

# **Spiritual Fellowship Journal**

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**The Joy of Living in a New Age**

**Are We Starting a New Religion?**

**Should a Urantia Church be Formed?**

## **The Spiritual Fellowship is a Religious Organization Whose Mission is to Bring the Spiritual Teachings of the Urantia Papers to All People.**

We believe that the Fifth Epochal Revelation will enculturate the grass roots of society through new religious organizations and help lay the foundation for an interfaith movement that will eventually involve all of the religions of the world. The history of religion shows that spiritual value systems are always established and promoted by some kind of religious organization. We invite you to join us in this pioneering effort to establish new religious organizations that have the potential to bring a spiritual transformation to our world.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Central Objective**

The central objective of those interested in initiating a new religious organization based on the teachings of the Urantia Papers should be to create a polity with maximum flexibility, function with both small groups or larger congregations, utilize lay leadership and/or ordained clergy, exhibit cross-cultural adaptability, and express broad theological inclusiveness.

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

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

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

## *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal*

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*The Spiritual Fellowship Journal is an ecumenical publication published twice yearly by The Spiritual Fellowship. Its purpose is to support the larger Urantia Community, especially as it seeks to interface with the cultures and religious institutions of our world. It also seeks to address issues of special concern in the establishment of new religious institutions with roots in the Fifth Epochal Revelation.*

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## Editorials

### Transitions...

Over the course of several years, Meredith Sprunger sent letters to mainline clergy seeking to introduce them to *The Urantia Book*. I was one who responded, having received and accepted an invitation for a loan copy of the book. I was astonished by the wisdom and the ring of truth of what I was reading, and it quickly became the center and focus of my spiritual life. I wanted to share it with everyone I could, although I was not naive about the prospects. I even wondered if I would find anyone else in my lifetime who would be open to “discovering” it.

One day Meredith and I were discussing other ways of introducing *The Urantia Book* to others in the mainline churches and he said he had been thinking of publishing a journal to interface with mainline clergy. My immediate response was, “We can do that.” It was not long before we were at work preparing the first issue of the Journal, thanks to the new technology of desktop publishing.

We published the Journal from 1991 through the spring of 2001, when Meredith and Irene moved to a retirement village and he felt he could no longer continue as editor. Still in full time ministry, I didn’t believe I could do the task justice. Fortunately, Larry Mullins took over the work of the Journal and has kept it going in fine style for the past three years. His own commitments have since become heavier, and he also decided he could no longer serve as editor and publisher. In the meantime, I retired early in order to have more time to work on behalf of the Fifth Epochal Revelation in whatever manner I could, and I agreed to take over this position. Meredith indicated he would serve in the position of associate editor. So, in effect, we are back to the original team, working in much the same way, with simply a switch in titles.

We have also sought to rethink our purpose: Has it changed? How do we now see our role in the larger Urantia Community and the world?

We had already shifted the primary focus from interfacing with clergy to encouraging the establishment of new religious institutions. It had become clear that very few clergy were interested in, or ready for, anything that purported to be a new revelation, regardless of the high level of its content and the self-authenticating nature of its message. We had not written off mainline clergy or churches, but we broadened the focus, recognizing the growing desire of many to be a part of a Urantia fellowship that shared in more than an academic discussion of the book.

Our newly revised stated purpose is: “...to support the larger Urantia community, especially as it seeks to interface with the cultures and religious institutions of our world. It also seeks to address issues of special concern in the establishment of new religious institutions with roots in the Fifth Epochal Revelation.”

A central ongoing concern is to assist the Urantia community to understand and interpret the Fifth Epochal Revelation, even while we seek to encourage new ventures in religious communities.

One of the primary tasks of the early Christian church was to interpret this new religion to the world around them, a Greco-Roman world that viewed this new cult as weak and unworthy of a great civilization. It was routinely attacked by leading writers and thinkers of the day. Thus, one of the most important categories of early Christian writings, especially in the second and third centuries, was known as “apologetics.” The goal of apologetics was to interpret the new faith to the skeptical and hostile world. Justin Martyr wrote his first and second “Apologies” around 150-160 A.D. They dealt with the relation of Christians to the state, widespread misunderstandings of the Christian religion, and why this religion was, in fact, superior to the pagan religions of the time.

I think we live in similar circumstance, where the claims of a new revelation will be greeted with a mixture of indifference, suspicion, and outright hostility. It will be met with assumptions about esoteric cults and new age movements. Before investigating it, few people would ever imagine its spiritual depth, or its harmony with the deepest insights and affirmations of the Christian faith, as well as the best and noblest insights of the world’s great religions.

We need passionate and articulate “apologists” to share the Fifth Epochal Revelation with the world. We hope the Journal will assist those involved in this task.

However, we are also still keenly interested in encouraging and supporting the efforts of those who wish to create new communities, fellowships that address a broader range of social and spiritual needs, including worship and the opportunity for service and outreach. We don’t envision a “mother church” that seeks to maintain order through control and conformity, but rather an organization that helps to bind us in spiritual unity through common goals, providing an umbrella of support and connectedness, even while it encourages diversity. We realize that such efforts will have to evolve over long periods of time.

We invite you to participate in the dialogue. The Urantia community is a remarkably diverse group of people, with a wealth of different viewpoints and insights. We need them. It is a part of the self-correcting nature of a community based on the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

I'm amazed, even awed, by the amount of talent represented in the Urantia community. We see the Journal as one of the avenues for this talent to be expressed on behalf of all. We recently sent out over a hundred invitations to submit articles in the Journal. We have, as of now, some forty positive responses. We look forward to seeing what this wealth of creative talent will produce. While we are not a public bulletin board service for every idea, we do wish to represent a forum for a wide range of insights and concerns related to our stated purpose.

Please join us!

***In this issue:***

- We've included the first of a two part series by Ken Glasziou on the efforts of scientists to relate Quantum Mechanics with human consciousness. While we realize it may not be easily accessible to all readers, we believe it is a remarkable achievement and an important work that harmonizes these efforts with the affirmations and insights of *The Urantia Book*.
- Richard Bain has an insightful article examining the "Atonement" and its widely acclaimed expression in the movie "The Passion," with the alternative understanding of the death of Jesus recorded in *The Urantia Book*.
- Jean Barr invites us to consider the essence of prayer and worship, and how they are related.

***Correction:***

- In the last issue of the Journal, the fine article on "Leadership for Spiritual Communities," was incorrectly attributed to me, rather than its rightful author, Richard Bain.

-Merlyn Cox

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## Religion in Transition

Bishop John Shelby Spong in his book, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*, cites evidence that religion—especially Christianity—is in dire need of being restructured. He points out that the concepts and expressions of Christian theology established in the prescientific era no longer make sense. Spong believes that early Christians were responsible for establishing the concept of a personal God, theism, which he rejects and in its place accepts Paul Tillich's concept of God as the nonpersonal Ground of Being. He goes to great length in redefining Jesus, transcendence, the meaning of prayer, the basis of ethics, the future of the church, and eternal life. His understanding of God-consciousness comes close to relationships with the pre-personal Thought Adjuster.

Spong, along with many Christian theologians, recognizes that the prescientific understanding of God and religion in general must be restructured to make sense in our contemporary view of reality. Unfortunately, he is not aware of, or ignores, the vast new concept of reality presented in the Urantia Papers. The transition of religious concepts today needs not only the upstep required by our contemporary scientific-secular view of reality, it more importantly needs a transition to harmonize with the extensive picture of material-mindal-spiritual reality presented in the Fifth Epochal Revelation. This transcendent transition will no doubt take centuries to consolidate.

There are many signs that the beginnings of this transition is underway. In *Religions in the Modern World* edited by Linda Woodhead (Routledge, 2002), changes in the religions of the world as well as a view of the future is presented. The last section of the book discusses the de-secularization and globalization of religion and the spiritual revolution from "religion" to "spirituality." While institutionalized religious traditions are not faring well today, interest in spirituality is thriving. There is a growing interest in spirituality both within institutionalized religion and in the general population. Spiritual experience—the influence of the Thought Adjusters, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, and the soul are increasingly more important than the external influence of institutional religion. While religious institutions are important socially in establishing a culture, spirituality is the shaper of the individual.

We are living in exciting times with the privilege of experiencing the beginnings of a new spiritual paradigm on our world, along with the opportunity to influence the shape of the future.

-MJS

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## The Joy of Living on the Edge

All progressive living begins with the motivation and courage to explore new possibilities and the unknown. It requires effort and determination and is safeguarded by wisdom. Living in the shelter of traditional frames of reference and values permits one to largely avoid challenge and conflict.

Social scientists have discovered that all human activities are characterized by what is known as the normal curve of distribution. A small percentage of people are pioneers, and there are always a few individuals, the fundamentalists, who refuse to change. The rest of society fall into a graded continuum between these two extremes. All human progress, sooner or later, follows the same evolutionary

*The Joy of Living..., cont.*

dynamics. Thomas S. Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, describes the basic nature of changes in scientific paradigms, which is basically the same as changes in spiritual paradigms. These changes have a long historical background that culminates in crisis situations. When the new gestalt or revolution occurs, it comes in its entirety displacing the old view. The transformation takes place not by convincing the authorities of the old view but by new people shaping the future. Kuhn quotes Max Planck saying, “a new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.” (p. 151)

The Fifth Epochal Revelation will follow a similar pattern. There will be a long period in which more and more progressive people discover the larger view of the Urantia Papers. No doubt, in time, a crisis will take place when the religious fundamentalists will make a major attempt to refute the teachings of the Urantia Papers. This confrontation, along with the passing of the older theologians, will result in a major religious paradigm shift to the new universe view.

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*We are now entering an extensive historical interval when the Fifth Epochal Revelation appears to be more or less dormant, but is actually undergoing a gestation period when developments are taking place preparing our world for a new age.*

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We are now entering an extensive historical interval when the Fifth Epochal Revelation appears to be more or less dormant, but is actually undergoing a gestation period when developments are taking place preparing our world for a new age. Those of us fortunate enough to be active in the womb of time have the joyful opportunity to contribute to the edge of spiritual enlightenment. It is a time of freedom for creative activity, a time to enjoy the subtle events shaping the future, a time of joy anticipating the advent of a new age.

