepts of the Salem traditions. (1033:6)

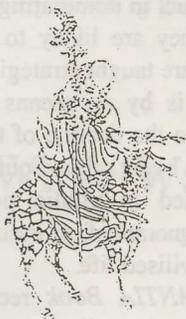
One day, flying in the plane to Europe, I was reading

an advertisement on Wang computers, when suddenly I understood that I had to pronounce 'Van' like 'Wang'. The explanation came slowly after my mind was illuminated. 'Wang' means in Chinese 'King'. Wang is understood as a function, a mediator between Heaven and Earth, between God and mankind. We have confirmation in the ideogram:



The top horizontal line is the symbol for Heaven, the second represents Mankind, and the third line is Earth. The vertical line is the junction between the three levels. This is the symbol for 'king', the middleman who interprets Heaven's will to mankind and who rules Earth on behalf of Heaven.

From the planetary rebellion to the arrival of Adam and Eve, the affairs of Urantia were for a long time administered by a council of planetary receivers.



And thus was Urantia governed and administered until the arrival of Adam. [760:0]

The twelve Melchizedek receivers of Urantia did heroic work. They preserved the remnants of civilization, and their planetary policies were faithfully executed by Van. [760:1]

Van's function on Earth for several thousand years was the prototype of a king functioning as ideally understood in Chinese tradition: the King is "Van" (or Wang)! There is no better designation for "King" than the name of the man who faithfully executed the planetary policies of Heaven.

...Van who thereby relinquished the titular authority which for over one hundred and fifty thousand years he had held by virtue of the action of the Melchizedek receivers. [830:1]

So how to pronounce 'Van'? I would like to suggest the pronunciation which may have a linguistic and historic basis. Now I say Van like Wang.

THE FAMILY

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It has become a cliché to point out that western civilisation is changing more rapidly as the years go by, and that the pace of change confuses and worries us. Many of the changes do not appear to be improvements. We are accelerating sideways, and *The URANTIA Book* predicts that [t]his secularistic human society, notwithstanding its unparalleled materialistic achievement, is slowly disintegrating. [2082:2]. It certainly feels like it.

We are also informed that the foundations of civilisation are spiritual, and the only way to rehabilitate it is by renewed dedication of its citizens to live by true spiritual

values. *The pursuit of mere knowledge, without the attendant interpretation of wisdom and the spiritual insight of religious experience, eventually leads to pessimism and human despair. [2076:8]. No social system or political regime which denies the reality of God can contribute in any constructive and lasting manner to the advancement of human civilization. [2084:7]. Intelligence may control the mechanism of civilization, wisdom may direct it, but spiritual idealism is the energy which really uplifts and advances human culture from one level of attainment to another. [910:0]*

This point is emphasised by many of the authors of

The URANTIA Book. Our problem may be material, but its solution is spiritual. Our civilisation is stagnant and regressing. To revitalise it, to lift it to a higher plane, spiritual progress is necessary.

However, although social progress is collective, the spiritual idealism which generates it is individual and personal. Our civilisation advances in accordance with the spiritual experience of its people. But only a citizenry accustomed to sacrificing immediate gratification for more worthy goals will be interested in trying. Only people who have learned something of unselfishness will be motivated to pursue the self-forgetfulness of friendship with God. Only people who have experienced the thrill of altruism will be likely to seek a life of service.

In other words, the spiritual idealism which alone can motivate a people to true and lasting progress depends on a moral foundation. For a person to be inspired by true spiritual idealism, he must practise duty, loyalty, unselfishness and so forth to a certain degree. *Morality is the essential pre-existent soil of personal God-consciousness...* [2096:1]. And the institution which inculcates morality is the HOME.

Now although the authors of *The URANTIA Book* are somewhat unflattering about many aspects of our civilisation, they are all unflinchingly positive about the institution of the home.

