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Dear Mr. Alexander:

A friend recently sent me a copy of your August SCP Newsletter in which Dean Halverson reviews The Urantia Book. Among the various comments on the book by conservative religionists which have come to my attention, your article is the most comprehensive and intellectually respectable. There are, however, numerous inaccuracies.

Urantia Societies do not generally meet on Sunday and attend several study groups during the week. (some do). There are no credal statements which are recited. The study group attended is not determined by the number of years the person has studied the book. I do know of some study groups which require comprehensive knowledge of the book for meaningful participation but this is not primarily related to a time factor. Spiritual growth "over many lifetimes on many planets" seems to imply a series of reincarnations which is an incorrect implication of The Urantia Book's view of spiritual growth.

Superficially there are some parallels between Gnosticism and The Urantia Book but in actuality the theology of the book does not stand in the tradition of the Gnostic heresies. The Urantia Book view of Jesus is not that he is "merely one of those emanated spirits" but (to quote Halverson) "Jesus is, in bodily form, the very image of the eternal God and is sovereign over all things. He is the 'head over every power and authority' (Col. 2:9) because he created them (Col. 1:16)." This is not only the position of The Urantia Book but the book's view of the centrality and sovereignty of Jesus is even more pronounced than that of orthodox Christianity.

The quotes taken from p. 1670 are taken out of context. What the authors of The Urantia Book are trying to do is not deny the importance of the person of Jesus but to point out that the gospel is more than a personality cult: "We would not belittle the place of the person of Jesus in a religion which might bear his name, but we would not permit such consideration to elipse his inspired life or to supplant his saving message: the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man." (p. 1670)

The classification of The Urantia Book as a "gospel which falls into the category of an Eclectic-Syncretistic movement" is a logical classification for an educated person to make who has a superficial knowledge of the book. It does have eclectic and syncretistic

ramifications but is a unique, holistic system which is neither eclectic or syncretistic in its essential nature.

To compare the life and teachings of Jesus in The Urantia Book with The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ is like lumping Jesus with the Essenes. They are not even close to being in the same league. The Aquarian Gospel is a superficial treatment of Jesus from a one-sided philosophical point of view; whereas, The Urantia Book's life of Jesus is a balanced, comprehensive treatment which is solidly rooted in the historic New Testament realities. The observation that The Urantia Book "systematically erases the distinction between creature and creator" is also incorrect. In some ways the enlarged concept of Deity and the universe in The Urantia Book actually magnifies the vast difference between creator and creature. Even after man achieves Paradise status the great difference between creature and creator remains.

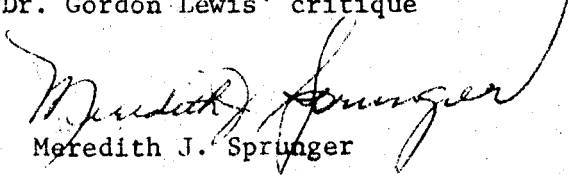
The various errors concerning the message of The Urantia Book in your article suggest that Dean Halverson either did not give the book a complete reading or chose to allow his own theological orientation to dictate what it implied rather than what the authors are actually saying. Incidentally, he also confuses Dr. William S. Sadler with William Sadler, Jr. Nevertheless, I should like to compliment both Mr. Halverson and the SCP Newsletter for attempting to evaluate The Urantia Book. It is an important book which should be called to the attention of the church for critical study. Even after a thorough reading, it is a difficult book to review.

New truth always must go through a period of testing. Paul was considered "mad" when he predicted the gospel of Jesus would be the wave of the future; and to the orthodox Hebrews he admitted they appeared to be deceivers - yet what they were saying was true. My guess is that The Urantia Book will meet essentially the same reception given the message of Jesus. The religious fundamentalists (Pharisees) with the best of intentions will label it heretical or even a work of the devil; the liberals and the power structure (Sadducees) will largely ignore it as irrelevant; but the great majority will receive it gladly when they have an opportunity to read it for themselves.

We hope to encourage critical research on the book by philosophers, theologians, and others. If it does not have solid spiritual value it will pass as another "aberration" of religious history; if it does have spiritual authenticity, it will win its way into the minds and hearts of mankind. Narrow, self-serving cults and half-truths cannot bear the light of critical examination and research. So all who are sincerely dedicated to truth and spiritual reality should welcome and encourage the most rigorous examination. Thank you, again, for your contribution toward this end.

Would you please place me on your mailing list to receive the SCP Newsletter and send me a copy of Dr. Gordon Lewis' critique of The Urantia Book.

Sincerely,


Meredith J. Sprunger