



the Fellowship Herald

Summer 2016

A publication of *The Urantia Book* Fellowship

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A CIRCLE OF KINDRED SPIRITS

By Bobbie Dreier, Fort Lee, NJ and Francis Oliver Lynn, Princeton, NJ

FROM BOBBIE...

Recently I started a new kind of study group. My husband Steve and I have hosted and attended *Urantia Book* study groups for forty years. Our regular study group has become family and an anchor in our lives. Study group is a treasured social and educational occasion and continues to enhance my understanding of the teachings. Although we have instituted a short period of silent contemplation I felt the need for something more—something to supplement, not supplant the study experience. The revelation is the basis of my personal religion and I wanted to experience an atmosphere of communion when we met to study—a *feeling of fellowship with the divine...the beginning of group worship.*” [103:4.1] (P.1133)

I have a personal prayer life. Conversations with God replaced the rote prayers of my childhood when I began reading *The Urantia Book*. And sixteen years ago, I began meditating regularly each morning. My intention during this quiet time, my “divine appointment,” is to enhance my relationship with God, to help me keep a consciousness of the reality of spirit through the day. I have a little talk with my Father in heaven and although I don’t expect to hear a voice, I sit in quiet receptivity. Nothing magical or mystical happens during my meditation, but over the years I experienced a growing consciousness of the presence of spirit in my life.

I value the combination of studying the teachings with a group *and* my personal prayer and meditation time. For some time, however, I’ve had the feeling that we could use the power of the group in worshipful contemplation to spiritualize our study. We are told that “*intellectually, socially, and spiritually two moral creatures do not merely double their personal potentials of universe achievement by partnership technique; they more nearly quadruple their attainment and accomplishment possibilities.*” [43:8.11] (P.494, 495) Why not consciously multiply our intellectual, social, and spiritual potentials when we gather? Rather than a social occasion I imagined a *Urantia Book* study group as a place where we could study and share our lives in the spirit, where we could actively apply some of the “*habits which favor religious growth ... worshipful problem solving, [and] sharing one’s spiritual life with one’s fellows...*” [100:1.8] (P.1095)

The encouragement of *group* worship is among the purposes of the socialization of religion. I wondered if worshipping

together in study group could help us transfer *The Urantia Book* teachings off the pages and into our lives—to walk the walk as well as we talk the talk. “*The worship experience consists in the sublime attempt of the betrothed Adjuster to communicate to the divine Father the inexpressible longings and the unutterable aspirations of the human soul...*” [5:3.8] (P.66) Could we, as a group of *Urantia Book* students share our personal soul longings with each other? Could worshipping together with the encouraging presence of trusted friends foster a level of intimacy that would enable us to support each other’s desire to live the teachings?

For several summers Gard Jameson and I have facilitated Circles of Trust, inspired by Parker Palmer’s *A Hidden Wholeness*, at preconference retreats. Deep respectful listening was the foundation of the experience. Based on the Quaker practice of “silent waiting, where we expect to come into the presence of God [and]...listen for the still, small voice that comes from God through the inward light...” (Friends General Conference, 2013) the goal was to create a safe space in which we could listen for inner guidance and affirm each other by our loving presence. “Allowing brief reflective silences to fall between speakers...gives everyone time to absorb what has been said...When we listen more deeply to others, we can listen more deeply to ourselves.” (Palmer, pp.119–121) In the retreat we spent time in extended silent meditation and created a level of trust and “soul” sharing by adhering to the following guidelines which encouraged respectful listening and trusting the silence.

- We listen to a spiritually evocative poem or story.
- We are invited to respond from our souls.
- We trust the silence and speak only when we can improve upon it.
- We ask each other honest open questions to help reach for deeper truth.
- We confront and correct ourselves, but never each other—no advising, no fixing, no setting straight!
- We learn to love by listening receptively to each other.

We were admonished not to respond to each other based on our knowledge or experience. It was counter intuit-

tive guidance, because *we want to help each other* and are *habituated to giving advice*. But the only true answers to our questions would come from our inner teachers. For me the experience of learning to listen and being listened to was transformative, and I decided to create a new study group inspired by my experience.

I called the new group a Circle of Kindred Spirits. The goal was to create a community of readers who *consciously* support each other's spiritual journey. It was important to begin with readers who meditate regularly and would willingly suspend the interactive nature of study groups, which encourages discussing, debating, questioning, and explaining passages. I initially invited thirteen friends with whom I had participated in retreats, readers who had a regular meditation practice and those who had expressed an interest in such a project. Among the participants was Francis Oliver Lynn, a longtime reader and Quaker practitioner. The group gathered for the first time on October 5th 2014 and met almost monthly since then with an average attendance of eight although most of the group travels more than an hour to attend. It was my hope that if we succeeded in establishing a process that worked we could then invite others to join us.

The structure of the Circle evolved as follows:

- Fellowship (½ hour): This was the *material/social* portion of the gathering, a time to have a cup of “coffee and ...” to catch up with each other.
- Study Group (one hour): This was a time primarily to engage our minds. We studied a pre-assigned passage from *The Urantia Book* with a desire to understand each other's point of view by respectfully listening rather than debating.
- Worshipful Meditation (½ hour): We engaged in a process of “*divine listening*” to a short *spiritual* passage from the book. “*Jesus taught his followers that, when they had made their prayers to the Father, they should remain for a time in silent receptivity to afford the indwelling spirit the better opportunity to speak to the listening soul.*” [146:2.17] (P.1641)
- Circle of Trust (one hour): We listened to a spiritually evocative poem or story to stimulate our deeply felt concerns or longings. We spoke only when moved to share, and we affirmed each other by respectfully listening—remaining silent to honor those who spoke. I think of this practice as *soul-sharing*.

The first couple of Circle sessions were very challenging. I encouraged everyone to read *A Hidden Wholeness* in preparation for the gathering, but initially most of the group had not read it. Unfortunately, as we are all so used to *preparing a response* instead of listening when someone

is speaking, there was no real waiting between comments. We are not used to extended periods of silence and often, someone spoke out of seeming nervousness rather than spiritual insight. In addition, albeit lovingly intended, too much advice was offered, and I felt responsible to keep a safe space for everyone. Although I was reluctant to intervene when the guidelines were not followed I knew that our fragile experiment would fail if we didn't adhere to the guidelines so that participants felt secure enough to share their inner lives. It was difficult for me because in order to maintain an atmosphere of trust, the facilitator must also be a participant.

A Circle of Trust “has no agenda except to help people listen to their own souls and discern their own truth.” (Palmer, p. 53) But old habits are tenacious and in the beginning we were all learning a new way of sharing our spiritual lives together. On one occasion I gently reminded Francis that he was “advising” after he responded with an explanation to someone's poignant soul offering. Although seemingly defensive at the time, after prayer and reflection he shared his “listening revelation” in a communication to the group:

“I have realized the wonderful gift of healing experienced through truly listening to one another. The mind, heart, and soul of each person has a need to express its sincere longing for spiritual guidance. What is required of the listeners is not their specific responses, but their receptivity to the divine presence that makes it possible for the soul of the speaker to freely and safely find expression and receive the guidance for which they are seeking.”

As the Circle evolved over the months more participants read Palmer's book, and with our accumulating experience the value of his process and guidelines became evident. We became keenly aware of how hard it is to truly listen to one another and what a gift it is to be listened to. In the process we were learning how to be authentic with each other—to integrate our inner and outer lives. The level of trust and the depth of inner life sharing became evident. Our Circle of Kindred Spirits had begun with the intention of consciously supporting each other on our Godward quest, not only to study about God, but to worship him and better reveal him in our lives. The group has decided to continue the experiment and I hope we are achieving our goals.

FROM FRANCIS...

As a longtime *Urantia Book* reader having read and contemplated the revelation within the structure of the study group, I became aware that studying the teachings was not enough to feed my hungry soul. I needed worshipful com-

munion—prayer and meditation, a daily discipline to put my faith into a practice that went deeper than the exploration of the amazing gift of our revelation. As time went on, I began to participate in a variety of religious forms. My search led me to the Quaker faith.

For twenty years I participated in Quaker faith and practice, marrying in a Quaker Meeting House, directing a Quaker youth conference center, teaching at the Princeton Friends School in New Jersey, and serving as the head of worship and ministry for the Princeton Friends Meeting. These experiences had served quite well to nurture my need for a communal spiritual life, and all the while I continued to participate in *Urantia Book* study groups, including hosting one for several years.

Yet, there was still something missing. My knowledge of the truth of the Fifth Epochal Revelation was not well received among my Quaker Friends, not one Quaker responded with open and sincere receptivity. The one constant comfort on this journey was my wife, Suzanne, who shares with me many of the same spiritual qualities and quests, so I was not truly alone.

Eventually the participants in the study group I had hosted moved on and so I occasionally attended the study group hosted by Bobbie and Steve Dreier. On one occasion, at the International Conference held at the University of Massachusetts, I attended a morning meditation facilitated by Bobbie. This experience was very similar to the Quaker form of worship—sitting in silence meditating upon the presence of the inner spirit. This was the very first time that I had experienced actual communal worship with kindred spirits of *The Urantia Book*—and I wanted more.

Last year Bobbie invited Suzanne and me to participate in a group she was forming, a “Circle of Kindred Spirits,” and asked us to read a book written by Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness, The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. Palmer is a Quaker elder and I was being led to an opportunity to finally converge distinct and cherished paths of my spiritual journey into a collective communal experience.

The goal of the group was to enhance our spiritual receptivity—to allow the conspiracy of spiritual forces dwelling within each of us to be activated; perhaps even our unseen friends would delight in guiding our effort. We were utilizing a time honored Quaker worshipful practice in which members simply gather to listen to the deeply felt spiritual responses of each participant. In this format there is a great deal of silence where each person consciously invites the inner teacher to infiltrate their thoughts, and when a person feels moved to speak, prompted by the “*light within*,” they do so. However, no one addresses a person directly,

or engages in dialogue; people simply speak when they are moved to speak, and the responsibility of each participant is to worshipfully listen and to allow the thoughts expressed to influence their minds in whatever manner that resonates with their inner teacher.

It is essential that periods of silence occur after a person speaks to allow for the absorption of what has been shared. This communal worship sharing is quite useful in allowing for the *soul* of each person to feel safe and to be fully present within the group. In this process, there is no attempt at convincing, correcting, fixing, helping and advising or coming to a solution or conclusion. The key element to this Quaker practice is *listening—divinely listening*, a precious gift that encourages inner life sharing—and listening is a practice that is never fully perfected—that ability is of God from whom we receive our guidance.

I discovered that practicing the art of listening that I had become accustomed to while worshiping with Quakers was initially really difficult when combined with the study of *The Urantia Book*—it was challenging for me to transition from the study group format to the practice of divine listening. On one occasion there was a key moment when, after meditating on a recited phrase, a participant expressed a personal *soul-felt* struggle. I was deeply moved by what he had said and immediately proceeded to present what I considered a well thought out and possibly helpful perspective. I was initially puzzled when Bobbie gently informed me that I was not following the guidelines. Surely what I had said was of value and it was consistent with the teachings of *The Urantia Book*, and after all, I did demonstrate my insightful interpretation of the teachings as they pertained to the concern expressed and had generously offered my perspective. I was being of service. I had much to say and admittedly was at times quite passionate in my attempt to present a persuasive explanation for what I considered to be a gracious offering.

After the Circle of Trust session, we processed what had taken place regarding my offering and Bobbie’s response informing me that I was advising and therefore sending an unwelcome ripple upon the fabric of our group trust. The patience and willingness of the group to explore this issue served as a bridge to understanding our process of *attempting to achieve and sustain an atmosphere of sublime trust*, and most importantly we had reaffirmed the essential value of divine worshipful listening to one another’s inner life struggles. What I realized is that my offering to my brother’s soulful expression was not in the interest of what he truly needed. Instead I was demonstrating my so-called mastery of *Urantia Book* information, and I was thrilled by the op-

portunity to showcase my ability to beautifully articulate this understanding in a way that would benefit others—when in fact I was benefiting my own sense of intellectual satisfaction. I subsequently realized that worshipful listening is an essential practice during every form of fellowship.

I have learned that we need to embrace communal experiences and to consciously invite the Spirit of Truth to stir among us, and to communally invite our Thought Adjusters to guide us in worshiping our Father. We must seize upon the opportunity to invite the Holy Spirit of our Creative Mother to guide our conscious thinking as we grapple with decisions in our personal lives and as a community of truth seekers. We can put into practice divine listening when we are in thoughtful study of the revelation, attentively listening to the whisper of the soul within each person's contributions. Every one of us can consciously offer a silent prayer to open our minds to one another that we may truly share the spiritual gifts that we each possess in abundance. And for me, of supreme value, is that we engage in worship of our Father within a circle of trusting kindred spirits. That is in essence living the faith of Jesus, for in being sublimely soul present, we receive what we are giving for we are collectively embraced in the Spirit of Truth.

Souls Embracing
One Another
True listening
Divine presence
Healing

Souls Expressing
Innermost Thought
Communion
God's Love
Spirit of Truth
Holy Spirit
Guidance

Souls Sharing
Meditation Prayer Worship
Giving
Receiving
Growing
Godward

BOBBIE AND FRANCIS...

It's been an interesting journey. We came together in a Circle of Kindred Spirits because we felt the need to spiritualize the study of *The Urantia Book* in an atmosphere

of communion and to intentionally support each other's Godward quest. In addition to engaging our minds and attempting to understand the teachings, we are supporting each other in the process of accessing inner truth, to feel the values and experience the reality of the teachings in our lives. We are trying to "reality-ize!" "*Mind knows quantity, reality, meanings. But quality—values—is felt. That which feels is the mutual creation of mind, which knows, and the associated spirit, which reality-izes.*" [111:3.6] (P.1219)

We are learning to love by listening. In the words of one of Palmer's Circle of Trust participants: "... I learned a new and demanding way to listen, a way unencumbered by my own antipathies and judgments. I learned to listen openly for the soul of another, for that which is genuine and sacred. In a moment of realization I saw that this was the way I could put love into practice—by listening selflessly with complete attention to another. I could do this at any time with anyone I met. I could simply practice love through listening." (Palmer, p. 143)

Although the challenges of competing commitments and not living in close proximity remain, we have decided to meet bi-monthly as we continue the process. Our experiment with a Circle of Kindred Spirits has begun to fulfill our desire for spiritual community. We are creating a deep level of trust and broadening our level of study by maintaining a consciousness of the spirit *within* and *around* us. It is our hope that we are helping each other reveal the spirit of the revelation in our lives. We are striving to perfect the art of *divine listening* and encourage you to go and do likewise!

Bobbie Dreier is a retired teacher and the grandmother of Matthew (21) and Jason (16). She and her husband Steve will celebrate their 54th wedding anniversary this year. She has worked to foster an "atmosphere of communion" at Urantia Book gatherings in preconference retreats, daily meditation sessions and worship programs. Currently Bobbie is a member of the Education Committee and has been actively involved in local and national Urantia Book activities with Steve for over 40 years.

Francis Oliver Lynn had the good fortune of discovering *The Urantia Book* when he was twenty years old. The day after he spent an evening walking on the campus of Notre Dame communing with God, he was given the gift of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. A newly found friend had placed the book in his hands and said, "I have a feeling that this is something that will appeal to you," an interesting intuition since she had never opened the book. A window into the universe had been opened and Francis has never stopped peering into the nature of God since that moment.

LISTEN UP GRANDPARENTS AND YAYAS

By Sara Blackstock, Walnut Creek, CA

Parents of today and those to come who have found the teachings of *The Urantia Book* to be essential to their spiritual development NEED your experience, your suggestions, your mentoring. To pass on what you have learned is actually a principle found at all levels of our universe career. Many of us who are long time “UBers” were on our own as we attempted to pass the truths of *The Urantia Book* to our children. We did it by the seat of our pants with various levels of success. There is now a generation of grandparents, and the younger generation who you raised, who can benefit measurably by your willingness to share some of your experiences.

Even a short answer to the following questions could be instructive:

1. If you raised your children with the teachings of *The Urantia Book*, what were the methods you felt were most receptive by your children: reading stories from *The Urantia Book*, telling stories, sending them to Sunday school, bringing them to conferences, having a study group in your home, or other methods?

2. What methods did not work? Perhaps even turned you off from *The Urantia Book*?

3. Children talk about God, heaven, hell, angels, the devil, good and evil. How did your children socialize the teachings? Did they have other children with whom they could share these concepts, or were they isolated within the sometimes specialized language of *The Urantia Book*?

4. If your partner was not involved in *The Urantia Book*, how did you work out what would be taught to your children?

5. What rituals or ceremonies, if any, were a part of your home life?

6. Are your children involved with *The Urantia Book* currently? Do they attend a church? Have they left the teachings to the side? Are they just not interested in religion? Have they found another path for spiritual fulfillment?

7. If you were raised in a home where your parent/s embraced *The Urantia Book*, what did you experience in your home which illustrated and taught the truths of life? What created a desire in you to continue to embrace *The Urantia Book* teachings?

8. If as a child growing up in a home where stories and terminology from *The Urantia Book* were used in normal, daily interaction, did you find it difficult to interact with peers who knew nothing about Fandors or Lucifer or Adam and Eve, or life on other planets, for example?

9. If you grew up in a home with parents who “inculcated” you into *The Urantia Book* teachings, if/when you have children what methods would you NOT recommend to parents as they desire to share *The Urantia Book*?

10. What were at least three of the most memorable truths emphasized in your home, or that you emphasized as a parent?

11. Jesus told his apostles: “It is not so important that you should know about the fact of God as that you should increasingly grow in the ability to feel the presence of God.” [155:6.12] (P. 1733) How did you as a parent embrace this truth in your home, or if you grew up in a home where your parents were aware of this, how did they provide the environment for this “feeling” as differentiated from “the fact of God”?

Thank you on behalf of the current parents and parents-to-be for your time and responses. Please send them to Sara Blackstock blackstocksara7@gmail.com and with the guidance of the Family Life Team (Richard Daunt, Riula Deoto, Miranda Clendening, Tony Finstad, Angie Thurston, and Janet Farrington, our wise mentor) will compile them to be shared in the next issue of the Fellowship Herald and put on the Family Life website: www.urantiafamilylife.org and the Fellowship web site www.urantiabook.org. If you so wish, your replies can be anonymous.

Sara Blackstock feels she has had the privilege of working with school-age children for almost 50 years as a teacher and administrator. She coordinated three Jerusalem Marketplaces at three International Conferences sponsored by the Fellowship, and is now the interim coordinator of the Family Life Team of the Fellowship.

EARLY PERSECUTIONS OF JESUS' FOLLOWERS AND DISPERSION OF THE APOSTLES

By Lawrence J. Bowman, Scottsdale, AZ

Consider the following passages from *The Urantia Book*:

Nathaniel's father (Bartholomew) died shortly after Pentecost, after which this apostle went into Mesopotamia and India proclaiming the glad tidings of the kingdom and baptizing believers. His brethren never knew what became of their onetime philosopher, poet, and humorist. But he was also a great man in the kingdom and did much to spread his Master's teachings, even though he did not participate in the organization of the subsequent Christian church. Nathaniel died in India. [139:6.9] (P. 1559)

Thomas had a trying time during the days of the trial and crucifixion. He was for a season in the depths of despair, but he rallied his courage, stuck to the apostles, and was present with them to welcome Jesus on the Sea of Galilee. For a while he succumbed to his doubting depression but eventually rallied his faith and courage. He gave wise counsel to the apostles after Pentecost and, when persecutions scattered the believers, went to Cyprus, Crete, the North African coast, and Sicily, preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom and baptizing believers. And Thomas continued preaching and baptizing until he was apprehended by the agents of the Roman government and was put to death in Malta. Just a few weeks before his death he had begun the writing of the life and teachings of Jesus. [139:8.13] (P. 1563)

Philip went on through the trying times of the Master's death, participated in the reorganization of the twelve, and was the first to go forth to win souls for the kingdom outside of the immediate Jewish ranks, being most successful in his work for the Samaritans and in all his subsequent labors in behalf of the gospel. ... [H]e was finally crucified for his faith and buried at Hierapolis. [139:5.11-12] (P. 1557-58)

After the dispersion because of the Jerusalem persecutions, Simon [Zelotees] went into temporary retirement. He was literally crushed. As a nationalist patriot he had surrendered in deference to Jesus' teachings; now all was lost. He was in despair, but in a few years he rallied his hopes and went forth to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom.

He went to Alexandria and, after working up the Nile, penetrated into the heart of Africa, everywhere preaching

the gospel of Jesus and baptizing believers. Thus he labored until he was an old man and feeble. And he died and was buried in the heart of Africa. [139:11.10-11] (P. 1565)

When these persecutions caused the believers to forsake Jerusalem, Matthew journeyed north, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and baptizing believers. He was lost to the knowledge of his former apostolic associates, but on he went, preaching and baptizing, through Syria, Cappadocia, Galatia, Bithynia, and Thrace. And it was in Thrace, at Lysimachia, that certain unbelieving Jews conspired with the Roman soldiers to encompass his death. ... [139:7.10] (P. 1560)

... And as concerns James [Zebedee], it was literally true—he did drink the cup with the Master, seeing that he was the first of the apostles to experience martyrdom, being early put to death with the sword by Herod Agrippa. James was thus the first of the twelve to sacrifice his life upon the new battle line of the kingdom. ... [139:3.8] (P. 1553)

When the later persecutions finally scattered the apostles from Jerusalem, Andrew journeyed through Armenia, Asia Minor, and Macedonia and, after bringing many thousands into the kingdom, was finally apprehended and crucified in Patrae in Achaia. ... [139:1.12] (P. 1550)

Peter's wife was a very able woman. For years she labored acceptably as a member of the women's corps, and when Peter was driven out of Jerusalem, she accompanied him upon all his journeys to the churches as well as on all his missionary excursions. And the day her illustrious husband yielded up his life, she was thrown to the wild beasts in the arena at Rome.

And so this man Peter, an intimate of Jesus, one of the inner circle, went forth from Jerusalem ... and he regarded himself as the recipient of high honors when his captors informed him that he must die as his Master had died—on the cross. And thus was Simon Peter crucified in Rome. [139:2.14-15] (P. 1552)

John [Zebedee] was in prison several times and was banished to the Isle of Patmos for a period of four years until another emperor came to power in Rome. Had not John been tactful and sagacious, he would undoubtedly have been killed as was his more outspoken brother James. As the years passed, John, together with James the Lord's

brother, learned to practice wise conciliation when they appeared before the civil magistrates. ... [139:4.13] (P. 1555)

The preceding selections from paper 139, “The Twelve Apostles”—the longest paper in *The Urantia Book*—briefly summarize what became of the nine apostles who went on to become spokesmen of the teachings of Jesus after the crucifixion and Pentecost. The Alpheus twins played no further role, and Judas Iscariot killed himself before his Master was even nailed to the cross. Of these nine, six were put to death by Roman authorities. The remaining three died natural deaths, with two of them (John and Simon) living long lives. John Zebedee, at 24 the youngest when he was chosen an apostle, lived to be the oldest (101). We can only imagine what he thought about the growth he had witnessed of the religion that had developed over more than seven decades since the death of Jesus.

