

# **Spiritual Fellowship Journal**

Volume 8, Number 1

Spring, 1998

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**Nina Bravo**

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**My Introduction to Jesus**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Central Objective**

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

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

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

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

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Journal**

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

Subscription donations and changes of address should be sent to:

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P. O. Box 11227  
Boulder, CO 80301

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# Editorials

## Balanced Outreach

In a response to the Fall Journal, we received a letter commenting on our “abandoning the effort to introduce leaders of the Christian Church to the teachings of *The Urantia Book*.” When we announced a shift in the direction of the Journal audience from mainline Christian ministers to *Urantia Book* readers in order to promote theological, philosophical, and polity discussions germane to an appropriate symbolism and socioreligious expression of the Fifth Epochal Revelation, we do not wish to imply that we are no longer interested in introducing Christian leaders to *The Urantia Book*.

We were merely observing that it is difficult for Christian ministers to seriously consider another spiritual paradigm. This is understandable. We will continue to introduce *The Urantia Book* to church members and ministers wherever there is interest. I continue to teach a Sunday School class, going on the fourth year, using papers from *The Urantia Book*. We publish *Urantia Book* quotations in the monthly news letter of the United Church of Christ we attend. All of the responses from the Sunday School class and the Tower Talk news letter we have received are positive, often quite enthusiastic.

What we are now attempting to do in the Journal is broaden and balance our outreach agenda and discussions. Over the years there will be all kinds of reactions to the Fifth Epochal Revelation. Many different religious groups will take origin from its teachings. Some of these groups we will admire and some we will find embarrassing. And there are some readers of *The Urantia Book* that think it is a great mistake for any kind of religious organization to be associated with the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

Peter Laurence, in the Fall issue of *Mighty Messenger*, points out various potential pitfalls of religious expressions and organizations. We should always keep these dangers in mind, but not be afraid of the varieties of socioreligious expressions that are inevitable in the future of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. The policy of the Journal is to encourage and facilitate a discussion of all aspects of religious expression associated with the teachings of *The Urantia Book*. There are great positive potentials as well as many possible dangers stemming from a response to the teachings of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. We believe the best guard against these “pitfalls” is free and open discussion.

-MJS

## Transition Times

As the third millennium nears, pocalyptic visions are everywhere. “End time” prophecies abound at the close of every century. Art Bell joins this parade in his recent book, *The Quickening* (Paper Chase Press, New Orleans, 1997). A more accurate title for Bell’s book would be “Portents of Catastrophe.” His encyclopedic survey of possible dooms day scenarios covers the waterfront. Bell observes that we are living in a global economy and predicts that world government is “just around the corner.” He then reviews our deteriorating social fabric, the confusion of our religious and spiritual aspirations, our worsening environmental problems, the threat of disease and famine, and the imminent possibility of natural disasters.

Bell periodically reminds the reader “...America’s national debt is spinning completely out of control,” (p. 55) “...it is difficult to devise hope for this world,” (p. 119) “...the survival of our species is at stake,” (p. 236) “...we are not in control,” (p. 274) “...you are very, very helpless,” (p. 290) “...we are standing on a world which is quickly becoming an increasingly dangerous place to live,” (p. 302) and “...the world will become increasingly unstable and our very existence as a species will be in great jeopardy.” (p. 148, 308)

Art Bell refers to Hal Lindsey’s book *The Final Battle*. Lindsey popularized the theory of premillennial dispensationalism that projects a period when the world will be ruled by the Anti-Christ, followed by a Middle East war and the battle of Armageddon. Consciously or unconsciously, Bell lays the foundation for this dooms-day scenario, and here and there he suggests the possibility of a world dictator.

We are obviously living in one of the great transition periods of history. During these transition periods there is always a breakdown of the older value paradigm and a great deal of confusion and disruption in society. Along with this turmoil there is widespread spiritual searching. The conditions for the emergence of a new philosophic age are coalescing in our society. The Most Highs, in my judgment, are preparing our planet for the Fifth Epochal Revelation. Our world is, indeed, on the “brink of one of its most amazing and enthralling epochs of social readjustment, moral quickening, and spiritual enlightenment.” (U.B. p. 2082) The evolutionary process bringing this to fruition, however, will no doubt take considerable time.

-MJS

## What is God-consciousness?

The highest objective of human life enunciated by all of the world religions in various ways is the achievement of God-consciousness and shaping one's life in harmony with God's will. This objective is also cited as the greatest achievement of human beings by *The Urantia Book*.

The great challenge to modern man is to achieve better communication with the divine Monitor that dwells within the human mind. Man's greatest adventure in the flesh consists in the well-balanced and sane effort to advance the borders of self-consciousness out through the dim realms of embryonic soul-consciousness in a wholehearted effort to reach the borderland of spirit-consciousness—contact with the divine presence. Such an experience constitutes God-consciousness.... And God-consciousness is equivalent to the integration of the self with the universe, and on its highest levels of spiritual reality. (U.B. p. 2097)

But what is God-consciousness? Most people tend to think of God-consciousness in terms of an alter ego experience, hearing a voice, or an awareness of another personality presence. Such concepts, in my judgment, give a misleading picture of God's presence in our lives. The indwelling Spirit of God, the Thought Adjuster, is actually an interior aspect of mind. It is the superconscious quality of mind as opposed to the subconscious, animal heritage of mind. This fragment of God's spirit is pre-personal in nature and is experienced as a quality of consciousness. When, through our dedicated and persistent will decisions, the Spirit of God is functionally dominant in our consciousness, this superconscious influence is evidenced by certain basic characteristics:

1. We experience a deep inner peace, in spite of problems and difficulties in our lives which may appear to be severe and overwhelming.
2. Our minds resonate positively toward truth, beauty, goodness, love, and all of the fruits of the Spirit.
3. We have an urge to master our minds under the dominance and control of these spiritual values until our minds become one with these values, and in the same mastery process we negate and then eliminate negative animal, subconscious influences such as anger, fear, anxiety, doubt, and self-deprecation.
4. As we make spiritually motivated decisions and strive to master our minds with spiritual values, the immortal soul evolves. The soul functions in our consciousness as an adjunct to our spirit-dominated aspect of mind, something like a "second mind." As spirit-values master our animal-origin mind, we live more and more in what might be called our "soul-spirit mind."
5. We experience an inner joy which passes all human understanding. We live in the interior *Spirit Level of Mind*

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whose basic characteristics are joy and fellowship with God, even as we live concomitantly in the exterior, material world that may bring us loss, defeat, or tragedy. Because this interior God-consciousness is dominant in our lives, the difficulties, problems, and losses of the material world are transcended through creative living. This joy elicits a confidence and courage that masters fear and anxiety and eventually obliterates these heritages of the subconscious animal mind.

In the cooperative partnership between the indwelling Spirit of God and the human will-mind, there evolves a growing God-consciousness, along with the development of the soul, that culminates in the oneness of the human mind and will with the will of God. At that point in time the human soul fuses with the indwelling fragment of the Spirit of God—usually on the mansion worlds of the Father's kingdom—and a new universe personality is born.

-MJS

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## Parallels in Epochal Revelation

It occurred to me as I finished reading Billy Graham's 735 page autobiography, *Just As I Am*, that there are parallels between the social dynamics of the Fourth and Fifth Epochal Revelations. The amazing popular appeal of the ministries of Billy Graham and Robert Schuller are similar to the widespread popularity of the preaching of John the Baptist preceding the Fourth Epochal Revelation. The religious-theological tension between the strict Pharisees and the more worldly Sadducees is not unlike the controversy between Christian conservatives and Christian liberal theologians influencing the ministries of Billy Graham and Robert Schuller. The "fullness of time" of both eras is characterized by a decline in the appeal of traditional values and widespread spiritual hunger and expectancy. To the credit of both Billy Graham and Robert Schuller, they recognize that theological differences should not prevent one from accepting and loving others who come from different faith positions.

Just as the teachings of Jesus transcended the divisions of the Pharisees and Sadducees in the inclusive concept of the Kingdom of God, so the Fifth Epochal Revelation transcends the boundaries of religious differences in an inclusive view of the family of God. The spiritual cosmology of the Fifth Epochal Revelation establishes a universe-wide concept of salvation that transcends religious-theological differences. We look forward to the day when the religions of the world, especially those that have divisive theologies, will discover this inclusive new spiritual paradigm and a new era of spiritual creativity will transform our world.

(Parallels... cont.)

Although the resistance to change in human nature is basically the same as it was in the first century A. D., our means of communication and transportation is radically different. With radio, television, computers, and the Internet, communication can be almost instantaneous in our Information Age. When a “critical mass” of people discover the enlarged vision of reality and the inspiring presentation of truth in the Fifth Epochal Revelation, this information can spread with startling rapidity throughout the world. Its integration into world culture, however, will likely take centuries. It is a rare privilege to serve as pioneers of this new spiritual paradigm that will bring a spiritual renaissance to our world!

-MJS

### **A Critical Approach to *The Urantia Book***

Revelation has traditionally been associated with “the voice of God,” and this authority has been a powerful influence in establishing what is accepted as true in society. Most people tend to forget the long experiential process which is required in any large social group in establishing the acceptance of a revelatory source. Any claim to “new revelation” is certain to elicit widespread skepticism and strong opposition. The first thing which is usually examined and challenged is the origin and authorship of such claims and then the content of the new revelation.

Since *The Urantia Book* purports to be the Fifth Epochal Revelation, authored by supermortal personalities, it is important to have a clear understanding of the philosophic criteria of truth necessary in evaluating such claim. First of all, claim or authority is not a philosophical criterion of truth. Secondly, knowing the origin and/or authorship of the book may give some insights, but is not a reliable philosophical criterion of truth. Whether supermortals or human beings wrote the book, it must be evaluated by its content not by who may have written it.

