

Spiritual Fellowship Journal

Volume 10, Number 1

Spring, 2000

**Go into All the World
To Every Race, Tribe, and Nation**
Jay Newbern

Do This in Remembrance of Me
John Marks

God's Gender
Richard I. Bain

The Commission to Minister
Meredith J. Sprunger

History's Unpredictability

A New Millennium Church

A Celebration of Low Technology

In His Presence

A Communion Service

The Resurrection of Value

The Spiritual Fellowship of Students of *The Urantia Book*

A Journal Established to Promote Theological, Philosophical, and Polity Discussions Germane to An Appropriate Symbolism and Socioreligious Expression of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

Guiding Principles¹

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 a group of people interested in initiating a new religious organization based on the teachings of the Fifth Epochal Revelation should be to create a polity with maximum flexibility that would function with small groups or large congregations, utilize lay leadership and/or ordained clergy, have cross-cultural adaptability, and broad theological inclusiveness.

Such an institution 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 *servicing and being served* by the common venture, than would be achieved alone or in a less committed relationship.”²

¹ See U. B. p. 966

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

***The Spiritual Fellowship
Journal***

Editor
Meredith J. Sprunger

Associate Editor
Merlyn Cox

Editorial Committee
Bud Bromley
Judy Smith
Irene Sprunger
Jack Williams

Editorial Consultants
Larry & Joan Mullins
Andre Radatus

Resource Consultants
David Biggs
David & Rebecca Kantor
Rosey Lieske
Victor McGonnegal

The Spiritual Fellowship Journal is an ecumenical publication published twice yearly jointly by The Christian Fellowship of Students of *The Urantia Book* in Fort Wayne, Indiana and the Christ Michael Corps for Publishing and Outreach in Boulder, Colorado.

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

The Spiritual Fellowship Journal
4109 Plaza Dr.
Fort Wayne, IN 46806
219-745-4363
MJSprunger@aol.com

Suggested annual donation - \$10.

Editorials

History's Unpredictability4
The educational-fellowship organizations in the Urantia movement are bogged down in internal strife. The enculturation of society will have to wait for the appearance of religious organizations.

Is it Time for New Religious Organizations?4
One wonders if the secular organizations in the Urantia movement are the proper aegis for the outreach of the teachings of the Urantia Papers?

Aspects of Prophetic Leadership.....5
Study groups provide ideal training for religious ministry and the foundation for organizing new religious organizations.

A New Millennium Church.....6
The new paradigm churches developing in our society suggest that our world is being prepared for religious organizations inspired by the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

Articles

Go into All the World.....9
Translations of the Urantia Papers in 20 languages is an important step in the outreach of the teachings of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

Do This in Remembrance of Me 11
Ritual is the main human technique for dramatizing and preserving religious sentiments and ideals.

Communion Service..... 14
A suggestive example of a formal Communion Service.

God's Gender..... 18
Reflection on the gender-biased language of the Urantia Papers.

The Commission to Minister 20
The distinctive characteristic of the religion of the Spirit is the centrality of service and evangelism.

Columns and Features

p **Mission Statement**2

p **Interface: A Celebration of Low Technology**7

p **Creative Outreach: In His Presence** 8

p **Sermon Series (pt. 7): The Resurrection of Value** 16

p **Book Review: The Powers That Be**24

p **Psalms Today** 6, 9, 18

Editorials

History's Unpredictability

The Urantia Book's expanded view of Deity and Reality, its new and inspiring picture of spiritual cosmology, and the enlarged presentation of the life and teachings of Jesus, will some day be a major factor in transforming our world.

How and when will this take place? The Urantia movement is awash with all kinds of speculation. The history of predicting the future, even by experts, is notoriously inaccurate. The history of past epochal revelations does provide some insights. All previous revelations have had difficulty establishing a foothold in their culture. They are characteristically opposed by the religious power structure at the time of their presentation. It is the creative and dynamic minority that carries their message throughout the world. And it requires centuries of evolutionary growth to establish a new spiritual paradigm.

As we survey the current status of the Fifth Epochal Revelation, we encounter numerous ambiguities. The United Midwayers, in presenting the Life and Teachings of Jesus, are obviously trying to inspire a transformation of Christianity, and secondarily, the other religions of the world. After almost fifty years of exposure, the power structure of Christianity exhibits little or no interest in *The Urantia Book*. As I recall, Dr. Sadler said they were told that for the first hundred years the Urantia Papers would be under the supervision of the angels of the churches. It will be interesting to observe any change in the interest of Christian leaders in the next fifty years.

Dr. Sadler and I used to discuss the type of religious organizations that would meet the criteria enumerated by the Brilliant Evening Star on page 966. Dr. Sadler advanced the idea that the mysterious origin of the Fifth Epochal Revelation and its advanced picture of spiritual growth would supply the "masterful mystery" and the "worthful unattainable" aspects of such a religious institution. He laid the foundation for the development of such religious organizations by specifying the training of ordained teachers in the Brotherhood constitution. But the early members of the Brotherhood motivated by an aversion toward institutional religion soon eliminated the word "ordained" from the constitution.

The educational-fellowship organizations in the Urantia movement have largely lost their creative leadership and dynamic outreach mission in competitive, internal strife and the Urantia Foundation is still bogged down in lawsuit activity. There seems to be a sense of stagnation in the Urantia movement, while at the same

time, there is an unprecedented search for spiritual relevance in our society.

Religious institutions are the central social organizations that are necessary to bring a new spiritual paradigm into our culture. But the power structure in the organizations of the Urantia movement are, by and large, prejudiced against sponsoring bona fide religious organizations. Sooner or later, probably independent of the official organizations, new religious organizations inspired by *The Urantia Book* will come into being. This will mark the beginning of the real enculturation of our society in the teachings of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. At the present time, the most hopeful aspect of outreach ministry is seen in the publication of *The Urantia Book* in other languages, and the posting of information about the Urantia Papers on the Internet.

Although we are in the infancy of the Urantia movement and have lost some of the enthusiasm and optimism of the Forum members when *The Urantia Book* was published, I am confident the Fifth Epochal Revelation will eventually be a major inspiration in transforming our planet—however, it will likely be a long and circuitous

The evil of the church was not its existence, but rather that it almost completely supplanted the Jesus concept of the kingdom. p. 1864

Is it Time for New Religious Organizations?

The three central organizations in the Urantia movement—The Urantia Foundation, The Urantia Book Fellowship, and The International Urantia Association—have repeatedly declared that they are not religious organizations. With the continued Foundation involvement in lawsuits against students of *The Urantia Book* and their recent threat against The Urantia Book Fellowship, one wonders if these secular organizations are the proper aegis for the outreach of the teachings of the Fifth Epochal Revelation?

In the face of the inability of these central organizations to work together harmoniously, and their failure to initiate a dynamic outreach mission, is it time to organize truly religious organizations in the Urantia movement? Historically, only religious institutions have been able to enculturate society. No doubt this will be true in the future. Dr. Sadler and I envisioned the advent of such religious organizations.

Many years ago, in preparation for the time when the Fifth Epochal Revelation would inspire religious institutions, I prepared a suggestive constitution for such an undertaking. It might stimulate discussion to share the preamble of this constitution:

**THE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP
CONSTITUTION
PREAMBLE**

1. *The Father/Motherhood of God and the brother/sisterhood of all people* is the guiding principle of the Fellowship. We acknowledge all individuals and traditions, past and present, who recognize this principle as kindred spirits. Recognition of the religion of Jesus as the ultimate ideal of living is central in our teaching, but we seek to avoid all forms of coercive literalism and legalism. The scriptures used for worship and education in the Fellowship shall be *The Urantia Book* and the Bible as well as passages of scripture from the various religions of the world which portray spiritual wisdom.

2. The Fellowship is ecumenical and nonsectarian in orientation. We accept into membership people from all backgrounds who recognize the Parenthood of God and the kinship of humankind as interpreted by the teachings of Jesus. The Fellowship seeks to relate to all people in love and recognizes the sister/brotherhood of all humanity.

3. The Fellowship seeks to develop ritual and ceremony which symbolize the highest values of truth, beauty, and goodness, along with the supreme values of love and social interaction found in the family and in the communion and caring of fellowship. We recognize the freedom of each congregation to evolve its own ritual and symbolism which shall include the sacrament of the Remembrance Supper, as well as such other rites as the local congregation may desire.

4. The Fellowship recognizes the key role of evolution and growth in the process of the life of each individual and congregation.

5. The Fellowship seeks to foster the most inspiring intellectual, emotional, and service sentiments of humanity and promote loyalty to such values and activities and to the groups and individuals who strive to actualize them.

6. The Fellowship strives to facilitate spiritual progress, enhance cosmic insight, augment moral values, encourage social development, and stimulate the highest expressions of personal religious living.

7. The Fellowship assists its members to visualize and articulate supreme purposes and goals of living for both time and eternity. It seeks to stimulate and support them in the actualization of these objectives.

8. The Fellowship seeks to support, honor, and enhance the values associated with the biologic, sociologic, and religious significance of the home.

9. The Fellowship acknowledges and lives with the mystery of personal and epochal revelation. We stand in awe at the incomprehensible love that God has for us—imperfect, often defective, finite beings—in bestowing

upon us a fragment of his own spirit essence to live with us and guide us toward reality and eternal life. We are confronted by the inexplicable efficacy of intercessory prayer and the mysterious integration and coordination of persons and events. We are challenged by the impossible-potential of the spirit mastery of our animal drives and urges and the reality of spiritual transformation.

10. The Fellowship believes that most of its spiritual practices and symbolism should be so designed that it can be participated in by the individual, the family, and the entire congregation.

11. The Fellowship recognizes that as ceremonies, rituals, and spiritual symbolism evolve, they should be relatively simple, filled with beauty and meaning. We seek to create a structure in which this symbolism and its related ceremonies may evolve.

12. The Fellowship recommends that each congregation provide in their local program, whenever possible, opportunities for religious education, personal counseling, spiritual guidance, and group worship. These religious ministrations should dramatize spiritual loyalties, magnify the lures of truth, beauty, and goodness, glorify the potentials of family life, stimulate unselfish service and warm friendship, conserve enlightened morality, support human welfare, and promote a wise outreach ministry to the world.

-MJS

Aspects of Prophetic Leadership

The viability of any organization is determined by the effectiveness of its creative leadership. One of the first things creative leaders learn is to multiply their hands and augment their ideas. Not until others are inspired and involved are projects accomplished. All new and advanced ideas and enterprises meet with opposition. Expect trouble. If your vision does not meet with opposition and resistance, you are not working at the growing edge of society, or your undertaking is long overdue. Since solid growth is evolutionary in nature, learn to value and actualize small steps. Incremental development is a necessary operational plan.