I have rearranged the above passages by the order that it seems to me the apostles finally left Jerusalem. Although Philip is described as “*the first to go forth to win souls for the kingdom outside of the immediate Jewish ranks,*” I have placed him as the third to leave. Acts 8:5–13 says he took the gospel to Samaria following the martyrdom of Stephen.¹ Also, as we will see in a moment from a later passage in *The Urantia Book*, Philip was one of the six apostles who initially played active roles in the early preaching of the gospel. Nathaniel and Thomas had left, and Simon Zelotes seemed to be keeping a low profile.

In the above passages there are tantalizing statements that make readers wonder how long the apostles remained together before they went their separate ways. “*When the later persecutions finally scattered the apostles from Jerusalem ...*” “*... was the first to go forth to win souls for the kingdom outside of the immediate Jewish ranks ...*” “*His brethren never knew what became of [Nathaniel]. ...*” “*When these persecutions caused the believers to forsake Jerusalem ...*” “*... He was lost to the knowledge of his former apostolic associates ...*” “*... when persecutions scattered the believers ...*”

We need to have a better understanding of how long the remaining nine apostles stayed together and what events led to their dispersals. We also need to understand the role of Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of the early followers of Jesus who had a spiritual transformation on his way to Damascus and became Paul, the real founder of the Christian church. And we also need to know if there were others who knew Jesus personally who became martyrs to their faith.

Consider again this statement in the passage about John Zebedee: “*... As the years passed, John, together with*

James the Lord’s brother, learned to practice wise conciliation when they appeared before the civil magistrates. ...” [139:4.13] P. 1555)

This seems to imply that James, the brother of Jesus, who became the titular head of the Christian church in Jerusalem, eventually died a natural death. However, according to Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived a generation after Jesus and is an important non-Christian source on the period of the early years of the church, James “suffered martyrdom by stoning at the instigation of the high priest Ananus during the interregnum after the death of the procurator Festus in AD 61.”² The early Christian writer St. Hegesippus says James was thrown from a Temple tower.³

I was startled when I first learned this about James several years ago. I have always wondered why *The Urantia Book* says nothing about James’s demise.

Rodan of Alexandria, who met Jesus in September, AD 29, and had lengthy discussions with Nathaniel and Thomas, yielded up his life in Greece with others “*when the persecutions were at their height.*” [161:2.12] (P. 1787)

THE FIRST MARTYR

We know that most of the apostles immediately went into hiding when the Roman authorities arrested Jesus. Only John was with the Master through the long evening and into the terrifying hours of the early morning. Peter followed the temple guards and Roman soldiers to the home of Annas but returned to the camp at Gethsemane after having denied to attendants in the courtyard that he was a follower of Jesus. By Saturday night after the crucifixion, the remaining eleven apostles were assembled in secret in the upper chamber of the home of John Mark’s father. Thomas, however, quickly left for the home of Simon in Bethpage, where he grieved in solitude. He remained there for a week until Peter and John brought him back with them, and Jesus made a morontia appearance to the gathered apostles. The group then left for Galilee and remained there for some two weeks until returning to Jerusalem. They purposely entered the city after nightfall so as not to be seen by the Jewish authorities. They were saddened to learn of the death of Elijah Mark and avoided appearing in public for the funeral.

That evening the apostles met in the upper chamber. All but Thomas, Simon Zelotes, and the Alpheus twins “*pledged themselves to go forth in the public preaching of the new gospel of the risen Lord ...*” “*Already had begun the first steps of changing the gospel of the kingdom—sonship with God and brotherhood with man—into the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus. Nathaniel opposed this shift in the burden of their public message, but he could not*

withstand Peter's eloquence, neither could he overcome the enthusiasm of the disciples, especially the women believers." [192:4.7] (P. 2051)

The apostles largely remained in hiding at the home of the widow, Mary Mark, until after Jesus' ascension and the bestowal of the Spirit of Truth on the day of Pentecost.

Soon after Pentecost the twins returned to their homes in Galilee. Simon Zelotes was in retirement for some time before he went forth preaching the gospel. Thomas worried

with sentries standing at the doors, but the apostles were not inside. Instead, they were told, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." [Acts 5:23,25]

And so all went well in Jerusalem until the time of the coming of the Greeks in large numbers from Alexandria. Two of the pupils of Rodan arrived in Jerusalem and made many converts from among the Hellenists. Among their early converts were Stephen and Barnabas. These able

The apostles largely remained in hiding at the home of the widow, Mary Mark, until after Jesus' ascension and the bestowal of the Spirit of Truth on the day of Pentecost.

for a shorter time and then resumed his teaching. Nathaniel differed increasingly with Peter regarding preaching about Jesus in the place of proclaiming the former gospel of the kingdom. This disagreement became so acute by the middle of the following month [June, 30 AD] that Nathaniel withdrew, going to Philadelphia to visit Abner and Lazarus; and after tarrying there for more than a year, he went on into the lands beyond Mesopotamia preaching the gospel as he understood it.

This left but six of the original twelve apostles to become actors on the stage of the early proclamation of the gospel in Jerusalem: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Matthew. [193:6.4-5] (2058) (emphasis added)

Section 4, "Beginnings of the Christian Church," of paper 194, "Bestowal of the Spirit of Truth," summarizes how "this Jesus sect" quickly attracted followers and once more gained the attention of the Sadducees. They "began to put the leaders of the Jesus sect in jail until they were prevailed upon to accept the counsel of one of the leading rabbis, Gamaliel, who advised them: 'Refrain from these men and let them alone, for if this counsel or this work is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them, lest haply you be found even to be fighting against God.' They decided to follow Gamaliel's counsel, and there ensued a time of peace and quiet in Jerusalem, during which the new gospel about Jesus spread rapidly." [194:4.10] (P. 2067-8)

According to Acts, when the apostles were arrested and put in the common prison, "an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, 'Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.' And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and taught." [Acts 5:18-21] The temple officers could not figure out how the prison could be securely locked

Greeks did not so much have the Jewish viewpoint, and they did not so well conform to the Jewish mode of worship and other ceremonial practices. And it was the doings of these Greek believers that terminated the peaceful relations between the Jesus brotherhood and the Pharisees and Sadducees. Stephen and his Greek associate began to preach more as Jesus taught, and this brought them into immediate conflict with the Jewish rulers. In one of Stephen's public sermons, when he reached the objectionable part of the discourse, they dispensed with all formalities of trial and proceeded to stone him to death on the spot.

Stephen, the leader of the Greek colony of Jesus' believers in Jerusalem, thus became the first martyr to the new faith and the specific cause for the formal organization of the early Christian church. This new crisis was met by the recognition that believers could not longer go on as a sect within the Jewish faith. They all agreed that they must separate themselves from unbelievers; and within one month from the death of Stephen the church at Jerusalem had been organized under the leadership of Peter, and James the brother of Jesus had been installed as its titular head.

And thus broke out the new and relentless persecutions by the Jews, so that the active teachers of the new religion about Jesus, which subsequently at Antioch was called Christianity, went forth to the ends of the empire proclaiming Jesus. In carrying this message, before the time of Paul the leadership was in Greek hands; and these first missionaries, as also the later ones, followed the path of Alexander's march of former days, going by way of Gaza and Tyre to Antioch and then over Asia Minor to Macedonia, then on to Rome and to the uttermost parts of the empire. [194:4.11-13] (P. 2068)

PAUL'S CONVERSION

The question arises: When was Stephen martyred? The above paragraphs make it sound like several years passed between Pentecost and his death. But much earlier in *The Urantia Book* we are given a clue as to when Stephen died. Remember that Stephen had met Jesus when he was in Jerusalem for his first Passover. That was in 17 AD. The two men talked for four hours. Stephen “*never even faintly surmised that the Galilean he had talked with some fifteen years previously was the very same person whom he later proclaimed the world’s Savior, and for whom he was so soon to die, thus becoming the first martyr of the newly evolving Christian faith.*” [128:3.6] (P. 1411) (emphasis added) Add fifteen to 17 AD and that brings us to 32 AD, just two years after Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection.

As Stephen was being stoned to death, “the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named

not lie low, Saul initiated a series of persecutions against these noisy sectarians. He did not shrink from the use of brute force. Presumably Hellenists were arrested in the synagogues and condemned to the usual punishment of thirty-nine lashes; some may even have suffered more serious physical hurt and even have been killed. In this way the relatively small community of the Hellenists was largely destroyed and fled from Jerusalem to neighboring territories and cities. ...⁴

It probably was not long after the death of Stephen that Saul went to Damascus in search of runaway converts. It was then that he had his “spectacular” conversion, whose details are not described in *The Urantia Book*. We are only told that he had a “*personal experience*” [196:2.1] (P. 2091) (italics in original) that greatly transformed him. In Galatians

Saul was so affected by Stephen’s steadfast proclamation of his faith in his dying moments that Saul began to question if what he was doing was correct.

Saul.” [Acts 7:58] “And Saul was consenting to his death.” [Acts 8:1] This book of the New Testament says that Stephen’s death precipitated a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and many believers scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Only the apostles remained. Saul entered house after house and dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. It was then that Philip began his ministry in Samaria. [Acts 8:1–5]

The description in Acts of the behavior of Saul of Tarsus at the time of Stephen’s death and awhile afterwards seems to be at odds with what *The Urantia Book* says of him. According to *The Urantia Book*, Saul was so affected by Stephen’s steadfast proclamation of his faith in his dying moments that Saul began to question if what he was doing was correct. “... [T]here were aroused in his heart those emotions which eventually led him to espouse the cause for which Stephen died; later on he became the aggressive and indomitable Paul, the philosopher, if not the sole founder, of the Christian religion.” [128:3.6] (P. 1411)

A more recent writer offers a different viewpoint on Saul’s role:

... On this occasion [of the stoning of Stephen] Saul, the scribal student and young teacher, played only a small role. But when others of these followers continued to agitate and did

1:12-17, Paul (the former Saul) tells of his former life in Judaism, violently persecuting the followers of Jesus and trying to destroy that church, and says he had a revelation of Jesus Christ. He was told to preach about Jesus among the Gentiles. At the time he discussed this with no one and did not return to Jerusalem to meet the apostles. Instead he went to Arabia for a while and then back to Damascus.

Three accounts of this episode on the road to Damascus are given in Acts, in Chapters 9, 22, and 26. As the book of Acts was written by Luke, a later convert of Paul’s, these would be secondhand descriptions. Saul was blinded by a light from the skies and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” When Saul asks who is speaking, he is told, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” The men who were traveling with Saul heard the voice but saw no one. They led Saul by hand into Damascus, where he was without sight for three days and neither ate nor drank. Acts 22:9 says that those traveling with him saw the light but did not hear the voice.

In the first chapter of Galatians, Paul continues his saga. After three years in Damascus,⁵ he “went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas⁶ [Peter], and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord’s brother. (In what I am writing to you, I do not lie!)” I wonder why he did not see at least James and John Zebedee, as well

as Andrew and Matthew. Paul then went “into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea; they only heard it said, ‘He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.’”

This first meeting between Peter and Paul was very important. Peter and the other apostles understandably were suspicious at first of this former persecutor turned proselytizer, but relations between the two men seemed to be off to a good start, and Paul was established as a recognized apostle alongside the founders of the church at Jerusalem. Paul probably chose not to stay longer because he feared reprisals from the Pharisees, who likely thought of him as a renegade.⁷ Also, certain Hellenistic Jews wanted to kill him.⁸ When Paul left Jerusalem, he returned to his home in Tarsus (according to Acts 9:30) and remained out of touch with the leaders in Jerusalem for several years.

However, Paul himself in Galatians mentions Syria and Cilicia, in that order. Tarsus was in the latter province. *The Urantia Book* says Paul was in Antioch, the capital of Syria, ten years after Jesus had spent more than two months in that city; three weeks of that time he worked as a tentmaker. This would place Paul’s visit in Antioch in the year 35, the same year that he first met Peter and James the brother of Jesus. When Paul “*heard his followers speak of the doctrines of the Damascus scribe, he little knew that his pupils had heard the voice, and listened to the teachings, of the Master himself.*” [134:7.3] (P. 1492) “*Though Paul never really surmised the identity of this scribe of Damascus, he did, a short time before his death, because of the similarity of personal descriptions, reach the conclusion that the ‘tentmaker of Antioch’ was also the ‘scribe of Damascus.’*” [132:0.10] (P. 1456) (Paul had once been a tentmaker. [89:3.6] ((P. 977) (See also Acts 18:3)

The passage from Paper 134 implies that Paul was preaching in Antioch and had followers. We will have to conclude that this visit was just a stopover on his way to Tarsus.

HEROD AGRIPPA AND JAMES ZEBEDEE

Peter and Paul were to meet again in Jerusalem some fourteen years later. In the meantime, Herod Agrippa came to power. He was the grandson of Herod the Great and a nephew of Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee who had put John the Baptist to death and whom Jesus called “that fox.” Agrippa was also a brother-in-law of Antipas, as the latter had married Agrippa’s sister, Herodias. She had left her husband, Philip, a son of Herod the Great, with their daughter Salome. This Philip, a half-brother of Antipas, is

not to be confused with another son of Herod the Great, who, upon his father’s death, became a tetrarch and ruled areas northeast and east of the Sea of Galilee, territories now in Israel (the Golan Heights) and Jordan. It was he who built Bethsaida-Julias and rebuilt Pania as Caesarea-Philippi and was a half-hearted believer in Jesus. Oh, and Philip the tetrarch married Salome. Incest seems to have run in the Herod family.

The tetrarch Philip ruled until his death in the winter of 33/34 AD. His territory was incorporated into the province of Syria until 37, when the emperor Caligula granted it to Herod Agrippa. Around that time, Herod Antipas’ tetrarchy was invaded by his former father-in-law, Aretas IV, the Nabataean king of what is now Petra, Jordan. Aretas was not happy that Antipas had divorced his daughter to marry Herodias. The forces of Antipas were heavily defeated, and Josephus says that many people regarded the defeat as divine retribution for Antipas’ killing of John the Baptist.⁹ Herodias urged her husband to discredit her brother, Agrippa. Their efforts antagonized Agrippa’s friend, the emperor Caligula, who banished Antipas to Gaul in 39. Herodias chose to go with him. Antipas died in exile shortly after.

Galilee and Perea were added to Agrippa’s kingdom. When Claudius became emperor in 41, he further augmented Agrippa’s territory by giving him Judea and Samaria. Agrippa now ruled over a kingdom roughly equivalent to his grandfather’s, Herod the Great.

Agrippa’s primary object was to court his Jewish subjects by showing great regard for the Mosaic Law and Jewish customs. The Jews regarded him approvingly. James Zebedee’s outspokenness in promulgating the teachings of Jesus led Agrippa to put him to death during Passover in 44 AD. James calmly heard the death sentence and continued to preach. Josiah, one of the false witnesses, was struck by James’s courage and came to believe in Jesus. When the authorities led the apostle forth to his execution, Josiah fell at his feet and asked forgiveness. James embraced him, gave him a kiss and said, “Peace and forgiveness to you.” Both men consequently were beheaded on the same day with the same sword.¹⁰ However, *The Urantia Book* implies that James’s accuser escaped execution. He “*was so touched that he rushed away from the scene of James’s death to join himself to the disciples of Jesus.*” [139:3.9] (P. 1553)

Legend has it that James is buried in Spain, at what is now the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Since the ninth century the cathedral has been a destination on the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James), a popular route of pilgrimage that annually attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists. Supposedly, James’s followers arranged for his

body to be transported to Galicia on the Iberian Peninsula. According to tradition, James preached in Galicia sometime after Jesus' crucifixion for several years before returning to Jerusalem. As *The Urantia Book* says nothing about this, I am very doubtful.

Just after James was martyred, Herod Agrippa had Simon Peter thrown in jail. Despite being bound in chains and under guard, Peter was freed from bondage by the intervention of an "angel." Acts 12:6–11 relates that Peter thought he was seeing a vision as the angel awoke him and told him to get up quickly. The chains fell off Peter's hands. He followed the angel past first one guard and then another to an iron gate leading into the city, which opened of its own accord. When the angel left him, Peter came to himself and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." *The Urantia Book* says this was not an angel but rather a secondary midwayer. [77:8.12] (P. 865)

When Agrippa heard that Peter had escaped, he had the sentries put to death. From Jerusalem he returned to Caesarea, the city on the Mediterranean that was the capital of Judea. Not long after, a delegation from Tyre and Sidon came to him and asked for peace regarding a dispute. When the king started making an oration, the people flattered him by saying that this was a god speaking, not a man. Immediately Agrippa dropped dead. (Acts 12:18–23) Josephus says that Agrippa died during games held in Caesarea in honor of the emperor Claudius. As he was speaking to the public, a cry went out, "This is not the voice of a man but of a god." Just then Agrippa had the vision of an owl perched over his head. He had seen this vision once before, when he was imprisoned by Tiberius. At that time the vision of the owl portended that he would become a king, but when he was to see it again, he would soon die. And so he did, after five days.¹¹ The young Christian sect saw the death of Herod Agrippa as divine justice.

PETER AND PAUL MEET AGAIN, AND THE LAST OF THE APOSTLES LEAVES JERUSALEM

When the midwayer rescued Peter from prison, the apostle went to the home of Mary Mark, the widowed mother of John Mark. Many believers were gathered together and were astonished to see him. After telling them how he had been released from prison, he said, "Tell this to James and to the brethren." (By "James," he meant Jesus' brother.) Then he departed and went to "another place." (Acts 12:12–17)

After leaving Jerusalem and before Paul became the leading spirit among the gentile Christian churches, Peter traveled extensively, visiting all the churches from Babylon

to Corinth. He even visited and ministered to many of the churches which had been raised up by Paul. Although Peter and Paul differed much in temperament and education, even in theology, they worked together harmoniously for the upbuilding of the churches during their later years. [139:2.11] (P. 1551)

New Testament scholars debate the chronology of Peter's life after leaving Jerusalem in 44 AD, following his escape from prison and the death of Agrippa. There is some speculation that he spent a fair amount of time in Antioch, to which many believers had fled following the martyrdom of Stephen; but whether this means an extended time or just occasional stopovers, cannot be determined from the various sources. Barnabas was one of the leaders in Antioch, and it was about this time that he either went to Tarsus to bring Paul there, or the latter came on his own accord. (Both cities, now in modern Turkey, are about 86 miles apart.) Soon the two left for a missionary journey to Crete and Asia Minor, including the Roman province of Galatia. Barnabas's cousin, John Mark, accompanied them part of the way but turned back when reaching the mainland and returned to Jerusalem. (*New Catholic Encyclopedia* says that Mark's return to Jerusalem, rather than Antioch, suggests homesickness.¹² I find this rather sweet, although we must realize that Mark was in his late twenties by then. This was probably his first trip away from Palestine.) While in Antioch in Pisidia in Asia Minor in 47 AD, Paul met a physician named Luke, who became a follower. [121:8.8] (P. 1342) It is unclear whether Peter was in Antioch of Syria when Paul returned from his first missionary journey. It appears that the two did not meet again until about the year 49, at what is known in Church History as the Apostolic Council or Council of Jerusalem. This does not appear to be mentioned in *The Urantia Book*.

This conference arose from concerns of the church at Jerusalem that Greek converts to the faith did not have to undergo circumcision. Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to meet with James the brother of Jesus, and Acts 15:1–35 says that Peter was also present. (Paul in Galatians says John was also there, saying these three "were reputed to be pillars.") Ultimately the delegates came to an agreement that baptism would replace the requirement of circumcision. Peter would largely preach to "the circumcised," and Paul to "the uncircumcised." (Galatians 2:7) In other words, Peter's ministry would continue largely to be to the Jewish Christians, while Paul would preach to the Gentiles.

Not long afterward, Peter was in Antioch and met with the mixed congregations. When others showed up from Jerusalem, Peter felt compelled to withdraw from meals with

Gentile members. This greatly annoyed Paul, and a rift existed between the two men that took awhile to heal.

It seems highly likely that Peter was never again in Jerusalem after this. Paul was to return there two more times, his final visit under unpleasant circumstances.

It was about this time that John Zebedee married his brother's widow and became the last apostle to leave Palestine. There was one other apostle whom I have not mentioned for a while: Simon Zelotes. *The Urantia Book* says that he went into "temporary retirement" "after the dispersion because of the Jerusalem persecutions." He was in retirement "for some time." "In a few years" he began his journey into Africa to spread the good news. Due to the lack of specificity in these passages from *The Urantia Book*, it is difficult to ascertain with certainty just when it was that Simon resumed preaching the gospel, but I will suggest that it was the persecutions following the death of Stephen that sent Simon into retirement, from which he did not emerge for several years, not long before Matthew left just before the execution of James Zebedee. Why Simon would disappear from the scene after Stephen's martyrdom is a little difficult to understand, considering that the Aramaic-speaking believers (including the apostles) were not affected. See the

but Paul, still angry that Mark had abandoned them on the previous trip, said no. This caused a falling out with Barnabas, and instead Paul chose Silas. The latter was a leading member of the church at Jerusalem. The two traveled through Syria, Asia Minor, and Macedonia. In the latter province, Paul founded churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Beroea. Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi but were released when they revealed their Roman citizenship. Trouble from hostile Jews in Thessalonica and Beroea forced Paul to move on to Athens. Silas remained at Beroea and then rejoined Paul at Corinth. In the latter city Paul met a couple named Aquila and Priscilla, who had been among the Jews expelled from Rome by the emperor Claudius. They accompanied Paul as far as Ephesus. Paul went on alone to Caesarea, where he went to Jerusalem and then to a brief, final sojourn in Antioch. This journey is covered in Acts 15:36–18:22. In the meantime, when Barnabas was excluded from this tour, he and John Mark went to Cyprus, but little is known about that trip.

It was probably during this second journey that Paul had started writing the letters that are known as the Epistles of Paul and form the earliest writings in the New Testament. More letters were written on his third missionary journey,

It was probably during this second journey that Paul had started writing the letters that are known as the Epistles of Paul and form the earliest writings in the New Testament.

possible chronology at the end of this article to get an idea of the dates.

As we will describe in a moment, John Mark also left about the same time as John Zebedee. James the brother of Jesus was left in charge of the church at Jerusalem until his execution in 61.

