

# Spiritual Fellowship Journal

Volume 4, Number 2

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

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

### **Guiding Network Principles**

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

### **Network Recommendations**

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

**The Spiritual Fellowship  
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**About the Editors**

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# Editorials

## The Renewal of Theology

John B. Cobb, Jr., professor of religion at the Claremont Graduate School, in an article in the June 29th issue of *The Christian Century* entitled, "Faith Seeking Understanding: The Renewal of Christian Thinking," says that theology no longer plays an important role in the church's life, and calls for a renewal of Christian thinking. "Theology," he observes, "has been relegated to professional specialists and increasingly abandoned by them as well."

This stagnation of serious and relevant Christian thinking by the rank and file of contemporary church members has a far deeper root than is perceived by most theologians. There has been a procession of modern theologies attempting to restore the dynamism of the Christian faith: existential and neo-orthodox theology, liberation theology, theologies of hope, of play, and of story, process theology, and many others. These theologies, groping for spiritual relevancy, have been unable to sustain an inspiring interest in Christian thinking by the common person because they are based on a view of reality, a revelation, designed to serve the reality frames of reference of the prescientific views of early Western Civilization—or they lack the empowering foundations of a relevant and recognized epochal revelation.

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The basis of an impelling and inspiring theology is a relevant view of reality, a revelation of truth configured to speak to the needs and longings stemming out of contemporary human experience. In our post-modern age, the latent potentials of the timeworn prescientific paradigm of reality are nearly exhausted. No amount of theological brilliance or perseverance can breathe life into the old paradigm. A new vision of reality is desperately needed.

And it is here in the form of *The Urantia Book!* Future experience on our planet will discover this fresh spiritual paradigm of reality that, in time, will transform our world. Its enlargement of theological parameters staggers the imagination. Its inspiring spiritual cosmology will once again stimulate the masses of humanity to be absorbed in the spiritual quest. Its Christology is sweeping in its inclusiveness without instigating interreligious rivalry, and yet is surprisingly "orthodox." The renewal of theology awaits its discovery by the church. For each individual, however, this discovery can be now!

-MJS

## Whatever Happened to the Soul?

*The soul has almost disappeared from contemporary theology. The Urantia Book gives a description of the soul that appears to lay the foundations for a meaningful use of the term again in religious language.*

An editorial by this title appeared in the January, 1994 issue of *Theology Today*, written by Patrick D. Miller, in which he observes, "We don't hear very much about the soul in theological circles these days." Television, art, and literature give more attention to the soul than theology. The disappearance of the soul in theological language is largely the result of contemporary psychology's lack of empirical evidence for the soul, and theological attempts to discard the dualism of Pauline thought about human nature. Theologians have opted for *the self* as a more holistic and accurate term.

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The authors of *The Urantia Book* give a description of the soul that appears to lay the foundations for a meaningful use of the term in religious language. The soul, they tell us, is a dual creation of the indwelling Spirit of God and human decisions that are harmonious with spiritual reality. This combined effort creates a new reality, a factualization of human decisions, which is part material and part spiritual. This transitional reality exists between the material and the spiritual and is denominated as "morontia." As the soul evolves, it has increasingly greater influence in human thought and action. It is a key aspect of personal development. Eventually, in spirit-directed people, it serves as a kind of second or morontia mind. The evolving soul is the indigenous aspect of human personality which is indestructible.

When the flood tides of human adversity, selfishness, cruelty, hate, malice, and jealousy beat about the mortal soul, you may rest in the assurance that there is one inner bastion, the citadel of the spirit, which is absolutely unassailable; at least this is true of every human being who had dedicated the keeping of his soul to the indwelling spirit of the eternal God. (U. B. p. 1096)

The root semantic meaning of psychology is "the study of the soul." Perhaps it is time for theology to restore the soul to a place of significance in our thinking and speaking about human beings. *The Urantia Book* opens the door to an enhanced understanding of the interrelatedness of mind, soul, and spirit in human psychology.

-MJS

# Guest Editorial

## A New Approach to Revelation

After many years of introducing both Christian laity and ministers to *The Urantia Book*, I am increasingly faced with the realization that one of the major obstacles preventing them from a serious examination of the book is its claim to revelatory status. Most people who grew up in the nurture of the Christian faith have consciously or unconsciously developed a fundamentalistic attitude toward the Bible: "This is the word of God and should not be questioned or doubted." This impression is reinforced in the book's concluding verses which threaten anyone adding or taking away from the book with plagues and other terrible consequences. (It is not widely known that this kind of threat was once very common, a forerunner of what we now know as copyright.) Because of this cultural conditioning, many church members assume that all authentic revelation ceased with the Book of Revelation. We should not be surprised, therefore, if such people automatically recoil from any suggestion of new revelation.

Some of us quickly learn that when introducing church members to *The Urantia Book*, one needs to alleviate fear by saying something to the effect that "The book purports to be revelatory, but read it critically like any other book. You will find that it contains some excellent spiritual insights." Interestingly, this is the method of evaluating revelation recommended by the authors of *The Urantia Book*. The only way revelation can be validated, they tell us, is through the truths we have acquired in personal experience.

*The Urantia Book* presents humankind with a new and eminently reasonable understanding of revelation. Even *epochal* revelation is not infallible.

But no revelation short of the attainment of the Universal Father can ever be complete. All other celestial ministrations are no more than partial, transient, and practically adapted to local conditions in time and space. While such admissions as this may possibly detract from the immediate force and authority of all revelations, the time has arrived on Urantia when it is advisable to make such frank statements, even at the risk of weakening the future influence and authority of this, the most recent of the revelations of truth to the mortal races of Urantia. (U. B. p. 1008)

Furthermore, a great deal of the textual material of *The Urantia Book* already exists somewhere in the written records of our world. At the conclusion of the *Foreword* (p. 17) we are told that more than one thousand of the highest human concepts have been collated in producing Part I of the book. The Midwayer (author) responsible for preparing Part IV, the narrative of the life and teachings of Jesus, utilized thought gems and superior concepts assembled from "more than two

thousand human beings who have lived on earth from the days of Jesus down to the time of the inditing of these revelations, more correctly restatements.... In many ways I have served more as a collector and editor than as an original narrator." (U. B. p. 1343) Superhuman revelatory sources were used only when the United Midwayers could testify that they had failed to find the required conceptual expression in purely human sources.

As more and more people in our society understand the openness and nonauthoritarian orientation of *The Urantia Book*, they will experience a greater freedom to examine it both as a casual adventure, and in a critical evaluation. This is especially true of the rank and file of the church. They will discover what a marvelous treasure of spiritual insight and inspiration it has for humankind, and how superbly it reinforces the basic tenants of the Christian faith.

*Ken Glasziou, Ph. D., is a research scientist, retired, who is active in church work in Australia. He is author of Science and Religion; The New Age Beyond 200 A.D., and Christ or Chaos: the Evolution of a Revelation.*

### **Interface: The Non-Historical Jesus**

How well can Jesus be known? Now that we've reached the twilight of the second quest for the historical Jesus, the answer is apparently much like the first—very little. Reading through "The Five Gospels," the published results of a poll by a group of scholars known as the Jesus Seminar, one wonders if the result of all this intense effort has brought us closer, or farther away, from the one who said "follow me" and proceeded to transform the world.

Reading through the introduction, I'm impressed by the thoroughness and reasonableness of their effort, the combined insights of decades of scholarship, and the proper questions to be asked in such an undertaking.

However, the set of assumptions which guide their effort is highly speculative and leads to conclusions less than convincing. For example, one of the criterion used is that of "dissimilarity," which holds suspect any texts that are harmonious with either the Jewish tradition on the one hand, or with the early church on the other. If they are not "dissimilar" enough, they're discounted as inauthentic. The result is a Jesus who has been shorn of any vital connection with either first century Judaism or with the early church.

While the goal has been to avoid at all costs making Jesus into our own preconceived image, some will find the results, in fact, dictated by preconceived notions of who Jesus could or could not have been. These preconceived

*The A-Historical Jesus, cont.*

notions seems more in tune with twentieth century existentialism than first century Judaism or Christianity. The new search for the historical Jesus leaves us with a curiously a-historical Jesus, a mystic and wandering sage, whose ideas about God could neither have been grasped by first century Jews or early Christianity.

Instead of narrowing the gap, this latest quest has, if anything, increased the gap between the “historical Jesus,” (the *real* Jesus) and the “Christ of Faith,” a mythical construct of the early church. Since the first is essentially unknowable, and the second is mythical creation of the early church, where does that leave us?

I recently heard a Biblical scholar talk about the importance of archaeology in these terms: “we cannot believe in one we don’t know, and we cannot love one we don’t believe in, and we cannot serve one we do not love.” The implication is that archaeology is thus critical because it will build for us a basis on which we can “know” Jesus—the first step in being able to believe and love and serve.

This would no doubt surprise millions down through the centuries who have felt that they have “known” Jesus better than anyone else in their lives—which would make Jesus the best known person in all of history.

If we need more knowledge, it is a knowledge *about* Jesus that unifies our knowledge *of* Jesus, not only with the ancient world, but the world we live in, and the world of future generations to come.

The only source that holds out that possibility is *The Urantia Book*, and it does it so thoroughly and convincingly you can only wonder at the skepticism and fear that keeps it from being read by scholars as well as laymen who are so thirsting for what it contains.

-Merlyn Cox

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...paganized and socialized Christianity stands in need of new contact with the uncompromised teachings of Jesus; it languishes for lack of a new vision of the Master’s life on earth. A new and fuller revelation of the religion of Jesus is destined to conquer an empire of materialistic secularism and to overthrow a world sway of mechanistic naturalism. Urantia is now quivering on the very brink of one of its most amazing and enthralling epochs of social readjustment, moral quickening, and spiritual enlightenment. (U.B., p. 2082:7)

## ***Issues and Answers:***

### **Issues for thought and de-**

### **The Father Idea**

A Response to: “*The Urantia Book* and Sexist Language,” by Judith L. Mace

Daniel Love Glazer

Judith Mace asserts that “The unparalleled revelations of *The Urantia Book* are afflicted with our sexist language. The acceptance of these papers is seriously threatened by this offensive, inaccurate, and obsolete rhetoric. The book’s language clearly addresses males and not females.” She goes on to advocate a change in religious language by, for example, using *Primum*, *Secundum* and *Tertium* to refer to the members of the Trinity, and using *te* for she/he, *ter* for his/her, and *tem* for her/him. I contend that Ms. Mace’s argument is quite erroneous and represents a severe misreading of *The Urantia Book*. An attempt to follow her proposal would do serious harm to the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

Readers of *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal* are no doubt aware that recent years have seen attacks on the traditional language used for both man and God on the grounds that it is, to use Ms. Mace’s terminology, “sexist, offensive, inaccurate, and obsolete.” The now classic critique of Mary Daly holds that, “Since God is male, the male is God.”<sup>1</sup> But, contrary to Mace and to the general tenor of *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal* issue in which her article appears, it is far from obvious that these attacks are soundly based and will (or should) carry the day. In the Christian churches, there are spirited debates about traditional versus revisionist (self-styled “inclusive”) language for Deity. I commend to the interested reader two recent anthologies which make the case for traditional language:

Kimel, Alvin F., Jr., ed. *The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

Hitchcock, Helen H., ed. *The Politics of Prayer: Feminist Language and the Worship of God*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992.

