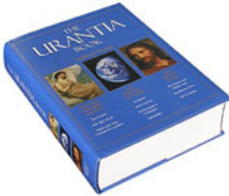


The Urantia Book

<i>The Urantia Book</i>	
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Author(s)	Original Multiple Authors

The Urantia Book (sometimes called the **Urantia Papers** or **The Fifth Epochal Revelation**) is a spiritual and philosophical book that discusses God, Jesus, science, cosmology, religion, history, and destiny.^[2] It originated in Chicago, Illinois, sometime between 1924 and 1955. Its authorship remains a matter of speculation.^[3]

The authors introduce the word "Urantia" as the name of the planet Earth and state that their intent is to "present enlarged concepts and advanced truth" in an "endeavor to expand cosmic consciousness and enhance spiritual perception." Among other topics, the book expounds on the origin and meaning of life, humankind's place in the universe, the relationship between God and people, and the life of Jesus.

The Urantia Foundation, a U.S.-based non-profit group, first published *The Urantia Book* in 1955 in English and has since translated it into 14 of other languages.^[4] In 2001, a jury found that the English book's copyright was no longer valid after 1983.^{[5][6][7]} The English text is a public domain work in the United States,^[3] and in 2006, the international copyright on the English text also expired.^[8]

Overview of the book

The Urantia Book is 2,097 pages long, and consists of an introductory statement followed by 196 "papers" divided into five parts:

- **The Foreword** is presented as a guide to the terminology developed in greater detail in Part I, and provides an explanation for words and phrases that are "in designation of Deity and certain associated concepts of the things, meanings, and values of universal reality."
- **Part I** consists of 31 papers that address what are considered the highest levels of creation, beginning with the eternal and infinite "Universal Father", his Trinity associates, and the "Isle of Paradise".
- **Part II** is composed of 25 papers pertaining to the origin, administration and personalities of "local universes," in particular the local universe of "Nebadon" that is said to contain Urantia. It presents narratives on the inhabitants

of local universes and their work as it is coordinated with a scheme of spiritual ascension and progression of different orders of beings, including humans.

- **Part III** includes 48 papers that compile a broad history of the Earth, presenting a purported explanation of the origin, purpose, evolution, and destiny of our world and its inhabitants. An additional 15 papers cover various topics such as "Religion in Human Experience", the concept of the Thought Adjuster, "Personality Survival", and "The Bestowals of Christ Michael".
- **Part IV** is presented in 77 papers and narrates "The Life and Teachings of Jesus". Included are papers about his childhood, teenage years, family life, public ministry, and the events that led to his crucifixion, death, and resurrection. It continues with papers about appearances after he rose, Pentecost, and finally, "The Faith of Jesus". Part IV illustrates many of the concepts presented in the first three parts through the story of Jesus' life.

Authorship

The exact circumstances of the origin of *The Urantia Book* are unknown. The book and its publishers do not name a human author. Instead, it is written as if directly presented by numerous celestial beings appointed to the task of providing an "epochal" religious revelation. For each paper, either a named celestial being, an order of being, or a group of beings is credited as its author.^{[9][10][11]}

As early as 1911, William S. Sadler and his wife Lena Sadler, physicians in Chicago and well known in the community, are said to have been approached by a neighbor who was concerned because she would occasionally find her husband in a deep sleep and breathing abnormally.^{[3][9]} She reported that she was unable to wake him at these times. The Sadlers came to observe the episodes, and over time, the individual produced verbal communications that claimed to be from "student visitor" spiritual beings.^[3] This changed in early 1925 with a "voluminous handwritten document", which from then on became the regular method of purported communication.^[3] The Sadlers were both respected physicians, and William Sadler was a debunker of paranormal claims, who is portrayed as not believing in the supernatural. In 1929, he published a book called *The Mind at Mischief*, in which he explained the fraudulent methods of mediums and how self-deception leads to psychic claims. He wrote in an appendix that there were two cases that he had not explained to his satisfaction.^[12]

The other exception has to do with a rather peculiar case of psychic phenomena, one which I find myself unable to classify, and which I would like very much to narrate more fully; I cannot do so here, however, because of a promise which I feel under obligation to keep sacredly. In other words, I have promised not to publish this case during the lifetime of the individual. I hope sometime to secure a modification of that promise and be able to report this case more fully because of its interesting features. I was brought in contact with it, in the summer of 1911, and I have



William S. Sadler



Lena K. Sadler

had it under my observation more or less ever since, having been present at probably 250 of the night sessions, many of which have been attended by a stenographer who made voluminous notes.

