

Is Urantian History Sacred or Profane?

How Did We Get Where We Are Today?

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An historical perspective on the evolving organizations as of the 1996 Urantia Book Fellowship Triennial International Conference, Vancouver, BC

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1. Origin—The Seventh Day Adventist Movement

The topic is: Is Urantian History Sacred or Profane? And I subtitled it, How Did We Get Where We Are Today? because that's the subject this is really about this morning. I'm not a lawyer although I'm going to talk about some legal subjects towards the end of this. I just wanted to take a minute to tell you the story of the origins of the Urantia Papers as I understand them. I think we have to realize that there is no real clear authoritative view of this. There's a lot of historical information, people have dug up a lot of interesting things and there's a lot of contradictory data. I'm not going to try to resolve any of the classic contradictory questions; in fact I'm going to skirt around them.

I want you to come into the rest of this discussion with the sense of the sweep of time that could have engendered the revelation.

My feeling is that if you want to find the roots of the revelation, not the revelation itself as a primary revelation, but the revelation as a social phenomenon, you have to reach back to the origin of the Adventist movement in North America in the 19th Century, because the people who first brought the revelation into being in the human experience came out of the Adventist movement.

Many of you know the story of how in the early 1800s a preacher named William Miller began to preach about the anticipated second coming of Christ and about the end of the age. He predicted various dates for it which then failed to come true bringing about a series of schisms in a lot of different church groups within the movement and much confusion ensued.

During this period of confusion in the early Adventist thinking in the United States, a woman named Ellen Harmon who lived in Gorham, Maine, experienced a head injury and she was given to having fits. Her family was involved in the Adventist Movement in the southern Maine area. She eventually began having visions and receiving messages that were pertinent to Adventist doctrine that dealt particularly with the confusion of why Miller's prophecies of the end of the age did not come true.

The group of believers who gathered around Ellen White (she married James White and so was known as Ellen White or Sister White subsequently) established what eventually became known as the Seventh Day Adventist Church. They celebrated the Sabbath on Saturday rather than Sunday. They do that because one of the key revelations developed by Sister White was that the reason Jesus didn't come back was because he was mad because they didn't keep the Sabbath; they changed it to Sunday. But that was one of the lesser problems compared to drinking booze, smoking tobacco, eating meat, and wearing tight fitting clothes. And there were some other issues that Jesus was displeased with.

Ellen White projected a kind of curious blend of sort of folk medicine, a lot of common sense actually, strangely enough, and just completely wacky things that explained the problem that was at the heart of the failure of the Adventist expectation. So it became the duty of the people gathered around her to reform the world so it would be a fit place for Christ's return.

The essential part of Ellen White's vision was that people were unhealthy. This had to do with smoking, meat eating, drinking and fornication. As this church developed she wrote a lot of stuff about health. She became involved in the hydropathic movement which involved giving people "water cures" and so forth.

And out of this period of time there emerged a young man whose name was John Harvey Kellogg who was from an Adventist family and who was educated as a hydropathic physician by the Adventists. At the age of about twenty or twenty-one he was put in charge of the Dean's environmental program of the Adventists. It took place in a restored hotel which became the Battle Creek Clinic and later became the Battle Creek Sanitarium.

You can get a pretty vivid picture of what life in Battle Creek was like after John Harvey Kellogg gave it the fullness of his attention. In the American medical community around the turn of the century you can see this newest approach to wellness.

2. William Samuel Sadler

And that brings us to William Samuel Sadler. William Sadler grew up in an Adventist family and he was very close to the Kelloggs. He decided to become a medical evangelist for the Adventists and he studied medical evangelism under John Harvey Kellogg at the Battle Creek Clinic. Later he became a medical missionary for the Seventh-day Adventists traveling to California to help establish the medical missions in the San Francisco area. I really can't recapitulate his history but you can find out a lot about this in the writings about him in Martin Gardner's book which you know, alas, in spite of what it says about The Urantia Book, has a lot of factual material scattered through it here and there.

Ernest Moyer is someone who has also done a lot of research on this period; a lot of other people have done a lot of research also.

In the early 1900s a huge doctrinal split divided the Adventist Church over the issue of the development of a practice in the course of medicine versus the traditions of faith. It was really a power struggle between the doctors who were coming out of Battle Creek Clinic realizing they were immersed in a kind of quasi-quackery and coming face to face with the modern medical tradition that was emerging in the United States at the time.

They were wanting to make things better and wanting to legitimize the church as an influence in American medicine, and on the other hand having the established clergy of the Church wanting to retain positive control over their total fate and not wanting to put the teachings of Sister White on a scientific footing because they were, after all, revelations. So there was a huge cost that's not publicly well understood because the church didn't choose to document it for review it at the time and didn't even talk about it until very recently.

The result was that John Harvey Kellogg was excommunicated from the church and a number of his supporters were also excommunicated from the church. And it was in

connection with the turbulence around this time that William Sadler (who was married to one of John Harvey's daughters [*sic*][*recte* nieces], Lena Kellogg Sadler) developed his own crisis of faith in the revelatory authority of the church and seemingly began his own quest for truth more in the direction of modern scientific thought, and rational thought, and less in the direction of Sister White's writings as the authority.

