

# Spiritual Fellowship Journal

Volume 5, Number 2

Fall, 1995

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**Putting the New Apocalypticism in Perspective**

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

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

### **Guiding Network Principles**

1. We believe *The Urantia Book* can make a significant contribution to the stimulation of spiritual creativity in churches, synagogues, and other religious institutions and their people.
2. We believe that at the present stage of spiritual development it is wise for ministers, priests, and rabbis to use *The Urantia Book* as a resource for preaching and teaching rather than referring to the book itself or directing attention to it. Almost every concept in *The Urantia Book* can be associated with some theologian, philosopher, or scientist in the past or present.
3. We believe that, although one should not be secretive about interest in *The Urantia Book*, one should use discretion in recommending it to people. The light of enhanced truth can frighten and blind as well as guide and illuminate.
4. We believe *The Urantia Book's* claim to a revelatory source and status is not germane to its usefulness in the presentation of spiritual truth. Truth has an inherent appeal, regardless of its source, and can be used to enrich one's preaching, teaching, and living.
5. We believe the Spirit of God works among us in a differential and evolutionary manner; therefore, we recognize that for whatever reason some clergy may not wish to read and critically evaluate *The Urantia Book*. This diversity should in no way stand as a barrier to our mutual respect, fellowship, and love.
6. We believe the leavening process of creativity stimulated by *The Urantia Book* should be ecumenical in nature.
7. We believe *The Urantia Book* will eventually be recognized by the great majority of the world's religious leaders as one of the most constructive spiritual messages our world has received since Jesus' ministry on earth.

### **Network Recommendations**

1. Read the entire *Urantia Book* to get its sweeping universe view of reality. Many of us started reading the book at Part IV, The Life and Teachings of Jesus. If you should like to get a quick overall view of the book you might read "The Gift of Revelation," a twenty-two page summary of the basic facts and truths of *The Urantia Book*.
2. Have the *Concordex* of *The Urantia Book* available to help in researching topics on which you are preaching or teaching.
3. Use the *Paramony*, which is a parallel and harmony of the Bible and *The Urantia Book*, to locate *Urantia Book* material on the Biblical text you are using in sermon preparation.

**The Spiritual Fellowship  
Journal**

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*The Spiritual Fellowship Journal* is an ecumenical publication published twice yearly by The Christian Fellowship of Students of *The Urantia Book* of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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

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

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

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**About the Editors**

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

## The Challenge of the Twenty-first Century

We are living in one of the major turning points of history. Our times have been labeled variously as the post-industrial, post-modern, and post-Christian era. The traditional paradigms of cosmology, value, and reality have lost their unquestioned relevance and authority among contemporary people. The social institutions which were structured by these traditional concepts and values are deteriorating in vitality and influence. The economic and political infrastructures of society are breaking down and losing their credibility and effectiveness. The mores that have been the foundation of human behavior and ethical standards in society are crumbling and immorality, crime, and violence are endemic. Religious institutions that were once the central pillars of society are now relegated to a peripheral position.

As we face the twenty-first century there are numerous scientific-technical innovations which will revolutionize the way we live. Computers and computer technology are changing the way we handle information and communication. Microbiology is opening a vast potential for altering living organisms. Recombinant DNA technology makes it possible to restructure both plants and animals and produce a variety of drugs, industrial lubricants, and enzymes. Human applications will range from predicting inherited genetic diseases to applying gene therapy for correcting genetic disorders. The new physics is radically changing our conception of the nature of material reality. We are, literally, being ushered into a new world of potential development.

Among the many problems that we face, the material-environmental, economic, and political difficulties are much easier to cope with than the personal-spiritual and social-cultural problems. Our industrial-technological civilization has broken up the small communities which were indigenous to the agricultural society and isolated the individual in specialization and urbanization. The advent of the computer has accelerated this separation and seclusion. The sense of community and the extended family are greatly diminished. Even the segregated industrial-business groups and the nuclear family exist in relative cultural isolation. This detachment and isolation contributes to the deterioration of family and community influence. The inherent human hunger for community and belonging causes young people to join gangs with territorial-defensive agendas and motivates adults to affiliate with ideological and religious groups with exclusive-restrictive boundaries.

The root of the breakdown of individual behavior, the deterioration and malaise of our social institutions, and the

failure of our religious institutions to satisfy our spiritual hunger and inspire our creativity, is that our civilization is trying to draw resources and energy from a horse and buggy paradigm of reality which has lost its relevance and serviceability. There are diverse and confused views of reality in today's world. Many scientifically oriented people have a materialistic-positivistic understanding of life. Most religionists have a simplistic view of spiritual cosmology that does not harmonize with our astronomical view of the cosmos, and a great portion of society is confused about what to believe. The basic dilemma of our times is that we have no unifying conception of reality.

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The singular ingredient which will bring meaning and unity into planetary existence is an inspiring paradigm of reality which will harmonize science, philosophy, and religion and inspire humankind to strive for common goals and objectives. Only a new and enlarged revelatory vision of reality has the potential of doing this. Hopefully, the searchers of our world will discover the Fifth Epochal Revelation in the twenty-first century. *The Urantia Book* is the only source of reality that is large enough and spiritually empowering enough to unify and energize the entire planet. Enculturating the world with the inspiring and ennobling teachings of the Fifth Epochal Revelation is the challenge of the twenty-first century!

-MJS

## The Scandal of Current Spiritual Cosmology

The material cosmology of the prescientific Biblical world was a simplistic view of a flat earth overarched by a firmament that had holes (stars) through which the light of heaven shown. Our current four dimensional scientific material cosmology in which distances are measured in light years indicates how out of date Biblical astronomy is. Even religious fundamentalists today have abandoned a flat earth material cosmology.

What is amazing is that progressive, liberal theologians of the twentieth century have done very little to expand an equally simplistic spiritual cosmology. Current orthodox spiritual cosmology consists only of the Trinity and possibly a few vaguely defined angels. Astrophysicists are continually speculating about material cosmological possibilities. In a November, 1994 *Scientific American* article entitled, "The Self-Reproducing Inflationary Universe," Andrei Linde

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observes, "If my colleagues and I are right, we may soon be saying good-bye to the idea that our universe was a single fireball created in big bang." He comments about how this new theory would make "a fundamental change in how the cosmos is seen." We see no such creative imagination at work among contemporary theologians regarding spiritual cosmology or eschatology in general. Deductive theological reasoning would project a spiritual cosmology at least as extensive and complex as our material cosmology. It is not surprising that many of our young people living in the context of our impressive contemporary material cosmology are not inspired by our antiquated spiritual cosmology.

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Here, as in so many other areas of spiritual enlightenment, *The Urantia Book* presents an expanded view of spiritual reality. The spiritual cosmology of the Fifth Epochal Revelation eclipses even the gigantic material cosmology of contemporary astronomy. As knowledge of the infinite spiritual cosmology of *The Urantia Book* infiltrates our world, it will bring new meaning and purpose to all of life. Young people will once more be thrilled by the challenge of spiritual growth and achievement, while those in advanced years will be inspired by the potentials of adventure beyond the grave.

-MJS

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*(The Hidden God, cont.)*

It surely follows, also, that such a Divine Person, who has gone to such lengths to know and be known by his creatures, might choose other means to add to our knowledge—knowledge made increasingly essential for our understanding of the divine plan by the new times we live in.

This is why *The Urantia Book* makes so much sense to so many who have taken the time to explore it. It is not only in keeping with the best insights of the world's great religions, it is in supreme harmony with, and indeed affirms as central, the truth of the Incarnation.

Its rich cosmology and coordination of insights from major disciplines, together with a greatly enhanced description of the life and teachings of Jesus, offer a wellspring of insight and inspiration for this new age, indeed for ages to come—or at least until Divine wisdom reckons the world ready for yet another upstepping in a manner appropriate for *that* time and age.

-Merlyn Cox

## ***Interface:*** **The Hidden God**

The philosopher Descartes once said that any philosophy that does not affirm that God is hidden is not true. The Pentateuch declares that no one can look upon God and live. Both are affirmations of the distance between the finite and the infinite. It is, no doubt, the rationale for the Deist belief that God made the universe like a giant clock, an enormous self-contained mechanism bound by its own laws, and then retired in splendid isolation.

In more recent times it has served as a rationale for skepticism. To many scientists, God is at best a theoretical First Cause, isolated by his own perfection. For many laymen, God remains a philosophical principle, too distant to be relevant in their day to day lives.

The affirmation of God's hiddenness thus often leads to the assumption that God is too removed by his nature to care, or is an invalid, impotent in the face of his perfection to communicate with his own creatures.

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While the affirmation that God is hidden seems self-evidently true, the implied consequences are not. For example, the idea that God is less than a person, and therefore less than his own creation, is surely an absurdity. The idea of God as an infinite person who does not love is likewise an absurdity, if not a contradiction. The necessary impulse of such divine love is surely to communicate with and to share with—to seek holy communion with—all other beings of his creation. This is the philosophical basis of the affirmation of the world's major religions that God reveals himself and the Christian affirmation of the Incarnation as the ultimate unveiling of the hidden God. Thus also the "scandal of particularity," the idea that the infinite God has uniquely revealed himself in one person.

It hardly seems fair or reasonable that God would reveal himself *only* in one person. But it is not unreasonable to believe that he might reveal himself *most fully* in one person.

It hardly seems fair or reasonable that God would deny access to himself to those who did not know or believe in that one person. But it is hardly unreasonable to believe he would choose one to reveal a better way, and ordain that through that person all would eventually come to know him.

*(Continued, left column)*

# *The Urantia Book* *and Spiritual Renewal*

## **Miracle of Recovery**

Jay Newbern

Since I have not been admonished by the Master to “Tell no man,” I feel free and even inspired to testify to the experiential reality of his unconditional love and unfathomable mercy. I would bear witness to the amazing grace of Christ Jesus, my savior. Grace is the unmerited divine assistance given humans for their regeneration or renewal.