We know nothing of the fate of Jesus' other siblings. It would be interesting to know how many generations existed of descendants of these children of Joseph and Mary, and if any descendants are still living. As for other followers, Lazarus had fled to Philadelphia in the Decapolis about the time of the crucifixion, became treasurer of Abner's church, and died at the age of 67, which would be about 61 AD. Abner fell out with Peter and James the brother of Jesus and later denounced Paul. He died in 74.

SUBSEQUENT WORK OF PAUL AND PETER

Paul shortly embarked on a second missionary journey. Barnabas again wanted John Mark to accompany them,

in which he transferred his base to Ephesus. In the order of their writing they are 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians, and Philemon.¹³ This is not the order in which they appear in the Bible. Three other books bearing Paul's name as the author are in dispute and are designated Deutero-Pauline: 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, and Colossians. A third set is designated Pastoral or Pseudo-Paul: 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus.¹⁴ It is believed these latter books were written later in the first century AD, long after Paul had died.

It was on this third missionary journey that Paul learned that Peter had taught at some of the same churches. At Corinth there sprang up factions in the names of Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ himself. (1 Corinthians 1:12)

Who was Apollos? He is not mentioned in *The Urantia Book*, nor Encyclopaedia Britannica. He was a Jew from Alexandria who came to Ephesus in the early 50s, after Paul had briefly returned to Palestine. He displayed an accurate knowledge of the story of Jesus and preached after the style

of John the Baptist but did not know the full magnitude of Jesus' death and resurrection (according to what Paul was teaching) or about the coming of the Holy Spirit. Aquila and Priscilla took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. (Acts 18:24-26) By the time Paul returned to Ephesus, Apollos had moved on to Corinth, where he "watered" what Paul had "sown." (1 Corinthians 3:6) Because of the polished eloquence of Apollos, against his wishes a faction grew up in his favor, to the exclusion of Paul and Peter. Paul managed to soothe the friction in Corinth. The last mention of Apollos in the New Testament is in the Epistle of Titus, which suggests that Apollos, disturbed by the division in Corinth, traveled with Titus to Crete. If so, we wonder if he met Fortune, "*the young man who was afraid,*" who "*became the leader of the Christians in Crete and the close associate of Titus ...*" [130:6.5] (P. 1438) Some believe that Apollos eventually returned to Ephesus to serve the church there.

Martin Luther proposed that Apollos was the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, and some modern scholars concur. *The Urantia Book* says that this book is one of the notable exceptions to the statement, "*Almost the whole of the New Testament is devoted, not to the portrayal of the significant and inspiring religious life of Jesus, but to a discussion of Paul's religious experience and to a portrayal of his personal religious convictions.*" (196:2.1) (P. 2091) Furthermore, *The Urantia Book* says that "*one of the writers of the Book of Hebrews*" understood the mission of Machiventa Melchizedek. [93:9.11] (P. 1024)

In the late 50s Paul returned to Jerusalem and, with a collection for the poor, arrived during Pentecost. Jewish pilgrims from Ephesus, remembering "the apostle to the Gentiles," accused him of bringing one of the Gentile delegates into the inner courts of the Temple, beyond the barrier excluding Gentiles. He was arrested, partly to save his life from the mob, but was given good treatment because of his Roman citizenship. To prevent his being lynched, Paul was removed to Caesarea, where the Roman governor imprisoned him for two years. A new governor wanted to send Paul back to Jerusalem to be tried by the Sanhedrin, but Paul urged him to send him to Rome instead. Luke accompanied him on the sea journey, but they were shipwrecked and had to spend the winter in Malta. They reached Rome in the spring, and for the next two years Paul was under house arrest.

And here the story in Acts comes to an end. *The Urantia Book* says nothing about Paul's fate. We only know that Luke wrote his Gospel in 82, sometime after the death of Paul. "*He planned three books dealing with the history of Christ and Christianity but died in AD 90 just before*

he finished the second of these works, the 'Acts of the Apostles.'" [121:8.8] (P. 1342) It is now generally believed that he died in the persecutions by the mad emperor, Nero, most likely by beheading. One source gives the date as June 29 in the year 67. "This date is open to dispute. Paul's death has been variously placed between 62 and 67. We shall probably never know for sure."¹⁵ As *The Urantia Book* gives that same year for the death of Simon Peter [121.8:3] (P. 1341), I am inclined to accept this year for Paul as well. When severed from Paul's body, his head bounced in three different places, from which fountains sprang up. The site of his execution came to be known as Tre Fontane (Three Fountains) Abbey, currently a Trappist monastery of the Cistercian order.¹⁶

The tradition that Peter was crucified upside down comes from the apocryphal Acts of Peter, which was composed in the second half of the second century. (This same work said that Peter could make dogs talk.)¹⁷

The persecutions of Christians under Nero are said to have occurred after a great fire in Rome that started in the Circus Maximus (at the opposite end of Palatine Hill from the Roman Forum) on the night of July 18 in the year 64 and burned for several days. Rumors soon spread that Nero himself started the fire or otherwise authorized it and watched its progress from his palace while strumming a lyre. However, the Roman historian Tacitus says that Nero was away from Rome, in Antium, when it started, and quickly returned to the city and took measures to bring in food supplies and open gardens and public buildings to accommodate refugees. Parts of his own palace were destroyed. Tacitus is the source for the story that Nero, looking for a scapegoat, put the blame for the fire on the Christians:

... Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite torture on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths.

Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.¹⁸

Tacitus had no love for the Christians. But in the next paragraph he writes that, “even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion,” and the populace relented in favor of the Christians.

Notice that Tacitus says nothing specifically about lions. Christians were not “fed” to the lions until later years—and there is some debate among current writers whether that ever really occurred.¹⁹

A modern writer says that Nero had no idea that Christians existed. Christians were still known as Jews, and the Roman authorities failed to distinguish Jews from Christians.²⁰ Another writer states:

It was probably easier for Nero and the court to settle upon the Christians as scape-goats for the fire in Rome, because they were small in number—smaller than Jews. Jews had friends in high places; Christians apparently did not. Christians likely were chosen as scapegoats because of their strong belief in the Second Coming and the general conflagration that would follow, when all non-believers would be destroyed.²¹

We might assume that these persecutions began not long after the embers of the great fire had died out, and the year 64 is frequently given as the date. Other writers say they occurred as late as 67, and since that is the date given in *The Urantia Book* for the martyrdom of Peter and his wife (who was thrown to the wild beasts in the arena the same day that he was crucified), we will accept that this was when they occurred. While in Rome just before the outbreak of the persecutions, Peter wrote the First Epistle of Peter, which, among other things, warns about the sufferings that are ahead. He mentions that Mark and Silvanus (almost certainly the Silas of Acts) are with him. *The Urantia Book* says that 1 Peter was subsequently altered by a disciple of Paul. [139:2.12] (P. 1552) Peter also encouraged Mark to write his Gospel, as he felt the church at Rome needed a written record of the life of Jesus. Mark made many notes before Peter died, “and in accordance with the outline approved by Peter and for the church at Rome, he began his writing soon after Peter’s death. The Gospel was completed

near the end of AD 68. Mark wrote entirely from his own memory and Peter’s memory. . . . This record by Mark, in conjunction with Andrew’s and Matthew’s notes, was the written basis for all subsequent Gospel narratives which sought to portray the life and teachings of Jesus.” [121:8.3] (P. 1341)

No Widespread Persecutions

Where was the arena in which the Christians were thrown to the wild beasts? It most certainly was not the Colosseum. That structure was built after Nero’s death in 68. Construction was begun sometime between 70 and 72 and not completed until some ten years later. The first Christian martyr in the famous arena is said to be Ignatius of Antioch, a student of the apostle John, who was thrown to the lions early in the second century.²² A more recent writer states that Christians may have died there as common criminals, but Christians who died as martyrs did so at other places, mainly Circus Maximus.²³

It is generally believed that Nero’s persecutions were held at an arena on Vatican Hill that Caligula had begun and was finished by Nero that became known as the Circus of Nero. Simon Peter most likely was crucified on this hill outside of the arena. This was the future site of the huge basilica that bears his name and for centuries has been the headquarters of the first organized Christian church.

A recent writer clarifies misperceptions about Roman attitudes toward the early Christians,

... thinking, for example, that Rome declared Christianity illegal and sent out the troops to round up the Christians, who survived by hiding in the catacombs. That may be suitable for a Hollywood screenplay, but it is simply not true historically. Christianity was not declared “illegal” until nearly two centuries after the writings of Paul—not until AD 250 under the fervently pagan emperor Decius. Only then were there any empire-wide persecutions (and there is some question about how extensive the persecution was even at that point). Before then, Christians were occasionally persecuted, as were many other groups, but they did not go into hiding en masse and communicate with one another only in private. ...

The earliest Christians were persecuted in a completely ad hoc and random fashion. It appears that persecution usually began at the grassroots level, as either alienated family members or re-

buffed friends took umbrage when Christians removed themselves from everyday life. The problems were exacerbated when small or large disasters occurred, because these were easily laid at the feet of the Christians, who steadfastly refused to worship the gods. If any acts of mob violence occurred, Roman governors might step in and round up the Christians. If the Christians continued to flout authority (e.g., by still refusing to worship the gods), they could be punished or executed. The emperors appear to have sanctioned this kind of activity and why not? If any group caused problems, it had to be dealt with.

It was not for a couple of centuries that Christians grew large enough as a group to begin to worry the Roman administration in any serious way. At that time, in the middle of the 3rd century, serious and systematic persecutions began.²⁴

Therefore, when *The Urantia Book* states that Rodan of Alexandria died “when the persecutions were at their height,” this seems to be an exaggeration. No such period can easily be identified.²⁵

Church tradition seems to be in agreement with *The Urantia Book* regarding the deaths of the apostles Andrew and Philip. There is a tradition that Andrew died on November 30, AD 60, during Nero’s reign. There is some disagreement in early Church History whether Matthew Levi died a martyr and, if so, where. Shortly after Jesus’ crucifixion, he had begun a record of the sayings of the Master and of his personal remembrances as an apostle. This record was written in Aramaic and was edited and added to in AD 40 shortly before Matthew left Jerusalem to engage in evangelistic preaching. A disciple named Isador escaped from that city in 70, after the Roman conquest, “taking with him to Pella a copy of Matthew’s notes. In the year 71, while living at Pella, Isador wrote the Gospel according to Matthew. He also had with him the first four-fifths of Mark’s narrative.” [121:8.7] (P. 1342) Isador wrote the Gospel in Greek.

Christian tradition regarding the apostle Thomas is most at odds with what *The Urantia Book* says about his life after the death of Jesus. It is largely believed that it was he who went to India and died there (perhaps unnaturally). Yet *The Urantia Book* says it was Nathaniel who went to India; Thomas was arrested and put to death in Malta.

As for Nathaniel, there is much confusion regarding him. This is because in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) he is called Bartholomew; only in the

Gospel of John is he named Nathaniel. *The Urantia Book* tells us that Bartholomew was the father of Nathaniel, and he died just after Pentecost. Two fourth-century church historians, Eusebius of Caesarea and Jerome, say that the apostle Bartholomew (Nathaniel) went to India on a missionary journey. According to tradition, he was martyred in Armenia. *The Urantia Book* says not so.

Regarding followers of Paul, Christian tradition holds that Barnabas was martyred at Salamis, Cyprus, in 61 AD. Beliefs that several other of his followers also met violent deaths are based on flimsy evidence, so we won’t mention them here.

It is not possible to come up with a reliable figure for how many Christians died for their faith during the first forty years after Jesus’ death, so we will make no such attempt here.

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

It was during Nero’s reign that the Jewish Rebellion broke out in Jerusalem, which eventually led to the destruction in 70 AD of the city and the Temple by the Romans under Titus, the future emperor. With this event, “... Christianity lost its original center and its power of attachment to Judaism. The community of old believers in Jerusalem had been scattered abroad before the siege and continued to exist only in a few small groups in the north of Palestine and beyond the Jordan. The time was not far distant when the capital of the Roman Empire would become in fact the metropolis of the Christian world.”²⁶

Larry Bowman began reading the *Urantia Papers* a year before their publication. As a member of the Sadler Forum at 533 Diversey in Chicago, his father was in on the *Urantia Revelation* from the very beginning in 1924/25. Larry had a thirty-four career as a librarian in Illinois, upstate New York, Ohio, and Arizona, where he has lived since 1973. He has been on the Fellowship General Council since 2010 and served as Secretary General from 2012-15. He is now on the Publications Committee. Feline companions Hermes and Marlin usually make room in the bed for Larry at night. Email him at tiglath25@gmail.com.

A POSSIBLE CHRONOLOGY

Dates marked * are from *The Urantia Book*. Other dates are my adaptations from best guesses of historians.

- 30* Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension; bestowal of the Spirit of Truth; Nathaniel leaves his fellow apostles
- 31* Death of Mary, mother of Jesus, in Bethsaida [187:4.7] (P. 2010)
- 32* Stephen becomes the first Christian martyr
- 32 Thomas leaves his fellow apostles; Philip begins his missionary work in Samaria; Simon Zelotes goes into temporary retirement
- 32 Paul's conversion
- 35 Paul first meets with Peter in Jerusalem; after a few days he heads home for Tarsus, after a stopover in Antioch
- 35* Paul is teaching in Antioch and learns of "the scribe of Damascus"
- 40 The term, "Christian," is being used by this time for believers in Antioch
- 40* Matthew edits his notes just before leaving Jerusalem to engage in evangelistic preaching
- c40 Simon Zelotes comes out of retirement about this time and begins preaching in Africa
- c43 Barnabas travels to Tarsus and persuades Paul to return with him to Antioch
- 44 Execution of James Zebedee, first of the apostles to experience martyrdom
- 44 Third arrest and "miraculous" escape of Peter
- 44 Andrew and Philip have probably left Palestine by this time
- 45–47 Paul and Barnabas on first missionary journey, accompanied by John Mark as far as Asia Minor mainland; he later leaves them and returns to Jerusalem
- 47* Luke becomes a follower of Paul
- c49 Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, a meeting between Peter, James the brother of Jesus, and maybe John Zebedee; and Paul and Barnabas
- c49 Peter's clash with Paul at Antioch
- 49 Paul has begun writing his letters to the churches by this date; these become the earliest books of the New Testament
- 49–53 Paul's second missionary journey, including two years in Corinth
- 50 Peter, John Zebedee, and John Mark have likely left Palestine by this time, leaving James (Jesus' brother) in charge of the Jerusalem church
- 54–58 Paul's third missionary journey, including two years in Ephesus
- 58 Paul returns to Jerusalem; Temple authorities conspire to have him arrested; he is imprisoned for two years in Caesarea
- 60 (Sept. 30) Traditional date of crucifixion of the apostle Andrew
- 60–61 Paul journeys to Rome, accompanied by Luke, and is shipwrecked in Malta
- 61–63 Paul under house arrest in Rome
- 61 Execution of James, the brother of Jesus
- 63–67 Unknown years in Paul's life; tradition has it that he visited Spain during this time, but I suspect he remained in Rome
- 64 Fire in Rome
- 66 Outbreak of Jewish War against Rome
- 67? Probable year of Nero's persecution of the Christians as scapegoats for the fire; Paul is likely executed then
- 67* Death of Peter and his wife in Rome
- 68 Death of Nero
- 68* Gospel of Mark completed
- 70 Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans

END NOTES

¹ The New Testament makes a distinction between Philip the Apostle and Philip the Evangelist. The latter was one of the Seven Deacons appointed to tend to the early Christians of Jerusalem. This group is not mentioned in *The Urantia Book*. It was the Evangelist who the book of Acts says went to Samaria and later Gaza. As there is agreement that writers often get these two confused, I will stick with the UB's depiction of the apostle Philip. It appears that both are the same person.

² *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1996), s.v. "James, 4."

³ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., s.v. "James, Saint, also called James, the Lord's brother."

⁴ Martin Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (London: SCM Press, 1991) [pages not recorded]

⁵ Acts 9:19–30, however, does not mention a three-year lapse between Paul's conversion on the way to Damascus and his return to Jerusalem and his first meeting with leaders of the church (Peter is not specifically mentioned). There is nothing about a period spent in Arabia. When Paul arrives in Jerusalem, the disciples are all afraid of him. It is Barnabas who brings him before the apostles. It seems inconsistent that it would be he who would do so, as Barnabas was one of the persecuted Hellenists and, so *The Urantia Book* says, an associate of the late Stephen. Barnabas is mentioned only once in the UB but appears several times in the New Testament as a future associate of Paul. As Luke was writing the Acts of the Apostles nearly six decades after the purported events, we will have to accept instead the chronology that Paul himself offered in Galatians.

⁶ Cephas is *rock* in Aramaic. Paul, in his various epistles, had a preference to call him Cephas, whereas the Gospels and Acts used the Greek Peter, from *Petros*. When I began studying French in high school, I was thrilled to learn that the word for stone (and rock) was *pierre*.

⁷ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Macropaedia, s.v. "The Apostle Paul."

⁸ *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Paul."

⁹ *Ibid.*, s.v. "Herod the tetrarch."

¹⁰ www.newadvent.org/cathen/08279b.htm, "Saint James the Greater;" <https://oca.org/saints/lives/2015/04/30/101248-apostle-james-the-brother-of-st-john-the-theologian>, "Apostle James the Brother of St. John the Theologian;" <http://www.biblepath.com/james.html>, "The Apostle James (Son of Zebedee). (These sources accessed January 19, 2016.)

¹¹ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, xix, 8.2

¹² *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967-1996), s.v. "Mark, Evangelist, St."

¹³ www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/

people-in-the-bible/the-quest-for-the-historical-paul/ James Tabor, "The Quest for the Historical Paul" (accessed September 7, 2015).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* See also Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament* (Chantilly, Va.: The Great Courses, 2000) Lecture 14: "Paul—The Man, the Mission, and the *Modus Operandi*, 217

¹⁵ www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1-300/apostolic-beheading-the-death-of-paul-11629583.html, "Apostolic Beheading; the Death of Paul" (accessed January 27, 2016)

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tre_Fontane_Abbey, "Tre Fontane Abbey" (accessed January 27, 2016)

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter, "Acts of Peter" (accessed January 27, 2016).

¹⁸ Tacitus, *The Annals*, 15:44.

¹⁹ E.g., Candida Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013). "Moss's thesis is that the traditional idea of the 'Age of Martyrdom,' when Christians suffered persecution from the Roman authorities and lived in fear of being thrown to the lions, is largely fictional. There was never sustained, targeted persecution of Christians by Imperial Roman authorities." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Myth_of_Persecution "*The Myth of Persecution*" (accessed February 8, 2016). See also <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2319577/Historian-risks-thrown-lions-book-claims-Christian-martyrdom-modern-believers-persecution-complex.html> "Historian risks being thrown to the lions for book which claims Christian martyrdom is made up and that modern believers have a persecution complex" (accessed February 8, 2016).

²⁰ Stephen Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986) [page not recorded]

²¹ Michael Grant, *Nero* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970) [page not recorded]

²² Peter Quennell, *The Colosseum* (New York: Newsweek Book Division, 1971), 60.

²³ Norbert C. Brockman, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Places [2 volumes]* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 108.

²⁴ Ehrman, *The New Testament*, Lecture 22: "First Peter and the Persecution of the Early Christians," 338-39; 341

²⁵ Moss. "According to Moss, although provincial governors in the Roman Empire had a great deal of personal discretion and power to do what they felt was needed in their jurisdiction, and there were local and sporadic incidents of persecution and mob violence against Christians, for most of the first three hundred years of Christian history Christians were able to live in peace, practice professions, and rise to positions of responsibility." "*The Myth of Persecution*," Wikipedia (cited in footnote 19) (accessed February 8, 2016).

²⁶ Alfred Firman Loisy, *The Birth of the Christian Religion* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1948) [page not recorded]

Never make the mistake of identifying Jesus' teachings with any political or economic theory, with any social or industrial system. [140:8.8] (P. 1580)

THOUGHTS ON THE BESTOWALS OF PERSONALITY AND THE THOUGHT ADJUSTER

By Kermit Anderson, Forest Grove, OR

INTRODUCTION

This article is intended to address certain misconceptions and misunderstandings among students of the Urantia revelation concerning specific aspects of the nature of *personality* and the *Thought Adjuster*, and the transactions and events whereby these profound universe facts come to be bestowed by God the Father on His universe creatures.

This article is not intended to be a comprehensive or exhaustive treatise on what authors of *The Urantia Book* have to say about personality or Thought Adjusters. Nor is it intended to be a big picture overview of the nature and role of these phenomena in the Paradise ascent. Rather, it is a collection of my reflections on the questions of how and when the bestowals of these universe facts are accomplished. My two main objectives in this piece are to disabuse readers of the revelation from thinking of the human personality as a thing or object, and to examine and understand the bestowal of the *Thought Adjuster* in the context of God's grace consequent upon Michael's gift of his Spirit of Truth to our world following the completion of his Urantian bestowal.

In the minds of the students of the fifth epochal revelation of truth to our world, there exists diversity of opinion and no small amount of uncertainty concerning the nature and bestowals of human personality and the indwelling Thought Adjuster. Over my years of studying and living with *The Urantia Book* the questions about the particulars of how and when we as individuals come by these wondrous gifts continue to stimulate my interest and lead to discussion, debate, and argumentation among serious students of the revelation. Attempts to answer these basic questions are fraught with complexity due to the transcendent nature of the entities in question and the mysteries surrounding these transactions. Yet, I will attempt to share my insights and deductions on these topics.

Early in our introduction to The Universal Father we are presented with His "...policy of profound self-distribution." We are told that He reserves "...to himself the exercise of only those powers and that authority which he apparently finds it impossible to delegate or to bestow." [10:1.1] (P. 108) Chief among these powers and authority which the Father has reserved for himself are the bestowal of *personality* on

universe creatures, and the gifts of the Thought Adjusters, to live and labor in the minds of his evolutionary will creatures. We are informed that God is discernably present only on Paradise and in the central universe. His manifestation in the universes of time and space is observable in and through the persons of the co-ordinate creators and rulers of these creations. However, concerning the bestowal of personality and the Thought Adjusters, God the Father acts uniquely, directly, and exclusively.

Among long-time students of the book, common responses to the question of when these bestowals take place are: personality is bestowed (as a thing or object) at conception or birth, and The Thought Adjuster arrives to take up residence in the mortal mind upon a child's first moral decision, i.e. just prior to age six. Yet, careful reading and reflection of the text suggests that perhaps these questions and answers are too simplistic. Somehow a more meaningful inquiry must reckon with the nature of the interface of the eternal (God the Father) with the temporal (creature).