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

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

In 1924, a group of Sadler's friends, former patients, and colleagues began meeting for Sunday intellectual discussions, but became interested in the strange communications when Sadler mentioned the case and read samples at their request. Shortly afterwards, a communication reportedly was received that this group would be allowed to devise questions and that answers would be given by celestial beings through the "contact personality".

Sadler presented this development to the group, and they generated hundreds of questions without full seriousness, but their claim is that it resulted in the appearance of answers in the form of fully written papers. They became more impressed with the quality of the answers and continued to ask questions, until all papers now collected together as *The Urantia Book* were obtained. The group was known as the Forum. A smaller group of five individuals called the Contact Commission, including the Sadlers, was responsible for gathering the questions from the Forum, acting as the custodians of the handwritten manuscripts that were presented as answers, and arranging for proofreading and typing of the material.^[9]

The Sadlers and others involved, now all deceased, claimed^[13] that the papers of the book were physically materialized from 1925 until 1935 in a way that was not understood even by them, with the first three parts being completed in 1934 and the fourth in 1935. The last Forum gathering was in 1942. Also documented are methods of reception that Sadler denied as the way the papers were received.^[10]

After the last of Part IV was obtained in 1935, an additional period of time supposedly took place where requests for clarifications resulted in revisions. Sadler and his son William (Bill) Sadler, Jr. at one point wrote a draft introduction and were told that they could not add their introduction because "A city can not be lit by a candle."^{[14][15]} The Foreword was then "received." Bill Sadler is noted to have composed the table of contents that is published with the book.^[16]

The communications purportedly continued for another two decades while members of the Forum studied the book in depth, and according to Sadler and others, permission to publish it was given to them in 1955. The Urantia Foundation was formed in 1950 as a tax-exempt educational society in Illinois,^[17] and through privately raised funds, the book was published under international copyright on October 12, 1955.

Only the members of the Contact Commission witnessed the activities of the sleeping subject, and only they knew his identity.^[3] The individual is claimed to have been kept anonymous in order to prevent undesirable future veneration or reverence for him. Martin Gardner states that an explanation concerning the origin of the book more plausible than celestial beings is that the Contact Commission, particularly William Sadler, was responsible. Gardner's conclusion is that a man named Wilfred Kellogg was the sleeping subject and authored the work from his subconscious mind, with William Sadler subsequently editing and authoring parts.^[9] A statistical analysis using the

Mosteller and Wallace methods of stylometry indicates at least nine authors were involved, and by comparatively analyzing the book against Sadler's *The Mind at Mischief*, does not indicate authorship or extensive editing by Sadler, without ruling out the possibility of limited edits.^[3]

Teachings

Nature of God

According to *The Urantia Book*, God is the creator and upholder of all reality—an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, infinite, and eternal spirit personality. The most fundamental teaching about God in the book is that he is a Father. "The face which the Infinite turns toward all universe personalities is the face of a Father, the Universal Father of love."^[18] Even during the development of numerous other themes in *The Urantia Book*, God as a loving Father is emphasized as the central, unifying attitude of God toward the universe.

God is inherently kind, naturally compassionate, and everlastingly merciful. And never is it necessary that any influence be brought to bear upon the Father to call forth his loving-kindness. The creature's need is wholly sufficient to insure the full flow of the Father's tender mercies and his saving grace. Since God knows all about his children, it is easy for him to forgive. The better man understands his neighbor, the easier it will be to forgive him, even to love him.^[19]

God is said to be a mystery though because of the infinite scope of his perfection and his attributes.