There are so many references to it that they leave us in no doubt about its importance. The home is *the basic institution of human progress* [977:1], an *exquisite enterprise* [781:1], *civilization's only hope of survival* [943:1], *the crowning glory of ... the evolutionary struggle* [913:1], *man's supreme evolutionary acquirement* [943:1], *society's veritable foundation* [977:1], and so on, and on. For the revelators, the home is mankind's most significant achievement—not building the pyramids, or going to the moon, or painting the *Mona Lisa*, or writing *War and Peace*. The home is IT, because it is the home which transmits culture from one generation to another, which civilises children, and inculcates basic ethics through the experience of everyday life. It is in the home (defined incidentally, as husband, wife and children) that such virtues as unselfishness, altruism and sacrifice are learned, and it is upon this foundation that civilised life is constructed.

Although some homes are better than others, on the average the home constitutes the only sure way of transmitting basic ethics. And we are warned that *any attempt to shift parental responsibility to state or church will prove suicidal to the welfare and advancement of civilization*. [941:8]

It is in the home, the family, that morality begins. *Family life is the progenitor of true morality, the*

ancestor of consciousness of loyalty to duty. [942:1]

So, to recapitulate, civilisation requires spiritual progress, and spiritual progress requires morality. The source of morality is the institution of the home, or what we are accustomed to call “the nuclear family”. In order, then to rehabilitate our civilisation we should possibly be looking at the home and family life, with the view of supporting morality to enhance spiritual receptivity and invigorate spiritual idealism towards true social progress.

As things stand, traditional family life is often derided by current ideology, and undermined by policies which seem to value only paid work. Mothers are encouraged to work outside the home and have their children raised in professional child care. Formal training for marriage and parenting scarcely exists. The divorce rate is high and rising. Various minorities want the state to redefine the meaning of the “family” to include almost any group of people who choose to live together. Taxation policy forces mothers into paid work. Welfare discourages responsibility. Fashion gives family life a boring image. Schools teach children that overpopulation is destroying the environment, that humans are only one animal species among many, and that our civilisation is selfish and cruel in dominating the earth. They are also taught that they are likely to suffer “abuse” in their families, and are taught strategies to resist it.

The list is by no means exhaustive. The forces contributing to the decline of the family are many and varied. We are being argued out of family life by special interests skilled in public persuasion and political activism, but ignorant of, or indifferent to, the fundamental basis of civilised life.

The URANTIA Book recognises the threat, but confines itself to generalisations which cannot be used to support any particular set of policies. It is a work designed to inspire people in all cultures and political systems. No proponent of a specific policy or programme can claim a mandate from *The URANTIA Book*.

But that said, the authors do seem to be implying that the step up in spiritual idealism which civilisation urgently requires can be built only upon a foundation of moral enlightenment growing out of traditional family life.

Thinkers and groups offering public support for the traditional family are beginning to emerge. They are widely ridiculed by intellectuals as backward and unsophisticated. But there is profound support for the traditional family among ordinary people, and some readers of *The URANTIA Book* might like to give sincere thought to joining them. Those who do will need courage, as the anti-family forces are well entrenched socially, astute politically, and adept in the public use of abuse and ridicule.

Channeling

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Let's put this subject to rest, as in rest in peace, once and for all. *The URANTIA Book* does this so well. Among the so-called channelers and their devotees, there are individual differences, but the main premise that they all adhere to is as follows: The Lucifer rebellion has been adjudicated. Urantia is no longer under quarantine. Therefore, the channelers, individual human personalities, are now receiving messages from various beings, and this constitutes the restoration of the universal broadcasts. *Broadcast* is the key word here.

In Paper 67, "The Planetary Rebellion," the subject of the interruption of the broadcasts is being discussed:

It should be recorded that, when Van appealed to the Most Highs of Edentia after Lucifer had sustained Caligastia on Urantia, the Constellation Fathers dispatched an immediate decision sustaining Van on every point of this contention. This

verdict failed to reach him because the planetary circuits of communication were severed while it was in transit. Only recently was this actual ruling discovered lodged in the possession of a relay energy transmitter where it had been marooned ever since the isolation of Urantia. Without this discovery, made as the result of the investigations of the Urantia midwayers, the release of this decision would have awaited the restoration of Urantia to the constellation circuits. And this apparent accident of interplanetary communication was possible because energy transmitters can receive and transmit intelligence, but they cannot initiate communication. [760:4]

It seems quite clear that universal broadcasts work in a somewhat similar manner as our earthly broadcasts — non-personal.