THE MATERIAL MINDAL SELF

Before looking more deeply at personality and trying to determine the particulars of its bestowal we must first recognize the more tangible actuality (from the standpoint of our consciousness), the material self. It is our failure to distinguish the differences between personality and the material mindal self that engenders confusion and misunderstanding surrounding their nature. The material self is a product of the interplay between our adjutant mind endowment and our physical mechanism (body), neither of which endures beyond the grave. Our genetic biologic foundation determines many of the qualities of our individuality and identity. Our material hereditary make-up establishes the boundary conditions of our physical mechanism. These boundary conditions affect the manner and expressions of the physical, mental, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual qualities of an individual. It is these associated qualities that are frequently but incorrectly called personality. Thanks to the revelation we have authoritative information to enable us to begin to make the necessary distinctions between the material self

and personality. References to the material self are to be found throughout the book.

PERSONALITY—WHAT IS IT?

Prior to the arrival of the fifth epochal revelation humans have never had a genuine understanding of the transcendent reality that is personality. It is not strange that as we encounter the term in the book our ability to comprehend what it says about personality is seriously conflated with our accumulated preconceived opinions and settled ideas attached to the word symbol. The revelators' reference to personality as "a deified level of reality" [0:5.1] (P. 0.V.1) should cause us to stop and reflect that they mean something different from what contemporary psychologists and philosophers suggest as the characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that make a person unique. Common definitions of

mental ways. In describing re-personalization on the mansion worlds, they speak of "personality reassembly" where they are referring to the coming together of the constituent factors of form (body), mind, soul, and spirit in a moment of creature re-consciousizing or awakening following the sleep of death. Personality in this sense is a more global term and less precise. The authors also use the word when they are being very specific about the universe reality that is "...a level of deified reality..." [0:V.1] (P. 8) or "...the one changeless reality in an otherwise ever-changing creature experience [that] unifies all other associated factors of individuality." [0:V.11] (P. 9) While the revelators decline to define personality, they list fourteen things which are known about personality in the preface to Paper 112. This list is actually a collection of bullet points summarizing the signal features of personality that have been elaborated upon elsewhere in

...our ability to comprehend what it says about personality is seriously conflated with our accumulated preconceived opinions and settled ideas attached to the word symbol.

personality do include the ideas of uniqueness and constancy over time, both of which appear to touch on qualities of personality described in the revelation. Frequently the word personality is used to describe what might more accurately be called temperament—those aspects of an individual's "personality" such as introversion or extroversion, that are often regarded as innate. From *The Urantia Book* perspective we might recognize these innate aspects of an individual as expressions of his or her material genetic biological foundation plus adjutant mind. It should be obvious however, that mankind's evolutionary understanding of the nature of personality must be supplemented by revelation in order to begin to approach a true comprehension of personality as a reality in the cosmos. The profound and abstruse nature of personality will ever be a frontier of discovery in our ascension career.

Personality is one of the unsolved mysteries of the universes. We are able to form adequate concepts of the factors entering into the make-up of various orders and levels of personality, but we do not fully comprehend the real nature of the personality itself. We clearly perceive the numerous factors which, when put together, constitute the vehicle for human personality, but we do not fully comprehend the nature and significance of such a finite personality. [5:6.2] (P. 70)

The revelators use the term personality in two funda-

the revelation. In addition to these, the terms "individuated will," "spirit pattern," "Paradise pattern," and "influence from eternity" are qualities and designations of personality that can be inferred in the revelation and can help to elucidate its function in the cosmic scheme of things, meanings and values. Therefore, interpreting the word "personality" in consonance with the revelators' intent depends on the context of their usage. It is in the more precise aspect of an existential influence from eternity that I use the term personality.

WHEN IS PERSONALITY BESTOWED?

That which comes from the Father is like the Father eternal, and this is just as true of personality, which God gives by his own freewill choice, as it is of the divine Thought Adjuster, an actual fragment of God. [112:5.2] (P. 1232)

Herein is the singular clue as to why the question, "When is personality bestowed?" is the wrong question. Existential human personality has no relationship to time. The Father, who inhabits eternity, bestows human personality in eternity, not in time. The question that should be asked is rather, "When does human personality become observable and functional in time?" That is, when does the existential influence called personality begin to manifest experientially? The existential human personality, devoid of identity is not

observable as experiential until it identifies with a self. The conditions for that are given below.”

Capacity for divine personality is inherent in the prepersonal Adjuster; capacity for human personality is potential in the cosmic-mind endowment of the human being. But the experiential personality of mortal man is not observable as an active and functional reality until after the material life vehicle of the mortal creature has been touched by the liberating divinity of the Universal Father, being thus launched upon the seas of experience as a self-conscious and a (relatively) self-determinative and self-creative personality. The material self is truly and unqualifiedly personal. [5:6.6] (P. 71)

Note another way of referring to the cosmic-mind endowment of the human being is the Holy Spirit. Also, in reflecting on this passage and interpreting it correctly it is crucial to understand what is meant by the “*liberating divinity of the Universal Father*” and how it “*touches*” the material life vehicle of the mortal creature. This “*liberating divinity*” is the personality encirclement in the Father’s personality circuit. The touching of the material life vehicle is the act of this personality, identifying with the material self (combined association of the material life vehicle and adjunct mind). This then represents the Father’s initiation of the finite creature as a cosmic citizen, in fact! Some readers suggest that the phrase, “*touched by the liberating divinity of the Universal Father*” refers to the Adjuster. However the subsequent clause, “*...being thus launched upon the seas of experience as a self-conscious and a (relatively) self-determinative and self-creative personality*” [5:6.6] (P. 71) depicts the function of personality, not the Adjuster. As indicated in the passage [103:0.3] (P. 1129) “*... long before the bestowals of the Spirit of Truth or the Thought Adjusters, man’s viewpoint of ethics, religion, and spirituality is enlarged by the influence of the supermind endowment of the Holy Spirit. All of these qualities are indicative of a functional and observable human personality.*”

THE THOUGHT ADJUSTER—WHAT IS IT?

While humans have long believed in the existence of the indwelling spirit as well as the soul, it is only with the fifth epochal revelation that mankind has been given such authoritative and extensive information about these mysterious cosmic facts. Along with God the Father’s supreme mandate, “*Be you perfect, even as I am perfect.*” [1:0.6] (P. 21) This same Universal Father has provided the ways and means for even such lowly animal-origin creatures as we humans to

fulfill this command. The secret of such an achievement is to be found in the perfect spirit guide, the Thought Adjuster, the Mystery Monitor given to every normal-minded mortal of our world. Thought Adjusters are referenced in all parts of the book, but Papers 107–112 of *The Urantia Book* give us a treasure trove treatment of encyclopedic proportions of these divine gifts.

While no less mysterious than personality, the Thought Adjuster is easier of description, initially being a thing apart, an individuated fact that can be conceptualized as localized in the human mind. Like personality, Mystery Monitors are of the Father, hence eternal, however their relation to finite creatures takes place in a temporal context. In the six papers referenced above we are given manifold details of Thought Adjusters such as their inscrutable nature, various classifications, differential career paths, role in soul making, and so on. As mentioned, my objective in this article is to examine the events and transactions surrounding the Father’s bestowal of these spirit gifts specific to our post-Pentecost status. Therefore, I will forego the enumeration and description of the qualities, characteristics, and functions of Mystery Monitors, except in the context of explaining how it is all normal-minded humans by grace automatically receive them.

WHEN DOES THE THOUGHT ADJUSTER ARRIVE?

Here again, our question is somewhat misleading. We are told that Urantians today receive Thought Adjusters around six years of age on average. The prevailing opinion among fellow students of the revelation according to my unscientific sampling is that the Monitor arrives very shortly after an individual’s first moral choice. Many testify with relative certainty as to the event of their child’s receipt of their Adjuster, based upon some overt act of altruism or exhibition of moral discrimination. Who is to say? However, I suggest that the process more often depends on the mystery of grace, acting unconsciously in a child rather than being linked to some overt outwardly observable behavior.

Prior to the arrival of the Spirit of Truth on an evolutionary world, numerous influences and conditions appear to be associated with the arrival of Adjusters, many of which are not fully understood even by such high beings as the Solitary Messengers. The prerequisites to Thought Adjuster indwelling on pre-Paradise Son bestowal worlds are listed in the book. [108:2.6-11] (PP. 1186–88)

On our world, because of Michael’s bestowal, Thought Adjusters automatically come to indwell all normal minded mortals. Why do I say this occurs by grace and unconsciously?

A stated prerequisite to Adjuster indwelling is a mortal mind that “...has been duly prepared by the indwelling ministry of the adjutant mind-spirits and encircuited in the Holy Spirit.” [108:2.2] (P. 1187) Couple this passage with what we are told by a Mighty Messenger in Paper 34 that, “When mind is thus endowed with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, it possesses the capacity for (consciously or unconsciously) choosing the spiritual presence of the Universal Father—the Thought Adjuster. But it is not until a bestowal Son has liberated the Spirit of Truth for planetary ministry to all mortals that all normal minds are automatically prepared for the reception of the Thought Adjusters.” [34:5.4] (P.379) It is apparent that a superconscious (unconscious) choice of the Father’s presence is sufficient to enable Adjuster arrival. On worlds without a Spirit of Truth, arrival of the Monitor is not automatic and requires conscious choice. I suggest that the presence and action of the Spirit of Truth is the agent of grace enabling a young, almost six year old child on our world to choose (superconsciously) the spiritual presence of the Father. Remember that the superconscious realms of mind are “above consciousness,” higher, i.e., closer to spiritual input from above, yet effectively unconscious. The remainder of the above cited passage goes on to reinforce the positional (higher) relationship of both the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Truth to us mortals.

To put even a finer point on the timing of the Adjuster arrival, we are told that, “Adjusters unfailingly come the instant the seventh adjutant mind-spirit begins to function and signalizes to the Universe Mother Spirit that it has achieved in potential the co-ordination of the associated six adjutants of prior ministry to such a mortal intellect. Therefore have the divine Adjusters been universally bestowed upon all normal minds of moral status on Urantia ever since the day of Pentecost.” [108:2.3] (P. 1187)

I further suggest that this “unconscious moral choice” be seen as a tiny measure of grace we are given in being established in conformity with the cosmos. That is not to say this initial connection we are given by grace is sufficient unto itself to ensure our arrival on Paradise. The revelation is full of exhortations and challenges along with the assurance of success for us to use our sincerity and daily decisions to advance in spirit status, and that we must do this consciously and persistently to succeed.

Who doesn’t find some measure of humor in the characteristic precision of the revelators when they tell us of the transit time of an Adjuster from Divinington to their appearance in the minds of their chosen subjects being 117 hours, 42 minutes, and 7 seconds, and that “Virtually all of this time is occupied with registration on Uversa.” [108:1.9]

(P. 1186) What! There’s red tape on high?

CONCLUSION

So it is that these bestowals of the Father on our world are beautifully coincident. The appearance of functional human personality and the actual arrival of the Thought Adjuster are almost simultaneous save for that 117+ hours that the Mystery monitor is detained by the bureaucracy of the superuniverse.

Thus we are initiated in the Father (personality and Thought Adjuster) by the grace of the Creator Son and Universe Mother to ascend through level upon level, realm upon realm to stand face to face with our Heavenly Father, and in perfection complete our universe initiation to be mobilized and pursue the next challenge of penetrating to completion our destiny as finaliters.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The universal and virtually automatic bestowal of Thought Adjusters, and consequent birth of souls on our world, lead me to conclude that mansion world resurrection is likewise well-nigh universal for Urantian mortals. I am well aware that fellow students of the revelation do not universally hold this opinion. It is the unfortunate planetary history and unorthodox administration (the irregular order of dispensations), coupled with the abundance of mercy that so persuades me. “The sovereign Judges of the universes will not deprive any being of personality status who has not finally and fully made the eternal choice; the soul of man must and will be given full and ample opportunity to reveal its true intent and real purpose.” [112:5.9] (P. 1233)

Kermit Anderson has been a student of the revelation since 1969. He and his wife Jackie hosted a study group in Huntington Beach, and Westminster, California from 1975 until 2015, until they moved to the Pacific Northwest in 2016. Kermit has served in various leadership positions in the Southern California societies of the former Urantia Brotherhood and current Fellowship. He is currently a co-host for the virtual study group Symmetry of Soul since 2010. www.symmetryofsoul.org

MINDEDNESS AND SPIRITUALITY, COMMENTS ON THE ABSOLUTES

Transcribed from a tape recording of Bill Sadler Jr. at a study group. Slightly edited for readability.

One of the very great statements made in the Urantia papers is found in paper twelve. In the universe of universes, quote, “*God is spirit; but Paradise is not.*”

Here we touch upon one of the essential differences between the metaphysics, or cosmology, of the Urantia papers and many other religions. I believe in three forms of reality: material, mindal, and spiritual. I believe there are three sets of laws (I’m ignoring personality for the moment), and I believe that if you want to produce spiritual results, you apply one set. If you want to produce a material effect, I think praying is strictly for the birds. Set up a material cause. And of course you have the intervening zone of intellectual reality which touches on both matter and spirit. You find in Hinduism, they tend to believe in one form of energy, in just one reality. You have Brahman, and you have Maya. In other words, you either are dealing with the absolute, or you are dealing with an illusion. And this is true in most religions which touch upon pantheism. *The Urantia Book* presents not only three forms of energy operating under three distinctly separate types of law, *The Urantia Book* presents the concept of reality which is both Deified and undefied—not anti-deity, but non-deity.

As we look at these papers, we’re going to observe that there are two absolute realities which are non-deity. Paradise is not Deity, neither is the Unqualified Absolute. Neither are non-responsive to Deity, but neither is Deity. Paradise is a lot easier to comprehend than the Unqualified Absolute. I think the simplest definition of Paradise is: Paradise is a machine which God built for the same reason that men build machines. In other words, a part of the control of this universe is mechanistic. And why should God be personally concerned with something which a machine can handle? We have the same reaction; we should understand that. Where you have a repetitive act of a mechanical nature, what do you want to do?

We want to build a machine. It’s characteristic of personality. And one of the reasons is because God himself set this pattern when he designed the absolute machine. The material heart of the material cosmos is a material reality, not a spiritual reality. In a human being, I think you have the most comprehensible presentation of the interaction of

three kinds of reality. Matter, mind, and spirit. Not human spirit, but endowed spirit. Here we have an interassociation of the three functioning realities in the finite universes. Plus a fourth—personality, which is one of the difficult concepts to get in the Urantia papers. The Urantia papers put some new twists on several words. Personality is one. Space is another.

We’ll spend some time talking about space, because these papers present space as a positive reality, not just a negative reality. These papers present personality as something quite different from your character, your temperament; we even use personality as a crude synonym for sex appeal. You know? Or social charm. But personality is presented in these papers as the fourth reality—something which is not matter, not mind, and not spirit, and which differs in a way from matter, mind, and spirit, because matter, mind, and spirit—while they are qualitatively different—they exist in terms of quantity. They respond to gravity. And you can measure the degree of response, so that you can speak, not only of material mass, but intellectual mass, and spiritual mass. Personality has quality, but no quantity. There is no mass to personality. And while we’re at it, let’s talk a little about that. I think that most helpful way of looking at personality is to think of an abstract color. Think of yellow. You all can conceptualize yellow, can’t you? But did you ever see yellow, except in relation to some object? No. Now you’ve got a feeling for what personality is.

You can conceptualize, you can conceive of personality in the abstract, but you will never see a personality except it is associated with one or more of the active energies in time and space. These papers can talk about personality in the abstract, but personality never functions unless it is associated with a living energy system. If you take personality away from living energy, you have something which is real, but is wholly non-functional. And I believe is non-detectable on sub-deity levels. I think God knows it’s there, but I don’t think we do. I think some of his deputies may know where it is, but I don’t think creatures do. Personality is, to a living energy system, in a way, what a color is to an object. It unifies the whole object. When it’s there, it dominates. You have some subtle relationships as we get into these three energies.

A spiritual being is not a personality simply by virtue of being a spiritual being. This is interesting. A spirit entity can be very real, and yet be other than personal. If a spiritual being is a personality, it is because the Father has added personality to spiritual reality. And in a way, this illustrates the primacy of the Father in relation to the Son, who is the active center of spiritual reality. How does spirit relate to mind? Do you have to endow a spiritual being with mind to enable it to think? The answer is no. Spirit is minded, without mind, illustrating the primacy of the Son in relation to the Conjoint Creator. Spirit is antecedent to mind, but not to personality. Isn't that interesting?

Is a minded being essentially spiritual? The answer is no. Any more than a spiritual being is necessarily personal. I think these are interesting relationships, illustrating the functional relationships of the three Deities, and their primacy in relation to each other. The unrevealed inhabitants of the worlds of the Eternal Son are not personalities. They're created by the Eternal Son. They're spiritual beings. We don't know anything about them, except we know they're not personal. A Thought Adjuster is a spiritual reality, but not a personality, unless God chooses to personalize that Thought Adjuster. An intelligent being may not be spiritual. I don't think an Associate Power Director is a spiritual being at all, but I'm sure an Associate Power Director is an exquisitely intelligent being.

I suspect such beings will be our instructors when we graduate from the local universe and become first stage spirits. And instead of studying God, we study physics, and astronomy, and the physical constitution of the universe of universes. And that's not as paradoxical as it might seem. I think maybe if you get outside of matter, then you can really understand matter. You can look at it from an exterior perspective. Those of you who have developed at-home-ness in a foreign language know how much you can appreciate English because you can think from a position exterior to the English language. I mean when you stop translating, this becomes a second language. It's just like if you leave this country, you have a wonderful basis of comparison and a new ability to appreciate what we have here. And also what they have there.

We really can understand only one of the discussed levels of Deity function, the personal. We're personalities. Hence we can deal with God as a Father of personalities. This makes sense to us because the fatherhood relationship is one which we either observe or have experienced or have both observed and experienced. Parenthood is an easy thing for reproducing creatures to comprehend. But is the First Source and Center the Father of a Thought Adjuster?

Oh, yes, you can use poetic license and use the word Father there, but actually he's not, is he?

What is it? We have no word for it. What is the relationship of a source to a fragment? You can be father only to a son. God is Father to a Personalized Adjuster, co-Father. The mortal contributors to the Adjuster's character are also parental there, but what is the word you use to describe the relationship of the First Source and Center to a fragment of himself that is not a son? We have no word. Neither do we have a word adequate to express God's relationship to an eventuated being, for God is functioning in a superpersonal sense. What does the word superpersonal mean? Nothing, absolutely nothing. You cannot grasp it, except you know it's not personality. It's not less than personality, but more than personality. But you see, the word personality is a maximum word in our experiential comprehension.

We know of nothing beyond personality. We can conceive of a sub-personal being as an animal. But that's not analogous to the prepersonal level of the Universal Father. A Thought Adjuster is not an animal. Neither can we understand what a superpersonal being is, because we're working up here on the second story of Undivided Deity, Incorporated. And when they say that God, as a superperson eventuates beings, what does that mean? Well, they've taken an English word and put an odd twist on it. They might just as well say he gloops them. You know what I mean? That's an arbitrary word. And it would be just as meaningful. They are not created; but how do they come into being? Who knows? It's by a different technique.

Fragmentation I can visualize as the tearing off of a piece—but eventuation is completely beyond me. I just know it's not creation. You see, we're getting into trouble as we deal with levels, and also this whole darn thing is complicated by the difference between a time reality and an eternity reality. I don't understand eternity; I just know it's not time. When they describe eternity events in these papers, they often use the present tense. And it makes just as much sense to put them in the present tense as it would the past tense. They do not say the God of Action functioned, and the dead vaults of space were astir; they say the God of Action functions, and the dead vaults of space are astir. It's no more distortion to say that this is happening in the present moment as it would be to say that it happened at any past moment in time, because it never happened in any past moment in time.

I would like each one of you to visualize this assignment: For whatever reason, you have been commissioned by some bureau in the American State Department, and it is your job to go to Africa. You can have textbooks with you, you can carry quite a lot of baggage. And it is your job to go into the

still remaining darker portions of Africa, and you are going to write, dictate, a series of presentations of the American way of life to Bantu tribesmen living in the Stone Age of culture. And interpreters have been provided—you don't know Bantu—interpreters have been provided who are fluent in Bantu and who have a complete grasp of English as well.

And in the course of your discussions, you have gotten to the chapter which deals with the functioning of the New York Stock Exchange in relation to American economy. And you are thinking how do you present the relationship between common stocks, cumulative and noncumulative preferred, debentures, secured debentures, the relationship between these liens against the earnings of a holding company, and similar obligations issued by subsidiary companies, which have a prior claim to the earnings of subsidiaries, which eventually will be funneled as dividends into the holding company; and the relationship of the income tax structure to the interest and dividends ultimately received by

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the bondholders and stockholders of this corporation; and the relationship of all this as it pertains to the American economy in terms of the rise and fall of the price of stocks on the New York Stock Exchange.

And so you start out. And the interpreter says, "Sorry, in Bantu, no word for common stock." And little by little, you begin to adjust your thinking. And the chances are, that what you wind up with, is a description of something very much like a State Fair, where produce is brought to a given spot, and bartered and exchanged. And you either describe it this way, or you skip the story of the New York Stock Exchange. Look. There's a tremendous gap between the verbal concepts in primitive Bantu and mid-Twentieth century English. But you can translate from English into Bantu; it can be done. The language of Uversa is not translatable into English under any circumstances. There is no overlap. The gap between Uversa and English is tremendously greater than the gap between English and Bantu. You have to go from Uversa to the tongue of Salvington; and even then, you can't translate into English. But from Salvington, you can go to the tongue of Satania, and now, you can translate into English. So, how many times do you suppose the interpreter said to the Divine Counselor, "But there is no word for this in English."

And little by little, the Divine Counselor compromised

his concept, permitted his story to be attenuated, finally, in certain places, said, "Well, we just won't talk about this at all, because the distortion is too great. I can't convey truth at all. Fact I'll sacrifice..." (Break in tape) "*We are fully cognizant of the difficulties of our assignment. We recognize the impossibility of fully translating the language of the concepts of divinity and eternity into the symbols of the language of the finite concepts of the mortal mind.*" [0:12.13] (P.17) And then they go on to say, we're very hopeful that your Thought Adjusters and the Spirit of Truth will help us in this matter.