Some additional facts need to be observed and evaluated. The authors of *The Urantia Book* say that whenever it was possible to find human authors to express their ideas and teaching, they have used these human sources. Research has confirmed these statements, and a great many of the human sources have been found. The creative way in which the authors have used these human sources is both interesting and insightful. Sometimes the use of these human sources are handled in such a way as to arrive at a position differing from that of the human author. Further, *The Urantia Book* instructs its readers that the science and the cosmology used in the book is not inspired, and will very soon be in need of revision. An analysis of the science of the book shows that it is more in harmony with the views of the 1940's than the positions of the 1990's. There is very little in *The Urantia Book* which would support *Urantia*

*Book* fundamentalism!

The central objective in evaluating *The Urantia Book* is to assess the quality of its spiritual truth and insight. This must be done by individuals using their total evaluation capacities developed through experience. Are the spiritual quality and insights of the book inferior to, equal with, or superior to our traditional sources of spiritual truth? During this period of testing, gradually a consensus will evolve regarding its quality. If the general opinion is negative, the book will fade into obscurity. If the consensus is positive, continued evaluation will determine the level of its spiritual contribution. Is it just another useful spiritual resource, or does it have the quality of revelation? My philosophical hypothesis is that if it has the spiritual quality of revelation, its influence will continue to grow in the church, the society, and the world.

My personal view, after forty years of study and evaluation, is that the book is of superior quality in at least four categories:

1. Its comprehensive view of Deity and Reality, including the Paradise Trinity.
2. The presentation of an enlarged spiritual cosmology which is commensurate with our gigantic material astronomical cosmology.
3. An overview of a vast array of spiritual personalities that function in a hierarchical system of ability and power, which must exist if we are to make any sense of the spiritual cosmos.
4. And finally, a greatly expanded presentation of the life and teachings of Jesus, that is solidly rooted in the New Testament realities.



*"The world needs more firsthand religion. Even Christianity—the best of the religions of the twentieth century—is not only a religion about Jesus, but it is so largely one which men experience secondhand. They take their religion wholly as handed down by their accepted religious teachers. What an awakening the world would experience if it could only see Jesus as he really lived on earth and know, firsthand, his life-giving teachings. Descriptive words of things beautiful cannot thrill like the sight thereof, neither can creedal words inspire men's souls like the experience of knowing the presence of God."(2083:5)*

## Positive Qualities

Jim Downs

I've been reading *The Urantia Book* since 1972 and can empathize with the difficulty of integrating traditional Christian beliefs with the new concepts of *The Urantia Book*. Although new religious organizations may be inspired by the Fifth Epochal Revelation, we need not reject the traditional religions that we have grown up with. The expanded and enhanced concepts presented in *The Urantia Book* do introduce some conflicts and differences with traditional views, but we should remember that spiritual growth always involves an intellectual adjustment to new and more mature concepts. Have we not all had the experience of learning one thing as a child and then having to deal with a more grown-up idea when we were older? We see such changes in all contemporary religious groups. For instance, I grew up as a Catholic with the belief that it was a sin to eat meat on Friday. When the church changed this rule, it did not destroy my faith in a loving heavenly Father. There are, of course, some irreconcilable conflicts that must be transcended in spiritual growth, but that is what growing up is all about. We need not throw the baby out with the bath water.

Virtually all of the world religions include the concept of an infinite Deity. Is it not myopic or arrogant to limit our concept of God? If we truly believe in the *infinity* of God, does it not follow that we will always be challenged with an expanding concept of the First Source and Center of all things and beings? It is my conviction that those who accept the teachings of *The Urantia Book* as the best conceptualization of their personal religion will not reject their religious heritage. In some cases, their traditional religion may reject them, but I see no reason to deny the good work and constructive aspects of the traditional evolutionary religions.

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*Jim Downs is a long time student of The Urantia Book and author of The Book of Positive Qualities. A brief review of this book follows.*

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## The Book of Positive Qualities

Jim Downs

Warner Books, 1996, 612 pp.

Jim Downs has compiled an encyclopedic list of these values. He says, "I have always been interested in ultimates and cosmic meanings: Why do we exist? What are the most important things to do and be in life? What are true val-

ues? This book is my answer to these questions. I decided to gather a complete list of positive qualities. After years of searching (and I'm still looking), I have a list of more than 1800. I boiled them down to the 988 featured here... I intend this book to not only be information oriented but also inspiration-oriented, meaning-oriented, and value-oriented." (p. xi)

The book attempts to stimulate guidance, balance, and inspiration for spiritual growth. It is an inspiring compendium of admirable traits to nurture self-improvement. Jim has also created a *Positive Qualities Chart* and a *Love, Truth, Beauty, Goodness* button. All of these may be obtained through the Good Cheer Press, Box 18764, Boulder, CO 80308.

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## Hymnody

*Traditional hymns revised to reflect the values of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.*

### Amazing Grace

Amazing grace, how great the love,  
that saved a soul like me!  
I once was blind, but now I see,  
was bound but now am free!

'Twas grace that taught my heart to love,  
and grace God's love receive;  
How precious does that grace appear  
to my soul from fear relieved.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.

'Tis grace that leads me to the good,  
God's truth my life secures;  
God's perfect will my standard be,  
as long as life endures.

And when we arrive on Paradise  
and eternal life is won,  
We've no less time to sing God's praise  
than when we'd first begun.

*"The world needs more first hand religion. Even Christianity—the best of the religion of the twentieth century—is not only a religion about Jesus, but it is so largely one which men experience secondhand." (2083)*

# Interface

## Do We Really Need Another Church?

When we began the *Spiritual Fellowship Journal* some seven years ago, our primary goal was to interface with mainline clergy. We had hoped to stimulate interest in *The Urantia Book* and dialogue with leaders of the churches, to “interface” between the two largely overlapping communities—thus the title of this column.

In the last issue Meredith Sprunger outlined the charting of a new course, which involved shifting the focus of our energies in a new direction, into the creation of new religious communities within the Urantia movement. It was based on the recognition that the overwhelming majority of the leadership of the churches simply isn’t ready to seriously investigate the claims of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. This was disappointing but not surprising. The seemingly meager results confirmed the suspicion that even in the face of the great spiritual unrest and hunger of our time, few are willing to look outside the bounds of the intellectual and institutional world in which they have been raised.

This is not to say we’ve given up on the church. Far from it. The church is not without spiritual vitality, and it has been “the best existent exponent of his (Jesus’) lifework on earth.” (p. 2085) We still believe the Urantia movement will eventually serve as a significant leaven in the church. But it seems clear that in order to do that, it will have to develop institutions of its own that will nourish and sustain its families and members, and serve as a platform for evangelism—for sharing the Good News made real in Jesus of Nazareth, now shaped by the new conceptual framework of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. It will need to develop a visible presence that can increasingly dialogue with the world around it.

It will no doubt take a long time before it will be viewed as anything other than another cult in an increasingly pluralistic world. That’s discouraging, but inevitable. And as inherently stultifying as religious institutions tend to be, they are still necessary. *The Urantia Book* speaks of such institutions—more specifically the “cult” and its “symbolism of rituals, slogans, or goals”—as “the skeletal structure around which grows the living and dynamic body of personal spiritual experience—true religion.” (p. 966)

We need to get on with the business of intentionally creating such institutions, even in the face of the realization that they will suffer through the same pitfalls that others have experienced before us. As Rebecca Kantor points out in her article on institutional leadership, “If you think that the Urantia movement is exempt from the challenges

and pitfalls of other organized religions, let me tell you, WE ARE NOT.”<sup>1</sup>

The Urantia movement is already a diverse fellowship reflecting a wide range of theological views. It will undoubtedly become more so. The challenge lies in providing a minimal framework flexible enough to allow for maximum diversity and creative expression.

While frustration may be inevitable, I believe joy and satisfaction will be also, the joy and satisfaction of seeing new communities and structures—and yes, even buildings—symbolizing a new vision of our world and our destiny as brothers and sisters under the Fatherhood of God.

-Merlyn Cox

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<sup>1</sup>Rebecca Kantor, “To Be Wise as Serpents, Harmless as Doves,” *Spiritual Fellowship Journal*, Fall, 1977, p.12.

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## Psalms Today

### Praise Our Creator

Let your heart sing with joy and devotion to the  
Lord, our Maker!

Serve the Creator with wisdom and gladness.

Live in his presence with fruitfulness and gratitude.

Know that the Creator is our Sovereign!

It is he that made us, and we are his mortal children.

We are his people, the citizens of his universe.

Recognize his presence with thanksgiving, and  
acknowledge his deeds with praise!

Give thanks for his Spirit of Truth, rejoice in his  
saving ministry to our troubled world.

For our Universe Father is good; his steadfast love is  
everlasting, and his truth endures to all

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*"Love is the highest motivation which man may utilize in his universe ascent. But love divested of truth, beauty, and goodness, is only a sentiment, a philosophic distortion, a psychic illusion, a spirit deception. Love must be redefined on successive levels of morontia and spirit progression." (2096:6)*

# Creative Outreach

## An Introduction to the New Mission of *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal*

Larry Mullins

### Prologue

Although relatively few mortals know about it to this day, one of the most astounding events ever to take place on Urantia was set into motion nearly a century ago. Circa 1910, celestial beings began to interface with a small group of mortals in Chicago. The mission of these celestial beings was to materialize and to place into the evolutionary mainstream, by means of this small group of mortals, an epochal revelation of supreme spiritual significance. The process that was used has never been fully known, and certainly not understood.

Generally, however, we can surmise there was a long period of preparation and adjustment for those involved. Then there began a series of supernatural materializations of written matter authored by celestial beings. The mortals swore a “sacred oath” to copy (as precisely as was humanly possible) the materialized manuscript - which had been authorized, authored, translated, and arranged by celestial beings. Once an acceptable level of human duplication of the materialized manuscript had been achieved, the original manuscript was destroyed.