God is not hiding from any of his creatures. He is unapproachable to so many orders of beings only because he "dwells in a light which no material creature can approach." The immensity and grandeur of the divine personality is beyond the grasp of the unperfected mind of evolutionary mortals.^[20]

God, according to the book, is one Deity who functions on a range of different levels of reality, both personal and impersonal. God is taught to exist in a Trinity of three perfectly individualized persons who are co-equal: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. These persons are referred to by additional titles in the book, primarily as the "Universal Father", "Eternal Son", and "Infinite Spirit". While stating that the concept of one God in three persons is difficult to fully understand, the book says that the idea "in no manner violates the truth of the divine unity. The three personalities of Paradise Deity are, in all universe reality reactions and in all creature relations, as one".

The Father, Son, and Spirit are considered "existential" persons of Deity, those in existence from the eternal past to the eternal future. In addition, three persons of Deity are described who are "experiential", or incomplete and in the process of actualizing: God the Supreme, God the Ultimate, and God the Absolute. Of these three, God the Supreme, or "the Supreme Being", is given the most explanation, as the person of Deity evolving in time and space to unify finite reality and the infinite. The persons of God the Ultimate and God the Absolute are considered to be remote from the possibility of comprehension and are covered on a limited basis.

Many types of celestial beings are enumerated in the book, and one of particular note is a joint "offspring" of the Universal Father and Eternal Son called a "Creator Son". A divine Creator Son is considered the full representation of the Universal Father and Eternal Son that is possible to people. Jesus of Nazareth is identified as a Creator Son who incarnated on Earth and whose life and teachings are portrayed as the fullest revelation of the personality and attitude of God ever given to humanity.

The final paper states:^[21]

To "follow Jesus" means to personally share his religious faith and to enter into the spirit of the Master's life of unselfish service for man. One of the most important things in human living is to find out what Jesus believed, to discover his ideals, and to strive for the achievement of his exalted life purpose. Of all human knowledge, that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it.

God and the individual

God is described as the Father of each individual, and through the direct gift of a fragment of his eternal spirit, called a **Thought Adjuster**, is said to be able to guide the individual toward an increased understanding of him. The Thought Adjuster is also called a "Mystery Monitor," "inner voice," "divine spark," and "pilot light". The concept is in ways comparable to the Hindu atman, the ancient Egyptian ka, and the Quaker inner light. In relation to biblical traditions, the Thought Adjuster is described by the book as the meaning behind the phrases "being made in God's image" and the "kingdom of God is within you":

The Adjuster is the mark of divinity, the presence of God. The "image of God" does not refer to physical likeness nor to the circumscribed limitations of material creature endowment but rather to the gift of the spirit presence of the Universal Father in the supernal bestowal of the Thought Adjusters upon the humble creatures of the universes.^[22]

Each person is said to receive one such fragment at the time of his or her first independent moral decision, on average around the age of five years and ten months. The Adjuster then serves noncoercively as a divine partner in the mind of the individual for the rest of life, and to the extent that a person consents with their free will to want to find God, it leads the person toward more mature, spiritualized thinking. Through the practice of learning how to follow the inner leadings of the Adjuster—choose "God's will"—the individual progresses to greater God consciousness and spiritual growth.

A person's Thought Adjuster is described as distinct from either the soul or the conscience. In *The Urantia Book's* teachings, the degree to which a human mind chooses to accept its Adjuster's guidance becomes the degree to which a person's soul "grows" and becomes a reality that can then survive death. The soul is in essence an embryonic spiritual development, one parental factor being the divine Adjuster and the other being the human will.

The book many times links the biblical New Testament teachings of becoming like a little child in attitude of trust and sincerity as being the stance each person should have toward God. It says the attitude of open-minded teachability facilitates spiritual growth in liaison with the work of the Thought Adjuster and invariably leads a person to love and serve other people. It also says, "But you yourself are mostly unconscious of this inner ministry. You are quite incapable of distinguishing the product of your own material intellect from that of the conjoint activities of your soul and the Adjuster". The book is strongly fideistic and teaches that neither science nor logic will ever be able to prove or disprove the existence of God, arguing that faith is necessary to become conscious of God's presence in human experience, the Thought Adjuster.

Persistently embracing sin is considered the same as rejecting the leadings of the Adjuster, rejecting the will of God. Constant selfishness and sinful choosing lead eventually to iniquity and full identification with unrighteousness, and since unrighteousness is unreal, it results in the eventual annihilation of the individual's identity. Personalities like this become "as if they never were". The book says that "in the last analysis, such sin-identified individuals have destroyed themselves by becoming wholly unreal through their embrace of iniquity". The concepts of Hell and reincarnation are not taught.