-MJS

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## Are We Starting a New Religion?

One of the stated goals of the *Spiritual Fellowship Journal* is to “address issues of special concern in the establishment of new religious institutions with roots in the Fifth Epochal Revelation.”

It may seem obvious to many that new religious institutions will appear as part of the impact of *The Urantia Book*, but it is not necessarily viewed as a good thing, or one to be encouraged. Many in the Urantia movement view all religious institutions with suspicion. The dangers of institutional religion are clearly pointed out in the pages of *The Urantia Book*, and those suspicions have been validated in the personal experience of countless readers.

Nevertheless, *The Urantia Book* suggests that institutional expressions of religious beliefs are natural and inevitable, if not absolutely necessary, and rather than bemoan the inevitable problems that will arise, we should be wise in recognizing their values as well as their limitations. (87:7; p. 966)

A related question that is often asked, then, is: Are we starting a *new religion*?

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*The word religion can mean many different things, even if everyone has a sense of what it means.*

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It is not as easy to answer as might first appear. The word religion can mean many different things, even if everyone has a sense of what it means. *The Urantia Book* says “Religion requires no definition; we all know its social, intellectual, moral and spiritual fruits. And this all grows out of the fact that religion is the property of the human race; it is not a child of culture.” (102:3)

Nevertheless, its use in our language and culture covers a broad range of meanings.

Religion is generally recognized as “a way of life or belief based on a person’s ultimate relation to the universe or God...”<sup>1</sup> Paul Tillich, considered one of the great 20<sup>th</sup> centuries theologians, spoke of religion as one’s “ultimate concern.” Martin Luther, in a similar fashion, said “whatever one’s heart clings to and trusts in, that is one’s God.” Thus, a person’s belief system concerning ultimate things (what one’s heart clings to) may include a lot that we would not deem very religious by ordinary definition, or worthy by most definitions. Usually, however, we reserve the word religion for belief systems that include belief in a deity and a way of “salvation” or liberation—in the afterlife, if not in the here and now.

One's religion is thus primarily about a personal experience and basic orientation to the whole of life. But the word "religion" is also used for the attending set of beliefs (i.e., creeds), sacred scriptures, ethical code of conduct, liturgy, and order and structure that go along with a community of believers who share those same basic beliefs.

Thus "religion" may be used to describe one's personal faith and beliefs, or it can mean a commonly held system of beliefs and its social expression by a community. Jesus made it clear that the essence of religion is the faith relationship between the individual and the Creator/Father. The distinction between personal and institutional religion is underscored in *The Urantia Book* with a quote from Romans 14, "Have you faith? Then, have it unto yourself." (99:5)

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*The distinction between personal and institutional religion is underscored in The Urantia Book by with a quote from Romans 14, "Have you faith? Then, have it unto yourself." (99:5)*

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Paul Tillich also wrote: "'Revelation' speaks of a divine, 'religion' of a human, action. 'Religion' speaks of culture, 'revelation' of that which lies beyond culture." "Revelation has to do with the absolute; religion with the relative."<sup>2</sup>

There is obviously a great gulf between the authority of revelation and the cultural response we often refer to as religion. The major "religions" of Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, are the result over time of the human response, individual and community, to divine revelation.

When Ganid suggested to Jesus, after their survey of the world's religions, that they create a new religion, Jesus replied: "Ganid, religions are not made. The religions of men grow up over long periods of time, while the revelations of God flash upon the earth in the lives of the men who reveal God to their fellows." (132:7)

While the use of the term "religion" will depend on one's usage and definition, in the end, I think, it is more correct to say that while we might begin a new religious fellowship, a new "church," or a new institution based on The Fifth Epochal Revelation, we are not starting a new religion.

To the degree that religion refers to one's personal faith, it is a reflection of the work of the Spirit-Adjuster in the life of the individual and not something we create by individual effort alone, let alone by group effort. To the degree religion is used to describe the intentional efforts of religionists to cooperate and share in group worship, ministry, outreach (evangelism), and service, it a religious "institution," not the faith conviction of the individual personality.

In common usage we might speak of our desire to start

a new religion; but if so, it would clearly mean a social, institutional expression of our common beliefs and values.

This discussion, I believe, poses an interesting question to many in the Urantia Movement: Is an informal study group that does no more than gather on a regular basis, with little or no shared public prayer or worship, or social or evangelical outreach, a "religious" organization?

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*In common usage we might speak of our desire to start a new religion; but if so, it would clearly mean a social, institutional expression of our common beliefs and values.*

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I would suggest the answer with another question: Is a group that meets regularly to study a book that purports to be an epochal revelation to mankind, whose purpose is, from beginning to end, to introduce us to a new and fuller understanding of God's purposes for us and all Creation, and includes 800 plus pages on the life and teachings of Jesus, a "religious" organization? How would you answer?

What is certain, I think, is that a new religion *will* emerge as the human response to the Fifth Epochal Revelation. It will be the reflection and sum of the beliefs of countless individuals as well as countless groups, formal and informal, with many of them growing out of the great religious traditions of the world, leavened by this revelation. All of this will begin in the hearts of believers, one at a time.

In his discourse or true religion, Jesus said "we will... shortly begin the bold proclamation of a new religion—a religion which is not a religion in the present day meaning of the word, a religion that makes its chief appeal to the Spirit of my Father which resides in the mind of man; a religion which shall derive its authority from the fruits of its acceptance."<sup>3</sup> (155:5)

The name we might give to any of this is pretty much arbitrary and largely irrelevant. It will not define or limit the work of the Spirit. We hope it will not get in the way. Our task is to go about it as wisely as possible, realizing the final result will be in the Father's hands.

-Merlyn Cox

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<sup>1</sup>"Religion," in Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia, 1986.

<sup>2</sup>"What is Religion?" Paul Tillich, James Luther Adams, ed., Harper, New York, 1973, p. 28.

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## Should a Urantia Church be Formed?

Sue Tennant

With all due respect for some fine churches and well-meaning Urantians, how could a “Urantian Church,” established in Boulder or any city anywhere in the world, possibly be universal enough in appeal to all races, religions and cultures, reflecting the global, universal and cosmic paradigms of the Urantia Papers?

I think response to the Fifth Epochal Revelation may require something radically more than a “church” idea. I would suggest a global “network” idea which espouses a new philosophy of living and an inclusive vision of the whole human family. My experience is that Jesus’ religion liberates us from dependence on organizations in order to give us sufficient spiritual distance so that we can help transform them by creating new ways of doing things.

It seems to me that the spirit is free of dogma, ritual, and secular loyalties, and it kindly empowers each of us to channel our gifts and passion into new ways of serving the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind. Perhaps a helpful concept of a “religious” organization might be a “learning” organization. If the creative energy of some readers is seeking an outlet independent of the Foundation or Fellowship, does it have to be a church? The Urantia Book gives us a marvelous philosophy of “Lifelong Learning”.

Why don’t we create, through spiritual education and training (SET) models scattered throughout the world, the opportunity to learn how to live by this philosophy in cosmic terms? People want the comfort of being with other people who are spiritually akin. Why not challenge them to serve the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind by creating a model of spiritual education and training (SET)?

I see the “invisible church” as an “invisible network” of spiritual education & training schools (SETS) for the spiritually challenged human race. We need to learn and teach about the faith that leads to a universe career and training for service to transform our world. I see each model as unique, experimental and adaptive, based primarily on small groups learning to live and teach Jesus’ religion of the spirit in the context of epochal revelation. I see SETS independently developing the following (among other things):

1. Teaching spiritual liberty and training for social responsibility,
2. Teaching personal religious experience and training for group harmony,
3. Teaching epochal revelatory knowledge and training for evolutionary application,

4. Teaching spontaneous spiritual living and training for doing the Father’s will.

And, I see SETS maintaining a worldwide network of cooperation and mutual sharing of information, resources and experiences because all are striving to realize the same goal—sonship with God and the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind. I believe I “see” this because it is in fact beginning to happen and I’m just starting to recognize it.

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*Sue Tennant is author of “Crossing Cultures in Business,” founder of the Ontario Chapter of the World Interfaith Education Association, and, along with her husband Derek, the owner of the Silver Springs retreat center.*

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## Prayer & Worship As We Should Understand It

Jean Barr

*“Worship is for its own sake; prayer embodies a self or creature-interest element; that is the greatest difference between worship and prayer. There is absolutely no self-request or other element of personal interest in true worship; we simply worship God for what we comprehend him to be. Worship asks nothing and expects nothing for the worshiper. We do not worship the Father because of anything we may derive from such veneration; we render such devotion and engage in such worship as a natural and spontaneous reaction to the recognition of the Father’s matchless personality and because of His lovable nature and adorable attributes.*

The moment the element of self-interest intrudes upon worship—that instant devotion translates from worship to prayer and more appropriately should be directed to the person of the Eternal Son or the Creator Son.” (65-5)

The Greek religion had a watchword “Know yourself”; the Hebrews centered their teaching on “Know your God”; the Christians preach a gospel aimed at a “knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ”; Jesus proclaimed the good news of “*knowing God, and yourself as a son of God.*” These differing concepts of the purpose of religion determine the individual’s attitude in various life situations and *foreshadow the depth of worship and the nature of his personal habits of prayer. The spiritual status of any religion may be determined by the nature of its prayers.* (67-6)

Words are irrelevant to prayer; they are merely the intellectual channels in which the river of spiritual supplication may chance to flow. The word value of a prayer is purely autosuggestive in private devotions and sociosuggestive



in group devotions. *God answers the soul's attitude, not the words.* (1002-4)

The more healthful attitude of spiritual meditation is to be found in *reflective worship and in the prayer of thanksgiving*. The direct communion with one's personal God Fragment, such as occurred in the *later years* of Jesus' life in the flesh, should not be confused with these so-called mystical experiences. (1100-1) (Please note that it was in the later years after He had succeeded in completing most or all of the levels of growth that we as humans must complete here to have this direct communion.)