3. The Sleeping Subject

It was shortly after this period that William S. Sadler and the person we know from the Urantia movement as the contact person first met. I think the best research of this meeting has probably been done by Earnest Moyer, although some apparently disagreed with him. But apparently Dr. Sadler and Lena were temporarily housed in an apartment building in a suburb in Chicago, and during this brief period they came in contact with the man and his wife. The man as we know, talked in his sleep, he talked about visitors from other universes and whatnot.

William Sadler, who had decided he was not going to be an ordinary clinical physician, but was going to specialize in the science of the mind and healing people through solving their mental problems, became very interested in this case. These two families maintained a close relationship for many years. I don't know any historical records that show how long this relationship lasted but it lasted long enough for Dr. Sadler to write about it in his book, *The Mind at Mischief*, which was published in 1929 or something like that, so it was apparently still going on at that point.

At some point during this time the decision was made to use this channel (and I don't mean channel in any sense the way it's used as a pathway of communication between the spiritual world and the formal world to impart a lot of knowledge). This resulted in the formation of the celestial side of the revelatory commission and you can read about this revelatory commission in *The Urantia Book*.

Paper 31:10.22 These thirty-one papers depicting the nature of Deity, the reality of Paradise, the organization and working of the central and superuniverses, the personalities of the grand universe, and the high destiny of evolutionary mortals, were sponsored, formulated, and put into English by a high commission consisting of twenty-four Orvonton administrators acting in accordance with a mandate issued by the Ancients of Days of Uversa directing that we should do this on Urantia, 606 of Satania, in Norlatiadek of Nebadon, in the year A.D. 1934.

I have no idea how they did it; I don't want to try to establish how they did it. As far as I'm concerned the efforts that were made to conceal the details, of how it was done, are

okay. I don't deny that I might be interested to know how they did it, but I see no way we will ever figure it out, short of a time machine, and even then you might not know. So that's not what this discussion is really about. But somehow they did it and of course they didn't stop after those 31 papers; they kept going until we had the entire Urantia Book. *The authority for it though, comes originally from this revelatory commission, these twenty-four Orvonton Administrators.*

4. The Contact Commission

Now who were these human beings that were working within this contact commission? We don't know authoritatively who these people were; but they were generally believed to be Dr. Sadler, his wife Lena Sadler, Wilfred Kellogg (Lena's brother), William Sadler Junior, and then it started to break down as to who exactly the other people were. In any case, it was a small group of five or six people who were responsible for receiving this material and doing with it whatever human beings were going to do with it.

Well it appeared as you know as an epochal revelation. It's a collection of papers about the universe and those of you who have read it know what it is. As I said earlier when we started this; this discussion isn't about what's in the book really; it's about some of the key events of the emergence of the papers, as a book, which were gathered together because of human beings who looked at it, reviewed it, studied it and tried to understand it.

I think primarily they served as a laboratory classroom, a laboratory to see if it worked; because if you wrote something and showed it to these people and they couldn't make heads or tails out of it, then you must have written over their heads, and if they asked a bunch of stupid questions, then you probably didn't write enough. So in some way, again I'm not vouching for it historically; the papers emerged and were read by many people during the period of their emergence, and presumably the people's reactions to them were monitored in some way and used to guide the development of the papers. Again I'm deliberately not trying to (unclear).

5. The Forum

A lot of people went to this group which was called The Forum. Some were people Dr. Sadler sought out as experts in their field, others were friends and associates who simply gathered together by word-of-mouth. As things went on, Dr. Sadler's psychiatric patients and their families became a major source of forum members.

I think you should remember that during this period psychiatry was not very well established as a medical science; it was more a certain kind of obscure art of talking to people and giving advice, reading thoughts, putting electrodes to their head and zapping people, initiating convulsions and giving more advice. Dr. Sadler's psychiatric practice, as far as I could tell, was just like everybody else's, period. They gave a lot of advice to neurotics; they gave a lot of shock therapy to depressives, and they put a lot of straitjackets on schizophrenics. I don't mean to trivialize it but the fact is that the treatment of mental illness was still in a very primitive stage in those days.

6. Typesetting

But in any case there occurred the question of how these papers would be printed into a book or left to be just sitting around being read by people in Dr. Sadler's office. And what we do know is that at some point Wilfred Kellogg was sent out to sign a typesetting contract. He came back with some 2,000 copper plates from which The Urantia Book would be printed. Of course this cost a lot of money and took a lot of time.

Apparently this was mostly occurring during World War II and shortly afterwards, and we're told, without any documentation, that there were mandates given during this time like, go fast at some times, go slow at other times. As concerning the celestial side there were the possible outcomes of World War II, the rise of Communism and what have you. I can neither confirm nor refute this stuff; I consider there to be more questions than answers. But the fact is, twenty years passed from the time the papers were completed until they were actually published and we know that it did not take twenty years to obtain the typeset. We do know that it took a long time to raise the money because the money was raised by contributions of individual members, particularly the group called The Seventy, who were the most dedicated students of The Forum.