Observing the World While Waiting for a New John the Baptist

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Monopolies now find themselves in a state of dissolution. This is true of social, legislated monopolies as well as of practices which came into being through the exercise of spiritual tyranny. In the following, I shall discuss the shattering of the monopoly of the partaking of holiness. By this term I mean disregard for the imagined hegemony and special privileges of the priesthood. Such a disregard presumes a time when fearless men and women are going to create their own traditions and superimpose a new and better spirit and spiritual content upon the time-honoured feasts and ancient mores. The sacraments, founded on the dogma of the church, will likewise be disregarded. There will be an absence of a special caste of intermediaries between man and God.

Every justification for the monopoly of the partaking of holiness was shattered by Jesus' lifework and his teachings, whose strength, though, will become manifest only after they have been brought to everyone's knowledge:

The religion of Jesus is the most dynamic influence ever to activate the human race. Jesus shattered tradition, destroyed dogma, and called mankind to the achievement of its highest ideals in time and eternity—to be perfect, even as the Father in heaven is perfect. [1091:2]

Acknowledgement of the fact that religion is a private, personal issue must no longer be a claim made only by ultracritical individuals, not to speak about the readers of *The URANTIA Book*. It should, instead, be a part of the spiritual capital of every average man and woman. Vestiges of spiritual tyranny are still visible, and they are many. This is true despite the outpouring of the Spirit of Truth and the influence of the Thought Adjusters. Evolution is slow. It is tempting to entertain an idea that we are right now performing a spiritual leap forward (as described in *The URANTIA Book*, 1863:12). If this is true, it would mean that a great change is taking place in mankind's spiritual awareness. The confusion which tends to antedate such a leap forward, is anyhow very

visible.

It may be timely to attempt an analysis of the spirit and the spiritual setting where an average man of the western world currently finds himself.

**Review of the Collective Spiritual And
Social Situation of the Occidental Man—
The Post-Rationalistic—Individualistic Age**

I shall first undertake to describe one concept which is employed by the intellectual world of today. The term I have in mind is **post-modernism**.

The emphatic part of the word 'post-modernism' is undoubtedly the prefix 'post'. The prefix keeps the term separate from the "modern" epoch of the past. The difference between an old and a new modernism is not absolute. This is because the definition of the new epoch seeks support in, and rests upon, the old modern age. Man is not yet moving over to a completely "new age"; he is rather moving away from the old, and is unable accurately to determine the goals he is to achieve.

As regards the content of post-modern culture, it is characterised by a radical pluralism, which is its most prominent feature. In a post-modern world, most variegated life-styles, values, religions, ideologies, schools of art, scientific methods and other endeavours to give shape to reality are co-existing. Pluralism was, of course, not something completely unknown in the old modern world either, but within the framework of post-modern culture, it has been transformed into a programme, a life-style.

Another characteristic of the content of post-modern culture is the overthrow of "great stories". The great ideas, ideologies and theories designed and devised to explain the whole of the existing reality are losing ground. Not only have Marxist utopias lost their credibility, but the same has happened also to the beliefs in capitalism's capacity to eradicate poverty and hunger. Neither has man's trust in human intelligence and morals, as proclaimed in the Age of Enlightenment, fared any better. The same concerns any notions of the nobleness of humanism and the saving power of science and technology. The great visions and the preconceived common goals are vanishing. Each and everyone is in quest of personal objectives and goals, and is going to achieve them the way he finds best. An analysis presented in *The URANTIA Book* is very much in line with what was stated above:

During the psychologically unsettled times of the twentieth century, amid the economic upheavals, the moral crosscurrents, and the sociologic rip tides of cyclonic transitions of a scientific era, thousands upon thousands of men and women have become humanly dislocated; they are anxious, restless, fearful, uncertain, and unsettled; as never before in

the world's history they need the consolation and stabilization of sound religion. In the face of unprecedented scientific achievement and mechanical development there is spiritual stagnation and philosophic chaos. [1090:2]