From Paper 5, "God's Relation to the Individual" ^[23]:

The great God makes direct contact with mortal man and gives a part of his infinite and eternal and incomprehensible self to live and dwell within him. God has embarked upon the eternal adventure with man. If you yield to the leadings of the spiritual forces in you and around you, you cannot fail to attain the high destiny established by a loving God as the universe goal of his ascendant creatures from the evolutionary worlds of space.

The book says that a person ultimately is destined to fuse with his or her divine fragment and become one inseparable entity with it, if the person chooses to accept the Adjuster's leadings and become self-identified with it. The act of fusion is the moment when a human personality has successfully and unalterably won eternal life, described as typically taking place in the afterlife, but also a possibility during earthly life. The result during human

life is a "fusion flash", with the material body consumed in a fiery light and the soul "translated" to the afterlife. The Hebrew prophet Elijah being taken to heaven without death in "chariots of fire" is said to be a rare example in recorded history of a person who attained fusion.

Once fused with his or her fragment of God, a person continues as an ascending citizen in the universe and travels through numerous worlds on a long, adventurous pilgrimage of growth and learning that eventually leads to God and residence on Paradise. Mortals who reach this stage are called "finaliters." The book goes on to discuss the potential destinies of these "glorified mortals".

The Urantia Book places much emphasis on the idea that all individuals have the same opportunity to know God, and it says nothing can hinder a human being's spiritual progression if he or she is motivated to be spirit led. The book regards human life on earth as a "short and intense test", and the afterlife as a continuation of training that begins in material life. The "religion of Jesus" is considered to be practiced by way of loving God the Father with a person's whole being, thereby learning to love each person the way Jesus loves people; that is, recognizing others as brothers and sisters and being of unselfish service to them.

Cosmology

The Urantia Book presents a detailed cosmological perspective on the universe and humankind's relation to it, while also stating that its cosmology will be in need of revision as new discoveries emerge in science, claiming its presentations are not meant to be a substitute for science.

The book uses the term "universe" to denote a number of different scales of organization, possibly because the book was written at a time when galaxies outside of the Milky Way were still called "island universes". In the book, a "superuniverse" is roughly the size of a galaxy or group of galaxies. A "local universe" is a sub-unit comprising approximately 10 million inhabited worlds when fully developed and accounts for 0.001% of the size of a "superuniverse". The book uses the term "master universe" to refer to what in modern usage would be the universe — all existing matter and space taken as a whole. When the term "universe" is used alone, the type usually can be inferred from the context.

The book teaches that the universe is vastly older than current scientific theories state, and that the universe is the product of intelligent and purposeful organization.^{[9][24]} The visualization of the cosmos presented from the center outward is:

- The eternal "central universe" called the "Paradise-Havona system", with the "Isle of Paradise" at its core, surrounded by twenty-one enormous worlds termed "the Sacred Spheres of Paradise", and then one billion additional perfect worlds known as "Havona".
- "Dark gravity bodies" that "completely encircle and enshroud Havona", followed by a "relatively quiet midspace zone".
- Seven superuniverses beyond this midspace zone, which swing counter-clockwise around the central universe. These contain all the evolutionary worlds of time and space, including the Earth, and have an approximate diameter of 400,000–500,000 light-years. A detailed organization of superuniverses is provided in the book. Briefly, the levels of organization are:
 - Individual inhabited worlds such as Earth
 - Local system (1,000 inhabited worlds)
 - Constellation (100 local systems)
 - Local universe (100 constellations)
 - Minor sector (100 local universes)
 - Major sector (100 minor sectors)
 - Superuniverse (10 major sectors)
- Beyond the seven superuniverses, enormous uninhabited "outer space levels" are described. The first outer space level is claimed to be over twenty-five million light-years wide and surrounded by a midspace zone over fifty

million light years wide. Second, third, and fourth outer space levels then surround each previous level with greater and greater magnitude.