A key element in prophetic planning is acquiring pertinent knowledge. There is no substitute for relevant educational experience. And such experience requires hard work and persistence. Initiating advanced social objectives requires years of persistent and intelligent activity. A prophetic objective is always a minority project. It requires finding and organizing the growing one to five percent of society. While these strategies are basic to all innovative growth, they are especially important in initiating a new religious institution.

Aspects of Prophetic Leadership, cont.

Starting with a Study Group is ideal training for prophetic leadership. All of the aspects of religious ministry can be initiated in such a small group. In this small fellowship there is an opportunity to make people feel at home and loved. Periodically visiting these people in their homes enables one to get to know them better—especially when there is sickness or traumatic experiences and when they are no longer able to attend the Study Group. A monthly News Letter can keep everybody informed about events in the local and world-wide Urantia movement. Depending on the background and temperament of the group, one can start the meeting with prayer and appropriate forms of worship.

Over the years, I have had many students of *The Urantia Book* contact me expressing an interest in starting a “Urantia Church” or “Urantia Fellowship.” None of them, to date, has succeeded in actualizing this important step in founding an indigenous religious institution inspired by the Fifth Epochal Revelation. Some day this vision will become a reality—but this is only the beginning!

-MJS



A New Millennium Church

Donald E. Miller, executive director of the University of Southern California’s Center for Religion and Civic Culture, made a study of new churches springing up around the country that appealed to the unchurched baby boomers. As a result of this study he wrote *Reinventing American Protestantism* (1997) in which he argues that a reformation is transforming the way Christianity will be experienced in the new millennium.

These new paradigm churches have discarded many of the attributes of establishment religion. He believes they are the harbingers of postdenominational Christianity. The pastors of these churches are not required to have a seminary education. They are individuals whose lives have been radically transformed by God. The focus is not on theological doctrine but on spiritual experience and service. The pastor is a teacher, visionary, and trainer, but the people do the basic work of ministry. These churches tend to be tolerant of different personal life styles.

Miller observes that innovation in religion occurs at the local and grass-roots level. He was struck by the fact that the new clergy within new paradigm churches are almost always first identified within the ranks of active laypeople. These individuals are then mentored and trained within the context of the local church. The fastest growing churches are cell-based—with all of the church ministry flowing out of small groupings of people and engaging in highly imaginative service to people in their neighborhoods.

All of this indicates, I believe, that our world is being conditioned for new paradigm religious organizations. One could hardly imagine a more perfect set up for the advent of new religious fellowships originating in Study Groups and Societies inspired by the Fifth Epochal Revelation. “You see for yourselves that the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Let us all, therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest that he send forth still more laborers into his fields.” (1681) “The time is ripe to witness the figurative resurrection of the human Jesus from his burial tomb amidst the theological traditions and the religious dogmas of nineteen centuries.” (2090)

-MJS



Our Universal Father

We love you Universal Father; your shepherding care and guidance is the enabling foundation of our lives.

As we contemplate your infinite goodness and understanding mercy, we are overwhelmed by our finitude and imperfection.

The fact of our existence fills us with wonder and the mystery of being inspires our aspiration for that which is eternal.

You give us our personal identity and bestow the integrating and mysterious intangibles of personality

We are ennobled by the indwelling presence of your spirit.

In the subliminal awareness of your presence, we know that we are never alone.

We feel secure in the warmth of your love
Because of your divine imprint on the nature of our souls, we:

Strive for that which is moral and good in spite of animal tendencies toward selfish pleasure and evil.

Believe in your ultimate goodness even when we experience personal tragedy and suffering.

Have faith in the triumph of your Supremacy despite world calamity and the despairing philosophy of materialistic pessimism.

We thank you for the opportunity to elect the quest of the ages.

We look forward to the endless education and growth which you have in store for us as we traverse the grand universe and one day stand in your presence on Paradise to be ushered into the service adventures of eternity!

Interface

A Celebration of Low Technology

I sing the culture of high technology. For as long as I can remember, I have waited anxiously for virtually every new technology to arrive on the scene. As a child I dreamed of moon landings when the wisest of our scientists thought it no more than a pipe dream. I considered the success of the Hubble telescope a matter of religious significance for which I prayed. It's initial problems I considered akin to the Fall in the garden. I've waited anxiously for the coming of high definition television since I first saw a demonstration more than 15 years ago. I'm close to being one of those high tech junkies who can never get enough of the latest and greatest technology has to offer.

At the same time, as the years have passed, I have come to appreciate the fact that virtual reality is, after all, virtual, and, no matter how good, still an imitation of the real thing. It's educational and entertainment value is almost endless, but just as a cell with all the protoplasm intact is not necessarily alive, so high tech representations remain just that.

Over the years, I'd come to a new appreciation of the "low tech" methods of communication: word, gesture, and simple presence. I've come to appreciate the difference between story and signal that Harvey Cox makes in his book, *The Seduction of the Spirit*.¹ Cox writes that the primary means of communication in the religious community are stories—parables, allegories, and personal testimony. Parables and allegories are folk expressions of the community's shared beliefs, while first person testimony is especially important and effective in disclosing the "interiority" of personal religious experience. Signals, in contrast, are the result of religion "coded, systematized, controlled and distributed." "Stories reflect those forms of human associations, which blend emotion, value and history into a binding fabric. Signals, on the other hand, make possible large-scale and complex types of human association where such binding would not be possible.... Stories enrich the fund of common recollection and stimulate shared imagination.... Signals permit people to move around in systems that would grind to a halt if all communication had to be deep and personal." Stories "convey multiple layers of information all at once and can be told and interpreted in several ways." Signals are like traffic lights; "They transmit one unequivocal message and discourage all but one response."

Cox points out that societies need both story and signal, but problems arise when signals begin to pose as stories. When a signaler poses as a storyteller, and the purpose is

not to develop genuine intimacy but to control, it can lead to the "seduction of the spirit."

It also happens when religion is reduced to dogma, or theology is substituted for religious experience. Theology and common affirmations of faith based on the reflection of religious experience may be important for the larger community to communicate its beliefs and strengthen its bonds, but these "signals" should not be confused with the personal experiences that gave rise to them.

High technology is most adept at communicating signals. Information can be digitized, stored, and passed on for endless generations (copies) with no loss of detail. What can't be so easily shared is the underlying experience. Master storytellers certainly can use high technology in the service of their art form. But a good story still invites the viewer to share and interact with the event. This blending of high tech and low tech, at its best, is both honest and highly effective. It extends the range of testimony beyond the small group to the larger human community.

But "low tech" communication is still of the essence where sharing faith is concerned. There is no substitute for personal presence. The subtleties of human communication are almost infinite: facial, tonal and body expressions, the blending of speech and silence. The Incarnation is the ultimate gesture of divine communication. And the Spirit seems to be most real where two or three are gathered—literally, "in touch" with each other.

This is why personal testimony is still so important in sharing *The Urantia Book*, and why, I suspect, at least in part, the use of mass media was discouraged among its first commissioned evangelists.

I still celebrate high technology, the larger human body electric (Internet, etc.) and its role in sharing the news about *The Urantia Book*; but even more I value the realm of Spirit presence, where two or more are gathered, and the good news it bears witness to becomes most real.

¹ Harvey Cox, *Seduction of the Spirit*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1973

-Merlyn Cox

The great hope of Urantia lies in the possibility of a new revelation of Jesus with a new and enlarged presentation of his saving message which would spiritually unite in loving service the numerous families of his present-day professed followers. (2086:2)

Creative Outreach

In His Presence

How did the human Jesus do the things he did?

The Urantia Papers tell us, regarding Jesus, that “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.” (U. B., p. 2089) We are also told that this knowledge about the religious life of Jesus is the most valuable human knowledge we can attain.

This very knowledge can transform our lives and our relationships. It can unlock the creative power that slumbers within us and bring forth a new life. The beauty and power of a truth such as this will continually confront us until we come to terms with it. Also, such a truth is expressed in many religions and by many people who have never heard of *The Urantia Book*. Our spiritual support group has been studying two alternate sources of spiritual truth that translate the power of the presence of God into practical human religious experience.

One source is a recent paper titled “The Seven Gifts of the Spirit” by Thomas Keating, a Catholic Priest.¹ The other source is a small book by Frank Laubach, *Practicing His Presence*.² The Keating paper provides some rich insights for Urantians who are interested in meditation, but find charismatic practices unwholesome. The Laubach book is a collection of letters written to his father in 1930-32. These letters reveal the secret of his amazing productivity in his later years.

Thomas Keating quotes Paul: “If anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creature.” (II Cor. 5:17) The Urantia Papers tell us (without referencing Paul) on page 1103: “If any man has Christ Jesus within him, he is a new creature; old things are passing away; behold, all things are becoming new.” This promise has stirred the human heart for centuries. The question has always been: How do we realize the promise of Jesus that he will renew our lives, and transform our outlook? Keating proposes a technique to achieve this, a method called “centering prayer.”

Father Keating’s theme is a technique of acquiring an attitude whereby we may receive the fruits of the spirit—the gift of God. The Urantia Papers tell us on page 1608 that the “highest and supreme [attitude] is uncompromising loyalty to the enlightened convictions of profound spiritual realities. And such courage constitutes the heroism of the God-knowing man. And you are all God-knowing men; you are in very truth the personal associates of the Son

of Man.”

Keating’s paper is too long and abundant with ideas to discuss fully here, but one visual idea he provided was most valuable to our group. Keating explains that there are two ways of asking for the power and energy of the Spirit to fill our souls. One is to say: “Give me this.” The other is to bolt the door of our human minds, and to pray in secret, *without words*, with our *hearts*. We turn our whole being toward God in childlike trust: “Our openness to the Spirit might be compared to baby birds opening their beaks for the worm that one of their parents is bringing. Practically half the baby bird is his mouth.” This powerful visual image is difficult to forget. It indicates a passion and hunger for the gifts of the Spirit, and an openness that could hardly be more vivid.

The other work that has been valuable to our group is Frank Laubach’s letters to his father, *Practicing His Presence*. Until the age of 45, Laubach’s life was spent as an obscure missionary among the Moslems in the southern Philippines. Then, like Brother Laurence before him, he decided to attempt to experience the presence of Jesus continuously. Forty years later, when he died at the age of 85, Frank Laubach was one of the best known and widely loved men of the twentieth century. He wrote over fifty books and was considered by many as the single greatest educator of modern times. The wellsprings of this man’s extraordinary life can be traced back to the lonely shack in which he lived on the island of Mindano. It was here he set out on the greatest adventure a man or woman can attempt: to find and live in the presence of God at all times. His brief book chronicles his inner experiences during this audacious endeavor.

Again, I can only touch upon the highlights of what Laubach had to say. One of the more powerful messages of these letters reveals the utter practicality of what he was doing. Like Jesus, this was no obscure mystic listening to voices and leadings. He tells us that “living in the presence is very, very difficult.” However, it “makes everything else easier.” Here is perhaps the great freedom that Jesus offered humankind. Once we find God, all else is added.