### **The Traditionalist Argument**

Before joining the crusade to rewrite *The Urantia Book*, we would do well to ponder the arguments made in these books. I will present a number of these arguments. Most of the contributions to these anthologies focus on the issue of language about God; some also discuss language about man. (I presume it is *The Urantia Book*’s generic use of “man” and inclusive use of “he” and “him” that leads Mace to charge that it “clearly addresses males and not females.”)

Consider, for example, two points made by Suzanne R. Scorsone:<sup>2</sup>

- “The English language has always, from the earliest days of which we have any written record, used the  
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word 'man' in two senses. Always there have been the generic (equivalent to the Latin *homo*) and the male gender-specific (equivalent to *vir*)."

- "It is... a simple and entirely familiar mental operation for the speaker of English, from the most literary to the most colloquial to sort the gender-specific uses of 'man.'"

And here are Michael Levin's comments:<sup>3</sup>

- "We may dismiss the idea that masculine pronouns are misleading.... It is not possible to produce a woman who believed (until feminists cleared things up) that 'He who hesitates is lost' did not apply to her. It is universally understood that 'he' is used with intention of referring to both men and women, and that this intention has settled into a convention."

- "Turkish lacks gender, but Turkish women lack many rights enjoyed by women in countries with more 'sexist' native tongues."

As for language about God, listen, for example, to Elizabeth Achtmeier.<sup>4</sup>

- "It is universally recognized by biblical scholars that the God of the Bible has no sexuality."

- "The few instances of feminine imagery for God in the Bible all take the form of a simile and not of a metaphor, and that distinction is crucial."

- "The Bible uses masculine language for God because that is the language with which God has revealed himself."

Achtmeier goes on to state that the use of female language for God ineluctably leads to identification of God with the world, i.e. pantheism; she cites feminist references to "the God with Breasts" who has "brought us forth from the womb of your being." She and others also point out that a female God at one with creation was a common concept among ancient peoples other than the Hebrews, in marked contrast to the Biblical concept of the Creator distinct from his creation.

The names feminists have proposed as substitutes for "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" are roundly criticized by several authors. "Creator" is often substituted for "Father" and "Redeemer" or "the Christ" for "God the Son." Yet the critics observe that Christian theology holds that all three members of the Trinity participate in creation and the First Person of Deity is far more than a creator. And the traditional appellations, "Eternal Son" and "Son of God" and "Son of Man," are necessary to express his relationship to God the Father, as well as his personal nature.

Contributors to these anthologies point out that Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith," always used "Father" to invoke God in prayer, and, moreover, explicitly taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father." Several authors also

criticize the feminist's rewritings of Scripture for violating the integrity of the Biblical text.

### ***Urantia Book Concepts***

But, one may say, the authors represented in these anthologies presumably all write without any knowledge or acceptance of *The Urantia Book*. If we accept Judith Mace's reading, *The Urantia Book*, despite being "burdened with sexist language," contains the principles which support the development of new, "inclusive" language.

But Mace's reading is highly skewed. For example, she maintains that "The authors probably knew of the impending social evolution away from patriarchal language—undoubtedly they hoped for it." This is pure speculation and projection on her part. For support she quotes the book's declaration that it necessarily contains errors in "the associated *cosmologies* therein presented" (p. 1109) [emphasis added], as if cosmologies referred to "sexist language."

Later she purports to cite *The Urantia Book* when she says, "No language can be considered universal and serviceable unless it is gender-inclusive or genderless." But the passage referenced actually says nothing about gender; rather, it refers simply to "The conquest of dialects—the triumph of a universal language." (p. 807:1 #10)

Mace notes, with approval, section one of the first Paper wherein many names are given for God the Father and we're told that "The First Source and Universe Center has never revealed himself by name, only by nature." But she passes over other statements in the very same section supporting the name "Father." Here are two:

- "If we believe that we are the children of this Creator, it is only natural that we should eventually call him Father."

- "On a planet of sex creatures, in a world where the impulses of parental emotion are inherent in the hearts of its intelligent being, the term Father becomes a very expressive and appropriate name for the eternal God."

Mace seems pleased to mention that *The Urantia Book* states that "Jesus sought to substitute many terms for the kingdom but always without success." Under the apparent impression that it helps her case, she continues quoting this paragraph: "Among others he used: the family of God, the Father's will, the friends of God, the fellowship of believers, the brotherhood of man, the Father's fold, the children of God, the fellowship of the faithful, the Father's service, and the liberated sons of God." (p. 1861:6) Though she quotes this full passage, she fails to remark on the significance that "kingdom" is the word Jesus sought to replace. The use of Father and the generic use of brotherhood, man, and sons are not seen to present a problem.

Mace then makes a startling claim. "In the last sentence of *The Urantia Book*, the authors write that at that time the

### *The Father Idea, cont.*

Father concept was the highest available imagery to describe God to us.... In the sixty plus years since the book was transmitted, radical changes have occurred in our culture and one can justifiably suggest the authors might now choose another concept." Whoa! What does the last sentence of *The Urantia Book* actually say? **"When all is said and done, the Father idea is still the highest human concept of God."** (p. 2097) This is very different from what Mace reports. The phrase, "When all is said and done" means when all that *can* be said has been said, *not* simply when we consider what is available at this time.

In fact, other human concepts certainly were available to the book's authors, whose mandate is to "give preference to the highest existing human concepts pertaining to the subjects to be presented" and who "may resort to pure revelation only when the concept of presentation has had no adequate previous expression by the human mind." (p. 16) In the Spring, 1993, issue of *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal*, Matthew Block reports on his discovery of a number of published works which evidently served as source material for *The Urantia Book*. Block has observed that the book's authors masterfully appropriate material from these works, using ideas and expressions that fit into the book's structure and concepts, while freely editing and upstepping passages that fail to conform to the book's message.

Block has recently come upon the book, *The Enduring Quest: A Search for a Philosophy of Life*, by H. A. Overstreet (New York: W. W. Norton, 1931). Block has identified numerous passages in this book which are clearly paralleled in the language and thought of *The Urantia Book*. In a chapter entitled "God and the Modern Man" are several passages which seem to find clear echoes in the concluding pages of *The Urantia Book*. Among these are the apparent sources for "Mortal man has a spirit nucleus" (p. 142) (Overstreet puts it, "What is most characteristic of [man] is that he is, as it were, nucleated.<sup>5</sup> ), and "All of man's universe romancing may not be fact, but much, very much, is truth." (p. 2096) (Cf. Overstreet on "The Truth of Man's Romancing," p. 208).

In a chapter of *The Enduring Quest* called "God and the Modern Man" are several passages which seem to find clear echoes in the concluding pages of *The Urantia Book*. Along with the passages that apparently met with the approval of the authors of *The Urantia Book*, we find the following:

Much that man once believed about God (or gods) we can obviously no longer believe.... In the patriarchal stage of consolidation, the god was a Patriarch, a Father. In the monarchical stages, he was a King.... None of these beliefs about the deity will any longer adequately serve us. *Even the belief with which we have grown familiar, of God as a Heavenly Father, who orders our welfare and expects from us adoration and obedience, is from the modern point of view, inadequate.*<sup>6</sup> [emphasis added]

Overstreet goes on to recommend as a superior concept of

God that of a "power greater than ourselves which makes for good."<sup>7</sup> And, of course, there were other human concepts of and names for God available to the revelators.

In other words, the idea of going "beyond God the Father" did not originate with Mary Daly. It was present in other earlier sources, including a book which was one of the significant human sources for *The Urantia Book*. **Yet the revelators explicitly reject this move to go beyond; instead they affirm the Father idea as the highest human concept of God.**

Mace seems so intent on updating *The Urantia Book* with her own notions of gender equity that she totally ignores several ways in which the book does support certain uses of "Mother" in referring to Deity:

- Consider this characterization of the Eternal Son: "In the same sense that God is the Universal Father, the Son is the Universal Mother." (p. 79)
- And on page 1289, we are told: "All soul evolving humans are literally the evolutionary sons of God the Father and God the Mother, the Supreme Being."
- Then there is the "local universe Mother Spirit." (p. 203)
- Finally, one of the "parable prayers" which Jesus shared with his apostles contains the salutation, "Glorious Father and Mother in one parent combined." (p. 1623)

These passages, and other, similar ones, demonstrate that *The Urantia Book* does indicate that what we might call "God the Mother" idea does have a legitimate place. At the same time, the overwhelming testimony of the Urantia revelation is that, as regards the first Person of the Trinity, "Father" is the most appropriate name in our mortal universe frame of reference. Of many supporting passages I could cite, I will content myself with the following, written by a Divine Counselor:

First and last—eternally—the infinite God is a *Father*. Of all the possible titles by which he might appropriately be known, I have been instructed to portray the God of all creation as the Universal Father.... In all his personal relations with the creature personalities of the universes, the First Source and Center is always and consistently a loving Father. God is a Father in the highest sense of the term. He is eternally motivated by the perfect idealism of divine love, and that tender nature finds its strongest expression and greatest satisfaction in loving and being loved. (p. 59) [emphasis in the original]

We who accept *The Urantia Book* as an epochal revelation of divine truth should bear in mind that Divine Counselors are Trinity-origin beings who "are the perfection of the divine counsel of the Paradise Trinity." They "represent, in fact *are* the counsel of perfection." (p. 217) [emphasis in the original]

### **The Contemporary Conflict**

The battle over sexist language is raging in the Christian churches, as well as in the culture at large. I attended a Christmas service at one church where the first three lines of the

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carol “Joy to the World” were changed from:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room,

to:

Joy to the world! The promised One  
Has come shalom to bring.  
Let ev’ry heart prepare a room,

In the same church, when the Lord’s prayer was recited, several members of the congregation said, (more accurately, shouted) “Our Creator” in place of “Our Father.”