For nearly a quarter-century I have been a student of *The Urantia Book*; however, two major obstacles were blocking me from genuinely implementing the teachings of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. One was that I was merely intellectualizing my religion; I was thinking, believing, and talking about God, but I was failing to actualize and manifest his will which is to engage in loving service to others. The other impediment to progress on the path of perfecting was the fact that I suffered from the terminal disease of alcoholism. In the depths of my despair, I was reminded of Jesus’ promise: “Forget not that I will stop at nothing to restore self-respect to those who have lost it, and who really desire to regain it.” (U. B. p. 1765)

The year of 1993 found me living and working in an unheated warehouse in Santa Rosa, seat of Sonoma County and California’s wine country. Going in and out of Alcoholics Anonymous, the drinking and loneliness continued as I religiously listened to K-Love, the contemporary Christian music FM station. The Good Shepherd whispered again to his lost sheep: “I do not promise to deliver you from the waters of adversity, but I do promise to go with you through all of them.” (U. B. p. 1767)

In AA we say that a head full of The Program and a belly full of alcohol don’t mix well at all. This truism applies even more intensely to a long-time student of *The Urantia Book*: “The Adjuster (indwelling Spirit of God) remains with you in all disaster and through every sickness which does not wholly destroy the mentality. But how unkind knowingly to defile or otherwise deliberately to pollute the physical body, which must serve as the earthly tabernacle of this marvelous gift from God. All physical poisons greatly retard the efforts of the Adjuster to exalt the material mind...(and) likewise tremendously interfere with the spiritual progress of the evolving soul.” (U. B. p. 1204)

Towards the end of my struggle with self-destruction, even William Shakespeare was instructing me: “To be or not to be—that is the question.” But I am sure that the most powerful truth from *The Urantia Book* which finally penetrated

my fogged consciousness was the revelation of Jesus’ decision while hanging in agony on the cross. The Jewish women had offered him drugged wine to lessen his suffering. “But when Jesus tasted this narcotized wine, as thirsty as he was, he refused to drink it. The Master chose to retain his human consciousness until the very end.” (U. B. p. 2007) I finally decided that if our God-man could endure an excruciatingly painful death without alcohol, I could endure a painless life without alcohol. I surrendered to win. My sobriety began on February 19, 1994 and must continue for the rest of this earthly life. AA teaches that we get a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition.

About a week later Ed D., an Irish Catholic AA who had sheltered me in the warehouse and kept me off the streets for more than a year, drove me from Santa Rosa to nearby Petaluma and St. Anthony’s Farm for the primary rehabilitation program. Almost every morning at the before-work meditation I read appropriate passages from *The Urantia Book* which were well received. Five-and-a-half months later I graduated. I had made in sobriety “...the greatest discovery possible for the human soul to make—the supernal experience of finding God for yourself, in yourself, and of yourself, and of doing all this as a fact in your own personal experience.” (U. B. p. 1731)

On August 18, three days before Jesus’ 2,000th birthday, I left the farm for St. Anthony’s secondary program at Covenant House in San Francisco. I graduated from this program and experienced the reality of God’s covenant in my life. “This covenant...represents the great Urantian agreement between divinity and humanity whereby God agrees to do *everything*; man only agrees to *believe* God’s promises and follow his instructions.” (U. B. p. 1020) I continued to observe my covenant that I had made with the Father when I took the third of AA’s twelve steps: “I made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood him.” Sincere decisions followed by more sincere decisions.

While adjusting to the transition from rural Sonoma County back to urban San Francisco, I realized that 1935 had been a very significant and landmark year spiritually. In that year the revelators finished inditing *The Urantia Book*. In the same year Alcoholics Anonymous was founded. I believe both are gifts from Jesus. I certainly needed both the 196 papers and the 12 steps!

After eleven months and graduation certificates from both of St. Anthony’s recovery programs, it was time to mainstream back into the real world. The Catholics had certainly done their part. They would now hand me off to the Protestants in the form of The Salvation Army. I chose my independent living space at the Bridgeway Project, the clean and sober residential hotel in San Francisco’s Tenderloin district downtown. Bridgeway was constructive and affordable, it required the discipline of continuing sobriety and spiritual growth.

The only problem was the neighborhood. Denizens of the Tenderloin include hundreds of homeless people, drug dealers and abusers, prostitutes, criminals, and the insane. It also contains poor people, Asian immigrants, and children. I was fearful and paranoid but I knew that when you really sign on with Jesus, he leads you directly into the front-line trenches. "If you dare to believe in me and wholeheartedly proceed to follow after me, you shall most certainly by so doing enter upon the sure pathway of trouble." (U. B. p. 1767) I petitioned Christ for his courage and he gave it to me. "Believing the gospel will not prevent getting into trouble, but it will insure that you shall be *unafraid* when trouble does overtake you." (U.B. p. 1767)

The Master's joy and peace have replaced my fear and loneliness. I now work for The Salvation Army as one of Bridgeway's front desk security clerks, ministering to and lovingly serving my brothers and sisters in recovery. "When man consecrates his will to the doing of the Father's will, when man gives God all that he *has*, then does God make that man more than he is." (U. B. p. 1285).

Jesus quoting Isaiah: "Then shall your light break forth as the morning while your health springs forth speedily. Your righteousness shall go before you while the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then will you call upon the Lord, and he shall answer; you will cry out, and he shall say—'Here am I.'" (U. B., p. 1656)

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-Jay Newbern, originally from Anderson, Indiana, and formerly a correspondent for NBC News/Chicago, is a long-time student of The Urantia Book.

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## Significant Books

### Leadership and the New Science Learning about Organization from an Orderly Universe

by Margaret J. Wheatley  
Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. 1994, pp.166

Margaret Wheatley uses insights derived from quantum physics, self-organizing systems, and chaos theory to reshape our world view. She has written a "breakthrough" book regarding the dynamics of human organizations which has interesting applications for church polity and administration.

The Newtonian model of the world, she points out, is characterized by materialism and reductionism. "In new science, the underlying currents are a movement toward holism, toward understanding the system as a system and giving primary value to the relationship that exists

among seemingly discrete parts." (p. 9) Quantum physics suggests that these seemingly separate entities may be influenced by unseen connections. Space is not empty but is filled with invisible fields which shape behavior. There is a "contextualism" in universe phenomena which establishes a participative process in nature. This is more a world of process than a world of things. "It would seem that the more participants we engage in this participative universe, the more we can access its potentials and the wiser we can become.... 'Whatever we call reality,' Prigogine and Stengers advise, 'it is revealed to us only through an active construction in which we participate.'" (p. 65) We live in an intriguing network of interactions and potential relationships.

Living systems demonstrate that disequilibrium is the necessary condition for growth. Self-organizing systems teach us that the sure way to stagnation and death is to maintain the security of a closed, dogmatic organization. The distinguishing feature of self-organizing and self-renewing systems is their *resiliency*. The basic characteristic of this resiliency is *self-reference*. "Self-reference is what facilitates orderly change in turbulent environments. In human organizations, a clear sense of identity—of the values, traditions, aspirations, competencies, and culture that guide the operation—is the real source of independence from the environment." (p.94) Erich Jantsch, in *The Self-Organizing Universe*, speaks of a profound teaching embedded in self-renewing systems. "The natural dynamics of simple dissipative structures teach the optimistic principle of which we tend to despair in the human world: the more freedom in self-organization, the more order." (p.40)

Information is the creative energy of all organizations. It is the basic ingredient of self-renewal. Often information is guarded and given only to the elite in institutions. Mainline Christian Churches are an example of organizations which are suffering because of a lack of information. They have been steadily declining in numbers and vitality for decades. Most ministers, for example, have not shared unsettling knowledge about the origin and nature of the Bible or the blood atonement doctrine that they learned in seminary. Sharing this information would, indeed, shock many of the faithful. But it would also lay the foundations for restructuring the church into a more relevant and vital spiritual fellowship. These same mainline clergy have, by and large, refused to seriously examine *The Urantia Book*. Although the book's message will someday revitalize the church and transform our world, church leaders are afraid of facing this possibility. New information is the life-blood of all of our institutions. If we are to grow, it must be shared with the rank and file of society.

-Meredith Sprunger

# The Purpose of Revelation

A Response to Martin Gardner's

*Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery*

Meredith J. Sprunger

The purpose of revelation is to reveal and enlarge spiritual truth. All presentations of revelation are communicated in the intellectual-cultural frames of reference of the times in which they are given. These human concepts carrying the revelation are transitory, but the truth they proclaim is eternal. For instance, the seven-day creation story in the Bible which theologians now classify as “myth,” made sense in the simplistic cosmology of prescientific times and effectively transmitted the spiritual truth that God is the source of all creation.

Every epochal revelation and all religions giving expression to the truths of revelation have a history of development that have many commonalities because human nature tends to exhibit consistent patterns, and we can learn from studying these past religious developments. There is a tendency in the early stages of all personal and social responses to revelation to identify the temporal intellectual-scientific-cultural vehicle concepts with the enlarged spiritual truths presented. The enlarged spiritual vision is so captivating and fulfilling that individual religionists and groups not only identify the temporal vehicle concepts with the eternal truths, they regard both as infallible and inerrant. Such theological beliefs have come to be referred to under the rubric of “fundamentalism.” These fundamentalists are often dedicated, wonderful people.

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*Many individuals who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible have spent their entire lives attempting to harmonize its temporal human concept carriers with its eternal spiritual truths.... It is the eternal spiritual truths pointed to by the Bible which make it an enduring document, not its outdated scientific-cultural carrier concepts.*

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Many individuals who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible have spent their entire lives attempting to harmonize its temporal human concept carriers with its eternal spiritual truths. It took centuries of experience and theological scholarship to finally separate the temporal Biblical carrier concepts associated with the Fourth Epochal Revelation from its eternal spiritual truths and prepare the planet for the Fifth Epochal Revelation. It is the eternal spiritual truths pointed to by the Bible which make it an enduring document, not its outdated scientific-cultural carrier concepts.

## Demythologizing *The Urantia Book*

Students of the Fifth Epochal Revelation are now experiencing this same inclination to identify its scientific-cultural

carrier concepts with the enlarged and inspiring spiritual truths it presents. The historic dichotomy which our planet has experienced between science and religion no doubt inspired the revelators of the Fifth Epochal Revelation to present an integrated view of the relationships of science, philosophy, and religion in the universe. The mandates under which the revelators worked, in my judgment, are wise and spiritually sound. They were required to use contemporary scientific frames of reference which they acknowledge will soon be in need of revision. They were instructed to use concepts indigenous to our culture and only use their own formulations when they could not find a human expression that was relevant to their purposes. They tell us that they used thousands of the highest human formulations of truth. The research of Matthew Block is verifying these statements and showing us the ingenious ways they have improved these human sources.

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*Since contemporary Christology is rooted in prescientific material cosmology and an extremely simplistic spiritual cosmology, theologians are regarding the doctrine of exclusive salvation through faith in the post-resurrection Jesus as increasingly unbelievable. They are no longer able to affirm what has been called the “scandal of particularity.”*

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The central thing to remember about revelation, as we have mentioned, is that its purpose is to reveal and enlarge spiritual truth. The accompanying scientific facts and cultural folkways used to carry and present these spiritual truths are transitory. It is the genius of revelation that eternal spiritual truths can be presented using temporal facts and changing cultural customs. The cosmological and metaphysical concepts of revelation are important because they are the frames of reference which make its message relevant in the times in which the revelation is given. The enlarged spiritual cosmology of the Fifth Epochal Revelation is critically important for mainline, liberal Christianity — as well as all traditional religions. Since contemporary Christology is rooted in prescientific material cosmology and an extremely simplistic spiritual cosmology, theologians are regarding the doctrine of exclusive salvation through faith in the post-resurrection Jesus as increasingly unbelievable. They are no longer able to affirm what has been called the “scandal of particularity.”