7. Founding Urantia Foundation

The next problem of course is how are you going to get this thing organized and then do something with it? Well you might think, well let's print a book. But of course somebody had to print the book, and as I understand it, Wilfred had the plates and Wilfred was not going to be the person to print the book. So in 1950 a group of people from within the Forum group formed Urantia Foundation. Five trustees got together and set this thing up. They were not the five members of the contact commission; they included some contact commissioners, but it was not exactly the same as the contact commission. There is a presumption that they did so by authority of that contact commission. In any

case they formed it. Wilfred was one of the people participating in the forming of it. Wilfred was in fact the donor of the plates to Urantia Foundation.

8. Printing the Book

They then proceeded over the next five years to print The Urantia Book from those plates. I think there were like 5000 copies of the first printing, something like that. And it was actually published in 1955.

At the same time the book was published they decided that they should create a formal social organization rather than just stay with the informal organization that The Forum or The Seventy had been. So they did a lot of work involving the creating of a constitution for a social organization which evolved pretty much like a church. That organization became The Fellowship of course, and at that time it was called The Urantia Brotherhood.

There were certain key things in forming The Fellowship. One was that the original people who formed it were the same as the five people who formed the Urantia Foundation. However it was not formed by Urantia Foundation; it was formed by the *members* of the Urantia Foundation, which was kind of skirting a legality. But there was some clear intent not to link the two organizations together; not to link them together in a legal sense. One had a Declaration of Trust and one had a constitution. The purpose stated for both were almost identical, but the ways in which they were going to pursue their aims were totally different. One was going to publish a protected book, one was going to be a social organization.

9. The General Council

The same people set up both organizations. The Fellowship then came together and elected a General Council. The General Council functioned for nine years trying to figure out what to do next, had a lot of committee meetings, debating a lot of things, a lot of early arguments-- many of the same things people are still arguing about today-- like go fast, go slow types of arguments. And eventually they moved into the process of representative government that it has now.

Well the key to that representative government of course is the so-called Societies, what used to be called Urantia Societies--local groups of readers that come together to organize themselves and, as an organization, have a single vote in a representative body called the Triennial Delegate Assembly and every three years elect people to the General Council who make policy for The Fellowship.

A lot of effort has gone into forming the Fellowship Societies. I've participated in the formation of a Urantia Society and I can testify to the difficulty of getting a bunch of Urantia Book readers to agree on something as complicated as a constitution. They have to agree on what they think it stands for; they have to agree on what they're going to vote about and so on. The Fellowship is not organized as a democracy; it's organized along the lines of a representative form of government.

The presumption is that any group of Urantia Book readers can elect a reasonably intelligent competent person from the group who then goes before the larger body and participates in the decision-making, and that it's not necessary or desirable to pole everyone in the organization to decide what to do based on a vote of the majority.

Many people have criticized this over the years. I for one can see the potential desirability, for many reasons, of having a completely democratic organization, but I can also see that a completely democratic organization would not be able to perform some of the functions that The Fellowship performs, just as they would not necessarily be able to perform some of the functions the Urantia Foundation performs; there's kind of a spectrum. We don't have a democratic organization now. Anyway The Fellowship is a republican organization.

Well what's the problem? Well nobody reads The Urantia Book. (Laughter)

10. Marketing

We do know the stories of the folks who were there at the time; people I knew who were there like Marion Rowley and Carolyn Kendall; they were just sure that as soon as the book was published, the world would beat a path to their door and of course they were pretty soundly silenced by the censors and sold about 500 books a year for years and years. And as you look back, we see some problems with that.

The distribution of the book was turned over to the Fellowship and improperly handled; and we think it was done in a completely ad hoc, volunteer, well, let's face it, amateurish way. There weren't that many people involved who had any experience in selling books, nor were there that many people who had any experience in selling religions either.

But efforts were made to improve the way books were sold and the Fellowship established distribution channels and entered into agreements with the Foundation as a contractor to sell The Urantia Book, and to distribute The Urantia Book, and over a number of years made additional contracts with book distributors. The book was placed in chain book stores; you could order them in regular bookstores, and generally a lot of progress was made in smoothing out this way of acting as the sales agent for the Foundation.

11. Translations and Litigations

Another big activity was of course...it was only in English, and while everyone in the world reads English as a second language these days, they don't necessarily read it well enough to wade through The Urantia Book; and so an effort was made to translate the book.

We know that a Frenchman named Jacques Weiss came forward and offered to translate the book into French. I guess he told the folks in Chicago, "I know a lot about this, you don't have to worry, I'll do everything myself, and do everything for you...hands off." Well that didn't turn out that well; it proved to be very difficult to exercise any control over what he did with the book and how he produced it, and the kinds of ways he used it, and the kinds of collaborations he made over the years, and eventually Urantia Foundation found itself in a lawsuit.

You can get all kinds of people who will tell you whether the lawsuit was necessary or not; whether he was a well-meaning guy who just didn't understand the language or not, when he tried to translate The Urantia Book. But the fact is, it was a bitter experience for a lot of people involved; it brought to light the risks of doing translations.