The book describes alternative explanations regarding the universe's origin, and suggests sources of error in astronomical observations made by scientists. For example, the concept of "space respiration"—that all of space itself undergoes "two-billion-year expansion-contraction cycles"—is claimed to be part of the explanation for astronomic redshift. *The Urantia Book* says we are currently almost half way through an expansion cycle.

History and future of the world

Urantia is considered one inhabited sphere among trillions of others in the universe. The book's extensive teachings about the history of the world include its physical development about 4.5 billion years ago, the gradual changes in conditions that allowed life to develop, and long ages of organic evolution that started with microscopic marine life and led to plant and animal life in the oceans, later on land. The emergence of humans is presented as having occurred about a million years ago from a branch of superior primates originating from a lemur ancestor.

The Urantia Book says "this story is graphically told within the fossil pages of the vast 'stone book' of world record ... the pages of this gigantic biogeologic record unfailingly tell the truth if you but acquire skill in their interpretation". Unlike current scientific views, evolution is said to be orderly and controlled. Primordial life is taught to have been intelligently planned, implanted, and monitored by "Life Carriers", instead of arising spontaneously. The book says that "mortal man is not an evolutionary accident", and that the purpose of evolution on a planet such as Urantia is to produce creatures of "will dignity" that can develop spiritual natures and survive material existence, going on to have eternal spiritual careers.

The Urantia Book teaches not only biological evolution, but that human society and spiritual understandings evolve by slow progression, subject both to periods of rapid improvement and the possibility of retrogression. Progress is said to follow a divine plan that includes periodic gifts of revelation and ministry by heavenly teachers, which eventually will lead to an ideal world status of "light and life" in the far distant future.

Though there is the ideal and divine plan, it is said to be fostered and administered by various orders of celestial beings who are not always perfect. Through mistakes or deliberate rebellion, the plan can be wrecked, requiring long spans of time to recoup lost progress. Urantia is said to be a markedly "dark and confused" planet that is "greatly retarded in all phases of intellectual progress and spiritual attainment" compared to more typical inhabited worlds, due to an unusually severe history of rebellion and default by its spiritual supervisors.

The Urantia Book describes the successive eras of biologic, intellectual, and spiritual uplifting as "epochal revelations" of God and his ministering agents to man. According to *The Urantia Book* the Lucifer Rebellion^[25] was a disruption of God's divine plan in the history of Urantia. In the book, Lucifer is classified as a "Primary Lanonandek Son" and head administrator of his attending system. He proposed the concepts of personal liberty, self-autonomy, and self-assertion. These concepts were adopted on Urantia first by the head of its human affairs, Caligastia. By joining Lucifer, Caligastia caused the eventual collapse of the same fragile civilization he had come to guide as "Planetary Prince" of the realm.^[26] *The Urantia Book* emphasizes that despite its dark history, Urantia has been the beneficiary of much good. The life of Jesus, designated in *The Urantia Book* as the "fourth epochal revelation," is said to have redeemed the planet of the blunders of rebellion. "And when Jesus came down from his sojourn on Mount Hermon, the Lucifer rebellion in Satania and the Caligastia secession on Urantia were virtually settled."^[27]

Comparisons

Comparison to Christianity

Of all current major world religions, *The Urantia Book's* teachings are most similar to those of Christianity. However, there are numerous and significant differences between it and commonly accepted Christian beliefs.

Jesus is held in high regard by *The Urantia Book*, as he is in the New Testament of the Bible. More than one third of the content of the book (Part IV) is devoted to a narrative about him. Part IV is said to be a restatement of his life and teachings based on a gathering of "superior concepts" from over two thousand individuals who have lived since his times, as well as from "superhuman" and "superplanetary sources of information".

The following are attributed to Jesus, as in the Bible:^[2]

- He was both human and divine, a Son of God incarnate who was born to Mary and Joseph.
- He lived a perfect life.
- He performed many of the miracles described in the Bible, such as the resurrection of Lazarus, the turning of water into wine, the feeding of the five thousand, and numerous healings of the blind, diseased, and infirm.
- He taught twelve apostles, most of whom went on to spread his teachings.
- He was crucified, and on the third day after his death, rose from the dead.
- He will return to the world again some day.