The entire unprecedented, astonishing encounter took nearly five decades, culminating in the publication of the Urantia Papers as *The Urantia Book* in 1955. Then, it is said that the mortal beings were told: “You are now on your own.” Abruptly, as unceremoniously as it had began, all traces of the celestial intrusion vanished, and there was only silence.

Upon this staggering, overwhelming premise, the Urantia Movement was founded.

### Discovering the Urantia Papers

I doubt that many thinking persons who have not studied the Urantia Papers to some degree would accept so extravagant a premise on face value. Certainly most prudent people would, at best, reserve judgment. Dr. Meredith Sprunger has often told the story of his initial rejection of the Urantia Papers as a result of reading the list of celestial authors in the front. It was not until he elected to read Part IV: The Life and Teachings of Jesus that he changed his mind. Yet, Meredith has also told us that it was not until he read the entire contents of *The Urantia Book* that he began to perceive the actual scope and purpose of the Urantia Papers.

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In a single prodigious stroke, the Urantia Papers placed the life and teachings of Jesus in a cosmological context that geometrically surpassed current theological thinking. Meredith was uniquely equipped emotionally, intellectually, and academically to grasp—at least to a remarkable degree—the scope of the Papers. He is an open-minded academic, with a balanced education and experience grounded in religion, philosophy and science. He could see the Urantia Papers constitute a religious book but not a religion any more than Jesus himself was a religion. Dr. Sprunger could see the Urantia Revelation as the wondrous coordinator-unifier of virtually all existing human knowledge with enlightened religious insight. This was a thrilling discovery, and one he was most anxious to share.

Dr. Sprunger enlisted several colleagues and began a systematic study of the Urantia Papers. These men went to Chicago in 1957 and met with Dr. William Sadler, who was the key human protagonist in bringing the Urantia Papers to publication. They became satisfied that *The Urantia Book* had been printed and was being distributed by sincere people who were not out to exploit it as an economic power base. There ensued a friendship between Dr. Sadler and Dr. Sprunger that was to last until the death of Dr. Sadler in 1969. For this reason, Dr. Sprunger has been perhaps the most reliable authority on the origin of the Urantia Papers and the inevitable apocrypha which surrounds it. Meredith became quite active in the Urantia Movement and served as President of the original Urantia Brotherhood. Yet the culture of the movement was often frustrating for Dr. Sprunger.

### The Birth of *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal*

Meredith perceived that what he believed to be the enormous paradigm of the Urantia Papers was not readily grasped by many other Urantians. The Urantia Papers state on page 2063 that “The spiritual forward urge is the most powerful driving force present in this world; the truth-learning believer is the one progressive and aggressive soul on earth.” Attempts by Meredith to suggest outlets for spiritual worship and expression for Urantians were generally discouraged. Urantians were content to call themselves “readers,” and a fear of religious “churchification” permeated Urantia organizations and activities.

After years of fruitless efforts to encourage religious practices and outreach activities, Meredith reasoned that he could find more fertile ground in the Christian Churches for establishing an appropriate spiritual representation in the Urantia Movement. So reluctantly, in 1979, he left his office in the Urantia Brotherhood and began a quest to interface with his fellow ministers of many Christian faiths. Dr. Sprunger sought, by means of individual evangelistic efforts, to bring the Urantia Revelation into the religious mainstream. To this end he founded *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal*. The scholarship and quality of the Journal have been designed to attract serious scholars from the clergies of Christianity.

Meredith maintained a study group and sent out thousands of letters offering ministers a free copy of *The Urantia Book* for examination. Gradually, over many years of arduous effort, it became obvious that the paradigm leap from main-line Christianity to the cosmic profoundness of the Urantia Papers was too vast for most professional clergy.

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*If you are not a positive and missionary evangel of your religion, you are self-deceived in that what you call a religion is only a traditional belief or a mere system of intellectual philosophy. (p. 1780)*

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However, the Journal continued, its intellectual standards undiminished, and it attracted ministers and Urantians. The numbers were not large, but there was a general shared-grasp among its readership of the need for a spirit of evangelism in the Urantia Movement. Indeed, it seemed inevitable that, one day, there would emanate a widespread urge toward religious-evangelism in the Urantia Movement. As Rodan commented in the Urantia Papers, “If something has become a religion in your experience, it is self-evident that you already have become an active evangel of that religion since you deem the supreme concept of your religion as being worthy of the worship of all mankind, all universe intelligences. If you are not a positive and missionary evangel of your religion, you are self-deceived in that what you call a religion is only a traditional belief or a mere system of intellectual philosophy. If your religion is a spiritual experience, your object of worship must be the universal spirit reality and ideal of all your spiritualized concepts.” [p. 1780] A modern-day philosopher, Mortimer Adler, has more recently observed: “...while each of the world’s great religions claims truth for its factual or moral beliefs... only some religions undertake missionary activities and attempt to make converts, while others do nothing of the kind, and some even operate under the obligation not to proselytize or convert. If a religion claims truth for its beliefs, why does it not seek to universalize itself? Should not the truth its communicants espouse be shared as widely as possible?”<sup>1</sup>

### **The Growing Desire for Religious Expression**

Recently, the long awaited change began taking place — not in the established leadership, but among the rank and file of the Urantia Movement. There arose from several areas at once a desire among many Urantians to call themselves believers. Meredith was invited to address a group of Urantian “believers” at a worship service in Boulder, Colorado on November 16, 1997. The Urantians in Boulder had passed a unanimous “Believer’s Resolution,” and many wanted to craft a formal religious organization. On the day he spoke, Dr. Sprunger gave a ringing address that challenged these “believers” to achieve yet another level of

commitment, that of Urantian Evangelism. At last, many ears were opening to hear the theme he had so long advocated. Meredith painted a vision of a world that desperately needs the enlarged reality paradigm of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. He called for a new Urantian Evangelism with a clarity and fire that few of us who were there will ever forget.

No longer could all Urantians be satisfied with reading the Papers and discussing them in private study groups. Not even believing the Urantia Papers was enough. Something new seemed to be in the air. More and more Urantians, from all over the country and beyond, seemed to hear the call to service and evangelism. Over forty years ago the Urantia Papers heralded a message: “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.” [p. 2082] After four decades of quivering, Urantians were called by Dr. Sprunger to take the plunge:

“After over forty years of preparing for the time when we will have an intentional outreach program, the world, generally, is oblivious to [*The Urantia Book*’s] existence. I think it is time to initiate a wise, but open, outreach ministry to the world. Obviously, it will not be easy. ‘The religion of the spirit means effort, struggle, conflict, faith, determination, love, loyalty and progress.’ [p. 1729] I would remind you that virtually all the major spiritual advances in history were made by laypersons.... We can transcend the cultocentric predicament through a courageous attempt to share these great truths with all of humankind.”

On that Sunday in Boulder many in the audience of Urantians were awakened by the “certain trumpet” that Meredith Sprunger was sounding. He continued:

“I recognize that such open ministry is not for timid souls.... Spiritual pioneering is a rigorous and lonely path of service. Do not imagine that opposition and oppression are only obsessions of the past. New and enlarged presentations of truth have always been, and will always be, attacked by religious traditionalists and fundamentalists. Nevertheless, those who have the courage, guided by wisdom, to bring a knowledge of the Fifth Epochal Revelation to the individuals and the institutions of our world, are engaging in one of the most important ministries of our times. Such missionary evangels will open the door to a spiritual dynamic that will transform our planet in the next thousand years.”

### **A New Mission for**

#### ***The Spiritual Fellowship Journal***

It is now time to establish the first spiritual/evangelical medium for Urantians. To serve this purpose, *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal* will redirect its primary outreach from established Christian clergy toward the fledgling Urantian ministries. A team of Urantians has been selected from a wide geographic area to serve as adjunct editorial and re-

source consultants to augment outreach. We are pledged to maintain the quality content and format of the *Journal*. The new target of the *Journal* is to serve all Urantians. It will provide a spiritual network for those who desire to use the Urantia Papers as a resource for evangelism, creative service, teaching, writing and outreach. It will offer a platform for Urantian believers who want to share the greatest treasure ever offered to humankind through wise yet vigorous evangelical outreach, loving service, and by living the teachings of Jesus.

We should make it clear that the new adjunct team of editors and resource consultants of the *Journal* do not seek to define “religion” beyond that which our group wisdom tells us resonates with the teachings of the Urantia Papers. Within these broad parameters, we expect Urantian religious expression to take many wholesome forms as the Spirit of Truth leads the “children of light into new realms of spiritual reality and divine service.” Each Urantian’s “revelation of truth must be so enhanced by passing through [their] personal experience that new beauty and actual spiritual gains will be disclosed to all who behold [their] spiritual fruits and in consequence thereof are led to glorify the Father who is in heaven.” [p.1917] Thus, the Urantian Religion is the religion of the spirit, and as the Master so often declared, the religion of personal experience.

Personally, I am honored to take my place among those editors and resource consultants all over the country who will augment and assist in the publication of the “new” *Spiritual Fellowship Journal*. I presume to speak for us all in acknowledging that the evangelistic Urantian corps is small. We take heart in being reminded by Dr. Sprunger that the original evangelists were a handful of lay men and women, and they turned the Roman Empire upside down. The “empire” we modern Urantians confront is an invisible, crystallized edifice—a confused culture—that accommodates all forms of human fear, avoidance, lethargy, pride, and indifference. As the Master cautioned Peter and James long ago, we pray for wisdom to equal our zeal, and courage to atone for our ignorance.

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<sup>1</sup> *Truth in Religion, The Plurality of Religions and the Unity of Truth* by Mortimer J. Adler, MacMillan, 1990, page 79.

