

“NO HUMAN BEING WILL EVER KNOW THE TRUTH, FOR EVEN IF THEY HAPPENED TO SAY IT BY CHANCE, THEY WOULD NOT KNOW THEY HAD DONE SO.” - XENOPHANES

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A JEWISH GIRL FINDS JESUS

By Bobbie Dreier, Fort Lee, NJ

This article is adapted from presentations given in Oklahoma City in August 2001 and in Chicago, (What's a Nice Jewish Girl Like Me Doing in a Place Like This?) in October 2001.

Every year as far back as I can remember I went to the synagogue for the whole day with my dad on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. I sat in the back in the women's gallery with my grandmother. Like Jews all over the world, we went to pray for forgiveness from God for all our sins against him, to repent and be released from some unknown punishment. We prayed and we fasted all day long. If God was merciful we were inscribed in the Book of Life for another year. I never knew exactly what would happen if we weren't inscribed, but I guessed that the people who died that year had not been forgiven.

Judaism is a religion that is based on the law, the law of God presented to Moses at Mount Sinai. Many Jewish people think of God as the Lord God of Israel. He is a just God and he expects his law to be followed. When God is disobeyed, he is fearful and punishing. Did he not banish Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and subject women forever after to pain in childbirth, turn Lot's wife to a pillar of salt, and destroy all life on the earth except for Noah's family and an arkful of animals? And on Passover Jews praise God for sending devastating plagues on the Egyptians including the destruction of their first born sons. The Old Testament is filled with the stories of God's laws and his wrath.

In Paper 96, "Yahweh God of the Hebrews," a Melchizedek of Nebadon tells us that in spite of Moses' valiant efforts to assure the fleeing Hebrews that God loved them and would not forsake or destroy them, they were also told during a cataclysmic volcanic explosion of Mount Sinai that "*their God was mighty, terrible, a devouring fire, and all-powerful.*" [96:4.5,6] (P. 1057) Although there is much evidence of a God who loves his people in the Old Testament, the idea of a just and powerful God is the one that persists. The Ten Commandments given to Moses at Mount Sinai are mostly "Thou shalt nots" and the Mosaic law consists of 613 laws that Orthodox Jews obey to this day. The traditions are very powerful and I grew up imagining a bearded king in the clouds who was watching me and waiting for me to slip up.

I always had a deep consciousness of my Jewishness. I was culturally conditioned and thought I was religious. My dad had an orthodox Jewish upbringing and a very strong Jewish identity. He wanted my mother to keep the orthodox religious traditions that he had grown up with in our home. Some of those included "keeping the Sabbath holy," lighting Sabbath candles and keeping a kosher home. "Keeping kosher" involves a strict set of dietary laws requiring separate

silverware, dishes, and cookware for meat meals and dairy meals. It is forbidden to eat milk products and meat together because of a Mosaic law that states: "Thou shalt not eat the flesh of a kid in its mother's milk." There is also a long list of forbidden foods including pork products and shellfish. My mom didn't light Sabbath candles or keep a kosher home but we ate no pork or shrimp, never had milk products and meat together, and I saw my dad get violently ill after he learned that a roasted chicken he had eaten was basted in butter. He believed with all his heart that he should spend the Sabbath at the synagogue (the Fifth Commandment says: "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy") but he was employed as a retail merchant in a children's clothing store, and Saturday was the busiest shopping day. The stores were closed on Sunday so Christians could go to church but Saturday was a work day. Like Matadormus and the Jews of old, he was raised to believe that wealth was the token of God's favor. He believed he never prospered because he disobeyed God by not keeping the Sabbath.

My dad was sixteen when he came to America from Poland with his mother on a steamship in steerage with one bag. They had lived in a little village called Kowel. (I imagine it to be something like Tevya's village.) His grandfather was a traveling rabbi and there was great joy in the village when he was home. He went to the synagogue schools, spoke Yiddish and Hebrew at home and Polish in public. He told me how he had been taunted and abused by soldiers who often rode through the village. He never knew if they were Polish, Russian, or German, but he believed they were Christians. They shouted, "Christ-killer" "Jud de Palestina" (Jew go to Palestine) as they passed, and they often cut off the beards of the old men with their swords. When he was very young he saw one of them cut off part of his grandfather's chin with his sword. He learned to spit three times when he passed a church "tu-tu-tu." He lived in fear of Christians.

He knew first hand of rampant anti-Semitism; he experienced the persecution generated by Jew-hating Poles, Russians, and Germans, and continued hearing about the pogroms in Europe from relatives who managed to get out by the late 30s. Hitler's "final solution" to the elimination of the Jews resulted in the horrors of the Holocaust and my dad and most of the people he knew lost many family members. It was very important to him that his children maintained the faith and survived as Jews.

When my parents were able to buy their first house

it was in what they called a “non-Jewish” neighborhood. I was the only Jewish kid in the school. I knew so little about Christianity that I missed getting 100% on a language test because I answered that the word “monk” could be male or female. I thought “monk” was a short way of saying monkey. In class we celebrated Easter by decorating eggs to take home and Christmas by making decorations and gifts for our families. All my friends went to church on Sunday. It all seemed perfectly normal to me. But not to my dad.

So he made sure I spent a lot of time at the synagogue. After school on Tuesdays and Thursdays I went to Hebrew School, on Friday nights we went to the Sabbath service, on Saturdays I went to “Junior Congregation” while the adults who were off on Saturday were in the synagogue, and on Sundays I went to Sunday School. I learned to read and write Hebrew phonetically so I could participate in the rituals of the synagogue service. They were conducted in Hebrew and I participated fully without ever understanding a word. I also wrote “Merry Christmas” phonetically in Hebrew on the chalkboard when my third grade teacher

because the high value Jews placed on education was always evident. My parents sacrificed many pleasures to save enough money to put three kids through college. I enjoyed celebrating all the holidays with family and participated in all the events at the synagogue. My father’s hope was that I would maintain the traditions, become a leader in the Jewish community, perhaps the head of a National Jewish Women’s organization. I was happy with my life and my religion. The problem was that I knew nothing about who God really was, nothing about the spirit within, nothing about doing God’s will, and I thought about him only when I was doing something wrong.

One Christmas I went to a church service at midnight with a friend. We were seated at the front of a balcony. The service was unfamiliar, but magical and I was totally engaged. Suddenly the preacher was looking at me and shouting: “Have you been saved? Have you taken Jesus as your Lord and Master?” And then he was yelling: “Come down, confess your sins and take Jesus as your savior.” I thought he was talking directly to me and I was scared out of

JESUS’ LOVE IS IRRESISTIBLE. HE WAS GOD’S LOVE REVEALED AND IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PERSONAL EXPRESSION OF GOD ON EARTH.

was doing a lesson on how Christmas was celebrated in other lands. It didn’t occur to me that Jews in Israel didn’t say “Merry Christmas.” I engaged in many mindless rituals, which unlike Jesus, I didn’t question. As prescribed, I kissed the mezuzah (a religious object on the door post of Jewish homes) and said to myself: “*The Lord shall preserve our going out and our coming in, from this time forth and even forevermore.*” [124: 4.7] (P. 1372) I never wrote out the word God because it was forbidden. I wrote G-d. I wore a Jewish star around my neck and studied to become a “daughter of the covenant” (a bat mitzvah) when I was thirteen. I learned all the Old Testament Bible Stories and believed they were true. I’m embarrassed that when I was in a ninth grade biology class and the teacher asked how life began I unhesitatingly said: “with Adam and Eve.”

At the time I thought that doing those things was my religion. I realize now, however, that my experience of being Jewish was more social, cultural, and political than religious. My Hebrew School lessons were filled with politics. I was totally immersed in the excitement when Israel officially became the Jewish homeland. The Jews finally had a home, a land where they would be free from persecution. And my studies were filled with morality. I developed a sense of righteousness and of guilt and duty. I was a good student

my mind. I wondered how he knew I was Jewish and that I didn’t believe in Jesus.

Of course, I was not about to believe in Jesus. Like Mary and Joseph up to the time Jesus was twelve years old, I could never have “*even faintly dreamed that Jesus was indeed and in truth the actual creator of this local universe of things and beings.*” [124:4.4] (P. 1372) Jewish people just don’t believe in Jesus as divine. First of all, the belief in one God is a certainty in Judaism. Jews KNOW that there simply are not any other gods, especially one who died on a cross and came back to life in three days. They obey the First Commandment: “I am the Lord thy God and thou shalt have no other gods before me.” In fact, as *Urantia Book* readers know, the belief in one God is the revelation of Melchizedek and the legacy of Abraham and Moses. The most important Jewish prayer, the Sh’ma, (“Sh’ma Yisrael, Adonoi Elohaynu, Adonoi Echad Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one”) is the first prayer that is taught to Jewish children and the last one uttered before one dies. It is repeated many times daily at synagogue services all over the world. It was certainly repeated by Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth and in the Temple at Jerusalem. The “Sh’ma” was the answer Jesus gave to one of the Pharisees who while trying to entrap him asked: “*Which is the greatest commandment?*” *Jesus answered:*

“There is but one commandment, and that one is the greatest of all, and that commandment is: ”Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one...” [174:4.2] (P. 1901)

Secondly, “Jesus” is kind of a bad word in most Jewish households. The persecutions during the Spanish Inquisition, the Crusades, the pogroms, the Holocaust, widespread anti-Semitism, and much of the suffering that Jews have experienced is in some way laid at the feet of Jesus. They make no distinction between Christianity and Jesus. And finally, there is the feeling of the need to perpetuate the race. Today the Jewish population is approximately 13.5 million and some fear that the downward trend indicates that Jews may disappear in a few generations. Jews fear assimilation, intermarriage, and especially conversion to Christianity.

No, I was not about to believe in Jesus. But I had lots of Christian friends and I liked everybody. It never occurred to me to think who was Jewish and who was not. However, it concerned my parents that I was dating “gentiles.” In spite of their constant efforts to make me go out with Jewish boys I liked the Italian boys and my dad was very worried that I would fall in love and marry a non-Jewish man. His concern was so great that he uprooted our family and moved to Teaneck, a town that was not “restricted” and had a sizable Jewish population. There I would likely meet a nice Jewish boy and get married. I did! I met Steve almost immediately and six years later we had a big Jewish wedding.

emotional change in him that seemed very real. In spite of all the chaos and conflict around us, he was peaceful. And it lasted, and I knew he had found something really important. So in spite of the fact that the book had something to do with Jesus (and the idea frightened me very much) I began to read it too. And it was in the pages of *The Urantia Book* that I first found Jesus.

At first I saw that there was much about his young life that I could relate to personally. Like me, as a child he lived in a place that was more gentile than Jewish and spent lots of time in the synagogue. He engaged in the same rituals (although he questioned their meanings, which I never did) and celebrated the same Jewish holidays. He celebrated Hannukah, the Festival of Lights commemorating the dedication of the Temple after the victory of the Macabbees; Purim, the feast of Esther and Israel’s deliverance through her; Passover, the commemoration of the escape from Egypt and the sparing of Jewish first born sons; Succoth, the feast of the first fruits and the harvest ingathering; and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Like most Jewish boys he was circumcised eight days after birth, and like Steve, and our son Marc, who were first born sons like Jesus, he was ritually redeemed from sacrifice in a temple ceremony. Like Jewish boys the world over, when Jesus graduated from the course of training at the synagogue he was pronounced a “son of the commandment” (bar mitzvah). This is a very big

MY DAD DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY. I AM A JEW. BELIEF IN THE DIVINITY OF JESUS IS NOT CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY.

So how did I come to see Jesus as divine? I was on the way to fulfilling my earthly father’s dream. I believed I was Cinderella and I had married the prince. But our early years together were very difficult. In the first year Steve’s dad died suddenly and tragically and we became responsible for his despondent mom and sixteen-year-old sister. I had intended to teach while Steve finished graduate school, but we had an unplanned baby and I was unable to continue teaching full-time. I found my mother-in-law to be very emotionally needy and demanding, and I was young and immature and didn’t handle things well. There was lots of conflict and sadness and life was not the fairy tale I had imagined it would be.

I was confused, unhappy, and not coping well, but Steve was searching. He was searching for meaning and he was searching for truth. For many years he had studied philosophers and truth seekers, explored many paths and contemplated the meaning of life. I went along for the ride, but solutions to our problems were not forthcoming and the quality of life didn’t improve very much. Then he found and began to read *The Urantia Book* and I saw a significant

occasion today for most Jewish boys.

When his mother joined him on his Passover trip to the Temple for his consecration as a son of the commandment she was made to sit in the women’s gallery. I remembered the little synagogue where I sat in the back balcony with my grandmother. Women took no part in the religious life of the Jews in Jesus’ time, and are still segregated from the men in Orthodox synagogues today. For almost 4000 years when orthodox men recite the morning prayer, they have prayed: “Blessed art thou the Eternal Our God, King of the Universe who hath not made me a woman.” Jesus’ treatment of women shocked the apostles, but *“he made it very clear to them that women were to be accorded equal rights with men in the kingdom.” [138:8.11] (P. 1546)* As a young man, in spite of the fact *“that girls of Jewish families received little education, but Jesus maintained...that girls should go to school the same as boys, and since the synagogue school would not receive them, there was nothing to do but conduct a home school especially for them (his sisters).” [127:1.5] (P.1396)* That endeared him to me.

He openly and graciously shared his relationship

with his Father in heaven. He knew him to be kind and compassionate, loving and merciful, a Father who loved each of his children personally and affectionately. It was so different from my vision of a powerful God of judgment and anger. I loved when he had his little talks with him. I began to try it myself instead of mindlessly repeating the 23rd Psalm or the “Our Father.” God didn’t talk back to me, but I began to realize that he was there, and that he was my friend—not my judge. I began to love God instead of fear him, and ask him what he wanted me to do, and not be afraid to do it. I began to have a relationship with God and Jesus was teaching me how, and when I was in doubt about what God wanted, Jesus was there to show me the way. He was the way.

Because of him my marriage improved. I realized that if there were problems to solve I needed to look inside myself for the power of goodness to make the changes, not to the supposed wrongdoer. The story of Jesus and Anaxand in Caesarea made a profound impact on me. My son Marc doesn’t know it, but I became a more competent and caring mother by learning from Jesus who was the master parent to his brothers and sisters.

Because of Jesus I noticed that my teaching was changing. I began to look more for the children’s motives than at their behavior. I tried to give them what they needed before they asked rather than as a reward for good behavior.

His fatherly treatment of aggressors helped me to see aggressive parents at school in a new way. Our district had been accused of “institutional racism” and white teachers were under scrutiny and attack by many black parents. One day I was summoned to meet with a single mom who had just moved to town and whose son was to be in my class. She pointed her finger at me and yelled threateningly, “I know about this district and I know the law and I don’t expect my son to get a fair shake and I’ll be watching you.” It was a scary moment, my heart was pounding, and I took a deep breath and prayed: “Help me Father,” and then I heard myself say to her, “Nickolas is one lucky boy to have an advocate like you in his corner. I can’t imagine what my life would have been like if my mom cared about me the way you care about him.” She was completely disarmed and we became friends and partners in Nickolas’ education. I realized later it was the Spirit of Truth speaking and I knew then for the first time what it meant that Jesus would always be with me in times of trouble. And he is.