Some differences with Christianity include:^{[9][24][28]}

- Jesus' crucifixion is not considered an atonement for the sins of humanity. The crucifixion is taught to be an outcome of the fears of religious leaders of the day, who regarded his teachings as a threat to their positions of authority.
- Jesus is the human incarnation of "Michael of Nebadon", one of more than 700,000 "Paradise Sons" of God, or "Creator Sons". Jesus is not considered the second person of the Trinity as he is in Christianity. The book refers to the Eternal Son as the second person of the Trinity.
- Jesus was born on earth through natural means of conception instead of a virgin birth.
- Jesus did not walk on water or perform some of the miracles that are attributed to him in the Bible.
- Jesus commissioned twelve women (and later more) as religious teachers, who traveled about with him and his apostles on their preaching missions.
- The book states that Jesus may return to the world many times. This contrasts with traditional Christian eschatology, in which Jesus returns only once.

Comparison to Buddhism

The Urantia Book considers Buddhism one of the "great international, interracial faiths" and says it "has shown an adaptability to the mores of many peoples that has been equaled only by Christianity."

Gautama Siddhartha is called a real prophet whose doctrines were "revolutionary and amazing" for their time. He is credited with being one of the seven outstanding teachers in human history in the matter of combining contemporaneous systems of ethical and religious teachings, a group that includes Moses, Laozi, and the Apostle Paul.

The teaching that a divine nature—the Buddha-nature—resides in all people, and that through their own endeavors people can attain a realization of this inner divinity, is cited as one of the clearest presentations of the concept of the Thought Adjuster to be found in non-revelatory religion.

The book says Gautama's experience was tragic, however, in that he was an "orphan prophet" whose philosophy failed early on to envision the reality of a spiritual God.

Despite this, the book states: "Buddhism is a living, growing religion today because it succeeds in conserving many of the highest moral values of its adherents. It promotes calmness and self-control, augments serenity and happiness,

and does much to prevent sorrow and mourning. Those who believe this philosophy live better lives than many who do not."

Comparison to other world religions

Facets of other world religions are incorporated in the book, including from Islam, Taoism, Judaism, Hinduism, Shinto, and Confucianism. For example, Paper 131, "The World's Religions" ^[29], discusses in more depth those aspects of different religions that have commonalities with what the book claims is the "religion of Jesus". There are also numerous other references to the world's major religions throughout Part III, "The History of Urantia", beginning with Paper 86, "Early Evolution of Religion" ^[30]. The perspective of *The Urantia Book* is that all religions should be studied to take "the best" from each.

Consideration as literature

The Urantia Book has been enjoyed by some as a form of science fiction, historical fiction, or fantasy. *The Urantia Book* is noted for its high level of internal consistency and an advanced writing style. Skeptic Martin Gardner, in a book otherwise highly critical of *The Urantia Book*, writes that it is "highly imaginative" and that the "cosmology outrivals in fantasy the cosmology of any science-fiction work known to me".^[9]

Parts I, II, and III are chiefly written in expository language. The papers are informational, matter-of-fact, and instructional. Part IV of the book is written as a biography of Jesus' life, and some feel it is a rich narrative with well-developed characters, high attention to detail, woven sub-plots, and realistic dialogue. Considered as literature, Part IV is favorably compared to other retellings of Jesus' life, such as *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* by José Saramago and *Behold the Man* by Michael Moorcock. Martin Gardner considers Part IV to be an especially "well-written, impressive work", and says, "Either it is accurate in its history, coming directly from higher beings in position to know, or it is a work of fertile imagination by someone who knew the New Testament by heart and who was also steeped in knowledge of the times when Jesus lived."

Critical views

Criticisms of claims as a revelation

In Paper 92, "The Later Evolution of Religion", the authors refer to the papers as the fifth revelation of "epochal significance" to humankind, the fourth epochal revelation having been the life of Jesus.