Christian theology is in desperate need of the spiritual cosmology presented in *The Urantia Book* to envision a metaphysical conception of reality that will enable theologians to comprehend the “glory of particularity” in the post-resurrection personality of Jesus. The Fifth Epochal Revelation “does synthesize the apparently divergent sciences of nature and the theology of religion into a consistent and logical universe philosophy, a co-ordinated and unbroken explanation of both science and religion, thus creating a harmony of mind and satisfaction of spirit which answers in human experience



those questionings of the mortal mind which craves to know *how* the Infinite works out his will and plans in matter, with minds, and on spirit.” (U. B. p. 1106)

The authors of *The Urantia Book* on page 1109-10 give an excellent description of the use of transitory knowledge and eternal truth in revelation. “Truth may be but relatively inspired, even though revelation is invariably a spiritual phenomenon. While statements with reference to cosmology are never inspired, such revelations are of immense value in that they at least transiently clarify knowledge by:

1. The reduction of confusion by the authoritative elimination of error.
2. The co-ordination of known or about-to-be-known facts and observations.
3. The restoration of important bits of lost knowledge concerning epochal transactions in the distant past.
4. The supplying of information which will fill in vital missing gaps in otherwise earned knowledge.
5. Presenting cosmic data in such a manner as to illuminate the spiritual teachings contained in the accompanying revelation.”

While the enlarged spiritual cosmology is basic in presenting expanded spiritual truth, the authors of *The Urantia Book* repeatedly warn against identifying the temporal scientific-cultural frames of reference of the book with its eternal spiritual truths. *Urantia Book* fundamentalists seem to have just as much trouble separating the temporal scientific-cultural carrying-vehicle concepts from the eternal truths of *The Urantia Book* as do the Biblical fundamentalists. They retort, “*The Urantia Book* is not the Bible!” Obviously not, but the human mind makes the same identity responses linking the temporal and eternal aspects of revelation. In all probability, they will spend their lives attempting to harmonize the book’s contemporary carrier concepts with its eternal spiritual truths.

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Martin Gardner’s recent book, *Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery*, is designed to undermine the credibility of *The Urantia Book*. To accomplish this purpose Gardner deals almost entirely with the human concept carriers of the spiritual truths, not the spiritual truths themselves. In actuality, history may show that it helped to focus attention on the real

spiritual quality of the Fifth Epochal Revelation (which he totally ignores) that will ensure its recognition and appreciation for centuries to come. Although Gardner’s book abounds with misinformation, erroneous assumptions, and fantastic speculations, it may be fortuitous that it appeared early in the Urantia movement.

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*Gardner is an indefatigable researcher reporting facts, events, and rumors which make The Urantia Book appear in the worst possible light. Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery is a hodgepodge of information and speculation about Ellen White’s revelations, Seventh-Day Adventism beliefs, Oahspe revelations, numerology, scientific errors in The Urantia Book, deviant activities, and controversy in the Urantia movement.*

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Gardner is best known as the author of columns in the *Scientific American* and the *Skeptical Inquirer*. He is a professional debunker of psychic and esoteric phenomena. Gardner is an indefatigable researcher reporting facts, events, and rumors which make *The Urantia Book* appear in the worst possible light. *Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery* is a hodgepodge of information and speculation about Ellen White’s revelations, Seventh-Day Adventism beliefs, Oahspe revelations, numerology, scientific errors in *The Urantia Book*, deviant activities, and controversy in the Urantia movement. The book is focused on the scientific-cultural carrier-vehicle aspects of *The Urantia Book* and largely ignores its spiritual truths. He believes Wilfred Kellogg channeled *The Urantia Book* and Dr. William S. Sadler edited and revised it. Since the supermortal authors of the Urantia Papers tell us they have used the ideas of thousands of human beings in the production of the book and research is confirming this fact, it would not be surprising if Dr. Sadler’s ideas were among this distinguished group. But, for many reasons, I am confident that Dr. Sadler did not write or revise the book.

Gardner attempts to denigrate the spiritual quality of *The Urantia Book* not by dealing directly with this issue but by using many of the classic logical fallacies:

1. *The Genetic Fallacy*. Gardner asserts that *The Urantia Book* is the product of channeling; therefore, he implies, its message is inferior, or, at least the product of human authorship. *The Urantia Book* is not the product of channeling activity. In 1958 I arranged a meeting of a group of ministers who were making a critical study of *The Urantia Book* and Dr. William S. Sadler to discuss the origin of the Urantia Papers. When we arrived, he had prepared a paper for us listing every imaginable form of subconscious mind or psychic activity, including channeling. At the bottom of the outline he had a note saying, “The technique of the reception of *The Urantia Book* in English in no way parallels or impinges upon any of

### *Purpose of Revelation,*

the above phenomena of the marginal consciousness.” He went on to tell us that as nearly as he could determine, the appearance of the Urantia Papers was associated with some form of superconscious mind activity.

Even if the book were a product of channeling, or any other technique or source of authorship, the only way to ascertain its quality is by evaluating its content or teachings. The real issue of spiritual quality is not seriously considered by Gardner.

2. *The Post Hoc Ergo Hoc Fallacy* (After this, therefore, because of this). Gardner points to the contradictions in Sister Ellen White’s pronouncements, documents her plagiarisms, and recites disputes among Seventh-day Adventists. Early in my correspondence with Gardner I observed that he had an emotional fixation on Seventh-day Adventism. I was therefore not surprised to read on p. 181, “I have always been interested in the history of Seventh-day Adventism ever since as a young boy, for a period of about a year, I considered myself an Adventist.” After these extensive references to Seventh-day Adventism, Gardner implies that since Dr. Sadler as a young man was active in Seventh-day Adventism ministry, *The Urantia Book* is in many ways an outgrowth of the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventism.

This is a vast distortion of fact and truth. *The Urantia Book* contains many theological and philosophical positions which are harmonious with insights in many of the world religions. Although it most closely parallels the insights of progressive mainline Christian theology, historical analysis may show that the Mormon movement, Seventh-day Adventism, and other contemporary religious movements were instrumental in preparing for the advent of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. *The Urantia Book* at the same time differs, particularly in its spiritual cosmology, from all traditional religious positions. Gardner again fails to discuss the spiritual truths presented by *The Urantia Book* with which he may disagree.

3. *The Faulty Generalization Fallacy*. Gardner cites the absurd dietary beliefs and practices of Dr. John Kellogg, Vern Grimsley’s deceptive pronouncements, the strange visions of Joe Pope, and the controversial beliefs of the channeling movement, and implies that these reflect the content of *Urantia Book* teachings. He cleverly avoids comparing any of these activities with *Urantia Book* teachings—for there are none!

4. *The Irrelevant Conclusion Fallacy*. Gardner analyzes and uses the scientific errors in *The Urantia Book* to depreciate its value even though the authors clearly state that the science and cosmology of the book are not inspired and will soon need to be updated. He also notes that human sources were used, which he labels as plagiarism, and thereby implies that the spiritual quality of the book is equally erroneous and human.

As we mentioned earlier, the authors of *The Urantia Book* clearly state that they have used human sources and why

they are using them. The use of these human sources is often handled in such a way as to arrive at a position differing from that of the human author. To accuse the superhuman authors of plagiarism is a bit far fetched, as they are not concealing the use of human sources and they deliberately avoided reference to specific human personalities—they do not want any St. Peter or St. Paul connected with the Fifth Epochal Revelation. This, in my judgment, is certainly a wise decision. There is very little in *The Urantia Book* which would support *Urantia Book* fundamentalism! Nonetheless, revelation always gives rise to fundamentalists.

5. *The Ad Hominem Fallacy*. Since Gardner is apparently not interested in grappling with the spiritual content of *Urantia Book* teachings, he attacks the activities of people he assumes are associated with its origin or who are *Urantia Book* readers: Seventh-day Adventists, the atypical people in the Urantia movement, as well as Dr. Sadler. He quotes Harry Loose (So far as I know, no one in the Urantia movement has ever heard of him except Harold Sherman) as saying, “The truth is that Sadler is mentally unsound. A paranoiac with a religio-power complex—feverishly grasping for greater jurisdiction of the mentalities of the many.” (p. 149) “Sherman was convinced,” Gardner writes, “that after Lena died Sadler became paranoid, his mind ‘perverse and deranged.’ Both he and his son Bill, Sherman wrote, ‘will lie and frame anybody and [do] anything to accomplish their purposes.’” (p. 150) Gardner’s personal opinion of Sadler is a little more reserved, “Although I do not question Sadler’s honesty and sincerity, I am convinced that he fell victim in his declining years to delusions of self-importance and grandeur of the sort that occasionally descend on the elderly.” (p. 403)

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*Anyone who knew Dr. Sadler will recognize that these statements are ridiculous. Dr. Sadler was an exceptionally well balanced, rational individual. He did not try to control people and usually did not express his opinion about an issue unless asked. ... I was amazed at his ability to remove himself from leadership influence and allow younger people to assume responsibility without his interference.*

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Anyone who knew Dr. Sadler will recognize that these statements are ridiculous. Dr. Sadler was an exceptionally well balanced, rational individual. He did not try to control people and usually did not express his opinion about an issue unless asked. He deliberately removed himself from leadership responsibilities in the Urantia Foundation and the Urantia Brotherhood and did not try to influence their decisions. He did everything he could to prevent his name from being associated with *The Urantia Book*. I was amazed at his ability to remove himself from leadership influence and allow younger people to assume responsibility without his interference.

He was also a very competent leader and I assume he could be autocratic with anyone who wanted to alter the content of *The Urantia Book*. Christy (Emma Christensen, a member of the contact commission who received the Urantia Papers) told me that Harold Sherman wanted to enter material on extra sensory perception in the book and was categorically refused.

Even though Martin Gardner's book contains many things which I think are erroneous and has evaluations with which I disagree, it is the first extensively researched public record of events surrounding the origin of *The Urantia Book* written by a person who is a skilled debunker and does everything possible to undermine credibility in its teachings. It is important in an open society to have such criticism available, and it helps prevent a cult mentality in the Urantia movement. The high spiritual quality of the Fifth Epochal Revelation will survive such attacks much as the spiritual truths of the Fourth Epochal Revelation survived the persecutions of the early Christian community.

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### **A Critical Approach to *The Urantia Book***

We should encourage a critical approach to *The Urantia Book*. Since it purports to be the Fifth Epochal Revelation authored by supermortal personalities, it is important to have a clear understanding of the philosophical criteria of truth necessary in evaluating such claim. First of all, claim or authority is not a philosophic criterion of truth. Secondly, knowing the origin and/or authorship of a book may give some insights, but it is not a reliable philosophic criterion of truth. Whether supermortals or human beings wrote the book, it must be evaluated by the quality of its content, not by what it claims, or who may have written it.