My dad didn’t have to worry. I am a Jew. Belief in the divinity of Jesus is not conversion to Christianity. It is a deepening of faith in God. Jesus kept all that was fine and beautiful in the Jewish teachings and enlarged the concept of God’s nature through his life. He asked his followers to believe with him, not in him. I was inspired by his teachings but I was won over by the life he lived. Jesus’ love is irresistible. He was God’s love revealed and is the most beautiful personal

expression of God on earth. Because of him I know I am a beloved child of God. And that’s simply divine!

Bobbie Dreier is a retired teacher and the grandmother of Matthew and Jason. Bobbie and her husband Steve recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. Currently president of The Urantia Book Society of Greater New York, she has been actively involved in Urantia Book activities with Steve for over 30 years.

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PRAYER FROM ANOTHER WORLD

Glorious Father and Mother, in one parent combined,
Loyal would we be to your divine nature.
Your own self to live again in and through us
By the gift and bestowal of your divine spirit,
Thus reproducing you imperfectly in this sphere
As you are perfectly and majestically shown on high.
Give us day by day your sweet ministry of brotherhood
And lead us moment by moment in the pathway of
loving service.
Be you ever and unflinching patient with us
Even as we show forth your patience to our children.
Give us the divine wisdom that does all things well
And the infinite love that is gracious to every creature.
Bestow upon us your patience and loving-kindness
That our charity may enfold the weak of the realm.
And when our career is finished, make it an honor
to your name, a pleasure to your good spirit, and a
satisfaction to our soul helpers.
Not as we wish, our loving Father, but as you desire the
eternal good of your mortal children,
Even so may it be. [144:5.6] (P. 1623)

RUMINATIONS ON REVELATION

By Steven Hecht, Acton, MA

(Presented at the New York/New England Readers' Conference, November, 2002)

Since the bulk of Matthew Block's material has yet to be published, it is far too early to try and form conclusions regarding the pedagogy of the revelators. But I believe we can begin to react to the generic fact of the human sources, even if we don't know or necessarily agree about all the particulars. Of course we "knew" that human sources existed because the book says so, but the scope and profundity of the reality has only recently come to light. I hope to take advantage of the surprise and disconcertment Matthew's and Steve Dreier's research has caused among the readership in order to explore some crucial and interesting issues regarding our relationship to revelation. The new information about human sources has caused many to reassess certain of their ideas about the sources and the contents of the book. What I am about to say might prove useful to a more accurate and inspiring understanding of revelation in general and epochal revelation in particular.

Autorevelation is defined on page 1109 [101:4.3] as "a result of the work of the indwelling Adjuster; epochal revelation when it is presented by the function of some other celestial agency, group, or personality." I will be focusing on epochal revelation, although it is not always clear as to whether the authors are distinguishing between auto and epochal revelation in their statements. It seems to me that many of their characterizations about revelation are equally applicable to both types. There is a continual interaction between auto and epochal revelation, and this happens in only one place—the mindal arena of human beings.

Towards the end of Paper 85, "The Origins of Worship," a Brilliant Evening Star tells us: "In the course of revelation the Gods formulate religion. Evolutionary religion creates its gods in the image and likeness of mortal man; revelatory religion seeks to evolve and transform mortal man into the image and likeness of God." [85:6.3] (P. 948)

This idea regarding revelation seems to conform to the Western tradition: revelation forms human religion; human religion depends on revelation for its form and content. This might be called the "top-down" model for contemplating the meaning and function of revelation. Humanity is the clay and revelation the potter; humanity is passive, revelation active. Moses receiving the tablets containing the Ten Commandments is an archetype for this understanding.

But, as with most things in the book, at least one other perspective on the matter is presented. In speaking about how Paul formed Christianity out of Hellenistic philosophy and religion and the teachings of the fourth

epochal revelation, the Brilliant Evening Star states: "His theologic compromises indicate that even revelation must submit to the graduated control of evolution." [89:9.3] (P. 984) And we are told elsewhere: "Always must the religion of revelation be limited by man's capacity of receptivity." So "must such divine visitations portray teachings which are not too far removed from the thought and reactions of the age in which they are presented." [92:4.1] (P. 1007)

Once the revelators state that revelation "must submit to the graduated control of evolution," it becomes easier to understand why they were mandated at all times to give priority to the evolutionary expression of human concepts rather than "pure revelation" from transcendent sources. So, at this point, we can understand how revelation is both a "top-down" operation and a "bottom-up" one as well. The traditional "top-down-only" notion of revelation can be likened to a one-way street. The model offered and demonstrated by the fifth epochal revelation is that of a two-way street. This second and more progressive model allows the fact of revelation to bring us out of a feudal paradigm (where our celestial ministrators are our lords and we are their servants) to where we can see ourselves as witting and/or unwitting collaborators. In fact, the very word "collaborate" is used to describe how "Melchizedek continued to collaborate throughout the nineteen succeeding centuries with the many prophets and seers, thus endeavoring to keep alive the truths of Salem until the fullness of the time for Michael's appearance on earth." [93:10.4] (P.1024) The results of some of this collaboration can be found in the most inspiring books of the Old Testament, works that did an inspired job of restating the truths brought by the third epochal revelation.

This notion of collaboration in producing revelation brings up a couple of interesting points. First, epochal and autorevelation are really two aspects of the same general phenomenon—revelation—and that is why they can keep feeding one another. This is probably already obvious to most of us, for we are told that the autorevelation of the shepherd boy became part of the Hebrew scriptures carrying forward the truth, beauty, and goodness of the teachings of Melchizedek. The intimate relationship between epochal and autorevelation is again emphasized when a Mighty Messenger tells us that too much "conceptual expansion would hardly be desirable as it would deprive the thinking mortals of the next thousand years of that stimulus to creative speculation which these partially revealed concepts supply. It is best that man not have an overrevelation; it stifles imagination." [30:0.2] (P. 330)

The metaphor of revelation as a two-way street can

be morphed into the image of a traffic circle, or rotary as we call them in Massachusetts. In order to keep that rotary moving—in order for revelation to stay both progressive and evolutionary (as stated on page 1007)—the flow of auto- and epochal revelation must continue to feed into the rotary in a regular and balanced manner. If epochal revelation is not complemented by an adequate degree of increased human receptivity for autorevelation, then we have the problem that was just discussed, called “overrevelation” and the attendant circumstance of stifled human imagination—indeed, a terrible curse for any generation. If autorevelation takes place without a suitable cosmic framework for understanding, the risk is greatly increased so “*as to precipitate a convulsion of fanaticism or to initiate some other intellectual upheaval which results disastrously.*” [110:4.5] (P. 1207)

I would not be surprised if our planetary administrators keep tabs on the symmetry of the global interface between epochal and autorevelation. Now that we have so recently received an epochal input into planetary culture and religion, perhaps our celestial caretakers are anticipating a compensatory improvement in Urantians’ capacity to

themselves the result of autorevelation. So, autorevelation (itself enhanced by exposure to previous epochal revelation) gives rise to written, inspired insights capable of being included in current epochal revelation. This current epochal revelation is intended to inspire us to use our imaginations in such a way as to accomplish the revelation’s own purposes into the future. And so, the circle of revelation continues to turn, and this is the engine that will take Urantia to the age of light and life.

Matthew’s investigations have revealed just how crucial the editing and compilation process was when it came to utilizing human sources. In other words, the revelators did not use any source uncritically; every human source was edited, interpreted, and contextualized into the broader presentation of the revelation. Matt often comments about how beautiful the authors’ editing, interpretation, and contextualizing are. The revelators take human concepts and expressions and use their own creative forces of imagination and intelligence to mold a revelatory platform that can support the continued evolution of human civilization and religion. And now the ball is in our court as we are asked to use this platform

THE NEW INFORMATION ABOUT HUMAN SOURCES HAS CAUSED MANY TO REASSESS CERTAIN OF THEIR IDEAS ABOUT THE SOURCES AND THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK.

maintain sure and steady communication with their Thought Adjusters. It is interesting to note that our celestial friends are willing to withhold epochal revelation in the interest of promoting the human imagination. The capacity for the human imagination to increase receptivity for autorevelation among individuals could be the topic of another essay. Perhaps the revelators are waiting to see how and when we apply our newly fortified imaginations so as to enhance the global effects of the very revelation that has stimulated them! Epochal revelation is capable of improving the ability of our superconscious to receive and express autorevelation. As our imaginations receive the fuel of inspiration from autorevelation, we can become more effective in spreading the good news of epochal revelation in all its truth, goodness, and beauty. This is the kind of work Melchizedek did with the Hebrew prophets and poets, the kind of work he did to help instigate the global religious revival of the sixth century, B.C. Anyone game for that? Our imaginations can work socially, politically, economically, ecologically, technologically, artistically, philosophically, ethically, and religiously—at least for starters!

The circle of revelation can express the insight that the human sources in the fifth epochal revelation were

to engage our interpretive abilities in order to open the revelation to our planet’s evolutionary predicaments and contemporary conditions. These predicaments are in the social and artistic realms, the political and religious, the ethical and the intellectual, to name just a few. Studying the book for the book’s sake will soon make the revelation an anachronism, in my opinion. Of course, opening the book to the world is best done in how we live our lives and how we treat others; however, I do want to focus on the issue of imagination and the creation of what we have typically called “secondary sources.”

As Jesus told Nathaniel, revelation is not a gift limited to any one generation. The rotary of revelation described above—the continuous interaction of epochal and autorevelation—means that new revelatory wine is always being pressed by humans to nurture and intoxicate other humans. Jesus tells us not to be satisfied with keeping new revelatory wine in the same old wineskins because revelation is evolutionary and progressive. Can we really be satisfied with placing new religious insights into the old wineskins of expression of our beloved written revelation, especially now that we know that many of those expressive forms are themselves human? I have little doubt that the revelators

were mandated to use human expressions whenever possible so that people like us would be less tempted to treat them as if they were written on stone tablets. I also have little doubt that the human sources were oh-so-easy to find by the first person really interested in looking for them for the same reason. Matt's work has taken the revelation off of its transcendent pedestal a notch or two, and in my opinion that is exactly what the Revelatory Commission intended.

Why did they intend this? Because the river is not the riverbed; truth is living and indestructible, even as it inspires and reflects the insights provided by the intoxicating mixture of human imagination and autorevelation. The revelators had no qualms about seamlessly mixing (contaminating?) the presentation of pure revelation with the most advanced evolutionary human thought and expression available at the time.

I am proposing that we continue to fearlessly mix (contaminate!) the conceptual truth, beauty, and goodness presented in the fifth epochal revelation with progressive contemporary work in science, philosophy, religion, art, etc. Since a written epochal revelation is unable to continually present truth in keeping with the most advanced "thought and reactions of the age," it falls upon reader-believers like us to ensure that the truths presented by epochal revelation remain both evolutionary and progressive. That entails their interpretation and restatement in light of contemporary thinking, and the creation of "secondary" works in order to do so. The best of these secondary works will bear the fruits of the imagination as inspired by autorevelation even as they demonstrate the ability to renew the truths of epochal revelation.

Would this kind of attempt mean that we are trying to create new truths, truths not contained in *The Urantia Book*? The first question to ask is whether mortals can ever "create truth." This is not the place to fully treat that question, but suffice it to say that God is the source of all truth and that truth is defined through our living it. The laws of life are in our living. Perhaps it is safe to say that truth-making is a collaborative effort for deity and humankind, symbolized and actualized by the Supreme. We know that we cannot create any truth not already sourced in God. So, can any truth be new? Sure it can, at least to us. Is it new to God? I think it can be, depending on how it is concretely actualized in our lives. Truth can come alive through us, be sourced in God, and still be new to God—thanks to the Supreme.

Well, I seem to have gotten off-track here—but not by much. The point in bringing up new truth in light of Supreme deity is that we shouldn't be frightened by new truth. We are explicitly told not to discount truth because of its apparent human source. (That word "apparent" contains a lovely ambiguity about the divine source and human sources of truth!) This admonition is quite relevant when we consider the many truths provided to the revelation by

human sources. It is also relevant to the truths now entering the world from contemporary human sources, truths not fully conceptualized and not expressed in *The Urantia Book*. The revelators tell us not to discount those truths, or their human sources. That is why it is crucial that *Urantia Book* readers open the revelation to the new truths of the world—scientific, philosophical, theological, religious, artistic, etc.—for that is the only way the world will open to the revelation. In order to open the revelation to the new truths of the world, we must put time and energy into learning and appreciating those truths, and then go on to integrate and associate new truth with the truth-expression of the revelation. Such learning and appreciation will no doubt stretch and strain our connection to the expressions used in the fifth epochal revelation—but that is where our imaginations do their invaluable work. In my opinion, we really have no choice if we want this revelation to stay relevant for each and every generation; the only alternative is to have a sacred book that is a jewel and an anachronism. The sterling example of how not to fear, avoid, or deny new truths from human sources—and how to fully integrate them with, and as, revelation is provided by the fifth epochal revelation itself.

The future of the truths expressed in *The Urantia Book* depends in part on the ability of each generation of readers to understand, interpret, restate, and recreate those truths, and in that process we will unavoidably find and create new ones. Just as the Revelatory Commission exploited the wide-ranging vanguard of contemporary progressive thinking in order to spiritually expand evolutionary religion and cosmology, we must courageously and continually engage with our contemporaries in order to better keep revelation alive for truth seekers everywhere.

In closing, I would like to remind everyone of how the Master expressed his balanced appreciation for the ever-steady value of "old" truth while maintaining a fearless openness for the advent of the new.

Then the Master proceeded to warn his hearers against entertaining the notion that all olden teaching should be replaced entirely by new doctrines. Said Jesus: "*That which is old and also true must abide. Likewise, that which is new but false must be rejected. But that which is new and also true, have the faith and courage to accept. Remember it is written: 'Forsake not an old friend, for the new is not comparable to him. As new wine, so is a new friend; if it becomes old, you shall drink it with gladness.'*" [147:7.3] (P. 1656)

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SAFEGUARDING THE SYMBOLS OF URANTIAN FAITH

By David Kantor, Sebastopol, CA

This essay is based almost entirely upon ideas found in theologian Paul Tillich's book, *Dynamics of Faith*.

THE MEANING OF SYMBOL

The authors of *The Urantia Book* comment at [100:6.1](P. 1100) that, "*Religion is not a specific function of life; rather is it a mode of living. True religion is a wholehearted devotion to some reality which the religionist deems to be of supreme value to himself and for all mankind.*" In his theological writing, Paul Tillich uses the term "ultimate concern" to symbolize what *The Urantia Book* is referring to as "wholehearted devotion."

Tillich contends that our "ultimate concern" must be expressed symbolically, because symbolic language alone is able to express the ultimate, which we can experientially know (through worship) as being far beyond word or description. This statement demands explanation in several respects. In spite of the manifold research about the meaning and function of symbols that is going on in contemporary philosophy, every writer who uses the term "symbol" must explain his understanding of it.