This resonated with my own personal experience. Once, in a very dark moment of my life, I was desperately in need of money. I was in the middle of a divorce, and the entire world seemed to be crushing my spirit. I could no longer rise to the challenge. One night I searched and prayed for rescue, and I came across a passage in a book by Emmett Fox. He said, in effect: But what of those who are now desperate for immediate help, who need to pay the mortgage, who are about to face the court, who dread the dawning of another day? This got my attention, and the passage that followed gave me my answer: “Find God within, and then let the worst take place. Have faith, he will deliver you, he will not forsake you. Your only task is

to make this connection; without it, nothing else matters.” I took this message in, because by then I had given up hope. I was a hungry little bird craving the spirit with all my heart. That night I slept in peace as a child of God, and indeed God delivered me.

We are, then, to recall that we are “personal associates of the Son of Man.” The great value of a good spiritual support group is that it brings forth the Spirit of Truth whenever we come together. The two works that were discussed here were not my discoveries, they were gifts of two of my fellow associates of the Son of Man who attend our group. Spiritual ideas multiply in the sharing. What I share with you I retain, and you acquire also. And we

Larry Mullins

¹ Thomas Keating, OCSO, “The Seven Gifts of the Spirit,” *Contemplative Outlook News*, Vol. 13, No.2, January-August, 2000.

² Brother Laurence and Frank Laubach, *Practicing His Presence*, The SeedSowers, P. O. Box 285, Sargent, Georgia 30275

Our Subliminal Mentor

Sensitize us, Universal Father, to your subliminal presence.

You are indigenous in our consciousness, the loving reality which is closer than our nearest friend.

You are the caring inner presence ever striving to shape and guide our thoughts, but never violating our will or autonomy.

You are our creative resource assisting us in translating

our animal-level minds into the higher estate of soul consciousness, integrating our cognitive center around your love, truth, and goodness.

Our minds transformed, we are born into a new level of being. We live in the inner reality of your presence filled with joy and undergirded by peace.

Living in the impregnable inner citadel of spiritual sureties, we are not overcome by catastrophic planetary events or the rigors of human suffering.

We thank you, O Heavenly Mentor, for your saving and transforming presence in our lives!

Go into All the World To Every Race, Tribe, and Nation

Jay Newbern

Today on Urantia, according to the United Nations, 5 billion people can read and write; this is over 83% of the total of 6 billion. There was no mass literacy until after the development of the printing press in the mid-15th century. Presently there are 31 major languages in the world that each claim 36 million speakers or more. *The Urantia Book* is now published in five of these languages—English, Spanish, Russian, French, and Korean—and is being translated into seven other major tongues: Chinese Mandarin, Arabic, Portuguese, German, Tamil, Italian, and Farsi.

The Urantia Book is also in print in two minor languages: Dutch (21 million) and Finnish (6 million). It is being translated into six more minor writing systems: Serbo-Croatian (21 million), Hungarian (14 million), Greek (12 million), Swedish (9 million), Lithuanian (3 million), and Estonian (1 million). As the Third Millennium approaches, the Urantia Papers are committed to print or to translation in 20 languages—12 major and 8 minor.

Major Languages of Urantia

Speaker Population in Millions

(Totals are from 1999 World Almanac & Book of Facts)

1. CHINESE MANDARIN (in translation)— 1,052;
2. ENGLISH (in print)— 508;
3. Hindi and Urdu (Hindustani) (India, Pakistan)— 487;
4. SPANISH (in print)—417;
5. RUSSIAN (in print)—277;
6. ARABIC (in translation) (modern standard)—246;
7. Bengali (India)—211;
8. PORTUGUESE (in translation)—191;
9. Malay-Indonesian—177;
10. FRENCH (in print)—128;
11. GERMAN (in translation)—128;
12. Japanese—126;
13. Panjabi (India)—94;
14. KOREAN (in print)—78;
15. Telugu (India)—75;
17. Chinese Cantonese (Hong Kong)— 71;
18. Marathi (India)—71;
19. Chinese Wu (Shanghai)—70;
20. Vietnamese—68;
21. Awadhi (India)—65;
22. Javanese (Indonesia)—64;
23. ITALIAN (in translation)—62;
24. Turkish—61;
25. Bhojpuri (India)—60;
26. Thai and Lao—52;
27. Chinese Southern Min (Xiamen, Shantou, Taiwan)—50;
28. Ukrainian—47;
29. Polish—44;
30. Gujarati (India)—44;
31. FARSI (in translation) (Persian) (Iran)—36.

The Importance of Language

Written language on this planet first appeared 5200 years ago when the Sumerians invented the initial script. Using a reed stylus, this Middle East people created pictures of tokens to count goods onto moist clay tablets. “No other invention—perhaps only the wheel comes close—has had a longer and greater impact. Writing helped preserve the three major monotheistic religions, whose believers the Koran refers to as ‘the People of the Book.’”¹ “Language is man’s greatest

Go into All the World, cont.

and most serviceable thinking tool..." (U. B. p. 908)

Sumerians had their origin 200,000 years ago after the submergence of Dalamatia (First Epochal Revelation) whose alphabet they lost; they adopted a peculiar writing system originating in Dilmun. "The Sumerian language, though virtually lost to the world, was not Semitic; it had much in common with the so-called Aryan tongues." (U. B. p. 860) Their clay tablets tell of the first and second Edens but they were confused about Dalamatia. They were mostly Andite in extraction although their culture was more Nodite in character. "By 5000 B. C. the three purest strains of Adam's descendants were in Sumeria, northern Europe, and Greece." (U. B. p. 896) The art of writing and their alphabet were imported from the Sumerian cities of the Persian Gulf by the Dravidians who were seafarers and merchants.

Presently there are 31 major languages in the world that each claim 36 million speakers or more. The Urantia Book is now published in five of these languages—English, Spanish, Russian, French, and Korean—and is being translated into seven other major tongues: Chinese Mandarin, Arabic, Portuguese, German, Tamil, Italian, and Farsi.

What these superb evolutionary linguists created of record is known as Mesopotamian cuneiform (3200 B. C. to A. D. 75). It was the first of several hundred written languages today. Shortly thereafter came Egyptian hieroglyphs (circa 3200 B. C. to A. D. 394). Languages that followed include Indus Valley (Pakistan) Harappan writings (2800 to 1900 B. C.) and Mayan hieroglyphs (A. D. 250 to 900).

Next appeared the antecedents of the two largest languages in the world today—Chinese and English. In 1200 B. C. the Chinese logograms (ideograms) originated, creating the only written system where individual characters represent individual words. Logogram characters often mean one thing when used alone, but something else when combined. "The Chinese character for 'sincerity,' for example, shows the character for 'man' alongside the one for 'word,' literally a man standing by his word."²

Our English language, the most complex on the planet with more than 600,000 words, stems from the Levantine alphabets which appeared in 1050 B. C. The Latin alphabet of Rome evolved from Greek around the 6th century B. C. "Seeded throughout the world by colonialism, the Indo-European languages sprang from a tongue spoken on the Russian steppes perhaps 6,000 years ago. Nine of the twelve languages with the most native speakers are Indo-European. Their influence continues to grow with the widespread adoption of English as a second language."³ English is the lingua franca (notice incorporated words)

of science, commerce, aviation, diplomacy, pop culture, and cyberspace.

In human history there have been more than 10,000 spoken languages, many now vanished. Some 6,000 are currently spoken but over half of these are unlikely to survive the 21st century. Half have fewer than 10,000 speakers and a quarter have fewer than 1,000.

The original Levantine alphabet was created by the Phoenicians. It planted the roots of other writing systems in the eastern Mediterranean, including modern Hebrew and Arabic. For example, the modern Latin letter "A" evolved from the Phoenician and Hebrew "aleph," the Aramaic "alaph," the Arabic "alif," and the Greek "alpha." In human history there have been more than 10,000 spoken languages, many now vanished. Some 6,000 are currently spoken but over half of these are unlikely to survive the 21st century. Half have fewer than 10,000 speakers and a quarter have fewer than 1,000.

Anthropologist Luisa Moffi: "In the Bible the multiplicity of languages can be interpreted as a curse. Instead, it's been suggested that it's a safeguard against our having the same cultural blind spots. The Acoma Pueblo people say the goddess Iatiku created different languages so that it won't be easy for humans to quarrel."⁴ The Urantia Papers disagree. "Language differences have ever since been the great barrier to the extension of peace. The conquest of dialects must precede the spread of a culture throughout a race, over a continent, or to a whole world. A universal language promotes peace, insures culture, and augments happiness." (U. B. p. 908)

Planetary Problems

The greatest planetary problem facing Urantia in the 21st century is that of population explosion. In 1988, only eleven years ago, there were 5 billion inhabitants of Spaceship Earth. In October 1999 that accumulation soared to 6 billion. The world's two most populous nations are Asian—China and India. Together they account for more than one-third of the global sum. China has 1.27 billion people, and the United Nations is now projecting 1 billion humans for India.

Spreading the good news of divine revelation to these giants is not only hampered by religion, race, and politics, but is also greatly handicapped by language. China not only has the largest language in Mandarin but can also claim three additional languages or dialects—Cantonese, Wu, and Southern Min—among the world's 31 major tongues. India is even more daunting. Fifteen different languages may be found in its constitution, and this huge country possesses 9 major languages (other than English) on the global listing of the top 31.

To appreciate the eventual far-reaching consequences for translation of the Fifth Epochal Revelation, one has only to scrutinize this single example. One of the leading Indo-European languages into which *The Urantia Book* is being translated is Portuguese, 8th on the list of 31. Portugal was an outstanding colonizer in the world and gave Brazil its official language of Portuguese. Brazil occupies a very large portion of the continent of South America, being the 4th largest country geographically on the planet. It is 6th largest in population with 180 million. Brazil has more square miles of area than the 48 contiguous United States. It has two world-sized cities: Sao Paulo, third biggest Urantian city at 25 million, and Rio de Janeiro, ninth largest at 14 million. Brazil's flag is the only national banner displaying the planet.

The focus of Urantian translations in the 21st century is quite obvious—Asia. It is the planet's largest continent and the most populous, and it is the least seeded with the teachings of Jesus. Of the 20 languages in which the Urantia Papers are in print or translation, there are but 3 Asian writing systems—Mandarin (No. 1), Korean (ranked 14th), and Tamil (ranked 16).

The focus of Urantian translations in the 21st century is quite obvious—Asia. It is the planet's largest continent and the most populous, and it is the least seeded with the teachings of Jesus. Of the 20 languages in which the Urantia Papers are in print or translation, there are but 3 Asian writing systems—Mandarin (No. 1), Korean (ranked 14th), and Tamil (ranked 16). In addition to the giants of China and India, there are also Indonesia (largest Muslim country), 5th in the world population with two of the top twenty-two languages, and Japan with its 12th ranked language of 126 million speakers. On the list of the 31 largest languages of 36 million speakers or more, 20 are Asian. Two-thirds!