Rather than call it post-modern, it is more striking to describe the current epoch as a **post-rationalistic—individualistic** age. In using the term 'post-rationalistic' age I refer to the Age of Enlightenment, which became possible in the aftermath of the Reformation with its multiplying effects. This age is characterised by a multitude of isms. It is a time of ideological and religious turmoil. The ideational legacy of the Reformation, as well as the criticism of institutionalised religion, which had its origins in the Age of Enlightenment, have enabled the individualism which is so accentuated in the modern age, the post-*URANTIA Book* era included. It is precisely the emphatic prominence of the individual that seems to be the fundamental tenet of the current age. Post-modernism is an excellent term, but the term post-rationalistic—individualistic is a better designation of the religious situation of the average man of the Western world.

It is possible to aver that the shattering of the monopoly of partaking of holiness was, in part, effected in the course of the post-rationalistic—individualistic age. A post-rationalistic—individualistic man formulates his own God concept and is happy with his personal religion.

The Christian church is, in a way, a "great story" of the old epoch, one that has not been bidden a definitive farewell as yet. The weight of tradition and the legacies of the old tie the man, who is otherwise very God-conscious, to the cult and ceremonies of the church. Even priesthood is accepted. Rejection of inherited superstitions is, at least subconsciously, an accepted programme. A thought pattern aiming at a holistic explanation of reality, in line with *The URANTIA Book*, must inevitably suffer from the context and the environment where it is set. Our book, too, is comparable to the "great stories" of the old and seems to have close connections with Christianity. *The URANTIA Book* is, because of the way it came into existence, mentally associated with a number of other books, such as *The Book of Mormon*. Yet, in its unprecedented holistic approach, which combines religion, science and philosophy into a magnificent whole, it is the key to the problems of our time. The most important message that this book may proffer is the ideal of a genuine religion:

True religion is a meaningful way of living dynamically face to face with the commonplace realities of everyday life. But if religion is to stimulate individual development of character and augment integration of personality, it must not be standardized. If it is to

stimulate evaluation of experience and serve as a value-lure, it must not be stereotyped. If religion is to promote supreme loyalties, it must not be formalized.
[1089:11]

On the other hand, *The URANTIA Book* too fosters the individualistic view on man's religiosity. But this can be counteracted in complementing the mere book-reading with social involvement and service to one's fellows.

In my view, the primal duty of the URANTIA movement is that of insuring the inviolability and integrity of the Revelation in the post-rationalistic—individualistic age with its long-drawn-out turmoil. Be it, as it is, an epic comparable to the "great stories" of the past, yet its potentials are bound to triumph in the time to come—not necessarily in our generation, however. It will simultaneously be the element which will definitely frustrate every attempt of the Christian church to maintain its spiritual hegemony. This is going to happen through and within the spiritual brotherhoods, through literature, art, even humour, inspired by the teachings of *The URANTIA Book*, set in motion, put in place, and performed by people who accept the message of this book.

Attempt by the Church to Monopolise the Partaking of Holiness

We live in a world of Protestantism, and even if the number of *URANTIA Book* students should grow tenfold, the same would continue to be the case. To know about the teachings of the Evangelic-Lutheran Church, one of the influential components of our culture, and to be informed about the shortcomings and weaknesses of its dogma is crucial to those who in these circumstances wish to advance the fifth epochal revelation.

My ensuing analysis will focus on the premises and substantiations presented in the fundamental document of the Protestant Church, the Confession of Augsburg (hereafter, CA). It is impossible to peruse all of the Articles of the CA in this short article; consequently, I shall only fleetingly comment on some of them, those which in the light of *The URANTIA Book* teachings seem to be the most flagrantly mistaken ones, both in their substance and in their assertions. The perused articles are Article II on Original Sin; Article V on the Office of Ecclesiastical Ministers; Article VII on the Church; and Article IX on Baptism. I am going to present the appointed articles, then find a fitting counterargument in *The URANTIA Book*, and in conclusion I shall present some of my own views and interpretations.