And again, I think of the Archangel who—I'm sure this Archangel has a high aesthetic motivation, because he was selected to write the paper on the celestial artisans, and he's talking about the affairs of the local universe, not the affairs of Orvonton or Havona. And he goes on to say, "*But I almost despair of being able to convey to the material mind the nature of the work of the celestial artisans. I am under the necessity of constantly perverting thought and distort-*

ing language in an effort to unfold to the mortal mind the reality of these morontia transactions and near-spirit phenomena." [44:0.20] (P. 499)

Not spiritual realities, morontia realities. "*Your comprehension is incapable of grasping, and your language is inadequate for conveying, the meaning, value, and relationship of these semispirit activities. And I proceed with this effort to enlighten the human mind concerning these realities with the full understanding of the utter impossibility of my being very successful in such an undertaking.*" "I can do no more than to attempt to sketch a crude parallelism between mortal material activities and the manifold functions of the celestial artisans. If the Urantia races were more advanced in art and other cultural accomplishments, then I could go that much farther in an effort to project the human mind from the things of matter to those of morontia." [44:0.21] (P. 499)

Not spirit, morontia. "*Every attempt on my part to explain the work of spirit embellishment would only recall to material minds your own pitiful but worthy efforts to do these things on your world of mind and matter.*" In regard to the harmony workers, "*These artists are not concerned with music, painting, or anything similar, as you might be led to surmise.*" The translator just said, no word in Bantu for common stock. "*They are occupied with the manipu-*

lation and organization of specialized forces and energies which are present in the spirit world, but which are not recognized by mortals.” [44:7.1] (P. 507)

Sorry, these people are color blind. No use describing red, yellow, and blue. No words in their language. “*If I had the least possible basis for comparison, I would attempt to portray this unique field of spirit achievement, but I despair—there is no hope of conveying to mortal minds this sphere of celestial artistry.*” [44:7.1] (P. 507) Ensembles of dancing undoubtedly represent a crude and grotesque attempt of material creatures to approach the celestial harmony of being placement and personality arrangement. The other five forms of morontia melody are unrecognized by the sensory mechanisms of material bodies. Fellow Bantu, tribesmen, fellow savages, fellow ignoramuses, let’s be a little charitable as we go through this and remember that their job of describing Paradise monota to us is infinitely more difficult than would be our job of describing 20th century Western civilization to a stone age tribe anywhere in their language. But I think we can develop some sympathy for these folks.

And they’ve got to work in English, don’t they? And so

always have happened since the beginning of things. Let’s analyze what one of these words means. Well, first of all This is not basic to human salvation. The love of God I’m not going to use the text, you can read that This is not basic to human salvation. The love of God something that’s static just is, isn’t it? And I think the best illustration of the static nature of Deity is the concept of I AM. I AM what I AM. I AM that I AM. God is. Deity is. And Deity is unchanging. And in many senses, Deity continues to be unchanging, unaltered by the events of time. Impervious, even, to the cycles of eternity.

We folks are alive today. It’s a dead cinch that a thousand years from now, none of us will be here, right? And if we don’t blow up this planet, there will be people here, correct? These people are potential, aren’t they? They’re not here, but obviously, they’re possible. A thousand years ago, we weren’t here, but we were potential, or we couldn’t be here now, right? In a certain sense, a seed is the potential of a plant. One of the cutest statements I ever read was in an analysis of genetics, and it said, a hen is an egg’s way of making another egg. When I think of static Deity, I think

They take our word space and add new properties to it. In other words, they actually expand our language a little bit in the process of trying to introduce their concepts

they introduce—they take words, like eventuate, and put new meanings in them. Occasionally they give us arbitrary words, like absonite, like morontia. They take the word personality and put a new twist on it. They take our word space and add new properties to it. In other words, they actually expand our language a little bit in the process of trying to introduce their concepts into Bantu. I think that if we can get a feel for the seven levels of the total function of Deity, it’s going to be very interesting to us, and it’s going to open up to us a feel for Deity, a feel for cosmic growth, and a feel for creature destiny, that we can hardly get anywhere else. I regard this statement of the seven levels of Deity function as one of the most basic to the comprehension to *The Urantia Book*.

This is not basic to human salvation. The love of God is basic to that. But to comprehension, this is basic. First of all, I wish you’d kind of get these words in mind; they’re real short words. This is not basic to human salvation. The love of God static, potential, associative, creative, evolutionary, supreme, and ultimate. Let’s emphasize the simultaneity of these things. All of these things are happening all the time,

of a fried egg. This is the I AM. Potentials have not yet differentiated from actuals. As the papers describe it, this is the hypothetical static moment of eternity. That’s the language used in the cross-reference I gave you. But the papers do not validate what (can’t understand tape) and metaphysicians call monism, which is not a fried egg, but a scrambled egg.

There’s a big difference. In a scrambled egg, you’ve got just a oneness, right? But in a fried egg, you’ve got a nucleus and a cytoplasm. The nucleus is the yellow part; the cytoplasm is the white. Always, even in a hypothetical static moment, in the beginning of beginnings this is not basic to human salvation. The love of God before the beginning of beginnings there was always the possibility for self will. When you differentiate potentials from actuals again, I’ve got to have real, real childlike simple symbols to get ‘em. This is not basic to human salvation. The love of God you know what happened? The yolk moved out away from the white. How many of you have separated yolks and whites? The yolk moved away from the white. This is the creation, eventuation, appearance, of possibilities. Something could happen. And, of course, the minute the yolk moved away from the

white, you don't have two realities, you have three realities. You have the white, you have the yolk, then you have the relationship between the white and the yolk. Doesn't the fried egg help? I mean you just can't be afraid of a concept of a fried egg, can you?

...moved away from the static situation. In so moving, the yolk demonstrated volition, and also qualified itself. It took up a new position. The white never moved, did it? And was never qualified. Hence, it's unqualified. And since we are dealing with absolute realities, here, I think, is the genetic derivation of the term Unqualified Absolute. Unqualified because it's never moved. And at this point, the white became an 'it', because the personal potentials were in the yolk. When you take the yolk away from the white, you rout it of all Deity and personality qualities. Henceforth, the Unqualified is 'it', not 'he'. The yolk, what name shall we give the yolk? I like the term Qualified Absolute. It's used in the papers, rarely. And what do we name the relationship between the white and the yolk? The papers give us a name, the Universal Absolute, whose function it is to interrelate the tensions and relationships between the Qualified Absolute and the Unqualified Absolute. And here is the beginning of the separation of Deity and non-Deity. The Unqualified Absolute is static reality minus all that is Deity. The Qualified Absolute contains within itself the seeds of Deity manifestation. Volition is inherent in the yolk. Response, inherent in the white, the cytoplasm. The Unqualified Absolute.

You know, one of the shrewdest criticisms of the Book of Genesis was written by an old Zoroastrian theologian. It's in the Pehlevi texts. And this old Persian, Zoroastrian, pre-Mohammedan of course, is saying, this story of creation is for the birds. God was not alone, because when he commanded something happen, this means that there was also present an obeyer of commands. How 'bout that? I think that's a pretty good definition of the Unqualified Absolute. When Deity speaks with an absolute voice, the commands are obeyed by the Unqualified Absolute.

Or, putting it this way, when total Deity takes snuff, the Unqualified Absolute sneezes. The next stage of development is that of associative. From here on, changes are going to take place in the yolk, not in the white. The white is essentially changeless, only responsive to the yolk. What's happening here? Well, I think we are trying to put together the story of the great prison break. This is the Universal Father escaping from the fetters of infinity and the limitations of absoluteness. Look, if God is all and fills all, there's no room for us, is there? There's no room for adventure. There's no room for change. If infinity is totally filled by the Infinite One, then there's no room for any other one, is there? If you've got a

pitcher that's full of water, can you put water in the pitcher? The answer is no.

As Lao-Tze says in the Tao te Ching, the great value of a vessel is its emptiness. So that it can be filled. And what God is trying to do is produce some emptiness, so that other than God may live. At this point, the principle of God is in this yolk, the Qualified Absolute. And at this point, God is the Absolute Personality. As the Absolute Personality, God suffers from awful limitations. He's everything. How does he create emptiness? Here's how he does it. And this, in crude language, is precisely what is described in the reference I've given you. Let's visualize God as wearing a coat. You know, fried eggs and coats and things like that—these are not frightening ideas. Let that coat symbolize the Absolute Personality. What happened? God took his coat off. He moved away from the Absolute Personality. And in so moving, he became Father of the Absolute Personality, who thus became the Eternal Son.

The Universal Father is not the Absolute Personality. The papers are very clear on this point. The Eternal Son is the Absolute Personality. In this transaction, God possessed himself of something new. This is not basic to human salvation. The love of God—Father personality. And if he could be Father of the Absolute Personality, he could be Father of any personality. And in this transaction, he escaped from the terrible limitations of absoluteness. If you will study the papers on the Eternal Son—I'll give you your cross-references here, "Limitations of the Eternal Son." (P. 281) The Eternal Son cannot be father to any being in his own name and right. The Eternal Son cannot fragment his nature. You cannot fragment personality.

One of its prime properties is unity. You can't break the unity of personality. How then, can the Father fragment? Ah! Because he's not only a person, he's everything else, too. And as a pre-person, he can fragment. The Father can't fragment his personal nature any more than the Son can, but he has a pre-personal nature which he can fragment. This is why the Eternal Son becomes forever a revelation of the Universal Father. All personalities are fashioned after the nature of the Eternal Son. And stop and think: this is automatically true, because all personalities are also sons, are they not? This, I think, is the derivation of the third level of total Deity function, associative.

It's not only associative as between Deity and non-Deity, it is associative as between the Father and his now-appearing son, the Absolute Personality. I think the principle that to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction is sound. When the Father revealed himself in the Eternal Son, at the same time he revealed himself in a non-spiritual, non-Deity

manner. At the same time that he took off his coat, he built a machine. He built Paradise. Paradise is a revelation of the non-Deity aspects of the First Source and Center, just as the Eternal Son is the full revelation of the personal, spiritual aspects of God the Father. God is not Father of Paradise; God is source of Paradise. He's Father of the Eternal Son. The First Source and Center is related to the physical universe, not by the quality of love, but by the majesty of physical law. His relationship to the personal universe is something quite different. Do you have this picture now?

We have the Father and Son present on Paradise. And they sustain a relationship to the Unqualified Absolute through the Universal Absolute. I have a name for this moment. I like to call it the zero universe age. I want to talk to you about universe ages as we go through the Foreword. They're quite related to this story. You'll recall that we're living in the second universe age, aren't we? It's the age of the superuniverses. Our universe age began—I would pick as a likely date, the date of the creation of the twenty one Ancients of Days. The papers tell us this is the first recorded

trinitization. And this act has the following results:

1. The appearance of their Deity equal.
2. The formation of the original Trinity.
3. The appearance of the central universe and
4. The potential appearance of all future material creation.

You see, this is a subtle one, all of the matter of all creation has come from Paradise. All of the stuff of the yet-to-be created nebulae of the future came from Paradise. I like to consider the relationship of two actual and one theoretical universe ages—zero, one, and two. Or, the zero age, the Havona age, and the present age of the Grand Universe. Back in the zero age, we don't have the complete function of Deity, do we? We have the static function, we have the potential function, and we don't truly have the associative function, do we? At best, it's foreshadowed. Now, when we get our first actual universe age, the Age of Havona, we have two new Deity levels in operation.

If our present universe age started with the creation of the twenty one Ancients of Days, what event is likely to end the present universe age?

event in history. Time history, as we know it, begins with the creation of the twenty one Ancients of Days. This happened a finite number of years ago. It can be written out in numbers. It's probably a hell of a big number, but it's a comprehensible number. That event ended the preceding universe age, didn't it? The age of Havona. And began the present universe age. We're living in the second universe age. The age of Havona was the first universe age.

What we're talking about now is the zero universe age. Zero is not a reality, but it's a very valuable concept, isn't it? This is what the papers refer to, I would say, as the dawn of eternity. Zero is not real. It's just conceptually valuable. Well, we've reached the zero universe age. And I would like, again, to take very careful inventory of what we have in this zero universe age. We have some potentials here. We've got the Unqualified Absolute. We still have the Qualified Absolute. We have the Universal Absolute. We have, in terms of actuality, three realities. We have two existential Deities, and a power base for operations. I visualize at this moment the Father and the Son alone on Paradise. And what do they do? They move into the fourth level of Deity function. They create. And how do they create? They engage in an act of total

We have the full expression of the associative level in terms of existential Deity. This is the Paradise Trinity. And we have the fourth level, the creative level. Now, does this mean the first two levels stop functioning? The answer is no. They go right on into the age of Havona. You still have static reality, potential reality, associative Deity, and creative Deity. And so it is when the age of Havona gives way to the age of the Grand Universe, or the seven superuniverses as dependent on Havona. This is the second universe age; this is the age in which we are now living.

The first four levels of the function of total Deity continue, and we add a fifth. And the fifth level of Deity function is evolutionary. What's the difference between creative and evolutionary? Time. Plus creature participation. Is a Havona native a partner with Deity in determining his status as a Havona native? No. He is what he is because the Gods made him that way, right? A mortal ascender, however, is an increasingly conscious partner with God in the evolution of his status as a finaliter. Right? Here is the big difference between creation and evolution. And the evolutionary concept is the big new thing as I see it, that appears in the second universe age. And it doesn't mean that any preceding thing stops

operating. It merely means a new thing is added. We still have two levels of Deity function, don't we? Supreme and Ultimate. What gives there? Are they operative now? No, not in any completed sense of the word. When will Deity function on the Supreme level? Total Deity.

Well, existentially, the Paradise Trinity of Supremacy is functioning, but it isn't functioning in that way in an experiential sense, is it? Because the Supreme Being has yet to evolve. If our present universe age started with the creation of the twenty one Ancients of Days, what event is likely to end the present universe age? If our present universe age started with the creation of the twenty one Ancients of Days, what event is likely to end the present universe age? Audience: New creation? Well, I think it will be the settling of the seven superuniverses in light and life, and that event will be witnessed by the emergence of the Supreme Being from non-contactable status to contactable status. When the Supreme Being has fully emerged, then, I think the present universe age will have come to an end. (Break in tape). How does the Supreme Being get this experience? Well, let's take Julia's mind that she's so attached to. Audience: Laughter.

I don't think that the Supreme Being is concerned with what happens on the first five levels of adjutant mind, that's animal mind. If you go up on one of the worlds of the Life Carriers, one of the biologic laboratories in the near regions of Salvington, the capitol of the local universe, there's a central placement of the seven adjutant mind spirits. And for the first five, you can take off qualitative and quantitative readings. But for the last two, spirit of worship, spirit of wisdom, you don't get quantitative readings. Those two repercuss right in the Creative Spirit of the local universe, because basically, these seven adjutant mind spirits are in a sense levels of her consciousness.

Now, when Julia worships, or shows wisdom, she uses this mind. And in using it, I think there is a repercussion. The best illustration I know: I pick a chair up. It's obvious to all of you that as I pick this chair up, my feet push down on the floor of this room with equal force. Right? OK. Now the picking up of the chair is Julia's experience in making some decision. And that remains her experience. That registers in her soul. This is the spiritual nature of the Adjuster making carbon copies. But the down-push of her feet on the floor I think registers in the local universe Mother Spirit and via that point, in the Supreme Being, so that all experience is registering in the Supreme Being. Hence, he is a product of all experience, whether it be the experiential nature of a Thought Adjuster, the experience acquired by the Michael Sons in their adventures out here in time and space, the wise acts—or one wise act of a Planetary Prince—all of this that's

going on in all the myriads of worlds, systems, constellations, local universes, seven superuniverses, the judicial acts of the Ancients of Days, all of the uncounted actions of seraphic ministers, all of this is funneling into and becoming a part of the emerging, evolving, growing, experiential nature of the Supreme Being.

We contribute to his growth; he contributes to our growth. We can grow because we are in him, and he is growing. Is it possible that anybody is not in him? The answer is yes. Beings whose nature is inherently of the previous universe age are what we might call pre-Supreme Beings. And they don't grow. Does a Divine Counselor evolve? How could he? The day he was created, he presents the council of the Paradise Trinity in absolute and ultimate perfection. How can you improve on that? Can you? You can't grow, can you? When the twenty one Ancients of Days were commissioned, they began to rule the seven superuniverses with the flawlessness of trinitarian perfection. When they adjudicated the first problem in justice presented to them, they adjudicated just exactly as would the Paradise Trinity. Do they grow?

The answer is no. They are pre-Supreme in nature, aren't they? Have we got any other evidence? You see, in our thinking, time means experience, and experience means evolutionary growth. I'm trying to get you out of this groove, so that you can realize that that which appears to be universal, isn't. It is just extremely prevalent. It is the characteristic of the present universe age, but not universal. Can we find any other evidence along these lines? Yes, we can. Two more bits of evidence. Consider a Mighty Messenger, and this would apply to his other Trinity embraced associates—what I say of one, I say of the other. What happens to him? He has the same experience of growth which we have, except that, on the way up, he's rebellion-tested. That's the one peculiarity of a Mighty Messenger—goes through Havona, and there's the Father, and there's the Corps of the Finality—shares our destiny. Probably is given a long enough tour of duty with the Corps of the Finality to give him a feeling of satisfaction of experience. And at an appropriate time after he has become a finaliter, he is withdrawn from the Finality Corps.

In groups of so many thousand, these rebellion tested finaliters are embraced by the Paradise Trinity. And this embrace does something to them. At least for the present universe age, it reaches ahead in the stream of time, and advance-precipitates out of the stream of time onto this Mighty Messenger future growth which might have been his during the rest of the present universe age had he not been Trinity embraced. And, at least for the present universe age, a Mighty Messenger ceases to grow. He can't grow. He's already had it given to him. And that's why he can be com-

missioned as an associate of a Divine Counselor, who doesn't grow. He is temporarily a stationary son, neither descending nor ascending. As it says in one of the papers, I think written by a Mighty Messenger, he speaks rather hopefully, he said, we have never been informed that this limitation of growth extends beyond the confines of the present universe age.

Is there any other evidence that we can find which helps us get a feeling for this fifth level of Deity function? Yes, there is. It might be a little bit fun for you to note down where else you can find about Creature Trinitized Sons, because it's not told all in one place. Can I give you a series of pairs of numbers? The first number is the paper, and the second number is the section in that paper. Paper 17, section 1. I'm going to give you six cross-references. Paper 26, section 11. Paper 20, section 8. Paper 55, section 12. Paper 117, section 2. Paper 23, section 4. You'll have a lot of fun, reading the tail-end of this paper and then following it up. There's something funny about these Creature Trinitized Sons. You'll recall that they are of two basic kinds. There are Creature Trinitized Sons who have homogeneous ancestors, and there are Creature Trinitized Sons who have heterogeneous, unlike, ancestors. What do we mean by homogeneous ancestors?

Well, two finaliters want to trinitize. The finaliters are alike—homogeneous ancestry. Two Havona natives want to trinitize. Again, homogeneous ancestry. And these are the Creature Trinitized Sons that are, for the most part, discussed in the paper on Trinitized Sons. And they become

age. Pre-evolutionary. These Creature Trinitized Sons are working in the seven superuniverses and in the Grand Universe, but their status is as of the next universe age, which is post-evolutionary. Example: When two dissimilar beings trinitize another—now you've got heterogeneous ancestry. As with a finaliter and a Paradise citizen. They always succeed, and they produce a being so far removed from the problems and situations of the present universe age, that he isn't even allowed to function. And those folks are described, partly in this paper and also in the last reference that I gave you. Paper 23, section 4.

Every such Creature Trinitized Son is immediately withdrawn from activity and is sent to Vicegerington in association with a Solitary Messenger, and they're held in reserve for activities having to do with the future universe ages. In other words, this whole order of Creature Trinitized Sons represents something which is really germane to the ages of the future, not to the present universe age. These beings are not participating in the growth of the Supreme Being. Hence, the passage of time does not produce experiential growth. They do not change in status. It's kind of hard to get out of that grove, isn't it? To us, and to most beings living in the present universe age, the evolutionary principle applies. Time passes, we grow, we experience, status changes.

We grow from babies, to children, to adults. And on to morontians, spirit ascenders, finaliters. But that's because we're part of the Supreme Being. And we are participating

... this whole order of Creature Trinitized Sons represents something which is really germane to the ages of the future, not to the present universe age. These beings are not participating in the growth of the Supreme Being.

respectively Celestial Guardians and High Son Assistants, if they're later Trinity embraced. Otherwise, they work all over the universes. You find them on the inner Havona circuit. You find them on the worlds of the Seven Supreme Executives. You find them out working with the Trinity Teacher Sons, and so on. They have one peculiarity, these Creature Trinitized Sons of homogeneous parents: they can't experience evolutionary growth. The specific discussion of why they can't is the next to the last reference I've given you. 117, section 2.

These beings are in, but not of, the present universe age. They're very much like a Divine Counselor, who is in, but not of, the present universe age. He functions in the seven superuniverses, but his status is like the preceding universe

in his growth as he is totaling our growth. Do you have a feeling for the peculiarity of growth which attaches to the present universe age? You see, the Supreme Being is God as comprehensible to evolutionary creatures. And the kind of a God who has a beginning is the kind of a God we can understand. We're told that as the sovereignty of the Supreme grows through the evolutionary growth of the seven superuniverses, and this means that increasingly spirit in the presence of personality, through mind, is coming to dominate matter. This is the growth of the power of the Almighty. This coalesces.

I think of a great river system. I symbolize it as a greater Mississippi River, with seven great tributaries, each representing the coalescing power flow from a superuniverse. And

each of these tributaries has its tributaries, which grow smaller and smaller as you go down from major to minor sector, to local universe, to constellation systems, and planets, even to us as individuals. We're the rivulets. This mighty inflow of experiential, evolutionary power coalesces with the spirit person of the Supreme. And it doesn't do this in the seven superuniverses. It does it—of all places—on the pilot world of the outer Havona circuit. That's the second change which took place in Havona. You see, Havona is related to the superuniverses, as well as the superuniverses are related to Havona. They affect each other. What happened when Grandfanda arrived? You remember, he was the first mortal ascender to reach Havona. And Havona has just never been quite the same since. Just a lot of things happened.

Let's take inventory: Until the arrival of Grandfanda, there had never been such a thing as a graduate guide in Havona. But Grandfanda was met by the first of the graduate guides, Malvorian, who did greet this pilgrim discoverer of Havona. Until Grandfanda arrived, Havona natives never evolved. But now they evolve. For example, they evolve into the various Finaliter Corps on Paradise. This is evolution. In each company in the mortal Finaliter Corps there's one Havona native. And they have their own corps, too. Until the arrival of Grandfanda, and the later appearance of finaliters, Havona natives could never trinitize with ascendant beings, could they? Because there were no ascendant beings available. Until Grandfanda arrived, there were no secondary supernaphim.