As we go into all the world to every race, tribe, and nation, can there possibly be any doubt whatsoever where we should go? To transform a recent campaign directive stating the goal, "It's the planet, sibling!" The Father indwells us; the Son envelops us; the Spirit encircuits us.

¹ *National Geographic*, August, 1999, p. 116

² *National Geographic*, August, 1999, p. 122

³ *National Geographic*, August 1999, Voices of the World fold-out map

⁴ *Ibid*

Jay Newbern, formerly a correspondent of NBC News/Chicago, is a long time student of *The Urantia Book*

Do This in Remembrance of Me¹

John Marks

“Every inspiring ideal grasps for some perpetuating symbolism—seeks some technique for cultural manifestation which will insure survival and augment realization—and the cult achieves this end by fostering and gratifying emotion.

“From the dawn of civilization every appealing movement in social culture or religious advancement has developed a ritual, a symbolic ceremonial.” (U.B., p. 965)

One of the hallmarks of religion is the performance of rituals. Religious rituals are usually associated with a sacred story or myth, and together the ritual and story express symbolically the human attempt to interact with what is perceived as sacred or divine reality. A vast body of anthropological studies as well as the findings of comparative religion document the universality of ritual as an indispensable component of religion. Although there are many theories on its origins, nature, and functions, it is safe to say that ritual appears to be the main human technique for enacting or dramatizing, and thus preserving through repetition, religious sentiments that are considered vital to the welfare of a particular community (hence sacred).²

Up to this point in the Urantia movement little interest has been shown in the establishment of any formal ritual. The only discernible behavior pattern among readers has been the consistent formation of study groups and their loose organization under the aegis of the Fellowship and the Foundation. *The Urantia Book* itself does not advocate any specific forms of ritual, although, as the quotation at the top of this article shows, it does stress the importance of ritual to the development of religion. The implication is that the specific forms of worship should be developed by the community of believers through a natural evolutionary process.

The recent shift in the focus of *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal* may indicate that *The Urantia Book* community is now ready at least to begin discussing how to develop appropriate symbolism and forms of expression to give vent to the religious feelings aroused by *The Urantia Book*. With this new purpose in mind, I would like to offer some personal experiences to illustrate the way ritual might be used in a worship service based on *The Urantia Book*.

Two memorable experiences stand out in my mind as examples of the way ritual can inspire the worshiper and give structure to communal worship without cramping the free expression of individual faith. Both “services” took place in the informal and familiar setting of someone's home and were simple affairs based on the partaking of a shared meal. To my mind such loosely structured gatherings of friends and acquaintances represent a practical and appealing way to introduce a formal element into the

Do This in Remembrance of Me, cont.

local study-group meetings, which eventually may lead to a standard basis of worship in some future Urantian “church.”

A Memorable Passover

The first experience was an interdenominational Passover meal, organized by a group of students including myself when I was in graduate school. The program of study I was pursuing at the time (Ancient Near Eastern Studies) attracted an interesting mix of people at both the student and faculty level. Among the students were Jews, whose backgrounds ranged from orthodox to reformed; Christians of various sects (Catholics, Evangelical Protestants, even one Mormon); and unbelievers of different perspectives, from vaguely agnostic to professed atheists. By the same token, the faculty consisted of an orthodox rabbi, a Roman Catholic priest, committed and indifferent Jews and Christians, and a few atheists as well. Since we were all involved in a common academic enterprise and were a relatively small group, we had plenty of occasion to share our differing perspectives.

One of the hallmarks of religion is the performance of rituals. Religious rituals are usually associated with a sacred story or myth, and together the ritual and story express symbolically the human attempt to interact with what is perceived as sacred or divine reality.

So one spring a group of us students decided it would be interesting to celebrate a common Passover, where not just Jews would participate but non-Jews as well—believers and unbelievers. As I recall, I had expressed an interest in experiencing Passover firsthand since I come from a Christian background and had always felt that I was missing something (similar, perhaps, to the way some Jews feel at Christmas). Others chimed in and our Jewish friends decided to accommodate by helping us organize the whole thing.

It all went exceedingly well. Each of us played a role in preparing the meal and in providing the necessary foods—matzo, bitter herbs, wine, etc.—for a proper Passover meal. There was a little awkwardness at first, but no more so than at the start of any party. One of the women came from a fairly strict orthodox background, and she, maybe more than anyone else, felt the strangeness of this Passover with Gentiles present. But as the evening progressed and it became obvious that she was invaluable as an authority on the correct way of conducting the celebration, she warmed up and enjoyed herself as much as the rest of us. Another woman, an atheist from an Italian-American background, quite unexpectedly was also very knowledgeable on the way the meal should be prepared and served; it turned out that she had waited tables during Passover at one of the

Catskill resorts and so knew the whole routine by heart.

In the end it struck me that we couldn't have orchestrated a better example of open human fellowship and mutual acceptance even if we had consciously set out to achieve this lofty goal; after all, we were really only trying to have a good time. I came away from that evening feeling that we had accomplished something worthy and important by crossing interdenominational lines, and that a spirit of good will had prevailed over the distinctions that usually keep people apart. We non-Jews had the opportunity to participate in one of the most ancient religious ceremonies on the planet, one that by tradition celebrated the liberation of the Jews from bondage under Pharaoh some three thousand years ago. And for the Jews among us it was a chance to share a tradition that was deeply meaningful to them and to elaborate on its significance to outsiders. Passover is a ritual that commemorates one of the earliest revelatory experiences, a vision of faith that would eventually change the history of this planet.

I realized, too, why Jesus had chosen such a setting for one of his most profound lessons. His vision of the kingdom of God was explained in the context of a common meal where people share simple human friendship and in this relaxed setting most easily reveal their better lights. This became the very symbol of his new kingdom and provided a model for the high standard of conduct he encouraged us to follow: namely, we were to treat one another with the respect and friendship accorded family and friends who gather for a communal meal. At the same time he was connecting his new revelation of God's will to the old revelation by using a ritual that symbolized the intimate relationship between God and his people in the Jewish tradition. He was embracing the old covenant and expanding it at the same time in a way that would also change the world.

The Remembrance Supper

About ten years after this occasion I accompanied members of our local Urantia study group to a potluck dinner at the home of a couple who belonged to another study group some fifty miles away. The occasion was the anniversary of Jesus' birthday (August 21, 7 B.C., according to *The Urantia Book*) and the form of the celebration was to be a “Remembrance Supper,” which is the way Jesus' Last Supper with his apostles is described in *The Urantia Book*, Paper 179 (pp. 1941-43). We enjoyed a casual meal on the patio and gradually got to know one another since most members of each respective group had not met the members of the other group before.

After the meal our host passed around glasses of wine and fruit juice and asked us all to stand while she read several passages from Paper 179. Then we drank our wine or juice together in a sort of “communion.” It was indeed a communion in the literal sense of the word but

without the stiff, solemn formality associated with the typical communion service in Christian churches. During the reading each of us communed with our own thoughts and meditated on the meaning of the words. We also had been communing with one another all along, first through conversation and then silently through our shared purpose in being there. Finally, one couldn't help thinking of Jesus' statement, "Where two or three believers are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20; U.B. p. 1763) and feeling the spiritual presence inspired by those words.

At the conclusion of the reading and communion "toast," our host asked each of us in turn to read from small slips of paper which she had passed out to everyone as we arrived earlier in the day. Each slip contained a line or two from *The Urantia Book*. Most people commented on the lines after reading them and this prompted others to chime in. By this simple device a meaningful discussion was promoted, which drew all of us closer together and raised the level of the conversation beyond mere social pleasantries to a deeper exploration of shared convictions and values.

At times I had the odd feeling that in some mysterious way the discussion was being guided toward important considerations and insights that don't normally occur in casual conversation (and once again I thought of the above-cited line from Matthew). I had the sense that we were sharing in a spirit of cooperation that enabled all of us to appreciate one another despite a variety of perspectives and brought out the best in us, smoothing over the usual personality conflicts which can occur in any large group. Bonds of spiritual kinship were formed that made a lasting impression on me and I think on many others there as well. As a result I came away from this occasion feeling deeply fulfilled, an experience that one should have on leaving any kind of worship service, but which unfortunately is rarely found any more in traditional places of worship.

"Man Does Not Live by Bread Alone"

Many *Urantia Book* readers may look on the stultifying rituals and empty ceremonies of traditional religions as exactly what they are trying to avoid in religion and have no desire to mimic any part of this hoary tradition. This is understandable. Even Jesus avoided what he considered some of the pointless ceremonies of Judaism, for which he was criticized by the orthodox of the day.³ He also went to great lengths to prevent his words and deeds from becoming crystallized, and thus he left no writings and spoke in parables to allow his message a wide range of interpretation.⁴

But he did establish a remembrance supper, which should give anyone who hates the idea of any kind of formal ritual pause to reconsider. It was simply a supper with his friends, which he suggested was an apt symbol of his vision of the "kingdom" of God—really the spiritual family of God. He

also recommended holding such a meal on a regular basis as an appropriate way to remember him, his life, and the meaning of his message. Finally, he demonstrated how a shared meal among friends could symbolize the sharing of the spiritual "bread of life" which he had bestowed on us through the revelation of his own life. Just as we gather at mealtime for food to nourish our bodies, so we should also gather for spiritual fellowship to nurture our souls. Unfortunately, later Christianity misunderstood the intent of this ceremonial meal and turned the elegant simplicity of the original event into a symbolic flesh-and-blood eating ritual with cannibalistic overtones.

Religions endure through their symbols and ceremonies, which provide the cultural basis of their spiritual component. Lacking this the Urantia movement really cannot be called a religion. It consists only of a mysterious book and the loosely knit groups of people who gather together to discuss it. I suggest that the movement consider adapting one of the oldest ceremonial forms on the planet⁵: the ritual meal, the basis of the Jewish Passover and the Christian Eucharist, an open-ended ceremony with great symbolic potential which uses the essential life-sustaining elements—food and drink—as symbols of the transcendent spiritual life. It would provide a unifying theme to all Urantia gatherings and yet allow plenty of room for individual creativity and variation.

I personally would stress the creative, human aspect of the ceremony and would avoid stereotyping or rigid formalities of any sort. Others may be attracted to a more formal presentation. In any case, the details should be left up to the members in each study group. A communal meal would provide a wide framework for interaction, to be modified according to individual taste.

Of course real religions can't simply be manufactured. A great deal of cultural evolution is involved in the process, and the input of many people over time. But this would at least be a good start.

John Marks is a freelance writer who lives in Western New York.

¹ Luke 22:19

² An excellent review of the role of ritual in religion is Evan M. Zuesse's article "Ritual" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, Editor in Chief (New York: Macmillan, 1987), vol. 12, pp. 405-422

³ For example, Matt. 9:10-17; 12: 1-14; Mark 2:15-28; 3: 1-6; Luke 5: 29- 39; 6: 1-11. U.B. pp. 1651-56

⁴ See U.B. p. 1330, points 5 and 6; cf. pp. 1692-93.