On the Original Sin

FURTHERMORE, OUR CHURCHES SHALL TEACH THAT AFTER THE FALL OF ADAM, ALL HUMAN BEINGS WHO ARE

REPRODUCED IN THE NATURAL MANNER, ARE BORN IN SIN; THAT IS, THEY ARE BORN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE FEAR OF GOD, WITHOUT CONFIDENCE IN GOD, AND UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE LUST FOR EVIL, AND THAT THIS PRIMORDIAL ILLNESS AND THIS ORIGINAL SIN IS A TRUE SIN, WHICH WILL CONDEMN THEM AND EVEN NOW CONFER ETERNAL DEATH UPON THOSE WHO ARE NOT BORN AGAIN IN THE ACT OF BAPTISM AND THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. [CA II]

The doctrine of the total depravity of man destroyed much of the potential of religion for effecting social repercussions of an uplifting nature and of inspirational value. Jesus sought to restore man's dignity when he declared that all men are the children of God. [1091:4]

As long as the dogma of the church includes the quoted passage, its foundations will be very low indeed. This Article II can only offend any normal-minded person. A learned theologian can only commit an intellectual suicide in accepting it. The entire substance of the Article is openly threatening, frightening, and it is with the power of this article that the church has endeavoured to bind thinking men and women to itself and to justify its hegemony in matters spiritual. This nefarious doctrine has been apt to foster people's anxieties and to aggravate the imbalance of many a human mind. The church will be unable to elevate itself from barbarism as long as it clings to this Article on the original sin.

On the Office of Ministers

FOR US TO RECEIVE THIS FAITH, THE OFFICE OF THE TEACHER OF THE GOSPEL AND THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE SACRAMENTS HAS BEEN INSTALLED. THROUGH THE WORD AND THROUGH THE SACRAMENTS, IN USING THEM AS INSTRUMENTS, THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL BE BESTOWED, WHO WILL, IN THOSE WHO HEarken TO THE GOSPEL, CALL FORTH THE FAITH — WHEN AND WHERE GOD SO DESIRES. IN OTHER WORDS, GOD JUSTIFIES FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST, AND NOT BECAUSE OF OUR MERITS, THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT THEY, FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST, WILL BE RECEIVED INTO THE MERCY, SO THAT WE, THROUGH FAITH, MAY RECEIVE THE PROMISED SPIRIT. [CA V]

The URANTIA Book view on priesthood is generally critical, although the teachings do present also a favourable view on the existence of priesthood, mindful of the fact that certain types of people seem to need them. The perspectives of the revelators are wider than those of impatient readers. Believers in the fifth epochal revelation have to possess forbearance with Christian priests for many centuries to come. *The URANTIA Book* has something to say also about the alliance between the church and theology, considering that all prominent

theologians have been priests, or representatives of one order or another.

The priesthoods have done much to delay scientific development and to hinder spiritual progress, but they have contributed to the stabilization of civilization and to the enhancement of certain kinds of culture. But many modern priests have ceased to function as directors of the ritual of the worship of God, having turned their attention to theology—the attempt to define God. [993:1]

It is not denied that the priests have been a millstone about the neck of the races, but the true religious leaders have been invaluable in pointing the way to higher and better realities. [993:2]

The latter quotation clearly lets us know that a priest and a true religious teacher are two separate persons. The collapse of the monopoly becomes a fact in this aspect. Another striking quotation sheds more light on this observation:

Pentecost marked the end of special priesthoods and all belief in sacred families. [2065:3]

The church does have the office of the administrator of the Word and the Sacraments, but this is true only because the church itself has so determined, and the definition above has unfortunately an enslaving effect on many of our fellows. This is part of the spirit of our epoch: the old “story”, Christianity and its teachings, operates in the background, although it has, in a way, been bidden farewell in a situation where we do not, as yet, know where we are heading.