In the face of attempts to extirpate traditional language, the 1988 General Conference of the United Methodist Church passed the following resolution:

The United Methodist Church affirms the right and custom of the use of biblical languages and images in all its forms in worship and in our common life together. Phrases such as “Lord” and “King” and “Father” are an integral part of the rich heritage of the faith. A truly inclusive church will not restrict its people as to what is appropriate and what is inappropriate language and imagery about God. We, therefore, affirm the use of biblical language and images in all its forms appropriate for use in hymns, liturgy, teaching and in all areas of our common life together.<sup>8</sup>

John Levenson reports on one prominent Christian seminary where no practices or beliefs, not even belief in the divinity of Jesus, are required of students or faculty, except that the use of “inclusive” language is an absolute mandate.<sup>9</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church recently issued a new edition of its catechism. Reports are that the final version of the English translation changed “inclusive” language in earlier drafts to traditional language.

A “Re-Imagining” Conference held in Minneapolis last November and supported by several mainline denominations has elicited a fire storm of controversy for featuring prayers and liturgies addressed to the goddess, Sophia. Theologian Wolfgang Pannenberg has characterized the conference as having “enthroned” Sophia as a female goddess, which “is not in line with Christian teaching and is flagrantly opposed to Biblical understanding.”

What is at stake in the language controversy? Alvin Kimel, Jr. views the “inclusive language” onslaught as an attempt to replace Christianity with a new religion—and some outspoken advocates of the new language admit as much. Kimel is worth quoting:

The influential Mary Daly describes ‘the significance of the women’s revolution as anti-Christ and its import as anti-church,’ and she has left Christianity. Rosemary Reuther (a prominent feminist theologian and seminary professor) has not gone that far, but it is well to remem-

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ber her statement that ‘feminist theology cannot be done from the existing base of the Christian Bible.’<sup>10</sup>

Will the new feminist vision of religion—non-Christian, or minimally Christian and non-biblical—be closer than traditional Christianity to the enhanced revelation of the religion of Jesus, as portrayed in *The Urantia Book*? One may seriously doubt it.

G. K. Chesterton called tradition “the democracy of the dead.” Many radical feminists would like nothing better than to overthrow traditional religion and culture, the creation of benighted “dead, white, European, male, heterosexual oppressors.”

A sure effect of succumbing to the pressure to effect a wholesale revision of traditional language for God and man is that all books that use or have used such language will be stigmatized as decadent and inferior. Indeed, this is a cherished goal of many language revisionists. Before *Urantia Book* readers accept the Newspeak, they should consider that the stigma will extend not only to the Bible and traditional Christian theology and culture, but also to *The Urantia Book*. Judith Mace says that “The acceptance of [*The Urantia Book*] is seriously threatened” by the book’s “offensive, inaccurate, and obsolete rhetoric.” On the contrary, I maintain that it is precisely such a false characterization of the book which is the threat.

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<sup>1</sup> Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> “In the Image of God: Male, Female, and the Language of the Liturgy,” Hitchcock, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> “Feminism, Freedom, and Language,” Hitchcock, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> “Exchanging God for ‘No Gods’: A Discussion of Female Language for God,” Kimel, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Overstreet, op. cit., p. 107

<sup>6</sup> Overstreet, op. cit., pp. 259-60

<sup>7</sup> Overstreet, op. cit., p. 261, quoting W. P. Montague

<sup>8</sup> *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*, 1988, p. 596

<sup>9</sup> “Theological Liberalism Aborting Itself,” Hitchcock, op. cit. p. 37

<sup>10</sup> “Language for God and Feminist Language,” Kimel, op. cit., p. 26

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*Daniel Love Glazer was raised as a Jew, but later became an agnostic and then a yogi. His spiritual search ultimately led to a transforming encounter with God. Shortly thereafter, he discovered The Urantia Book, and through its pages a knowledge of Jesus. He works as a computer science teacher and is married, with two children. He is active in his local United Methodist Church.*

## The Historicity of *The Urantia Book*

Meredith J. Sprunger

The fact that *The Urantia Book* has won the appreciation of thousands of people with capable minds and balanced personalities within the Christian and Judaic traditions, and has sold over 250,000 copies without organized promotional effort, attests to the attractiveness of its religious message. Years of experience, however, have demonstrated that the first thing people wish to know about *The Urantia Book* is its authorship and origin. This is a difficult question to answer because the book does not fit into conventional categories. It claims to be new revelation and to have been written by supermortal personalities!

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*Years of experience, however, have demonstrated that the first thing people wish to know about The Urantia Book is its authorship and origin.*

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In the middle and late 1950's a group of United Church of Christ ministers made a serious attempt to evaluate the book and answer the question of origin. Among the various resources consulted, we asked Dr. Robert V. Moss Jr., who was at that time Professor of New Testament Studies at Lancaster Theological Seminary and President of the United Church of Christ, to evaluate the book. We met with him in South Bend, Indiana, October 6, 1958, and engaged in a spirited and fruitful discussion. Dr. Moss, although he did not read the entire book, remarked that the treatment of biblical material in *The Urantia Book* was essentially in harmony with the best scholarship of the day and observed that the book had many inspiring passages. On October 13, 1958, he wrote saying:

It occurs to me that we did not deal with one basic question. As you know, Christianity is an historical religion and because of that the bases of revelation can be tested by scholarship. It seems to me extremely important that the source of the Urantia "revelations" be set forth in any serious discussion of its claim. To say there is no historical basis for the "revelations" is to say that it differs radically from the biblical understanding of the way in which God acts.

Our group was already investigating this question, and we continued to thoroughly research the historicity of *The Urantia Book*. We had quickly discovered the papers were received by a small group of people in Chicago under the leadership of Dr. William S. Sadler. Dr. Sadler was a highly respected psychiatrist who is sometimes referred to as the father of American psychiatry. For many years he taught at the Post-graduate School of Medicine of Chicago University and for almost thirty years was a lecturer in Pastoral Counseling at McCormick Theological Seminary.

## The Mind at Mischief

In researching books written by Dr. Sadler, we discovered relevant material in *The Mind at Mischief*, Funk & Wagnalls, 1929. The subtitle of the book is "Tricks and Deceptions of the Subconscious and How to Cope with Them." In the book Dr. Sadler presents his view of mediumistic phenomena. On the basis of considerable research, he maintains that all of the mediums that he studied were either fraudulent or self-deceived victims of subconscious mind activity in which their alter ego appeared to them as a source of knowledge from the spirit world. One case did not fit this classification. There is little doubt that this individual was the man whose superconscious mind *The Urantia Book* claims was used in some way in the materialization of the Urantia Papers. In the appendix of *The Mind at Mischief* Dr. Sadler describes this atypical case:

In the discussion of fraudulent mediums or self-deceived psychics, the reader of this book has several times encountered the statement that there were certain exceptions to the general indictments there made, and referred to this appendix. It now becomes my duty to explain what I had in mind when those footnotes were inserted....

The...exception has to do with a rather peculiar case of psychic phenomena, one which I find myself unable to classify, and which I would like very much to narrate more fully; I cannot do so here, however, because of a promise which I feel under obligation to keep sacredly. In other words, I have promised not to publish this case during the lifetime of the individual. I hope sometime to secure a modification of that promise and to be able to report this case more fully because of its interesting features. I was brought in contact with it, in the summer of 1911, and I have had it under my observation more or less ever since, having been present at probably 250 of the night sessions, many of which have been attended by a stenographer who made voluminous notes.

A thorough study of this case has convinced me that it is not one of ordinary trance. While the sleep seems to be quite of a natural order, it is very profound, and so far we have never been able to awaken the subject when in this state; but the body is never rigid, and the heart action is never modified, though respiration is sometimes markedly interfered with. This man is utterly unconscious, wholly oblivious to what takes place, and, unless told about it subsequently, never knows that he has been used as a sort of clearing house for the coming and going of alleged extra-planetary personalities. In fact, he is more or less indifferent to the whole proceedings, and shows a surprising lack of interest in these affairs as they occur from time to time.

In no way are these night visitations like the seances associated with spiritualism. At no time during the period

of eighteen years' observation has there been a communication from any source that claimed to be the spirit of a deceased human being. The communications which have been written, or which we have had the opportunity to hear spoken, are made by a vast order of alleged beings who claim to come from other planets to visit this world, to stop here as student visitors for study and observation when they are in route from one universe to another or from one planet to another. These communications further arise in alleged spiritual beings who purport to have been assigned to this planet for duties of various sorts.

Eighteen years of study and careful investigation have failed to reveal the psychic origin of these messages. I find myself at the present time just where I was when I started. Psychoanalysis, hypnotism, intensive comparison, fail to show that the written or spoken messages of this individual have origin in his own mind. Much of the material secured through this subject is quite contrary to his habits of thought, to the way in which he has been taught, and to his entire philosophy. In fact, of much that we have secured, we have failed to find anything of its nature in existence. Its philosophic content is quite new, and we are unable to find where very much of it has ever found human expression.

Much as I would like to report details of this case, I am not in a position to do so at present. I can only say that I have found in these years of observation that all the information imparted through this source has proved to be consistent within itself. While there is considerable difference in the quality of the communications, this seems to be reasonably explained by a difference in the state of development and order of the personalities making the communications. Its philosophy is consistent. It is essentially Christian and is, on the whole, entirely harmonious with the scientific facts and truths of this age. In fact, the case is so unusual and extraordinary that it establishes itself immediately, as far as my experience goes, in a class by itself, one which has thus far resisted all my efforts to prove it to be of auto-psychic origin. Our investigations are being continued and, as I have intimated, I hope some time in the near future to secure permission for the more complete reporting of the phenomena connected with this interesting case. (pp. 382-384)

### **Sadler Interview**

On May 7, 1958, our group of ministers had an appointment with Dr. Sadler to discuss phenomena associated with the origin of *The Urantia Book*. When we arrived he had prepared a paper for us listing every imaginable form of subconscious mind or psychic activity. At the bottom of the outline he had a note saying, "The technique of the reception of *The Urantia Book* in English in no way parallels or impinges upon any of the above phenomena of the marginal consciousness." He went on to tell us that as nearly as he could determine, the appearance of the Urantia Papers was associated with

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some form of superconscious mind activity.

Dr. Sadler candidly discussed any questions we asked him, but he would not talk about two things: the name of the individual whose superconscious mind was used in some way in the materialization of the Urantia Papers, and the details associated with this materialization. He said they were asked to take vows of secrecy regarding these two things. When we asked him why these restrictions were imposed on them, he gave the following reasons:

1. The main reason for not revealing the identity of the contact personality is that the revelators do not want any human being—any human name—ever to be associated with *The Urantia Book*. They want this revelation to stand on its own declarations and teachings. They are determined that future generations shall have the book wholly free from all mortal connections— a St. Peter, St. Paul, Luther, Calvin, or Wesley. The book does not even bear the imprint of the printer who brought the book into being.