And so when a bunch of volunteer readers came forward and said, "Ah-ha, we have a Finnish translation," and delivered it to the Foundation, I think it was greeted with the kind of skepticism that they wished they had applied to the French translation, like "Cool ! But we don't know whether this is a good thing or a bad thing." So it turned out to take a long time to get the Finnish translation out because of trying to avoid getting into the problems of the French translation.

To me, their first really important Urantia translation was the Spanish translation, because here the Foundation realized that there are more readers of Spanish than there are French and Finnish put together, so they decided to actually fund the Spanish translation. Now there had been one or two Spanish translations done privately by people in the years before, but there were various reasons they didn't want to use those. I'm not really willing to pursue that argument at this point—see I'm skipping over a lot of arguments that people had back then.

But the Foundation went to the Fellowship and said, "Gee-whiz, if you'll raise some money to pay for this Finnish translation from an authoritative professional set of translators, quarter million, half a million, something like that, then we'll put the rest of the money in from our resources to print the book in Spanish."

Eventually there was a Spanish book printed. It took a lot longer than a lot of people thought it would take, but then they saw a profit. And as you know, the Foundation has increasingly funded printing translations and is putting more and more energy into it.

12. Fundraising

The focus during this period was getting organized I would say but, you know, I'm not going to get into current things about the other important things involved in an organization--setting up conferences, having study groups, talking to each other, having field representatives going around to study groups, building a larger membership for the Fellowship, chartering more societies, having larger conferences, having these summer types of things for people who are really serious— the kind of stuff where you sit down and get to know each other. This became more and more another activity.

The important feature of this though, which I think you have to put into perspective, was raising money. That always happens. The way fundraising was approached was that the two organizations decided they would go out and rather than in any way competing, they would appeal together to the readership—"Give us your money whatever you want us to do." These were pretty low-key appeals; they'd send everyone a letter once a year that said, "Yeah, we could use the money." Then they split it 50-50.

What happened over the years was that Urantia Foundation was constantly running short of money, and every few years the Fellowship would give them a transfusion by putting \$50,000 or so into their accounts to make up the slack. We'll get into why they were constantly running out of money, but part of it was simply that their operation was running more expenses. The Fellowship in this period had a relatively small number of members and fewer activities and operated on a relatively break-even basis.

The Foundation's activities were more speculative, longer range, and involved a greater investment. And they tended to spend a lot more money on these things, and of course the Spanish translation was one of the things that the Fellowship thought had more value, although the people who were opposed to it will tell you the Fellowship didn't pay for all of it by any means, maybe half of it, something like that. There were a lot of gifts and bequests from special people, but in the end, in most cases, they didn't amount to that much money. But one of the big drives came in the late 1970s when the Foundation found it had more or less run out of money and couldn't print The Urantia Book.

That was bad.

They brought other people in from the Fellowship to talk about the problem and one of the conclusions that was reached was to set up a perpetual printing fund. The Fellowship would raise the money for the perpetual printing fund, enough money to print a run of about 20,000 Urantia Books which at that time would cost about a quarter of a million dollars.

The Foundation would, every time they sold The Urantia Book, put money back into the fund to replenish it so the next time they had to print the book, there'd be money there. You know they had been trying to do that all the time of course, but I think that everyone felt that by giving them a clearly defined earmark for funding, and giving them a policy that they would agree to for managing that money it would then be safe to say that The Urantia Book would never be in danger of not being printed—not being readily available.

13. The Copyright

I'm talking about things that were bringing the movement together with shared objectives in making things happen that were good for everybody. But there were also counter currents building that went in other directions. I put establishing the copyright first, not because it was in any sense disorganized; it was simply that it's sort of where it starts, because establishing the copyright involves saying, "We own this book. We five people who have started this organization, the Urantia Foundation, we five people own this book, and you have no grounds for claiming it's content as your religion."

And no matter how necessary you may feel it was, I think you can also understand that—in at least in the North American religious tradition where the Bible is not copyrighted and it's said to be an article of faith, and fundamentalists and everyone have their Bible and many editions of it and so on—the idea that it is a copyrightable work, that it's not the foundation of a religion, rubbed some people the wrong way; and it did from the very beginning. There are disputes going right back to the founding of Urantia Foundation about this.

I don't want to debate the merits of it but that's why it's the first thing on the list, because it represents a point at which conflict began, an issue over which conflict began, and many of the other things that I'll talk about harken back to this issue.

14. The Trademark

Another point was, "Hey we're Urantians, but what is a Urantian? How do people recognize us?" Well the organizations—the Fellowship and the Foundation—decided that they would identify themselves with the word *Urantia* and they would use this symbol and the three concentric circles symbol as it is described in the book. What is this symbol? Well, we'll go into it a little later, but you know the banner of Michael, it's his symbol.

(interjection from audience) (unclear) ". . . there was clearly a set of instructions given to the contact commission for the Urantia Foundation Trustees from the Revelators having to do with these issues (unclear)."

Well, I am describing what I think the historical record indicates, since there were no instructions published with the book, and since there were no instructions published separately from the book for the readers during the period in which such instruction might have appeared.