The assertion that the Spirit of Truth (the Holy Spirit of the Christians) would be bestowed through the Word and the Sacraments is one of those doctrines whose objective is the spiritual monopoly of the church and its perpetuation. *The URANTIA Book* view is unambiguous:

Do not overlook the fact that the Spirit of Truth was bestowed upon all sincere believers; this gift of the spirit did not come only to the apostles. The one hundred and twenty men and women assembled in the upper chamber all received the new teacher, as did all the honest of heart throughout the whole world. This new teacher was bestowed upon mankind, and every soul received him in accordance with the love for truth and the capacity to grasp and comprehend spiritual realities. At last, true religion is delivered from the custody of priests and all sacred classes and finds its real manifestation in the individual souls of men. [2063:4]

The Lutheran Church, in endorsing a document like the Augsburg Confession and in perpetuating it as a distinctive feature of its dogma, continues to imagine that it acts as an intermediary between Christ Michael and any normal man. That one has to heed to the gospel is considered a precondition for the reception of the Spirit of Truth. Theologians have been exchanging views on the prospects of salvation of a man who has never “hearkened to” the gospel. The Catholic church maintains a doctrine on “anonymous Christians”, and this doctrine maybe gives a positive answer to the question, whether a “non-hearkener” can win salvation. Similar ideas have lately been suggested also within our church and within the ranks of our theologians. These views, however, constitute just a kind of embryonic phase in the transformation of the church instruction. Many average churchgoers, however, appreciate such opinions. Finally and for a change, one can hear something spiritually encouraging issue from within the church. Some theologians, those who have committed the intellectual suicide discussed above, have repented of their having taught people things that they themselves do not believe. It remains to be seen, whether, for example, from within the Catholic church a new theologian will arise, one in command of the courage to revise the age-old dogmas and make them veer towards that overall view on dogmatics which is presented in *The URANTIA Book*. Not everything need be the work of the theologians. Works of fiction, ordinary literature, for example, would have a much more tangible impact than even a thousand ecclesiastical pronouncements and confessions.

On the Church

OUR CHURCHES SHALL, FURTHERMORE, INSTRUCT THAT THE ONE AND ONLY HOLY CHURCH SHALL LAST FOR EVER. THE CHURCH IS THE CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY, WHEREIN THE GOSPEL SHALL BE PREACHED IN PURITY AND THE SACRAMENTS ADMINISTERED CORRECTLY. UNANIMITY ABOUT THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS WILL BE SUFFICIENT TO ENSURE A TRUE UNITY OF THE CHURCH. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS NOT NECESSARY THAT THE INHERITED HUMAN TRADITIONS, RITUALS OF THE DIVINE SERVICE, OR THE CEREMONIALS, WHICH ARE REGULATED BY MAN, BE EVERYWHERE UNIFORM. [CA V]

That a church will eventually take shape, evolve from a spiritual brotherhood, is inevitable:

Just as certainly as men share their religious beliefs, they create a religious group of some sort which eventually creates common goals. Someday religionists will get together and actually effect co-operation on the basis of unity of ideals and purposes rather than attempting to do so on the basis of psychological opinions and theological beliefs. [1091:6]

An effort to monopolise the religious brotherhood and to rule over it is most evident in the articles of the CA. The notion that a unanimity about the doctrine of the gospel and about the correct way of administering the sacraments would be sufficient for the achievement of genuine unity in the church is refuted in the *URANTIA Book* quotation above. It is comforting to realise and personally to experience what the quote has to say about co-operation with somebody on the basis of a unity of ideals and purposes. The collapse of the monopoly is an undeniable fact within numerous groups and communities, and has crossed even the boundaries between religions.

And again, the revelators, who in this case are our cousins, the midwayers, recognise the needs of those people who are incapable of real progress:

It is all too true that such a church would not have survived unless there had been men in the world who preferred such a style of worship. Many spiritually indolent souls crave an ancient and authoritative religion of ritual and sacred traditions. Human evolution and spiritual progress are hardly sufficient to enable all men to dispense with religious authority. [2085:6]

About the bewilderment which rules within the Christian church, it is said:

And so, for centuries, the Christian church has labored under great embarrassment because it dared to lay claim to those mysterious powers and privileges of the kingdom, powers and privileges which can be exercised and experienced only between Jesus and his spiritual believer brothers. And thus it becomes apparent that membership in the church does not necessarily mean fellowship in the kingdom; one is spiritual, the other mainly social. [1866:1]

This quotation very well highlights the subject matter of this my writing, viz. the attempt of the church to monopolise the religious experience and the partaking of holiness. The efforts of the church to define itself as the congregation of the holy are ambiguous, as much as they are spiritually and intellectually utterly unattractive to men of the post-rationalistic—individualistic age, to men guided by the Spirit of Truth and orientated by their Thought Adjusters.