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*Larry Mullins is a consultant in advertizing and marketing. He is an editorial consultant for the Journal and author of Immature People with Power and Jesus: God and Man. Larry will continue writing the "Creative Outreach" column for the Journal.*

## Spirituality Between the Times

Robert Crickett

Spiritual and religious expressions of the Fifth Epochal Revelation are in their infancy, mere buds responding to the first warm currents of a wholly new Spring. The initial appearance of the Urantia Papers has been in a Christian culture. As we evolve a spiritual experience in the context of the Fifth Epochal Revelation, it is helpful to realize that the authors fashioned its teachings to rest on the foundations of the best insights of the Christian experience. To understand the Fifth Epochal Revelation in its historic relation to Christian spiritual experience, one must realize that Christianity rests on the authorities of the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and two thousand years of church history. In the promotion of the Urantia Papers to Christians, however, these formidable authorities are not easily countered. The Urantia Papers have no pedigree or authority except the leading of the Spirit of God in the hearts and minds of individuals. Since most people require the support of their fellows in religious experience, the initial growth of epochal revelation is always a slow, grass-roots movement.

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Furthermore, the spread of the Fifth Epochal Revelation differs enormously from the personal, faith-filled evangelism of the early Christians. The dissemination of the teachings of a book often tends to be intellectual rather than transmitting a life-changing spiritual experience with a grace-filled personal God. The enlarged spiritual vision of the Urantia Papers has great world-transforming potentials; however, the heralds of this Good News need to exhibit the same inspiring spiritual enthusiasm that motivated the early Christian evangelists.

### A Unique Time in History

From a Urantia Papers’ perspective, we are at a unique time in history, a time of overlap between revelations. It resembles the time when John the Baptist was still preaching but Jesus had already been baptized. The old heritage of Melchizedek was still powerful, but the new power of the Father in Michael had emerged from its chrysalis and was quickly drying its wings. Questions arise now about the Urantia Papers supplanting the Bible’s authority that would have arisen then, such as: “What shall become of John and his followers and the ways of the old prophets? And what will emerge among Jesus’ followers?”

*Between the Times... cont.*

Today, Christianity has little witness of the new spirituality which will emerge from the spiritual potentials and leadership inspired by the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

John is, as it were, still preaching, and Jesus has only now departed for the Perea hills and his time of planning.

Today, all Christendom appears to be looking either for the return of Christ, or some expression of spiritual renewal. The Christian world senses the immanence of a spiritual renaissance. Its attention rests upon the only option provided by their leaders—the return of Christ or spiritual renewal within the parameters of tradition. Within the church, Christians have no evidence of anything else which effectively challenges their own experiential standards and expectations.

But surely, as in the days of John and Jesus, the disciples of the old ways are being exposed to a new and enlarged truth that is largely ignored or rejected. And the ever-prevailing spiritual gravity toward the Father's purposes of growth is giving increase to the new and causing a decline of the old. Just as spiritual evolution shepherded the dominance of the Fourth Epochal Revelation, I expect the same process to prevail between the enlarged teachings of the Urantia Papers and biblical traditions.

### **Christian Interface**

The struggle to seed-sow the Urantia Papers throughout our world is an endeavor to win influential spiritual allegiances. Christian spiritual allegiances will long look to a self-styled biblical authority and will not yield to an "impostor" scripture; that is, unless they are provided an authentic spiritual witness of their own Jesus Christ in the context of that new scripture. When they are effectively exposed to this enlarged life and teachings of Jesus, the truth of their own convictions will impel them to rush to this Christ they have long worshiped.

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*I believe the Urantia movement has an obligation to be pro-active in developing religious vocations so that the revelation is not only spread but also evangelized by living spiritual witnesses.*

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The spiritual spread of the Urantia Papers depends on men and women who personally know and who will dare to make a stand for the Christ Michael of the Fifth Epochal Revelation in the face of the compromised religion about the Jesus of Christianity. In this universe plan for the propagation of the Urantia Papers on earth, we can expect Nebadon's spiritual forces to provide for religious vocations so that new ministers are raised up who will develop new religious groups as a witness of Christ Michael and the Universal Father, in spiritual "power from on high."

In the overlap time, while the winning of Christian allegiances may be slow in coming, the new religious groups, with their Michael inspired ministers, will also win people of other faiths to a fuller understanding of the kingdom. But, whether or not upstepped Christians flock to it, the family of God will indeed grow spiritually through the power of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

I believe the Urantia movement has an obligation to be pro-active in developing religious vocations so that the revelation is not only spread but also evangelized by living spiritual witnesses. Whether that can be achieved to any degree in the current political climate, or with members of the current generation of readers who seem largely indisposed to a display of public religiosity, provides for interesting speculation. Study of the Urantia Papers will, however, inevitably move out of the lounge room and into the public halls of inspiration and worship. And human beings must ultimately emerge, who are guided wholly by the inspirational life of Jesus and his magnificent gospel, and by spiritual empowerment from on high. The predominant forces will seek the institutionalization of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. They will draw its heralds into the great diversity of religious vocations currently extant in the world. Churches and religious groups will start as small, personalized, but effective socioreligious expressions of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

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*Robert Crickett was introduced to The Urantia Book in 1972. It enhanced his vocation as a Buddhist monk and was influential in his work in the field of substance abuse treatment. He currently pastors the Church of Christ Michael in Melbourne, Australia.*

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*"Religion does need new leaders, spiritual men and women who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings. If Christianity persists in neglecting its spiritual mission while it continues to busy itself with social and material problems, the spiritual renaissance must await the coming of these new teachers of Jesus' religion who will be exclusively devoted to the spiritual regeneration of man. And then will these spirit-born souls quickly supply the leadership and inspiration requisite for the social, moral, economic, and political reorganization of the world." (2082:9)*

## Spiritual Affirmations to Enhance Religious Living

Sue Tennant

The ideal religious life is one in which the individual maintains unbroken communion with the indwelling spirit so that the inner life of reflection, meditation, and prayer transcends and transforms the outer life through loving service to the brother/sisterhood of humankind. This is called the religion of the spirit and differs from other religious practices in that it is personal, original, liberating, spontaneous and inclusive.

It is defined not by rules, but by love. And while this human and spirit relationship may be enhanced by the timeless truths of the world's religions, it is not dependent on any religious ritual or dogma. It depends solely on living faith—the positive assertion of how things ought to be—the universal will of God. In teaching the religion of the spirit, the Master left behind a great legacy of spiritual affirmations. These positive statements of truth banish fear and enlarge human understanding of God's love and purpose. The Infinite so values each finite mortal as a beloved son or daughter that he gives a spirit fragment of himself to help the individual grow an eternal soul which is destined to become God-like. Becoming God-like is learning to regard all others as God regards us and to co-create reality with his spirit—to actually do the positive and progressive will of God.

This spirit gift hails from the Absolute and Infinite Source of all personality, love, spirit, unity and energy—a level of reality which makes no distinction between potentials and actuals and therefore knows everything. The spirit in us is not limited as human nature is limited. The good news is that when we know God as our Father, our individual mortal potential becomes unlimited, eternal and divine. Spiritual affirmations can strengthen even a grain of faith. Material reality is ultimately subject to the power of mind and the sovereignty of spirit. Many of our life circumstances are the consequences of our thoughts and how we act (or don't act) on them. The quality of these thoughts, our faith, is directly proportional to how much we permit the Father's presence in us to spiritualize our thinking.

A strong faith, combined with patience and intelligent effort, can heal broken relationships and remove mountains of material difficulty. It is entirely an individual matter how frequently to affirm spiritual truths, but since it's so uplifting and pleasurable, more is better than less. The first thing in the morning it is effective because the mind is so receptive, and then often throughout the day it can

## Examples of Spiritual Affirmations

### *On son/daughtership with God:*

I choose to affirm God as my Father and I never doubt his love and mercy. Moment by moment, day by day, I permit the indwelling spirit to transform my perceptions, thinking and actions. I am led step by step from darkness to light, from despair to hope. The universe is generous and provides me with all I need to learn and grow.

### *On a social level:*

I have an unconditional loving regard for all people at all times. I am forgiven as I forgive all those who distress and wound me. In all situations and with all people I am saved by faith and at peace with God. I take full responsibility for my personal happiness. In all things I prefer to do good to others.

### *In times of uncertainty:*

I am grounded in faith and unmoved by fear. When the path is hard and the hour is dark I am unafraid. My love of life ensures my survival in this life and the next. I am God's precious child and he will make my struggle a blessing. I am never alone. The angels guard me and the spirit gives me comfort and peace. I belong to the universe family because I am unique, irreplaceable and cherished. I know that God yearns to be loved and known as I yearn to be known and loved.

I am God's beloved child and I always desire to do good. When I set worthy goals, universe energies are released to help me.

### *On prayer:*

When I pray my soul can breathe. I am never discouraged; all my prayers are answered in the fullness of time. I give thanks for all things because I trust God with my life. I pray for guidance, strength, courage, patience, and faith, not for things. I pray often and in private. I take time to pray for others because I am graced by faith. I pray to extend the religion of the spirit on earth. I am learning that with God, nothing, absolutely nothing, is impossible.

### *On making difficult changes:*

I correct my ways because God is good and he perfects me in love. As God is sovereign in me I fully master myself. I cleanse myself of all evils of mind and body while I seek perfection in the love of God. I master my self by faith in the spirit which ever works by love. My soul receives the nature and character of God.