The claim of revelation in *The Urantia Book* has been criticized for various reasons. Skeptics such as Martin Gardner say it is a product of human efforts rather than a revelation because some of its science is flawed. Because the book does not support certain tenets of Christianity, such as for example the atonement doctrine, while at the same time presenting an account of parts of Jesus' life absent in the Bible, others with a Christian viewpoint have argued it cannot be genuine.^{[28][31]}

Other critics have felt that at over 2,000 pages, nearly twice the length of the King James Bible, it is too long, complex, and bureaucratic.^{[17][24][32]}

Criticism of science

In Paper 101, "The Real Nature of Religion," ^[33] the authors write:

We full well know that, while the historic facts and religious truths of this series of revelatory presentations will stand on the records of the ages to come, within a few short years many of our statements regarding the physical sciences will stand in need of revision in consequence of additional scientific developments and new discoveries. These new developments we even now foresee, but we are forbidden to include such humanly undiscovered facts in the revelatory records. Let it be made clear that

revelations are not necessarily inspired. The cosmology of these revelations is *not inspired*.

Skeptics like Martin Gardner see the science in *The Urantia Book* as clear reflections of the views that prevailed at the time the book is said to have originated. The claim by the authors that no unknown scientific discoveries could be imparted is seen as a ruse to allow mistakes to be dismissed later. That presentation of post-1955 scientific knowledge is avoided is taken to be evidence it was written by humans and not by celestial beings with superior knowledge.

Examples of criticisms regarding the science in *The Urantia Book* include:^[9]

- The described formation of the solar system is consistent with the Chamberlin-Moulton planetesimal hypothesis.[34] Though popular in the early part of the 20th century, by the early 1940s it was discarded by Henry Russell's argument that it was incompatible with the angular momentum of planets such as Jupiter.[35] The currently accepted scientific explanation for the origin of the solar system is based on the nebular hypothesis.
- The age of our universe is stated to be more than 1,000,000,000,000 (one trillion) years old and the universe is said to periodically expand and contract—respire—at 2-billion-year intervals. Current observations, however, suggest that the true age of the universe is approximately 13.7 billion years. The big bang theory is not supported.
- A fundamental particle called an "ultimaton" is proposed, with an electron being composed of 100 ultimatons. The particle is not known to be described anywhere else and the concept is not supported by modern particle physics.
- Some species are said to have evolved suddenly from single mutations without transitional species. The theory originated with Dutch botanist Hugo De Vries, but was short-lived and is not now supported.
- The book repeats the scientific understanding at the time of its publication that one side of the planet Mercury always is turned to the sun due to tidal locking. In 1965, radio astronomers discovered that Mercury actually rotates fast enough for all sides to see exposure to the sun.
- The book says that a solar eclipse was predicted in 1808 by the Native American prophet Tenskwatawa. The eclipse was actually predicted in late April 1806 and occurred on June 16, 1806.
- Controversial statements about human races can be found in the book. Supporters state that criticism has arisen mainly due to reading passages out of context. Gardner believes that William S. Sadler, who wrote some eugenicist works, had a hand in editing or writing the book, and that this is how the ideas were included.

While some adherents of the book believe that all of the information in *The Urantia Book* including its science is literally true, others accept the book's caveats and do not believe that the science is fully accurate.

Meredith Sprunger, a liberal believer in *The Urantia Book* and retired minister in the United Church of Christ, writes, "research has revealed that virtually all of the scientific material found in *The Urantia Book* was the accepted scientific knowledge of the period in which the book was written, was held by some scientists of that time, or was about to be discovered or recognized." He argues against its literal infallibility and that fundamentalism over the book is "just as untenable as Biblical fundamentalism".^[9]

Other believers maintain that the book has prophetically anticipated scientific advances already. They believe more of its science — if not all of it — will be proven correct in the future. Gardner evaluated many of these claims as of 1995 and found them unconvincing. Some arise because the book is said to have been indited by the revelators by 1935, but then was not published until 1955. Science discovered during the two intervening decades can be perceived as prophetic by believers, while skeptics think such facts were added prior to publication. For instance, the catalytic role that carbon plays in the sun's nuclear reactions is described in the book, though Hans Bethe's announcement of the discovery was not made until 1938.

The only apparent anticipation of science the book has made, in Gardner's opinion, is that it says the magnetic sense that homing pigeons possess is "not wholly wanting as a conscious possession by mankind". In 1980, a British zoologist, Robin Baker, published evidence that humans have a limited magnetic sense.