Whether or not you believe there were a set of instructions, it becomes sort of a secondary matter of religion. I'm avoiding trying to separate all of that because I don't think there's any way to answer it. I don't think an argument that the social evolution should be based on instructions has any useful validity; so whether there were instructions or not is really relevant only to what individuals may choose to believe.

I don't care what instructions were given. If someone says there was an instruction, then that instruction must make sense and must work out in a social context. And if it doesn't work out, then I have to assume that either there were no instructions given, or the instructions were not received correctly, not interpreted correctly, or not acted on correctly; but as a practical matter it doesn't matter. We're very far from the point where anyone has plainly received instructions, and unless I receive instruction, I don't know how to evaluate it. And if I received it, none of you know how to evaluate it. How do you know I got an instruction? How do you know I didn't get an instruction or received an instruction? Now that's the way it strikes me as having been the case around the early days.

What I'm trying to focus on is that these organizations chose this word and this symbol as the way they would identify themselves to the world. As time progressed though, they had second thoughts about having done that. There was the initial idea derived from some supposed instruction, that the symbol needed some sort of protection. There was also supposedly legal advice that it was an unprotectable symbol, but at some point the Foundation decided, perhaps acting on what it felt was a legitimate instruction, to register the symbol and the word as trademarks.

During this period though, they were not particularly worried about what the Fellowship did regarding these symbols—the word *Urantia* and the circles. The Fellowship used them as trademarks also. The issues of who controlled them or who owned them were not cared about. The five trustees of Urantia Foundation were all on the Executive Committee of the Fellowship. It was hard for the two organizations to be very far apart on this, although of course, the General Council—those thirty-six wild and woolly readers—would, as a whole, disagree with what those five trustees felt. But since those five people had been so long involved in the movement, it was natural that they were in dominant positions and tended to influence thinking.

15. The Licensing Agreement

I guess my point is how everybody was using the symbols, then suddenly the Foundation registered both and the people continued to use them, and then the second part really was, “Well, why do we have the symbols, what are they good for”? And here you get the concern that they might have long-term value and importance as marks of identity that needed some sort of strong protection, and they wanted to take care of that.

A request was made by the Foundation to the Fellowship, essentially by the five Trustees to the fourteen members of the Executive Committee, (of which they constituted five), to enter into a license agreement to use these trademarks subject to the ownership and control of Urantia Foundation.

This was not a particularly big issue; everyone said, "Sure." However after this agreement was made and circulated more widely among the Societies it came to their attention that there was an element in the agreement—it was called *The Confirmatory Agreement*—in which the people who signed the license were saying, “Granted, Urantia Foundation has always owned this symbol and we have always done this under a license from them, and even though we never signed this, we just now got around to it, so it's really been binding from the beginning and not something we just did last month.”

Well, a lot of people, you know I would say maybe somewhere in the range of 10 to 20 percent of the readership, disagreed strongly with the falsehood of this provision. And there was a lot of arguing back and forth but eventually it was settled and pretty much everybody agreed to support the idea that Urantia Foundation had always controlled it.

The essential element leading to consent on the part of the Societies was the assurances that were given by the Trustees—and particularly by the last living member of the contact commission, Emma Christiansen— that these rights that were being assigned to Urantia Foundation would never be used to control or abuse the Fellowship; that this was a relation of trust and something that the Fellowship was doing in order to purify the title to these marks that was held by Urantia Foundation so that the marks would be protected in the world at large.

Unfortunately this then started to be followed by some rather strange episodes. By the mid-1980s the membership of the Foundation had changed somewhat. Emma Christiansen passed away and it became apparent that the trustees no longer felt that they owned these marks in trust with the Fellowship, but rather that they owned them as a way of controlling all uses of the text—and this is simply my opinion derived from my observation of their subsequent actions.

We saw demands made by the President of the Fellowship to rewrite our Constitution in keeping with his idea of how he thought it should be constructed, as opposed to the way the General Council following established procedures had decided to do it. We received orders from the Trustees which essentially—well in our marketing agreement with the Foundation, the Fellowship agreed to advise them on how to most effectively market The Urantia Book to increase its distribution.

The Foundation sent orders to the Fellowship prohibiting the General Council from conducting discussions of marketing of The Urantia Book on pain of cancellation of rights to the use of the trademarks, rights which supposedly had been given to the Foundation by the Fellowship with respect to the agreement not to abuse this relationship.

We received directives from the Foundation stipulating how the election of officers who served the societies should be conducted, and which groups of readers should be considered chartered as societies and which should not be considered as chartered societies. And it was during this period that there developed a lot of irritation over this seeming abuse of the licensing relationship which really had been established, as I said, to give the Foundation the trademarks that had some power in the public arena—they turned it inward and tried to use it to micromanage the social evolution of the movement, at least as it was involved in the Fellowship.

So that's what I mean by peculiar demands from friends.

16. The CUBS Lawsuit

As irritating as that was, the real problems that were emerging came from the Foundation's pursuit of legitimacy of the copyright. The Foundation has arguably copyrighted one of the most plagiarizable books that has ever been published. You know, if someone publishes a work of music they don't automatically expect that everybody on the planet will eventually want to rip it off and make it their own; and yet that's almost the very objective of The Urantia Book.