The central objective in evaluating *The Urantia Book* is to assess the quality of its spiritual truth and insight. This must be done by individuals using their total capacity to evaluate its philosophic coherence and experiential spiritual relevance. Is the spiritual quality and insights of the book inferior to, equal with, or superior to our traditional sources of spiritual truth? During this period of testing, a consensus will gradually evolve regarding its quality. If the general opinion is negative, the book will fade into obscurity. If the consensus is positive, continued evaluation will determine the level of its spiritual contribution. Is it just another useful spiritual resource, or does it have the quality of revelation? My philosophic hypothesis is that if it has the spiritual quality of revelation, its influence will continue to grow in society throughout the world.

Fall, 1995

My personal view, after almost forty years of critical study and evaluation, is that *The Urantia Book* is of superior quality in at least four categories:

1. Its comprehensive view of Deity and Reality, including the Paradise Trinity.
2. The presentation of enlarged spiritual cosmology which is commensurate with our gigantic material astronomical cosmology.
3. An overview of a vast array of spiritual personalities that function in a hierarchical system of ability and power, which must exist if we are to make any sense of the spiritual cosmos.
4. And finally, a greatly expanded presentation of the life and teachings of Jesus, that is solidly rooted in the New Testament realities.

In short, *The Urantia Book* is the best view of an integrated universe, the best model of total reality that I have encountered.

Generations of scholars will be probing the human aspects and personalities whose concepts were the temporal carriers of the eternal spiritual truths of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. This is both interesting and appropriate research which may, along with the confines of the English language, shed some light on the limitations of the latest epochal revelation. But the real quality of *The Urantia Book* will be determined by its spiritual truths and insights. In my judgment, they are without peer on our planet.

### **The Ascendancy of the Fifth Epochal Revelation**

During the first forty years of its history the Urantia movement has evolved from a handful of readers in Chicago to hundreds of study groups and tens of thousands of readers throughout the world. Without mass publicity or promotion over 250,000 copies of *The Urantia Book* have been sold and translations are available in French, Spanish, and Finnish. Work continues on the Dutch and Russian translations, with editions of Korean, German, Swedish, Hungarian, and Italian translations on the drawing board. Audio and computer versions of the book are available and numerous study aids have been published. Regional and International Conferences are being held and secondary works are proliferating.

All this is impressive but of much greater importance is the tempering and structuring of the Urantia movement in preparation for its world-wide mission. The rugged struggle of these early years has established solid foundations for carrying a new paradigm of spiritual reality to humankind. The Urantia movement very early in its history has encountered most of the challenges that have threatened religious transitions down through history. We have received an experiential vaccination against these viruses which have threatened creative spiritual growth in the past. The Fifth

*Purpose of Revelation, cont.*

Epochal Revelation has demonstrated its dynamic and power in steering the movement repeatedly through critical periods and controversial encounters in our journey.

The Urantia movement has been confronted by centralized organizational control and we have witnessed the power of individual initiative and creative diversity to establish a pluralistic foundation for outreach ministry. We have escaped oligarchical-authoritarian direction in the triumph of participatory democracy and openness. We weathered the threat of legalistic-power strategies through the dominance of cooperative team work.

Soon after regional and national conferences were held, students of *The Urantia Book* were captivated and challenged by the intrigues of charismatic control of the Urantia movement. With the passing of time, we recognized the danger of charismatic influence and witnessed the emergence of evolutionary-rational decision-making. On the heels of this tempering experience, we were confronted by a more subtle form of charismatic influence in the captivating channeling movement among readers of *The Urantia Book*. Following the example of the Christian church in dealing with similar movements in its history, we have achieved the spiritual maturity to allow individual freedom to evaluate the authenticity of spiritual experience.

We are now entering the intellectual-spiritual struggle which took mainline Christianity centuries to largely resolve: distinguishing between the contemporary, fallible human carrier concepts used in revelation from its eternal spiritual truths. Martin Gardner's book, *Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery*, may help to shorten this period in the Urantia movement. It may also help to guard against cult attitudes among those who have living faith in the enlarged spiritual truths of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

The solid core of the Urantia movement has come through these tribulations with renewed dedication and balance. We have come of age. Spiritual freedom and participatory democracy have taught us that there can be unity of purpose in the midst of intellectual and political diversity. The Fifth Epochal revelation will make its way and overcome any barriers placed in its way. We are standing at the threshold of "one of the most amazing and enthralling epochs of social readjustment, moral quickening, and spiritual enlightenment" (U. B. p. 2082) on our planet. The preliminary, orienting growth developments of the Urantia movement are largely behind us. The potential of an exciting outreach mission of the Fifth Epochal Revelation is awaiting us. The Most Highs have prepared us and our planet for the most thrilling vision of spiritual reality since Jesus of Nazareth walked on our world. This outreach mission will be many-faceted, pluralistic, and victorious!

-Meredith Sprunger

## **The Question of Revelatory Infallibility** *Is the Science of The Urantia Book* **Revelatory?**

Kenneth Glasziou

Some years ago I wrote an article for a newsletter circulated among *Urantia Book* readers implying that the scientific content of *The Urantia Book* contains errors. This statement brought an impassioned response categorically denying that the book could contain error and stating that in no circumstances would the revelators lie to us.

I admit to having subscribed to similar sentiments when I first discovered the book's high quality of spiritual truth. Eventually, however, I discovered so many examples of what I felt sure were errors that the demands of simple logic required me either to abandon my faith in the book as revelation or to delve more deeply into the nature of epochal revelation. In part, what follows is a result of that research.

### **The Limitations of Revelation**

The authors of *The Urantia Book* clearly tell us the book is limited by our finite conceptual capacities and language, and the restrictions of their revelatory mandates. The Foreword to the book states:

*The concept of the I AM is a philosophic concession which we make to the time-bound, space-fettered, finite mind of man, to the impossibility of creature comprehension of eternity existences—nonbeginning, nonending realities and relationships. To the time-space creature, all things must have a beginning save only the ONE UNCAUSED—the primeval cause of causes. Therefore do we conceptualize this philosophic value-level as the I AM, at the same time instructing all creatures that the Eternal Son and the Infinite Spirit are coeternal with the I AM; in other words, that there never was a time when the I AM was not the Father of the Son and, with him, of the Spirit. (p.6)*

In giving us such time-dependent concepts, the book unabashedly acknowledges that they are "inaccurate," but that it is necessary to do so because our feeble finite minds are incapable of comprehending the incomprehensible—a spaceless, timeless infinity. Remarkably, the revelators have managed to perform a feat of philosophic explanation that permits us to retain the concept of a monotheistic theology, an idea that proved so serviceable for the welfare of the children of Abraham, and subsequently to Christianity and Islam. So did the revelators lie to us? No, of course not, for they tell us what they are doing.

To fully appreciate the Fifth Epochal Revelation, we need to consider the enormous difficulties confronting the revelators in coping with our relatively primitive mental and spiritual capacities. There were also further limitations imposed by the mandates under which they were authorized to work. In

addition, we need to note that this revelation nowhere claims to be divinely inspired, or a product of divine dictation. It is given to us by a goodly number of celestial or superhuman beings ranging from very high personalities (Divine Counselors, Perfectors of Wisdom, Universal Censors, etc.) to mere midwayers and seraphim who, reputedly, are not all that far above our own levels of intellect. And even in Part I of the book provided by the senior group of authors—all of whom have probably experienced the very presence of the Universal Father on Paradise—we observe their humble admission of limited knowledge in words like “I/we do not know/understand/comprehend...” at least 35 times!

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Jesus, in discussing the Scriptures with Nathaniel, says, “Mark you well, Nathaniel, nothing which human nature has touched can be regarded as infallible. Through the mind of man divine truth may indeed shine forth, but always of relative purity and partial divinity. The creature may crave infallibility, but only the Creators possess it.” (U. B. p. 1768) Only the Creators possess infallibility! None of the authors of the Urantia Papers were of Creator status! Hence we would indeed be foolish to regard *The Urantia Book* as an infallible revelation. The authors of the book further tell us:

Truth is inconcussible—forever exempt from all transient vicissitudes, albeit never dead and formal, always vibrant and adaptable—radiantly alive. But when truth becomes linked with fact, then both time and space condition its meanings and correlate its values. Such realities of truth wedded to fact become concepts and are accordingly relegated to the domain of *relative cosmic realities*. (emphasis added) (p. 1297)

None of the Fifth Epochal Revelation claims to be infallible truth. The authors of the book repeatedly state or imply this fact. In discussing the Urantia Papers they tell us:

These papers differ from all previous revelations, for they are not the work of a single universe personality but a composite presentation by many beings. But no revelation short of the attainment of the Universal Father can ever be complete. All other celestial ministrations are no more than partial, transient, and practically adapted to local conditions in time and space. While such admissions as this may possibly detract from the immediate force and authority of all revelations, the time has arrived on Urantia when it is advisable to make such frank statements, even at the risk of weakening the future influence and authority of this, the most recent of the revelations of truth to the mortal races of Urantia. (p. 1008)

There are other important statements that should make us aware of the limitations of *The Urantia Book*. In the Foreword the authors state 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 subject to be presented.” (p.16) For Part I of the book we are told, “...more than one thousand human concepts representing the highest and most advanced planetary knowledge of spiritual values and universe meanings” have been used. (p. 17) In Part IV of the book, the midwayer responsible for preparing the narrative of The Life and Teachings of Jesus utilized thought gems and superior concepts 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.” (p. 1343) Other sources were used only when the midwayer could testify that he had failed to find the required conceptual expression in purely human sources.

Students of *The Urantia Book* are introduced to a remarkable and inspiring presentation of spiritual truth. We are on a journey of discovery. For us truth is relative, progressive, experiential. There are grades of relativity for the truth in the book. Each of us is expected to discover his or her own truth. Undoubtedly some of its truth comes close to being divine truth—may even be divine truth. But that discovery is personal and experiential.

### **Science in *The Urantia Book***

At the very bottom of the gradation of relative truth is the science component of *The Urantia Book*. The revelators tell us:

Mankind should understand that we who participate in the revelation of truth are very rigorously limited by the instructions of our superiors.... We full well know that, while the historic facts and religious truths of this series of revelatory presentations will stand on the records of the ages to come, within a few short years many of our statements regarding the physical sciences will stand in need of revision in consequence of additional scientific developments and new discoveries.... The cosmology of these revelations is *not inspired*. It is limited by our permission for the co-ordination and sorting of present-day knowledge. While divine or spiritual insight is a gift, *human wisdom must evolve*. (p. 1109)

Only in special circumstances could the revelators go beyond the bounds of present day (1930's) knowledge. Important lost knowledge could be restored, and where there were vital gaps in otherwise earned knowledge, information could be supplied. What could be clearer about the scientific knowledge of *The Urantia Book*? It contains a contemporary cosmology to help integrate a revelation of spiritual truth. In effect it says, “Expect to discover errors, but please do

*Question of Revelatory Infallibility, cont.*

not throw out the baby with the bath water, do not discard the genuine religious truths contained therein.”