Consider the comment made by the revelators at [112: 2.7](P. 1228): "*As mind pursues reality to its ultimate analysis, matter vanishes to the material senses but may still remain real to mind. When*

else. The red sign at the street corner points to the order to stop the movements of cars at certain intervals. A red light and the stopping of cars have essentially no relation to each other, but in common usage they may be united as long as such a convention is maintained by participating persons. The same is true of letters and numbers and sometimes even of words—they point beyond themselves to sounds and meanings. They are given this special function by convention within a nation or by international conventions, such as agreement regarding mathematical signs. Sometimes such signs are called symbols; but this is unfortunate because it makes the distinction between signs and symbols more difficult. Decisive is the fact that signs do not participate in the reality of that to which they point (stop signs), while symbols do (a mandala or the cross of Christianity). Therefore, signs can be replaced for reasons of expediency or convention, while symbols cannot. The second characteristic of the symbol then, is that it participates in that to which it points by evoking a response from deeper levels of mind, as contrasted with a sign that merely asks us to recognize a

THE SYMBOL MEDIATES THE PRESENCE OF THE DIVINE TO THE MORTAL MIND, BUT THE SYMBOL IS TRANSCENDED ONCE CONSCIOUSNESS EMBRACES THE REALITY TO WHICH THE SYMBOL POINTS.

spiritual insight pursues that reality which remains after the disappearance of matter and pursues it to an ultimate analysis, it vanishes to mind, but the insight of spirit can still perceive cosmic realities and supreme values of a spiritual nature. Accordingly does science give way to philosophy, while philosophy must surrender to the conclusions inherent in genuine spiritual experience. Thinking surrenders to wisdom, and wisdom is lost in enlightened and reflective worship."

The symbol may be understood as that which occupies mind as it begins to make the transit from thought to worship. In various cultures these sacred symbols may take an almost endless variety of forms from dance to passages contained in a sacred text. The symbol mediates the presence of the divine to the mortal mind, but the symbol is transcended once consciousness embraces the reality to which the symbol points.

Symbols have one characteristic in common with signs in that they point beyond themselves to something

socially contrived convention.

The third characteristic of a symbol is that it opens up levels of reality that otherwise are closed for us. All arts create symbols for a level of reality that cannot be reached in any other way. Music, a painting, or a poem may reveal elements of reality that cannot be approached scientifically or through logical deduction. In the creative work of art we encounter reality in a dimension that is closed for us without such works.

The symbol's fourth characteristic not only opens up dimensions and elements of reality that otherwise would remain unapproachable, but also unlocks dimensions and elements of our soul that correspond to the dimensions and elements of reality. A great play gives us not only a new vision of the human scene, but opens up hidden depths of our own being. Thus, we are able to receive what the play reveals to us in reality. There are within us dimensions of

which we cannot become aware except through symbols, such as those that are brought into consciousness by certain melodies and rhythms in music.

The fifth characteristic of sacred symbols is that they cannot be produced intentionally. They grow out of the individual or collective unconscious and cannot function without being accepted by the unconscious dimension of our being. Symbols that have an especially social function, as political and religious symbols, are created or at least accepted by the collective unconscious of the group in which they appear.

The sixth and last characteristic of the symbol is a consequence of the fact that symbols cannot be invented. Like living beings, they grow and they die. They grow when

In this context, it should be kept in mind that one's ultimate concern is, by definition, that central concern relative to which all other values and meanings of both the personal and social life are made subordinate. The extent to which one's ultimate concern is the preservation of a social role, a belief system, an ideology, or even a community is the extent to which one's faith has become idolatrous—simply because that which should be the transcendent nature of one's ultimate concern has become embodied in something finite.

These insights of Tillich's are expressed in *The Urantia Book* at [100:6.2] (P.1100) where the revelators comment that, "*The accepted supreme value of the religionist may be base or even false, but it is nevertheless religious. A religion is genuine to just the*

. . . ANYTHING THAT IS A MATTER OF UNCONDITIONAL CONCERN BECOMES A GOD IN THE LIFE OF THE PERSON WHOSE LIFE IS ORIENTED TOWARD THAT PARTICULAR CONCERN.

the situation is ripe for them, and they die when the situation changes. The symbol of the "king" grew in a special period of history, and it died in most parts of the world in our period. Symbols do not grow because people are longing for them, and they do not die because of scientific or practical criticism. They die because they lose the power to produce a particular response in the group in which they originally found expression.

These are the main characteristics of every symbol. Genuine symbols are created in several spheres of man's cultural creativity. We have mentioned already the artistic realm. We could add history, politics, religion, and, in the case of Urantians, symbols given as a gift by revelation.

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

We have discussed the meaning of symbols generally because, as we said, man's ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically! One may ask: Why can it not be expressed directly and properly? If money, success, or the nation is someone's ultimate concern, can this not be said in a direct way without symbolic language? Is it not only in those cases in which the content of the ultimate concern is called "God" that we are in the realm of symbols? The answer is that anything that is a matter of unconditional concern becomes a god in the life of the person whose life is oriented toward that particular concern. If the nation is someone's ultimate concern, the name of the nation becomes a sacred name and the nation receives divine qualities that far surpass the reality of the being and functioning of the nation. The nation then stands for and symbolizes the true ultimate for that person, but in an idolatrous way.

extent that the value which is held to be supreme is truly a cosmic reality of genuine spiritual worth."

Economic, political, or institutional success as ultimate concern is not the natural desire of Adjuster-indwelt personalities. Rather does such an ultimate concern demonstrate mortal readiness to sacrifice all other values of life for the sake of a position of power and social predominance. The anxiety about not being an economic or professional success is an idolatrous form of the anxiety about divine condemnation. Success becomes viewed as grace; lack of success, ultimate judgment. In this way concepts designating ordinary realities become idolatrous symbols of ultimate concern.

It is important to appreciate that the true ultimate transcends the realm of finite reality infinitely. Therefore, no finite reality can express it directly and properly. The language of faith is the language of symbols. God is the fundamental symbol for that which concerns us ultimately.

In the idea of God we must distinguish two elements: the element of ultimacy, which is a matter of immediate spiritual experience and not symbolic in itself, and the element which is taken from our ordinary experience and symbolically used to represent this experience in thought and conversation. The person whose ultimate concern is a sacred tree has both the ultimacy of concern and the concreteness of the tree, which then he uses to symbolize his relation to the ultimate. The person who glorifies Jahweh, the God of the Old Testament, has both an ultimate concern and a concrete image of what concerns him ultimately. For many Urantians, *The Urantia Book* itself has become such a symbol, representing an ultimate concern even for individuals who

do not grasp very much of its content as well as mediating access to the divine for many who take the time to explore its conceptual landscape.

God is the primary symbol of faith, but not the only one. All the qualities we attribute to him—power, love, and justice—are taken from finite experiences and applied symbolically to that which is beyond finitude and infinity. If faith calls God “almighty,” it uses the human experience of power in order to symbolize the content of its ultimate concern. So it is with all the other qualities and with all the actions—past, present, and future—which we attribute to God. They are conceptual symbols taken from our daily experience, and not necessarily information about what God did once upon a time or will do sometime in the future. Faith is not the belief that such stories are literally true; rather is faith the acceptance of such stories as symbolic expressions of our ultimate concern in terms of divine actions.

Another group of symbols of faith are manifestations of the divine in things and events, in persons and communities, in words, documents, and books. This whole realm of sacred objects is a treasure of symbols. Holy things are not holy in themselves, but holy in a human sense because they point beyond themselves to the source of all holiness, that which is of ultimate concern.

SYMBOLS AND MYTHS

The symbols of faith do not appear in isolation. They are united in “stories of the gods,” which is the meaning of the Greek word “mythos”—myth. In Greek mythology the gods are individualized figures, analogous to human personalities, sexually differentiated, descending from each other, related to each other in love and struggle, producing world and humanity, acting in time and space. They participate in human greatness and misery, in creative and destructive works. They give to man cultural and religious traditions, and defend these sacred rites. They help and threaten the human race, especially some families, tribes, or nations.

The gods of mythology appear in epiphanies and incarnations, establish sacred places, rites, and persons, and thus create a cult. But they themselves are under the command and threat of a fate that is beyond everything that is. This is mythology as developed most impressively in ancient Greece. It is the world of the myth, great and strange, always changing but fundamentally the same: man’s ultimate concern symbolized in divine figures and actions. Myths are symbols of faith combined in stories about divine-human encounters.

It is interesting to note in this regard that *The Urantia Book*, in its presentation of a theology of interpersonal relationships, develops its mythology around the relationships between the gods and the activities repercussing in the time/space domains as a result of those interpersonal

relationships. In our mythology, these relationships between the gods become archetypal elements within the minds of those mortals actively pursuing the goal of cosmic citizenship through service relationships with their fellows.

Thus the concentric circles symbol provided by the Urantia revelation is integrated with and expressive of the core content of the revelation. It is a symbol that allows us to integrate our understanding of Michael’s bestowal, his universe government, and the over control of the Paradise Trinity in the processes of Supremacy—our growing relationships with each other.

URANTIAN SYMBOLS

If we accept the idea that one of the primary purposes of the fifth epochal revelation is to revitalize spiritual life and religious living on our planet, we can look at the revelation and ask, “What tools have the revelators provided in order to help us realize this purpose?” Given what we know about the mythological and symbolic content of religious expression, there are three gifts contained within the revelation that can support Urantian religion: the remembrance supper, the prayers in Paper 144, and the concentric circles symbol.

In visiting groups of readers all over North America and in a number of foreign countries, these three elements of the revelation always seem to emerge naturally in readership communities as symbolic touchstones of shared commitment to the teachings of the revelation. The remembrance supper is engaged in as a “symbolic rendezvous with Michael.” The prayers in Section 5 of Paper 144 are often used for liturgical purposes. The concentric circles symbol is invariably used in the form of a banner or large poster at the front of rooms in which meetings are held. It is also used in a manner similar to the fish symbol of early Christianity to guide people to places where meetings are being held—on signposts in parking lots or along walkways.

These religious treasures are honored when we use them for the religious purposes for which they were provided. We desecrate (“de-sacralize”) them when we use them for purposes other than those with which they are directly identified in the revelation itself.

Because of the religious nature of these symbols, the responsibility for their protection cannot lie anywhere else other than with readers and believers. The spiritual power of these symbolic tools with which future generations of Urantians might facilitate the appearance of a new age of religion on our world depends upon choices which each of us make in our daily lives—choices as to how we will use, understand, honor and preserve, the sacred symbols of the fifth epochal revelation.

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WHEN BELIEF BECOMES FAITH

By Al Lockett, Liverpool, NY

Belief can exist without faith; but faith cannot exist without belief. Belief can exist without God; but faith cannot exist without God.

We are all born into a world where God exists already. How we respond to or acknowledge the fact of God's existence is based on a number of environmental factors. Further simplified, where and when we are born, into what culture or part of the world, who our parents are and a host of other elements, all form the basis for the development and evolution of our personal belief systems.

Our experiences as children and the degree to which those experiences affect how we view the world, together form the foundation by which our belief in the existence of God gradually progresses into a personal faith in the existence of God. It is from this intellectual soil that the indwelling spirit of God works to spiritualize those experiences into the realities of living faith. For many readers of *The Urantia Book*, it is the subsequent review of our life experiences that we examine in order to determine why it was that we were

Before we enter into a discussion of faith vs. belief, we must first define what we mean by belief and what we mean when we say faith. A search of a popular Internet search engine indicates that there are upwards of 12 million entries under faith with everything from country rock artist Faith Hill to faith in the most obscure representations. What was immediately apparent was that there is a wide variety of thought and opinion on what constitutes faith and what constitutes belief. The line of demarcation is blurred with distinct differences in the various mortal perspectives, especially when confronting the variety of religious and non-religious philosophies today.

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy states that "*belief is the acceptance of something as true, or thinking that something could be true.*" That is further broken down into two separate notions: *belief in* and *belief that*. The theological use of the

WHEREAS BELIEF MAY TRANSLATE INTO AN INTELLECTUAL EXERCISE, FAITH IS NOT AND MUST BE LIVED IN ORDER TO BE EXPERIENCED.

guided to the book, even more so to accept it as the fifth epochal revelation to mankind. And for many readers, the discovery of *The Urantia Book* has been a faith-enhancing, faith-uplifting, or faith-confirming experience. The value of revelation is its confirmation. It allows us to raise the bar on our faith and deepen our faith attitude. It provides a blueprint for a more directed approach and more active participation with our Thought Adjusters in our personal and spiritual growth.

So at what point does one's personal belief become one's living faith? What are the processes both intellectual and spiritual? What are the indications or benchmarks? Is it a black and white, all or nothing phenomenon—you either have it or you don't—or is there gradual unfolding, sometimes having faith, then other times giving into the doubt of mere belief? Whereas belief may translate into an intellectual exercise, faith is not and must be lived in order to be experienced. In the movie "The Matrix", Lawrence Fishburne in the character of Morpheus says to Keanu Reeves, "There is a difference between knowing the path and walking the path." *The Urantia Book* has provided a clear delineation of the path and now we step out on faith.

term belief is the closest to its common usage. Theologians believe in the *probability* of something, more like an opinion, and secondly the *certainty* of something. They call this explicit and implicit belief. When a person believes a truth that he or she knows, the belief is explicit; when the person believes the consequences of a truth which they cannot know, the belief becomes implicit. For the sake of this exercise, we are going to rely on the definitions of faith portrayed in *The Urantia Book*. It is from this perspective that we can gain a clearer understanding of what is faith and what is mere belief.

"*The acceptance of a teaching as true is not faith; that is mere belief.*" [101:8.1] (P. 1114) Because a person accepts a particular religion or teaching as the Truth and is willing in some cases to even die for that teaching does not in itself qualify as faith. "*Neither is certainty nor conviction faith.*" [101:8.1] (P. 1114) Of the many people who will come upon *The Urantia Book*, some will accept it and believe that it is true; they will express certainty and be convicted of its authenticity, but will not immediately express genuine spiritual faith. But when that truth begins to shape their viewpoint and starts to eliminate the shackles of animal fear, their mode of life responds to the gravity of *truth*. Like metal

filings attracted to a magnet, everything in that person's life becomes dominated by the magnetic pull of truth. There is something satisfied on the material or intellectual level where facts and knowledge dominate. There is something satisfied on the spiritual level as the Thought Adjuster is successful in connecting. (Without that connection faith could not exist.) The soul of the individual experiences an increased growth rate just from the addition of cosmic consciousness and recognition of cosmic unity. *"Belief has attained the level of faith when it motivates life and shapes the mode of living. A state of mind attains to faith levels only when it actually dominates the mode of living"* [101:8.1] (P.1114)

"By their fruits you shall know them." Genuine faith is expressed in the mode of living, It dominates the life of the individual. God is present in every phase of their existence.