When you have a copyrighted work that thousands of people want to rip off and use in their own artistic productions, for their own entertainment, to make money or whatever, you have this tremendous enforcement problem if you want to keep that from happening because the more attractive your copyright product is, the harder it will be to keep people from wanting to do those things.

And yet if you want to keep control of it, you have to do that.

So during this period Urantia Foundation was acquiring increasingly large legal bills, partly from lawsuits and partly just for various legal manipulations put in place, protections for the copyright.

This culminated in a body of litigations known as the CUBS lawsuits. CUBS stands for Center for Urantia Book Synergy, a group of readers in Santa Barbara, California, who wanted to be proactive in aggressively putting out The Urantia Book and getting people to read it. The lawsuit was extraordinarily expensive for Urantia Foundation.

The essence was that this bunch of people published a magazine called *The Urantian Synergist* and “Urantian” was a word the Foundation said was its trademark. The folks in Santa Barbara said, “Well it's the name of our religion.”

It would be inappropriate to try to comment on the legalities of it, but a great deal of effort was expended pursuing the lawsuit, taking depositions and so forth. Like most litigation that occurred over such matters, nothing was decided in court, although a lot of legal records were produced that had bearing on the situation. But in the end, settlement agreements were reached which then left open a lot of further opportunity to argue.

The point I'm really getting to from the social end is that, while some people sided with the people who wanted to use the word Urantia in their name, and other people sided with the Foundation who wanted to suppress it, the bottom line was that it cost the Foundation a great deal of money to pursue this lawsuit; according to rumor, something in the vicinity of two-thirds of a million dollars.

The problem I think there was that the Foundation did not have two-thirds of a million dollars to spend on litigating this lawsuit because the funds litigated appeared to have come from the moneys raised by the Fellowship to assure the protection of the printing of The Urantia Book and to fund the Spanish translation. I say "appear to" because one has very limited insight into what actually was going on at this time.

But we do know that there were three Trustees of the five who were extremely disturbed by the way the Foundation was managing its affairs at this time and sought to impose some accountability within the organization, perhaps initially not realizing how serious the problem was.

They were unsuccessful for various reasons, partly due to their own inability to agree on how to impose accountability, and partly because they were opposed by two members of the Board who were quite united in not wanting to be held accountable.

In any case, these three Trustees resigned from the Board and because the trust funds that were in question were governed by obligations of the Foundation to the Fellowship as to how they would be expended, and because the Fellowship itself—the members of the Fellowship—were very divided over the question of the lawsuit, it was natural for the Fellowship to become involved in trying to inquire into what had become of these funds. And in fact it appeared that at the time, the Foundation was not prepared to take on the Spanish translation in spite of having agreed to do so.

This was a serious matter and though the Fellowship perhaps didn't approach this publicly, a very quiet effort was made to get the Foundation, the remaining Trustees, to be accountable for this, to open up discussion of, what is the nature of this problem, let's come clean about the problem, and let's see if we can deal with this problem in constructive ways. No constructive response came back. The Fellowship then decided that because the Foundation could not address this issue, or would not address this issue, it would be difficult to go to the readership and claim that additional funds should be raised to support the work of Urantia Foundation, that the Foundation had in fact accepted a half a million or more dollars and then could not account for what had happened to the money.

17. The Schism

When the General Council announced that unless there was some accountability, and this was done very quietly, unless there was some accountability, it wouldn't be able to pursue joint fund raising. The remaining two Trustees engaged in an activity that, I think is fair to say, was attempted fratricide. They issued legal papers revoking the right of the Fellowship to use the word *Urantia* in its name, revoking the right of the Fellowship to use the three concentric circles symbol as a mark of identity, and then began a campaign of aggressive disinformation about these events which resulted in the publication and distribution to some six thousand people of a seventy page document presenting a view that did not reflect the actual circumstances of what was going on.

The Fellowship, particularly the Executive Committee, felt that the situation was so grievously embarrassing to the movement as a whole that it could not be made public at the present time and therefore consciously decided not to make public the point of what the actual problem was about.

The Foundation then took certain steps to remedy its financial shortfall and clean up its books, but it did this in secret and it did this basically in private through a single large financial gift transfusion from one individual. I think you could argue endlessly about, well, OK, they did clean up their act, but they didn't share their problem with people

who had contributed to the moneys that they were supposed to hold in trust, but they did get it back in line. And so, were the concerns of the Council legitimate, or not?

I think personally, that accountability for the use of donated funds is absolutely essential if you're going to raise funds from the public at large. Had you raised funds from sophisticated donors who had special insight into what you're doing it's another matter. But when you go out to thousands of people and say, "Send us \$25, send us \$50 and so forth," for a specific purpose, you have to have some sense that you're going to be able to back up your fulfillment of that purpose.

And this, you know, this was a crisis. It was a short term crisis of conjurance which possibly could have blown over had the Foundation not chosen at that time in its diminished capacity of only two Trustees to revoke the license that it had previously contracted. And I will say, you know, that my own opinion is that it was an act of extreme bad faith to revoke the license because the Fellowship had never given in any "understanding" or in any legal paperwork the granting of the power of revocation by the Foundation.