When Grandfanda arrived on the pilot world of the outermost Havona circuit, simultaneously, the first Paradise citizen arrived on the pilot world of the innermost Havona circuit to begin the outward traversal of Havona as Grandfanda was beginning the inward traversal of Havona. And you'll recall the citizens of Paradise and the evolutionary citizens of the superuniverses first met face to face on the fourth Havona circuit. Think back to God the sevenfold. Think back to God the sevenfold. The growth of the Supreme represents a collaboration between the creator children of the Paradise Deities and their Paradise parents. And the eldest of these children—and in a sense, they're representatives of the seven master spirits, aren't they?—that's the highest order of Deity which is sub-Paradise. And what is the origin of the reflective spirits? Each one of the seven Master Spirits collaborated with the Paradise Trinity in the production of seven reflective spirits which were like human nature.

And when this cycle had run its course, we had 49 reflective spirits, and that particular aspect of cooperation between the creator children of Paradise Deity and Paradise Deity, that cycle had run its course. You couldn't get any

more, could you? The first time the Supreme Being acted, he acted because the foundation for action had been thus established. That was his first function as a creator. He never functioned before or since. (Break in tape) In talking about the first universe age, we can make an observation: It has no origin in time, does it? But it does have an ending in time, doesn't it? It ends when the second universe age is born. And I have elected to present the opening of the second universe age as the creation of the 21 Ancients of Days. If you're going to pick a marker, it seems to me that's as good as any.

The 21 Ancients of Days were created and commissioned, I think, this is the essence of the dawn of the present universe age, the second universe age. The age of the seven superuniverses. Yes? Audience: The Eternals were created with Havona? Yes. So were the Trinitized Secrets of Supremacy. Eternals of Days means just what the name implies. And Ancients of Days—they're the oldest beings in existence. Anyone behind them doesn't have age; they've always been around.

William Samuel "Bill" Sadler, Jr. was the only surviving son of Doctors William S. Sadler and Dr. Lena Sadler. Just as the coming new revelation (The Urantia Book) was announced in 1924, Bill joined the U.S. Marine Corps and served for the next four years. After military service, he attended the University of Chicago, but left when his comparative religions course failed to mention God. After graduation from Northwestern University and trying several lines of work, in 1947 Bill and a former associate of his father established a business in the management consulting field. With Bill as President and salesman, Sadler and Associates became a highly successful firm. Their office was at 333 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago; this building also became the original location of Urantia Foundation in 1950.

WHY SHOULD YOU SUPPORT A URANTIA ORGANIZATION LIKE THE URANTIA BOOK FELLOWSHIP?

By Paula Thompson

Well, because if you are reading *The Urantia Book* you know what it means to be spiritually hungry and you know firsthand what a difference the revelation makes when one's soul is truly fed.

Jesus described the pain of spiritual longing well when he poignantly said, "*The world is filled with hungry souls who famish in the very presence of the bread of life; men die searching for the very God who lives within them. Men seek for the treasures of the kingdom with yearning hearts and weary feet when they are all within the immediate grasp of living faith.*" [159:3.8] (P. 1766)

Doubtless, you've experienced the ardent search for truth and meaning that he describes and know how good it feels to find spiritual teachings that actually make sense. Do you remember how it feels to wonder, "Is God really that way?" "Who am I and how do I fit in?" "What is the value and purpose of my life?" "Why does God let evil exist?" "Why does God let good people suffer?" Not to mention how confusing it can be when, in the process of sincerely questioning, one is confronted with the rigidity of dogmatic fundamentalism on one side and the baroness of faithless secular science on the other.

Certainly, those of us who are blessed to have this amazing revelation in our lives do know how it feels to have satisfying and logical answers to life's most perplexing questions. We who read *The Urantia Book* don't have to fear death, or see the world as a hopeless mess, or think of God as "*an offended monarch, a stern and all-powerful ruler whose chief delight is to detect his subjects in wrongdoing and to see that they are adequately punished...*" [188:4.8] (P. 2017) We have been given a precious gift by being fully liberated from these stultifying beliefs.

Sadly, some people are so spiritually starved that they've lost their appetite for spiritual things, even for the truth. Nobody seems to be making much sense or speaking much truth anyway. And yet, the world needs liberating and life giving words of truth now more than ever before and we *Urantia Book* readers have those words.

We at *The Urantia Book* Fellowship still burn to share this amazing gift with the world. We haven't given up on it and we won't. Sure the task is difficult and daunting, but someone has to do it. Someone has to share this sustenance with those who hunger and thirst for it. Indifference and apathy won't feed starving souls any more than it will feed starving bodies. We're committed to this project of making the book readily available to all who seek for truth and hunger for righteousness and we'll keep exploring every opportunity available to us. We want to show the world how divinely relevant and sublimely real this book is and that it is in fact an epochal revelation from a friendly and well-ordered universe. We'll get it into the hands of those who long for it but we won't stop there. Once they have it, we'll do all we can to bring them together for meaningful socialization around it. In other words, we'll keep doing what we've done for the last 60 years. We can't do it without YOU. We need your help. Are you with us?

We are also committed to YOU, as a fellow student of these teachings and someone who is a member of our Brotherhood of Believers. The revelation tells us we have a sacred obligation to serve you. We take that very seriously, which is why we've thoughtfully created this great publication to highlight the scholarly and spiritual offerings of our precious and diverse Urantia brotherhood.

Please join us in this great and ongoing project by giving what you can. Make a donation, and be at peace knowing that because you did some hungry soul will be fed and that they will find the God of their dreams and know that they are not a cosmic orphan but truly a child of the living GOD.

To donate online, go to the Fellowship website, www.urantiabook.org and click DONATE. Or send a check to *The Urantia Book* Fellowship, PO Box 6631, Broomfield, CO, 80021 USA

TOP/DOWN

By Gary Deinstadt, Somers, NY

I was invited to speak on *The Urantia Book* at an interfaith service that a local Christian church usually schedules on the third Sunday of every month. I know these people well, because I've worked with them in other interfaith endeavors. Participants involved come from diverse religious backgrounds, including clergy. They recently created a speaker series. In addition to the invited speaker, there's an interfaith team of approximately five people, who each contribute a five-minute talk related to the speaker's subject matter.

In the planning stages of my talk, I collected quotes from *The Urantia Book* and asked if they'd be interested in choosing one to speak on. At our meeting, we were reviewing the quotes and many said, "I'd like to speak on this one, no wait, I found another. Can I pick more than one??" They all enjoyed the process. I suggested that in their presentations they read the quote as is, and then feel free to add anything they'd like. So on the day of the service, I really had no idea what to expect.

I was surprised at what they came up with. It was interesting to see what they gleaned from an out of context quote from a book they didn't know. Much of it was insightful. It demonstrated to me that it wasn't important whether they got it right or not; it was more about creating the space for self discovery, the opportunity to participate, to share their own perspectives, reach their own conclusions, which interestingly enough, led to the common desire of digging deeper into *The Urantia Book*. Figuratively, all I did was open *The Urantia Book* and leave the room. By the time it came for me to speak, people were already eager to hear what I was going to say. There was definite buzz in the room.

I chose to begin with a quote from Paper 34: The Local Universe Mother Spirit. Section 6: The Spirit In Man . . . *The dead theory of even the highest religious doctrines is powerless to transform human character or to control mortal behavior. What the world of today needs is the truth which your teacher of old declared: "Not in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit." The seed of theoretical truth is dead, the highest moral concepts without effect, unless and until the divine Spirit breathes upon the forms of truth and quickens the formulas of righteousness.*

I requested a moment of silence for us to ask the divine spirit to breath on all of our forms of truth. In this way, I acknowledged all their forms of truth. I wanted to be re-

spectful of their personal religious experiences. My motive was to create a trusting warm, comfortable, and inviting atmosphere.

After our brief moment of silence, I told them that trying to describe *The Urantia Book* was like trying to describe Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring* and/or Beethoven's Ninth Symphony etc. I added that I could easily bog them down in the minutiae of what notes were played where and by what instruments. I could also tell them more about the composers, which are all important factors when you consider the piece as a whole, but nothing would move them as much as the personal experience of hearing the music for themselves. So I said I would follow a similar pattern in presenting *The Urantia Book*. For the most part, I stayed away from the minutiae, got out of the way and let the book sing.

The next thing I wanted to accomplish was to rid myself of potential red flags. For example:

"The Urantia Book...

It's not a religion, but much is religious.

It's not a particular philosophy, but quite philosophical.

It's not a holy book or practice.

No shoulds or should nots.

It wasn't created to save you, fix you, or convince you of anything.

It doesn't require a belief. It's more of a definitive work; so it wasn't necessarily inspired per se, but it's the most inspiring thing I've ever encountered."

I did this because I didn't want to get in the way of their personal beliefs. I didn't want them to think I was there to fix them or sell them anything. I wanted to create an equal playing field.

We briefly looked at the first couple of paragraphs of the forward, "*In the minds of the mortals of Urantia- that being the name of your world etc.,*" We glanced over the title's of the papers/ authors, etc., but then we narrowed it down to subject matter that were more immediate to people's concerns: Why are we here; where are we going—(The Eternal and Divine Purpose) the universe in and around us, good and evil in the world and life after death.

The Q&A that followed was interesting in so many ways. I'd get a couple of questions such as, "So, where's Jesus now?" Well, if you find yourself in a similar circumstance, I suggest responding: "*Where two, three or more are gathered, etc.*"

because any additional info could easily lead you into *The Urantia Book* minefield. A *Urantia Book* minefield question is one that either forces you to use the book's language, which may be familiar to readers, but clearly demonstrates to others that you're in this world, but starting to sound like you're not of it. OR, it's a question you can't possibly answer when you approach it from the bottom/up. (finite to the infinite.) It has to be addressed from the top/down. If I couldn't come up with a comprehensive response, I would simply apologize and explain my dilemma. I used the example of a thousand-piece puzzle. Most puzzles come with the whole picture on the cover of the box, so you know what you're trying to piece together. If all you have is a bunch of other pieces, you may get a clue, but the cover has to be your reference point. Surprisingly, they happily accepted the fact that it was a top/ down question.

The fascinating outcome of all this was that they truly wanted to know more about the *top*. Most people eagerly expressed an interest in studying the book further and are looking forward to joining us at our next study group meeting.

So, from this experience I learned:

1. If possible, allow others to participate. They want to feel like they're part of it. Not on the outside looking in.

2. Create an atmosphere of trust. Make them feel as if they were guests in your own home.

3. Be positive, respectfully humorous, humble and loving. Remember, they're there to be inspired, not corrected.

4. Stay away from minutiae; keep out of *The Urantia Book* minefield :)

5. If applicable, always try to answer from the top down approach.

6. Follow the pattern of Machiventa & Michael; become one of them. Let them get to know you and lovingly do all that you can to meet them where they are.

7. I've come to realize that a lot more people want to know about this revelation than I thought. I think we just have to get better at creating the atmosphere for the gifts of God to do their job.

Gary Deinstadt has been a student of *The Urantia Book* since 1982. He served on the General Council for 13 years and the Executive Committee for 5 years as the Education Committee Chair. Gary and his wife Andrea host a monthly study group at their home in Somers, New York (Westchester County). Gary is an ordained Interfaith minister and a two-time Emmy Award winning composer.

HEALING MEDITATION

Creative Life Force coursing through me,
With vibrations of healing energy,
Renewing my body, mind and soul,
Making me a whole, healthy being,
Divinely freeing the child in me,
I am wonderfully wild, spontaneously free ...

I let everything go as the Spirit surges,
With words flowing forth as wisdom emerges,
Intuitive insight empowers my hearing,
Time and space disappearing in the everpresent NOW ...

Lord, show me how to transform and transcend,
Mend my broken spirit, restore my troubled mind,
In the healing, holy presence I know I can find my way
Out of the darkness and into the dawn,
Once more in the Light, I am being reborn,
As I breathe in blessings from God within and above,
I tune into a universe of infinite love ...

THE NATURE OF PERSONALITY REALITY

By Byron Belitsos, San Rafael, CA

The truth about personality is a universal mystery—but we do know a few good things about it. In this essay, we dive into *The Urantia Book's* robust teachings on the nature of personality, or what I also call “selfhood” or “personhood.” I’ll compare these ideas with related notions from both the world’s wisdom traditions as well as a few representatives of depth psychology as we examine the complex relationship between healthy ego development and higher spiritual attainment. Along the way I will also make a few risky excursions into philosophic psychology and speculative theology, and call out ways that *The Urantia Book's* idea of personality constitutes a startling revelation to modern psychology and today’s living religions.

My ultimate aim is to highlight the serviceability of *The Urantia Book's* unprecedented revelations about the nature of personality reality. These include (1) the paradox of how each personality’s uniqueness in eternity coexists with its equality before God, and (2) *The Urantia Book's* revelatory description of the special endowments that always come with the gift of personality: creative free will, self-consciousness, and cosmic intuition. My hope is that I may enhance your idea of the centrality of personhood in the cosmic economy; and also help you to gain a better appreciation of what is knowable about personality, either by experience or revelation. May this essay also inspire you to relish the truths of the beauty and goodness of the Father of all personality with increasing love and awe

THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF PERSONALITY IN THE WEST

Let’s start with the earliest source of the idea of personality in the West. At Exodus 3:14 we meet the mysterious *I Am*, who declares himself to Moses in a rather dramatic way. After Moses asks for its name, he receives this startling reply: “God said to Moses, ‘I Am Who I Am’. This is what you say to the Israelites: I Am has sent me to you.” Not an easy assignment for old Moses. But it is not an exaggeration to say that his obedience to Jahweh’s commandment made possible our modern ideas of personhood.

Clearly, this newly announced Hebrew God was *relational*. He displayed unmistakable personal qualities. He took the initiative with Moses. He entered into a give-and-take dialogue and even used a show of fire to get his points across. Further, Jahweh’s phrase “I Am Who I Am” conveyed that he was a self-aware and self-caused being, not a

mere abstraction or metaphysical principle. As the Hebrews were soon to learn, this independent and powerful God had *feelings and ideas and plans*. He had will and intention. He was a living and *personal* Creator who communicated with his people through his prophets.

If Jahweh was their true God, then who were the Hebrews? They, as God’s own people, could rightly envision themselves as thinking, feeling, and choosing persons—each one a “mini-*I Am*” created by the original *I Am*, whose first impulse was to “make man in our image and likeness” (Genesis 1:26). And this notion soon became a bedrock doctrine of Christianity.

Similar ideas emerged in other ancient venues, especially in Greek philosophy. In our democratic political traditions that go back to ancient Greece and Rome, the status of *personhood* conferred certain inalienable rights on citizens who could be now described as free and sovereign individuals. Slaves were the exception that proved the rule: they were not defined as persons under ancient law, so they were not free and did not need to be treated with dignity. Christian thinkers arrived at a splendid concept of personhood that freed all slaves regardless of legal status. This concept declared our divine value as children of a loving Father, once stained by the sin of Adam but now salvaged by the grace of the Atonement. We can know the preciousness of the human individual, they taught, by accepting the truth of God incarnate as one of us, and thereby entering into his personal essence through worship, service, and the sacraments.

In ancient and medieval times, the dignity of personhood and the rights of citizenship also entailed duties to the state. These rights and duties were clearly spelled out at first in Roman law. They were later codified by modern democracies in their constitutions and elevated to even higher status in the U.N.’s Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. But the *Urantia Revelation* offers an unprecedented expansion of what it means to be a person. Politically speaking, it begins by calling for a global bill of rights and individual accountability before global law (in the *Urmia lectures*). It then goes on to declare us to be citizens of a much more encompassing realm than the nation or even the planet—ultimately proclaiming our right to ascend to Paradise and our duty to contribute to the evolution of the Supreme as cosmic citizens. Above all, *The Urantia Book* establishes human personality as infinitely unique and directly sourced from the Father,

and able to serve in a sacred and sublime partnership with the additional gift of the Thought Adjusters, which are a pure fragment of true God.

PERSONHOOD—ANCIENT AND MODERN

These revolutionary teachings arrived with a whisper, unknown and unacknowledged in a world swirling in doubt and turmoil about the dignity of personhood. Communism and fascism were built upon a critique of individualism and a frontal attack on the classical ideal of the free, sovereign, and rational self endowed with inherent rights before God. Nietzsche and his followers declared that the Western idea of self was a fictional construct, buffeted about by the arbitrary conventions of language and culture. Freud and Jung made clear that the ego, the conscious self, was like a small boat on the vast ocean of the unconscious that could capsize as a result of stress or trauma. A generation later, transpersonal psychologists and New Age thinkers influenced by Eastern religion taught that the belief in a separate self was a sign of negative ego and a source of pain and conflict. The impressive findings of neuroscience in the past few decades led scientists and philosophers to deny the ontological or even the psychological reality of the personal self, instead reducing our thoughts, feelings, and choices to mere biochemical operations of the material brain.

Clearly, the idea of personhood is in trouble today—both as a concept and in terms of the protection of human rights on the world stage. But long before the modern turn to the idea of a fragmentary, or fictional self, or “protean self,” the idea of the insubstantiality of the self already had a distinguished pedigree in the venerable teachings of Buddhism.

The earliest texts of the Theravadan school of Buddhism in particular negate the idea that we are each uniquely personal beings, calling this idea the primary source of *dukkha* (dissatisfaction and suffering). The Dalai Lama often restates the classic view, which is that that our *belief in an independent self is the root cause of all suffering*. He has even embraced the findings of neuroscience to support the Buddhist notion of the “emptiness” of selfhood.

What we believe to be the self, says Buddhist psychology, is merely an aggregation of ever-changing attributes, such as sensations, perceptions, wishes, and shifting states of awareness called *skandhas*. Such mental events may appear to have unity, but on closer inspection they reveal no stable organizing center or enduring continuity of consciousness. This observation that the self or soul lacks any cohesive quality has its own lineage in the modern West, best represented in modern times by the writings of the eighteenth-century skeptical Western philosopher, David Hume. Hume famously

argued in his “bundle theory of personal identity” that, if we pay attention to our raw experience, we can readily perceive the lack of unity of selfhood in our ordinary daily life.

In the face of such radical claims, you or I might insist on our “me-ness” as a matter of common sense. But it’s not unfair to ask: Just where or how is this sense of “I” or “me” to be located? In reply, one has to admit that our sense of self is rarely the same from day to day, or for that matter even for a few minutes. We’re more like helpless observers of an ever-changing flux of states, thoughts, feelings, and objects of awareness. And then here comes the Buddhists again, whose disciplined methods of introspection practiced over hundreds of years provides no direct evidence of an enduring person or some identifiable artifact of selfhood—aside from the perishable human body.

But again, we in the West—we rugged ones out here in the “land of the free”—hold out hope for something more solid. Better to choose something that stands for the “I am,” some abiding feature of the self that can provide a feeling of constancy of the self in the presence of unending flux. “I am an immaterial thinking self,” says Descartes. “I am my feeling heart,” say the Romantic poets. “I am a coherent set of electro-chemical transactions in my brain,” say the materialists. But if direct experience is the criterion, none of these perceptions is stable and reliable across time, not even in one 24-hour cycle, given our nightly surrender of selfhood to the dark world of dreams and deep sleep. Purportedly, devoted Buddhist meditation has revealed the ultimate truth of impermanence, not only of the self, but of all things and beings.

But as Buddhism grew in sophistication, later interpretations concluded that Buddha did not exactly hold to a settled doctrine about no-self—not to mention other crucial questions, such as the existence of an afterlife or whether the universe is eternal. He merely denied that such questions could be usefully answered on psychological grounds if your goal is to end *dukkha*. These issues are imponderable and indeterminate, he declared. To debate them is beside the point. If I may paraphrase, the Buddha would say: “O monks, do not brood over such views. Such brooding, O monks, is senseless.”

If one considers the rich record of the Buddha’s dialogues with his students, we learn that he was a pragmatic healer above all. He was absolutely committed to reducing their suffering and pain. The best medicine was to encourage his followers to let go of their identifications with “this or that” phenomenal reality, for all such attachments to that which is impermanent will lead to frustration and delusion.

Consider also the nondual schools of Hinduism, now

increasingly popular among millions of Yoga and new age adherents the West, once the bastion of independent selfhood. Generally known as *Advaita Vedanta*, they teach that “personhood,” including our self-awareness, is derived from *Brahman*, the underlying *impersonal* essence of the cosmos. *Brahman* can be defined as a self-sufficient universal consciousness with no “existential Other,” and thus is unable to engage in loving relationships with human persons.

This school of monism, with its concept of an indeterminate *One*, stands in stark contrast to the trinitarian doctrines of the West according to which the Absolute *I Am*

reflection—that is, the existential perfection of God’s self-awareness. Hegel declared this divine transparency to be the basis of divine personhood, as well as the source and essence of human personality. Hegel’s philosophical theology made more explicit the inner meaning of the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, and the Urantia Revelation greatly amplifies these same meanings in its discourses on “Deity personalization” in Part I.

My point here is more limited: the very concept of personality, divine or human, requires a self-awareness of both the fact and the truth of our unique personhood. And it

... the very concept of personality, divine or human, requires a self-awareness of both the fact and the truth of our unique personhood.

personalizes as the “Eternal Father” of the “Eternal Son,” these two being distinct “hypostases” that somehow operate as one by virtue of the unifying power of the Holy Spirit.

In classic Hindu doctrine, the transcendent *Brahman* corresponds to an entity residing in each of us known as *atman*, or the Self—a concept that the Urantia text celebrates as a foreshadowing of its own teaching about the Thought Adjuster, especially in the later Buddhist formulation of an indwelling *Buddha-nature*.

Teachers of nondual Vedanta would agree with Buddhists that we can have no direct cognition of this entity. Any particular idea or perception of a self that we may have, and all forms of identification with any given content of consciousness, *cannot* be the *atman*, since this entity was never separate from the indivisible, impersonal, absolute, and universal *Brahman*. Any particular attachment is a limit on realizing the truth of pure consciousness without an object. Think of the proverbial eye that can’t see itself or the tongue that cannot taste its “tonguehood.”

But if we turn again to the classical Western idea of God in its highest expression, we can say that the eye of God *can* see itself, and even humans can do so too at the end of a long process of personal evolution.