### *On failure:*

I am created to grow perfect through trial and error. Imperfection is my teacher and I grow wise from my mistakes. Failure teaches me to depend on spirit for change and growth. When I feel gratitude I free myself from all

guidance. I am given the sweet ministry of brother/sisterhood and am led in the pathway of loving service. I am a liberated son/daughter of God and commissioned to serve all religions and all peoples. I focus my energies on spiritual renewal and intellectual freedom. I free the thinking of others to accept son/daughtership with God. My life choices symbolize my fraternity with all people. I heal the souls of others by replacing age-old fears with faith. My compassion enfolds the weak and afflicted.

***On doing the will of God:***

The spirit lives in me and in every way I am empowered to do the will of God. I use my intelligence and imagination to envision how things ought to be. I change myself and the world by reaching for high ideals. Moment by moment, day by day, I co-create the brother/sisterhood of humankind. I maintain unbroken communion with spirit and teach others

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*Sue Tennant is Vice-chair of North American Interfaith Network*

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## **Human Values**

Nina Bravo

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*This excerpt from the introduction of Nina Bravo's book Human Values, edited for space, was translated by Susan Ransbottom and Rosey Lieske.*

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All of humanity is confronting a grave problem—not a crisis of values, as it's being called, but rather their total revitalization. On a personal level you know that something's going on. You may sense you've not chosen well ethically, but don't know how to interpret your own perceptions, either to sort out the influences of the people or society around you, or the ideological isms, the current trends, or media influence. You might hear and talk about values, but if asked what they are, you probably couldn't define them.

### **What are Values?**

There are many definitions already proposed by ancient philosophers, as well as those related through history and legend. Among them there appear to be two very strong but antagonistic views that have been maintained to the present day.

One position points to values as goals, ideals that man can achieve. Values are seen as objective realities not subject to culture, time, science, or any other variable. They are external to man, not depending on him, but in accordance with innate natural law are eminent, transcendent, and atemporal. For example, *love*, which many confuse with mere feeling, would correspond here with cosmic order. (Have

you stopped to think about the perfection and organization of our Universe?)

The second position asserts that values are subjective, depending on the quality which each person gives them, in accordance with his or her own points of reference (culture, age, gender, education, religion, etc.). They are subject to change with the history and circumstances of the moment, even the feelings of the moment. This is the view most prevalent now. The world is valued in accordance with individual perception.

Think of the chaos which confronts you every day: those who cheat and lie to you because it serves them; those who rob you of your time and peace, thinking only of themselves; those who overwhelm you with their phobias for order, making you a slave to their psychological tyranny. There are myriad examples with which you live every day that you feel are unjust to you.

Ask yourself now, "Are others feeling the same about me?" In a world in which each person chooses what they want we end up feeling what Sartre expressed best, "The Other is my Hell", or in modern terminology, "those closest to me frustrate me the most." This is the world of the subjectivists and is the cause of most of the suffering of body, mind, and soul.

Now another flow of thought is emerging—values by consent, or values defined by the majority. Do you believe, are you certain, that the subject of values—a subject so complex, of which so little is known, neither taught with precision at home nor in the schools or universities— can be discerned by majority opinion, matters as delicate as the bioethics of genetic engineering, for example? Values determined by the majority are an undermining of values themselves.

Today mankind needs to remember, return to its roots and review its history, extracting from it the experience that existed prior to humanity's opting for either a purely objective or subjective view. Plato, in his dialogue "Timeo," speaks to us of the values practiced in Atlantis, the submerged continent. As legend or reality, a review of their values would support a vision of a marvelous civilization. They were mere men, but they did possess clear, definite, practical, transcendent values. They had strength, patience, valor, perseverance, and all this contributed to the creation of beauty, harmony, culture, poetry, art, and music.

What happens when we compare them to the world today—a society of terrorism, consumerism, and disposable human relationships? We have great technical advances but also tremendous spiritual decline! Man is permanently discontent with himself, in an eternal search, without finding an answer to the reason for his existence.

It may be that we have to turn our gaze back and look deeply to discover what those people had that took them so far and carefully review also the cause of the destruction of those great, past civilizations. We may discover that the

cause was the use and abuse of opposing qualities, or values and their devaluations.

What are “Opposing Qualities?” Aristotle said that “Virtue (or value) is a point of equilibrium between two extremes.” For example:

OMNIPOTENCE	STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
(Excess)	(Midpoint)	(Absence)

One pole is always a negation of the value, while the other is the exaggeration of this same value. For instance, punctuality is a value. Yet its excess can become agonizing for the person who possesses it and a burden for those around him.

In this book we are going to devote ourselves at length to the moral values or virtues that are, for us, the necessary guide. Within our general culture man finds himself facing other value systems — religious, ethical, aesthetic, etc. These systems will be mentioned and be touched on tangentially, but our work will be principally dedicated to the moral values that we feel, believe in, and affirm. These values are at the base of a solid inner structure for a human being, and therefore apply to the family and society.

Certain prerequisites are required for man to embody and realize values. Freedom, the capacity to choose, is inherent in the concept of morality. Man is free through his nature and design. We are given free will. Always, from the moment we wake up each day, we have various options. We can choose to have a good day, a bad one, or even a mediocre day devoid of pleasure. The option is ours. No one compels or forces us.

### The Three Keys

In order to open the door of wisdom and happiness, which we all seek, three keys are necessary. The first key is *Thinking*. We have the intelligence to learn, understand, and adapt ourselves, in addition to many other functions of mind such as imagination, memory, creativity, discernment, discrimination, and appraisal. The second key is *Feeling*. We have the full range of our emotions and feelings, such as the capacity to love, to be astonished, ecstatic or bored. The third key is *Action*. Acting is carrying out what we think and feel. It is executing and realizing the power of our will.

What happens when you feel and act but do not *think*? You know many people who do this and you may also be like this at times. They are people of action and reaction, like caterpillars on the ground, curling into a ball the instant you touch them. They are the ones who throw themselves into a dry pool, never looking to see if it has any water. They become furious and strike out.

Values take root in intelligence—they are operational habits which are learned and acquired. If we don’t use our intelligence, we are more beast-like than any animal since they possess the instincts of their species and do not need to learn as we do. They are born knowing what is neces-

sary, controlled by instinctual parameters. While we have impulses rather than instincts which can be governed with our intelligence and will.

What happens if you forget to use the key of *Action*? You feel discontent because you haven’t organized your life, and yet you do nothing except lament. You do not write that book you’ve proposed, or finish the letter you left half-written. You belong to a species of builders of castles in the air. You are constantly lying to yourself, and your self-esteem is plunging.

It may seem strange to you that the key of *Feeling* may be unused, but unfortunately that’s the way it is. Here we find the hardhearted type, trampling over anything and anyone, climbing the ladder of success at the expense of others. These unfeeling persons, who believe themselves to be superior, have no idea how to put themselves in another’s place. Or, carried to an extreme, they become the kidnapper or assassin, completely unconcerned about the damage they cause. Does this horrify you? It is something that happens, and can happen to you, if you’re not using the key of feeling!

You realize now that in order to open the door of wisdom and happiness you must use the three keys simultaneously. If you forget even one, you’ll never cross the threshold to the happiness you long for. The keys need to be used in complete, coherent harmony among themselves. How many times have you found yourself thinking one thing, feeling another and acting in a way unrelated to either? The result is that you find yourself fragmented, your psyche broken or unbalanced. This is what happens when our inner selves are not free.

To choose implies a deep understanding of how one thinks, feels and acts. If we do not integrate these keys of behavior, we become slaves of ourselves. Think about this. Am I coherent in my thinking, feeling and acting? Am I truly free or a slave to myself? Which key is it that I’ve most hidden away?

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*Nina Bravo is a Chilean psychologist and lecturer who has given seminars on value recognition in her work as a family and group therapist.*

*She brings her Spanish readers into an intimate and ongoing review of their own relationship to the 28 values covered in the book through a series of questions they must pose to themselves. Her years of experience as a therapist is revealed by the wisdom of the questions themselves. Hopefully, there will be a full English translation soon of this fascinating and practical workbook on spiritual values.*

*The author, along with Oly Tartakowsky, has founded and nurtured a vibrant Urantia movement in Chile, South America.*

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

### **My Introduction to Jesus**

Richard I. Bain

Before my encounter with *The Urantia Book*, I was content to drift along with no theology except a hazy concept of God. My relationship with Deity consisted mainly in giving God a call on the hot line when I was in hot water or was otherwise distressed. But Jesus and I had never been properly introduced.

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*We are told that when we contact the Spirit of Truth, we are in essence in contact with the personality of Jesus, or more exactly, the personality of Christ Michael, our Universe Sovereign. (p. 2062) But how are we aware of this contact? The Urantia Book specifically tells us that when we encounter spiritual truth, the Spirit of Truth is involved.*

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Of course, I had heard the name of Jesus as in: "Saved by the blood of Jesus," or heard people sing, "What a friend we have in Jesus." Somehow I didn't relate to all this Jesus talk. But then I met Jesus in *The Urantia Book* and it was no longer possible to ignore him. It began to dawn on me that his life and teachings were relevant to my life. Could I then have a relationship with this Jesus as Christians do? What kind of a relationship? Complicating this question is the fact that Jesus is a dual nature being, both human and divine. Neither identity seemed very accessible. The human Jesus has been dead for over 1900 years and the risen Christ is perhaps a thousand light years distant. Nevertheless, Christians claim to have a personal relationship with this Jesus. But how?