⁵ As far back as the third millennium B.C.E., Sumerian priests served statues of their gods a sacred meal, which they then later consumed. See also *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4: 653-655 on the antiquity of the sacred meal.

Communion Service

The Remembrance Supper

In the name of the triune God: The Universal Father, The Eternal Son, and The Infinite Spirit. Amen.

“Of God, the most inescapable of all presences, the most real of all facts, the most living of all truths, the most loving of all friends, and the most divine of all values, we have the right to be the most certain of all universe experiences.” (p. 1127)

“Of all human knowledge, that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it.” (p. 2090)

“Jesus was the perfectly unified human personality. And today, as in Galilee, he continues to unify mortal experience and to co-ordinate human endeavors. He unifies life, ennobles character, and simplifies experience. He enters the human mind to elevate, transform, and transfigure it.” (p. 1103)

Said Jesus, “I have come into the world to put love in the place of fear, joy in the place of sorrow, confidence in the place of dread, loving service and appreciative worship in the place of slavish bondage and meaningless ceremonies.” (p. 1675)

In establishing a meaningful relationship in the Remembrance Supper, Jesus used symbols of wine and bread to *suggest* a living and personal communion with his Spirit of Truth. He sought to set our reborn souls “free upon the joyous wings of a new and living spiritual liberty.” We need no theological interpretations of his divine presence “for on all such occasions the Master is *really present*.”

On this night of his betrayal, Jesus took the cup in his hands and blessed it, saying: “Take this cup, all of you, and drink of it. This shall be the cup of my remembrance. This is the cup of the blessing of a new dispensation of grace and truth. This shall be to you the emblem of the bestowal and ministry of the divine Spirit of Truth.” (p. 1941)

And in like manner, after they had partaken of the cup of remembrance, the Master took bread, and after giving thanks, broke it in pieces and directed them to pass it around, saying, “Take this bread of remembrance and eat it. I have told you that I am the bread of life. And this bread of life is the united life of the Father and the Son in one gift. The word of the Father, as revealed in the Son, is indeed the bread of life.” (p. 1942)

“And as often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me. And when you do remember me, first look back upon my life in the flesh, recall that I was once with you, and then, by faith, discern that you shall all some time sup with me in the Father’s eternal kingdom. This is the new Passover which I leave with you, even the memory of my bestowal life, the word of eternal truth; and of my

love for you, the outpouring of my Spirit of Truth upon all flesh.” (p. 1943)

Invitation

You, then, who sincerely desire to acknowledge the love of the Universal Father and the sovereignty of his Son, Christ Michael, in your life, unite with me now as we consecrate ourselves to the guidance of his Spirit of Truth, and dedicate ourselves in his service.

Let us Pray

Our perfect, righteous, and loving heavenly Father, we desire to give ourselves fully unto you, and to your Son, Christ Jesus.

Guide and direct us on our life’s journey. Sanctify our steps and co-ordinate our thoughts. Ever lead us in the ways of eternal progress. Fill us with wisdom to the fullness of power, and vitalize us with your infinite energy. Inspire us with the consciousness of your ever present spiritual guidance and ministry. Guide us ever upward in the pathway of light. Make us like yourself in eternal glory, and receive us into your endless service on high. Amen. (p. 1622, adapted)

“Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am true and loyal, and you shall find spiritual rest for your souls.” (p. 1808)

The minister after uncovering the elements, may lift up the cup saying,

The cup of blessing which we celebrate, is Christ Michael’s designated emblem of his spiritual presence with us through the Spirit of Truth.

As the ushers are passing the cup of blessing, the minister may read selectively from the following passages, stopping when the ushers return:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. I am the vine, and you are the branches. Every branch coming out of me which bears no fruit, the Father will take away. Every branch which bears fruit, the Father will cleanse that it may bear more fruit. You must abide in me, and I in you; the branch will die if it is separated from the vine. As the branch cannot bear fruit except it abides in the vine, so neither can you yield the fruits of loving service except you abide in me. Remember: I am the real vine, and you are the living branches. He who lives in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit of the spirit and experience the supreme joy of yielding this spiritual harvest. If you will maintain this living spiritual connection with me, you will bear abundant fruit. If you abide in me and my words live in you, you will be able to commune freely with me, and then can my living spirit so infuse you that you may ask whatsoever my spirit wills and do all this with the assurance that the Father will grant us our petition. Herein is the Father

glorified: that the vine has many living branches, and that every branch bears much fruit. (p. 1945, adapted)

You well know the commandment which directs you that you love one another; that you love your neighbor even as yourself. But I am not wholly satisfied with even that sincere devotion on the part of my children. I would have you perform still greater acts of love in the Father's family. And so I give you this new commandment: That you love one another even as I have loved you. And by this will all people know that you are my disciples if you thus love one another. (p. 1944, adapted)

When I invite you to love one another, even as I have loved you, I hold up before you the supreme measure of true affection, for greater love can no person have than this: that they will lay down their life for their friends. And you are my friends; you will continue to be my friends if you are but willing to do what I have taught you. You have called me Master, but I do not call you servants. If you will only love one another as I am loving you, you shall be my friends, and I will ever speak to you of that which the Father reveals to me. (p. 1944-45, adapted)

Love men and women, as I have loved you. Serve your fellow mortals, even as I have served you. My love overshadows you, my spirit dwells with you, my peace abides upon you. I will go with you into the world. I am with you always. (pp. 2057, 2053, adapted)

When the ushers have returned, the minister raising the cup, may say:

Take and drink this cup of blessing. For our Sovereign is, indeed, the cup of love residing with us through the Spirit of Truth.

The minister lifting and breaking the loaf of bread, may say,

This bread of remembrance which we consecrate, is Christ Michael's designated emblem of his bestowal life among us as the true and living Bread of Life.

As the ushers are passing the bread, the minister may read selectively from the following passages, stopping when the ushers return.

I have come to proclaim spiritual liberty, teach eternal truth, and foster living faith. My Father now stands ready to give you the true bread of life. The bread of heaven is that which comes down from God and gives eternal life to the people of the world. And when you say to me, Give us this living bread, I will answer: I am this bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger, while he who believes me shall never thirst. (p. 1710-11, adapted)

"I am this bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and are dead. But this bread which comes down from God, if a man eats thereof, he shall never die in spirit. I repeat, I am this living bread, and every soul who attains

the realization of this united nature of God and man shall live forever. And this bread of life which I give to all who will receive is my own living and combined nature. The Father in the Son and the Son one with the Father—that is my life-giving revelation to the world and my saving gift to all nations." (p. 1711)

"The true shepherd gathers his flock into the fold for the night in times of danger. And when the morning has come, he enters into the fold by the door, and when he calls, the sheep know his voice. Every shepherd who gains entrance to the sheepfold by any other means than by the door is a thief and a robber. The true shepherd enters the fold after the porter has opened the door for him, and his sheep, knowing his voice, come out at his word; and when they that are his are thus brought forth, the true shepherd goes before them; he leads the way and the sheep follow him. His sheep follow him because they know his voice; they will not follow a stranger." (p. 1818)

I am both the door to the Father's sheepfold and at the same time the true shepherd of my Father's flocks. I am the true shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. The thief breaks into the fold only to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; but I have come that you all may have life and have it more abundantly. He who is a hireling, when danger arises, will flee and allow the sheep to be scattered and destroyed; but the true shepherd will not flee when the wolf comes; he will protect his flock and, if necessary, lay down his life for his sheep. Verily, verily, I say to you, friends and enemies, I am the true shepherd; I know my own and my own know me. I will not flee in the face of danger. I will finish this service of the completion of my Father's will, and I will not forsake the flock which the Father has intrusted to my keeping. (p. 1819, adapted)

When Jesus had finished his earth life, the name of the Father had been so revealed that the Master could truly say:

I am the bread of life.

I am the living water.

I am the light of the world.

I am the true vine; you are the branches.

I am the good shepherd.

I am the infinite Father of my finite children.

I am the way, the truth, and the life.

I am the open door to eternal salvation.

I am the living link between time and eternity.

(p. 1965, adapted)

When the ushers have returned, the minister raising the bread, may say:

Communion Service, cont.

Take and eat this bread of remembrance. For our Lord is, indeed, the true Bread of Life.

Now may this communion with our Creator and Savior, who is the Cup of Love and the Bread of Life, keep and preserve us in body, mind, soul, and spirit unto eternal life. Amen.

Let us enter prayerful thanksgiving.

Bountiful and loving Universe Father, we rejoice that you have established a memorial of your saving bestowal ministry on our world. We thank you for refreshing and restoring us through your living presence and loving fellowship in this Remembrance Communion with your Spirit of Truth. Keep us in your constant care, strengthen our faith in the transcendence of spiritual growth in our lives, and increase our love for one another as we go forth in service in the world.

We live in the power of your love, and praise your universe sovereignty for ever and ever. Amen.

(This document contains quotes from The URANTIA Book, which was copyrighted in 1955 by URANTIA Foundation; 533 Diversey Parkway; Chicago, Illinois 60614; 773-525-3319, all rights reserved.)

“The dangers of formalized religion are: fixation of beliefs and crystallization of sentiments; accumulation of vested interests with increase of secularization; tendency to standardize and fossilize truth; diversion of religion from the service of God to the service of the church; inclination of leaders to become administrators instead of ministers; tendency to form sects and competitive divisions; establishment of oppressive ecclesiastical authority; creation of the aristocratic ‘chosen people’ attitude; fostering of false and exaggerated ideas of sacredness; the routinizing of religion and the petrification of worship; tendency to venerate the past while ignoring present demands; failure to make up-to-date interpretations of religion; entanglement with functions of secular institutions; it creates the evil discrimination of religious castes; it becomes an intolerant judge of orthodoxy; it fails to hold the interest of adventurous youth and gradually loses the saving message of the gospel of eternal salvation.” p. 1092:4

The Resurrection of Value

Rev. Gregory Young

There is an interesting story of an unusual event that happened in a Broadway theater. It was a Friday night, and the theater was packed for a performance of Tennessee Williams’s *The Night of the Iguana*, starring the notable actress Dorothy McGuire. Just before the curtain was about to rise, a woman in the audience—an overweight, middle-aged woman in a blue print dress—startled the audience by suddenly shouting, “Start the show! Start the show! I want to see Dorothy McGuire. I love Dorothy McGuire!” Ushers and the house manager descended to try and reason with the woman. They reached out for her, but she pulled back and continued to shout, “I want to see Dorothy McGuire! Start the show!”

After a moment of shocked silence, the people in the audience decided they had a maniac in their midst and began to get ugly, booing the woman and laughing derisively. “Throw her out!” someone yelled. The woman turned to the shouters, “All I want is to see Dorothy McGuire,” she said, “and then I will leave.” There was more laughing and booing—things were getting out of hand.