Original Deity sees “Godself” in perfection. There exists an “Other” in the Godhead; God is absolutely reflected and revealed in the person of the Son, the absolute Other and the absolute of personality. “*The Eternal Son is the unqualified personality-absolute*,” says *The Urantia Book*, “*that divine being who stands throughout all time and eternity as the perfect revelation of the personal nature of God.*” [10:2.4] (P. 110)

The nineteenth century philosopher G. W. F. Hegel called this intimacy of God and the Son the *absolute*

follows that our own quest for perfection (“Be you perfect as my Father in heaven is perfect”) implies that we have a goal of *perfecting* our own self-consciousness—for in this we are emulating the eternal state of the self-reflected consciousness in which our Father always abides. The Father absolutely knows himself in and as the Son, and the Son ever knows the Father in perfection. Hegel’s notion of absolute reflection is practically paraphrased in this well-known *Urantia Book* passage: “[The Father] *is the only being in the universe, aside from his divine co-ordinates, who experiences a perfect, proper, and complete appraisal of himself.*” [2:1.4] (P. 34)

So, what’s the upshot for us as sons and daughters of God? The first profound step toward our own proper self-appraisal is none other than *Father fusion*—fusion with the Thought Adjuster through our direct recognition that the indwelling Father fragment is our *truest self*. Later we identify this as “True Self” consciousness.

Technically, nondual Hinduism would deny this experience. We cannot fully know the *atman* and still remain self-aware; rather, to attain the Self is to disappear into its depths. We can foretaste this submergence of the personal ego through the devoted practice of meditation or ritual. We’ll know its earmarks when we achieve the state of nondual bliss—a temporary oneness with the One. Remember that the existential One (or *Brahman*) cannot allow an absolute Other—for there is no true sonship or daughtership with God in such monistic theologies. *Brahman* is neither a relational nor a self-aware *I Am*.

The illuminated state of bliss—the goal of most nondual practices—is not a *true-self-reflection*. It is only available in the moment of the pure experience of consciousness as such, sometimes known as witness consciousness—the

moment-by-moment awareness of the insubstantiality of selfhood and emptiness of all objects or mind-moments that arise in awareness. The optimal sadhana (spiritual practice) entails contemplations and meditations designed to realize that we will blissfully return to union with *Brahman*; our spiritual goal is enlightenment through merger with this impersonal Absolute essence. We will then realize that our apparent sense of separateness was an illusion. Ultimately, we will “fuse” with Brahman, and *lose all sense of separate identity and self-consciousness*, allowing us to “get off the wheel of reincarnation.” In this moment, we realize that we always already are one with this great It, in no way separate at any time from its essence. And that’s why the Hindu sages teach “Thou art that!” (tat tvam asi)—we are identical with Brahman.

Our sense of personhood is illusory, for no separate self could have existed in the first place. Our nondual enlightenment is nothing personal. We as individuals are nothing special in the face of the Absolute—we are not unique and beloved sons and daughters of God, but impersonal units of the Godhead.

THE COSMIC RIDDLE OF PERSONHOOD

So, which is true? The adamant uniqueness of the personal self—the idea that we are potentially immortal beings with singular rights, duties, and free-will prerogatives whose personhood is rooted in a loving and personal God? Or instead, must we overcome any sense of separate selfhood in a quest for impersonal enlightenment through disidentification with all contents of consciousness and all limiting identities? Or else, might there be a third option: Buddha’s teaching that to concern ourselves about this issue

is imponderable, just as Buddha proclaimed. We can make observations about human behavior, but the fundamental nature of personality is unknowable unless and until clues about its reality are somehow revealed to us in a way we can understand or experience. And when that occurs we can apprehend this revelation only by means of faith and insight, and with perhaps a bit of theological speculation as displayed in this essay. Divine revelation has the capacity to change the equation: “*The universe fact of God’s becoming man has forever changed all meanings and altered all values of human personality.*” [112:2.7] (P. 1228)

Such a divine revelation about the meaning of personhood was not available at this scale to Buddha or to the Hindu sages. Establishing an adequate understanding of personality requires a dramatic epochal revelation of the sort that we see in the incarnation of Christ and in the event of revelation we know as The Urantia Papers.

Jesus was and is the living revelation of authentic selfhood. He is the “icon” of personhood, as taught especially in Eastern Orthodox theology. His life was the ultimate disclosure of the potentials of human personality. His eventful story and his relationships with ordinary men and women were a revelation of the transcendental principle of “personalness.”

The Christian theological claim is huge: We can know the truths of the personal self by studying the life and teachings of Christ, and by apprehending him as *divinity personified*. As the Son, he is the source, “with the Father,” of our abiding human personality. And that means we too can become divinized.

The same theology is now mercifully updated and restated for the modern world in the fifth epochal revelation, specifically in Part IV of *The Urantia Book*. In these pages

Human personhood is said to be gifted by divine fiat upon each individual, conferring powers of reflective awareness, self-determination, creative consciousness, relative free will, and the capacity for cosmic insight.

is useless because the essence of personhood is ultimately unknowable?

According to the Urantia Revelation, the reality of personality is self-evident to divine beings, but its ultimate essence is unfathomable for God’s creatures, at least those who have not achieved Father fusion. “*Personality is one of the unsolved mysteries of the universes.*” [5:6.2] (P.70)

In terrestrial life we lack the cognitive capacity to “see our own eyes.” The truth about personhood is an

we glimpse the exemplar of the perfection of the unification of personality in the life of Jesus.

But of course the Urantia text also goes a big step beyond an expanded narrative about Jesus. It calls out many previously unrevealed aspects of the mystery of personality in Paper 112, “Personality Survival.” In its theology and cosmology (provided especially in Parts I and II), the Urantia text also offers an original and unprecedented philosophic teaching about the divine source and nature of personhood.

PERSONALITY AS HOST, UNIFIER, AND SYSTEMATIZER

So what, then, is human personality, even divine personality, to the extent that we can grasp it in this life? Human personhood is said to be gifted by divine fiat upon each individual, conferring powers of reflective awareness, self-determination, creative consciousness, relative free will, and the capacity for cosmic insight. Beyond that, the stock description for most Urantia students is that personality is both (1) an utterly unique bestowal and (2) an unchanging reality—as in these authoritative statements.

Throughout all successive ages and stages of evolutionary growth, there is one part of you that remains absolutely unaltered, and that is personality—permanence in the presence of change. [112:0.1] (P. 1225)

Personality is that part of any individual which enables us to recognize and positively identify that person as the one we have previously known, no matter how much he may have changed because of the modification of the vehicle of expression and manifestation of his personality. [16:8:4] (P. 194)

Personality is unique, absolutely unique: It is unique in time and space; it is unique in eternity and on Paradise; it is unique when bestowed—there are no duplicates; it is unique during every moment of existence. [112:0.12] (PP. 1225–26)

These are vivid and remarkable quotes. But I believe they stand out from other important statements because of our bias in favor of the Western idea of the independent and autonomous self. On closer inspection, we find that *The Urantia Book's* full depiction of personality is even broader and deeper—and is also richly paradoxical and mysterious.

First mystery: While personhood is stated to be “*unique in eternity*”—we soon come across the disconcerting statement in Paper 112 that personality has no identity.

Personality, while devoid of identity, can unify the identity of any living energy system. [112:0.7] (P. 1225)

But how can this be possible? How can something utterly unique have no specific identity?

Can it be that personality “holds the space” so that a provisional identity may appear and evolve as we make our freewill choices? Further, might it be possible that, in so doing, our unique personality *conditions* the mode of appearance of our identity at any one moment, doing so “secretly” but always consistently? A party may have all sorts of activities within it, but the hostess of the party always confers on the event a special flavor or color. She may even condition the party so that all sorts of qualities express themselves spontaneously.

Think of your personality as your very own “personal

hostess” on loan to you from a perfect source—“heaven’s personality agency” if you will. She is a consummate professional. She delivers consistent quality no matter what the work conditions may be. But each hostess provided by the agency is different. Each one brings with her absolutely unique and adorable qualities, so special that they far transcend and outlast anything that may appear on the surface of your life as your temporal identity—such as housewife or doctor, rich or poor, old or young, American or Chinese. Other persons who come very close to you will feel her presence as something quite precious and unusual. Your friends and lovers always feel this “something” each time they see you. The closer they get, and more they get to know your unique and unchanging qualities, the more likely it is that they will fall in love!

Hopefully, meanwhile, your identity is moving on an upward path. It is growing from ego-centrism toward soul identification—and later, to Thought Adjuster identification and fusion. Your personality graciously provides an unchanging container, a “sacred space,” in which your identity may evolve according to your life choices; yet there is no reason why your personality cannot impart a certain flavor or a certain “look and feel” on each version of your identity that emerges.

Now, let’s address another but related mystery: Personality may not be the determiner of your temporal identity, but we are told that it is the unifier of the given ingredients that comprise identity—whatever these may be at any level of personal development.

But the concept of the personality as the meaning of the whole of the living and functioning creature means much more than the integration of relationships; it signifies the unification of all factors of reality as well as co-ordination of relationships. Relationships exist between two objects, but three or more objects eventuate a system, and such a system is much more than just an enlarged or complex relationship. This distinction is vital, for in a cosmic system the individual members are not connected with each other except in relation to the whole and through the individuality of the whole. [112:1.17] (P. 1227)

Personality is, then, a “cosmic systemizer.” As such it is far from a static “thing”—for it is dynamically unifying your constituent parts, thereby always updating your “system.” But personality itself is an operating system that never needs

to be updated! It always provides the same high-quality functionality.

But again, how is it that something so dynamic is also “unchanging,” always “permanence in the presence of change”? Herein we must face another paradox. Like the *Tao*, perhaps it is the case that personhood changes, but always remains the same.

Allow me to go further. Let us suppose that personality confers a systematic wholeness on whatever ingredients we supply through our daily choices and experiences. Echoing our earlier discussion, can it be that our inherent quality of uniqueness arises from the uniquely *creative* manner in which our personalities bring about these provisionally unified systems of self? And can it be that this *style* or *method* of unifying the self is always the same?

What we can say with more confidence is that, if at any moment we “freeze frame” and look inside, we will discover a very specific mix of elements, aside from an unchanging manner in which our personality “colors” this mix. This must be the result, because the factors being unified are always in flux. There is no *separate self* in operation here—no special self-existing “me” with a certain content and identity that stands alone and unchanging in the cosmos. That’s the illusion of self-centered egotism. Our freewill choices never cease to change the content of the identity of the mortal self as they show up in the container of our personality.

From the subjective point of view, the job of personality may be to focalize our existing psychological sense of identity. Personality does its level best, let’s say, to *beautifully* unify our very partial identifications. It lets us stand tall as an individual in the moment, ready for concerted and single-pointed action. Yes, our self-presentation will always change, but there is a distinct and highly individualized system in place that confers unity and stability on the ever-changing constellation of elements, including contents that are entirely unconscious.

I would further speculate that, when one of the ingredients in our self-system is flawed, the “selfhood-systematizing-function” known as personality will precipitate out this flawed feature. It will spin out key elements so that they show up in the self-presentation of the whole. An adept psychologist (or spouse) will be able to pick out this inconsistency in the mix. Sometimes this element betrays itself only in a single frame. But if there were not a systematized (but again provisional) whole, this out-of-place part might never have been revealed against the backdrop of the whole.

Now let’s bring our self-awareness back into the picture. You and I can honestly say “I am *this* or *that*” because

personality is inherently self-conscious. We marvel at the self-awareness even of little children.

But of course this “I” is not *perfectly* self-conscious. In daily experience we are not easily aware of personality’s systematizing operations. Its work is unconscious—as Freud or Jung might put it.

The revelators give us a startling explanation for this apparently occult quality of personality functioning: “*The type of personality bestowed upon Urantia mortals has a potentiality of seven dimensions of self-expression or person-realization.*” [112:1.9] (P 1226) And, in this same passage, we learn that only three of these dimensions are finite! These finite dimensions have to do with direction, depth, and breadth, it states. And the higher dimensions of personality aren’t even named.

In other words, personality chiefly operates from *outside of space and time*. Which is why we get this warning:

Much trouble experienced by mortals in their study of human personality could be avoided if the finite creature would remember that dimensional levels and spiritual levels are not co-ordinated in experiential personality realization. [112:1.12] (P. 1227)

The upshot is that personality quietly carries out most its functions unconsciously, far outside of all possible experiential awareness. We can’t ponder such transactions, nor can we self-realize them in our experience, because this other-than-finite activity is not accessible to any finite being.

MORE PARADOXES OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

We have established that personhood is largely unknowable. Yet it does have a known subset of dimensions in the finite realm—enough so that we can fall in love with the manifested personalities of other persons!

We’ve also glimpsed the idea that the personality that functions within each one of us is absolutely unique, always and forever.

But now we have a new problem: If all this talk about permanent uniqueness is true, how is it that at one and the same time we are utterly equal before God, who is “*no respecter of persons*”? In other words, how is it that we are *nothing special* from the perspective of the infinitude of God—as Eastern religion might put it—yet we are at the same time “unique in eternity”?

Here’s what I am getting at: *The Urantia Book* finds a way to advocate all three of our possible positions about the reality of personhood: uniqueness (the general Western view); emptiness or “nothing special-ness” (the Eastern un-

derstanding); *and* imponderability (as in Buddha’s special warning to his students). But how can all three be true?

They can all abide as true because paradox lies at the heart of the Urantia Revelation.

And is interesting to note that we can map these three positions into the gospel teaching of Jesus as provided in Part IV of *The Urantia Book* : the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man (or, the parenthood of God and the siblinghood of humankind, in gender-inclusive language).

Let’s go the route:

God is our loving parent, attending to us and our needs as if we were God’s *only* child. We are uniquely adorable in God’s eyes, and each of us is indwelt by God and specifically guided to carry out a singular life purpose that has been gifted upon us.

Yet, at the same time, we are nothing special. Any apparent differences between you and I pale in comparison to our enormous cosmic distance from divine perfection. The eternal and infinite God regards all of us to be of equal status in the cosmic economy—a truism that is also found in the Old and New Testaments. (“For there is no respect of persons with God.” Romans 2:11; “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and

makes clear that our personhood is also imponderable.

Personality is one of the unsolved mysteries of the universes. We ... do not fully comprehend the real nature of the personality itself. We clearly perceive the numerous factors which, when put together, constitute the vehicle for human personality, but we do not fully comprehend the nature and significance of such a finite personality. [5:6.2] (P. 70)

Evidently we are falling down a cosmic rabbit hole into even more mystery. Perhaps a way out is to take a detour and consider how these revelations about human personality square with contemporary notions of selfhood.

A LOOK AT CONTEMPORARY “UNIQUE SELF” THEORY

Perhaps most helpful for us is the work of Marc Gafni, PhD, a contemporary teacher of spirituality in the lineage of integral philosopher Ken Wilber among many other influences. Gafni offers a cutting-edge “evolutionary” take on the realities of personhood that builds upon leading psycho-spiritual theories and teachings, East and West.

In his breakthrough work, *Your Unique Self: The Radical*

In other words, two great principles apply to personality, which are really two opposites that only God’s infinitude can unify: the reality of our individual uniqueness, alongside the abiding truth of our utter equality before the divine throne as God’s immature children.

on the unjust.” Matthew 5:45).

Offering a revelatory enhancement of such perennial biblical wisdom, *The Urantia Book* puts it like this:

Personality ... is unique in relation to God—he is no respecter of persons, but neither does he add them together, for they are nonaddable—they are associable but nontotalable. [112:0.12] (PP. 1226–27)

In other words, two great principles apply to personality, which are really two opposites that only God’s infinitude can unify: the reality of our individual uniqueness (“they are nonaddable”), alongside the abiding truth of our utter equality before the divine throne as God’s immature children. “As ... different classes of mortals appear before the judgment bar of God, they stand on an equal footing; God is truly no respecter of persons,” said Jesus. [133:0.0] (P. 1468)

In the faces of such a paradox, this quote goes on and

Path to Personal Enlightenment (Integral Publishers, 2012), Gafni argues for three distinct “stations of the self”: the separate self of the secular West; the impersonal “no-self” of the East; and the unique self that we know about from the Urantia Revelation—which Gafni, a former rabbi, derives especially from his studies of esoteric Judaism.

Gafni calls this third station our “Unique Self,” a phrase he coined. Unique Self is “an irreducible self-validating essence,” “the personal face of essence,” and “a unique expression of all that is.” According to Gafni, “God loved you so much he personalized himself as you.”² Such language is reminiscent of this well-known and beloved statement in the Urantia Revelation:

The love of the Father absolutely individualizes each personality as a unique child of the Universal Father, a child without duplicate in infinity, a will creature irreplaceable in all eternity. [12:7.9] (P. 138)

Gafni's three phases of selfhood unfold as we "grow up" spiritually. Conventional society is organized around the apparent solidity of our "egoic personal self." But with the growth of insight, egoism gradually dissolves as we awaken to the insubstantiality of self. We recognize that the stance of ontological separateness is a fallacy. We are all made of love.

If we pursue this insight to its logical conclusion, we stabilize in the perception of the impersonal nature of "True Self" (another of Gafni's coined phrases)—the general goal of the nondual enlightenment practices of the East.

Our full recognition of the insubstantiality of the egoic self "is the ground for awakening to Unique Self." In this final phase, we recognize that nothing remains but our *unique perspective*, our singular position in the cosmos as a discretely aware individual now able to identify with transcendent realities, including the enormous arc of cosmic evolution. Gafni makes much of this issue of perspective.³

Stabilized awareness of Unique Self is a development of late adulthood, if it is ever achieved. It can require a lifetime of psycho-spiritual practice and life experience to see through one's egoic personality, accept that we are nothing special or separate, and thereby awaken to the nonpersonal nature of our True Self—which paradoxically shows up uniquely in each of us.

Before we go on, a little background on basic psychology is in order. According to mainstream modern psychology, healthy ego development requires that we first learn to operate as separate selves in the practical world of our family of origin. When an infant recognizes that it is distinct from its mother, this is the dawn of the "separate-self" awareness that Eastern religion insists must be later shaken off in adulthood. Having achieved a sense of "my" and "mine," the child begins its first experiments in life experience. If its "object-relations" are healthy, its ego soon emerges as a relatively unified center of awareness. A normal child is able to make its first independent moral decision at around age 5 or 6, according to the Urantia Revelation. In this moment, a Thought Adjuster arrives and unconscious soul evolution begins behind the scenes—but its identity is properly and naturally bound up in ego development.

The danger of youth (and otherwise normal adults)—states Gafni along with most ego psychologists—is not so much that they sense themselves as separate from their parents, society, or community, but that they fall into a "false separate self." These cases are the unhealthy manifestations of an insecure, traumatized, or distorted ego that, for example, harbors neurotic beliefs about being "not enough" or

"unlovable." But if the ego finds a path to becoming balanced and functional—in an environment of loving relationships with parents, siblings, and friends—it will naturally evolve to more advanced structures of awareness. It will become increasingly able to manage the complex features of everyday reality, interacting with them with knowledge, skill, and wisdom. Urantians might say that the self is working its way through the *seven psychic circles* of human growth. [See 110:6.1] (PP. 1209–12)

The upshot, according to Gafni, Jung, Wilber, and others: We maintain and improve these adult ego structures all the way up to the highest stages of our personal growth; we never leave our healthy ego behind, as Carl Jung made clear in his theory of individuation. We simply "transcend and include" previous ego states as we go. We should endeavor to improve the functionality of our ego structures throughout adult life—but if we are growing spiritually, we move beyond ego's exclusive attachments to self, family, profession, community, race, gender, religion, and nation. The mature ego operates with increasing competence in all of these realms, but is also increasingly free of limiting identifications with any of them. Far from being merely ego-centered, we now become world-centric, then universe-centric, and ultimately we emerge as *God-centered*. We arrive at the doorstep of our True Self, the indwelling God.

Our attainment of this level of consciousness could itself be seen as a particular kind of ego competency. But as we become free of partial identifications, something more profound occurs: we no longer block our intrinsic awareness of the *limitless and unqualified consciousness that dwells within*. Some degree of God consciousness now abides within us as the ever-present background of our healthy ego awareness. And this state of being, once again, is our True Self, according to Gafni—or the *no-self* of Buddhism and nondual Hinduism. Welcome to pure and abiding true-self-awareness, now free of limiting self-concepts!

True Self becomes evident when we stabilize in the experience of this effortless expanse of awareness. We joyfully identify with this moment-by-moment "flow" state. We are detached from any particular contents of consciousness. All moments of awareness are welcome. We are no longer like a separate "monad" standing apart from things, somehow existing unto ourselves; we are a space-time manifestation of an eternal self. We are one with the One. We recognize that all personal selves, including ours, are One Self. In his space, God truly is no respecter of persons, because we are all equal and all one before God's majesty and grace.

But wait, here comes a key theological distinction.

The absolutely self-aware and omniscient Divine Person,

by definition, pervades the universe with omnipresent divine consciousness. Divinity knows all that is happening in *real time*. This means that, in effect, it operates from *every* point of view. It has no perspective because it takes *all* perspectives.

It is still the case that, when True Self shows up, this purified self-consciousness still carries along with it the memories, the life skills, the wisdom, the worldview, the mature and healthy ego—that is, the *unique perspective*—that is exclusive to that person. Their well-adjusted ego is the summation of that singular perspective.⁴ In other words, enlightenment is *not* the extinguishment of the healthy ego as taught in some systems, but rather the earmark of a mature and highly refined ego that has let go of all lesser identifications. It lets infinitude take the best seat at the feast of experience!

As our identity expands, each stage of psychological growth offers us glimpses of our ontological uniqueness, according to Gafni. For example, at more conventional stages we sense the singularity of our body, our family and community, our life story, our special talents, our specific skills and roles. This sense of our particular contribution grows as we mature. But with the attainment of no-self or True Self—now fully detached from any given ego position but capable of skillfully adopting any ego state as may be required—we paradoxically get a much clearer view of our uniqueness. He writes: “Our personalized expression of True Self is our Unique Self. The understanding that True Self always shows up differently through every pair of eyes is the central realization of Unique Self ... The True Self is always looking through a perspective.”⁵

Again, perspective *without* realization of True Selfhood is the separate self-ego, not yet aware that it is embedded in a larger universe, the evolving divine cosmos that produced us in the first place. But with the higher attainment of True Self realization, we recognize that *we are cosmic evolution showing up in person*, as evolutionary author Barbara Marx Hubbard famously says in her writings.⁶ “In the awakened Unique Self, evolution becomes conscious of itself,” writes Gafni. “The awakened Unique Self who has evolved beyond exclusive identification with ego is constantly being called by the evolutionary impulse.”⁷

A crucial additional point: True Self enlightenment is never some universal, all-encompassing awareness of all possible perspectives on reality. One becomes “True Self,” not “True God.” When we attain “no-self,” we don’t take the point of view of the Absolute. Instead, we let the Absolute take our point of view. “To love God is to let God see with our own eyes, which is to empower God with our unique

perspective,”⁸ writes Gafni.