2. There is much connected with the appearance of the Urantia Papers which no human being fully understands. No one really knows just how this phenomenon was executed. There are numerous missing links in the story of how this revelation came to appear in written English. If anyone should tell all he really knows about the technique and methods employed throughout the years of getting this revelation, such a narration would satisfy no one—there is too much missing.

Various members of the Chicago group speculated that the revelators wished nothing "miraculous" associated with the book and intended that it be accepted or rejected entirely on the worth of its teachings. On numerous occasions Dr. Sadler told me that he really did not know how the materialization was accomplished, and that just about everything known about the origin of *The Urantia Book* is found in various places in the book.

We found that during Dr. Sadler's investigation of this phenomenon he consulted with men like Howard Thurston, the renowned sleight of hand artist who devoted considerable time to exposing fraudulent mediums and psychics, and Sir Hubert Wilkens, the noted scientist and explorer who was interested in investigating psychic phenomena. All of them agreed that the phenomena connected with this individual could not be classified with other types of psychic phenomena such as automatic writing, telepathy, clairvoyance, trances, spirit mediumship, channeling, or split personality.

Since it was obvious that Dr. Sadler started as a professional researcher and skeptic and turned into a believer, I asked him why he changed his mind. He replied that as they read the early Urantia Papers he observed that many of the group known as the Forum—which Drs. William and Lena Sadler had started to discuss medical topics but was now

*Historicity, cont.*

engrossed in examining the Urantia Papers—were becoming highly impressed by their content. He was particularly concerned about his wife. So one Sunday he made a speech about the importance of objectivity and a critical approach to the material. The response he got was kind of a testimony meeting. The essence of their reaction was, “We don’t care who wrote the papers, they simply make more sense than anything we have read along this line.”

But Dr. Sadler thought his professional reputation was at stake. He had publicly declared there were no genuine mediumistic phenomena, and he wasn’t going to allow one baffling case to change his mind. As time went on, however, he was increasingly impressed with the consistency and high quality of the material. He was satisfied in his own mind that the subject involved in the materializations could not have produced the material as he did not have the qualifications or abilities to do so. By this time he also was convinced that he was dealing with genuine phenomena and not some clever trickery. Finally, he told me, when the paper evaluating the personalities of the twelve apostles came through, he threw in his intellectual towel. He said, “I’m a psychiatrist, and I think I know my business, but this paper was a real blow to my pride. If I had a half-dozen of the world’s best psychiatrists to help me and years to prepare it, I was convinced that I could not fabricate a paper with this ring of genuineness and insight. So I said to myself, ‘I don’t know what it is, but I do know that it is the highest quality of philosophical-religious material that I have ever read.’” From that time on, Dr. Sadler became not only the professional director of the group but also its dedicated leader.

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Events surrounding the origin of *The Urantia Book* have little relevance in assessing the truth and spiritual quality of the book—these must be determined by evaluating its content. It is, however, an important area for research. The findings of such research lends a significant contribution to the critical evaluation of the text itself. The following story is the product of years of investigation and many hours of discussion with those associated with the origin of the Urantia Papers. It includes a personal knowledge and friendship with key people in the Urantia movement over the past thirty-eight years.

During this period I served pastorates in the United Church

of Christ and joined the faculty of Indiana Institute of Technology, acting as head of the Department of Psychology, chair of the Division of Liberal Arts, and President. I have been especially careful to maintain academic objectivity and exercise critical evaluation of both *The Urantia Book* and the Urantia movement. The essential elements of the following narration have been cross-validated many times by numerous people who had first-hand experience in the events associated with the origin of *The Urantia Book*.

### **The Chicago Story**

Dr. William S. Sadler (1875-1969), physician, surgeon, psychiatrist, professor, and author of forty-two books, was a man of unusual abilities. He was a popular lecturer on Chautauqua platforms and promoted modern medicine and mental health issues through talks, magazine articles, and books. As a result of this effective advocacy, he and his wife, Dr. Lena Sadler, were frequently asked by friends and acquaintances to host an informal group where medical and social issues could be discussed. Accordingly, the Sadlers started a Sunday afternoon tea in the mid 1920’s, which became known as “The Forum,” where such topics were examined and sometimes debated. In time the Forum came to be composed of professional people: doctors, lawyers, dentists, ministers, and teachers, along with individuals from all walks of life—housewives, secretaries, farmers, and common laborers.

One Sunday a Forum member asked Dr. Sadler what he thought about a psychic medium who was drawing large crowds in one of the local theaters. Dr. Sadler replied that he had investigated many such psychics and found they were either dishonest frauds or sincere but self-deceived people whose subconscious mind activity led them to believe they were getting knowledge from the spirit world. “Then,” he added, “there is one that I haven’t figured out yet.” They, of course, wanted to know about this person, later called “the contact personality,” and Dr. Sadler shared some of the information gathered since 1911.

For a number of years he and a small group of associates, called “the contact commission,” had the opportunity of testing and verifying the content of unusual forms of distant communication. They were trained and familiarized with the technique of communication and information imparted by the alleged extra-planetary personalities, later known as “the revelators.” Through such a sharing of information, the agenda of the Forum was virtually taken over by the revelators.

Around this time, a personality who claimed to be a student visitor to the planet challenged the contact commission saying, “If you people realized what a high spiritual source you were associated with, you would stop making these puerile investigations to detect fraud and ask some significant questions about the nature of reality and the

universe.” Dr. Sadler took this message to the Forum and suggested that they take up the challenge by writing questions which could be taken to the revelators. They agreed to do so, and the many questions submitted were organized by Dr. Sadler. The first question presented was, “Is there a God; and, if so, what is he like?” In response they received five papers which the revelators requested be read to the Forum and kept in Dr. Sadler’s office safe.

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Soon after the first Urantia Papers were presented, the revelators requested that they form a closed group. Each member of the Forum was asked to sign a pledge which read: “We acknowledge our pledge of secrecy, renewing our promise not to discuss the Urantia revelations or their subject matter with anyone save active Forum members, and to take no notes of such matter as it is read or discussed at the Forum meetings, or make copies or notes of what we have personally read.” Membership tickets were issued and the charter membership numbered thirty. From time to time new members were received into the Forum after being interviewed by its officers and signing the pledge of secrecy. During the Forum’s existence its membership rose to a total of 486. Members of the Forum were permitted to come to 533 Diversey Parkway and read the papers, but they were never taken from the building.

The original papers were handwritten. Handwriting experts agreed that it was not the writing of the human individual whose superconscious mind was used in some way in the materialization of the papers. They were requested to have these original papers typed and carefully checked by the members of the contact commission. Whenever the original papers were typed and checked, the originals in the locked safe disappeared.

Occasionally, after papers were read and placed in the office safe, they disappeared. When the contact commission inquired about this disappearance, very little explanation was given beyond the fact that it was their decision to withdraw the paper. Other papers were altered after being read to the Forum. For instance, one of the papers stated that the apostle Nathaniel had “a good sense of humor for a Jew.” The members of the Forum chuckled at this comment. The next time they obtained this paper from the safe, they discovered the phrase “for a Jew” was deleted. The assumption was that they were required to read these papers to the Forum so that these higher beings could observe human reaction to the

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material presented. In this manner the papers composing *The Urantia Book* were received in the mid 1930’s.

In 1939 members of the Forum were asked for volunteers who would be willing to meet on Wednesday evenings to seriously and systematically study the Urantia Papers. Seventy persons expressed their desire to join this class, and they became known as “The Seventy.” The seventy were trained through papers and by directives from the revelators and by Forum leaders up to the time of the publication of *The Urantia Book*. Special emphasis was placed on the evolutionary nature of the acceptance of new truth and the danger of using mass media and revolutionary methods in presenting the message of the Urantia Papers to our contemporary culture.

When permission to publish the Urantia Papers was given, the revelators stated that they regarded *The Urantia Book* as a feature of the progressive evolution of human society. The book belongs, they said, to the era immediately following the ideological struggle in which they saw our planet involved. Early publication was granted so that leaders and teachers might be trained and translations of the book could be published in other languages. Various instructions were given for the publication of the book including the procurement of an international copyright.

In preparation for the publication of *The Urantia Book*, the Urantia Foundation was established by a Declaration of Trust under the laws of the State of Illinois on January 11, 1950. The Foundation is managed by a five member Board of Trustees who are appointed for life terms. The trustees’ duties and responsibilities are defined in the Declaration of Trust. Among the most important of these are the publication of *The Urantia Book* and preserving its text inviolate in perpetuity.

When the Foundation made an appeal to the Forum members for funds to cover the first printing of 10,000 copies, the response was immediate. The cost of the first edition was around \$75,000. The book is printed at the Crawfordsville, Indiana plant of R. R. Donnelly and Sons Company, and was published by the Urantia Foundation on October 12, 1955.

A French translation of *The Urantia Book* was published in 1962. Finnish and Spanish translations were published in the spring of 1993. Work continues on the Dutch and Russian translations, with translations into Korean, German, Swedish, Hungarian, and Italian on the horizon.

### **Study Groups and Societies**

Members of the Forum recognized that some sort of fraternal organization was sure to grow out of the teachings of *The Urantia Book*. Accordingly they organized the Urantia Brotherhood on January 2, 1955, and the Urantia Brotherhood Corporation, which acts as the legal and fiscal agent of the Brotherhood, on October 21, 1955, under the laws of

*Historicity, cont.*

the State of Illinois. In December, 1959, the Internal Revenue Service of the United States ruled that the Urantia Foundation, the Urantia Brotherhood, and the Urantia Brotherhood Corporation were tax-exempt, not-for-profit organizations.

The organizational building blocks of the Urantia Brotherhood are local Societies which emerge from mature study groups, and they function with great autonomy. In 1989, as the result of a dispute over democratic control of the Brotherhood, the Brotherhood severed organic connection with the Urantia Foundation and changed its name to the Fifth Epochal Fellowship, now better known as **The Fellowship** for students and readers of *The Urantia Book*, with offices at 529 Wrightwood, Chicago, IL 60614. The Urantia Foundation, with offices at 533 Diversey Parkway, Chicago, IL 60614, is sponsoring a new fraternal organization entitled The International Urantia Association. These fraternal organizations are primarily interested in the spiritual stimulation and growth of people of all faiths and religions.