"Prayer is entirely a personal and spontaneous expression of the attitude of the soul toward the spirit; prayer should be the communion of sonship and the expression of fellowship. Prayer, when indited by the spirit, leads to co-operative spiritual progress. *The ideal prayer is a form of spiritual communion, which leads to intelligent worship. True praying is the sincere attitude of reaching heavenward for the attainment of your ideals.*" (1618-7)

"Jesus brought to God, as a man of the realm, the greatest of all offerings:

- The consecration and dedication of his own will to the majestic service of doing the divine will.

*Jesus always and consistently interpreted religion wholly in terms of the Father's will.* When you study the career of the Master, as concerns prayer or any other feature of the religious life, *look not so much for what he taught as for what he did. Jesus never prayed as a religious duty.* To him prayer was the following:

- A sincere expression of spiritual attitude,
- A declaration of soul loyalty,
- A recital of personal devotion,
- An expression of thanksgiving,
- An avoidance of emotional tension,
- A prevention of conflict,
- An exaltation of intellection,
- An ennoblement of desire,
- A vindication of moral decision,
- An enrichment of thought,
- An invigoration of higher inclinations,
- A consecration of impulse,
- A clarification of viewpoint,
- A declaration of faith,
- A transcendental surrender of will,
- A sublime assertion of confidence,
- A revelation of courage,
- The proclamation of discovery,

- A confession of supreme devotion,
- The validation of consecration,
- A technique for the adjustment of difficulties,
- And the mighty mobilization of the combined soul powers to withstand all human tendencies toward selfishness, evil, and sin.

He lived just such a life of prayerful consecration to the doing of his Father's will and ended his life triumphantly with just such a prayer. *"The secret of his unparalleled religious life was this consciousness of the presence of God; and he attained it by intelligent prayer and sincere worship—unbroken communion with God—and not by leadings, voices, visions, or extraordinary religious practices."* (2088-5)

We can achieve *almost (we are not Jesus)* this consciousness of the presence of God through the diligent achievement of the circles and mind levels we are aware of sometime after balance and transcendence. Eventually, a degree, (as human creatures), of the consciousness of His presence will be with us 24 hours a day!

*"In the earthly life of Jesus, religion was a living experience, a direct and personal movement from spiritual reverence to practical righteousness.* The faith of Jesus bore the transcendent fruits of the divine spirit. His faith was not immature and credulous like that of a child, but in many ways it did resemble the unsuspecting *trust* of the child mind. Jesus *trusted God* much as the child *trusts the parent*. He had a profound confidence in the universe—just such a *trust* as the child has in its parental environment. Jesus' wholehearted faith in the fundamental goodness of the universes very much resembled the child's *trust* in the security of its earthly surroundings." (2089-2)

"It is not strange that He once said, 'except you become as a little child, you shall not enter the kingdom,' notwithstanding that Jesus' faith was *childlike*, it was in no sense *childish*." (2089-3)

If we practically live and modify our lives, by the simple things below:

- Take care of our details. (No problem exists except someone left a detail undone.)
- Remember that cause and effect are the natural laws of the universe. (Here all is dual in nature and duality is the separation of the cause from the effect by way of function.)
- Make our decisions always "for the greatest good for all concerned."
  - o Locate the difficulty,
  - o Isolate the problem,
  - o Remove the personalities,

*Prayer and Worship, cont.*

- o Remove bias, passion and all other prejudices,
  - o Recognize its nature and gravity,
  - o Use tact and tolerance,
  - o And do whatever is for the greatest good for all concerned—not just for you. (Consider everyone else—you are taken care of.)
- Let go and let God handle the rest with trust in Him.
  - Develop patience, tolerance and compassion—these are the main components of love.
  - Remove fear and insecurity.
  - Convert urges, (into the social art of living,) transfer lures (must be transferred into the lure of universal cosmology), and transform desires (into spiritual longings which are capable of permanent attainment.)

What happens is that as we daily change our habit patterns—using the decision making law of God to do the “greater good for all concerned,” we are acquiring true wisdom, utilizing faith, building trust from that faith, and finally beginning to trust God’s ability to work for us and with us.

Trust comes and builds as we repeatedly decide to do the “greater good for all concerned” and literally see the results play out without any help from us—except the intent to do the greater good. We will find that and prove our Father is the most perfectly consistent Being ever encountered and it then becomes easy to trust Him when the results are glaringly apparent.

**Conditions of Effective Prayer**

“If you would engage in effective praying, you should bear in mind the laws of prevailing petitions:

1. You must qualify as a potent prayer by sincerely and courageously facing the problems of universe reality. You must possess cosmic stamina. (Do not live in a dream world—get real about the situation and take action to solve it yourself first and go the extra mile trying to do it.)
2. You must honestly have exhausted the human capacity for human adjustment. You must have been industrious. (If illness, we must have exhausted all medical help available—if business, we must have done everything possible to salvage the situation.)
3. You must surrender every wish of mind and every craving of soul to the transforming embrace of spiritual growth. (We must work each day to modify the negative in our lives and make our decisions for the greater good.) You must have experienced an enhancement of meanings and an elevation of values. (As you develop spirituality, life will change in your sense of values and the meanings of these.)

4. You must make a wholehearted choice of the divine will. You must obliterate the dead center of indecision. (Do the greater good, eliminate procrastination and make an irrevocable decision to become His Son.)

5. You not only recognize the Father’s will and choose to do it, but you have effected an unqualified consecration, and a dynamic dedication, to the actual doing of the Father’s will. (You know what this is —see # 4. It is so critical to be repeated in different words.)

6. Your prayer will be directed exclusively for *divine wisdom* to solve the specific human problems encountered in the Paradise ascension—the attainment of divine perfection.

7. And you must have faith—living faith. (Trust is a must.) (1002)

*We are told to pray only for values, not things.* Things we can get, values we must have help with and develop the growth to appreciate and recognize values.

We are told that genuine prayer:

- Adds to spiritual growth,
- Modifies attitudes, and
- Yields that satisfaction which comes from communion with divinity.
- It is a spontaneous outburst of God-consciousness!

Again we are told that God answers man’s prayer:

- By giving him an increased revelation of truth,
- An enhanced appreciation of beauty, and
- An augmented concept of goodness,
- Prayer is a subjective gesture,
- But it contacts with mighty objective realities on the spiritual levels of human experience,
- It is a meaningful reach by the human for superhuman values and
- Is the most potent spiritual-growth stimulus!

*And worship is thankfulness for all we have and know and are.*

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# The Challenge: Part 1

Kenneth Glasziou

(Emphasis in Paper is by author)

“The Universe of universes, *in toto*, is mind planed, mind made, and mind administered.” (p. 481)

*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. Truth, beauty, and goodness are divine realities, and as man ascends the scale of spiritual living, these supreme qualities of the Eternal become increasingly coordinated and unified in God, who is love.* (p. 43)

The authors of the Urantia revelation presented their own qualifications in what surely must be one of the most remarkable books ever written—a work that would be even more remarkable if actually written by human beings.

To be the imaginative work of either a human individual or group, we would need to attribute to the authors’ advanced knowledge over an impressive range of subjects, remarkably fertile imagination, and the ability to display extraordinary consistency throughout a 2000 page work—all long before the general availability of advanced computers. In fact, many serious readers are so impressed by what they read that, for them, the revelatory claim is self-authenticating.

However, to grant it a revelatory status and some kind of celestial authorship, there are problems. Not the least of these is its error content—some of which is so obvious that, after considering the mental astuteness elsewhere displayed, one has to acknowledge that inclusion of such error had to be deliberate.

Why? One possible answer is to divert attention away from the revelation and to something of more immediate importance. What that could be is hinted at in the statement, “*construct a new appealing philosophy out of the enlarged and exquisitely integrated modern concepts of cosmic truth, universe beauty, and divine goodness.*”

What a challenge! The new philosophies must not only be short, sharp, and simple, but also suited to the immediate needs of its recipients.

What the revelators are asking is not for some academic,

scientific, and theological tome, but something more along the lines of Jesus’ *Sermon on the Mount* as it is presented in Matthew 5 to 7.

Be aware though that it is not an educated and privileged leadership that constitutes the real menace to the advancement of the Brotherhood of Man. Rather, it is their armies of ignorant and misinformed followers, those who directly create all the havoc and the mayhem.

Getting rid of the leaders will not bring on the Brotherhood. There will always be a surfeit of power-hungry malcontents ready to step into any vacancy.

Rather, it is the army of the underprivileged, the poor, the starving, the ignorant, the illiterate, those who hunger for a better share of God’s good gifts to the world, that could either form a fertile field in which the message of love and respect for one another could take root and flower—or else become recruited for murder and mayhem.

That **this world is not a machine** in which we all do as we do because we cannot do otherwise is now a proven fact. Quantum theory has empirically demonstrated the existence of a transcendent reality outside of our time and space that can interact with our world in intelligent ways. And for this to occur in the way it does, “consciousness” has to be a component of that transcendent reality.

Some call this consciousness “God.” The Urantia revelators inform us that God has granted us free will, and this grant is inviolate. We are offered a choice. We can enlist on the side of God by revoking our free will and accepting God’s will in all things—placing ourselves firmly on the pathway of selflessness, tolerance, and love.

Or, we can choose to let mayhem take its course.

## Materialism, Idealism, and the Urantia Revelation

Most Westerners accept as scientific fact the idea that we live in a materialist world—a world in which everything is made of matter and in which matter is taken as being the only fundamental reality.

In no small part, this scenario owes its origins to the French mathematician, Rene Descartes, who 400 years ago, proposed his famous philosophy of dualism, one that divides the world into an objective sphere of matter and a subjective one of mind. Together these enshrined his ideas of the world as simply being a machine.