There was no documentation and ample testimony couldn't produce proof to show that the Foundation did in fact acquire the power of revocation of the license. Again, one is faced with the unwillingness of the Fellowship as a social organization to expend funds to litigate an issue in which, in a clear sense of the group, they were in the right.

18. An Inviolable Text

I want now to put that behind us for a moment because I brought you historically to the point where the legendary schism occurred between the Fellowship and the Foundation, and try to look for a moment at the current two issues that confront the social development of this movement that seem to be major factors in how these two organizations can participate and work together for the welfare of the revelation somewhat in the future.

One of them is the issue of protection of the text of The Urantia Book, and the other, which I'll discuss, has to do with the word symbol. I'm going to try to keep this short because I'd like to leave some time at the end for you guys to address some issues about going forward. I'm going to try to provide some information and see where we can go with this.

I think a large fraction of readers of The Urantia Book believe there's a tremendous need to have an inviolable text, an accurate text, an un-corrupted text, and I don't mean the argument about where the commas are, or whether there were twelve apostles or eleven

apostles after Judas left, or any of this sort of thing. I mean a text that conveys the basic principles of truth that The Urantia Book presents as The Fifth Epochal Revelation.

The problem in protecting the text is how that should be done. The original idea, as you know, is that it would be copyrighted, *but the problem is that copyright as it exists in the United States, is a legal action that is not oriented toward the protection of the text. The purpose of US copyright is to protect the owner's commercial interest in the work. So the only type of textual corruption that is prohibited under copyright law is essentially the textual corruption that compromises commercial interest for the copyright holder.*

The fact is that copyrights do eventually run out and for a revelation, that some people say is hardly going to even come into its own for a thousand years, a hundred years of copyright is nothing. But all a copyright does is let you go after someone who takes your revelation and competes with you commercially.

Now one of the ideas of how to preserve the text was to get a trademark and put the trademark on every really authentic version of the book and that's the underlying motivation that was given for registering the trademark originally. It was not as a way of regulating the activities of the social organization; it was in order to have a valid trademark to protect and identify an inviolate version of the text.

The advantages of trademarks are they don't run out; the disadvantage of trademarks is that if a lot of people like them and think they're pretty, they quickly pass into what's called generic usage and it becomes increasingly difficult to complain about someone doing something with it that you don't like.

The way you try to prevent that is you go after everybody who does anything with it that you don't like or that you don't approve of, or you didn't give them a license to do. In doing that you create a legal record that shows that you're diligent in enforcing the trademark and that it is your trademark. That has its downsides, and we'll talk about later, but in any case this is about the text.

Now once the Foundation established the copyright they then had to do something about it, and they began to persuade people; and when they couldn't persuade people to do what they wanted they began to litigate. For some reason the initial take seems to have been on trying to handle the copyright the way you would handle a trademark.

Readers were apprised not to quote from the book at all, ever, not to copy out anything from the book. Advice was given to organizers of conferences not to allow quotations to be read aloud from the book unless approved. This is the kind of thing that, you know, if you were doing a television commercial for Pepsi-Cola, and you had a Volkswagen drive through and it was identifiable as a Volkswagen, you would worry about it because

Volkswagen might not want their car, their trademark, appearing in a Pepsi-Cola commercial. But it's very difficult to explain to Urantia book readers how these kinds of concerns matter when their talking about quoting from "The Word of God." Of course I'm putting it in quotes because it's not the word of God, but if it had actually been the word of God engraved on stone tablets, it might have been harder to get a copyright. But then that's what a lot of the argument has been about too.

I think most of you know that this argument over ownership and the litigation about ownership came to a head with the lawsuit between the Foundation and Kristin Maherra finally. Well it hasn't ever gone to trial but, had it gone to trial (unclear). It's never really gone to trial, the issue has never been decided except on an advisory basis by the appellate court but that's (unclear).

19. Fact or Fiction

What I'd like to focus your attention on now is the issue that has come out of copyright litigation in the United States, and that is whether or not The Urantia Book is a work of fiction or a work of nonfiction. And early on the Foundation used to say basically, this is a work of fiction, this is the copyrighted story that Gene Roddenberry wrote when he wasn't working on Star Trek and we own the copyright to it and you cannot make a storyline out of this or do anything with it. Now of course they never said anything remotely like that. They said this is a revealed work of God, just what you think it is, but you can't make a storyline out of it and do something with it.

The problem that came up though is that, under U.S. copyright law, as has been clearly reinforced in the Maherra litigation, if it's a work of fiction you can't take the storyline out of it and do something with it. But if it's not a work of fiction then presumably the factual content of it is up for grabs and you can take that storyline out and rewrite it any way you please--just like you can take a story out of Time magazine and present it in your own words using the facts, the factual content, however you wish. *Copyright law doesn't extend to facts.*

Now in The Urantia Book you have this little problem because most secular people look at it and say, "This is not fact," but at the same time, believers look at it and say, "This is not fiction." The problem is that the text itself presents itself as fact. And I say "what has emerged currently" because, you know, another million dollars and it's going to change.