Many of us have tended to ignore these statements of the limitations of *The Urantia Book*. Only in recent years has there been any concerted effort to identify the human sources of *Urantia Book* material. Slowly it is becoming evident that the book’s own statements regarding human sources are accurate. Much of its science and cosmology is directly derived from human sources available at the time of the inditing of the Papers.

*The Urantia Book* contains revelation; of that I am sure! It contains a vast amount of authentic and original religious truth just waiting for us to discover and make our own. It also contains a cosmology appropriate to the level of human knowledge in the 1930’s. Hidden in that cosmology, there is prophetic information to discover that covers vital missing gaps in our knowledge. Why was the book written in this strange way when many of the problems so generated could easily have been avoided simply by not mentioning them? Was it really necessary to give us such near unbelievable information such as the incredible passenger birds, that every fourth child of Adamson and Ratta was born invisible, or that a single couple gave birth to red, green, blue, yellow, and indigo children?

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*I do not pretend to have the answers to the many mind-boggling riddles that have arisen during twenty years of continuous struggle to understand The Urantia Book. My personal conclusion is that it is not infallible. It does contain errors and some of it for me is incomprehensible. Nonetheless, my awe and respect for the book has increased with time. As the years go by, more and more, its contents becomes the hub about which my very existence revolves.*

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*Ken T. Glasziou, M. Sc., Ph. D., is a research scientist, retired, who is active in church work in Australia. He is author of Science and Religion; The New Age Beyond 2,000 A.D., and Christ or Chaos: The Evolution of a Revelation.*

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## Ministry and Service: Our Call

Marvin Gawryn

I’d like to begin sharing with you on the topic, “Ministry and Service: Our Call,” by relating a story told by a friend, Jim Davis, the associate pastor of the church we attend. You may have read in the papers last year of the outbreak of disease in India that killed many thousands of people. In the midst of those who were dying, Mother Theresa and her co-workers ministered to the needs of those who were leaving this world. Mother Theresa, in her 80’s, herself in frail health, was working day after day, 15 and 16 hours a day. A reporter who was following her around finally asked her, “How can you keep doing this?” “I have to,” she replied, “I love God, and these are God’s people.”

### Our Calling

In the topic chosen, “Ministry and Service: Our Call,” I’d like to take a look first at the “our call” part. What does it mean to be called? Mother Theresa said, “I have to. I love God and these are God’s people.” What does she mean “I have to?”

There’s a feeling I’ve had inside, and I would guess many of you have had a similar feeling. It is a feeling of being pulled, a constant tugging at the soul. God is pulling us all the time; he doesn’t let up. Our sense of it ebbs and flows, gets more conscious and less conscious. But somewhere in our awareness, God keeps pulling us and we feel it. How does this pulling begin? I think it begins when, at some point, we hook ourselves to God.

Perhaps some of you are acquainted with “carabeneers?” They are used with ropes to do serious mountain climbing. Once they are hooked together, they are very secure. They don’t slip apart even under tremendous tension. I believe we hook ourselves to God by loving him. We attach ourselves to God securely and repeatedly each time we worship him in love. And then steadily, and increasingly, God can begin to pull us.

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*He pulls us in two directions; inward towards himself, and outward in service to his children. It is this constant pull outward to minister to our sisters and brothers that we have come to understand as “our call.”*

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He pulls us in two directions; inward towards himself, and outward in service to his children. It is this constant pull outward to minister to our sisters and brothers that we have come to understand as “our call.”

Each person’s calling evolves over time, and it is as unique as the person who feels called. Our Father knows our special qualities, and he inspires us accordingly. We vary greatly in temperament and experience. If we love God and follow his call, he will lead us to those particular service paths which

excite our higher passions. When we feel deeply called, there's a sense of right-fit between what is needed in a situation, and what we can offer to fill that need. So, not only do we feel "I have to;" at some deep level we also feel, that with God's help, "I can."

### A Sense of Duty: Service

The wellspring of our sense of calling flows not only from our love for God; it also taps down to a core sense of *duty*. When we realize how much the Father gives us in every single moment, we feel we should give back. We want to do something to balance the equation. Giving ourselves in service deeply satisfies this urge to fulfill our duty. We can make our contribution to the cosmic balance. It becomes our great joy, our great satisfaction, to give back to God by ministering to his children. As the authors of *The Urantia Book* observe: "This is the birth of cosmic morality and the dawning realization of universal duty." (p. 1206)

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*For me the word, ministry, has become associated with the conveying of truth to a hungry soul, in all of the many ways it can be conveyed. For me the word, service, is the broader term that connotes doing good for another in all different kinds of ways.*

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Before talking about specific arenas of service, I should like to talk about two distinctions that have been very important to me as I have thought about this topic. The first distinction is loosely tied to the two words: ministry and service. For me the word, *ministry*, has become associated with the conveying of truth to a hungry soul, in all of the many ways it can be conveyed. For me the word, *service*, is the broader term that connotes doing good for another in all different kinds of ways.

This distinction was quite clear and important to Jesus. In describing his personal ministry on p. 1461, the authors of *The Urantia Book* say he listened sympathetically, offered practical suggestions, and spoke words of comfort and consolation. In addition, however, "invariably would he tell these distressed mortals about the love of God and impart the information, by various and sundry methods, that they were children of this loving Father in Heaven." On p. 1931, talking to fifty of his followers, Jesus makes the distinction quite explicit. "Let all mankind benefit from the overflow of your loving spiritual ministry, enlightening intellectual communion, and uplifting social service; but none of these humanitarian labors, nor all of them, should be permitted to take the place of proclaiming the gospel."

And on p. 1465, after Jesus and Ganid returned a lost child to his mother in Rome, Jesus said, "You know Ganid, most human beings are like the lost child.... Did we not supremely enjoy this ministry of restoring the child to his mother? So do those who lead men to God experience the supreme satis-

faction of human service." So the highest form of service, the indispensable service that Jesus always included, in various and sundry ways, was the ministry of sharing the essential soul-saving truths of the gospel.

A second distinction that's been important to me is between two of the ways of sharing spiritual truth that we have available to us. First, is sharing the Bible or *The Urantia Book* themselves, and second is sharing, in their simpler form, our own best understanding of Jesus' main teachings.

Unfortunately, at times, we have fallen into the trap of thinking one or the other of these approaches is the "right" or "best" one. As usual, Jesus' piercing insight can correct our misunderstanding. On p. 1474 he says to the miller in Corinth, "Give the milk of truth to those who are babes in spiritual perception. In your living and loving ministry serve spiritual food in attractive form and suited to the capacity of receptivity of each of your inquirers." Serving spiritual food in a form that is attractive and suitable to the needs of our different inquirers is an art form which combines skill, intuition, and a cookbook with more than one recipe.

*The Urantia Book* was designed to respond to the sophisticated spiritual quest of the many modern men and women whose needs remain unmet by the current evolutionary forms of religion. The book presents a universe view, a theology, and a narrative of global history that deeply satisfies and reorients the modern mind, and stretches it to the very edges of its current capacity. Two of its most innovative theological contributions are an incredibly detailed description of the eternal life which sets this first life in a soul-satisfying context, and more than fifty pages devoted exclusively to revealing the Father's most astounding gift to each one of us—his indwelling presence. For many people who are searching beyond contemporary religious sources, *The Urantia Book* may well satisfy them in their search for truth.

Most of us have discovered however, that, for many other people, the book itself is just too unconventional, even indigestible. And yet, another unique feature of *The Urantia Book* is that it also equips us to minister in special ways to the more basic needs of *these* hungry souls as well.

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We have a replete, clear restatement of Jesus' life and his original teachings. The authors of *The Urantia Book* state that each of the apostles taught their own version of the gospel, and that Jesus honored the variety and originality of their teachings.

### *Ministry and Service, cont.*

I think that one of the most important things those of us who feel called to minister can do is similarly to develop our own understanding of this modern restatement of Jesus' teachings, so we can express them clearly in our own ways, and serve spiritual food suited to the capacity of each of our inquirers. For we can only show another what we ourselves have clearly seen.

For me, the gospel centers on the miracle of the nurturing, guiding parent-child relationship we have with God. Our Father's Spirit fragment resides at the very center of each of our personalities; it is an incredibly intimate kind of companionship we share with God, available in every moment. And there is guidance and direction in this miraculous relationship; we can discern God's will and as we follow it, we grow spiritually, becoming more like God. This core of inner family relationship can eventually come to pattern our outer relationships. The joy of inner love overflows naturally in service to sisters and brothers around us; our sense of the family grows larger.

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And this astounding gift of childhood in God's family never has to end. We are offered an eternal life filled with spiritual adventure, new worlds on which to serve, and character growth all the way to Paradise! And what is the price of entry to this grand universe family? Simple faith. All we have to do is open our hearts in childlike trust, and receive the gift our Father so much wants to give us, simply receive the gift of a life shared with him.

### **The Global and Interfaith Families**

In thinking about ministry and service, it's been very helpful for me to look at four different contexts or different arenas in which we can serve. Each of these service arenas can also be conceived of as a family, in a sense a sub-family within the Father's larger universe family. I'd like to spend some time now looking at how we can minister in each of these service families.

The first, the global family, is the largest. Our primary calling in this arena is to reach out to those lost souls who have not yet found their way home, who have not yet discovered a living relationship with God. They are everywhere around us, spiritual orphans, wandering around in the confusion and pain of their self-conceived isolation.

We must open ourselves to feel their need. Jesus was constantly scanning for them. Look closely at his trip to Rome: the young man who was afraid, the two women of the night,

the mistress at the inn, the Chinese merchant, the runaway lad, and the criminal condemned to die. He felt their need, and he made bold to approach and engage them in conversation. Of course he was a little unconventional; he took some social risks. He could have been rejected; but he rarely was. His love of those he served opened the way for him to touch their souls. We too must learn to love like that. We too, at times, must take risks, act a little unconventionally, if we are to touch the hungry souls of our fellows

They are all around us. People in crisis, people with so much on their minds. We find them at work and among our various acquaintances, at the lunch counter next to us. You want to know how to start? Read the section on "Personal Ministry," p. 1460, and see how Jesus approached people. Usually he started by asking them questions. It takes a little courage, but it works, and the more you do it, the easier it gets.