Worse still, a century later Newton and his heirs conclusively established the principle of causal determinism—the concept that all motion can be predicted exactly using only the physical laws of motion and the initial conditions of the system in motion.

Imagine a bunch of billiard balls on a perfectly even

*The Challenge, cont.*

billiard table. Given Newton's equations of motion and the initial positions, masses and velocities of all of these balls at some initial time, then, so determinism claims, the whole future of these billiard balls can be calculated.

The philosophical import of this kind of thinking took root to such a degree that another French philosopher-scientist, Pierre Laplace, was able to propose that if some superior intelligence, at a given instance, was acquainted with all the forces by which nature is animated, and at some initial moment also knew the position and velocity of each and every particle of matter then, to that superior-intelligence, neither the past nor the future of the universe would be uncertain.

Laplace also wrote a highly successful book on celestial mechanics. This caught the attention of his emperor, Napoleon, who asked why it was that he made no mention of God—to which Laplace responded, “Your majesty, I have no need of that hypothesis.” In a fully deterministic Newtonian world, God was no longer needed!

To these principles of objectivity and determinism in classical physics, a third was added by Einstein. This came as a consequence of his declaration that the velocity of light was a limiting velocity in a vacuum—the velocity of light was a constant that no material thing could exceed.

The implications of this speed limit were far reaching, perhaps none being more important than that all interactions between things material in space-time must travel through space one piece at a time and with finite velocity. Hence all such interactions must be “localized”—they must occur within the boundaries set by the speed of light. This fact has been given the name, ‘the principle of locality.’ Later, we will learn that certain important quantum events ignore the principle and can occur instantaneously, even if at opposite ends of the universe. Such events are said to be ‘non-local.’

And that, roughly, is where the majority of the Western world finds itself today—all without realizing they are more than fifty years behind the empirical findings of modern science—something we will now seek to demonstrate.

### **Beyond space, beyond any thing**

First we need to know that there is an enormous size gap between the micro world of the atom and that world we normally think of as being microscopic—something visible under a microscope. With a very good microscope bacteria and other single cell organisms can become visible. Their size is mostly in the range  $1-10 \times 10^4$  cm. An atom is about  $10^8$  cm; an atom's nucleus  $10^{13}$  cm; an electron about  $10^{21}$  cm. ( $10^6 = 1$  millionth,  $10^9 = 1$  billionth)

Perhaps our first intimations of the peculiarities of the quantum world came in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when Britisher,

Thomas Young, obtained unequivocal evidence that light had similar characteristics to what is observed in a pond of water when wave fronts emanating from different disturbances meet one another. Where their wave peaks meet, they reinforce. When trough meets peak, they cancel.

Young's concept of the underlying wave characteristics of light dominated physics for the next one hundred years. But then along came the young Einstein to throw a hammer in the works with his interpretation of the so-called photoelectric effect which implied that light also behaved as if it consisted of particles. It turned out that both Young and Einstein were right—light does behave both as a wave and as a particle.

The light particle is given the name “photon.” It is also determined to be mass-less. So what about other sub-atomic particles, those that do have mass, and even electric charge, such as the electron for example?

Experiments of the same kind as Young's in which a narrow beam of electrons was passed through two parallel slits and then onto a screen gave the same result as Young obtained—an interference pattern of narrow bars interspersed by gaps. So electrons, too, appear to have wave-like characteristics. However, when electrons were used, it was also technically possible to slow their presentation rate until only one electron at a time was presented.

At first the result appeared to be that each electron registered on the screen as a single spot—that expected for particle-like behavior. But as time went by and thousands of spots accumulated on the screen, the result was extraordinary—a series of bars interspersed with gaps slowly built up. And since each electron went through the slits, one at a time, for this pattern of light and dark bars to build up, each electron surely had to go through both slits and somehow interfere with itself!!

Many years of quite ingenious experimentation were required to catalogue what happens.

### **Delayed choice equals ‘necromancy’?**

In view of the surprising results already obtained it was inevitable that, sooner or later, someone would pose the apparently stupid question, “What would happen if the second slit was not opened until its photon or electron had already gone through the alternative open slit?”

When the second slit was opened but only after the photon had already passed through and beyond the first slit, the single dots gradually built up into the bars of the interference pattern. This remained true when any signal to open the second slit would need to exceed the speed of light. Thus any such signal would need to be non-local. (ref. Hellmuth et al, 1986)

Labeled ‘necromancy’ (utilizing information from the

dead) when first proposed, the actual experimental proof for “non-locality” had to await development of appropriate technology before becoming achievable. In the meantime advances both in theory and technology already indicated what the probable result would be.

### **Hidden variables and non-locality**

The critical advance in theory came from Irish physicist, John Bell, whose 1965 theorem, among other important predictions, showed that in order to be compatible with quantum theory, hidden variables must be non-local. This was contrary to the criticism of quantum theory by Einstein who insisted that the theory was incomplete, that there must be undiscovered “hidden variables” that would complete the theory and make its extraordinary results rational. To his dying day, Einstein would not accept the concept of non-local signals. For him, all had to be predictable, determinist, and within the boundaries set by local signaling, the speed of light being the upper limit.

Einstein was long dead before technology advanced sufficiently to permit the concept of non-locality to be put to empirical testing.

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*Einstein was long dead before technology advanced sufficiently to permit the concept of non-locality to be put to empirical testing.*

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Though Bell’s theorem had been scrutinized in the laboratory and had given some positive results, it was only in the year 1982 that incontrovertible evidence, acceptable to peer scrutiny, became available through the work of a French group of physicists led by Alain Aspect.

This French group took advantage of the fact that a radioactive isotope of calcium emitted twin pairs of correlated photons in opposite directions. Being correlated means that they share certain properties such that if the magnitude of such a property for one of the twins is known, that of the other can be also be determined.

The result of their experiments was to show that whatever happened to one of the correlated photons affected its twin even though no signal at light speed or less could pass between them—implying that instantaneous communication somehow occurred and would still do so even if the photons were at opposite ends of the universe.

Thus the criticism by Einstein and co-workers, Podolsky and Rosen, regarding hidden variables and correlated properties, was shown by Aspect’s group to be entirely wrong. It also established the reality beyond doubt of the phenomenon of non-locality, as well as demonstrating that if hidden variables existed they must be non-local—that is

in a transcendent dimension outside of our space-time.

The Aspect experiment has since been confirmed by independent workers, one such group being in Switzerland where the optical fiber system between two villages separated by a high mountain was utilized. The distance between them was about 15 kilometers. But that was some time back. The record is probably very much larger at the present.

Among the many confirmatory experiments demonstrating the reality of non-local effects is a group of optical tests that raced twin photons to a target, one of which had to tunnel through a barrier placed in its path. Curiously, the photon tunneling through the barrier arrived at the target before its twin (which traveled at the speed of light.) For the twin that tunneled through the barrier, the average tunneling velocity was 1.7 times that of light, so a non-local effect. A second curiosity was that the twin doing the tunneling was able to “sense” the far side of the barrier and cross it in the same amount of time, no matter how thick the barrier was made. (see Chiao et.. al. 1993)

Query: how does a mere photon “sense” the thickness of a barrier?

### **Non-locality—its supreme importance**

Quantum theory has many strange quirks that are rightly labeled “out of this world.” Of these, surely the most significant for us human beings is the Bell-Aspect proof of the reality of non-locality—that is a transcendent arena of reality outside of space-time—the existence of which constitutes the ultimate challenge to materialism.

Carried to a logical conclusion, non-locality implies the existence of a transcendent universal consciousness (i.e. how does a mere photon “sense” the thickness of a barrier?)—and that consciousness is both within and beyond this material world. For material realists the alternative interpretations are:

- A) To accept that there are faster-than-light signals in a transcendent realm in which hidden variables exist.
- B) Either give up strong objectivity or else accept a role for observer’s consciousness.
- C) Sweep the Bell-Aspect work under a carpet.

The Bell-Aspect results and their independent confirmation occurred more than 20 years ago. And although they shattered the foundations of materialism, they can provide a meaning for life, even open the pathway to God, and are by far the most significant achievements of quantum science for humanity up to this present day—nevertheless they remain ignored and almost unknown.

### **What most quantum physicists believe.**

Back in 1911, Ernest Rutherford proposed a planetary

### *The Challenge, cont.*

model for atomic electrons which he said, circulated around the atom's nucleus much as planets revolve about the sun.

However this model had a weakness in that it was inherently unstable and should eventually result in electrons crashing into the nucleus or being lost by its atom.

Suppose, said Norwegian physicist, Neils Bohr, that the orbits the electrons describe are discrete. Each such orbit, from the lowest energy level to the highest, has a fixed unalterable pathway—a stationary orbit, non-changing in its energy value. To change that orbit, energy must be absorbed or emitted in discrete quanta. But in doing so, it is by a quantum jump, without that electron ever being anywhere in between.

These electron orbits were also visualized as stationary waves, each of which, according to Max Born, was really a probability wave that tells us where we are likely to find an electron in any attempted observation. However, in order to do so for a single electron, the observer is forced to collapse the wave pattern. Thus single electrons can only ever be observed in particle form.

These concepts were slowly developed by physicists such as Heisenberg, Dirac, and Schrodinger—the wave equation for matter, known as the Schrodinger equation, emerging as the connection for the mathematics that replaced Newton's laws in the new physics.

The revolution in all this was that the change over from classical to quantum physics introduced uncertainty, for we can no longer think in terms of the absolute position and momentum of any object. Now, and presumably forevermore, we can only provide a probability estimate of such parameters, and these must be in accord with the Heisenberg uncertainty principle which states that the more accurately we know the position of the object, the less we can know about its momentum or velocity—and vice versa.

These are “uncertain” times in which the atom and its sub-atomic components belong to the quantum world—a world of components that exist in states of “being neither this nor that” and are dislodged from such states only when observed.