Because it presents itself as factual, then its content is deemed factual, whether it is actually factual or not. Therefore because it presents itself as factual, its content is not protected as though it were a work of fiction.

But that doesn't mean it's not protected; that just means the story of say, Jesus meeting Andrew on the roadside is not protected by copyright. If Jesus actually did meet Andrew on the roadside, and you recorded it, because you recorded it as fact, the fact of it is not copyrightable. That doesn't mean that the words which were expressed are not copyrightable. It starts to get very unclear, but you see the basic idea.

I mention this because previously the Foundation had worked against the people who had plagiarized the storyline in parts of the book on the theory that it was fiction and therefore they could not do that. I didn't like that the storyline was being plagiarized from it, but the way the legal scales were tilted, if someone wants to take the book and steal the storyline, and put it in their own words or even falsify the storyline, apart from its true meaning, they are not particularly vulnerable to copyright law.

I'm not saying that you couldn't go sue them and get it into court and spend a lot of money and make them stop, but that doesn't mean that the balance of the law would support that easily. It could be very expensive and might not succeed. So that's why I bring up the rights of plagiarizers and falsifiers. You could say they shouldn't have any rights because you want to keep the text inviolate, but the current situation is that the more you screw up the text, in a sense the less vulnerable you are to action on the legal level. On the other hand, you're going to get it when you get to the mansion worlds but presumably you don't care about that if you're plagiarizing and falsifying.

20. Fair Use and Permitted Use

I want to point out a couple of things about sticking true to the text. The Foundation has in the last year or so developed a policy of “permitted use.” People have confused this with the concept of “fair use.” There is a legal concept in copyright law of “fair use” that says that if I publish a book, there are certain types of uses of the text—though very limited in nature—that are protected by law. The copyright clause does not give the copyright owner absolute control over everything that's done to the text. But in fact almost everything Urantia Foundation complained about with the readership in the early years fell under “fair use.”

You may say that they had a moral right to complain but at no time did they ever have a legal right to complain about the abuses that were being perpetrated. I'm talking about the limited uses like in quotes in conference presentations and things like this.

There's a difference though between permitted use and fair use. Fair use is guaranteed by law and the Foundation had no say as to what constitutes fair use. On the other hand you don't necessarily know what fair use is because when you read copyright law it's gobble gobble gobble, and it talks about a degree of partiality, degree of duplication of work, use for education or research purposes only, use for criticism only—there are very limited things that fall into this category of fair use. But within fair use if the preponderance of your usage falls in this category, copyright law says that's legitimate.

It is not my business to say what any particular instance might or might not be fair use. If you're going to create a work based on The Urantia Book and you're concerned about whether it falls under fair use you better make a call, you better consult a lawyer, or you can take the alternative course, which is to go with policies of “permitted use” where the Foundation actually says to you, it's okay to do that; we approve of that; we don't necessarily approve what you say, but we, it's okay for you to use our book that way. And in this case they're acting and this is something over which they have control.

Rumors say that the Foundation has been very generous with people, certainly compared to times past, in saying, yeah, go ahead and do it as long as you quote it accurately. The book is available from many sources on the Internet. I do not know of any Internet publication that is done by permission of the Foundation; nor has the fair use status of the Internet publication been litigated in a qualified court. And beyond that, all I would say is, there's the fact that it's out there.

There are certain paths by which a work can be used even though it's copyrighted. And those instances may or may not fall into one of these categories. But, you know, the essence of this sort of thing is that in any given moment there are going to be a lot of things that don't match up, and various parties and different interests may seek to make the situation more rational by bringing in or forming some policy.

21. As a Practical Matter

I'll make a comment about Internet publication that has nothing to do with The Urantia Book. It may be a bit of a parallel but I'm really just making a general comment. There are people with almost infinitely more resources than Urantia Foundation who have copyrighted works of art and science to which the claim of ownership is infinitely stronger than the claim of Urantia Foundation's copyright for The Urantia Book because these are in fact works of fiction. There are in fact works of crap that are, in some cases, even patentable objects. And these things are being placed and distributed on the Internet outside these people's control every day and they have been unable with all of the armaments of law to do anything about it because as soon as they shut down one distributor another one springs up.

They are distributed from places outside the United State's jurisdiction, they are distributed in the U.S. by people who are just simply into disobedience of these things. And I'm not talking about The Urantia Book at all. This has nothing to do with the copyright of The Urantia Book. I'm just saying that there are companies like Segoe, Nintendo, Microsoft, and so forth, who have been unable with all of their resources to prevent the free dissemination and unlimited distribution of works over which they have unquestionable title to ownership.

So as a practical matter I would say, the problem that the Foundation would face if it sought to by force do something about the Internet situation, it's just not within their ability to do it. If enough people want to defy the situation—and that's really what it comes down to you see—I mean, it's a matter of if people want to cooperate with a particular policy then the policy is easier to maintain.

Transcribed by Maria Downing, September 7th, 2012

Editor's note: On June 20, 2001, the Oklahoma City Federal Court ruled that the U.S. copyright to The Urantia Book was in the public domain. A subsequent appeal was denied.