Some may question the "religious zealotry" or the somewhat seemingly fanatical fervor, or the disciplined orthodoxy of a religion as demonstrations of religious faith; after all, the lives of the proponents are certainly motivated by their teaching, their mode of living is certainly shaped, from elaborate rituals, to vigilant prayer cycles, sacred places, sacred foods, sacred writings sacred days all paying homage to a very sacred God or gods as the case may be. *"Faith is a living attribute of genuine personal religious experience."* [101:8.1] (P. 1114)

We look to society for the visible examples of the differences between faith and belief. *"Beliefs may become group possessions, but faith must be personal."* [101:8.2] (P. 114) I grew up in a Christian home, Baptist to be more precise, with a little bit of apostolic evangelism, baptized in the spirit, saved by the blood of one Jesus Christ who long before I was born, lived and died on a cross for the sins I had and would surely commit. I was told to believe in and have faith in Jesus and for that I could be assured that Jesus would keep me safe from harm and take my soul to heaven when I died, the requirement being that I go to church every Sunday, say my blessings before I eat and my prayers before bed. These are heavy concepts for a child to fully comprehend. If you asked me if I believed in God, my answer would have been a resounding "yes," although my budding faith wasn't so sure and was centered somewhere else more personal to me and out of public scrutiny.

"Convictions about God may be arrived at through wise reasoning, but the individual becomes God-knowing only by faith, through personal experience." [102:6.5] (P. 1124)

So it is both difficult and wrong to assign faith to a group or to ascribe faith to an individual because they are a part of a religious group or adherents to a teaching that is "ancient" or very old, making it purer and therefore the practitioners deeply faithful. *"Theologic beliefs can be suggested to a group, but faith can rise up only in the heart of the individual religionist."* [101:8.2] (P. 1114)

Religions are always replete with things that you have

to do or things that you are forbidden from doing. Often times the test of the faith has to do with how closely the practitioner follows the rules. Some religions forbid the looking upon a women's face, or art in the household, or growing a beard. Some prescribe hours of studying sacred text for deeper meaning. *"Belief is always limiting and binding; faith is expanding and releasing. Belief fixates, faith liberates."* [101:8.2] (P. 1114)

"Faith does not shackle the creative imagination, neither does it maintain an unreasoning prejudice toward the discoveries of scientific investigation." [101:8.4] (P. 1115)

"Faith has falsified its trust when it presumes to deny realities and to confer upon its devotees assumed knowledge." [101:8.3] (P. 1114) I remember listening to a radio show one evening, and the guest on the program was introduced as a professor, a Ph.D., and scientist of some sort who was also a Christian Fundamentalist and Creationist. His mission was to prove scientifically the historical authenticity of the Bible. He had several books published to his credit and he lectured and taught that the world was only 6,000 years old. This calculation was based on a mathematical model constructed by reading the Old Testament and calculating how much time had elapsed since God made Adam and Eve. He shunned any scientific data that opposed this model or evidenced an Evolutionist perspective, even to the point of challenging carbon dating and referring to the evidence of dinosaurs as the "unclean beasts" referred to in the Bible.

"Faith never shuns the problem-solving duty of mortal living" [101:8.3] (P. 1115)

It does not exempt you from dealing with the challenges of living. One cannot just do nothing and rely on God to take care of things. There is no such thing as faith without action. Faith in and of itself signifies movement from the dead center of inertia.

"Living faith does not foster bigotry, persecution, or intolerance." [101:8.3] (P. 1115) Enough said!

CHILDLIKE TRUST

So if there is a key to judging the extent of or measuring the growth of our faith as it moves along the continuum of our life experience, it is in the example provided by the life of Jesus. *"Jesus' earthly life was devoted to one great purpose—doing the Father's will, living the human life religiously and by faith."* [196:0.14] (P. 2090)

Jesus trusted God much as the child trusts a parent. He depended on God as a child depends upon its parent. He was not inhibited by doubt and unbelief. He was free to express his life in the service of a loving Father, truly able to "let go and let God." He *"combined the stalwart and intelligent courage of a full-grown man with the sincere and trusting optimism of a believing child."* [196:0.11] (P.2089) His faith was so strong and complete that he was totally fearless.

"The faith of Jesus attained the purity of a child's trust. His

faith was so absolute and undoubting..." [196:0.12] (P. 2089) The faith of Jesus was trusting, like that of a child, but it was wholly free from presumption. He did not presume God would handle it. "*He made robust and manly decisions, courageously faced manifold disappointments, resolutely surmounted extraordinary difficulties, and unflinchingly confronted the stern requirements of duty.*" [196:0.14] (P. 2090)

As we look introspectively to examine our own report card of personal experience and religious growth, here are 12 faith indicators from *The Urantia Book*.

1. *Causes ethics and morals to progress despite inherent and adverse animalistic tendencies.*

2. *Produces a sublime trust in the goodness of God even in the face of bitter disappointment and crushing defeat.*

3. *Generates profound courage and confidence despite natural adversity and physical calamity.*

4. *Exhibits inexplicable poise and sustaining tranquillity notwithstanding baffling diseases and even acute physical suffering.*

5. *Maintains a mysterious poise and composure of personality in the face of maltreatment and the rankest injustice.*

“. . . KNOWN AS THE AGONDONTERS, MEANING EVOLUTIONARY WILL CREATURES WHO CAN BELIEVE WITHOUT SEEING, PERSEVERE WHEN ISOLATED, AND TRIUMPH OVER INSUPERABLE DIFFICULTIES EVEN WHEN ALONE.” [50:7.2] (P.579)

6. *Maintains a divine trust in ultimate victory in spite of the cruelties of seemingly blind fate and the apparent utter indifference of natural forces to human welfare.*

7. *Persists in the unswerving belief in God despite all contrary demonstrations of logic and successfully withstands all other intellectual sophistries.*

8. *Continues to exhibit undaunted faith in the soul's survival regardless of the deceptive teachings of false science and the persuasive delusions of unsound philosophy.*

9. *Lives and triumphs irrespective of the crushing overload of the complex and partial civilizations of modern times.*

10. *Contributes to the continued survival of altruism in spite of human selfishness, social antagonisms, industrial greeds, and political maladjustments.*

11. *Steadfastly adheres to a sublime belief in universe unity and divine guidance regardless of the perplexing presence of evil and sin.*

12. *Goes right on worshipping God in spite of anything and everything. Dares to declare, 'Even though he slay me, yet will I serve him.'*" [101:3.4] (P. 1108)

Each of these will resonate individually with the challenges associated with living. Each will demand the full compliance of faith and fearlessness. Each will require all or nothing, complete trust in God. Life lessons will invariably

provide plenty of practice.

"On Jerusem the ascenders from these isolated worlds occupy a residential sector by themselves and are known as the agondonters, meaning evolutionary will creatures who can believe without seeing, persevere when isolated, and triumph over insuperable difficulties even when alone." [50:7.2] (P. 579)

As we observe and live in a world where God exists, we can't presume to judge whether any individual has faith or not, but we can eliminate misunderstanding, ignorance, and well-intentioned philosophizing and determine where we stand in the matrix of complicated belief systems. "*Have you faith? Then have it to yourself.*" [99:5.7] (P. 1091)

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"Primitive man lived a life of superstitious bondage to religious fear. Modern, civilized men dread the thought of falling under the dominance of strong religious convictions. Thinking man has always feared to be held by a religion. When a strong and moving religion threatens to dominate him, he invariably tries to rationalize, traditionalize, and institutionalize it, thereby hoping to gain control of it. By such procedure, even a revealed religion becomes man-made and man-dominated. Modern men and women of intelligence evade the religion of Jesus because of their fears of what it will do to them—and with them. And all such fears are well founded. The religion of Jesus does, indeed, dominate and transform its believers, demanding that men dedicate their lives to seeking for a knowledge of the will of the Father in heaven and requiring that the energies of living be consecrated to the unselfish service of the brotherhood of man.

[195:9.6] (P. 2083)

THE PATTERNS OF REVELATION

By Linda Buselli, Clarks Summit, PA

To a *Urantia Book* reader, the subject of revelation has many meanings and many levels within each meaning. Most modern religions already have their holy scriptures, consider them inviolate, and do not really expect any new “scriptures” to be revealed. Yet within the last century, a spiritual awakening has swept the world, bringing with it not only *The Urantia Book*, but a number of other writings believed to be new revelations of God. What is this spiritual awakening and what is *The Urantia Book’s* place in it?

To gain a clearer view of the present, it might be helpful to review the main features of the first four epochal revelations. There are decided differences between the first two and the second two. Both the arrival of the Planetary Prince and his staff and the later coming of Adam and Eve involved large numbers of people settled in one place. Both revelatory groups, the Prince’s staff and the Adamites, were not able to communicate much of religion to the primitive peoples they encountered. They taught very simple spiritual concepts and spent most of their time civilizing and socializing these tribes. Gifted individuals from the different tribes were brought to a central place, trained, and then sent back to their people to uplift them.

By contrast, the epochal revelations of Machiventa and Jesus were bestowals of a single individual and occurred within a much shorter time frame than the first two. Machiventa established Salem as a base of operations, brought students in, trained them, and sent them out as missionaries. But Jesus went one step further; he never established a center or

to any inhabited world. We can suppose that the isolation of Urantia from the universe circuits would make it very difficult for the usual pattern of revelation to be followed, but why would the revelators choose to give us these truths in this manner? There may have been a number of reasons. (I do so love to speculate on how our unseen friends might think.)

1. Civilization had progressed markedly in 2000 years, even in the previous decades. Word-of-mouth dissemination had been incredibly enhanced by modern means of communication, travel, etc. The world had become a global community, albeit the neighbors weren’t getting along well together.

2. The choice of the English language for the revelation may have been made because English has more than three times the vocabulary of any other language on earth and can express greater subtlety in meanings. It is spoken in some form in every country in the world and was the language of the largest democratic nation.

3. The Revelatory Commission knew that eastern thought and western thought were about to meet. Between the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the Dalai Lama was driven out of Tibet, giving eastern religious thought more attention in the west; and Pope John XXIII convened Vatican II, opening up Christian theology and mysticism to the world. Since then, there has been an explosion of interest in things spiritual, and a mingling of eastern and western concepts. Genuine spiritual seekers are willing to examine the values and truths in both, and much confusion has

. . . NEW TRUTH REVEALED IS NOT VERY FAR ABOVE THE LEVEL UNDERSTOOD BY THE PEOPLE OF THAT DAY AND AGE, AND MAKES USE OF THEIR WRITINGS, WHEN AVAILABLE. IT BUILDS UPON THE BEST OF WHAT ALREADY EXISTS IN THE THOUGHT PATTERNS OF THE PEOPLE.

“school” at all. He trained the apostles and disciples and they went out into the world much as Machiventa’s missionaries had done. The pattern of epochal revelation was changing.

Two thousand years later, another giant step was taken with the publication of *The Urantia Book*. This was not only a totally new type of revelation for Urantia, but it was a rare departure from the general method of bringing a revelation

resulted. For myself, *The Urantia Book* has served as a unifier and an expansion of these varied viewpoints, and it has long been known that the book is intended to serve as a tool to get Urantia through this period of confusion and chaos between the secular and the spiritual.

Present readers and those who come after us will have to deal with the following issues.

LANGUAGE

Just as English is the most widely spoken language on the planet, it may also be the most quickly changing one. One of the reasons its vocabulary is so extensive is that it adapts words from other languages, and even invents its own, at a very rapid rate. The English language is only about one thousand years old, and it continues to evolve rapidly. Even in the fifty years since the publication of *The Urantia Book*, some of the terms in the book have begun to change slightly in meaning, or in usage; for instance, let's take the term "weeping." While it is still clearly understood, it has been replaced in ordinary speech by other terms, such as "crying," or "sobbing." Also, words such as "galaxy" are being used somewhat differently than in the 1920s, which has caused some confusion among readers who are interested in astronomy. Most people associate the word "psychic" with mindal phenomena or ESP; however, the book uses the term "psyche" or "psychic" in its original meaning in the Greek language, which is "spirit" or "soul." Thus, the seven psychic circles deal not just with intellectual understanding, but with the growth of the soul. We might be more likely to term them "soul circles" in the use of language today.

English has no singular gender-neutral pronoun for persons. This means, in order to be politically correct, one must use he/she, etc. Some people already prefer "humankind" to "mankind," and the head of a committee is a "chair" rather than a "chairman." This difficulty will bring increasing problems as social conditions change.

Translators will always face the problem of variations in local or regional dialects. We have two Spanish translations of the book now, reflecting differences in usage between Spain and Latin America. Also, the literal translation from one language to another can be very misleading, depending on idiomatic terms.

As all of these languages change, updates will have to be made to maintain the clarity of the concepts presented in the book; and this will create problems in precise definitions. This will also be difficult for those who want the original text kept inviolate, for it will become less and less readable over a long period of time unless it can be expressed in the language of each new generation. We've been told *The Urantia Book* is to provide spiritual guidance for the next thousand years; but a thousand years from now, perhaps much sooner, the English of the book may well be unrecognizable.

DISSEMINATION

In all four of the earlier epochal revelations, truth was carried by word of mouth. Eventually, in the third and fourth revelations, "scriptures" were produced; but the written word has always been subject to errors in interpretation and translation, as cited above. We have six different bibles in our house, and that means for any given verse, we can find six separate versions.

However, worldwide electronic communication offers us some very promising ways of disseminating the teachings of *The Urantia Book*. Thousands of people contact our website each day, and websites are interconnecting at an astonishing rate. We have a powerful new tool for transmitting the teachings of the book at a faster rate than ever before.

RECURRING PATTERNS

All five epochal revelations have certain aspects in common:

1. The new truth revealed is not very far above the level understood by the people of that day and age, and makes use of their writings, "scriptures," when available. It builds upon the best of what already exists in the thought patterns of the people. In other words, every new revelation refers to previous human sources as a matter of course. This is noticeable in Michael's bestowal, as he quoted from the Hebrew scriptures he considered appropriate. Also, he was born into a society that was looking for a son of God; and the mystery cult of Mithraism had prepared the minds of many Gentiles for the birth of a divine son. In fact, some of the beliefs and practices of both groups are still visible in the practice of Christianity today.

The scientific and advanced philosophic content of *The Urantia Book* is closely linked to the knowledge and science of its day. As we are becoming aware, much of the philosophy expressed was derived from leading Christian writers of that generation; and some of the scientific theories, such as plate tectonics and plasma physics had already been proposed, if not popularly accepted by the scientific community.

2. Aside from the leaders such as Machiventa and Jesus, the teachers of truth were ordinary men and women who had been inspired to disseminate it. In both the third and the fourth epochal revelations, priesthoods eventually arose. But *The Urantia Book* arrived during a burgeoning wave of new types of revelation and individual spiritual practices. Without ecclesiastic sanction or connections, the book appealed to independent spiritual seekers who were free to interpret its truths in their own ways.

3. Truth was dispersed by many different individuals using diverse languages and practices. With *The Urantia Book*, translations were delayed, perhaps to keep the original text pure; but we are now reaching out to the many peoples of the world in their own languages, thus following the established pattern in a new way.

4. Every revelation has brought dynamic changes to the society in which it has been revealed...but not right away. Individuals take a long time to assimilate truth into their private lives; and enormous amounts of time have been required to have the new truth gradually infiltrate the cultures involved. Christianity took over 300 years to bend the will of the Roman Empire to its cause.