On Baptism

ABOUT BAPTISM OUR CONGREGATIONS SHALL TEACH THAT BAPTISM IS INDISPENSABLE TO SALVATION, AND THAT THE MERCY OF GOD IS CONFERRED THROUGH BAPTISM.

CHILDREN HAVE TO BE BAPTISED SO TO COMMIT THEM TO GOD'S KEEPING AND BE TAKEN INTO GOD'S MERCIES.
[CA IX]

To a reader of *The URANTIA Book* it is evident that, contrary to the claims of the church, and in contravention of what has been ascribed to Jesus in his missionary assignment as it is taught by the church, Jesus did not install baptism.

Baptism is a feature that became attached to the Jesus movement through the actions of John's apostles. We read in *The URANTIA Book*:

But the most serious of all their problems was the question of baptism. Their difficulties were all the more aggravated because Jesus had refused to make any pronouncement upon the subject. They finally agreed: As long as John lived, or until they might jointly modify this decision, only the apostles of John would baptize believers, and only the apostles of Jesus would finally instruct the new disciples. Accordingly, from that time until after the death of John, two of the apostles of John accompanied Jesus and his apostles to baptize believers, for the joint council had unanimously voted that baptism was to become the initial step in the outward alliance with the affairs of the kingdom. [1625:4]

As a matter of fact, the decision was a compromise which Jesus made with purpose:

Jesus foresaw that a social organization, or church, would follow the progress of the true spiritual kingdom, and that is why he never opposed the apostles' practicing the rite of John's baptism. He taught that the truth-loving soul, the one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, for God, is admitted by faith to the spiritual kingdom; at the same time the apostles taught that such a believer is admitted to the social organization of disciples by the outward rite of baptism. [1865:3]

Baptism, as we may read, is not a prerequisite for admission to the spiritual brotherhood. It is an instrument in the hands of the priests wherewith to get parents, under the pressure of traditions, to yield to a baptism of their children. In this aspect, the monopoly is still very strong.

The church goes on instructing that baptism is the precondition for the reception of the Holy Spirit. In a way, one may say that Jesus' view on baptism was qualifiedly positive. A new meaning should perhaps be attached to baptism. The future will show what the attitude of *The URANTIA Book* readers towards this issue is going to be.



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**International URANTIA Association
Journal**
Quarterly News Journal

In Conclusion

Christians are prone to say: "Christ has done this and has done that for me, after I espoused the faith." This represents a puerile, primitive view based on reward mentality. A true follower of Jesus can never make such a statement. He has liberated himself from materialistic concepts and from egotism. He is God's dynamic servant, who meets all people without fear. Should he say something about his relationship with Christ, he might say: "Do not boast about what Christ has done for you, rather contemplate what you could do for Christ and for your fellow men today." In conclusion, we might one more time quote the blue book and give a thought to this intriguing assertion and promise:

Sooner or later another and greater John the Baptist is due to arise proclaiming "the kingdom of God is at hand"—meaning a return to the high spiritual concept of Jesus, who proclaimed that the kingdom is the will of his heavenly Father dominant and transcendent in the heart of the believer—and doing all this without in any way referring either to the visible church on earth or to the anticipated second coming of Christ. [1866:2]

Last but not least, I may state that we shall hardly be around to see the monopoly of the partaking of holiness broken, to the extent that we would possibly like to see it happen. But the progress is steady. We remain in anticipation of better times, as promised in the book.

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Subscription (including postage)

4 issues: 15 U.S. dollars, 15 Australian dollars, or 50 Finnish marks.
Single copies: 4 U.S. dollars, 4 Australian dollars, or 15 Finnish marks.

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