A second, and smaller, arena for service is the interfaith family, the family of all believers, both within established traditions and outside them. These are people who, to one degree or another, have already found God. There is a great deal of service we can give and receive in this arena. If we have genuine respect for other peoples' beliefs, we can graciously share the best of our understanding of truth and still realize that we have much to gain by gratefully receiving the best in their traditions.

*The Urantia Book* highlights the great importance of promoting loving brotherhood among the followers of different religions. Look at Jesus' ministry to the religious leaders in Rome, and his service to the interfaith community in Urmia. It is an interesting testimony to the ecumenicity of *The Urantia Book* that so many of its readers feel called to dialogue with people of all traditions.

### **The Home Family**

So far we have looked at service in the global family and the interfaith family. Each one is a smaller subset in God's overall family. The third service arena I'd like to mention is still smaller, and yet it is probably the most intense, constant opportunity for devoted service that any of us are likely to experience. I'm speaking of the home family, and the 20-year-long-non-stop-service of raising children.

First of all, I think we tend to underestimate the value of our ministry in the home family. Sharing sources of truth to a hungry humanity seems more grand and glorious. So much of raising children is mundane, nuts and bolts care-giving. I think most of the time in home ministry we don't even recognize that we are serving. The sheer labor involved is often numbing. At the end of most days, I don't feel much deep soul-satisfaction of service rendered; I just want to fall into bed!

And yet this experience is basic in our spiritual training. Indeed, this is where most of us really learn what it means to serve, to put our interests aside for the welfare of another, to act selflessly on a devotion that turns our lives upside down .



When I have felt the frustration of family responsibilities keeping me from “more direct” evangelistic efforts, it has been very helpful for me to remember that Jesus, according to *The Urantia Book* account, spent twelve years after Joseph’s tragic death raising his father’s family and four years ministering to the world. For him family ministry was clearly a high priority.

And it’s not all mundane. Introducing our children to a living relationship with our Farther is spiritual ministry of the first order. If we do that well, we can look forward to an eternal friendship with each of our children in which to savor the fruits of our labors. A few months ago I was tucking in one of my children for the night and I said to her, “I’m so glad God has given you to me to raise as his child.” She gave me a huge hug and said back, “I’m so glad God gave you to me to be my daddy.” I felt the bells were ringing on high; it was an incredibly full moment!

Love and service are spiritually linked. On p. 1419 of *The Urantia Book* we read: “Jesus...loved his family, and this natural affection had been tremendously augmented by his extraordinary devotion to them. The more fully we bestow ourselves upon our fellows, the more we come to love them; and since Jesus had given himself so fully to his family, he loved them with a great and fervent affection.” So it seems that love and service are very reciprocal. The more we love someone, the more we want to serve them, and the more we serve them, the more we grow to love them.

### The Inner Family

This insight leads into the fourth and last service arena I would like to mention: the inner family. By inner family I mean the constant set of internal relationships that each of us enjoys with the indwelling Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, and our Guardian Angels. I believe that, to the extent we cultivate these relationships, they constitute a genuine experience of inner family life.

Now how is it that we can render service to this inner family? To serve is to determine what would most satisfy and benefit another person, and do that for them. What is it that the indwelling Spirit of God most desires from us? **It is** our love, our trusting affection as his children. God wants to share with us in a mutual loving relationship, the full expression of which occurs only in the embrace of worship.

Look again at Jesus. He spent so much of his time in worshipful communion with his Father. This is where we encounter the living heart of his gospel. This is where we *feel* like God’s child. This is where we ourselves are renewed and nourished in his love, which then overflows in our ministry to others. Without worship we dry up, like a dusty riverbed cut off from its source. On p. 1616 we read, “Worship is the technique of looking to the *One* for the inspiration of service to the *many*.”

We are also told that “the Spirit of Truth came to help the believer to witness to the realities of Jesus’ teachings and his

life as he lived it in the flesh, and as he now again lives it anew and afresh in the individual believer of each passing generation of the spirit-filled sons of God.” (U. B. p. 2061) It is in prayer that we develop our relationship with Jesus, and open ourselves to the transformation of his Spirit. If we have enlisted in Jesus’ ongoing work on this world, the more our relationship with him grows in prayer, the more he can live in us and through us, the more effective we can be in his service.

We are also told that our angels guide “the footsteps of the human personality into paths of new and progressive experiences...working through the social, ethical, and moral environment of human beings.” (U. B. p. 1245) I think that it is in our inner lives, through sincere prayer, that we can develop friendship and a working partnership with our angels and the angels of others, and thus be more effective in our efforts to minister to our fellows.

I think we *honor* and *serve* and *work with* the members of our inner family by choosing to spend time in relationship with them in the depths of prayer and worship. And I think all of our service and ministry efforts in the other three family arenas take root and are sustained in this life of the inner family. It is the vital wellspring from which all of our service efforts must flow.

So, summarizing, we’ve looked at the nature of being called. We’ve looked at a couple of distinctions: between the ministry of sharing spiritual truth and all other types of service; and between sharing sources such as the Bible and *The Urantia Book*, and personally sharing the simple essentials of the restated gospel. We’ve looked at four arenas in which we can serve: the global family, the interfaith family, the home family, and the inner family. I believe that if our service efforts are to remain balanced and be effective in the long run, we need to be involved to some degree in service in each of these family arenas.

Before closing, I’d like to make an observation about the window of time coming up to the end of the millennium. The philosopher, Richard Tarnas, has written a book that is well worth reading. The title is *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that have Shaped Our World View*. In it he tells a three thousand year story of the struggle between philosophy, science, and religion in their efforts to define reality and the human condition. Put very simplistically, the Greeks dominated for a thousand years with philosophy. Then, through the first millennium and the middle ages, the Christians dominated with religion. Starting five hundred years ago, science and philosophy progressively displaced the religious paradigm and installed a rational and mechanistic world view in its place.

In the last two hundred years, however, we have worked ourselves into a rather disturbing corner. Philosophy has argued itself to a standstill; it now admits it can’t definitively know anything at all. And the new science now, as well, is

## *Ministry and Service,*

beginning to acknowledge its profound inability to offer a defining universe paradigm.

In the midst of all this lack of definition, the common person has been left to drift with no moorings on a confusing sea of relativism. Nothing seems quite sacred or sure anymore, and life just keeps getting more complex and confusing with each passing year. And yet something else is going on here. Sociologists report a great surge of people searching for spiritual direction both within the established traditions and outside of them. Contemporary periodicals abound with articles that have titles like, "America's Quest for Spiritual Meaning," and "Solving the Mystery of Jesus, and Why it Matters Today." The kettle seems full and the water is beginning to bubble. I believe there is a cultural wave of spiritual searching that will continue to build until it crests at the end of the millennium.

*The Urantia Book* has so much of that for which people have been hoping and searching. Blending science, philosophy, and religion, it offers a new and brilliantly integrated universe paradigm, sufficient to meet humanity's needs for the next one thousand years, proclaiming that:

- The universe is God's creation, and we are his beloved children;
- God dwells intimately within us where we can enjoy his constant companionship;
- God wishes us to learn and grow under his guidance and serve our brothers and sisters in his family;
- This life is but the barest beginning of a vast voyage of discovery, unfolding over aeons of time, on countless worlds, in association with a great host of celestial beings;
- We are destined for Paradise, where we will come into the personal presence of our Universal Father at the center of all things, and then enter into God's eternal service in the never-ending ages to come.

These amazing truths are the feast for which our world hungers.

On page 2048 Jesus says to Peter, "Feed my sheep. Do not forsake the flock....Love the flock as I have loved you and devote yourself to their welfare even as I have devoted my life to your welfare."

May we each, in our own way, heed the Master's call to minister and serve.

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## **Spiritual Perspectives in the Workplace**

James Moravec

One of the most important aspects of life is our vocation, the activity in which we spend the major portion of our time. Let us suppose that you put in a 40-hour work week. Add to that 40 hours the time spent preparing for work, getting to and from work, and any extra meetings and conferences. In a typical week you have spent at least 45% of your waking hours in work-related matters. If you are self-employed, work overtime, or bring your work home, it is easy to approach 60% or more of your time engaged in work activities. The workplace occupies such a significant portion of our lives that we should seriously consider its place in our spiritual destiny.

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Rodan of Alexandria observed, "The two major problems of life are: making a temporal living and the achievement of eternal survival. And even the problem of making a living requires religion for its ideal solution." (U. B. p. 1778:4) The daily problems we encounter in the workplace will be most easily solved if we can maintain a spiritual perspective or, as Webster defines perspective, "a view of things in their true relationship or relative importance."

We all have put a great deal of thought and effort into career planning but we read on page 435 of *The Urantia Book* that "It is not so much what you learn in this first life; it is the experience of living this life that is important. Even the work of this world, paramount though it is, is not nearly so important as the way in which you do this work." How is it then, that we maintain our spiritual perspective while dealing with the daily challenges at work?

### **Creativity Linked to Values**

In order to put first things first in our lives, we must focus on values. No matter what vocation or work we are engaged in, the way in which we do this work is determined more by our dominant values than any other factor. Jesus taught his followers that the will of God can be done in any earthly occupation. All things are sacred in the lives of those who are spirit led, that is, subordinated to truth, ennobled by love, dominated by mercy, and restrained by fairness-justice. If we know and love God, our real business on earth is so to live as to permit the Father to reveal himself in our lives. In this way, God-seeking persons will be attracted to these higher ways of living and may even ask for our help in finding out

more about the God who inspires such expression in our lives. Think of the many people you encounter in the workplace, all potential spiritual brothers and sisters in the kingdom. Are truth-seekers drawn to you by the way you conduct yourself in the workplace, or do you easily lose sight of the spiritual perspective when bogged down by deadlines, quotas, understaffed departments, and the multitude of daily problems?

That which the enlightened and reflective human imagination of spiritual teaching and leading wholeheartedly and unselfishly wants to do and be, becomes measurably creative in accordance with the degree of mortal dedication to the divine doing of the Father's will. When man goes in partnership with God, great things may, and do, happen. (U.B. p. 1467:6)

One aspect of the workplace that makes it difficult to maintain our focus on the spiritual is the mood that is created today by the dominance of the profit motive. Many of us find our work environment adversely affected by others who are driven to attain increasing amounts of material possessions while they give little attention to spiritual values.

Present-day profit-motivated economics is doomed unless profit motives can be augmented by service motives. Ruthless competition based on narrow-minded self-interest is ultimately destructive of even those things which it seeks to maintain. Exclusive and self-serving profit motivation is incompatible with...the teachings of Jesus. (U. B. p. 805:6)

How well celestial personalities know us, for they go on to say, "But the profit motive must not be suddenly destroyed or removed; it keeps many otherwise slothful mortals hard at work." (U.B. p. 805:7) So, if we are sincerely dedicated to doing the Father's will — if we wholeheartedly apply ourselves to trying to maintain our focus on spiritual perspectives — we will become increasingly more creative in finding solutions to our work-related problems. This is definitely a challenge, one that requires great effort if we are to accept it and progress.