### **Future Development**

Both the Urantia Foundation and The Fellowship have refrained from using mass media, believing that person to person contact and slow evolutionary growth is the most effective long term policy for introducing people to *The Urantia Book*. It is rather amazing that in a time when reporters are examining all kinds of cults and new religious movements, *The Urantia Book* has received little general publicity. The academic world is just beginning to discover its existence. In 1983, Dr. Jacques Rheume at the University of Ottawa wrote a doctoral thesis on the topic "An Analysis of a Revealed Text: *The Urantia Book*" (*Analyse d'un Texte Revele: The Urantia Book*). In 1985, there was an American Academy of Religion Consultation on the theme "*The Urantia Book* in Religious Studies."

*The Urantia Book* is one of the most promising sources of creative thought in philosophy, religion, and culture in our contemporary world. It has extremely broad ramifications. The authors' overarching grasp of the dynamics of civilization and culture shed wisdom in almost every area of human endeavor. Although we are confident the church will one day view *The Urantia Book* as an authentic and enlarged source of spiritual truth, it will only gain such recognition through critical evaluation by laypersons, ministers, and theologians.

*The Spiritual Fellowship Journal* grew out of the Clergy Network of the Christian Fellowship of Students of *The Urantia Book* organized in 1979. It is designed to interface with mainline ministers who have both the theoretical and practical background needed to critically evaluate the book's content. The recognition of enlarged spiritual concepts and values also requires courage, balance, and open-mindedness. We invite you to join the increasing number of religious leaders interested in initiating a period of testing for this new and fascinating vision of spiritual reality.

## **The Mystery of the Trinity: Unity in Plurality**

Stuart R. Kerr III

The doctrine of the Trinity has always posed conceptual problems for Christian theology. How can three persons constitute a unitary reality? Conversely, how does God differentiate his perfect unity into the plurality of his creation? How can the limitations of finitude be derived from limitless infinity, temporal succession from absolute eternity, generative possibility from primal necessity? *The Urantia Book* presents a view of reality which places these perplexing questions within the framework of a new paradigm that makes them more understandable.

This expanded picture of reality structures the compatibility of awesome complexity and sublime simplicity. *The Urantia Book* reveals a cosmos functioning as a harmonious system. Divine infinity is mirrored in the multiplicity of finite things, and divine eternity is integrally expressed in the endless temporal succession of cosmic events. The inter-relatedness of finite things to one another and to the whole expresses a comprehensive and true "unity in plurality."

The universe of universes is altogether unified. God is one in power and personality. There is co-ordination of all levels of energy and all phases of personality. Philosophically and experientially, in concept and in reality, all things and beings center in the Paradise Father. God is all and in all, and no things or beings exist without him. (U. B. p. 646:1)

### **The Evolutionary Nature of Spiritual Growth**

Throughout the progressive evolution of humankind, individuals have striven to discover truths concerning the nature of reality. That there is a "many," a plurality of things, is clear to most of us. But the human intellect searches for an underlying commonality. We hunger for a systematic and comprehensive view that ties things together. The goal of human thought in science, philosophy, and religion is to uncover the elemental and inherent unity in things. We intuitively value a unity amid diversity, a coherence of reality vibrant in richness and vitality. The highest articulation of such a unifying reality is our conceptualization of God.

It has been the burden of both experience and revelation to enhance our understanding of God. The knowledge of God was acquired gradually as humankind became increasingly able to receive it. The Old Testament effectively delivered the people of the Levant from polytheism and fixed in their hearts and minds the great and fundamental truth of the unity of the Godhead. Readiness for the knowledge of the Trinity, however, had to wait until the fullness of time when God's Son would incarnate into the world and the Spirit of Truth would prepare humankind for an expanded

knowledge of the Godhead. Premature revelation would actually hinder religious progress. Humankind needed to understand the unity of God before it could profitably be taught the enigma of the Trinity.

The dual nature of Jesus, as Son of Man and Son of God, has been a significant help in our understanding the mystery of the Trinity. In Jesus we see a superbly unified person with a duality of natures. Here we have unity combined with diversity. The human nature of Jesus in no way detracts from his divine nature, nor does his divine nature obscure his true humanity. These two natures are unified and supersummative in quality. Even lowly human beings can experience a growing unity with the indwelling Spirit of God. We have been given the choice of unifying our will with the Father's will and gradually attaining attunement with God.

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*In Jesus we see a superbly unified person with a duality of natures. Here we have unity combined with diversity. The human nature of Jesus in no way detracts from his divine nature, nor does his divine nature obscure his true humanity.*

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The doctrine of the Trinity is an expansion of the doctrine of the Incarnation. Although different elements of the Trinity doctrine are found scattered throughout all parts of the Bible, there is no one place where this doctrine is set forth in a complete and systematic form. The New Testament assumes the Trinity with a sublime naturalness and simplicity. The first use of the term "Trinity" dates to the second century. Tertullian describes the distinctions in the Godhead as "persons," not meaning personalities, but forms of manifestation. To avoid the pitfall of Tritheism, this same explanation of the Trinity is encountered today. When God acts as creator, it is a Father function; when God acts as a savior, it is a Son function; when God acts as a sustainer, it is a Spirit function. Orthodox theologians, however, point out that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in each of these functions.

The church has stated the doctrine of the Trinity in various creeds, such as the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 concisely summarized the doctrine in these words: "Firmly we believe and simply we confess that one alone is true God, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, three persons, one essence, one substance, and one nature entirely simple. The Father is from no one, the Son from the Father alone, and the Holy Spirit equally from both...consubstantial, co-equal, co-omnipotent, and co-eternal."

### **A New Paradigm of Spiritual Knowledge**

Today, 20th century people are searching for a more complete understanding of spiritual reality. As we prepare to enter the next millennium, *The Urantia Book* presents a new paradigm of spiritual knowledge with an enhanced and expanded vision of the Trinity. In language which time-space

conditioned beings can understand, we are told that in the dawn of eternity the Father-I Am breaks free from the static fetters of unqualified infinity confinement by the exercise of his absolute free-will. This primal act repercussions in the dynamic relationship of the Seven Absolutes of Infinity. The Paradise Trinity is the existential core of this Deity Reality in which the Universal Father is Primal, the First Source and Center of all things, beings, and realities. The Universal Father is discernible as personality and is the divine Father of all personalities.

The Son shares with the Father his divine character of Deity. They are forever and inseparably one personal unity of universe presence; and it is by virtue of this mutual omnipresence that all creation rests upon the everywhere active presence of the spirit of the Eternal Son. The spirit of the Father is eternally resident in the spirit of the Son, but the Son alone perfectly personalizes the Father's love and mercy. To the universes of creation, the Son is the living revelation of divine love.

As God is love, so the Son is mercy. The Son cannot love more than the Father, but he can show mercy to creatures in one additional way, he not only is a primal creator like the Father, but he is also the Eternal Son of that same Father thereby sharing in the sonship experience of all other sons of the Universal Father. (U.B. p. 75:6)

The Son is the perfect image of the Father, perfectly mirroring and expressing all that the Father is. The Son is uncreated, eternal, without beginning, equally God. The Father and the Son love one another with a boundless love that fully expresses their reality; and this personal love proceeding from the Father and the Son is the Infinite Spirit. The Spirit is not created; the Spirit is a person co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son.

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*In language which time-space conditioned beings can understand, we are told that in the dawn of eternity the Father-I Am breaks free from the static fetters of unqualified infinity confinement by the exercise of his absolute free-will.*

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The Infinite Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, and as "unitive" Being, proceeding from both the Father and the Son, maintains the unity of creation. Acting as the Conjoint Creator with the Father-Son union, the Spirit is the universal and divine minister of the Son's mercy and the Father's love. The Infinite Spirit is the source of universal and absolute mind. It is through mind endowment that the Spirit serves as the indispensable co-ordinator of both spiritual and material realities. He is the universal co-ordinator of creation, the correlator of all actual reality. The Spirit is the unifier of the manifold energies and diverse creations which have appeared in consequence of the divine plan and eternal purpose of the Universal Father.

*The Mystery of the Trinity, cont.*

The Conjoint Actor functions throughout the grand universe as a positive and distinct personality, especially in the higher spheres of spiritual values, physical-energy relationships, and true mind meanings. He functions specifically wherever and whenever energy and spirit associate and interact; he dominates all reactions with mind, wields great power in the spiritual world, and exerts a mighty influence over energy and matter. At all times the Third Source is expressive of the nature of the First Source and Center. (U. B. p. 99:3)

The existence of these three eternal persons of Deity in no way violates the truth of divine unity. The three perfectly individualized personalities of Deity are as one to all persons and things in the universe: "Trinity is Deity unity, and this unity rests eternally upon the absolute foundations of the divine oneness of the three original and co-ordinate and coexistent personalities, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit." (U. B. p. 108:2) All the diversity of the character traits and infinite powers of the three persons of the Trinity are divinely unified and undivided Deity realities.

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### Trinity Functions

Personality is inherent in the individual members of the Trinity, but the Trinity is not, in and of itself, personal. The unified essence of the Trinity might be understood more properly as a supersummative conjoining of the three Deity endowments of the Father, Son, and Spirit. These three eternal personalizations of Deity become undivided and indivisible within the Deity reality of the Trinity, and this oneness of Deity is existential and absolute. This divine unity encompasses a Deity reality which exceeds by far the simple sum of the personal attributes of the three persons of Deity.

The Trinity interacts with manifested reality in a collective sense, functioning in ways that are both personal and nonpersonal. It is a divine reality comprising qualities, characteristics, and functions which are unique, original, and not wholly predictable. "The Trinity association of the three Paradise Deities results in the evolution, eventuation, and deitization of new meanings, values, powers, and capacities for universal revelation, action, and administration." (U. B. p. 113:4)

As we view the past, present, and future of time, the authors of *The Urantia Book* tell us that of all things manifested in the universe of universes, only the concept of the Trinity is deemed inevitable: "The original and eternal Paradise Trinity is existential and was inevitable. This never-beginning Trinity was inherent in the fact of the differentiation of the personal and the nonpersonal by the Father's unfettered will and factualized when his personal will co-ordinated these dual realities by mind." (U. B. p. 15:7)

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The reality of the present master universe is unthinkable without the Trinity. Only the conception of the Trinity union of the Father, Son, and Spirit allows postulation as to how the Infinite could possibly achieve threefold and co-ordinate personalization in the presence of the absolute oneness of Deity. No other philosophic or theologic proposal could account for "the completeness of the absoluteness inherent in Deity unity coupled with the repleteness of volitional liberation inherent in the threefold personalization of Deity." (U. B. p. 108:3)

Faith in the Trinity entails a faith in three divine persons living in the deep eternal relationships incumbent upon this Trinity. The Father is always the Father to the Eternal Son who is ever his only-begotten and uncreated Son. The Infinite Spirit lives always as the conjoint third person who administers the eternal love of the Father and Son to the universe of universes. These persons revealed within the Godhead are distinct; they are a community eternally bound together in perfect understanding and love. In learning the mystery of the Trinity, we realize that divine life can be shared, and shared even by us created individuals who, as sons and daughters in faith, can be brought into the joy of the perfect community.