### **Decisions— who or what makes them?**

Beyond all this there is the problem of decision making. Who, what, and where are the decisions made on the actions to be taken. And who or what keeps the records? After an electron wave is collapsed by an observer to become a particle in order to make a measurement, an electron particle will, of its own accord, spread out quite rapidly but only as a probability wave.

Given sufficient time it could spread throughout the whole universe—only to be ordered to collapse instantaneously

to a particle state again because some inquisitive human being wants to make a measurement. Who has the record of its probability distribution so that the collapse can be carried out instantaneously in an orderly manner?

In the Aspect experiment, it was the measurement of the polarization of one of two correlated photons that collapsed its wave function—and instantaneously and automatically brought about the polarization alignment on the same axis of its correlated partner. Yet no signal at light speed or less could pass between them.

It was the conscious decision of the experimentalists that both started the chain and triggered the second collapse. A consciousness that can trigger both collapses, the second collapse somehow getting its instructions from beyond space and time, must surely itself be non-local or transcendent, or at least be contiguous with a consciousness that is so capable.

Quantum physics has demolished materialism as a valid concept. So what alternatives are there that are consistent with presently known ‘facts.’ One possibility is some form of monistic idealism such as the well-known platonic version of people who sit in a dark cave watching the shadows on its back wall. According to Plato, that is the reality, for what we experience in this world is but the reflections of the reality of the perfect world that lies beyond our vision.

Is our science compatible with an appropriate form of idealism (based on ideas), and if so, can we interpret both science and philosophy on some mutually compatible formulation?

At least superficially, there is a resemblance between the answers to key questions given by quantum physics and those given by Zen masters.

“What is Buddha?” asked a student monk. “The mind is Buddha,” answered the master. “Then what is mind?” asked another student. “The mind is not Buddha,” responded the master.

Imagine a student asking the ghost of physicist Neils Bohr if an electron is a particle. “It is,” is his likely reply. Another student asks him “Is an electron a wave?” Again Bohr responds, “It is.” “Where can we find such a wave?” asks another. “Beyond time and space,” says Bohr. “And where is that?” is the next question—to which Bohr enigmatically answers, “Where the wave is.”

When we fire electrons, one at a time through parallel slits, at first single hits register on our screen—which is consistent with the electron as a particle. But if we fire thousands of single electrons, one at a time, through the same slits, we get an interference pattern—which is consistent with the electron as a wave. This wave aspect persists, even for a single electron—a wavicle? Where is this

wave aspect before the thousands of other single electrons were fired, before the interference pattern commenced to register? It never manifests in ordinary space, so where was it hiding and how does it manifest as diffraction only after the event?

It we wish to observe the single electron of a hydrogen atom, we can only do so by collapsing its wave form and observing it as a particle. As soon as we cease observing it commences to spread out probabilistically in accordance with the Schrodinger equation. Where does it go? Wherever that may be, the moment we again choose to observe it, it collapses instantly.

According to physicists, the collapse of such a wave is just too rapid to be within the limits set by the speed of light—so it cannot be within our space-time. So where was it? Heisenberg named its location “potentia,” a word which he borrowed from Aristotle. To be in “potentia” is to be in a transcendent domain that appears to be conceptually identical with “non-locality” as defined by the Bell-Aspect work.

Idealists also consider that to be non-local is to be in the domain of “consciousness,” which for them, is also the “ground of all being”—a domain which is “original, self-contained, and constitutive of all things, manifesting itself as the subject that chooses, experiences what it chooses, and which collapses the wave function in the presence of brain-minded awareness.”

Quantum theory then, when interpreted according to idealist metaphysics is paving the way for an idealist science in which consciousness is the “all of being”—and matter and materialism pale into secondary importance.

However, a primary contribution of quantum physics to this scenario is that it has positively demonstrated a new dimension, non-locality, showing that there is more to this world than just matter, Einsteinian space-time, and a predetermined, mechanistic universe.

### Reconciling Realism and Idealism

In what appeared to have been an absurd idea, philosophers Gottfried Leibniz and Bertrand Russell both suggested that the views of realists and idealists can be reconciled if each of us has **two heads**. Empirical objects, the ordinary objects of our daily lives, would lie outside our “Small Head” to be used or experimented with. But simultaneously these same objects would be theoretical ideas inside our “Big Head”—which also embraces our “Small Head”—and thus itself becomes an object of empirical scrutiny.

In reality, this “Big Head” does not have to be ours alone, but can be composed of all such Heads. And since this one super Head would hold all of reality within it, we could all be sharing the one “Big Head.”

This concept provides us with two ways of sharing reality. One aspect, all of our small Heads, is local—it is within the confines of Einsteinian space-time with accessibility limited by the speed of light. But Big Head is non-local, instantaneously accessible, and encompasses the experiences of every empirical object, including our Small Heads, our empirical brains.

Given the existence of both local and non-local aspects of mind, the latter being an organizing principle connecting with brain-mind and local and non-local consciousness, both idealism and realism can be valid—for if brain-mind is an object in a non-local consciousness that encompasses all reality, then what materialists nominate as objective empirical reality is also within this same consciousness.

But why is there so much consensus about an apparently material, determinist objective world that looks to be so permanent? If it is true that the moon is there only when we look at it—as most quantum physicists will assert—why does that moon appear to be so real, so permanent?

Firstly, even the smallest of classical objects, relative to quantum objects, have enormous masses—which means their quantum probability waves spread only very slowly. Such slow spreading makes the trajectory of their approximate center of mass highly predictable. Thus, whenever we look at the moon, we find it where we expect it. Furthermore the complexity of macro bodies translates into a very long regeneration time for their wave function—which induces us to look at them in causal terms.

In the non-local universal consciousness all phenomena, even so-called classical empirical objects, are simply objects in consciousness.

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**The world, the whole universe, is made of consciousness and is existent only in consciousness.** *That is a lesson of quantum physics and its differentiation of locality and non-locality.*

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**The world, the whole universe, is made of consciousness and is existent only in consciousness.** That is a lesson of quantum physics and its differentiation of locality and non-locality.

With idealist science we have arrived at a science that excludes neither the subjective nor the objective, neither spirit nor matter—and thus is able to resolve the deep schism of our thought.

### What says the Urantia Revelation?

(Please note that the words “consciousness” and “mind” are not precisely defined either in philosophy or in the Urantia revelation and tend to be interchangeable.)

*The Challenge, cont.*

*“In the evaluation and recognition of mind it should be remembered that **the universe** is neither mechanical nor magical; it is a creation of mind.*” (p. 481)

*Mechanisms do not absolutely dominate the total creation; **the universe of universes in toto is mind planned, mind made, and mind administered.** But the divine mechanism of the universe of universes is altogether too perfect for the scientific methods of the finite mind of man to discern even a trace of the dominance of the infinite mind. For this creating, controlling, and upholding mind is neither material mind nor creature mind, it is spirit-mind functioning on and from creator levels of divine reality.”* (p. 481)

*“Cosmic mind is the diversified mind of time and space. Cosmic mind comprises all finite mind levels and coordinates experientially with the evolutionary deity levels of Supreme Mind and transcendentally with the existential levels of absolute mind. Mind always connotes the presence and activity of loving ministry plus varied energy systems, and this is true of all kinds of mind. Paradise mind is beyond human understanding; it is existential, non-spatial, and non-temporal.”* (p. 480/481)

*“The Universal Father is the only personality in all the universe who does actually know the number of the stars and planets of space. All the worlds of every universe are constantly within the **consciousness** of God.”* (p. 49)

*“God is possessed of unlimited power to know all things, his **consciousness** is universal. His personal circuit encompasses all personalities, and his knowledge of even the lowly creatures is supplemented indirectly through the descending series of divine Sons and directly through the indwelling Spirit of the Father.”* (p. 49)

*“The Universal Father realizes in the fullness of the divine **consciousness** all the individual experience of the progressive struggles of the expanding minds and the ascending spirits of every entity, being, and personality of the whole evolutionary creation of time and space. And all this is literally true, for **‘in Him we all live and move and have our being.’**”* (p. 29)

*(to be continued...)*

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## JESUS AND THE CROSS

Richard Bain

One of the most talked about and written about motion pictures of 2004 has been “The Passion,” written and directed by Mel Gibson. The press reports that church attendance has increased as this film has been viewed throughout the U.S. But the film has not been universally accepted. While many conservative Christian leaders have applauded the film, some liberal critics have panned it as another Gibson blood-bath movie and possibly an anti-Semitic one as well. Considering the way the authors of the Urantia Papers view the Christian doctrines regarding Jesus’ death on the cross, I think it is more the theological premises of the movie than the brutality that may be a major problem for folks in the Urantia community.

Orthodox Christianity views the death of Jesus on the cross as a necessary sacrifice or atonement to satisfy God’s justice so God can forgive our sins. Liberal Christians seem to either ignore the Atonement Doctrine or favor a much milder interpretation. Anyone familiar with the Urantia Papers contained in The Urantia Book knows that the authors of the Papers find the Atonement Doctrine quite offensive. For example, a Divine Counselor tells us, “The barbarous idea of appeasing an angry God, of propitiating an offended Lord, of winning the favor of Deity through sacrifices and penance and even by the shedding of blood, represents a religion wholly puerile and primitive, a philosophy unworthy of an enlightened age of science and truth. Such beliefs are utterly repulsive to the celestial beings and the divine rulers who serve and reign in the universes. It is an affront to God to believe, hold, or teach that innocent blood must be shed in order to win his favor or to divert the fictitious divine wrath.” (4:5.5) What then was the origin of this “barbarous idea?”