5. No epochal revelation yet has remained "pure" for

the reasons listed above. *“Each of the apostolic teachers taught his own view of the gospel of the kingdom.... Though they all taught the same truth, each apostle presented his own personal interpretations of the Master’s teaching. And Jesus upheld this presentation of the diversity of personal experience in the things of the kingdom...”* [148:1.2] (P. 1658)

6. Celestial help has been given between epochal revelations, as it has been deemed necessary. Van remained behind following the Lucifer rebellion and prepared the way for Adam and Eve. We have virtually no information about what happened between the Adamic default and Machiventa’s incarnation. However the succession of Hebrew prophets was supported and encouraged by the Melchizedek receivers until Michael’s arrival. There was also a worldwide appearance of prophets and religious teachers during the 6th century BC. And *The Urantia Book* itself tells us that *“Jesus did not found the so-called Christian church, but he has, in every manner consistent with his nature, fostered it as the best existent exponent of his lifework on earth.”* [195:10.9] (P. 2085) Perhaps our unseen friends have been and will continue to foster *The Urantia Book*.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Urantia Book will have an important role in the spiritual awakening of this planet. Since we cannot see how this will work out, we must be careful not to limit our vision for either the immediate or the distant future. Just as the teachers of former revelations could not know the permutations their teachings would take, we cannot predict how these truths will be interpreted and taught by our successors.

“However wise it may be to glean wisdom from the past, it is folly to regard the past as the exclusive source of truth. Truth is relative and expanding; it lives always in the present, achieving new expression in each generation of men—even in each human life.” [79:8.8] (P. 888)

The patterns of revelation seem to remain the same; it is the expression of them that has altered, dependent on the reasons listed above and others unknown to us. The one factor we can confidently expect to be present throughout the future is change. *“All static, dead, concepts are potentially evil. The finite shadow of relative and living truth is continually moving. Static concepts invariably retard science, politics, society, and religion.”* [130:4.15] (P. 1436) and *“The fact of God, the divine law, is changeless; the truth of God, his relation to the universe, is a relative revelation which is ever adaptable to the constantly evolving universe.”* [102:7.2] (P. 1120)

Change is one of the most difficult steps for us to take. Our inability to change delays our reception of truth, both as individuals and as entire cultures; our openness to change gives our Adjusters more leeway in their tasks and allows for more rapid cultural adaptations. We are living in a changing society, one that is searching for truth, that is perhaps more open to advanced spiritual teachings than it has been for

some time. We will have to be adaptable to new ways of expressing ourselves and sharing our experiences within the context of our new opportunities for communication.

“Truth is living; the Spirit of Truth is ever leading the children of light into new realms of spiritual reality and divine service. You are not given truth to crystallize into settled, safe, and honored forms.... What a sorry sight for successive generations of the professed followers of Jesus to say, regarding their stewardship of divine truth: ‘Here, Master, is the truth you committed to us a hundred or a thousand years ago. We have lost nothing; we have faithfully preserved all you gave us; we have allowed no changes to be made in that which you taught us; here is the truth you gave us.’” [176:3.7] (P. 1918)

Is *The Urantia Book* a revelation? Yes. Does the discovery of human source material dilute the meaning of that term? No. I suspect that it is our own erroneous definitions of what constitutes a “revelation” that have led to the disappointment of some readers. After all, the apostles also had a great deal of trouble understanding the real nature of many of Jesus’ teachings. The authors of *The Urantia Book* have done exactly what they said they would do. They have followed an established pattern of revelation: *“...we are to be guided by the mandate of the superuniverse rulers which directs that we shall, in all our efforts to reveal truth and co-ordinate essential knowledge, give preference to the highest existing human concepts pertaining to the subjects to be presented. We may resort to pure revelation only when the concept of presentation has had no adequate previous expression by the human mind.”* [0:12.10] (P. 16)

And from a midwayer: *“The memoranda which I have collected...embrace thought gems and superior concepts of Jesus’ teachings assembled from more than two thousand human beings who have lived on earth from the days of Jesus down to the time of the inditing of these revelations, more correctly restatements. ...I well know that those concepts which have had origin in the human mind will prove more acceptable and helpful to all other human minds....In many ways I have served more as a collector and editor than as an original narrator.”* [121:8.13,14] (P. 1343)

The Urantia Book, like previous revelations, is a repository of both human wisdom and advanced spiritual insights. It is not just a revelation in and of itself, but *it precipitates revelation in us*. It engenders within the human soul that which will help to usher in light and life. It must be given new life and new meaning in each generation. The truth of the revelation of the book is not in the precise words written on its pages, but in the living human experience of its ideals.

Linda Buselli has been studying and teaching *The Urantia Book* for over 30 years. She is currently serving as a Fellowship General Councilor and Chair of the Publications Committee.

THE DIFFICULTY OF BEING OBJECTIVE

By Nancy Johnson, Mesquite, Texas

I've been pondering the attributes and attitudes of God these many years and marvel more and more at how he can always be objective about everything that happens. He understands everything so perfectly that when they nailed his son to the cross, he loved "them" as much as he did Christ and forgave them even before they asked. He must have seen the situation in an entirely different light than we do.

Remember how we reacted to 9/11? The world was shocked—outraged!—and we wasted no time declaring a war on terrorism. We saw the destruction of the World Trade Center and the taking of nearly 3,000 lives as a godless act. Strangely enough, the terrorists see us as godless, and they praised Allah for making their attack successful beyond their expectations. Stranger yet, God is there, knowing exactly what happened, yet loving the terrorists just the same as their victims of that fateful day. God is objective. Sin isn't real to him. He's no respecter of persons. He loves all his children equally.

Webster defines objective as: emphasizing or expressing the nature of reality AS IT IS, *apart from personal reflections or feelings*; also, expressing or involving the use of facts *without distortion by personal feelings or prejudices* (emphasis mine).

I thought about this long and hard and figured this is probably our biggest problem. Human beings are usually just the opposite—no matter what's really going on, it's how we think and feel about it that we get all fired up about. Webster says that's *subjective*.

Being objective is an important aspect of God's perfection. He extended us an invitation to become perfect, even as he is perfect, so I figured it would behoove me to take a close look at this aspect of his perfection.

I put myself under a microscope to look at my own reactions to everyday situations, especially if I was feeling tested, trying to recognize what I reacted to and why I reacted that way. Then I'd ask God what was really going on and how did it appear to him. Then I studied others—whoever was handy—trying to find out what they reacted to. Many people like to explain themselves, and it was no surprise that they were quite willing to talk about the things they react to. Oftentimes I explained why I was curious about peoples' reactions, and there were a few who got into the spirit of it with me.

The trickiest problem we ran into was facing that we're actually being subjective when we think we're being objective. In time it became a mind game, and we finally reached the point where we could laugh at ourselves as we were caught in the act of being subjective. It's even better when we catch ourselves.

The Urantia Book says on page 1094 [100:1.2] that ignorance and prejudice are the greatest inhibitors of growth. It's hard to separate the two or to figure out which comes first. Are we ignorant because we're so wrapped up in our feelings and emotions and preconceived ideas that we can't see the forest for the trees? Or, do we misinterpret and distort reality because we're ignorant? We can't see reality as God sees it; that's for sure. In fact, we can hardly get ourselves out of a situation far enough to see it as the angels see it.

In a sense, we each view reality as if we were the center of the universe. We certainly start out that way—aware only of our own needs and wants and feelings. Everything else is outside of our "center" and we eventually grow to have a lot of thoughts and opinions and more and more feelings about what goes on "out there." It is said that by the time we're six years old our attitudes are rather firmly established. Children rarely question what's really happening "out there" or why—their primary concern is how it affects them. They busy themselves learning ways to make things go the way they want them to. And how they want them to go depends on how they've learned to feel about themselves and their environment.

Once set, those attitudes and opinions and feelings are a part of us—unconscious for the most part—and all new situations are weighed from that point of reference. "Normal" is what's normal to us. We assume it's normal for everyone. It can, and often does, come as quite a shock to learn that people we've become very close to don't think or feel the way we do about some things that are pretty important to us. Once we realize this, we're usually inclined to "set them straight." For most of us, it's many a heartache later before we start to question our own points of view. Some go to their graves having questioned themselves very little—the way they see it is the way it is, and there is no other way. Period. And that's subjective.

Reality is whatever it is—nothing can change that. That's objective. It appears different to each of us because we see it from our own center-of-the-universe, and that makes our viewpoint subjective.

Thank heaven for the vicissitudes of existence and certain inevitabilities we must encounter. [3:5.5-13] (P. 51) Essentially, vicissitude means change. It implies a change great enough to constitute a reversal of what has been and by means that are beyond our control. In the plan of creature evolution, we're supposed to switch from subjective (and self-centered) to objective (God-like). We're assured it produces joy. We're assured that this joy is ours for the striving.

The pain or negative reactions we experience can

only come from resisting the necessary changes. Oftentimes we experience discomfort in a situation and honestly don't know it's because we're resisting some needed change. Most religions teach something about the virtues of long suffering, and if we accept that and are brave about it, it may not occur to us to investigate what we might be doing ourselves that's causing the discomfort. We just accept it and find that we're better persons for having bravely endured. That certainly may be true, but that does not mean it was necessary. We have full control over how much discomfort we experience in our Paradise ascent, and it is in exact proportion to how much we resist the change from subjective to objective. So even though our resistance may be unintentional, it nonetheless produces discomfort.

Most of our discomfort is *intentional but unconscious*. We hold tenaciously to our ideas of what we consider to be right or wrong. Parties on both sides of a disagreement consider themselves right, or at least hold the other side to be wrong; otherwise, there would be no disagreement. Both sides are probably right, and both are probably wrong. We can see how others often make that mistake, but we have great difficulty being objective where our own value systems are concerned. We're told quite plainly on page 555 [48:6.22] that we "*can be technically right as to fact and everlastingly wrong in the truth.*" Subjective creatures that we are, we probably interpreted that as an assurance that those who are in disagreement with us are wrong. Our own views are "right," of course, or we wouldn't believe in them. We can correct this imbalance by trading viewpoints and trying to defend theirs against our own. We can see our views more clearly then.

One of our favorite ways to resist change is also

yet. We know there are conditions called low and high pain tolerance. People with low pain tolerance often think people with high pain tolerance are just lucky. It could be that people with high pain tolerance make their own "luck" by their attitude. Most will allow that they just don't give their pain any more attention than it takes to make it go away, and they busy themselves with some kind of work they consider more important than the pain. It's a technique of dwelling less on the self and more on what the self is doing, and that is a step toward becoming objective.

On page 555 [48:6.26] we find support for this technique. It says the work we are doing is important. The self is not. It's a handy way to get rid of physical pain, but we find it more noticeably effective in ridding ourselves of a psychological burden brought on by ego. Who of us has not had our feathers ruffled more often than we care to admit? And how often has the real joy of some of our better efforts been marred because we didn't get as much reward or appreciation as we were expecting? It goes on to say we lose a lot of energy to the wear and tear of ego dignity and how much more we can accomplish when we correct that problem. It's easier said than done, but just think of all the trouble and energy we'd save if we didn't resist the change!

Page 555 [48:6 & 7] is full of ideas we can help ourselves with. We make a lot of plans in our lives that include other people—marriage, family, work, friends, groups, etc. The more subjective we are about what we expect from these relationships, the more certain we can be of disappointments. An unconscious subjective attitude is expressed here in slightly exaggerated form by: "I can't control myself, so I must control others in order to insure my

IT'S A TECHNIQUE OF DWELLING LESS ON THE SELF AND MORE ON WHAT THE SELF IS DOING, AND THAT IS A STEP TOWARD BECOMING OBJECTIVE.

intentional but unconscious. We blame others for whatever misery comes our way. We know we wouldn't intentionally make ourselves miserable, so it's obvious someone else is doing this to us, and we can always come up with someone to blame. Psychology has made enormous strides forward in recent years. If we've kept abreast with the latest findings, we can readily see that it doesn't matter what anyone else "does to us," we're in strict control of how much we suffer as a result. And if the choice is ours, so is the responsibility for that choice.

If what we read is true about these people who can walk barefoot across a bed of red-hot coals without any sign of burning or pain, we can infer that all of us also have control over physical pain. We just haven't learned the trick

happiness (or peace of mind)." Objectively, the opposite is more apt to succeed: "I can't control others, but I *can* control myself, and I'll be responsible for my own happiness (or peace of mind)."

Every day in many ways we're subjective. Every time we feel the slightest discomfort, physically or emotionally, we can probably trace the cause back to some subjective attitude or opinion we're not willing to yield up. Some of these we wouldn't even admit to ourselves, much less to anyone else, so we busy ourselves at "growing spiritually." That's something like trying to build a house without a foundation—the first ill wind that comes along will blow it over. Notice how often the book refers to our physical (emotional), mindal, and spiritual growth, and notice, too, that it's always presented in that

order. I presume that was intentional.

Sometimes we know we're being subjective and find it doesn't produce any discomfort. A closer look at "subjective" revealed that it comes in two forms—positive and negative. Humans are subjective creatures—there's no escaping that reality. I accept three things then: (1) It must be a part of God's plan; (2) God's plan is perfect and loving; and (3) It must be to our advantage to be subjective.

It seems we would have to be subjective just to get started living and keep on living until our minds grow enough to respond to the spiritual gravity circuit. Babies might choose to cancel out and call the whole thing off after that rude slap on the rear they get as they arrive, but mother's loving arms may help them decide to stick around and see what this is all about.

We'd have to be subjective to go inside ourselves and search for potentials to develop. Whatever motivates us to do this in the beginning doesn't matter. Eventually we'll learn that this is God's way of experiencing himself. If we went on realizing our potentials with that as the sole purpose—so God can experience himself—that would be pretty darned objective. We're probably more motivated by the eternal reward we've been promised, but that's okay. Our Father delights in rewarding us.

Most of the time we're playing a subjective/negative game called "my will be done." When we exhaust our energies and realize it isn't worth the hassle, we can always transform and reenergize by taking a subjective/positive stand: "It is my will that Your will be done," which is what the game of life is all about. How much and how long we play around in the negative is strictly up to us.

I question that anyone but God can ever be totally objective because he's the only one who will ever know all that is. We'll probably become objective only within whatever sphere we attain perfection. For us in the flesh, objectivity—reality comprehension—is an ideal. We will become increasingly objective as we discern more and more eternal truths, and the revelators have already advised us that most of the truth we discern here is more relative and evolutionary than it is eternal. It's a long road to objectivity.

So maybe we would be wise to content ourselves with the awareness that we're almost totally subjective and spend more time converting negatives to positives. That's probably the key to discerning truths and becoming objective, anyway.

***Nancy Johnson** is a puzzle person who has worked extensively with the text of The Urantia Book for 27 years. She typed the text of the book into an electronic format in 1981, and she indexed it electronically in 1990. Nancy has typeset both Uversa Press editions of The Urantia Book. As a member of the Fellowship's Publications Committee, she also typesets the Mighty Messenger.*

WORDS OF WISDOM

"Good will is the mightiest practical force in the universe."

The Talmud

"The first and best victory is to conquer self."

Plato

"In nothing do men more nearly approach the gods than in doing good to their fellow men."

Cicero

"Take care that the divinity within you has a creditable charge to preside over."

Marcus Aurelius

"Perfection is attained by slow degrees; it requires the hand of time."