The Paradise Trinity is existent. The stage of universal space is set for the manifold and never-ending panorama of the creative unfolding of the purpose of the Universal Father through the personality of the Eternal Son and by the execution of the God of Action, the executive agency for the reality performances of the Father-Son creator partnership." (U. B. p. 91:1)

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# Significant Books

## Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time

### The Historical Jesus & the Heart of Contemporary Faith

Marcus J. Borg  
Harper San Francisco, 1994, pp.

Biblical scholars like Rudolf Bultman have pointed out that using the resources of secular history, we can know almost nothing about the life and personality of Jesus. Contemporary Biblical scholarship confirms this paucity of information about Jesus in secular literary sources. Marcus J. Borg, Distinguished Professor of Religion and Culture at Oregon State University, in his most recent book, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, shows that even though we cannot verify much about Jesus, we can appreciate and participate in the religion of Jesus. He describes his own pilgrimage from naive, unquestioning belief in Christ, through collegiate skepticism, to a mature Christian faith. This was a journey from secondhand belief to firsthand experience.

Borg's book stands in sharp contrast to John Crossman's *Jesus, a Revolutionary Biography* (Harper San Francisco, 1994). Crossman uses his extensive knowledge of cross-cultural anthropology and Greco-Roman and Jewish history to reject most of the Biblical biographical data about Jesus. Among the many recent books on the historical Jesus, only Borg explores what the latest Biblical scholarship means for personal faith.

Many Christians, especially in mainline churches, find that their childhood image of Jesus no longer makes much sense. "It is for these people," Borg says, "this book was written." (p.1) The author distinguishes between the pre-Easter Jesus (historical) and post-Easter Jesus (early Christian faith). Jesus' relation to the Spirit of God was the source of everything that he was and did. "For Jesus, compassion was the central quality of God and the central moral quality of a life centered in God." (p. 46) The dominant social vision of Judaism was centered in holiness: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." (Lev. 19:2) This Jewish purity system created a world of sharp social boundaries: between pure and the impure, righteous and sinner, male and female, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile. There was something boundary shattering about Jesus' message and activity: "Be compassionate as God is compassionate." (p. 58)

Borg observes that the Hebrew word for compassion, whose singular form means "womb," is often used of God in the Old Testament. And wisdom is a feminine noun in both Hebrew (hokmah) and Greek (sophia). "To say that God is like a womb is to say that God is like a woman, just as the personification of God as Sophia suggests that God is like a

woman; and Jesus is a spokesperson for the compassion of Sophia/God." (p. 103) Jesus criticizes the central values of his social world's conventional wisdom: family, wealth, honor, purity, and religiosity. In the place of conventional wisdom, he presented an alternate, even subversive, wisdom such as, "You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. 6:24)

Like other Biblical scholars, Borg acknowledges there is insufficient extra-Biblical evidence to postulate the divinity of Jesus. "The multiplicity of images for speaking of Jesus' relationship to God (as *logos*, *Sophia*, Son—to name but a few) should make it clear that none of them is to be taken literally. They are metaphorical.... Thus it is not the case that Jesus is *literally* 'the Son of God.'" (p. 109) "As one who knew the Spirit, Jesus *may* have imagined and/or experienced the Spirit as *Abba* and *Sophia*. But did he, in addition, think of himself as 'son' (in some special sense) of the one he called *Abba*?.... Given the nature of our sources, I find it difficult to imagine how a judgment of historical probability could be reached on this particular matter." (p. 110)

During the last two decades, a movement known as *story theology* has called attention to the narrative character of the Bible. Borg speaks of the macro-stories of scripture as *the exodus story*, *the story of exile and return*, and *the priestly story*. These stories, Borg says, have shaped our Christology. The priestly story has dominated and distorted the popular understanding of Jesus. "The notion that God's only son came to this planet to offer his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world and that God could not forgive us without that having happened, and that we are saved by believing this story, is simply incredible. Taken metaphorically, this story can be very powerful. But taken literally, it is a profound obstacle to accepting the Christian message. To many people, it simply makes no sense, and I think we need to be straight forward about that." (p. 131)

"Believing in Jesus does not mean believing doctrines about him. Rather, it means to give one's heart, one's self at its deepest level, to the post-Easter Jesus who is the living Lord, the side of God turned toward us, the face of God, the Lord who is also Spirit." (p. 137) This means moving from secondhand religion to firsthand religion.

The strength of the intellectual honesty of contemporary Biblical scholarship along with its lack of evidence in the understanding of the divinity of Jesus, underscores the great need in mainline Christianity for the inspiring insights of *The Urantia Book*. *Urantia Book* Christology reinforces both the historic Christian faith in the divinity of Jesus, and many of the insights of modern scholarship. It liberates us from the divisive religion about Jesus and reemphasizes and magnifies the religion of Jesus.

-MJS

## *The Urantia Book* *and Spiritual Renewal*

### **The Transforming Encounter**

Carol Hay

When I was a young woman I found myself facing a growing spiritual dissatisfaction that I could not find a way to resolve. Although I had a solid Christian background, I hungered for more. I needed something that would fill in the gaps in my personal religious experience and would realistically help me transfer my religious beliefs into religious living.

We have all heard the saying, "Be careful about what you're praying for, because you might get it!" The truth of this saying hit home with me the day I opened *The Urantia Book* for the first time. Here was a book that expanded my knowledge of God, offered new information about the universe, and brought an exciting new dimension to my personal relationship with Jesus.

It's difficult to explain all the ways in which *The Urantia Book* has changed my life. The information in its pages has given me inspiration for almost 20 years now. The book has affected me from the inside out, altering my view of reality in a way that could only be described as transformative.

The first thing that happened to me as I read the book was a startling shift in my perspective of our place in the cosmos. It was similar to the change which one would experience after finding out that he lived in the United States after only having been aware of the existence of his hometown. What a glorious universe home we live in! The expanded realization of God's immense grandeur which I have learned from the book has enriched my worship experiences a thousandfold.

*The Urantia Book's* descriptive account of our continuing existence beyond our brief sojourn on earth then expanded my perspective of time. Once I was able to embrace the concept of life in eternity, my earthly difficulties seemed to shrink into manageable challenges, and I have found that there are no problems in life which cannot be overcome.

But the most expansive change that has occurred in my life because of reading *The Urantia Book* has to do with the compelling narrative of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Here, the book comes alive with the account of a human being whose eloquence in living and commitment to his Father's will has answered every question I have about the way I want to live my life. The Jesus of *The Urantia Book* is neither a passive mystic nor a fated martyr, but a robust God-man who engages life to its fullest. The Jesus I find in *The Urantia Book* has timeless appeal that reaches out to me in my time and place, helping me recognize the spiritual presence of Jesus that permeates our world today. I have learned that

true religion is a religion of the spirit and consists in the way our personal relationship with God inspires how we respond to the challenges of day to day living and shows us how we can aspire to raising the mundane aspects of our earthly existence to the level of true art as we express the Father's love to others in our own lives.

*The Urantia Book* presents the opportunity to expand our perspective of the meaning of life and our purpose on this planet and beyond. But better still, it offers information that will expand our relationship with the incomparable personality of Jesus, inspiring new opportunities to experience the love of the Father.

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*Carol Hay, a long time student of The Urantia Book, speaks extensively to church groups on personal religious growth. She is also an editor of the Invisible Fellowship Magazine.*

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### ***Psalms Today*** **Spiritual Progress**

How long, O Lord, must we wait for the enlightenment of humanity?

How long will we be afraid to turn our face toward truth?

How long must I bear this anguish of soul, struggling with closed minds and stunted souls?

How long will your people be led by the priests of the past instead of the prophets of the future?

Give me the patience to co-operate with your laws of creative evolution.

Deliver me from the folly of devising shortcuts to sound spiritual growth.

May I not indulge in the short-lived joys experienced by the midwife of the premature.

Rather, O Lord, give me the joys of those who stand alone on the mountain top.

Give me the satisfactions of those pioneers who break new trails knowing that others will follow, settle, and build.

May all the lone voices of truth crying in the wilderness become a chorus of humanity affirming your will and way.

I have complete trust in the triumph of your great plan for humankind. Your steadfast love and Fatherly care are present at every step of the way.

In the midst of the problems and suffering of my life, I live in the bountiful blessings of renewal, growth, and inner peace you provide me.

The Spiritual Fellowship Journal

I will praise you eternally! (13)

# The Supreme Potential of the Family

Janet Farrington

## Editorial Introduction

*For most of us growing up in Western Civilization, even though we were active and knowledgeable church members, the discovery of The Urantia Book opened a new and exciting vista of Reality. In addition to the centrality of the Trinity, The Urantia Book describes Absolutes of potentiality and an evolutionary aspect of Deity, called God the Supreme. The Supreme grows as the personalities in the evolving universes attain Godlikeness. This developing factualization of Deity is very close to Deity concepts in the writings of Jung, Teilhard de Chardin, and Whitehead. The Supreme is that evolutionary aspect of Deity in which we “live and move and have our being.” God the Supreme is the cosmic womb in which finite potential grows, the Universe Mother of the evolving finite creation. The Supreme is the realm of the actual and the potential: “The great struggle of this universe age is between the potential and the actual—the seeking for actualization by all that is as yet unexpressed.” (U. B. p. 1284)*

## The Challenge of Parenthood

As I was pondering the potential and actual aspects of the evolution of the Supreme one day, and folding yet another basket of laundry for my active family of five, I suddenly had an Aha! experience regarding the nature of the Supreme. I was folding a sock that my baby Hannah loves to pull off her tiny feet and chew, and I was thinking about how her socks would gain in size over the years as her feet grew. Larger and larger would they become until suddenly they would rival my own and then, when my baby reaches womanhood, her socks and not-so-tiny shirts would no longer fill my basket. I realized that each little Hannah-sock reflects the potential that my daughter will someday grow large enough to actually do her own laundry.

I picked up my son’s little league tee-shirt and imagined how small it would look next to the high school jersey he might some day toss into the basket. I thought of all the tee-shirts I would surely fold as he journeys on towards manhood; that with each folding, yet another aspect of his potential would be unfolding, and would someday be actualized; that, he too, will someday do his own laundry.