#### **The Mediation of the Spirit of Truth**

In order for a mutual relationship to exist, there must be some sort of connection between the persons. Jesus said something about this connection when he stated "Where two or three are gathered together, there I am also." (p. 1448) The authors of *The Urantia Book* inform us that Jesus is present with us through his Spirit of Truth. We are told that when we contact the Spirit of Truth, we are in essence in contact with the personality of Jesus, or more exactly, the personality of Christ Michael, our Universe Sovereign. (p. 2062) But how are we aware of this contact? *The Urantia Book* specifically tells us that when we encounter spiritual truth, the Spirit of Truth is involved. From personal experience I believe this feeling is spiritual satisfaction, sometimes

even elation. The Bible and *The Urantia Book* also refer to the Spirit of Truth as the Comforter. When we are in crisis and feel spiritually comforted it may be the action of the Spirit of Truth. Further, *The Urantia Book* indicates that the Spirit of Truth may offer us guidance, so when we feel we have received guidance, this may be the action of the Spirit of Truth. But when we connect with the Spirit of Truth, are we really contacting Christ Michael or just a presence that is like him? Is Christ Michael aware of us as we are aware of him through the Spirit of Truth? Does it matter?

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*The picture of Jesus in The Urantia Book is so genuine and appealing that it will, in time, win the admiration and devotion of all of the peoples of the world. We currently have many impediments to this divine-human relationship. The negative experiences some people have had with Christianity stand in the way of discovering the real Jesus and his matchless character.*

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I believe that it is important to know that we are making contact with Christ Michael himself, just as we would rather talk to the person we dialed on the telephone rather than a message this person has left or an answering service person who will relay our message to the person we wish to contact. It is difficult to imagine Christ Michael's consciousness being able to simultaneously and directly contact innumerable people at the same time. It may be impossible for finite beings to understand how this is possible. Nevertheless, Christ is our Universe Sovereign, the spiritual pathway for all in our universe to ascend to the Universal Father, and we can hardly understand or place limits on such a spiritual being. Even though our finite mortal minds cannot understand the omniscience or omnipresence of Deity, we can experience the reality of such a relationship with Christ. Jesus assured the apostles that he would be with them through the Spirit of Truth. Somehow Christ is literally present with us through this same Spirit of Truth. If so, what do we need to do to insure that there are no impediments to such a relationship?

#### **Impediments of Communion with Jesus**

The picture of Jesus in *The Urantia Book* is so genuine and appealing that it will, in time, win the admiration and devotion of all of the peoples of the world. We currently have many impediments to this divine-human relationship. The negative experiences some people have had with Christianity stand in the way of discovering the real Jesus and his matchless character. I have seen too many images of Jesus, in pictures or on plastic crosses, looking down at me with sad, teary eyes. Not that his death is without meaning, but if you do not accept a literal doctrine of atonement, the cross, as interpreted by conservative Christianity, obscures the facts about the nobility of his life with myths about his death. I could never accept the idea that even though I repent

of my wrong doings, Jesus had to die on a cross before God could love me and forgive me. Because I have a bit of a problem with the conservative Christian concept of Jesus, I have sometimes used his Hebrew name, Joshua, when I refer to him. When I say Joshua ben Joseph, I think of a rugged Galilean who lived a life of courage and compassion. I think of a man who stopped in the middle of addressing a crowd to go into the street to comfort a woman who was carrying a heavy load. I think of a man who loved little children, who could laugh and enjoy a meal with friends, who could pull in a net full of fish or build a boat with the best of them. I think of a man who experienced the whole range of human emotions, but who was not ruled by his emotions. But the authors of *The Urantia Book* have put it more profoundly than I ever could:

The all-consuming and indomitable spiritual faith of Jesus never became fanatical, for it never attempted to run away with his well-balanced intellectual judgments concerning the proportional values of practical and commonplace social, economic, and moral life situations. The Son of Man was a splendidly unified human personality; he was a perfectly endowed divine being; he was also magnificently co-ordinated as a combined human and divine being functioning on earth as a single personality. Always did the Master co-ordinate the faith of the soul with the wisdom-appraisals of seasoned experience. (p. 2088)

Never on all the worlds of this universe, in the life of any one mortal, did God ever become such a living reality as in the human experience of Jesus of Nazareth. (p. 2087)

When I think of negative experiences connected with Jesus' name, I especially think of our Jewish friends. I once worked with a Jewish fellow who grew up in a predominantly Christian neighborhood in New York City. He told me that when he was young, the older Christian boys called him "Jesus killer" and burned him with cigarettes. It is not surprising that he had little use for Christians or for Jesus. It is particularly important that when we introduce Jesus to people who have had negative Christian experiences, and people in the non-Christian world, that we emphasize that *The Urantia Book* presents a new and inspiring, as well as a more authentic, picture of Jesus.

### **A New Revelation of Jesus**

The 700 page *Life and Teachings of Jesus in The Urantia Book* brings life to the sketchy New Testament story and with it a new authenticity. It is basically harmonious with all religions, emphasizing the religion *of* Jesus which is unifying, as opposed to the religion *about* Jesus which tends to be divisive. Actually, the peoples of the world already have a relationship with Jesus through the Spirit of Truth but do not know it. The Spirit of Truth operates within our minds whether or not we acknowledge Jesus. Perhaps all that is lacking for a more

meaningful two-way relationship is acknowledging that it already exists. And this relationship would be enhanced if we would reinforce those actions that seek truth, create beauty, and establish goodness.

No doubt many of us are already doing many things that engage us with the Spirit of Truth, such as seeking truth, praying for guidance, and gathering together for spiritual purposes. Obviously, we are each going to have a unique relationship with Jesus, just as our relationships with each other are different. Our cultural background, theology, and personal preferences will define and color all our relationships, including our relationship with Jesus. But I do not doubt that his understanding and gracious spirit will make possible a joyful and creative relationship with all of us. There is, however, one final and most difficult impediment to a relationship with Jesus/Christ Michael—*us*.

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All mutually satisfying relationships require several things: one is trust, another is honesty, but perhaps the most difficult is the willingness to make a commitment. When two people decide to marry, they have to accept certain limitations that they didn't have before. This perceived loss of freedom has spelled the death of many a relationship because one party or the other lacked either the maturity or the courage to make sacrifices. Fear of risk-taking or immature selfishness often keeps us from many desirable goals in life such as establishing a relationship. The freedom to do what we please seems desirable, but the mature person understands that the pleasures of a good relationship far outweigh the illusory freedom of the uncommitted life.

Just so, the spiritual rewards of a relationship with Jesus far outweigh the freedom of doing our own thing. When we wrestle with a relationship with the Universal Father or Christ Michael, we are probably wrestling with fear. It is our choice: Will our lives be defined by courage and faith or with fear and anxiety—or worse, defiance of Ultimate Reality. "The doing of the will of God is nothing more or less than an exhibition of creature willingness to share the inner life with God." (U. B. p. 1221)

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*Richard I. Bain is an electrical engineer and an editor of Innerface International. He is a long time student of The Urantia Book.*

## Sermon Series on Spiritual Growth

### Sharing Our Spiritual Experience

Rev. Gregory Young

Early one morning recently while out jogging I was excited to see the first robins of the season. Then on my way to the church office I saw a number of red-winged blackbirds in the wetland on the north side of the Donges Bay road. Great, I thought, these are the harbingers of spring. Its time to get ready to plant our garden!

Over the past several years, as some of you know, I have become increasingly interested in gardening and feeding the birds in our yard. A few weeks ago I was in a new store handling all kinds of bird feed and equipment. I discovered that Kit and George Harrison, nationally renowned wildlife authors, were there promoting and signing books. I picked up one of their books on the characteristics and habits of songbirds common to this area. The book seemed very interesting so I decided to purchase it.

That evening I began reading about the robin, the first bird discussed in the book. I learned that male robins come back to nesting areas first, when the average temperature is about 37 degrees. The female, I was surprised to find out, sometimes gets disoriented while building her nest and will build several nests close to each other. Robins tenaciously protect their territory, but will sometimes share a nest area with another bird of an entirely different species.

Now before you think my sermon this morning is for the birds, I want to reassure you that I don't want to give you an introductory lecture on ornithology, but I should like to make this point: Before I became really interested in wild birds, I knew a few basic things about birds such as when robins appear, spring is not too far away. Beyond such common knowledge, I knew very little about birds. Now that I have read the Harrison book, a whole new world has been opened to me. I'm so enthused with my new found knowledge that I want to share it with those close to me.

When something really inspires us, we need to share it. Think, when was the last time that you learned something, were so enthused over a new view, that you had to share it with others? I'm not referring to gossip. When was the last time that you were excited about something that opened up your mind and world so much that it changed the way you looked at life from that time on? When was the last time that you became passionately involved in something so important that you just had to share it?

True and living spiritual awareness and spiritual growth are these kinds of life-changing experiences. You may

assume that I'm going to suggest doing something that in our tradition is not considered to be good manners. We are taught that there are two things that we should never talk about in normal social conversation: religion and politics. While there is some wisdom in this advice, I should like to suggest that there is more to the ways we act as Christians than in the good deeds we do. There are many people who are looking for something to believe in, an anchor for their lives. Those who are consciously or unconsciously searching for meaning in their lives are deeply influenced by people who live with passionate conviction, and have an irrepressible enthusiasm for their vision of reality. These hungering people are intrigued by those who seem to see more meaning and purpose to life than they do.

I'm not talking about people who are overpowering, insensitive, or have proselytizing intentions. I'm referring, rather, to those people who are caring and believe that their faith is so helpful and inspiring that they are willing to share it when there is an opportunity in an appropriate context. There is a vast difference between religion and spirituality. What a lot of people share is their religion, their particular brand of dogma, and I believe it has given sharing spiritual Good News a bad name. There is a pronounced difference between the religion about Jesus and the religion of Jesus. The one is based on intellectual belief, doctrine, and the other is rooted in personal spiritual values, truth, beauty, and goodness.

While there has been a decline of interest in traditional forms of religion in our society, there is an unprecedented expansion of interest in spirituality. People hunger and thirst for deep spiritual meaning in a world that seemingly has lost a relevant spiritual orientation. For a number years now books on spirituality have consistently been at the top of the best seller list. People are looking for something to give meaning and purpose to their lives.