And then, from behind the curtains, Miss McGuire appeared. She crossed the stage and came over to the place where the woman was sitting, and with remarkable poise, and grace, and kindness, extended her hand toward the woman. Quietly, willingly, the woman took her hand, and Miss McGuire led her gently toward the exit. As they reached the back of the auditorium, Miss McGuire paused, turned toward the audience and said, “I’d like to introduce you to another fellow human being.”

I can’t help but think that this is what Jesus might have done in this situation. It seems to me that Jesus’ ministry was one in which he sought to introduce people to their own sense of humanity and the genuine humanity of others. Perhaps the primary message shared with us in the life and teachings of Jesus—repeated so many times in so many ways—is that we have value. We carry the imprint of our creator. We are created in the likeness of our divine parent, with the indwelling presence of God deep in our mind uniting with us as the co-creator of our soul.

Jesus had a high regard for everyone he met. He saw more in people than others saw, more than people saw in themselves. Why did Jesus spend so much time with the blind, the lame, the lepers, the dead of spirit? Why did he invite street people in to a feast fit for a king? Why did he touch the heart of an adulteress and the very soul of a harlot named Mary Magdalene? Why did he dine with the dreaded tax-collector? Why did he move the hearts of a centurion and of a thief hanging next to him on a cross? His love was always reaching out, always seeking to restore value.

Why did Jesus talk about us being the salt of the earth and the light of the world? Why did he talk of looking for lost sheep? Why did he heal a crippled man on the sabbath? Because we have value, worth, and are deeply cared about by God. We are very special in God's eyes! Christ wants us to realize that we are human beings with unique attributes and special personal responsibilities and opportunities. We each have a purposeful agenda in the life that has been given to us!

Guy Doud, a teacher from the Brainard, Minnesota area, was selected as the teacher of the year for 1987-88. He is very good at what he does because he sees the value in each of the students that he teaches. He cares deeply for them and they know it and they respond to that kind of love. Guy was teaching a contemporary short story class. He gave students journal assignments every day; they had to write and write and write. Then they were supposed to react to the stories they read. According to Doud, they didn't seem to understand the stories very well. But one girl was terrible! She never wrote a story—just a sentence. When Doud would try to talk with her, the walls went up. He sent notices home, hoping that her parents would do something to change her attitude and behavior. But it just made the communication worse.

Finally, at the end of six weeks, mid-trimester time, Doud gave the students a journal assignment asking them to write something they thought Doud should know about them personally. The only requirement was that they write the entire hour. Their papers were not going to be graded but they had to do the assignment if they wanted a mid-trimester grade. That evening after Doud returned from a football game, he made himself a bowl of butter brickle ice-cream and sat down to read the student's papers.

He came to this girl's paper and found that page after page was filled. She started, "I know you don't like me because I'm dumb. But I'm not as dumb as you think I am. You see, last summer I had an abortion." And then she went on to tell the whole story. She poured out her pain in the paper—how she got pregnant and ran away from home, how her boyfriend had moved away from her out to the west coast. "If I can't be with my boyfriend" she wrote, "I'd just as soon be dead!" And she started listing all of the ways she'd considered using to take her own life.

And Doud said, "I'm sitting there on a Friday night, my ice-cream is melting, and I'm reading this paper and think: My word! for six weeks, this girl has been sitting three feet away from me, and I've been more interested in Flannery O'Conner's southern gothic style and trying to shove it down her throat than I really have been about her."

This experience reconfirmed something for Guy Doud—that there is something more important, more valuable than reading, writing, and arithmetic; something even more important than computer literacy. He teaches

human beings! As children of our Heavenly Father, we have a responsibility to affirm our worth. We have a responsibility to resurrect and restore the genuine value in those who see themselves as little more than human trash.

We need someone greater than ourselves—the indwelling presence of God to resurrect us from the graves of guilt in which we bury ourselves. We need that spiritual power to resurrect us from the many ways in which we crucify and condemn ourselves, and diminish our spirits to a state that is less than fully human. Jesus demonstrated the power of God in his resurrection, but he came to resurrect us as well. He came to resurrect value, to rescue us from the garbage heaps on which we sometimes discard ourselves. Jesus became incarnate on our world so that when we are confronted with a personality of such truth, beauty, goodness, and love, we can not help but be lifted up and inspired to a new level of living and loving. Whenever the spirit of Jesus touches someone, they are transformed!

All too often we see ourselves in the same manner as the consumables that we buy. They are disposable—diapers, pens, coffee cups, razors, food containers. We see ourselves as useless, insignificant, worthless, disposable people. Sometimes we bury that which is really good within ourselves. When adversity gets the upper hand and our lives are not going as we have planned, we lose touch with the Master, we lose our sense of value and purpose.

Even when we have fallen into one of life's deep dark pits, the Spirit of the Master reaches down and lifts us up to a state of dignity once again. The energy of his Spirit restores our sense of value and brings about a transformation of our identity—we know that in God's view, we are someone very special and that we can make an important difference in the world. In partnership with God we can restore value and dignity where it has been lost! Thanks be to God!

Myra Brooks Welch wrote a marvelous poem, "The Master's Touch," that says more eloquently what I have been trying to share with you.

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But he held it up with a smile:
"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"
"A dollar, a dollar" then, "Two." "Only two?"
"Two dollars and who'll make it three?"
"Three dollars once, three dollars twice:
Going for three, ..." but no.
From the room far back, a gray haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow;
Then wiping the dust from the old violin
and tightening the loosened strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet
As a caroling angel sings.

The Resurrection of Value, cont.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said, "What am I bid for the old violin?"
And he held it up with the bow.
"A thousand dollars. And who will make it two?
Two thousand. Who'll make it three?
Three thousand once, three thousand twice,
And going and gone." said he.
The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not quite understand.
What changed it's worth?" Swift came the reply:
"The touch of the Master's hand."
And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.
A "mess of potage, a glass of wine,"
A game—and he travels on.
He is going once and going twice.
He's going and almost gone!
But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Can never quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.

God the Supreme

O Great Mother of all finite creation, we thank you
for generating the nourishing environment of
our finite adventure.
In your dynamic Ground of Being we live, and
move, and have our being.
You are the Supreme Actualizer of our
evolutionary experience, urging us to constant
growth in our mortal pilgrimage.
You require ever increasing competence and
achievement.
We must do something of significance as well as
be something of spiritual worth.
You challenge us to ascend the psychological
levels of cosmic realization and mind mastery.
You lead us in the finite exploration of the
cosmos, and we rejoice in the promise of the
thrilling adventures of eternity.

God's Gender

Richard I. Bain

In an article entitled "Whither Goest Thou, Woman?" in *The Fellowship Herald* (Spring, 1999) Jeanne Melchior takes the authors of *The Urantia Book* to task for showing gender bias in their writing. She says that the gender biased language of the book casts doubt on the book's revelatory status. She is so distressed by it that she is setting the book aside in favor of less biased spiritual writings. Are her criticisms valid? If so, what can we or should we do about it?

Sexist Language

Ms. Melchior first attacks the concept of God the Father; she claims that this gender-biased concept taints the content of the whole book. So why did the authors choose "God the Father" to indicate the first person of the Trinity? And why did Jesus call God "Father?" Ms. Melchior points out that God was known by feminine names in many early cultures. But, as I recall, these were agrarian cultures which tended to have feminine deities because of their connection with the soil and the importance of the concept of fertility for a good harvest. By contrast, the ancestors of the Hebrews were wandering herders who related to a masculine deity who was like a strong tribal leader. I think we need to consider that God the Father was the next evolutionary step in the God concept of the Hebrews. We can follow the God concept in the Old Testament as this concept evolved from a stern and vindictive God into the God of love presented by Jesus. Jesus himself spoke about the evolution of the God concept on page 1768.

Ms. Melchior quotes Jesus on page 1372-3 where he uses the concept of the earthly family as an illustration of the heavenly spiritual family. Jesus refers to the human father as the head of the family in this quote. Consider this: Jesus did not come to radically transform society, but to give as full a revelation of the Father as was possible in the culture of his day. In Jesus' day, the father was the head of the household. The role of the father as head of the household is a good illustration of the role God the Father plays in the household of the universe. But I don't think that either Jesus or the authors of *The Urantia Book* ever said that God the Father is a male figure. They wanted to convey that the first person of the Trinity is primal in the universe; he is the First Source and Center and is ancestral to all other personal beings. In the period when the Urantia Papers were received, as in Jesus' day, the father was generally acknowledged as the head of the household.

The Author's Dilemma

Possibly the authors foresaw the rise of feminism and the distress that the gender biased language of the book would cause some people. They had even greater problems with the English language, but they were "restricted to the use of the circumscribed language of the realm." When the

Urantia Papers were indited the common practice was to use “man” as a generic term for both men and women.

It is exceedingly difficult to present enlarged concepts and advanced truth, in our endeavor to expand cosmic consciousness and enhance spiritual perception, when we are restricted to the use of a circumscribed language of the realm. But our mandate admonishes us to make every effort to convey our meanings by using the word symbols of the English tongue. We have been instructed to introduce new terms only when the concept to be portrayed finds no terminology in English which can be employed to convey such a new concept partially or even with more or less distortion of meaning. (p. 1:2)

Would they have been wise to present a neutral or hybrid Mother/Father God in a culture that knew God as “Our Father which art in Heaven?” Perhaps that is further reason that the authors chose the same option as Jesus: Use the images of the prevailing culture that best describe the nature of God.

Ms. Melchior also has a problem with the designation “Sons of God” being applied to both men and women. Was it a mistake to closely link the hierarchy of the spiritual government to the human family? It is ironic that most of the beings denominated as of the order of Sons of God are non-sex beings. What meaning could the term “Sons of God” have when applied to non-sex beings? And even the angels, who are not sexual creatures, are called “Daughters of God.” In this case, there may be a basis for using this term; artists of past eras have often portrayed angels as feminine. It seems obvious to me that the authors again were trying to use existing human concepts to explain the relationship of the various orders of beings at the various levels of the universe. They may also have had the motive of trying to be consistent with Jesus usage where feasible. (pp.1589, 1929, 1931)

I do agree with one of Ms. Melchior’s objections about the mention of women in *The Urantia Book*. I think all of us would enjoy hearing more about the women’s evangelistic corps that ministered to and witnessed to women. Surely there were some worthy stories to be told about this corps. Ms. Melchior may see Jesus as guilty of gender bias, but consider how radical an action it was in his culture to commission a women’s evangelistic corps and authorize them to preach the gospel to their sisters. Under Judaism, the teaching of religion was almost exclusively the province of men. Women were not even allowed to sit with their husbands in the synagogue. It is also sad that the woman’s corps received only one brief mention in the Bible. (Luke 8:2-3)

I know that the gender bias issue is a concern for a number of women in the Urantia community. But not all women

object to the language of the book. To decide how much of an issue we should make of masculine language in *The Urantia Book*, I believe we need to ask ourselves what the intent of the authors was in using such language.