As I picked up each little dress and pair of worn jeans, I tried to burn into memory the experience of holding an actual moment of my life with each child, as symbolized by these soon-to-be-outgrown clothes. And then as I held this moment, I scanned across the potential that awaits us and imagined a much older woman looking back and remembering, that her half-empty basket used to hold so much that has now been actualized and is held within the sweet embrace of the Supreme. In that moment I set a new personal standard for cosmic laundry folding.

Fall, 1994

My Aha! experience was the result of discovering that as a parent I hold both potential and actual in my hands, just as does the Universal Mother, the Supreme Being. There is no arena of living that reflects the great struggle between the actual and the potential better than family life. When I think of the challenge human parents face when they struggle to help actualize the potential of their children, I become awestruck by the incredible responsibility with which the Father entrusts us. With the birth of a child two great “potentials” spring into existence. One is the simultaneous birth of a family, either new or newly configured. Another is the evolution of a cosmic citizen, which depends greatly on the potential realized within the family. The potential of the human family is to emulate the living and supportive relationships of the divine family—the kingdom of God.

The Paradise Father realizes that in order for his mortal children to achieve their spiritual destiny and contribute to the future of the Supreme, they need to feel his presence. And, therefore, the Father sends his Spirit, the Adjuster, to indwell each of us as a friend, a guide and a loving parent. The Adjuster provides a constant and loving presence of the Paradise Father and reflects the universe model for family life—loving parents raising cosmic citizens through their wise and constant presence.

Human parents have complete responsibility for this role in the lives of their young children prior to the coming of the Adjuster. I believe this is why the first, formative years are so important. It falls upon the shoulders of human parents to give not just a part, but the whole of their presence. And it is not time alone that we speak of. Just as the still small voice of the Spirit of God is always present and ready to help, so human parents should always be available and supportive of children, saying to each of them and every day of their challenging life, “you are loved, and we are with you.” If all children in our society could depend upon this level of parental presence from both their parents, whether they lived with them or not, the need for mercy on our streets would greatly diminish.

Without this presence, without a constant, loving parental presence, children of God will not evolve their full potential. And for this reason, family life provides the most important foundation upon which human destiny is attained and Deity realization of the Supreme is achieved.

To the extent that we do the will of God in whatever universe station we may have our existence, in that measure the almighty potential of the Supreme becomes one step more actual. (U. B. p. 1278)

## The Family as a Microcosm of the Supreme

Human destiny originates and is actualized within the framework of the family throughout our universe career. Like an ever expanding circle, the family reaches beyond the original few to encompass an ever increasing number of

### *Supreme Potential of Family, cont.*

people with whom we work and live. And as our consciousness expands, so does our realization of family. We move from an original definition of our human family towards a global and finally a cosmic definition. There is never a time in the whole of our universe career that we do not define our existence on some level in terms of family.

The human family is the first training ground for cosmic citizenship. It is within this first family that we begin to understand the gift of free will. From the earliest states of human consciousness, the evolving child struggles to exercise free will. Every milestone in the child's development is related to how the child expresses free will. Initially, the child is exposed to the limits within which free will can be exercised. Eventually, step-by-step, the child, if given the chance, will learn to exercise free will in a way that leads to progress.

The human family is a microcosm of the Supreme. The evolution of the family is dependent on the realization of potential by each of its members. Step-by-step, the family evolves as the individuals evolve. Every interaction between individuals in the family serves to either contribute to the growth of the whole family or to inhibit that growth. And when the growth of the family is inhibited, the growth of the individuals within that family also suffers.

I believe we need to expand the definition of the human family. What first comes to mind when family is discussed is mom, dad, and the kids. This is a limited perception. Mom, dad, and the kids is only one configuration of a family. The concept of the family needs to be defined in a way that recognizes the creative and supportive potentials of all possible arrangements of human beings who live in close relationship to one another; who share with each other their constant and loving presence; who strive to understand their responsibility to all God's children.

The child resides within the Supreme, within the family of humanity, and within a specific human family simultaneously. But it is within the primary human family that a child first learns what it means to be dependent on and responsible for others—brother/sisterhood. It is within the human family that a child first experiences the love of parents—mother/fatherhood. The responsibility for teaching loving relationships is a challenging task for parents who may be overworked, undertrained, and struggling. The job of teaching our young brothers and sisters how to develop their minds, hearts, and souls is such an important task that it falls upon all shoulders in the cosmic family. This is Supreme work!

The child represents a nearly limitless potential for Supremacy. The child who grows in the loving embrace of an extended human family experiences the kinship of humanity during the critical formative years. Service becomes a natural extension of love for others. The child who is parented as a child of God by a loving family grows secure in an experiential

faith in the Father/Motherhood of God. Outreach becomes a natural extension of God's love.

Man can discover the Father in his heart, but he will have to search for the Supreme in the hearts of all other men; and when all creatures perfectly reveal the love of the Supreme, then will he become a universe actuality to all creatures. (U. B. p. 1290)

### **A Philosophy of Family**

Many people of our society have pointed to the need for better child training. We will achieve better child training not by means of a specific theology or methodology for children but through an improved broad philosophy of family. It is not a program to separate and educate children that will support the family, but a process to incorporate and illuminate all family members. We need to recognize the desperate need for the extended family in our community and society as a whole. We need to understand the potential reach of family beyond mother, father, and the kids, to encompass elders, mentors, and friends. We need to share our presence with each other as members of a loving extended family.

We need elders to sit with attentive children at their knees and share stories filled with wisdom and love. We need mentors to walk side-by-side with adolescents as they prepare for entry into the world of adults by defining values and discovering goals. We need friends to stand with parents in times of need, to offer support and sustenance as we all strive to raise children with kindness and love. We need to feel each others' presence; to touch each others' inner spirits.

The Supreme is the beauty of physical harmony, the truth of intellectual meaning and the goodness of spiritual value. He is the sweetness of true success and the joy of everlasting achievement. (U. B. p. 1278)

A comprehensive philosophy of family would recognize the separate, simultaneous, and Supreme realities of family life. We each belong to an original family, a primary family, an extended family, a global family, and a divine family. Each new expression of family builds upon all former expressions and encompasses all that a child of God has discovered about loving relationships.

An insightful philosophy of family would recognize that the human family is a microcosm of the Supreme, and provides a forum for the expression of the spiritual realities that actualize the Supreme. It is in relationship with others that we discover spiritual truth; it is the discovery and expression of spiritual truth that evolves the Supreme.

A spiritual philosophy of family would recognize that human relationships offer both a divine and daunting challenge. Within the family, in every relationship, we struggle to love each other as we know our Paradise Father loves us. We struggle for the patience to allow unique expression to individual free will, when what we really crave is conformity and obedience. We struggle to ask questions when our instinct

and training is to issue commands. We strive to embrace those with whom we disagree and stand with patience and love in the face of adversity, when the way of the world is to throw stones. We carve out of potential the actuality of the Supreme when we push ourselves beyond our personal limits and find forgiveness and love for others. We evolve as the Supreme evolves, struggling for Deity expression in the experiential reality of finite existence.

### Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the currency of evolution. Without forgiveness our relationships with each other would deteriorate; without forgiveness we could not move forward. Our struggle for progress is dependent on feeling the need for change. That need is often born of conflict and pain. Without forgiveness the emerging child of God would be continuously burdened by the mistakes of the evolving child of humanity. We must forgive ourselves by exercising faith and forgive each other by expressing love. We must gather unto ourselves great stores of loving forgiveness and spend liberally.

We must forgive the mistakes of our parents, just as we hope to be forgiven by our children. This does not mean forget. This does not mean ignore. We cannot hope to progress without understanding those forces that have brought us to the crossroads of our lives as parents and children. In those moments when we feel the urge to repeat the mistakes we suffered in our childhood, we need to forgive—our parents, ourselves, our children. And in that moment of forgiveness the Supreme evolves, the family evolves, and the kinship of humanity progresses one step beyond what it was a moment before. In that moment of forgiveness the reality of God is reflected in the life of a human child.

We must forgive the mistakes of our brothers and sisters, just as we hope to be forgiven by them. This does not mean we should ignore evil. This does not mean we should overlook injustice. We cannot hope to progress without a wise examination of the decisions and actions that shape our world, and we cannot hope to progress without a gentle response. The urge to criticize others is often stronger than the desire to forgive and encourage resolution; yet a continuing conflict does very little to evolve the Supreme. The lack of forgiveness and resolution retards evolution just as much as the more obvious forms of evil and injustice: “The fruits of the spirit are the substance of the Supreme as he is realizable in human experience.” (U. B. p. 1290)

The Supreme does not evolve as a result of the success, power, prestige or position acquired by an individual. The Supreme evolves as a result of the loving relationships actualized between individuals. And these relationships are dependent on forgiveness, tact, tolerance, encouragement, and kindness. There is no limit to the power of love; if it motivates all behavior, it can bear all response. This

is especially true in the family. There is no better way to teach children respect, than to treat them with respect. There is no better way to reveal the existence of God than to reflect God’s love.

If forgiveness is the currency of evolution, then the family is the bank of the Supreme. The interest that is accumulated as a result of forgiveness and love in the family grows exponentially throughout eternity. Children who are forgiven their faults in their original family learn to forgive their own children in their primary family. People who are forgiven their mistakes in the extended family, learn to forgive all their brothers and sisters in the global family. These human investments have spiritual value. These are the dividends that evolve the Supreme.

When you find the Father, you will find the great cause of your spiritual ascent in the universes; when you find the Supreme, you will discover the great result of your career of Paradise progression. (U. B. p. 1291)

The Father is the cause, the Supreme is the result. I believe the family is the way: The way to integrate spiritual values with social progress; the way to initiate Father/Motherhood and invest in brother/sisterhood; the way to realize the cosmic value of finite experience as a child of God in the family of humanity. The family can provide a safe haven, a loving embrace, a place to turn to when living gets hard.

The family of *Urantia Book* readers is an extended family inspired by a larger vision of Reality and an enhanced appreciation of the interrelatedness of all people. We are a committed and diverse family of readers who support each other in times of need and share with each other the bountiful harvest of the fruits of the spirit. Inspired and empowered by this new revelation of truth, we are dedicated to the expansion of interfaith boundaries. We strive to offer something of Supreme value to our spiritually hungry brothers and sisters of all faiths throughout the world: A spiritual philosophy that promotes family living as a tool for cosmic growth; a philosophy of living that truly helps the child of God grow within the family of humanity. This, after all, is the stuff of which the Supreme is made. This, my brothers and sisters, is the Supreme potential of the family.