### Origin of the Atonement Doctrine

The word “barbarous” gives us a clue to the origins of the atonement idea. Animal and human sacrifice was a feature of most primitive religions. The ancients believed that a god or gods were subject to the same emotions and passions as mortals are. Therefore, if someone did something to offend the gods, a price had to be paid, a sacrifice had to be made, and that sacrifice was at first a person, and then later on an animal. Regarding the primitive people, a Midwayer informs us, “These early Neanderthals could hardly be called sun worshippers. They rather lived in fear of the dark; they had a mortal dread of nightfall. As long as the moon shone a little, they



managed to get along, but in the dark of the moon they grew panicky and began the sacrifice of their best specimens of manhood and womanhood in an effort to induce the moon again to shine. The sun, they early learned, would regularly return, but the moon they conjectured only returned because they sacrificed their fellow tribesmen. As the race advanced, the object and purpose of sacrifice progressively changed, but the offering of human sacrifice as a part of religious ceremonial long persisted.” (64:4.1) A Life Carrier says of the origin of animal sacrifice: “Very early the Andonic peoples formed the habit of refraining from eating the flesh of the animal of tribal veneration. Presently, in order more suitably to impress the minds of their youths, they evolved a ceremony of reverence that was carried out about the body of one of these venerated animals; and still later on, this primitive performance developed into the more elaborate sacrificial ceremonies of their descendants. And this is the origin of sacrifices as a part of worship.” (63:6.4) The Urantia Papers trace the sacrifice idea from cannibalism to human sacrifice to animal sacrifice. The reasons for these customs were many, and usually a result of superstition, ignorance and fear. These rites and rituals were even a part of early Judaism.

The early Hebrews did practice human sacrifice. According to a Divine Counselor, “The Hebrews believed that ‘without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin.’ They had not found deliverance from the old and pagan idea that the Gods could not be appeased except by the sight of blood, though Moses did make a distinct advance when he forbade human sacrifices and substituted therefor, in the primitive minds of his childlike Bedouin followers, the ceremonial sacrifice of animals.” (4:5.4) This animal sacrifice lingered as a Jewish religious ritual until the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews. But Jews do still observe Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. And, thanks in large part to Paul of Tarsus, the Jewish atonement idea found its way into Christian doctrine.

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*The Midwayer authors tell us that one of two great mistakes was: “The effort to connect the gospel teaching directly onto the Jewish theology, as illustrated by the Christian doctrines of the atonement—the teaching that Jesus was the sacrificed Son who would satisfy the Father’s stern justice and appease the divine wrath...”*

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The Midwayer authors tell us that one of two great mistakes was: “The effort to connect the gospel teaching directly onto the Jewish theology, as illustrated by the Christian doctrines of the atonement—the teaching that Jesus was the

sacrificed Son who would satisfy the Father’s stern justice and appease the divine wrath. These teachings originated in a praiseworthy effort to make the gospel of the kingdom more acceptable to disbelieving Jews. Though these efforts failed as far as winning the Jews was concerned, they did not fail to confuse and alienate many honest souls in all subsequent generations.” (149:2.4) But the authors are not totally negative about Paul’s compromises. “Paul started out to build a new Christian cult on ‘the blood of the everlasting covenant.’ And while he may have unnecessarily encumbered Christianity with teachings about blood and sacrifice, he did once and for all make an end of the doctrines of redemption through human or animal sacrifices. His theological compromises indicate that even revelation must submit to the graduated control of evolution. According to Paul, Christ became the last and all-sufficient human sacrifice; the divine Judge is now fully and forever satisfied.” (89:9.2) But why has this centuries old doctrine persisted in Christianity? Why does the Atonement Doctrine have such staying power?

### **The Power of the Atonement Doctrine**

The authors of the Urantia Papers tell us, “...the power of any idea lies, not in its certainty or truth, but rather in the vividness of its human appeal.” (92:3.5) There are good psychological reasons for the appeal of the Atonement Doctrine, if we accept these premises:

- 1) We must accept that we all inherited Adam’s sin, or at least his sinful nature.
- 2) We must accept that we are unable of our own accord to achieve salvation.
- 3) We must accept that God’s justice trumps his love, that he cannot forgive us until a price is paid to atone for our sinfulness.
- 4) We must accept that our sinfulness is such a heinous crime that the only way God’s justice can be satisfied is for a being equal to him to become a human sacrifice.
- 5) We must accept that Jesus is a being equal to God (or even God himself as the second person of the Trinity) so that his death is significant enough to atone for our sins and satisfy God’s justice.

With a pessimistic view of human nature, and especially in a religious community where unconditional acceptance is expected, it isn’t difficult to buy into all this. Many people seem naturally inclined to believe the idea that all human beings are depraved, as Paul put it.

Looking at the terrible things people sometimes do to one another, it isn’t hard to believe that we are inherently flawed and sinful beings. And since for many people justice is really retribution (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,) it is easy for these people to believe that justice requires

### *Jesus and the Cross, cont.*

the death of a God being to satisfy God's justice. If we buy into all this, it brings a tremendous sense of relief. Our guilt from past sins is gone. Our fear of eternal damnation is gone. Though we are hopeless sinners, Jesus' death on the cross has paid the bill, so we just believe, sit back, and breathe a sigh of relief. No critical thinking is required; what could be easier? But the authors of the Urantia Papers strongly dispute the philosophical premises of this doctrine of atonement.

A Divine Counselor has this to say, "Righteousness implies that God is the source of the moral law of the universe. Truth exhibits God as a revealer, as a teacher. But love gives and craves affection, seeks understanding fellowship such as exists between parent and child. Righteousness may be the divine thought, but love is a father's attitude. The erroneous supposition that the righteousness of God was irreconcilable with the selfless love of the heavenly Father, presupposed absence of unity in the nature of Deity and led directly to the elaboration of the atonement doctrine, which is a philosophic assault upon both the unity and the free-willness of God." (2:6.3) "The affectionate heavenly Father, whose spirit indwells his children on earth, is not a divided personality—one of justice and one of mercy—neither does it require a mediator to secure the Father's favor or forgiveness. Divine righteousness is not dominated by strict retributive justice; God as a father transcends God as a judge." (2:6.4) But this Divine Counselor makes it clear that rejection of God's love and mercy does have consequences: "God is never wrathful, vengeful, or angry. It is true that wisdom does often restrain his love, while justice conditions his rejected mercy." (2:6.5)

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But if God is a God in whom love is dominant and whose justice is tempered with mercy, how is it that Jesus died a painful and ignoble death on a cross? Was God involved in this? How?

### **Why Did Jesus Die on The Cross?**

In the Jesus papers, the Midwayers tell us: "The Father in heaven desired the bestowal Son to finish his earth career naturally, just as all mortals must finish up their lives on earth and in the flesh. Ordinary men and women cannot

expect to have their last hours on earth and the supervening episode of death made easy by a special dispensation. Accordingly, Jesus elected to lay down his life in the flesh in the manner which was in keeping with the outworking of natural events..." (183:1.2) But there were other reasons and purposes for Jesus to allow events to transpire as they did.

The Urantia Papers suggest or imply a number of other reasons for Jesus' death on the cross besides that already mentioned. Among these additional reasons are the following:

- 1) Jesus was willing to die for his beliefs, for the sake of the gospel he taught.
- 2) Jesus knew that some of his Apostles and Disciples would be martyred. Could he run away from the political consequences of his teachings and actions and expect his followers to die for his gospel?
- 3) Jesus knew it was time for his apostles to learn to function on their own; that it would be better for them if he weren't around to depend upon.
- 4) The Spirit of Truth could not come into the world until Jesus returned to his position as a Creator Son.
- 5) Jesus was willing to die not just for his friends, but also as an appeal to his enemies. 188: 5.6

### **Will the Atonement Doctrine Ever Disappear?**

Considering that the Atonement Doctrine has persisted all these centuries, is there any hope that this firmly entrenched doctrine will fade away? The authors of the Urantia Papers indicate that atonement theories are a normal feature in the primitive religions of a world (39:5.5), and that the Atonement Doctrine will one day evolve out of Christianity, but not easily. "Evolutionary religion makes no provision for change or revision; unlike science, it does not provide for its own progressive correction. Evolved religion commands respect because its followers believe it is The Truth; 'the faith once delivered to the saints' must, in theory, be both final and infallible. The cult resists development because real progress is certain to modify or destroy the cult itself; therefore must revision always be forced upon it." (92:3.1) And our unseen friends will also help this evolution along: "In the more advanced epochs of planetary evolution these seraphim are instrumental in supplanting the atonement idea by the concept of divine attunement as a philosophy of mortal survival." (39:5.5)

It seems to me that the rise, evolution, and eventual disappearance of the atonement concept is driven by people's evolving God concepts. When gods were seen as no more than superhumans with all the flaws we mortals have, the idea of God requiring revenge or human sacrifice to atone for our sins seemed logical. But as the God concept has

evolved, our view of God is evolving from that of a tough tribal chieftain to that of a God of love. Yes, there is justice, but such justice is always tempered with mercy and understanding of our human frailties and imperfections. This is the picture of God that I find in the Urantia Papers. Will the majority of Christians ever abandon the Atonement Doctrine and embrace such a God concept?

### **Christians and The Atonement Doctrine**

While the Atonement Doctrine is entrenched in Christian theology, it would be a mistake to assume that all Christians interpret it the same, or assign it the same weight. Many liberal Christians and students of *The Urantia Book* who are also Christians probably don't endorse it. Nevertheless, it is theological baggage that even the most liberal Christian churches have to acknowledge in some way. One way it's being dealt with is to de-fang it. I once heard a United Church of Christ minister say that Jesus' death on the cross "built a bridge between God and humanity." Other liberal Christian churches seem to just ignore it. Many liberal Christians have realized how demeaning this doctrine can be to God as well as harmful to humankind. But once you've pulled this dogma's teeth, all it can do is gum you.