Concepts Define Language

I do not believe that either Jesus or the authors of *The Urantia Book* intended to denigrate women by their choice of language. Jesus realized that he couldn’t suddenly change the attitudes of his culture overnight; social change takes time. (He tried to change the phrase “Kingdom of God” to “Family of God” without success.) He did the best he could to begin that process in his ministry. I believe that he did his best to accord women as much equality as was possible under the circumstances. To have made the gender bias of his culture an important issue in his ministry could have alienated the people he was trying to reach with his message. And after all, his was an exclusively spiritual mission, not a social one.

I do not believe that either Jesus or the authors of The Urantia Book intended to denigrate women by their choice of language.

It appears to me that the authors of *The Urantia Book* decided to follow Jesus’ lead in avoiding social issues. They don’t address social issues such as abortion and homophobia. I can see that they faced a dilemma; should they try to use new models for the Gods and the spiritual hierarchy? If so, what would be appropriate models for God the Father, for the Sons of God, for the Daughters of God? Would their attempt to incorporate these new models have been helpful in getting across the ideas, or would promoting the new models have interfered with the message?

Nevertheless, as the songwriter tells us, “the times they are a changin’.” Women are assuming their rightful places beside men in industry, in government, and in some religious institutions in our culture. Despite the fact that Jesus and the authors of *The Urantia Book* did not intend to place women in a lesser status, the fact remains that the language does appear sexist. What can we do about this?

The Inadvisability of Editing a Revelation

Some with strong feminist feelings have suggested that we rewrite *The Urantia Book* to eliminate the gender bias. Perhaps it is a possibility, but I can foresee decades of haggling over appropriate terminology. And it is difficult to imagine a group of Foundation Trustees that would go along with such a plan. If someone did undertake such a plan, they would have to exercise due care. Much as in the process of translation from English to another language, the rewriters must take great care to see that the essential message is preserved. Could we relate to God the Head of the Household in the way we do God the Father? What of the Eternal Son and Infinite Spirit? Would they become

God's Gender, cont.

the Subsidiary but Co-equal heads of Household? I would not object to God the Father becoming the Universal Parent and God the Son becoming the Co-eternal Parent. I guess the term "Infinite Spirit" is genderless enough that that term could stay. In addition, we have no nonsexist pronouns for "he/she" or "him/her." But while we wait for possible agreement on the new terminology, what do we do in the meantime?

Inescapable Adjustments from Generic Language

I am certain that the authors of *The Urantia Book* anticipated that this situation would arise. I suspect that they hoped we would read the book with an eye to the concepts embodied in the words, rather than concentrate on the language used to convey the concepts. Of course, if we disagree with the concepts themselves, that is quite a different matter. If we think that God the Father is not the head of the celestial family, or that a Creator Son should not be the ultimate authority in a local universe, then we have serious philosophical differences with the authors of *The Urantia Book*. In such a case, we might indeed wish to set the book aside and seek for a spiritual philosophy we find more agreeable. But if we do accept the ideas behind the words, then I believe we should translate the words into their intended or highest level meanings as we read them, just as we have to do with the Bible or the Declaration of Independence.

Consider the Declaration of Independence. It tells us, "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal." What, only men? Can we know what the authors of this document, purportedly written primarily by Thomas Jefferson, had in mind? Whatever Thomas Jefferson's ideal may have been, I'm sure that he was pragmatic enough to know that inclusive language would bring controversy into the picture, and might have shattered the unity of purpose of those wishing to break with England. Or perhaps they didn't even consider gender issues, but today we recognize that a true democracy must ultimately be inclusive if it is to grow and prosper. The seeds of real equality are at least implied in the words of the Declaration. And who among us would wish to go back and alter such a great historical document in the name of gender issues?

The authors intended *The Urantia Book* to aid our individual spiritual growth and to act as a catalyst for the spiritual progress of the world. We can either use our time fussing about the gender issue in *The Urantia Book*, or we can use our time and energy learning and living the spiritual principles contained in this book. As for myself, though I acknowledge that *The Urantia Book* has some flaws, I cannot conceive of abandoning a book that contains such beautiful and powerful spiritual truths. The language may be dated, but the concepts are sublime.

The Commission to Minister

Meredith J. Sprunger

If you are not a positive and missionary evangel of your religion, you are self-deceived in that what you call a religion is only a traditional belief or a mere system of intellectual philosophy.

(U.B. p. 1780)

Service—more service, increased service, difficult service, adventurous service, and at last divine and perfect service—is the goal of time and the destination of space.

(U. B. p. 316)

The distinctive characteristic of the religion of the Spirit is the centrality of service and evangelism. Both Jesus and the authors of *The Urantia Book* point out that those who have experienced a dynamic personal relationship with God and have dedicated themselves to the demands of this relationship must *do* something about it. Genuine religion always motivates action and changes lives.

Many of us have received just enough of an inoculation of religion to have developed an immunity to the real thing. We can comfortably intellectualize and emote about it endlessly and thereby escape the fruit-bearing demands of action. Neither high sounding words, grandiose plans, nor good intentions are substitutes for service and ministry, for actually *doing* the Father's will.

The Centrality of Service

Jesus constantly emphasized the centrality of service and fruit-bearing in our relationship with the Father. Religionists have often side-stepped the demanding discipline of spiritual ministry by engaging in religious substitutes such as theologizing, in-group rule-making, legalism, defensive power struggles, dogmatic proclamation, and mystic contemplation. The basic teaching of Jesus can be summarized by three words: *attitude, action, and outreach*. We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind, and our neighbor as ourself. We actualize this love in the concrete action of creative service; and this ministry is to be directed in an outreach to the ends of the earth.

Let us recall in more detail what Jesus has to say about this life of ministering to our fellows. In the parable of the Sower he illustrates the importance of sowing the seeds of truth. This seed will obviously fall on different types of soil. The sowing is our responsibility, but the results, to a large extent, are in greater hands. We are reminded on p. 557 of *The Urantia Book* that "The evolving soul is not made divine by what it does, but by what it strives to do." We ought to strive to whet the appetites of our associates for truth, but not be overly concerned about results.

The parable of the Two Sons points out that good intentions are not enough; actually *doing* the Father's will

is required of all true sons and daughters of the heavenly Father. Or as Matthew phrases it, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21) To Peter he said, "Feed my sheep." (p. 2048)

The parables of the Good Samaritan, the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Coin all emphasize the importance of reaching out to others. Cults and Study Groups tend to be centripetal, inward; their primary relationships and focus is with insiders. Knowledge is shared with in-group members and special guidance is often claimed by the select few. A mature religion or religionist is open and outgoing and seeks to bring ministry to all humankind. When we turn from our in-group preoccupations, we see that, indeed, the "fields are white for the harvest but the laborers are few." The world hungers for a vision of a larger understanding of the universe and of God. Our world is desperately in need of the enlarged reality paradigm of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

Jesus admonishes us that we are responsible for amplifying and sharing the truth that has been given to us. On pages 1917-18 we read, "Truth is living; the Spirit of Truth is ever leading the children of light into new realms of spiritual reality and divine service. You are not given truth to crystallize into settled, safe, and honored forms. Your revelation of truth must be so enhanced by passing through your personal experience that new beauty and actual spiritual gains will be disclosed to all who behold your spiritual fruits and in consequence thereof are led to glorify the Father who is in heaven. Only those faithful servants who thus grow in the knowledge of the truth, and who thereby develop the capacity for divine appreciation of spiritual realities, can ever hope to 'enter fully into the joy of their lord.' What a sorry sight for successive generations of the professed followers of Jesus to say, regarding their stewardship of divine truth: 'Here, Master, is the truth you committed to us a hundred or a thousand years ago. We have lost nothing; we have faithfully preserved all you gave us; we have allowed no changes to be made in that which you taught us; here is the truth you gave us.' But such a plea concerning spiritual indolence will not justify the barren steward of truth in the presence of the Master. In accordance with the truth committed to your hands will the Master of truth require a reckoning."

A Clarion Call for Action

These ringing words of the authors of *The Urantia Book* are a clarion call for action and growth! Are we becoming missionary evangelists or in-group comfort seekers? We are told on pages 279-80, "In the universal regime you are not reckoned as having possessed yourself of knowledge and truth until you have demonstrated your ability and your willingness to impart this knowledge and truth to others."

The latest and greatest truth which the Master has committed into our hands is the Fifth Epochal Revelation. What fruits of the spirit show that you have done something creative in spreading this enlarged vision of truth in your community and in the world? Where have you sown this improved seed of truth? Are you cultivating personal and social soil and planting seeds with care; or, are you merely letting nature take its course and busying yourself with other things while the winds of chance broadcast the seeds at random? Are you content to admire this beautiful treasure of wisdom, drinking in its great truths, and circumspectly sharing them with a few initiates of your in-group and then returning the treasure again to its closet? Or are you putting this treasure to work in the world where it can enrich all of the peoples of the earth?

A mere handful of apostles and disciples of the Fourth Epochal Revelation turned the Roman world up-side-down. Although thousands of people are students of *The Urantia Book* most of them are "closet" followers of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. After over forty years of preparing for the time when we will have an intentional outreach program, the world, generally, is oblivious of its existence. I think the time has come to initiate a wise, but open, outreach ministry to the world. Obviously, this will not be easy. "The religion of the spirit means effort, struggle, conflict, faith, determination, love, loyalty, and progress." (p. 1729)

The Key Function of Laypersons

I would remind you that virtually all of the major spiritual advances of history were spearheaded by laypersons. The religious professionals not only are the stewards of vested interests, but their spiritual vision has been shaped and circumscribed by institutional forms and theological structures. After forty years of trying to interest the most progressive mainline ministers in *The Urantia Book*, I have regrettably come to realize that the paradigm shift to a new revelation is just too great for them. It was perfectly natural for the priests living in Jerusalem to doubt that anything of real value could originate in Nazareth. This places an extraordinary responsibility in the hands of lay people for the initiation of a spiritual renaissance powered by the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

It is easy for new spiritual movements to be captured by cult dynamics. The only escape from this cultocentric trap is to follow the ministry Jesus taught his apostles—that of engaging in an active outgoing proclamation of the Good News. We can transcend the cultocentric predicament through a courageous attempt to share these great truths with all humankind. I am convinced that the base for such evangelistic activities must be religious institutions dedicated to outreach ministry. I would invite all serious students of the Fifth Epochal Revelation to become missionary evangelists in some form of active outreach ministry.

The Commission to Minister, cont.

This ministry can take many forms and each of us must discover which function or channel we find creative. We can serve the Universal Father in every vocation and through all of the arts and sciences. We need to seek the Father's guidance and direction in our service. All of us are not called to the same ministry. Courageously keep step with the music that you hear. Whether it be the call of the trumpets, the cadence of the drums, the melody of the woodwinds, the exquisite strains of the violins, or the quieting harmony of the harp—follow your own inner leading and so will the Father's symphony of service benefit all humankind.