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# Church and Culture

## A New Beginning For World Religious Unity: Part 2

Byron Belitsos

*This is the final section of a two part report on the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions.*

For anyone interested in the future of religion, the Parliament of the World's Religions, held in Chicago last September, was a central event of our times, a jubilee for interreligious dialogue. It also marked the centennial of the world-historic 1893 Parliament of World Religion, now recognized as the founding event in the interfaith movement. The 1993 Parliament heralded a new beginning of the movement toward religious unity in a postmodern world.

### Models of Interfaith Dialogue

Throughout the week, lay people, theologians, and religious leaders grappled with various approaches to interfaith dialogue. All of us, even the proselytizers, were swept up into a vast experiment of sharing and listening.

Speaker after speaker advocated that each of us listen openly and graciously to the beliefs of all others, no matter how different or strange. We were urged to allow the other to share, *and* allow the other to listen. This reigning philosophy goaded those of us who are used to disguising our religious affiliation—notably *Urantia Book* readers—to come out of the closet. After 19 years of reading the Book, this was the first religious gathering I have attended where I felt quite uninhibited about sharing my belief in *The Urantia Book*.

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*After 19 years of reading the Book, this was the first religious gathering I have attended where I felt quite uninhibited about sharing my belief in The Urantia Book.*

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The spirit of the Parliament was one of general openness, but I was able to identify at least four distinct models for interreligious dialogue that seemed to animate the participants: exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist, and functionalist.

### Exclusivism

We all know that many religions have spawned fundamentalist movements that find intolerable the relativism implied in interfaith dialogue. For example, the Southern Baptist Convention sent no representatives to the PWR, nor did any of the strains of Islamic fundamentalism. My own mother church, the Eastern Orthodox, surprised many by

withdrawing on the third day of the Parliament, on orders from the Patriarch in Istanbul, Turkey. The Orthodox were offended by the presence of several small “neo-pagan” groups, notably WICCA and the eco-feminist group called Covenant of the Goddess.

It was an embarrassment for me to realize that my two religious affiliations, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Urantia Fellowship, were not represented at the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions.

Others of the exclusivist strain were more pragmatic. There was no shortage of proselytizing organizations who used the Parliament as a platform to promulgate “truth.” I personally met many attendees who held forth on the superiority of their tradition over others, or who had considerable difficulty allowing me to share my own peculiar faith.

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*I suppose I am an inclusivist. The Urantia Book seems to endorse this position in the “Second Discourse On Religion” (UB:1732), where we read that “the religion of the spirit requires only unity of experience...only unity of spirit feeling.”*

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The exclusivist approach might be described as “esoteric,” as opposed to the “exoteric” tendencies that exist within these same traditions. Generally, esoteric religionists identify as “absolute” some feature of the external form of their religion. A revealed text, a ritualistic practice, or some definition or symbol of God, is seen as superior in some sense to all others. To permit relativism would cause an unacceptable insecurity in the faith.

### Inclusivism

By contrast with the esoteric, the exoteric's faith is based on a direct *mystical* or personal experience of the Ultimate. Symbols and beliefs are experienced as transparent—an expedient way to mediate the encounter with God. “The exoteric finds the Absolute within traditions as poets find poetry in poems,” says Frithjof Schuon, who has elaborated the distinction between esoteric and exoteric in *The Transcendental Unity of Religions* and elsewhere.

Exoteric believers in any tradition have an obvious basis for dialogue that is grounded in their common mystical experience. This would imply that there are only two types of religions: the esoteric and the exoteric, and these divergent approaches are to be found in each tradition. Schuon says the real divisions in world religion are not between the many religions, but these two very different types of religious persons.

I suppose I am an inclusivist. *The Urantia Book* seems to endorse this position in the “Second Discourse On Religion” (UB:1732), where we read that “the religion of the spirit requires only unity of experience...only unity of spirit feeling.”

The ultimate meaning of the Parliament for me was in the growing sense of the unity of religious experience as the *ground* for interreligious dialogue. A unity of religious feeling was always palpable at the interfaith meditation sessions held each morning and evening. This sense of unity was especially true of plenary sessions — grand events with several thousand people often in attendance, some watching by closed-circuit TV in adjoining ballrooms.

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The culminating experience of spirit unity for me was the plenary on “The Inner Life,” held on the fourth night. Representatives of the major religions spoke — each one a master of the exoteric path within their tradition. As each intoned his or her experience of transcendent realities, the audience seemed to become more *still*. An unspoken consensus of the unity of spiritual experience hung in the air. I felt this especially in the poignant silences between their presentations, in the dignified demeanor of each representative, and in the ardor of the listening audience.

### **Pluralism**

The meetings of the academics and theologians were concurrent with the popular workshops and lectures. They were open to any lay observers who could fit into the crowded ballrooms.

The academics wrestled with more exacting models for creating a legitimate basis for interfaith dialogue. A dominant model among today’s theologians is “pluralism.” Raimundo Panikkar, a keynote speaker in the Conference on Pluralism, warned that we must be skeptical in our search for a “universal theory” or even a common essence of religion. He and others made clear the danger of a rush to find a “common essence,” for in the process we might miss what is genuinely different, and therefore what is genuinely *challenging* in other religions. Stating in advance what is common may inhibit our ability to really listen, to be simply open. While rejecting the need to always find common ground, the theologians of pluralism paradoxically hold fast to the value of dialogue, while always warning against the pitfalls of a “radical skepticism.” They try to walk the difficult path between “inclusivism” and total relativism.

### **Functionalist**

I define the functionalist model of interfaith dialogue as the search for broadly common goals and purposes, especially that of uniting all humankind — even non-believers — for the sake of the survival of the planet. Functionalists

are pragmatic. They realize how difficult it would be to unite “...the followers of the differing intellectual theologies which so characterize Urantia.” (UB:1010)

Functionalists can find considerable support for their approach in *The Urantia Book*, which preaches that “Someday religionists will get together and actually effect cooperation on the basis of unity of ideals and purposes rather than attempting to do so on the basis of psychological opinions and theological beliefs.” (UB:1091)

### **Declaration of a Global Ethic**

This *Urantia Book* statement is a fair description of the Parliament! The Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders did succeed in unifying around the Declaration of a Global Ethic, which was issued on the final day of the Parliament. Meeting for three days in the auditorium of the Art Institute of Chicago, the site of the 1893 Parliament, the delegates debated this and many other proposals, and with a few abstentions approved the document.

The Declaration bases unity on shared ethical principles, not theology. It affirms a broad and common understanding for ethical behavior for all peoples, for norms and standards describing what is acceptable and unacceptable across all religious and spiritual traditions. This includes commitments to non-violence, just economics, tolerance, equal rights, and respect for life. It also condemns inequities in the world economy, environmental abuses, media manipulation, sex discrimination, and religious violence. The Assembly also affirmed a process by which the Declaration could take root in the world community, through an ongoing process of debate and discussion in the religious community, aided by scholarly input and critique.

The Declaration was drafted by the noted Swiss theologian Hans Kung, by invitation for the Council of the Parliament. An extended argument for such a world ethic appears in his most recent book, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New Ethic*, reviewed in a recent issue of the *Spiritual Fellowship Journal*.

The 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions was a new beginning for world religious unity. Hopefully, the day will come when humankind will achieve that spiritual maturity where religious tolerance and interfaith understanding will enable us to achieve religious unity amid our theological diversity.

-Byron Belitsos

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*Byron has been a journalist and television producer and is presently a consultant in the telecommunications industry.*

# My God is a Sweet and Juicy Apple— Without the Waxy Cover

By Matt Neibaur

While serving a mission in Argentina for the Mormon Church, I had a dream. At the time I was working in a district of Buenos Aires called Mataderos. This is the district containing the slaughter houses. The discarded animal remains were burned, leaving a dark smoke over the neighborhood. The sewage system was poor and often overflowed allowing the gutters of the cobblestone streets to fill with blood. The scent of death was everywhere. I thought of Auschwitz, as I dodged cars on my rusty bike.

One night after a late discussion with a prospective member family, I arrived at our apartment exhausted, and collapsed in bed. I began to dream. This was no ordinary dream. It was too vivid, and it refused to fade from memory like most dreams do. I remember that I was in a Mormon Temple. They have a special room known as the Celestial Room, an earthly representation of what heaven is like. Its clean with white walls, gold mirrors, curtains, and plush carpet. As I entered this room I saw in the distance an image of Jesus. I approached him cautiously, wondering if there was some mistake in allowing me this apparition. As I drew nearer it became clear that this was Jesus, and it was no mistake. Humbled, fearful, yet joyful and excited, I rushed toward him. In a spontaneous gesture of overwhelming love, I threw my arms around him. I relished this moment, thinking that my diligence in the face of such adversity had made me worthy of such an experience. As I wept, I noticed that His posture had not changed. He was rigid. I stepped back hesitatingly and inspected him. His expression had not changed. Puzzled, I reached up and cautiously touched his face. I gazed at my fingers in amazement—wax. Green and yellow under my finger nails. To my abhorrence. He was a statue—made of wax.

I woke up, my bed was drenched in sweat. In the coming years, this dream often returned to haunt me.

About twelve years later, I had become dissatisfied with my church. It seemed so superficial, so caught up with appearances. I thought of how they wax apples in the supermarket to make them shiny and more appealing to the consumer. I was a waxed and shiny apple, but was I sweet or sower on the inside, I wondered? At this time, I had, perhaps by accident, discovered *The Urantia Book*. After reaching the last part dealing with the life of Jesus, I had a religious experience. No visions, no voices, no apparitions, or anything like that. In fact, I can't describe what I experienced. It was an out-pouring of love, a feeling of connectedness to God and all mankind. Yet, it was more, and I knew it was real. And afterwards, I knew that God was real, and good—infinately good. My life had been changed, transformed. The shiny waxy outside was OK, I conjectured, but the flavor of the real thing was so much better.

At this juncture of my life, everything was new and alive. I saw God in everything and everyone. I began to search for references of my new God in Scriptures, books, poems, philosophy, Eastern and Western religions. He was everywhere, but you had to look. References that made Him out to be silly, manlike, jealous, pugnacious, and the like, were no longer tenable. This could not be the God that I knew. The Scripture passages that previously seemed fearful and forboding, now seemed quaint and foolish. My God is too good to be involved in homicide, mountain pushing, and war mongering. My God is a sweet and juicy apple, without the waxy cover.

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*Matt Neibaur is a doctor of Internal Medicine living in Jacksonville, Florida.*

## Urantia Book Resources

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

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

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