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In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Happy are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled." Many of us misunderstand the kind of spiritual ministry that will satisfy this hunger. Sharing the Good News of Jesus' message is not actualized in pointing our finger at the evils of society and standing in judgment of those around us. Not many people are inspired to develop a dynamic faith by listening to hellfire and brimstone lectures. True spirituality communicates on a deeper level. It

points to universal truths and goodness that ignite a spark in the human soul and inspire us to live these truths and actualize this goodness.

We are not accustomed to talking about our spiritual lives. It seems awkward, confusing, even embarrassing. Sharing powerful and meaningful spiritual experience may be associated with preaching, and none of us like preachy people. Each of us, however, is a gold mine of rich experience, a walking story still in progress. We learn and grow from the mutual sharing of each other's insights and experiences. Sharing what is spiritual means to share something personal, very important, and life enriching to us with others when they seek it.

Think about the conversations that you have had with people over the years. Do any of these conversations stand out in your mind? I suspect that the discussions which come to mind are the heart-to-heart talks that you have had, exchanges that might be called spiritual in nature, conversations that were deep and meaning-filled. The discussions that I have had with people who have had "near death experiences" have been very powerful and spiritual for me. They have contributed meaning and perspective to my life.

As followers of Jesus, we all belong to the brother/sisterhood of humankind, and are called to share the Good News of God's love. We are called to bring meaning and purpose through our sharing and service to each other's lives. So in closing, I ask you: "Are you the personalization of a sponge or a light?" We know that a sponge takes in a lot of liquid and won't give it up until it is forced to do so. A light when it is turned on gives light everywhere. When Jesus used analogies in referring to human life, he spoke of the sons and daughters of God as lights of the world: "You are the light of the world.... Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and be led to glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16) I hope that we may all find ways to share the light of our lives with others that will enrich both the giver and the receiver.

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Gregory Young is pastor of St. John United Church of Christ in Germantown, Wisconsin.

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*"The modern age will refuse to accept a religion which is inconsistent with facts and out of harmony with its highest concepts of truth, beauty, and goodness. The hour is striking for a rediscovery of the true and original foundations of present-day distorted and compromised Christianity—the real life and teachings of Jesus." (2083:5)*

## *Psalms Today*

### **Our Refuge and Hope**

O Lord, the refuge and hope of the afflicted.

I cry out for your help and guidance.

I am perplexed and confused.

Why am I brutalized, abused, and exploited?

What have I done to deserve such treatment?

Where have I failed in my relationships?

Teach me your wisdom; guide me in your love.

When should I turn the other cheek in sacrificial love?

When should I act in self-defense?

When should I use legal means to escape a degrading relationship?

Grant me objectivity to clearly see the truth.

May the insight of your spirit lead me to creative action.

Help me to maintain my self-respect as your child.

Endow me with courage to live in harmony with reality.

I do not understand the dynamics of evil:

How good people can do such bad things.

How the best intentions can end in failing to do good.

How moral people permit an immoral society.

Give me the vision and resilience to live with these ambiguities.

Let my faith transcend the discouraging experiences of life.

Lead me in paths of loving service, and keep me in your tender care. (86)

*"Christianity has indeed done a great service for this world, but what is now most needed is Jesus. The world needs to see Jesus living again on earth in the experience of spirit-born mortals who effectively reveal the Master to all men. It is futile to talk about a revival of primitive Christianity; you must go forward from where you find yourselves. Modern culture must become spiritually baptized with a new revelation of Jesus' life and illuminated with a new understanding of his gospel of eternal salvation. And when Jesus becomes thus lifted up, he will draw all men to himself. Jesus' disciples should be more than conquerors, even overflowing sources of inspiration and enhanced living to all men. Religion is only an exalted humanism until it is made divine by the discovery of the reality of the presence of God in personal experience." (2084:1)*

# Significant Books

## Stealing Jesus

### How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity

Bruce Bawer  
Crown, 1997, 340 pp.

Bruce Bawer is an Episcopalian and one of our leading cultural critics. He has published several volumes of criticism, including *Diminishing Fictions*, *The Aspect of Eternity*, and *Prophets and Professors*, as well as one of the most influential books about homosexuality, *A Place at the Table*. He has delivered talks and sermons in churches around the country and has published essays on religious subjects in *The New York Times Magazine* and elsewhere.

*Stealing Jesus* focuses primarily on Protestant legalism and nonlegalism, the Church of Law and the Church of Love. “In recent years,” Bawer observes, “legalistic Christians have organized into a political movement so successful that when many Americans today hear the word *Christianity*, they think only of the legalistic variety.... Far from being a vestige of traditional Christian faith, in short, it is a distinctively modern phenomenon—one that, while making tradition its rallying cry, has at the deepest level betrayed Christianity’s most precious traditions. In fact it has, as we shall see, carried out a tripartite betrayal.

•*Doctrine*. It has replaced the traditional emphasis on Christian belief with bizarre doctrinal strictures that have no legitimate basis in scripture, reason, or tradition.

•*Authority*. It has replaced the foundational Protestant trust in the individual’s ‘soul competency’ with a dictatorial system of clerical absolutism.

•*Law*. It has replaced Christ’s gospel message of love, which drew on the noblest parts of the Hebrew Scriptures, with the harshest edicts from the Pentateuch, the epistles of Paul, and the Book of Revelations.” (p. 11)

Bawer traces the development of Protestant legalism during the 19th and 20th centuries. Rooted in John Nelson Darby’s dispensational premillennialism and End Times theology that was popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible, the writings of E. Schuyler English, and *The Fundamentals*, a series of essays authored by ministers and theological professors defending fundamentalistic doctrine, the stage was set for the resurgence of legalistic theology.

The dynamic behind this conservative revival was the fear aroused by the theory of evolution, Higher Criticism in biblical research, and a reaction against Rauschenbush’s Social Gospel. “Faced with the chance to embrace new knowledge and reason, American fundamentalists—unlike virtually all other Christians around the world—chose instead to ally

themselves with ignorance and irrationality.” (p. 90)

This heritage is carried on by Hal Lindsey in *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority, the fundamentalist takeover of the Southern Baptists, Pat Robertson and the Christian Coalition, and to a lesser degree by James Dobson and Focus on Family, and Bill McCartney and the Promise Keepers. This Church of Law, in the opinion of Bawer, is not a setting in which intelligent, serious people can expect to work out meaningful and responsible answers to ultimate questions. “Nor is it something that the earliest followers of Jesus would have recognized as Christianity. I don’t think it’s an exaggeration, in fact, to suggest that if the first Christians were exposed to the rhetoric of Robertson, Reed, Dobson, Falwell, and company, they might well ask, in astonishment, ‘How did these vicious people manage to steal the name of Jesus?’” (p. 28)

*Stealing Jesus* at times bogs down in minutia, but it is a good survey of the origin and development of differences among fundamentalists, evangelicals, and mainline churches. It might be regarded as a sequel to John Shelby Spong’s *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*.

-MJS

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## Quebec Newsletter *Reflectivite*

Pierre Routhier

Here in Quebec, two tragic events have helped us to see people at their best: the flooding around Lake St. John and the ice storm in the Montreal region which left millions stranded without electricity and heat during the coldest part of the winter. The ice storm that Quebec has experienced gave us the opportunity to put the teachings of *The Urantia Book* to the test through loving service, brotherly help, tolerance and solidarity. Many generous souls opened up their homes to the disaster-stricken, sometimes without even having met those people before.

At the present time, when the international press is reporting barbaric acts perpetrated across the planet, we tend to believe that those barbarians show no human signs other than their external appearance. Consequently, it is very comforting to know that acts of love and generosity are also accomplished around the world by other humans. Love needs to be free. Thus, it is necessary that we all be free to choose to love or forsake God and our fellow man. When people nourish in their heart such spirit poisons as hate, vengeance and suspicion, they become a curse to our humanity by lowering themselves to a level below a beast. But when the love of God and our neighbor motivate our acts, we witness an overflow of generosity and become a blessing to humanity—alleluia!

## ***The Future of the Fifth Epochal Revelation***

Meredith J. Sprunger

In October of 1955, *The Urantia Book* was published with great enthusiasm. The newly organized Urantia Brotherhood visualized organizing thousands of study groups and gradually chartering well grounded societies. The specific nature of these societies was ambiguous. Most of the founding members regarded the Urantia Brotherhood as a religious or quasi-religious organization. Dr. Sadler clearly saw societies developing as bona fide religious groups.

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The leaders of the Forum who developed the Brotherhood Constitution did not take the time to structure it directly from the teachings of *The Urantia Book*, but used and adapted the ready-made constitution of the Presbyterian Church for this purpose. Under Sadler's leadership, the Brotherhood Constitution provided a key place for ordained teachers. Following the publication of the book, Dr. Sadler started a school to train and ordain teachers. On numerous occasions Dr. Sadler and I discussed the nature of this new religious organization and its future development.

### **Disillusioning Experience**

As the Brotherhood grew, a quite different view soon surfaced. The majority of the early members of the Urantia Brotherhood had a pronounced anti-church and anti-institutional bias. There was a marked uneasiness regarding the use of prayer and group singing at Brotherhood meetings. To guard against moving in the direction of a religious institution, we removed the term "ordained teacher" from the constitution. It was made clear that we were not interested in starting a new religion. If anyone identified us as a cult, we were irritated and defensive. We defined ourselves as "an educational-social organization with a religious purpose."

We were enthusiastic about introducing religious, educational, and political leaders to *The Urantia Book*. Illusions of grandeur about initiating a spiritual renaissance on our planet invigorated Urantia Conferences. Gradually, evolutionary reality began to change the picture. Religious and political leaders were not impressed. The book was succinctly dismissed as a contemporary gnostic document or politely ignored.