There are three basic forms of service in which each of us is challenged to participate. First, we should strive to live the great truths given to us. This is elemental. Second, we ought to engage in various kinds of material service. We should aid the needy, work for social, economic, and legal justice, and foster the actualization of human well-being. Finally, and most importantly, we are called to engage in a spiritual ministry to the minds and souls of our fellows. This sharing and proclamation of the good news has, historically, effected the greatest transformation of human life and society of all of the forms of ministry. Spiritual ministry is the most vital and far-reaching way to share the great truths of revelation and experience.

The Unique Function of a New Spiritual Paradigm

After more than forty years of experimenting with ways to "bootleg" the teachings of the Fifth Epochal Revelation, I am convinced that only the unique cosmological reality paradigm of *The Urantia Book* has the potential to bring a spiritual renaissance to our planet. Most of the concepts of *The Urantia Book* are already in the thought patterns of Western Civilization. It is the unique integration of these ideas in a new cosmological setting presented in the Fifth Epochal Revelation that makes them effective. Many theologians, ministers, and educators are currently presenting the essential truths of *The Urantia Book* in their teaching. This is doing much good but it lacks the integrative spiritual vision and power of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. Only the coherent message of *The Urantia Book* itself has the dynamic to bring about a transformation of the contemporary human condition.

I recognize that such an open ministry is not for timid souls. It is difficult for people who are balanced, solid citizens in their communities to risk being viewed as "different" or belonging to some strange cult or movement. Pioneers always face difficulty and hardship. Spiritual pioneering is a rigorous and lonely path of service. Do not imagine that opposition and oppression are only aberrations of the past. New and enlarged presentations of truth have always been, and will always be, attacked by religious

traditionalists and fundamentalists. Nevertheless, those who have the courage, guided by wisdom, to bring a knowledge of the Fifth Epochal Revelation to the individuals and the institutions of our world are engaging in one of the most important ministries of our times. Such missionary evangelists will open the door to a spiritual dynamic that will transform our planet in the next thousand years. An Archangel of Nebadon reminds us, "The weak indulge in resolutions, but the strong act. Life is but a day's work—do it well. The act is ours; the consequences God's." (p. 556)

Principles of Ministry

Whatever form of outreach ministry you should choose to engage in, let me share some principles of ministry that may help to guide this service. I would invite you to adapt, internalize, and live by the following seven principles of ministry.

1. *Use wisdom and balance in all of your service.* Avoid extremes, exhibitionism, oversell, and the spectacular. Learn to distinguish between artistic good taste and the theatrical. Remember that personal contact is more effective than impersonal mass communication. Understand the wisdom and effectiveness of small groups. These groups form coalitions and networks more open and dynamic than hierarchical bureaucracies and self-serving cults. Such a network is many times greater than the sum of its parts. It has multiple leadership, pluralistic policies, and its center is everywhere.

Start where people are, not where you are. Communicate in their frames of reference and anticipate their natural reactions. Combine the most expert knowledge with the highest values in all of your ministry. Master your mind through the power of the spirit. Be strong in the spirit; know that in liaison with God nothing can defeat the spiritual purposes of your life. Be fearless, but act with discretion.

2. *Let love create the atmosphere of all of your interpersonal relationships.* Remember that you cannot communicate effectively with others unless you positively and unconditionally accept them with all of their imperfections. Strive to prevent your own biases and limitations from interfering or distorting your service to them. Support, stimulate, and help people; do not seek to coerce them. See all of your fellows as persons of worth and strive to build their self-confidence and self-respect. Be natural and genuine and enjoy their company.

Serve out of love, a thankful heart, and the joy of the act itself. Ministry is an intrinsic activity of the creative mind and the loving soul. Extrinsic motivation in service compromises its spiritual value. Serving God even for good extrinsic purposes, such as building your study group or church, or even to bring about a spiritual renaissance, limits its spiritual value and personal satisfaction. Minister out of the intrinsic motivation of love, thankfulness, and joy

and the extrinsic repercussions or results will largely take care of themselves. Serve with the openness of creative love; but do not try to manipulate people.

3. *Temper your personal convictions with philosophic objectivity.* Always be honest and open. Cultivate freedom of opinion and respect the right of others to disagree with your most deeply held convictions. Honor each person's God-given right to self-determination. Try to establish common ground but do not contend with people. Let your enthusiasm for truth animate your discussions but never knowingly put people down or offend.

4. *Recognize that evolution is the underlying principle of life.* Do not expect immediate results. All growth is unconscious and has mustard seed beginnings. The roots of a new tree of life take decades to penetrate the rocks of tradition on which it is planted. Be patient but do not become the victim of a fearful "do-nothing" psychology and bury your talents and treasure in stagnation or cult obscurities. Be concerned about ministering effectively but relatively unconcerned about results. Realize that your ministry must be planned and conducted in the context of the law of readiness. Always minister at the point of evolutionary readiness but do not confuse this basic preparation for the surface conditions of psychological and social readiness. All who have prophetic vision know that evolution, the plow of history, eventually breaks the crust of individual resistance and moves the clods of social stagnation. Be loyal and persistent in your service without needing to see results or be honored by success. It is our privilege and responsibility to minister; the results are in the hands of God the Supreme. In all things cultivate in yourself the mind and attitude of the Supreme. The vicissitudes of time do not change the goals of eternity.

5. *Be actively involved in routine, commonplace experiences.* Grow, bloom, and bear fruit in the soil where you are planted. If possible, keep your old social and religious ties strong and healthy. Share at the level of spiritual acceptance. When you are a tadpole don't pretend to be a trout or an eagle. Only dedicated and creative tadpoling will bring you inner satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment. These mundane activities and identifications will bring a sense of proportion, genuineness, and integrity to your ministry. Forget the failures of the past and do not allow yourself to be preoccupied anticipating the future. Live in the present in constant fellowship with the Universal Father and absorbed in the existential moment of experience.

6. *Cultivate an active sense of humor.* Humor helps us maintain a proper sense of perspective. You can carry useful man-sized or woman-sized loads when you get the world off your shoulders. Do not take yourself too seriously even though you are participating in important work. Be unconcerned about prestige and status. Strive to

avoid self-contemplation and cultivate self-forgetfulness. Finite personalities can become tragic figures when they lose their sense of perspective and fail to appreciate the comedy of life. We need to learn to laugh at ourselves and the frustrating, ridiculous, and absurd situations we encounter. A lighthearted spirit can be a great asset in carrying the sometimes heavy burdens of ministry.

7. *Above all, live with joy in your heart and find joy in your ministry.* You belong to the Father's kingdom which has an eternal future of unimaginable adventure and reward. Nothing can long prevent the fulfillment of your most ardent spiritual hopes and fondest dreams. All who experience this faith in an eternal destiny live with irrepressible joy even in the midst of material hardship, social conflict, and seeming personal defeat. As you free yourself from the slavery of the lure of things, the adoration or criticism of people, and the importance or preoccupation with self, you will experience the liberating joys of service. You will also discover that in doing so you are free from the egocentric social pressure of being successful and establishing or maintaining a reputation.

When your will is in harmony with the Universal Father, the joy of service also brings a deep inner peace. When you no longer experience this peace of mind and joy in your ministry, find another channel of service which does fill your heart with joy because you feel that you are where you belong, where your heavenly Father wishes you to serve.

Summary

Let us now summarize what we have shared together. Jesus, by example and teaching, tells us the one thing necessary in our relationship with the Universal Father is to experience a personal fellowship with him, a living faith. This living faith activates three great spiritual truth responses: (1) loving attitudes toward God and our fellows, (2) dedicated action in service motivation, and (3) outreach ministry communicating the good news to all the world.

These three great spiritual truth responses are augmented by seven principles of ministry: wisdom initiation, love radiation, philosophical discretion, evolutionary consideration, commonplace participation, humor realization, and joyful consummation.

Now may living faith, the one all-encompassing requirement of sonship, inspire us to actualize the great truth responses of love and service, guided and enhanced by the seven-fold principles of ministry. May each of us experience Godspeed and joy in the adventure of our commission to minister!

Meredith Sprunger is a college teacher and minister of the United Church of Christ, now retired, and editor of The Spiritual Fellowship Journal.

Significant Books

The Powers That Be

Theology For a New Millennium

Walter Wink

Galilee Doubleday, New York, 1998, 207 pp.

Walter Wink is Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City. His book, *The Powers That Be*, is an attempt to show how the “Domination System” that has controlled the policies of social institutions for the last five thousand years can be changed. The social systems that governed human institutions have been rigidly hierarchical, authoritarian, and patriarchal.

Human experience is interpreted through the lens of our worldview of reality, our spiritual paradigm of meaning. Professor Wink suggests that our most creative frame of reference is an “Integral Worldview”—a panentheism view of God where everything is in God and God is in everything, but the self-identity of God is independent of particular things. Using this inclusive worldview Wink sees the “Myth of Redemptive Violence” as the key belief that keeps the spiritually deficient Domination System in power. The belief that we achieve justice through violence, peace through war, and security through strength is the bedrock on which the Domination System is founded. “The myth of redemptive violence is the simplest, laziest, most exciting, uncomplicated, irrational, and primitive depiction of evil the world has ever known. Furthermore, its orientation toward evil is one *into which virtually all modern children (boys especially) are socialized in the process of maturation.*” (p. 55)

We must redefine nonviolence and understand its spiritual power. Jesus urges us to transcend both passivity and violence by pointing to a third way—one that is assertive and yet nonviolent. The injunction to turn the other cheek and to walk the second mile are examples of doing something positive to protest an injustice. Professor Wink devotes an entire chapter describing the practical effectiveness of this kind of nonviolence in our society. In using assertive nonviolence, the means must be consistent with the ends, and show respect for the rule of law. Wink distinguishes between *force* and *violence*. “*Force* signifies a legitimate, socially authorized, and morally defensible use of restraint to prevent harm being done to innocent people. *Violence* would be a morally illegitimate or excessive use of force.” (p. 159)

Professor Wink has written a brilliant and helpful book. The limitations of the book, in my judgment, are that he tends to center on social action and the Domination System rather than the process of spiritual transformation that results in social action. His emphasis gravitates toward politics and institutions rather than the spiritual transformation of the individual and the evolutionary process which eventually results in social, political, and institutional change. These deficiencies may be the result of the incompleteness of Wink’s Integral Worldview: the recognition that God’s *primary* relationship with our world is through God’s indwelling spirit in *individuals* and the *evolutionary process*. Social action and change in politics and institutions are the end result of this individual spiritual transformation.

-MJS

The Christian Fellowship of Students of *The Urantia Book*, Inc.

The Spiritual Fellowship Journal

P. O. Box 1091

Flint, MI 48501

Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Flint, MI

Permit #132