Voltaire

"Reputation is what men and women think of us; character is what God and angels know of us."

Thomas Paine

"Solitude is as needful to the imagination as society is wholesome for the character."

James Russell Lowell

"Everything happening, great and small, is a parable whereby God speaks to us, and the art of life is to get the message."

Malcolm Muggeridge

"Even if you travel everywhere you will not find the limits of the soul, so great is its nature."

Heraclitus

"Discovering the Father and Creator of the universe is a supremely difficult task; and having found

Him it would be impossible to tell anyone about Him."

Plato

CLOSED CIRCLE OR OPEN BOOK?

Stephen Zandt, San Francisco, CA

“Sometimes the planting of a seed necessitates its death, the death of your fondest hopes, before it can be reborn to bear the fruits of new life and new opportunity.” [48:6.25] (P. 555)

The shape of a mustard seed is like an oblong or a tiny spheroid. It is an enclosed universe of potentiality, waiting for the chance to grow. In order for that mustard seed to do what it is capable of doing, it needs nurturing in the soil, the awakening rays of the sun. It must break open to permit new life to sprout. How might this seed-symbol of transformation indicate to us the need for a new attitude as believers and followers of Joshua ben Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth?

For over 2,000 years opinions historical and theological, cultural and political, have battled for authority concerning the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The traditions and superstitions, the powerful miraculous attributions about this most intriguing person have preoccupied millions. Theological opinion concerning this one human being ranges from God incarnate to elaborate hoax. At the outset of the third millennium since his lifetime Jesus, as the risen Christ, has become an object of intense scholarly debate and research, while for many he is the focus of fanatical devotion.

During the final century of the second millennium after Jesus’ birth, a new compilation and restatement of the teachings of Jesus came into existence as part of a new revelation, of cosmic scope with epochal significance, titled *The Urantia Book*.

Suddenly, the universe made contact with mortals, between the First and Second World Wars. In the pages of this unusual book, the person of Jesus took on a vastly altered significance, and became associated with real universe power and authority, yet oddly free of human religious entanglements.

A key concept in this book’s restatement of Jesus’ teachings is the distinction drawn between the widespread religion about Jesus, called Christianity, and the actual religion which Jesus himself practiced, as a divine and human being, here on this planet.

For students of the Urantia Revelation who have discovered the transformative story of Jesus’ human existence, a deepened appreciation of the significance of his matchless teachings is only the beginning of a lifelong search into meanings and values that truly makes all things new, material as well as spiritual.

But, what of the Good News? What does this Revelation have to tell us about the Gospel, not of Mark, Luke, Paul or John, but of Jesus of Nazareth, himself?

The personality who compiled the teachings of Jesus

for us makes this statement at the beginning of Part IV of *The Urantia Book*: “Acknowledgment: *In carrying out my commission to restate the teachings and retell the doings of Jesus of Nazareth, I have drawn freely upon all sources of record and planetary information. My ruling motive has been to prepare a record which will not only be enlightening to the generation of men now living, but which may also be helpful to all future generations.*” [121:8.12] (P. 1343)

“I have unhesitatingly appropriated those ideas and concepts, preferably human, which would enable me to create the most effective portraiture of Jesus’ life, and which would qualify me to restate his matchless teachings in the most strikingly helpful and universally uplifting phraseology.” [121:8.14] (P. 1343)

Jesus himself summarizes his gospel after his resurrection, in an appearance in Nicodemus’ courtyard in Jerusalem. He states: “*I admonish you ever to remember that your mission among men is to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom—the reality of the fatherhood of God and the truth of the sonship of man. Proclaim the whole truth of the good news, not just a part of the saving gospel. . . . Sonship with God, by faith, is still the saving truth of the gospel of the kingdom. You are to go forth preaching the love of God and the service of man. That which the world needs most to know is: Men are the sons of God, and through faith they can actually realize, and daily experience, this ennobling truth.*” [193:0.4] (P. 2052)

After the Pentecost experience, yet another summary is offered from the revelators: “*Jesus lived on earth and taught a gospel which redeemed man from the superstition that he was a child of the devil and elevated him to the dignity of a faith son of God. Jesus’ message, as he preached it and lived it in his day, was an effective solvent for man’s spiritual difficulties in that day of its statement. And now that he has personally left the world, he sends in his place his Spirit of Truth, who is designed to live in man and, for each new generation, to restate the Jesus message so that every new group of mortals to appear upon the face of the earth shall have a new and up-to-date version of the gospel, just such personal enlightenment and group guidance as will prove to be an effective solvent for man’s ever-new and varied spiritual difficulties.*” [194:2.1] (P. 2060)

This unique revelatory perspective on the teachings of Jesus helps to plant seeds of urgent and challenging growth for the believer in the rich soil of personal experience.

The revelators tell us: “*The Master offered no solutions for the nonreligious problems of his own age nor for any subsequent age. Jesus wished to develop spiritual insight into eternal realities and to stimulate initiative in the originality of living; he concerned himself exclusively with the underlying and permanent spiritual needs of the human race. He revealed a goodness equal to God. He exalted love—truth, beauty, and goodness—as the divine ideal and the eternal reality.*” [140:8.31] (P. 1583)

The call to perfection within this gospel of Jesus brings

us as believers to produce spiritual fruits, as new conceptual patterns in the lives of those of us who embrace this vivifying way of life. Through our personal choice, we begin by removing the old accusations of inherent guilty sinfulness, faithfully learning to accept actual sonship (family of faith) with our loving creator. We develop a true relationship with our God, who guides us toward spiritual transformation, not as a hopeless miscreant, but as a beloved child, unique and valuable in the eternal ages. Salvation becomes the gospel key to eternal life, granting to each of us the knowledge that we are not condemned, but rather cherished as personal beings with Paradise potential.

As clarity increases about Jesus and his gospel, superstition and fear become unnecessary burdens. The

these constitute falseness. But the fetish of factualized truth, fossilized truth, the iron band of so-called unchanging truth, holds one blindly in a closed circle of cold fact. One can be technically right as to fact and everlastingly wrong in the truth." [48:6.22] (P. 555)

Our contemporary culture is in a period of massive upheaval. Philosophy is grappling with chaos and negation. Theology searches for meaning. History is being revised. There have been several recent revolutions in science. And religion has become the motivator for armed conflict between peoples, organized and crystallized religion, that is. Yet, Jesus' gospel offers us personal peace, once the new and living way has settled into place in personal worship and practice. He warns all who are sincere that a struggle with olden thought forms and idolatry must be undergone. But

WE DEVELOP A TRUE RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR GOD, WHO GUIDES US TOWARD SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION, NOT AS A HOPELESS MISCREANT, BUT AS A BELOVED CHILD, UNIQUE AND VALUABLE IN THE ETERNAL AGES.

traditions and trappings of many olden belief systems begin to melt away in the intense beams of the light of truth. As one grows toward real mortal maturity, the props and scaffolding once used to bolster a feeble faith in God can be taken down and put away for good. We are building the real edifice of soul-growth for eternity. Love of the truth and sincerity of purpose lead us every step of the way. Experience as human beings is the only road home.

We learn that God is not a stern dictator and arbiter. Instead, God turns out to be a welcoming, saving, loving, intellectually stimulating, Father. There are rules, but they are methods of becoming more real, more loving, more giving human beings.

We accept the invitation to come home to the center of all things. After all, the creator of all things has issued to each of us the open invitation to join him in Paradise. The joy and peace of God's universal plan of transformation and ascension is ours to choose.

Just prior to listing the mortal insights of Morontia Mota, an archangel makes the following statement: *"Even now you should learn to water the garden of your heart as well as to seek for the dry sands of knowledge. Forms are valueless when lessons are learned. No chick may be had without the shell, and no shell is of any worth after the chick is hatched."* [48:6.21] (PP.554-5)

"The creation of new pictures out of old facts, the restatement of parental life in the lives of offspring—these are the artistic triumphs of truth. The shadow of a hair's turning, premeditated for an untrue purpose, the slightest twisting or perversion of that which is principle—

the rewards are those which deepen and gladden the mind and the heart, while stirring up desires for fellowship and service to believers and seekers everywhere on the planet.

The stages of awakening to the gospel message are personal, but certain broad categories or plateaus might be summed up as:

1. BORN AGAIN - Personal acquaintance with God, knowing as opposed to believing.
2. SONSHIP - Faith acceptance of Child-of-God status, "He is, therefore I am."
3. THE FATHER'S WILL - Recognition and acceptance of the will of God; "It is my will that your will be done."
4. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE THOUGHT ADJUSTER - Increasing awareness of God within us, personal religious experience; group religious devotions and prayer.
5. SENSITIVITY TO DIVINE ISSUES - Truth, Beauty and Goodness in others and in oneself; honoring religious living and thinking in diverse lifestyles and cultures.
6. MANIFESTING FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT - Personal transformation through loving service; personal peace that passes all understanding.
7. DEEPENING COMPREHENSION OF CAUSATION, DUTY AND WORSHIP - Taking one's personal place in cosmic reality, as a part of the evolution of the Supreme.

Jesus, speaking to the apostle Thomas, says: *"Dedicate your life to the great work of showing how the critical material mind of man can triumph over the inertia of intellectual doubting when faced by the demonstration of the manifestation of living truth as it operates in*

the experience of spirit-born men and women who yield the fruits of the spirit in their lives, and who love one another, even as I have loved you.” [181:2.26] (P. 1961)

The revelators comment, elsewhere in the text: *“Jesus does not require his disciples to believe in him but rather to believe with him, believe in the reality of the love of God and in full confidence accept the security of the assurance of sonship with the heavenly Father. The Master desires that all his followers should fully share his transcendent faith. Jesus most touchingly challenged his followers, not only to believe what he believed, but also to believe as he believed. This is the full significance of his one supreme requirement, “Follow me.”* [196:0.13] (P. 2089)

The more we delve into the faith, the teachings, and the parables of Jesus, by contrast the greater becomes the need for us to critically evaluate the onslaught of contemporary media and slick propaganda. The hypnotic effect of clever hype in advertising, the materialistic mania fostering selfishness and class warfare, the propaganda of fear and war through outright terror, accentuate the distinct impression that our culture and civilization are in acute suffering from a disease of the mind and soul. Yet the antidote is near at hand, if we will faithfully apply it. As our personal lives become suffused with the “divine virus of love,” the less hold on us do the transient material possessions, the selfish motivations of contemporary western culture, have. As though coming awake from dreaming, we begin to penetrate the many layers of cultural bondage, political presumptions, linguistic manipulative programming, especially evolutionary religious dogmas. As Paul, the apostle, so aptly put it: “Now, we see through a glass darkly, but then, face to face.”

The call from our souls, the inner longings and purposive ideals, startle us awake, at last!

Awakening to the totality, universality, and simplicity of Jesus’ gospel of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Humankind, we see on one hand how far we have to go. But on the other hand, we understand how many rungs up the civilizational/cultural ladder we have climbed. This is more apparent in the twenty centuries since The Master was alive on earth. The quickening, progressive waves of scientific discovery, mechanical invention, intellectual comprehension, political, cultural, and artistic accomplishment have utterly transformed our planet since Jesus’ resurrection.

And yet, we are plagued with wars, with grossly overpopulated cities, epidemic diseases, cultural stagnation, environmental degradation, and crime. The swinging pendulum between the poles of aggressive political hubris

and atheistic world-weary despair might leave us dizzy with the sickening sense that our world is spinning out of control. Fear may be a master fraud, but it threatens to take hold when the media-machine predicts disaster and awful death. Our ability to evaluate and discriminate becomes blurry. We long for relief. We demand that God take control.

“Be not discouraged; human evolution is still in progress, and the revelation of God to the world, in and through Jesus, shall not fail.” [196:3.30] (P. 2097)

Is this not the time to re-acquaint ourselves with the comforting assurances of the Good News? Should we fail to place the Universal Father at the center of history and prophecy, we might dare to overlook the evolutionary sweep of God’s presence, his saving love for all humanity. When we fail to place our faith in the brotherhood of believers in God our Father and God our Mother, in the ultimate triumph of Good, we declare that the Gospel has not moved us to transform our minds, to open to new understanding. We are caught in the cold, closed circle.

Jesus lived with a sublime trust in the Father’s watchcare, knowing the presence of God moment by moment, undiluted by doubts and fears. Jesus’ Gospel of Good News assures each of us that we have a personal relationship with God. Our family becomes the worldwide human race. We learn that God is present in our inmost being. Our prayers and longings are answered.

We increasingly find that we need peaceful moments to associate ourselves with our inner spiritual reality. We discover that trust and love create relationships of sustaining and healing wholeness. We realize our deep hurt and loneliness, as we open injuries and pain to the transformation of the Spirit, overcoming mindal darkness with the divine light of truth and the affection we feel for one another. The promise to make all things new comes true, for every sincere seeker after God and his trusting, healing LOVE.

“The religion of Jesus fosters the highest type of human civilization in that it creates the highest type of spiritual personality and proclaims the sacredness of that person.” [194:3.7] (P. 2063)

“The spiritual forward urge is the most powerful driving force present in this world: the truth-loving believer is the one progressive and aggressive soul on earth.” [194:3.4] (P. 2063)

Typically, much strife and contention has accompanied the teachings and the teachers of Jesus’ gospel. Martyrdom, persecution, even criminalization have tended to make modern believers somewhat cautious about falling prey to overly zealous behavior. Even the Golden Rule has been

“BE NOT DISCOURAGED; HUMAN EVOLUTION IS STILL IN PROGRESS, AND THE REVELATION OF GOD TO THE WORLD, IN AND THROUGH JESUS, SHALL NOT FAIL.” [196:3:30] (P. 2097)

turned upside down, to create a polite refusal to intrude into the privacy of others' lives.

It is a terrible thing to see real evangelism deteriorate into opinionated argument and condemnation. Zealots create strife and belligerence wherever they go, no matter to which religious movement they attempt to obtain converts. Tact and tolerance and the ability to listen for the cry in another's soul may win more believers than any show of intellectual skill or forceful debate. Dropping pearls of wisdom effectively into common conversation is an art form in itself. Going on the second-mile-journey may be the source of a miracle for someone in deep need.

"A new and fuller revelation of the religion of Jesus is destined to conquer an empire of materialistic secularism and to overthrow a world sway of mechanistic naturalism...Religion does need new leaders, spiritual men and women who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings." [195:9.2&4] (P. 2082)

Jesus calls us to open up our real potentials, to give of ourselves as we are uniquely able to be useful. The welling-up of feelings brought on by personal spiritual transformation brings us to want to aid in a similar transformation of the entire world, one community at a time.

We do not find Jesus saying merely, "Peace be upon you." He urgently commands us to love one another, to go into all the world to spread Good News—the glad tidings of our kinship with the God of universes. Evidently, laziness has no place in the religion of Jesus. The working words are, "Go" and "Do," "Serve" and "Love."