Internal disillusionments have compounded the evolutionary picture. The licensing agreement controversy, the Clayton incident, the Foundation-Brotherhood schism,

the proliferation of lawsuits, and the wide-spread interest in channeling have sobered our naive idealism. Most of us now realize that the Fifth Epochal Revelation has been launched on the troubled and turbulent seas of evolutionary struggle.

### **Hunger for a Religious Community**

In recent years, spiritual seeking has emerged on an unprecedented scale, accompanied by a disenchantment with contemporary religious institutions. The Most Highs, no doubt, are nurturing conditions for the acceptance of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. There has also been an increasing longing in the Urantia movement for a "religious community" which goes beyond the usual study group, one that furnishes a sense of "spiritual family" and communion, along with worship and a community identity. There is a growing sense of need for spiritual nourishment from birth to death. Study groups and societies, which are primarily intellectual-social groups, do not furnish all of the functions of traditional religious institutions, although they may serve as preliminary steps toward such religious organizations. I believe the single most important activity in the Urantia movement at this time is to focus on the development of resources which may help actualize new religious institutions. Hopefully, such institutions will serve as vehicles through which the Fifth Epochal Revelation can be carried out into the world.

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I'm confident that sooner or later such new religious institutions will evolve in the Urantia movement. There have been several aborted attempts to do this already. When this does happen, there is a danger that these religious institutions may be extemporized, without adequate time and consideration to formulate organizations that best reflect the insights of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. A wiser approach is for competent teams of interested people to evolve a body of resources associated with theology, polity, and liturgy before the pressure of necessity fashions religious organizations without such help.

There is a great need for institutions to serve on the growing edge of spiritual development in our world—religious institutions which will appeal to the highest spiritual aspirations of humankind. This was a concern of Rabbi Abraham Heschel, who, in a conversation with Robert Greenleaf shortly before his death, asked, "Why do so many of the great religions which have their origins in the mystery [of spiritual power] come ultimately to be social service agencies, or in their religious life to be preoccupied

*The Future of... cont.*

with form and concerned more with the container than the content?" To which Greenleaf replied, "In the face of these conditions, **one simply builds anew** (emphasis added). We are called to listen to the prophetic voices who have the rebuilding message for these times so that we can support and encourage them." (*Servant Leadership*, p. 255)

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*We must evolve religious institutions which will bring spiritual nourishment to hungry souls, within which we can achieve personal-spiritual identity and a level of service and worship heretofore not possible by individuals working singly, in study groups, or in outmoded religious institutions. With the Father's guidance, they will become social-religious vehicles carrying the Fifth Epochal Revelation throughout the world. This, I believe, is the most important challenge of our times!*

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### **Principles Inherent in the Development of Religious Institutions**

There are a number of principles inherent in the development of new religious institutions which we should keep in mind, such as:

1. The idealist in many of us who have been inspired by *The Urantia Book* has projected a vision of the Fifth Epochal Revelation upstepping all of the religions of the world and uniting humankind in a common spiritual fellowship. We are turned off by the parochialism and rigidity of contemporary religious institutions and feel that the last thing we need is another religious institution. But the lessons of history and the teachings of *The Urantia Book* tell us that the most effective social agents of spiritual change are new religious institutions embodying larger spiritual truths. The Supreme works from the grass roots up, not from the top down. This approach is not as romantic as our idealistic vision, but it is the only realistic process that builds the foundation for social and spiritual growth in the culture.

2. New religious institutions are not "designed" — they evolve. The authors of *The Urantia Book* remind us, "Man cannot cause growth, but he can supply favorable

conditions." (p. 1097) We should establish this "conditional" type of research. There will be many types of new religious organizations stemming from the Fifth Epochal Revelation. We need to prepare materials for possible use by such new religious organizations. Numerous people have asked me for such help in the last ten years; they may or may not find this research helpful. The assumption is that resources compiled over a period of time by mature students of *The Urantia Book* will provide helpful insights and wisdom which might not otherwise be available.

3. We should be aware of the larger spiritual context in which a religious institution functions. The brother/sisterhood of all people, the kinship of all humanity, takes place in the realm of the Supreme. A genuine spiritual fellowship, which is the basis of a religious institution, has its inception in soul consciousness. The soul bears the imprint of its divine-human creation and gives rise to a second or ancillary mind consciousness. As we grow in the Supreme, our personal identity is increasingly transferred from the material mind to soul consciousness. More and more, we operate out of our "soul-mind." This fellowship of souls is the foundation of a bona fide religious institution.

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*I, personally, do not think the Fellowship should be organically or officially connected to this research or any religious institutions stemming from it. Many students of *The Urantia Book* are still uncomfortable with institutional religious activities. The Fellowship has a place in coordinating all types and levels of activity associated with *The Urantia Book*.*

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But human beings are much more than disembodied souls. We have unique material bodies and material based minds. We integrate our lives with dissimilar personalities and function in diverse social groups. A sound and serviceable religious institution, therefore, must have the spiritual depth and theological-social flexibility to serve a wide variety of human beings. Its polity needs to embody the highest experiential wisdom.

4. I, personally, do not think the Fellowship should be organically or officially connected to this research or any religious institutions stemming from it. Many students of *The Urantia Book* are still uncomfortable with institutional religious activities. The Fellowship has a place in coordinating all types and levels of activity associated with *The Urantia Book*. It might encourage or even facilitate these religious activities without being organically involved with them. Hopefully, the Fellowship can establish cooperative relationships with many diverse organizations while remaining organizationally independent from them.

## A Socioreligious Expression of the Fifth Epochal Revelation

More than forty years of experience in interfacing with the most progressive segment of mainline Christianity has taught me that anything purporting to be a new revelation is not within the boundaries of current theological-institutional respectability. In the main, Christian clergy will require a longer time frame to discover the supernal teachings of *The Urantia Book*. I have always assumed that the most important channel for carrying the Fifth Epochal Revelation to our world would be new religious institutions. It is now time to promote research in discovering an "Appropriate Symbolism and Socioreligious Expression of the Fifth Epochal Revelation." The mission of *The Spiritual Fellowship Journal* is to serve as one of the platforms for this discussion.

The central objective of people interested in initiating such a new religious organization should be to create a polity with maximum flexibility, one that would function with small groups or large congregations, utilize lay leadership and/or ordained ministry, have cross cultural adaptability, and broad theological inclusiveness. Robert Greenleaf, in his book *Servant Leadership*, has a vision of such an institution "as a gathering of persons who have accepted a common purpose, and a common discipline to guide the pursuit of that purpose, to the end that each involved person reaches higher fulfillment as a person, through *servicing and being served* by the common venture, than would be achieved alone or in a less committed relationship." (p.237)

There are many appropriate areas of research for those interested in building resources to use in initiating new religious organizations. These materials should not be seen as definitive, but should serve as stimuli for creative thinking, whereby these groups may be helped to make their own carefully considered decisions.

Our intent is to prepare the soil for the advent of grass roots religious institutions which will become the channels of spiritual power, bringing the Fifth Epochal Revelation to our troubled and spiritually hungry world—Christ Michael's gift and saving guidance to our confused planet. The future of the Fifth Epochal Revelation rests upon the spiritual and evangelical dynamics of new religious institutions which will carry it to the four corners of our world.

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

## Outreach to Young Urantians

Larry Mullins

"If the Christian church would only dare to espouse the Master's program, thousands of apparently indifferent youths would rush forward to enlist in such a spiritual undertaking, and they would not hesitate to go all the way through with this great adventure." (p. 2085)

"Only the real religion of personal spiritual experience can function helpfully and creatively in the present crisis of civilization." (p. 1087)

The most powerful and attractive religious potential ever to exist on this planet, and the greatest gift ever given to men and women, has been very slow in its development. We are told in the Urantia Papers that the most fertile domain for evangelism is the young. For those Urantians who are not deeply experienced in personal evangelism (and I am one), this kind of outreach offers a friendly, gentle atmosphere.

Urantian youth of all ages are quite hungry for the stories and messages in the Urantia Papers. Different approaches must be made to each age group, of course. Aside from Urantia programs developed for the very young, there seems to be fewer existing programs and study aids to challenge the critical preteen ages (circa ages 9-13), and even less material for the equally important later teen-years. Perhaps there are many efforts now being made to reach out and attract young Urantians that are not reported. Perhaps those who are active doers are less adept at writing about it.

As Urantians, we need to reach new levels in evangelism to our young. One opportunity may lie in "hooking-up" the many Urantians who are willing to work on outreach to our youth. Perhaps by sharing ideas we would set into motion an invisible, living network of humans to assist the Angels of Progress in their efforts to disseminate the teachings of the Urantia Papers to the young.

One or more well-written articles or papers on the subject of creating such a network would start this process in this neglected area. We are looking for informative, well-thought-out ideas from the silent, working evangelists who have experience in the area of Urantian youth-outreach of various ages. This is an appeal for such quality materials.

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*Larry Mullins is a consultant in advertizing and marketing. He is an editorial consultant for the Journal and author of Immature People with Power and Jesus: God and Man.*

## Suggestive Preamble for the Constitution of a Religious Organization Based on the Fifth Epochal Revelation

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

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

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

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

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

6. The Fellowship strives to facilitate spiritual progress, enhance cosmic insight, augment moral values, encourage

social development, and stimulate the highest expression of personal religious living.

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

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

9. The Fellowship acknowledges and affirms the mystery of personal and epochal revelation. We stand in awe at the incomprehensible love which God has for his imperfect finite children in bestowing upon us a fragment of his own Spirit essence to live with us and guide us toward reality and eternal life. We are confronted by the inexplicable efficacy of intercessory prayer and the mysterious integration and coordination of persons and events. We are challenged by the impossible-potential of the spirit mastery of our animal drives and urges and the reality of spiritual transformation.

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

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

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

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*The Spiritual Fellowship Journal*

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