Several people in *The Urantia Book* story discuss work-related problems with Jesus. His replies are just as relevant today as they were two thousand years ago. For those of us who find ourselves in vocations that involve providing a service to individuals whose behavior is far from spiritual, we can find inspiring words in Jesus' discussion with the mistress of a Greek inn in which he said, "Minister your hospitality as one who entertains the children of the Most High. Elevate the drudgery of your daily toil to the high levels of a fine art through the increasing realization that you minister to God in the persons whom he indwells...." (U.B. p. 1475) Even the smallest task performed when thought of as a service to God will be performed in the best possible way, with the greatest care and attention. Looked at from the spiritual perspective, every action becomes, potentially, an act of love—a work of art.

A young Greek in the shipyards asked this question of Jesus: "If the Gods are interested in me, then why do they not remove the cruel and unjust foreman of this workshop?" Jesus replied with these words:

Since you know the ways of kindness and value justice, perhaps the Gods have brought this erring man near that you may lead him into this better way. Maybe you are the salt which is to make this brother more agreeable to all other men; that is, if you have not lost your savor. As it is, this man is your master in that his evil ways unfavorably influence you. Why not assert your mastery of evil by virtue of the power of goodness and thus become the master of all relations between the two of you? I predict that the good in you could overcome the evil in him if you gave it a fair and living chance. There is no adventure in the course of mortal existence more enthralling than to enjoy the exhilaration of becoming the material life partner with spiritual energy and divine truth in one of their triumphant struggles with error and evil. It is a marvelous and transforming experience to become the living channel of spiritual light to the mortal who sits in spiritual darkness. If you are more blessed with truth than is this man, his need should challenge you. Surely you are not the coward who could stand by on the seashore and watch a fellow man who could not swim perish! How much more of value is this man's soul floundering in darkness compared to his body drowning in water! (U. B. p. 1430:3)

I'm sure this discussion with Jesus helped this young Greek view his problem from a more spiritual perspective. And as we use this spiritual frame of reference in viewing our contemporary problems, we will arrive at more creative and effective solutions.

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### **Guidelines for Action**

The authors of *The Urantia Book* point out that Jesus was constantly doing good things for people "as he passed by." A study of the ways in which Jesus related to people indicates that he had a high degree of personal preparedness in his personal encounters. A list of some of the skills or techniques that Jesus possessed, which enabled him to minister to his fellow mortals so effectively, can serve as an excellent guideline in our efforts to maintain our spiritual perspective. When relating with people, Jesus was:

- very perceptive, sensitive to the person's inner thoughts and feelings. (We can show increased sensitivity and perceptivity by developing good listening skills, taking the time to

*Spiritual Perspectives, cont.*

be aware of body language);

- conscious of the individual's level of spiritual and intellectual development, always making sure to address them at the appropriate level;

- always interested in what they were doing while he seldom offered them advice unless they asked for it;

- cautious in not directly pointing out another's flaws but would rather, through a series of questions, lead them to recognize those flaws themselves;

- never drawn into conflicts that could not be adequately dealt with when directed to the appropriate channel. (As we are not personally able to deal with every problem that arises, we should make an effort to become knowledgeable in the services that are available for dealing with conflicts);

- always able to provide words of comfort. He looked for the good and praised it. He left his fellows with some suggestion that was practical and immediately helpful. And he would always include in his discussion some message of the love of God and the truth that they were loved children of the Most High.

### **Opportunities for Service**

To Ganid, the young man from India, who Jesus served as a tutor, he said, "To become acquainted with one's brothers and sisters, to know their problems and to learn to love them, is the supreme experience of living." (U. B. p. 1431:1) Later he also taught Ganid that he should, "Become interested in your fellows; learn how to love them and watch for the opportunity to do something for them which you are sure they want done." (U. B. p. 1439:1)

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*"Service occupations steadily have grown to become the economic roots of the U. S. work force. According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than two-thirds of the nation's employment growth during the past twenty years has come in the service sector. By 2000, it's predicted that as much as 90% of the U. S. labor force will work in service occupations."*

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Although some of us may be employed in high tech professions where opportunities for intimate encounters and personal service to one's fellows are limited, we are currently undergoing a shift in the American job scene. The following is a quote from *Jobs of the Future* by Marvin Cetron. "Service occupations steadily have grown to become the economic roots of the U. S. work force. According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than two-thirds of the nation's employment growth during the past twenty years has come in the service sector. By 2000, it's predicted that as much as 90% of the U. S. labor force will work in service occupations."

Jesus gave the following message to the apostles in his farewell discourse.

You have not merely chosen me, but I have also chosen you, and I have ordained you to go forth into the world to yield the fruit of loving service to your fellows even as I have lived among you and revealed the Father to you. The Father and I will both work with you, and you shall experience the divine fullness of joy if you will only obey my command to love one another, even as I have loved you. (U. B. p. 1945:2)

The authors of the Jesus papers comment on Jesus' farewell discourse with these words.

If you would share the Master's joy, you must share his love. And to share his love means that you have shared his service. Such an experience of love does not deliver you from the difficulties of this world; it does not create a new world, but it most certainly does make the old world new.

Keep in mind: It is loyalty, not sacrifice, that Jesus demands. The consciousness of sacrifice implies the absence of that wholehearted affection which would have made such a loving service a supreme joy. The idea of *duty* signifies that you are servant-minded and hence are missing the mighty thrill of doing your service as a friend and for a friend. The impulse of friendship transcends all convictions of duty, and the service of a friend for a friend can never be called a sacrifice. The Master has taught the apostles that they are the sons of God. He has called them brethren, and now...he calls them his friends. (U. B. p. 1945: 3,4)

The old religion taught self-sacrifice; the new religion teaches only self-forgetfulness; enhanced self-realization in conjoined social service and universe comprehension. The old religion was motivated by fear-consciousness; the new gospel of the kingdom is dominated by truth-conviction, the spirit of eternal and universal truth. And no amount of piety or creedal loyalty can compensate for the absence in the life experience of kingdom believers of that spontaneous, generous, and sincere friendliness which characterizes the spirit-born sons of the living God. Neither tradition nor a ceremonial system of formal worship can atone for the lack of genuine compassion for one's fellows. (U. B. p. 1951:2)

It is obvious that both through the example and teachings of Jesus and the contemporary condition of our society, we have a tremendous task before us. To shift our attention from the material to the spiritual in order to better deal with the daily struggle of the workplace will take a very conscious effort. We can make a beginning at internalizing this spiritual perspective in our lives in the here and now, but we are told this process will continue in the next phase of our eternal career:

...you will learn to let pressure develop stability and certainty; to be faithful and earnest and, withal, cheerful; to accept challenges without complaint and to face

difficulties and uncertainties without fear... If you fail, will you rise indomitably to try anew? If you succeed, will you maintain a well-balanced poise—a stabilized and spiritualized attitude—throughout every effort in the long struggle to break the fetters of material inertia, to attain the freedom of spirit existence?

...you will learn to suffer less through sorrow and disappointment, first, by making fewer personal plans concerning other personalities, and then, by accepting your lot when you have faithfully performed your duty.

You will learn that you increase your burdens and decrease the likelihood of success by taking yourself too seriously...nothing equals the importance of the work of the world in which you are actually living. But though the *work* is important, the *self* is not. When you feel important, you lose energy to the wear and tear of ego dignity so that there is little energy left to do the work. Self-importance, not work-importance, exhausts immature creatures; it is the self element that exhausts, not the effort to achieve. You can do important work if you do not become self-important; you can do several things as easily as one if you leave yourself out. (U. B. p. 555: 4-6)

### Dealing with Problems

Some time ago, I attended a weekend retreat entitled “Pathway to Wholeness—Understanding Stress and Our Crazy Extremes.” The seminar was very insightful and I came home with many practical guidelines for dealing with daily problems. I learned that stress is the response to finding ourselves in a situation in which we have not developed adequate coping resources. We are all aware that two different individuals put in the same predicament will probably respond differently. While one may become anxious and begin to show the classic symptoms of stress, the other may efficiently deal with the situation without any difficulty at all. The difference is the result of one having had adequate resources to cope with the problem. They may have been through a similar situation in the past, and had some experience in dealing with the problem. Perhaps this person may have slept better the night before, or may have been in better health. Whatever the reason, they felt adequate and knew they could handle things.

Throughout the weekend we continued to talk about ways to improve our coping resources in order to avoid stress. There are seven aspects of our lives which need to be fostered in order that we grow into well-balanced, adequate individuals. We should strive to develop:

- optimal physical health,
- rewarding family life and relations with primary others,
- opportunities for mental stimulation and growth,
- the ability to express one’s emotional experiences,

- job satisfaction,
- the ability and the time to have fun, and
- an ever deepening and enriching relationship with our Creator.

We should be striving to develop adequate coping resources in order to better deal with the problems we are faced with on a daily basis. We need to progress to the level on which we can maintain our focus on the spiritual perspective and avoid conflict and stress by wholeheartedly believing in the power of God’s goodness and its eventual triumph over evil.

The effort to maintain a balance in the use of our time and energies will continue throughout our long sojourn toward Paradise. Ever and anon we will be engaged in work, progress, and play activities; or stated otherwise, in service, study, and relaxation activities. Jesus set the perfect example. He knew the importance of regular quiet time for prayer and worship, a time to revitalize oneself, to direct our focus to the spiritual perspectives in order that we might return from our meditations with a stronger dedication to doing the Father’s will.

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*The authors of The Urantia Book repeatedly remind us that one’s vocation can be utilized as an effective “reflector” for the dissemination of the light of life.*

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The authors of *The Urantia Book* repeatedly remind us that one’s vocation can be utilized as an effective “reflector” for the dissemination of the light of life. We are admonished to let our light so shine that our fellows will be guided into new and godly paths of enhanced living. To help us maintain our focus on the spiritual perspective let us remember Jesus’ words to the Alpheus twins in one of his resurrection appearances.