We are admonished by the revelators: *"Neither democracy nor any other political panacea will take the place of spiritual progress. False religions may represent an evasion of reality, but Jesus in his gospel introduced mortal man to the very entrance upon an eternal reality of spiritual progression."* [195:6.10] (P. 2077)

"Freedom or initiative in any realm of existence is directly proportional to the degree of spiritual influence and cosmic-mind control; that is, in human experience, the degree of the actuality of doing 'the Father's will.' And so, when you once start out to find God, that is the conclusive proof that God has already found you." [195:6.16] (P. 2078)

"Only when man has become sufficiently disillusioned by the sorrowful disappointments attendant upon the foolish and deceptive pursuits of selfishness, and subsequent to the discovery of the barrenness of formalized religion, will he be disposed to turn wholeheartedly to the gospel of the kingdom, the religion of Jesus of Nazareth." [195:9.7] (P. 2083)

"Modern culture must become spiritually baptized with a new revelation of Jesus' life and illuminated with a new understanding of his gospel of eternal salvation. And when Jesus becomes thus lifted up, he will draw all men to himself. Jesus' disciples should be more than conquerors, even overflowing sources of inspiration and enhanced living to all men. Religion is only an exalted humanism until it is made divine by the discovery of the reality of the presence of God in personal experience." [195:10.1] (P. 2084)

"Ever bear in mind—God and men need each other. They are mutually necessary to the full and final attainment of eternal personality experience in the divine destiny of universe finality." [195:10.3] (P. 2084)

The real gospel of Jesus can be easily apprehended, and even taught, but it must also be lived. Hypocrisy haunts the lives of those who resist the transforming power of personal experience with God, overcoming selfishness through performing loving service to fellow mortals.

In summation, sometime it may dawn on us that we, ourselves, are potential living gospels through our lives as we interact with this world and its cultures. We have an opportunity to become, as it were, an open book. When asked, we teach whatever can be learned. When need is perceived, we become involved. When the time has come to be silent, to listen intently to the inner realms, we humbly give over to God the direction of our thoughts. In group devotions, we seek remembrance and renewal, leading us to true worship.

"The call to the adventure of building a new and transformed human society by means of the spiritual rebirth of Jesus' brotherhood of the kingdom should thrill all who believe in him as men have not been stirred since the days when they walked about on earth as his companions in the flesh." [195:10.6] (P. 2084)

This simple yet saving and powerful gospel turned the western world upside down. It led to the Renaissance, and even to the Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment, and our modern world.

Perhaps the times of the present will see a planetary upending of the ancient closed circle of traditions and cults in a unique, new opening of human potentials to the healing touch of the Father's love. We are in the midst of massive unpredictable change. Which way will the planet go? Who knows? Who might stop long enough to "read" us and to know us, if we should become "the people of the open book?"

"In accordance with the truth committed to your hands will the Master of truth require a reckoning ... Freely have you received: therefore freely should you give of the truth of heaven, and in the giving will this truth multiply and show forth the increasing light of saving grace, even as you minister it." [176:3.7&10] (P.1918)

Stephen Zendt has been studying The Urantia Book for thirty years. The past nine years he has been a member of the General Council of the Fellowship, and he previously participated in the recording project to put the entire Urantia Book on cassette tapes. Stephen lives in the San Francisco Bay area.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

By Meredith J. Sprunger, Fort Wayne, IN

“If you are not a positive and missionary evangel of your religion, you are self-deceived in that what you call religion is only a traditional belief or a mere system of intellectual philosophy.” [160:5.3] (P. 1780)

“The religion of the spirit means effort, struggle, conflict, faith, determination, love, loyalty, and progress.” [155:5.11] (P. 1729)

I have always known that *The Urantia Book* would inspire new religious organizations. The Spiritual Fellowship appears to be the first of these new religious organizations that seeks to intentionally found a community based on worship, personal spiritual growth, outreach, and evangelism, the things that we have traditionally associated with a church, synagogue, or mosque. It has had a forty-five year gestation period. Dr. Sadler and I used to discuss the probable nature of religious organizations inspired by the fifth epochal revelation. We observed that the authors of the Urantia Papers talked about the need for a new religious organization.

“Notwithstanding that the cult has always retarded social progress, it is regrettable that so many modern believers in moral standards and spiritual ideals have no adequate symbolism—no cult of mutual support—nothing to belong to.” [87:7.3] (P. 965)

“It is difficult for religion to survive as the private practice of isolated individuals. This has ever been the error of the religious leaders: Seeing the evils of institutionalized religion, they seek to destroy the technique of group functioning. In place of destroying all ritual, they would do better to reform it.” [97:10.7] (P. 1076)

“While it is true that the institutionalization of religion has usually detracted from its spiritual quality, it is also a fact that no religion has thus far succeeded in surviving without the aid of institutional organization of some degree, greater or lesser.” [98:6.1] (P. 1083)

“Regardless of the drawbacks and handicaps, every new revelation of truth has given rise to a new cult, and even the restatement of the religion of Jesus must develop a new and appropriate symbolism.” [87:7.6] (P. 966)

“There is a real purpose in the socialization of religion. It is the purpose of group religious activities to dramatize the loyalties of religion; to magnify the lures of truth, beauty, and goodness; to foster the attractions of supreme values; to enhance the service of unselfish fellowship; to glorify the potentials of family life; to promote religious education; to provide wise counsel and spiritual guidance; and to encourage group worship. And all live religions encourage human friendship, conserve morality, promote neighborhood welfare, and facilitate the spread of the essential gospel of their respective messages of eternal salvation.” [99:6.2] (P. 1092)

BACKGROUND EVENTS

When I finished reading *The Urantia Book* in 1956 I recognized that its superior teachings were very close to the theological positions of the leading thinkers on the growing

edge of Christianity. I saw the fifth epochal revelation as the great hope of a revitalization of the Christian faith. It seems that the midwayers in the “Life and Teachings of Jesus” are trying to upstep Christianity.

I, therefore sought to follow the pattern of Jesus’ ministry. At the beginning of his public ministry Jesus went to Annas, the most prominent leader of Judaism, in the hope of communicating with the leaders of Judaism. He continued his ministry in the synagogues of Judaism whenever possible. In a similar fashion, I contacted many of the leading theologians in 85 seminaries belonging to the American Association of Theological Schools. Between 10,000 and 15,000 personal letters offering loan books were sent to ministers in the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, the Disciples of Christ, and Unity ministers, and 5,000 letters were sent to the members of the American Philosophical Association. We presented the paper “*The Urantia Book* and Religious Studies” at the national meeting of the American Academy of Religion and published *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal* interfacing with mainline Christian ministers. We made presentations of *The Urantia Book* to ministerial groups, college classes, and individual church groups. After more than forty years of interfacing with Christian leaders and lay people, it is obvious that it will be a long time before the leaders of Christianity will seriously examine the Urantia Papers.

We should observe this is consistent with the history of religion. Whenever an advanced paradigm of religion has appeared on our world, it has never won over the power structure of the old religions. Usually, the new spiritual paradigm is carried to the world by ordinary people who are seekers of spiritual truth.

Realizing that eventually the Urantia Papers would need to be presented in a form that would permit studying the Papers in settings such as Sunday School classes, I condensed the central facts and truths of each paper in the exact language of *The Urantia Book*, so that sufficient time is permitted for discussion. I have used these papers for the last nine years in an Explorers Sunday School class I teach in the United Church of Christ that we attend. They have inspired some excellent discussions. In anticipation of the time when the Urantia Papers would inspire a new religious organization, I composed “The Spiritual Fellowship

Constitution” in December of 1988.

We should also point out that there has been a negative attitude toward religious institutions and to some degree a “spiritual vacuum” in the official organizations in the Urantia movement. The Urantia Foundation, *The Urantia Book* Fellowship, and the International Urantia Association have emphasized that they are not religious organizations. Antagonism and a struggle for power and influence have dominated the official organizations.

At the same time, in recent years people have been searching for spiritual meaning on an unprecedented scale. There has been an increasing longing among students of *The Urantia Book* for a religious community, something to belong to that gives a sense of belonging to a spiritual family. There is a growing sense of the need for spiritual nourishment from birth to death. It was in this atmosphere, after many years of planning, that The Spiritual Fellowship was formed. It is the first religious organization designed to carry the fifth epochal revelation to the indigenous communities of the world.

... IT APPEARS THAT THE MOST HIGHS ARE USING EVOLUTIONARY RELIGION TO PREPARE THE WAY FOR A NEW RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION INSPIRED BY THE URANTIA PAPERS.

While we must always keep in mind that God is the end and all other things are means, there is a danger in forgetting that it is the means that are instrumental in getting to the end. When using terms like “church” or “fellowship,” there is a danger in getting bogged down in semantics—a religious organization is also a brother/sisterhood. The history of religion shows that new spiritual value systems are always established in society through some kind of religious organization. The social dynamics of a religious organization are basic in carrying the religion of Jesus to the grass roots of the world. We believe The Spiritual Fellowship has this potential.

In addition to these preliminary activities, it appears that the Most Highs are using evolutionary religion to prepare the way for a new religious organization inspired by the Urantia Papers. We are living in one of the most promising periods of history. The most distinctive contemporary development of religion in our world is the advent of the ecumenical movement and the unprecedented search for meaningful spiritual experience. This expanding quest for spiritual guidance and direction has taken many forms. The theologian Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) observed that all religions are relative—that is limited, partial, and incomplete. The historian Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) examined all of the religions of the world and pointed out that there is a common core and goal behind all religions. The

psychiatrist Carl G. Jung (1875-1961) in an in-depth study of religions, found that there is a common psychic origin and function among religions. These and other scholarly studies of religion set the stage for the contemporary ecumenical movement.

Paul F. Knitter’s book, *No Other Name?;¹ A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*, is one of the most insightful present-day discussions of the ecumenical basis of religion. Dr. Knitter reminds us that Jesus established a theocentric (religion of Jesus) foundation of religion rather than a Christocentric (religion about Jesus) basis of religion. He believes that all religions could profit from the insights and experiences of other religions. The last chapter of Professor Knitter’s book entitled, “The Challenge of Interreligious Dialogue,” makes an eloquent argument for the development of a global theology. Knitter’s more recent book, *Introducing Theologies of Religions²*, continues this discussion.

Stemming from this new pluralism in theology over the past quarter century or more, Lonnie D. Kliever’s book *The Shattered Spectrum,³ A Survey of Contemporary Theology*, observes that the kaleidoscope of new theologies that have appeared in recent times defy classification under the old categories. Professor Kliever believes that radical changes will take place in the form and content of religion in the future: “In such crisis circumstances, the search for and conversion to a new worldview can and does occur. Such a breakthrough depends upon finding some new organizing metaphor or shared paradigm through which to re-view and re-shape the world.” (p. 197) The authors of the Urantia Papers have given us such a new spiritual paradigm that will bring a renaissance of religion on our world.

Evidence of the changing nature of religion and the searching attitude of people is seen in the Congregational Life Survey funded by the Lilly Endowment and the Louisville Institute. In April of 2001, nearly 300,000 worshipers filled out questionnaires answering questions about their church attendance and religious convictions. Nearly one quarter of them switched congregations in the past five years. But only seven percent of newcomers had no earlier involvement with a faith community which suggests that only a small number of the unchurched are looking for traditional religious affiliation. A great number of people are searching for a more meaningful spiritual experience. In

the February, 2002 issue of the Atlantic Monthly, an article, “Oh Gods!” by Toby Lester, says that the new century will probably see religion explode—in both intensity and variety. New religions, he says, are springing up everywhere and old ones are transforming themselves dramatically.

The stage is set for the advent of a new spiritual vision that will transform our society. Our world has been prepared by:

- The birth of the ecumenical movement
- A growing recognition that a global understanding of religion must be theocentric
- A proliferation of new theological approaches to spiritual experience
- An unprecedented searching for a more meaningful view and experience of spiritual Reality
- A realization that our world needs a “new organizing metaphor or shared paradigm that will reshape the world”

The fifth epochal revelation, in my opinion, is the only resource that has the spiritual vision and power to fulfill these longings and aspirations of our human condition. The history of religion shows that spiritual value systems are always established by some kind of religious organization.

HISTORY OF ORIGIN

Early on, after my discovery of *The Urantia Book*, I intuited that my mission was to interface with Christian leaders, but I would help anyone who wanted to start a new religious organization based on the Urantia Papers. Over the years, I have worked with many such people, but none succeeded in actually starting such a religious organization. In January of 2001, Sherilyn Henry came to Fort Wayne and asked if I would help her organize such a religious organization. I was happy to do so. This was the beginning of The Spiritual Fellowship.

We composed a Constitution and decided that a Board of Directors would make final decisions about The Spiritual Fellowship policy until there were twenty-five fellowships. At that time representatives from these fellowships would determine the structure and policy of The Spiritual Fellowship. An announcement of the organization of The Spiritual Fellowship was placed on the Internet and a survey among around forty interested people was made to determine membership of various committees. A logo or emblem of three azure blue concentric circles intertwined with a gold cross and a symbol at the center was adopted. Sherilyn Henry, acting as Executive Director, incorporated The Spiritual Fellowship in the State of California.

Several teleconferences of the Board were held in 2001, and we met at Fort Wayne in January, at Boulder in June, and at Fort Wayne in September of 2002. The IRS granted us nonprofit standing in August of 2002. Also in August Sherilyn Henry resigned from the Board of Directors. She disagreed with the use of the term “fifth epochal revelation”

in official Spiritual Fellowship communications. The officers of the Board are: Meredith Sprunger, Chair; Larry Mullins, President; Tom Choquette, Vice President; Nancy Long, Secretary and acting Executive Director; Dick Bain, Treasurer; and Irene Sprunger, Director. Another Director will be selected in the near future. The Spiritual Fellowship will probably be in the process of organizing for the next couple of years.

SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP CONCEPTS⁴

GUIDING PRINCIPLES—THE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP SHOULD:

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

THE PURPOSE OF THE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP IS TO:

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

THE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP SEEKS TO AVOID DANGERS, SUCH AS:

1. Fixation of ritual and theology
2. Developing vested interests and secular involvement
3. Serving the institution instead of serving God and ministering to people

4. Forming competitive sects and developing a “chosen people” attitude
5. Developing authoritarianism, dogmatism, and false ideas of sacredness
6. Venerating the past while ignoring present needs and timely spiritual interpretations
7. Failing to hold the interest of youth and grow with the times
8. Losing sight of spiritual ministry and the saving message of salvation

CENTRAL OBJECTIVE

The central objective of The Spiritual Fellowship is to create a polity with maximum flexibility that will function with small groups or large congregations, utilize lay leadership and/or ordained clergy, have cross-cultural adaptability, and broad theological inclusiveness.

We strive to be “a gathering of persons who have accepted a common purpose, and a common discipline to guide the pursuit of that purpose, to the end that each involved person reaches higher fulfillment as a person, through serving and being served by the common venture, than would be achieved alone or in a less committed relationship.”⁵

PREAMBLE OF THE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP CONSTITUTION

1. The loving Parenthood of God and the spiritual brother/sisterhood of all people are our two guiding foundational principles. We acknowledge as kindred spirits, all individuals and traditions, past and present, who recognize these two principles.

2. We rejoice that all people are God’s beloved children and that, as the ultimate authority, a fragment of God’s spirit indwells each person, guiding us, if we are willing, to our highest spiritual good.