To clarify: God may see with our eyes, but we *don’t* see with *God’s* eyes. Even in True Self consciousness, we are not perceiving and engaging with reality *just as it is*, as would the Divine Person. This is the fallacy of many sectarian and cultish teachings and absolutist religions—an error that has thankfully been corrected in our time by interfaith dialogue, multicultural awareness, and postmodern criticism. Instead, by disidentifying with our separate self, we recognize that we are engaged in a vast enterprise in which we and all other True Selves—each with its own precious and unique viewpoint on the universe—are constructing a composite reality based on our endless array of perspectives. We sense our relativity in the cosmos, we honor the perspectives taken by other Unique Selves, and we increasingly recognize the unique contribution that only we can offer. Gafni calls it “the Unique Self symphony.”

REVISIONING PERSONHOOD WITH THE URANTIA REVELATION

There are points here that can help us understand *The Urantia Book’s* revelations about personality. Gafni’s work and those of his colleagues throw fresh “evolutionary” light on many of our key distinctions. In return, *The Urantia Book* provides needed corrections or enhancements to evolutionary thought.

One of these enhancements arises from *The Urantia Book’s* theology of personality, which we are about to consider. These original ideas about personhood far transcend the idea of the irreducibility of the “unique perspective” of the enlightened person who has seen through egoism and has come to identify with cosmic evolution—although such an achievement is no small matter.

To get at this, let’s first review first what happens within the finite realm. As we’ve noted, personality acts as our host, systematizer, and unifier. It holds the space as we make those freewill choices that migrate the seat of our identity to our immortal soul. But we are also told that personality also has dimensions entirely outside of time and space. Why must this be the case? In brief, the answer we are given is that the gift of personality to his children is the vehicle of the Father’s personal presence in time.

Personhood must have transcendent dimensions because it is divine in essence. But the converse is also true: Divinity is essentially personal, although we have to add that it has nonpersonal dimensions as well.

Stated otherwise, personality is a primal manifestation of the infinite; infinity inherently personalizes as the Father of all, who in turn personalizes as his children. Nonpersonal

manifestations (Paradise, Havona, and the evolving universes) are made available in the service of all personality, both existential and evolutionary. These unfathomable transactions took place in eternity but have “fathomable” links to our finite realm of time.

So we must up the ante once again—this time with the added revelation that personality is the chief attribute of Deity. And further, that personhood is in fact the most important single reality in the universe.

Without God and except for his great and central person, there would be no personality throughout all the vast universe of universes. God is personality. [1:5.7] (P. 28)

Personality, in the supreme sense, is the revelation of God to the universe of universes. [1.5.13] (P. 29)

The Urantia Book is, from this standpoint, a “personalist” teaching. Some interpreters even contend that the *ontological reality of personality* is the central revelation of the *Urantia* text.

The foreword to *The Urantia Book* can be notoriously difficult, but a brief encounter with it helps us understand these points. The foreword purports to reveal the fundamental definitions and the *a priori* principles of cosmic reality. Right from the outset we learn of the primal division within universal reality: that between realities that are “deified” and those that are not (i.e., “undeified realities”). In the next step, we learn that deified realities are by definition *personal*, since God is personality. Here again is the equation of divinity, personality, and reality.

Now, if we limit our purview to the evolving universes, we discover that the primary distinction in the space-time domains is also that between personal and nonpersonal realities. “*Personality may be material or spiritual, but there either is personality or there is no personality. The other-than-personal never attains the level of the personal except by the direct act of the Paradise Father.*” [5.6.3] (P. 70) Two other crucial distinctions in the evolving domains, we are told, are that between *actual and potential* and *existential and experiential realities*. The upshot is that human persons are part of “deified” reality, but we are also evolutionary and experiential.

These are crucial ideas, but they don’t exhaust our subject. While the *Urantia Revelation* does not and cannot offer a systematic or complete definition of personality, as we noted, it offers an astonishing list of fourteen characteristics of personality. For the complete listing of attributes see Paper 112, sec 1–2.

I will close our discussion by highlighting a selection of

seven of these. My list is paraphrased or otherwise derived from the fourteen attributes. I’ve put special emphasis on the attributes of *will*, *cosmic insight*, and *love*, which we are now ready to tackle. What follows is a synthesis in the form of aphorisms of the points made in the course of this essay, while adding final inferences and speculations:

1. Human personality is a transcendental gift that is independent of space and time—but represents the personal presence of divinity in the finite realms.

Personhood is a direct bestowal from God as First Source and Center. It does not evolve into being as does the human soul. Personality is either present or it is not present; it is “changeless,” yet it is also dynamic in ways beyond our comprehension. Personhood is existential and “incomputable”; it has no measurable units, as does energy in all its forms (including the energies of mind, soul, and spirit). The Divine Person is One and indivisible, and all of his bestowals participate in this unity.¹⁰ Further, human personality—as a manifestation of an absolutely indivisible unity—is inherently “encircuited” with the Divine Person. The *personality circuit*, an exclusive revelation of the *Urantia Papers*, enables the Father to maintain personal contact with all persons: “*Through the personality circuit the Father is cognizant—has personal knowledge—of all the thoughts and acts of all the beings in all the systems of all the universes of all creation.*” [32:4.8] (P. 363) Marc Gafni has a wonderful phrase for this ineluctable quality of the unity of Creator and creature personality: he calls this *God’s infinity of intimacy*.¹¹ On the other hand, the capacity for creatures of time to *receive and embody* the transcendent gift of personality—to become freewill, self-aware persons—is an evolutionary attainment. Far back in the story of humankind, slowly evolving hominids achieved a certain evolutionary readiness that triggered this gift of bestowal from Deity; they achieved “will dignity.” [This story is told in Papers 58–63 in *The Urantia Book*.] Since those far-distant times, all of us have duly received the mysterious gift of personality at birth. It is notable that “Lucifer denied that personality was a gift of the Universal Father.” [See 53:3.] (PP. 603–4)

2. Personality confers qualities of self-awareness and creative freewill, and activates the capacity for scientific, moral, and spiritual insight.

Personality is a universal mystery; but we are offered many clues about it. Among these are the revelation that human personality possesses, in a limited way, two powers that are intrinsic to Deity: self-consciousness and will. “*Creature personality is distinguished by two self-manifesting and*

characteristic phenomena of mortal reactive behavior: self-consciousness and associated relative freewill." [16:8.5] (P.194) We can readily observe these attributes in action. Even infants possess a modicum of self-awareness and some degree of liberty of will, a primitive ability to consider options and choose their next experience. In a grand sense, every infant (and adult) participates in God's infinite will and unlimited self-consciousness. Our capacity to make decisions *presupposes* a self-awareness that is rooted in God's own perfect self-consciousness. God's gift to us makes available a capacity in the mind that is naturally self-reflective and able to evaluate and decide among options that come into consciousness. These two inherent attributes of selfhood, self-consciousness and relative freewill, are *a priori* signs of the divine origin of personhood. In addition, personality enables in our thinking what are known as the three *a priori* cosmic intuitions, thereby activating our perception of "three basic mind realities of the cosmos": the mathematic, judicial, and reverential forms of discrimination. [See 16:6–8.] (PP. 191–92)

3. Individuals can reciprocate by choosing the "will of God."

These transcendent gifts naturally evoke a grateful human response. We can respond in kind by detaching from limited and partial ego identifications, thereby releasing the will from the mechanical grip of worldly desires. The

achievement of "no-self" enlightenment liberates our will to choose the way of God. The divine will becomes self-evident to us when our ego-identifications drop. *A Course in Miracles* correctly teaches that *our deepest will is God's will*. By consistently choosing God's will, we move toward Father fusion, the irrevocable choice to live in God's will.

4. Personality is creative—relatively free of influence from past events.

Personality allows *interiority*, an internal space in which we are relatively free from antecedent causation. Our inner life offers a province of free choice in which we're not helplessly reactive to external stimuli, as is the case with animal minds. We can rise above any given incoming stimulus. We can instead open within us a zone of "free attention" wherein we can engage in reflection followed by creative choices. "[Personality] is not wholly subject to the fetters of

antecedent causation. It is relatively creative or cocreative." [112:0.5] (P. 1225) Only personal beings are self-observing or self-reflective, that is, able to gather in their thoughts and feelings and calmly choose a particular direction of action. Personalities have, at least in potential, the internal spaciousness that opens up the intellectual capacity required to think, plan, evaluate, and choose among options. And that's another way of saying that personal beings are moral and creative beings, capable of recognizing and worshipping the source of all personality.

5. The personal is primal, always "superordinate" to other parts of the self.

Personality is our highest attribute, just as it is God's chief characteristic. As God as Universal Father is prior to his creation, human personality transcends and has the potential to control all domains of energy-reality. "*Personality is superimposed upon energy.*" [0:5.4] (P. 8) It has prerogatives that are logically prior to those of all other energies of the human self (body, mind, soul, or spirit). "*When bestowed upon evolutionary material creatures, personality causes spirit to strive for the mastery of energy-matter through the mediation of mind.*" [112:0.6] (P. 1225) Personality confers the precious power of freewill choice, allowing the mortal intellect to choose among higher values originating in our spiritual impulses. We use the medium of mind to make those choices that lead to self-mastery in relation to

Personality allows interiority, an internal space in which we are relatively free from antecedent causation.

the living energy systems of the self. This is another way of saying that personality is "causal," for it is the source of a self-consciousness that fosters self-mastery and the balanced unification of all factors of selfhood.

6. Personality has no identity, but is rather the host of identity; it unifies and systematizes the elements of selfhood around chosen identities.

We've seen that, at first, our identifications are partial and narrow. These self-chosen or culturally imposed limits, often rooted in fear, come under challenge when we inevitably find ourselves confronted by wider realities. A healthy adaptation in the face of such challenges leads us to choose a more inclusive identity, resulting in a higher-order self-awareness. We integrate *more* into our domain of selfhood, and eventually become God-centered. At the highest level, we may identify with "witness consciousness" itself, abid-

ing in an awareness that is independent of all perceivable interior or exterior phenomena. We forsake any given part; we choose instead the whole. Such is the theoretic nondual state of True Self.

Technically speaking, personality is a transcendent function that (unconsciously) unifies and systematizes self-awareness at any level of attainment, high or low. Confused, splintered, traumatized, or disassociated persons *lack unity in their self-sense* because they are unable or unwilling to adapt to the given realities in their experience. That's why they appear especially unstable and lack consistency in their behavior. But the Buddhists are also correct that even in the healthiest of us, consciousness may *appear* to have no stable center. Nonetheless, the personality quietly unifies what it can, even in those who are mentally deranged. A person who is unclear about their life purpose, who is subject to conflicting emotions, or who is self-deceived, is a divided person. Such folks may even be duplicitous. We may feel that they are not trustworthy. Practically speaking, a unified person is one who has reflected on their life purposes and goals in prayer and introspection sufficiently enough to allow their personality endowment to do its primary job: the systematic work of unifying his or her living energy system in a balanced way.¹² The theological basis of this function is the premise that God is unity; God is one in existential perfection. Out of love and regard for us, the eternal God invites us into unity and perfection, ours to achieve in time as a highly personal attainment made possible by the intrinsic attributes of personality. God's gift of personality—a direct bestowal by God—is able to confer increasing unity on such an evolving being. *“The purpose of cosmic evolution is to achieve unity of personality.”* [112:2.15] (P. 1229)

7. We are social creatures who crave to belong; personality is spontaneously sensitive to the presence of other persons.

“Personality responds directly to other-personality presence.” [112.0.13] (P. 1226) Personhood is nonlocal—a “unified field” that envelops us, also known as God's *personality circuit*. Once we cross the threshold into this nonlocal field of personal selves, we—as persons—find that other persons are *attractive* to us *in general*. Each one we encounter is lovable in their own way. They are like a fractal of the Divine Person—who, after all, is the source of all these unique personalities in the first place. The participation of each one of us in the unified field of personality makes us inherently sensitive to and appreciative of the personality-presence of others.

Especially when we encounter those we care about, we

don't just observe the details of their face, age, dress, demeanor, speech, or behavior; we take in the whole person. We may find that we adore their personhood, just as it is. We may intuit the beauty of the transcendent unity of the unmistakable distinctiveness of a unique personal presence.

Personality is like a cosmic version of the law of attraction. When you are near me, I resonate naturally and immediately with you, over against the non-personal things or events in the room. This occurs, not because you may be useful to me, but simply because you are a *fellow personality*. In moments of prayer, worship, or celebration, you and I may fall even further into this delightful domain of our sacred oneness.

Theologically, our cosmic equality is sourced from the Source of all personhood—the God of personality. This is another way of saying that the divine gift of personality imparts moral consciousness, which in turn ripens into love, mutual regard of whole personalities, and which finds its fulfillment in the contemplation of and union with the Original Personality. Loving other persons is a recognition of their irreducible and infinite uniqueness, their radiant personal qualities that ultimately point to and participate in the Infinite itself.

In the true meaning of the word, love connotes mutual regard of whole personalities, whether human or divine or human and divine. Parts of the self may function in numerous ways—thinking, feeling, wishing—but only the co-ordinated attributes of the whole personality are focused in intelligent action; and all of these powers are associated with the spiritual endowment of the mortal mind when a human being sincerely and unselfishly loves another being, human or divine.

All mortal concepts of reality are based on the assumption of the actuality of human personality; all concepts of superhuman realities are based on the experience of the human personality with and in the cosmic realities of certain associated spiritual entities and divine personalities. Everything nonspiritual in human experience, excepting personality, is a means to an end. Every true relationship of mortal man with other persons—human or divine—is an end in itself. And such fellowship with the personality of Deity is the eternal goal of universe ascension. [112:2:7–8] (P. 1228)

And from here we can logically proceed to the Golden

Rule, and all other standards of ethical conduct. The brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind, which Jesus came to proclaim, is possible because the *God of all personality* is the sole source of all personhood, equally so for each of us. In the end, who needs a definition of personality when we can experience and savor its delights directly? And if no human person is present, we can always commune with the everywhere presence of the Divine Person.

Both the Unique Self hypothesis and *The Urantia Book* support the grand idea that each instance of personality must be absolutely unique. But what can explain the ongoing explosion of unique, experiential beings who populate planet Earth, and presumably all other inhabited planets? Each singular perspective supplied by each person must have ultimate value. It must have a transcendental purpose. In some sense, as I have argued, human personhood allows the existential God—an infinite and perfect being who exists outside of space and time—to have something impossible to get otherwise: a replete experience of the sub-infinite evolutionary domains as they slowly evolve toward perfection. We

might say that God desires to have an “all-experience,” and therefore does he require a virtually infinite diversity of experiencing subjects, each of which provide him their unique viewpoint upon evolution.

The Divine Person encompasses and transcends evolution and all evolutionary beings. We can't get outside of his circle of eternity, but we can allow God to dwell with us in our evolutionary home of personality performance. And that, indeed, is a love supreme.

Byron Belitsos (*Evolving-Souls.org*) has advanced training in philosophy, psychology, history, and theology. He is the publisher, editor, or co-author of numerous acclaimed books, including many related to the *Urantia Revelation*. A student of *The Urantia Book* for over four decades, he has spoken widely about its teachings at conferences and on radio and TV programs. This essay is excerpted from his forthcoming book *Your Evolving Soul: The Cosmic Spirituality of the Urantia Revelation*. Byron resides in San Rafael, California.

END NOTES

¹ This discussion especially draws from “The Atman and its Negation: A Conceptual and Chronological Analysis of Early Buddhist Thought,” by Alexander Wynne, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* (Vol 33, pp. 103–171).

² See the opening chapters of *Your Unique Self: The Radical Path to Personal Enlightenment* (Integral Publishers, 2012).

³ “Core to Unique Self theory is the mapping of the three distinct stations of self: separate self, True Self, and Unique Self. Through this journey we realize that the personal is not left behind but rather is evolved. [We must] transcend the narrow personal nature of the separate self-personality for the impersonal True Self of classical enlightenment to emerge. But the goal of enlightenment is personal plus, not personal minus. The deeper realization of True Self is Unique Self. This third station of Unique Self realization brings the personal back online as the very expression of enlightenment through the personal face of essence and emptiness. The station of True Self finds the total number of True Selves to be One. This, however, is only true in the realm of un-manifest One-ness, as there is no True Self anywhere in the manifest world. Why? Because every individual's awakening to this Oneness arises through his or her own unique perspective. In this way, True Self + Perspective = Unique Self. Any experience of formless True Self, when it manifests through an individual, manifests as the Unique Self. So to repeat, there is no True Self anywhere in the manifest world; there is always a perspective.” See “Unique Self: Why It Matters,” by Marc Gafni. Accessed Nov 16, 2015 at: www.unique-self.com/unique-self-theory/unique-self-basics/marc-gafni-on-unique-self/unique-self-why-it-matters/.

⁴ The essence of this perspective is the *soul*, according to the *Urantia Revelation*. In this state, we have transferred our seat of identity to the soul itself.

⁵ *Ibid*, p 18.

⁶ See for example *Conscious Evolution* (New World Library, 2015).

⁷ *Ibid*, p 40

⁸ *Ibid*, p 29

⁹ The movement in contemporary philosophy known as personalism first arose in the 19th century, but has roots in the theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas. “Personalism is an approach or system of thought which regards the person as the ultimate explanatory, epistemological, ontological, and axiological principle of all reality,” according to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Among its best-known exponents are Martin Buber, Étienne Gilson, and Jacques Maritain.

¹⁰ Here and throughout this section I draw special inspiration from George Park, independent philosopher and author of “Personality and Man,” which first appeared in *Urantia Fellowship Herald* (2007).

www.urantia-book.org/archive/newsletters/herald/. Park also believes that personality is bestowed at birth, or possibly at conception. I am indebted to George's work.

¹¹ See for example “True Self, Unique Self, and the Infinity of Intimacy,” accessible at www.ievolve.org/true-self-unique-self-and-the-infinity-of-intimacy/.

¹² “The unique feature of [Jesus'] personality was not so much its perfection as its symmetry, its exquisite and balanced unification.” [UB: 100:7.1]

JESUS SAID.....

The following quotes represent comments made by Jesus. How many of them do you remember well enough to fill in the blanks? Enjoy.

1. "_____is the aroma of friendliness which emanates from a love-saturated soul." [171:7/1] (P. 1874)
2. "_____is the shadow of fear:_____the mask of cowardice." [145:3.4] (P. 1632)
3. "When man goes in partnership with God, great things_____, and _____happen. [132:7.9] (P. 1466)
4. "The flight from_____is the sacrifice of truth." [130:1.2] (P.1428)
5. "Do you not comprehend that God dwells within you, that he has become what you _____that he may make you what he _____!" [148:6.10] (P. 1664)
6. "In all that you do, become not _____and _____." 155:1.4] (P. 1726)
7. "...only the eye of the_____will behold the Son of Man glorified by the Father and appearing on earth in his own name." 176:2.5] (P. 1915)
8. "...you must now prepare to acquire at the hand of that master of all teachers actual_____." 181:2:24] (P. 1961)
9. "In gaining entrance into the kingdom of heaven, it is the_____that counts." [140:3.19] (P. 1571)
10. "...where your treasure is. there will your_____be also." [165:5:4] (P. 1823)
11. "...in all group relationships we unfailing provide for definite_____." [181:2.16] (P.1959)
12. "_____is the measure of man's moral nature and the indicator of his spiritual development." [143:2.3] (P. 1609)
13. The possibility of making mistakes is inherent in the acquisition of _____. [130:4.11] (P. 1435)
14. Sin is an experience of creature _____; it is not a part of God's _____. [174:1.4] (P. 1898)
15. _____is a liberating revelation, but _____is the supreme relationship. [143:1.4] (P. 1608)
16. All true values of creature experience are concealed in depth of _____. [130:4.] (P. 1434)
17. Did you ever sincerely endeavor to talk with the spirit of your own _____? [133:4.10] (P. 1475)
18. The human mind does not well stand the conflict of double _____. [133:7.11] (P. 1480)

1. gracefulness 2. hate, revenge 3. may, do 4. duty 5. are, is 6. one-sided, overspecialized 7. spirit 8. experience 9. motive 10. heart 11. leadership 12. self-mastery 13. wisdom 14. consciousness, consciousness 15. truth, love 16. recognition 17. soul 18. allegiance

2017 Fellowship International Conference



The Fellowship International Conference—IC17 is shaping up to be bigger, better and different from previous Triennial International UB Conferences! The dates will be July 19-23, 2017, with 2 pre-conference retreats starting on July 17, so put it on your calendars and spread the word!

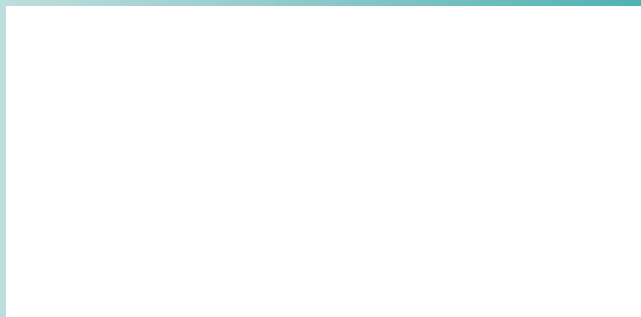
Denver is the city we have chosen which is centrally located in North America with a big airport and cheap airfares. The University of Denver campus will be the site for our 2017 International Conference. DU provides a beautiful, economical, central location, with RTD light-rail which stops right in front and also travels to the airport, downtown, and to many attractions around Denver. There are plenty of extra lodging and dining choices very nearby, including camping with yurts and cabins as well. So no matter how you prefer to travel and stay, there will be options for everyone.

Many UB readers attended The Parliament of World Religions in Salt Lake City in October of 2015 and had a wonderful experience sharing the book and teachings with new readers. The peacefulness and sharing that went on there was incredible and we want to share it with other UB readers. We also would like to share in their mission, which *The Urantia Book* echoes, which talks about helping “unite religionists under common goals and ideals instead of specific beliefs”. So, we are going to offer a track of regular-type previous UB conferences, just has always been done at IC conferences, but we also want to include some Interfaith and International good works presentations and experiences for everyone. These may include: demonstrations and experiences of other faiths’ practices (maybe even some Sufi Whirling Dervishes, a daily Langar for lunch provided by the Sikhs, presentations by the Methodists, Unitarians, Bhuddists, the Islamic society, Jane Goodall Institute, Urantia University, and the list keeps growing!) Registration information will be up on www.IC17.org website early this summer to enable attendees to plan way ahead. You will also have the opportunity to take a survey on this site and tell us what you want your conference experience to include! There are so many fun activities available very close-by for your whole family! Make IC 2017 part of your summer vacation plans!

The planning committee is already several months into weekly planning sessions. If you have ideas, want to help, or want more information please feel free to contact Miranda Clending, Program Co-Chair miranda8280@gmail.com.

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...men die searching for the very God
who lives within them.

[159:3:7] [P. 1766]