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*How ironic that Jesus, who taught love and abhorred animal sacrifice, was himself pictured by Paul and others as an innocent lamb sacrificed to a God whose justice supposedly demands innocent blood.*

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How ironic that Jesus, who taught love and abhorred animal sacrifice, was himself pictured by Paul and others as an innocent lamb sacrificed to a God whose justice supposedly demands innocent blood. But let us not look down our noses at our Christian brothers and sisters. They are burdened with centuries of tradition and dogma which does not pass away so easily: "Only two influences can modify and uplift the dogmas of natural religion: the pressure of the slowly advancing mores and the periodic illumination of epochal revelation.... The cult advances slowly in generation epochs and age long cycles. But it does move forward. Evolutionary belief in ghosts laid the foundation for a philosophy of revealed religion which will eventually destroy the superstition of its origin." (92:3.2)

Christianity today suffers from theological inertia. The old theology is shopworn and needs to be discarded, but Christian theologians don't see anything new to fill the vacuum that would be left if the old theology were discarded. How unfortunate that they have not taken *The*

*Urantia Book* to heart. But we must not be too critical of them. Inertia is not always a bad thing. Though inertia slows the acceptance of good new ideas, it also deters the acceptance of bad new ideas. The authors of the Urantia Papers tell us that progress that is too rapid can be suicidal. (39:4.15) After all, without the inertia of a flywheel to smooth out the explosions in the cylinders of a car engine, it might shake itself apart. There is an optimum pace to progress that will neither shake us apart, nor leave us sitting in the driveway with a dead engine.

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The sentiments expressed in "The Passion," and the current growth of theologically conservative churches is perhaps only a temporary step backwards before we take two steps forward. I think it would be a serious mistake to publicly attack the Atonement Doctrine or to publicly emphasize the parts of the Urantia Papers that are critical of this doctrine, though I think we should certainly express our disagreement with the doctrine if we are asked for our opinion. Can we promote attunement instead of attacking atonement? I think a good way to deal with this distressing doctrine is to use the "Jesus method," as illustrated by Jesus' dealings with the young Philistine, Gadhah. When Gadhah asked Jesus about Jonah and the whale, Jesus, knowing how important this story was to the young man's faith, did not refute the story. Rather, Jesus treated the details of the story as metaphors explaining how we should deal with life's problems. (130:1.2) As Jesus once advised, we should "Be as wise as serpents, but as harmless as doves." (140:8.8)

Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from *The Urantia Book*. The references listed are in the following format: ([paper number]:[section number].[paragraph number]).

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*Richard Bain is an electrical engineer, a long time student of The Urantia Book, and a consulting editor to The Spiritual Fellowship Journal.*

# Actualizing A New Organizational Paradigm

Richard S. Omura

I have expressed my views that a spiritual organization based on the teachings of *The Urantia Book* is necessary to further the truths of the book in the lives of men and women of the planet as detailed in my thesis, "Disseminating the Teachings in *The Urantia Book*." The points in contention of such an organization are the pitfalls of institutionalized religion of which *The Urantia Book* speaks:

(The following is reformatted in numerical order for this purpose.) P.1092 - §3 - §4

But as religion becomes institutionalized, its power for good is curtailed, while the possibilities for evil are greatly multiplied. The dangers of formalized religion are:

- (1) fixation of beliefs and crystallization of sentiments,
- (2) accumulation of vested interests with increase of secularization,
- (3) tendency to standardize and fossilize truth,
- (4) diversion of religion from the service of God to the service of the church,
- (5) inclination of leaders to become administrators instead of ministers,
- (6) tendency to form sects and competitive divisions,
- (7) establishment of oppressive ecclesiastical authority,
- (8) creation of the aristocratic "chosen-people" attitude,
- (9) fostering of false and exaggerated ideas of sacredness,
- (10) the routinizing of religion and the petrification of worship,
- (11) tendency to venerate the past while ignoring present demands,
- (12) failure to make up-to-date interpretations of religion,
- (13) entanglement with functions of secular institutions,
- (14) it creates the evil discrimination of religious castes,
- (15) it becomes an intolerant judge of orthodoxy,
- (16) it fails to hold the interest of adventurous youth and gradually loses the saving message of the gospel of eternal salvation,

(17) Formal religion restrains men in their personal spiritual activities instead of releasing them for heightened service as kingdom builders.

Although the dangers are many, I feel that we must sooner or later venture onto this path. Presently, The Urantia Foundation furthers the material needs of the book, publishing and distributing. The Fellowship brings readers together in a social context and creates an environment where the ideas in the book are intellectually and philosophically discussed. But, alas, there is no organization to promote and develop the spiritual concepts that is so much an integral part of the book.

So, in order to meet what I believe is this need for a spiritual organization that will not succumb to the dangers of institutionalized religion, I propose the following:

A spiritual facilitation organization that transcends the conceptual framework of traditional religious organizations is one that is open to new truths, and is in service to God and not to itself; where truth is dynamic and open to personal interpretation; where there are only ministers and no administrators; where uplifting competition and diversity is encouraged and not repressed; where authority is given each individual and not to an ecclesiastical group; where every human being on the planet is given equal worth so as not to foster a "chosen-people" attitude; where levity and humor is encouraged as to avoid exaggerated ideas of sacredness; where new and cutting edge ideas of religion are explored in order to escape the routinizing of religion and petrification of worship; where we are focused in the "now" instead of venerating the past; where new and better interpretations of religion are nourished and advanced; where we shun all entanglements with secular institutions; where there is equal integration of status; where progressive ideas and orthodox standards are given equal value; where activities encourage and hold the interest of our youths so that the message of eternal salvation is kept from generation to generation.

How can we create such an organization? How would it be structured?

The following are safeguards against the 17 dangers of formalized religion listed above:

1. We can be open to new truths by not revering any one text as sacred. Our prime source is our indwelling divine spirit which is made evident by our own experiences and that of others as described in many religious philosophies.
2. We can always be in service to God by being self-forgetful, working always for others, not for the organization.
3. By leaving truth open to personal interpretations, we can agree on truth but not mandate its belief.
4. By having ministers and no administrators, we can have

a structure where each member self-administers himself. Projects are accomplished by consensual support among members. No one is required to support anybody or anything. Members are expected to comport themselves in “fatherly love” with each other. Projects are initiated through discussion and accomplished through mutual support.

5. Sectarianism and competition is often a result of a stifling and repressive atmosphere. Diversity is encouraged within the organization so that members do not have to form splinter groups to actuate their ideas.

6. Power would rest on each individual and his/her ability to garner support for a particular project.

7. Every individual and group on the planet is attributed with inherent worth.

8. Levity alleviates the overbearing atmosphere of sacredness. We will take our work seriously but not ourselves seriously.

9. The impetus would be to hold each idea, concept or activity as valuable only as long as it has meaning. We can avoid crystallization by throwing out concepts and activities that have lost their savor.

10. Old ways of doing things will not be treasured merely because of tradition. By being constantly in the “now,” we will remain focused and present.

11. There will always be an impetus for improvement without fear of failure. “The act is ours, the consequences God’s.”

12. Personal religion will be kept up to date by valuing the personal religious experiences of each individual.

13. We will avoid entanglements with secular institutions by keeping clear of unnecessary material attachments and interests. Production of material goods such as through publishing or fund raising will not be encouraged.

14. Since each member would be an authority of his own, there would be no ecclesiastical authority.

15. Although new ideas and interpretations would be explored with vigor, orthodox standards would still be kept as long as they have meaning and value.

16. The youths of now are our future generation. All necessary means to keep their interest would be initiated. This would entail encouraging numerous activities and programs tailored for our young as well as the whole family.

17. We will emphasize the value of informal religion—that is, personal relationship with God, in order to free them to heighten their spiritual activities as kingdom builders.

I envision this spiritual facilitation organization as a nationwide brotherhood of *Urantia Book* readers who support the efforts of other *Urantia Book* readers who wish to promote the spiritual concepts of the book through seminars,

worship services, conferences, retreats, outreach, etc.

In a sense, this organization will be the spiritual spokesperson for the Urantia movement as the Urantia Foundation is a spokesperson for the publishing arm and the Urantia Book Fellowship the spokesperson for the socializing arm. As for its structure, rather than having a constitution and by-laws such as are a part of most human organizations, I envision a group of people who are bonded as a family by their spiritual maturity—that is, the attitudes of humility, righteousness, meekness, and purity of heart, where leadership is earned by insight, love, sincerity and service. It would be an organization that would indeed transcend the structure of how other organizations are run.

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This organization will not be a new religion or a church, but will facilitate the development of personal religion and will make available guidance to any individual or group desiring to start a church based on teachings of *The Urantia Book*. Its purpose will not be to compete with, censure or to repeat the activities of other *Urantia Book* organizations. The ultimate purpose of this organization will be to promote, develop and apply the spiritual teachings of the Fifth Epochal Revelation through diverse personal interpretations in order to establish on this planet a foothold of the supernal ideas, concepts and truths which is so necessary for the optimum well being of this world.

For this purpose, the recent technological advances in communication such as e-mail and the internet provides a wonderful tool for organizing such a group. But because it is based on a new paradigm, it may be slow getting going. The actual work will only happen if individuals with strong organizational skills come to the fore to propose new projects and garner ample support from members. It will be an experiment to see if such a new organization would be viable in this social and cultural context.

As is evident, this is just an idea at this time and definitely needs more work from many other minds besides myself. Suggestions, ideas and plans are not only welcome but sorely needed.

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# POISON, PARABLES, AND PARADISE

Stephen Zendt

We all love stories, in one form or another. Our Western culture has served up many entertaining forms of storytelling. European peoples, during the Middle Ages, listened to the Troubadours, wandering entertainers who brought the news and told tales with musical accompaniment. These minstrels were often the only means of communication in a time of rampant superstition and warfare, where each fiefdom was a world unto itself, and travel was dangerous and limited. Almost no one knew how to read or write except scribes and those in the monasteries. The storyteller was an important feature of medieval life.

Later on, after Gutenberg had perfected moveable type and the printing press, storytelling began to appear in print, first as the Bible, and then in the form of novels and poetry. In the past century, we have witnessed the explosion of the various aspects of “The Media.” From Los Angeles came the silent movies, then the “talkies,” which gave way to Technicolor extravaganzas like “The Ten Commandments,” “Gone With The Wind,” and “The Wizard of Oz.”