3. The Spiritual Fellowship affirms that true religion is the spiritual experience of personally knowing God. We believe that the supernal quest of all people is that of discovering God, and that the path of finding and doing God’s will is an individual responsibility and personal experience.

4. The Spiritual Fellowship recognizes the life and teachings of Jesus, as confirmed and expanded in *The Urantia Book*, as the spiritual ideal for human living. To this end, we utilize all sacred scriptures portraying the spiritual truth and wisdom that are harmonious with this guideline for spiritual living.

5. The Spiritual Fellowship welcomes all people into membership who recognize the Parenthood of God and the

THE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP IS SEEKING TO ESTABLISH THE GRASS ROOTS RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS BASED UPON THE TEACHINGS OF THE URANTIA PAPERS THAT WILL CARRY THEIR TRANSFORMING MESSAGE TO THE SPIRITUALLY HUNGRY PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.

MISSION STATEMENT AND CORE VALUES

The Spiritual Fellowship is a religious organization whose mission is to bring the spiritual teaching of the Urantia Papers to all people.

The Spiritual Fellowship is committed to motivating, empowering, and supporting all people in their growing relationship with God and encouraging loving service, forgiveness, and ministry among all of God’s children. The Spiritual Fellowship believes the Urantia Papers present an expanded revelation of the Life and Teachings of Jesus and a fuller revelation of God and our relationship to God. While recognizing that any revelation is incomplete short of the attainment of God, our Universal Parent, The Spiritual Fellowship recognizes the value of a continuing study of the Urantia Papers and other spiritual sources for inspiration and guidance.

spiritual kinship of all people, and who endeavor to live a God-centered life striving to give selfless, loving service to others.

6. The Spiritual Fellowship challenges each member to strive towards consistent, God-centered living and thus supports, honors, and encourages spiritual transformation and enhanced values for the individual and the family in all aspects of life: physical, social, psychological, and spiritual.

7. The Spiritual Fellowship recognizes the freedom of each fellowship to evolve its own celebration of God’s love and supports each fellowship in providing community worship and religious education. Additional programs are encouraged that offer support for personal and family spiritual transformation.

THE BASIC CONGREGATIONAL-CHAORDIC POLITY OF THE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

1. The Fellowship should be owned by all participants. No participant should have an inherently greater or lesser

ownership position.

2. Participants should have equitable rights and obligations. There should be no attempt to impose conformity.

3. The Fellowship should be open to all qualified participants. While it must be able to create standards for eligibility, once those standards are established, it should be open to all interested participants meeting the standards.

4. Power, function, and resources should be distributive to the maximum degree.

5. To the maximum degree possible, everything should be voluntary. Persuasion, not compulsion, should be fundamental.

6. The Fellowship should induce, not compel, change. It should liberate and enhance creativity and ingenuity.

7. The Fellowship should be infinitely malleable, yet extremely durable. It should be capable of constant self-generated modification of functions without sacrificing its essential nature and principles.

ADMISSION OF MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENT

Article 15, Section 7

“Persons may become members of a local fellowship in the following ways; (a) profession of faith in the Father/Motherhood of God and the brother/sisterhood of all people as interpreted by the Life and Teachings of Jesus in the Urantia Papers as taught by their local fellowship; (b) letter of transfer from another fellowship; (c) letter of transfer from a religious institution and acceptance of option (a).”

“Persons may become members-at-large of The Fellowship by (a) profession of faith in the Father/Motherhood of God and the brother/sisterhood of all people as portrayed by the Life and Teachings of Jesus; (b) letter of membership from another fellowship; (c) letter of transfer from a religious institution and acceptance of option (a).”

(It should be pointed out that this does not require the individual to believe that the Urantia Papers are revelation or even the “fifth epochal revelation.” Each member of The Spiritual Fellowship is entirely free to form their own opinion regarding the nature of *The Urantia Book*.)

VISION OF THE FUTURE

The Urantia Book, in my judgment, has the greatest potential of spiritually advancing our world of any event since the coming of Jesus over 2000 years ago. The history of religion shows that spiritual value systems are always established and promoted by some kind of religious organization. The Spiritual Fellowship is seeking to establish the grass roots religious foundations based upon the teachings of the Urantia Papers that will carry their transforming message to the spiritually hungry people of the world. I believe we are at the beginning of a new era of religion on

our world. We invite you to join us in this outreach mission.

This outreach ministry will not be easy. It is not for timid souls. It is difficult for people who are balanced and solid citizens in their community to risk being viewed as “different” or as belonging to some strange cult or movement. Pioneers always face difficulty and hardship. New and enlarged presentations of truth have always been, and will always be, attacked by religious traditionalists and fundamentalists. The history of spiritual growth shows that not until an enlarged vision of truth is attacked and its pioneers persecuted does it come to the attention and make its appeal to a significant number of creative seekers for spiritual truth in society—“*Happy are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” [140:3.11] (P. 1571) Nevertheless, those who have the courage and wisdom, to bring a knowledge of the fifth epochal revelation to the individuals and institutions of our world are engaging in one of the most important ministries of our times. Such missionary evangelists will open the door to a spiritual dynamic that will undoubtedly transform our planet in the next thousand years. An Archangel of Nebadon reminds us, “*The weak indulge in resolutions, but the strong act. Life is but a day’s work—do it well. The act is ours; the consequences God’s.*” [48:7.13] (P. 556) Now is the time for courageous and wise action!

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¹ Knitter, Paul F. *No Other Name?: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*. New York: Orbis Books, 1985.

² Knitter, Paul F. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. New York: Orbis Books, 2002.

³ Kliever, Lonnie D. *The Shattered Spectrum: A Survey of Contemporary Theology*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981.

⁴ See *The Urantia Book*. [87:7.6-10] (P. 966)

⁵ Robert K. Greenleaf. *Servant Leadership*. Paulist Press, New York, 1977, p. 237.

A DIALOGUE ABOUT “THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN”

By Claudia Ayers and Lee Smith, Soquel, CA

“Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that faith is his twin brother.” Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.” John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*

The Urantia Papers have enriched our lives and guided our hearts and minds for virtually all of our adult lives. When we were novice readers, the phrase “the kingdom of heaven” brought forth very different mental images.

Lee: I had a bit of bible training, so the phrase “the kingdom of heaven” was familiar—from the timeless imagery of the parables to the mysterious prophecies concerning the return of Jesus. However, it was Jesus that spoke most directly to my soul when he said, “the Kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:21)

Claudia: The “kingdom of heaven” phrase brought me confusion. I had been exposed to very little church talk. “Kingdom” was not a word I had ever used in my worldview. It was relegated to fairytales and the school study of medieval Europe. To me, the word “kingdom” did not evoke mental images supportive of freewill or democracy, which were the mainstays of my global ideal.

Now, thirty years later, we are more seasoned readers. Our optimism that the Urantia Papers would imminently find a significant niche in society has considerably mellowed into more of a long view. We have each had our revelation perspectives altered and tempered by the ongoing discoveries and somewhat perplexing depth and breadth of the human source contributions. Doubts about the nature and authenticity of our inspirational papers have surfaced in our minds.

Lee: Yet, regardless of authorship (whether human, divine, or both), I continue to appreciate “The Kingdom of Heaven” Paper for describing the kingdom concept so thoroughly and for explaining how the personal faith realization of the consciousness of entering the kingdom can be accomplished through the simple process of practicing “faith, sincerity” and “truth hunger” on a daily basis.

After the controversy and wrangling over the human source material has gone full circle, I surmise that the Urantia Papers—as a catalyst for spiritual transformation—will not have significantly suffered. I still consider *The Urantia Book*, as a whole, an “epochal” revelation, but not necessarily a

“divine” revelation. I am no longer proselytizing *The Urantia Book* as “sacred text.” Given the role that “sacred texts” have in fanning the flames of fundamentalist-inspired conflicts all over the planet, I believe the distinction between “epochal” and “divine” (or sacred) is a reasonable one.

Claudia: The basis of my faith in God was my discovery and subsequent acceptance of the Urantia Papers. Accepting the Urantia revelation as “truth” required me to accommodate, one way or another, my distaste for such terms as “kingdom of heaven” and “Thought Adjuster” and to reconcile the near complete lack of gender inclusiveness in the language. To later discover that so much of the wonderful message in these papers came from human sources, and that much of it is inaccurate has been troubling to me, to say the least. I have had to completely examine my faith and find the truer inner source on which to base it. But now, I am rebuilding my cosmological framework on this inner, more durable, spiritual core. My faith is more humble. I have no more, and no less, of a basis for my faith than any other mortal religionist.

By the power of group wisdom, amended with prayer and meditation, we have found that faith can be made more meaningful because of the process that doubt inspires. We find it quite amazing that in a relatively short time, our doubts have given birth to a newly inspired and richer faith.

Lee: It all really comes back to the conflict between doubt and faith with which we each have to personally come to grips. It is relatively easy to understand that doubt is fueled by fear. Real faith, as powered by God, is liberating and soul building.

Jesus, in his instructions for teachers and believers, admonishes: “*There is but one struggle for those who enter the kingdom, and that is to fight the good fight of faith. The believer has only one battle, and that is against doubt—unbelief.*” [159:3.8] (P. 1766)

Claudia: What did Jesus mean by “the kingdom of heaven?” He used it interchangeably with “the kingdom of God,” and to his apostles he always taught the kingdom as embracing an individual’s personal experience in relation to others here on earth and to the Father in heaven. But Jesus was doing his best to offset the messianic belief that the chosen people would be displacing the “kingdoms of men” with a physical kingdom of God, and he further had to deal with a myriad of other factors of his day and age on earth that prevented his true meaning from being conveyed.

We find in paper 170, during Jesus' last sermon in Pella, that he preached at length on the topic of the kingdom of heaven. *"The great effort embodied in this sermon was the attempt to translate this concept into the ideal of the idea of doing the will of God. Long had the Master taught his followers to pray: 'Your kingdom come; your will be done'; and at this time he earnestly sought to induce them to abandon the use of the term kingdom of God in favor of the more practical equivalent, the will of God. But he did not succeed."* [170:2.11] (P. 1860) I take this message to heart. I frequently remind myself of this personal truth by practicing this simple restorative meditation: I breathe in "Your will," and breathe out, "be done."*

Today's spiritual community again stands in need of a concept to designate the power of faith and the transcendence of spiritual reality. The Kingdom of Heaven phrase was problematic 2000 years ago, and it appears to be just as unclear today. The persistence of terribly confused spiritual concepts is bringing our planet ever closer to fracture, if not destruction. The world needs unifying calls to faith.

Lee: Jesus struggled with shifting and uplifting the Jewish Messianic concept of the "kingdom" concept to the idea of "family fellowship" with God as our loving parent. We are told that he *"sought to substitute many terms for the kingdom but always without success. Among others, he used: the family of God, the Father's will, the friends of God, the fellowship of believers, the brotherhood of man, the Father's fold, the children of God, the fellowship of the faithful, the Father's service, and the liberated sons of God."* [170:2.20] (P. 1861)

For me, the kingdom of heaven is really built upon a pattern of personal relationships, and not on a framework of crystallized prose. This realization is an outgrowth of dynamic interaction between sincere truth seekers and divine inspiration.

Word symbols, however instructive, create their own limitations. We are told in the "Last Teaching at Pella" that we learn about God from Jesus by observing the divinity of his life, not by depending on his teachings... *"never did Jesus say, 'Whoso has heard me has heard God.' But he did say, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father.' To hear Jesus' teaching is not equivalent to knowing God, but to see Jesus is an experience that in and of itself is a revelation of the Father to the soul."* [169:4.12] (P. 1857)

Claudia: Each of us is connected to all other living things. We are each linked to even the elemental structures and universe energies that spark, support, and sustain life. The living system some call earth, and others call Urantia, is either guided towards becoming increasingly sustainable, or it isn't. Each of us has a hand in this planetary guidance.

As I write, we are on the brink of a war that can go one of two ways: closer to global community or further from it. (I like to use this spelling of community: Come-in-unity.)

We believe that Jesus would like all adults to view each

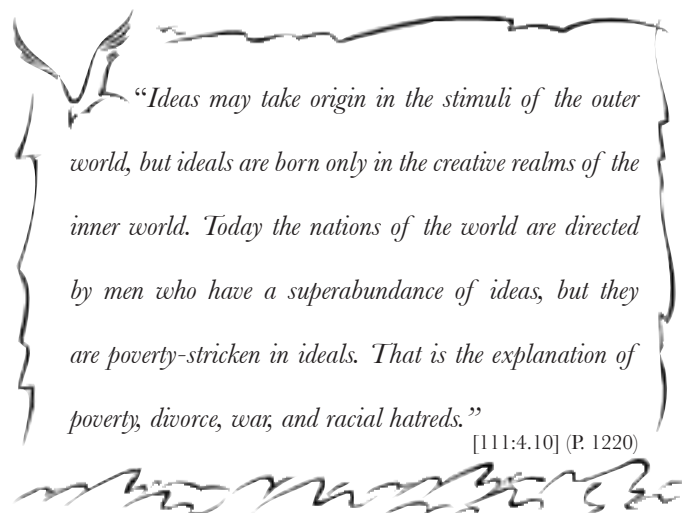
child on the planet as one of their own. We believe this is the true meaning of unconditionally loving one's children. Jesus gave us so many tips on how to do God's will. He asked that we love one another in the way that he loves each of us, the way God loves each of us. If we start by loving all the children on earth, soon we progress to loving all the adults as well.

Human kingdoms are passing from the planet, but we hope and pray that inter-connecting human relationships are on the upswing. The call to faith may need to be reframed. It may still be disuniting to state, "Come, enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Were Jesus walking on earth today, we believe he might again try to invoke a unifying theme with his compelling concept of family fellowship with our Heavenly Parent. Perhaps he would today be inviting us to "Come, enter the Universal Faith Community."

*We thank Diana Elwyn for sharing this, her personal meditation, with us.

Claudia Ayers has been a reader of The Urantia Book since her mother gave her a book in 1973. She has two daughters in college, teaches high school math, and lives in Soquel, CA.

Lee Smith found The Urantia Book in 1975, and shortly thereafter started a study group in Santa Cruz, CA, which has continued in his home to this day. He has served with The Fellowship for many years and is currently the Chair of the Education Committee.



Anti-Terror Treatise

When I shed the suit of worry
That I carry on me day and night,
When I strip away the anxious bands
Of tightly held beliefs,
I stand naked to the gaze of God, and I tremble.

What happens then is nothing short of cosmic love:
Down from the utmost reaches of my mind
Stream consciousness and light in healing waves of wonder.
Enfolded, embraced within supreme creative being,
I am surrounded by the power of righteous thought.
I behold as I am beheld.

What I had clutched to me as vital crumbles into dust.
Selfish hopes are whisked to insignificance
By a force at once benign and beautiful
That powers stars and galaxies,
Yet makes me feel beloved,
At home, encouraged.

The love that forgives, serves, resurrects, remembers,
Showers down on me and on my world of pain and fear.

Our God makes all things new, in spite of our determined doubt.
If I remove my tiny self, God is there in radiance and mercy.

How can I cling to outmoded ways,
When our world is breaking open before astonished eyes?

Stephen Zendt
San Francisco, 2002