Never forget that, when you are a faith son of God, all upright work of the realm is sacred. Nothing which a son of God does can be common. Do your work, therefore, from this time on, as for God. And when you are through on this world, I have other and better worlds where you shall likewise work for me. And in all of this work, on this world and on other worlds, I will work with you, and my spirit shall dwell within you. (U. B. p. 2049:4)

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“Service—more service, increased service, difficult service, adventurous service, and at last divine and perfect service—is the goal of time and the destination of space.” (316:5)

## Media and Values

### Putting the New Apocalypticism in Perspective

Byron Belitsos

Let me venture a prophecy: The remaining years of this decade— of this millennium—will witness an upsurge of apocalyptic prophecy such as the planet has never before seen. Visions of apocalypse will become the coin of the realm in religious and political circles. The term “apocalypse” means a revealing, or “unveiling” of truth; the apocalyptic scenarios that will be widely disseminated in the late ‘90’s will claim to unveil the secrets of the end-times, when suffering and even history itself comes to an end. As global political and ecological chaos worsens, such apocalyptic unveilings of the future will cascade across the land. A myriad of self-styled prophets—some posing as scientists, some as politicians, some as spiritual teachers—will arise to preach some mixture of planetary doom and salvation, with the action culminating around the year 2000. It is in this environment that *Urantia Book* activists may be challenged to present the book’s own prophecies of the the faith-challenge of the planetary journey to the days of Light and Life. (Regarding the Age of Light and Life, see Papers 52 and 55 in *The Urantia Book*.)

The varieties of end-times prophecies will be vast, extending across a broad spectrum. At one extreme will be what we might call “New Age” millennialism, offering an *ecstatic apocalypse of the self*; at the other, fundamentalist Christian millennialism, preaching a *fiery apocalypse of history*.

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What shall we make of these new jeremiads of an “end-time?” Most of the end-time prophets around us—both false and true—will have at least two things in common. First, their prophecies are all to some degree sourced from the Bible itself. Second, they will manifest a universal human tendency seen in all cultures; humans everywhere have dreamt of putting an end to suffering and evil by inventing *an end to time as we know it*. Centuries ago St. Augustine wondered, “Time must have its conclusion in some state redeemed from present suffering, for who could bear such an eternity of suffering?”<sup>1</sup>

The Biblical roots will be easy to trace. Literal or figurative interpretations of prophetic passages in Daniel, Ezekiel, the New Testament, especially the book of Revelation, will hang everywhere in the air. The apocalyptic movement will include those who unconsciously pay homage to biblical prophetic traditions by using modern cultural spin-offs from these traditions. It will also include others who will use clever variations on or even inversions of the themes found in these ancient texts. Many of these prophecies can be traced to one-sided selections from the many phases of Jesus’ own teaching about the Kingdom of God as presented in the New Testament. *The Urantia Book* itself updates and purifies the prophetic passages in the Bible, presenting visions of the future that could enter into the dialogue with apocalyptic thought.

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It is more difficult to trace the universal human urge that underlies apocalypticism, but there are many clues. One mark of apocalypticism is its impatience with evolution. It chafes at the presence of evil; it is intolerant of imperfection. As a result, it becomes presumptive about the course of evolution, rather than hopeful and patient. It presupposes that God will act according to some human agenda of putting an end to evil and suffering. Further, it looks for and even demands signs to confirm this agenda; it even manufactures signs. Above all, it presumes to know how to read the “signs of the times” with exactitude. This leads apocalyptic prophets to go so far as to make firm predictions as to when deity is going to appear and put an end to evil and suffering.

Apocalypticism contains a certain pride of knowledge—what we might call “pride of revelation.” Traditionally, apocalyptic prophets claim that it is possible to know when time will end; they believe they hold the secret of how evil will finally be vanquished upon the return of Christ. It is with such presumptuousness that apocalypticism shortcuts the challenges of faith.

As I see it, faith depends on our hope in the promises of God.<sup>2</sup> *The Urantia Book* promises us a DAY of personal perfection, our fusion with our Thought Adjuster, and a “DAY of the Lord” (to use the phraseology of the Bible, as in 1 Cor 1:8 or Phil 1:10), the sometime return of Michael to his birth planet. These promises always beckon us forward in hope. It is in this sense that faith and hope are interdependent. Genuine faith induces soul growth as we face an unknown future, energized with hope in the promises of God. And what are these promises? That some day all truth *will* be unveiled. And that some distant day, at the literal end of time, at the consummation of this universe age, the Supreme *will* emerge

triumphant, at the great jubilee of his power-personalization, the DAY of the **true** apocalypse of this age.

But faith suffers when our sublime hope in the fulfillment of these promises becomes a presumptuous knowledge of a mythic “end-time”—the end of the trials of evolution. The interdependence of faith and hope is torn asunder. The challenge of free-will choice in the face of uncertainty—as well as the other “*inevitable*” of evolutionary creature life” spoken about in the much-loved passage on page 51 in *The Urantia Book*—is stolen from us. This is the danger of apocalyptic thinking to personal growth and to the orderly progress of the human community.

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The early warning signs of the approach of an apocalyptic era are upon us now. In fact, prophetic millennialism has been growing in intensity at least since the 1960’s. One key source was in the idealism of the political struggles of the ‘60’s, which had taken on a millennial turn by the late ‘70’s. In those days of its political disillusionment, the ‘60’s generation translated its hopes for change into a transcendent version of its formerly this-worldly politics—the so-called New Age movement, with its near-obsession with dramatic inner transformation, sometimes joined with occasional outward millennial events such as the Harmonic Convergence of 1987. The rightist reaction to ‘60’s liberalism and feminism also birthed its own native millennial vision. This took the form of apocalyptic Christian fundamentalism, of a kind and intensity not seen in America since the Millerite movement, which predicted the return of Christ in 1844.<sup>3</sup> It appears that these two forms of apocalypticism are about to achieve their final expression over the next few years.

In Judeo-Christian terms, the dream of the millennium is the fullest realization of the promises of God to the Hebrews—the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. New Ageism and biblical fundamentalism emphasize very different phases of Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom. Jesus’ concept of the kingdom was rich with varied meanings:

Jesus never gave a precise definition of the kingdom. At one time he would discourse on one phase of the kingdom, and at another time he would discuss a different aspect of the brotherhood of God’s reign in the hearts of men. In the course of this Sabbath afternoon’s sermon Jesus noted no less than five phases, or epochs, of the kingdom, and they were:

1. The personal and inward experience of the spiritual life of the fellowship of the individual believer with God the Father.

2. The enlarging brotherhood of gospel believers, the social aspects of the enhanced morals and quickened ethics resulting from the reign of God’s spirit in the hearts of individual believers.

3. The supermortal brotherhood of invisible spiritual beings which prevails on earth and in heaven, the super-human kingdom of God.

4. The prospect of the more perfect fulfillment of the will of God, the advance toward the dawn of a new social order in connection with improved spiritual living—the next age of man.

5. The kingdom in its fullness, the future spiritual age of light and life on earth.

Wherefore must we always examine the Master’s teaching to ascertain which of these five phases he may have reference to when he makes use of the term kingdom of heaven. By this process of gradually changing man’s will and thus affecting human decisions, Michael [Jesus] and his associates are likewise gradually but certainly changing the entire course of human evolution, social and otherwise. (U.B. p. 1872-3)

What I am calling “New Ageism” emphasizes the sudden, impatient advent of the kingdom within. The teaching that “the Kingdom is within you” is the first and most important phase of the Kingdom teaching. But here we are speaking of an apocalyptic version, a narrow interpretation. This can come in the form of a Buddhistic annihilation of the ego as taught in some cults and communities in North America; or, more commonly, through a “one-eyed” spiritualism that reduces this powerful kingdom teaching to the ecstasy of finding “God within” and then *keeping* him there. The fundamentalist Christian reverses this “inside out” spiritualism of the New Age.

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*The Urantia Book* clearly tells us that the early Christians, having lost sight of the crucial first phase of the Kingdom teaching, instead tragically set the Kingdom off into the future. This error is the root of much Christian apocalypticism of the past centuries as well as current fundamentalistic Christianity. Prophetic apocalypticism became so attractive<sup>4</sup>, because the church itself taught that the kingdom was to be delivered at the *end of this age*, from “the outside in:”

When Jesus’ immediate followers recognized their partial failure to realize his ideal of the establishment of the kingdom in the hearts of men by the spirit’s domination

### *New Apocalypticism, cont.*

and guidance of the individual believer, they set about to save his teaching from being wholly lost by substituting for the Master's ideal of the kingdom the gradual creation of a visible social organization, the Christian church. And when they had accomplished this program of substitution, in order to maintain consistency and to provide for the recognition of the Master's teaching regarding the fact of the kingdom, they proceeded to set the kingdom off into the future. **The church, just as soon as it was well established, began to teach that the kingdom was in reality to appear at the culmination of the Christian age, at the second coming of Christ.**

In this manner the kingdom became the concept of an age, the idea of a future visitation, and the ideal of the final redemption of the saints of the Most High. (U.B. p. 1865, emphasis added)

The key text of Christian apocalypticism, the book of Revelation, speaks of a "New Jerusalem" miraculously delivered from outside (and above) in a sequence of events culminating in the Battle of Armageddon and the millennial reign of Christ. But it makes almost no reference to Jesus' crucial teachings of the "Kingdom within."

In my view, each of these approaches outlined above are impatient shortcuts on the rocky road of evolution. The rhythm of evolution requires that we come to terms with the evil of time by the evolutionary techniques of faith and hope. To keep faith and hope in balance, **each** of the phases of the Kingdom teachings are necessary to realizing any **one** of its phases. We must neither overemphasize the goal (the "millennial reign" of Light and Life) nor the starting point (the "Kingdom within") of this long journey. And this

is another way of saying that the Fatherhood/Motherhood of God and the brotherhood/sisterhood of humankind are *interdependent* realities.

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<sup>1</sup> See Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup> Here I follow in part the argument of the Protestant theologian Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 207-8.

<sup>4</sup> For histories of Christian apocalypticism see: Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1992); and Michael J. St. Clair, *Millenarian Movements in Historical Context* (New York: Garland Press, 1992)

-Byron Belitsos

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"The religious challenge of this age is to those farseeing and forward-looking men and women of spiritual insight who will dare to construct a new and appealing philosophy of living out of the enlarged and exquisitely integrated modern concepts of cosmic truth, universe beauty, and divine goodness. Such a new and righteous vision of morality will attract all that is good in the mind of man and challenge that which is best in the human soul." (43:3)

## Urantia Book Resources

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

Dr. Duane L. Faw, Professor of Law emeritus of Pepperdine University School of Law, spent six years compiling a parallel and harmony of *The Urantia Book* and the Bible. The *Paramony* was published in 1986 and contains 25,000 cross-references revealing the similarities and differences between the facts and concepts of these two great books. Dr. Faw has been a teacher of adult Bible classes for 40 years and a certified lay speaker in the United Methodist Church for over 25 years. The *Concordex* and *Paramony* can be purchased from The Good Cheer Press, P. O. Box 18764, Boulder, CO 80303.

An exhaustive *Urantia Book Concordance* was published by the Urantia Foundation in 1993. If your local bookstore does not carry *The Urantia Book* or *The Urantia Book Concordance*, they can be ordered from the Urantia Foundation, 533 Diversey Parkway, Chicago, IL 60614. The Urantia Foundation also publishes French, Spanish, and Finnish editions of *The Urantia Book*.