Radio presented not just news, but soap operas and dramatic programs, such as the notorious “War of the Worlds,” which terrorized listeners who actually believed they were hearing an alien invasion of our planet. As technological progress brought more and more innovations to the public, something called television gradually crept into our lives. This new medium told us stories like never before. It was movies and radio and live entertainment all rolled into one box. We had an appetite for whatever the glowing screen might be showing. When I was a boy, our family would actually pick up the dining room table and carry it into the living room so that we could have dinner and watch a favorite television show. My mother was unwilling to give in to “TV Trays.”

This addiction to television became even more acute with the introduction of color and the development of audacious new types of programming. The proliferation of news coverage following the assassination of John Kennedy began to convince much of the viewing public that television was important as well as entertaining. So, for decades we have been glued to the tube, which has rewarded our loyalty with a proliferation of programming and channels that offers everything, all day, every day, as long as you can pay the price and you have the remote control.

What does all this mean, in terms of our appetite for hearing, seeing, and feeling the effect of a well-told tale? How devoted are we to favorite authors, filmmakers, and television programs?

How many of us became entranced with The Fifth Epochal Revelation because of the many marvelous stories? Van and Amadon, Adam and Eve, Adamson and Ratta, Machiventa and Abraham, the evolution of our human understanding of God, Jesus in Rome, the planetary rebellion—all are legendary containers of our cultural and religious past. The storytelling skills of our unseen friends have given us our unknown history, and in so doing, they have pointed us toward our unrevealed planetary destiny. Someday, we will join the universe circuits again, and grow toward Light and Life.

What does it mean to form a tale, to see a story through from the beginning, on to the middle, up to the end? It means that the storyteller creates and controls the conscious contents of the tale. Those of us who listen or read or behold events absorb the details and feel the emotions. We are stirred or influenced by the unfolding of events, the evocation of character, the run of the plot, and the unique junctures of history. In short, we become absorbed in the story? As a boy, I would use a flashlight so that I could continue to read under the covers, long after my bedtime. Sometimes I lasted longer than the batteries. Next morning, groggy from lack of sleep, the story was still running in my mind. I could not wait to resume my reading. I was captivated by what the storyteller had assembled for me.

I am convinced that the maker of stories is one who practices a very high art, and our Master, Joshua Ben Joseph, learned his art very well indeed. Here, then, are some principles of the art of story telling which I have perceived:

1. The tale itself declares the context of thinking during the time it is being told; the storyteller determines the content of the tale and, to some extent, the context of the mind of the listener or reader.
2. Listening to words spoken, or reading them on a page, requires a certain trust in the ability of the storyteller.
3. Boredom is not permitted; the story must hold its audience awake and aware; the art is in the portrayal of reality or fantasy which is vital and vivid.

Now, let us consider the contemporary predicament of our crumbling Western Civilization.

## Poison

We live in a world of accelerating cultural change. Many of the dependable assumptions of the past no longer provide us any helpful clues to determine what we are experiencing as a culture. Our various media tempt us with advertising which uses none too subtle messages—sexual and materialistic accomplishments and unearned luxury—to entice us to spend and become debtors for possessions which lead us into further temptation. Envy, greed, and lust are now

successful sales tools.

Worse yet, we find that the materialistic rewards of our capitalistic system are causing severe environmental damage to our planet. We are poisoning our air, water, and earth. It would seem that we cannot avoid poisoning our thinking, as well. We read, hear, see, and most awful, we sometimes experience firsthand the dysfunctional, angry behavior of individuals whose level of maturity is childish at best. We are exposed to stunning displays in films, television, news, and novels: Everything from road rage to outrage, from jealousy to hostility, from indifference to aggressive bullying.

We know from our reading of *The Urantia Book* that “impatience is a spirit poison.” (p. 557) We also know that “unreasoned fear is a master intellectual fraud . . .,” (p. 556) and that “anger is like a stone hurled into a hornet’s nest.” (p. 557) Yet we find ourselves prey to these very conflicting emotional torments almost daily in urban life. Even more concentrated is the tension of interpersonal relationships, both in the workplace, and most frequently at home.

Our ideals call us to be charitable, ethical, kind, and good. We are aware that what we say and how we say it may soothe and comfort, and even give joy to a troubled soul. However, the moment-to-moment encounters of the real world so often leave us regretful for the way in which we have treated other people, the way we have ignored our spiritual impulses and ideals. We live in a polluted civilization. For me, the most pernicious form of interpersonal pollution is the pervasive context of lying, or of fraud. Honest individuals, sincere folks, genuine friends are such treasures that we simply must do all we can to strengthen and preserve our relationships. “Love is the desire to do good to others.” (p. 648)

The concentration of spirit poisons which our secular materialistic culture has permitted to grow and flourish should alarm us all, and move us to clean the air, to purify the water, and to refresh our spiritual lives. If we have been hiding our light beneath our “comfy bushel basket,” it is high time to realize that our light is needed, and it cannot be seen while in hiding.

The poison of contemporary cultural atheism and nihilism, the materialistic indifference of consumerism, and the apathy of political naiveté have brought us to the brink of environmental disaster and economic relativism. We know we can do better. The gospel of the Kingdom, as our revelation teaches, not only provides an effective antidote for the poisons of our disintegrating culture, it also grants us a measure of mercy and grace which heals the stings and slights of our crazy world. But this gospel cannot be contained within us. It is only an effective solvent and balm as we share it, as we carry it over to others. We

perform our sacred duty to the Supreme as we establish a community with our loved ones, as we promote honest communication among ourselves, and as we realize the necessity of stewardship for our planet. The love of God in the community of believers becomes a real sustenance for each of us, and we will do well to grow it and preserve it wherever we can.

### Parables

Where can you find short, succinct tales of spiritual uplift and deeply personal meaning which can compare with the parables of the Master? His great genius for utilizing common experience to illustrate powerful, transforming truth is unparalleled in human literature. His method of teaching was spoken storytelling. (No one, not even the Alpheus twins, was passing out copies of his speeches.) The parables permitted him to teach believers, while keeping unbelievers in the dark. And, his way of telling these lovely little gems was obviously unforgettable. Many of us knew of the parables before we knew of *The Urantia Book*. The gospel narratives of the New Testament, with all their tampering and garbling, still convey one simple reality. The mustard seed, the pearl of great price, the slothful steward, the prodigal son, all speak to the soul, saying: The kingdom is within you, and it grows as you grow in grace and truth. You manifest the Kingdom by giving your gifts to the world around you. Love and community grow, in the great family of believers, toward the brotherhood of all humanity. We are taking the first steps toward this awesome planetary journey.

Jesus spoke to multitudes of people of many levels of intellect and culture. Not all of them understood all that he had to teach. I would wager, on the other hand, that those who were sincere in seeking to enter the Kingdom heard in the parables something they could remember. They heard something they could relate to their own lives, as they lived under the rule of Rome, in the land of the Hebrews. Later, Greeks found the parables memorable as well. These believers sought to be baptized, and they began to follow Jesus and the apostles wherever they went.

The miraculous transforming power of the parables, their power to transmute the poison of personal persecution into the blessings of friendship with God rests, I believe, in the open interpretation of meaning for each individual. The parable speaks to you in your need, and it enfolds your consciousness in real healing truth. The effect may not be instantaneous. This is not a miraculous healing in which twisted limbs are suddenly made whole. It is, for me, a yeasting of awareness, a seasoning of reasoning, which bears spirit fruit in due time.

I love this comment of Dr. Ervin Seale concerning Jesus’ parables: “The world’s greatest teacher of things spiritual

*Poison, Parables... cont.*

used the highest art of the teacher, the parable. For the parable does not fill the mind with descriptive facts, but opens the seeing eye and the hearing ear until the mind is aware of the treasures it already possesses.”<sup>1</sup>

It is an essential element of human free will that no one can dictate to you how you will receive or interpret a parable. You have the freedom to accept or to reject. You make meaning in your inner life of that which you remember. If you have a need met by the parable, you will recall what you heard, and feast on it in your life within. Like the lost coin which is found, or the talents returned double their value, a discovery is made of new life and new meanings. The Kingdom begins as a seed but sprouts and grows mighty in the good soil of the believer’s mind.

**Paradise**

One of the features of the Morontia life is the recognition, summation, and distillation of the life in the flesh. It seems that all of everything we have done with worthwhile results, whether for others or for our own growth, is to become a possession of our growth potential. What we carry on into the Paradise embrace is a unique and irreplaceable reality in the universe. Our Agondonter personality is the one gift we have to give. There is no other method, no other source for obtaining the experience and the perspective that only we can provide. I believe we are being transformed, first in mind, but later through the Spirit, into evolutionary masterpieces of significance. We will fit into a place that needs our insight and our experience to become useful to the cosmos. We will join with trillions of other personalities, outpouring praise and thanksgiving, which will at last satisfy our longing for fulfillment. We will have discovered our place in the heart of God.

Our preview of this satisfaction and achievement can be found in the parable of the prodigal son. It is healing and heartening to realize that God looks upon our road of life, and God sees us returning, even before we know God’s joy and welcome home. The parable seasons our memory of events in our own biography. A true interpretation of life requires insight into origins ( the legacy of our mother and father), perception of history ( the sequence of events that has borne us along until now, our spiritual autobiography), and the faith leap toward our Paradise destiny.

We grant personality to our Mystery Monitor, and our Father Fragment takes us home for good.

Leavening and cleansing and healing are actions these parables of Jesus will provide, as they live in our minds, feeding our hungry hearts. They are wonderworkers of the soul, companions of the Spirit in the long work of transformation. With the receptive openness of a little child, I recommend, once again, a reading of the parables. If you hunger for righteousness, they are riches and food aplenty.

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<sup>1</sup> Seal, Ervin. *Learn to Live*, “The Meaning of the Parables,” p. 23. William Morrow, N.Y., 1955

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*Stephen Zendt lives in California and works in financial services. A long time reader of The Urantia Book, he was involved in a project to record TUB on tape, served on the Fellowship General Council for nine years, and was host for a weekly study group in San Francisco for twenty years.*



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U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Permit # 650