Mark McMenamin, a professor of geology, quotes a section of the book describing a billion-year-old supercontinent that subsequently split apart, forming ocean basins where early marine life developed. He says, "This amazing

passage, written in the 1930s, anticipates scientific results that did not actually appear in the scientific literature until many decades later." McMenamain also states, "Of course I am being selective here in my choice of quotations, and there are reams of scientifically untenable material in *The Urantia Book*."^[36]

Plagiarism allegations

The Urantia Book states in its Foreword that more than one thousand "human concepts representing the highest and most advanced planetary knowledge of spiritual values and universe meanings" were selected in preparing the papers. The authors say that they were required to "give preference to the highest existing human concepts pertaining to the subjects to be presented" and would "resort to pure revelation only when the concept of presentation has had no adequate previous expression by the human mind."

In recent years, students of the papers have found that the free use of other sources appears to be true.^{[9][24]} None of the material allegedly used from other sources is directly cited or referenced within the book.

In 1992, a reader of *The Urantia Book*, Matthew Block, self-published a paper that showed nineteen possible examples of *The Urantia Book* utilizing material published earlier.^[37] All of the source authors identified in Block's paper were published in English between 1905 and 1943 by U.S. publishers and are typically scholarly or academic works that contain concepts and wording similar to what is found in *The Urantia Book*. Block has since claimed to have discovered over 125 source books and articles, written by over 90 authors, which were incorporated into the papers.^[9]

The use of outside source materials was studied separately by Gardner and Gooch, and they concluded that the book did use many of the sources noted by Block. Gardner found that at least one of the source book authors was quoted in earlier works by Sadler, and most of the books purportedly would have been available to Sadler or Forum members in Chicago prior to 1955.

For instance, Gardner and Block note that Paper 85 appears to have been taken from the first eight chapters of *Origin and Evolution of Religion* by Edward Washburn Hopkins, published by Yale University Press in 1923. Each section of the paper corresponds to a chapter in the book, with several passages possibly used as direct material. Likewise, much of *The Urantia Book* material relating to the evolution of mankind appears to have been directly taken from Henry Fairfield Osborn, *Man Rises to Parnassus: Critical Epochs in the Prehistory of Man* published by Princeton University Press in 1928.

In one example cited by Block, the original author discusses the periodicity of the chemical elements and concludes that the harmony in the construction of the atom suggests some unspecified plan of organization. The authors of *The Urantia Book* assert that this harmony is evidence of the intelligent design of the universe. W. F. G. Swann writes on page 64 of *The Architecture of the Universe* (italics indicate edits as compared to *The Urantia Book*, bolding indicates deletions):

Starting from any one **of them [i.e., chemical elements]**, and noting some property such as **the melting point, for example**, the property would change as we went along the row, but as we continued it would gradually come back to the condition very similar to that which we started ... The eighth element was in many respects like the first, the ninth **like** the second, **the tenth like the third**, and so on. Such a slate of affairs point[s] **not only** to a varied internal structure, but also to a certain harmony in that variation suggestive of some organized plan in building the atom.

Contrast with *The Urantia Book's* version:

Starting from any one element, after noting some *one* property, such a quality will exchange for six consecutive elements, but on reaching the eighth, it tends to reappear, that is, the eighth chemically active element resembles the first, the ninth the second, and so on. Such a fact of the physical world unmistakably points to the sevenfold constitution of ancestral energy and is indicative of the fundamental reality of the sevenfold diversity of the creations of time and space.

Block and many believers do not see the use of human source materials as plagiarism. Block writes:

One probable reason that the human sources were left undisguised was to enable students to discern, through comparative analysis, how this coordination of planetary knowledge was actually effected. As mentioned above, the initial analyses have already proved tremendously illuminating in this regard. Another reason was to keep us aware of the book's anchorage in a specific time and place. While a very large part of the book is of timeless value and perennial applicability, some of its discussions directly address and respond to the world situation of the early 20th century. Thus, every generation will have to determine the relevance and applicability of certain of the book's teachings to its own situation.

Emerging from all these discoveries is the gratifying realization that the Urantia Book is exactly what its authors claim it to be.

Adherents

There is no way to gauge how many adherents there may be as there is no central organization to census. Informal study groups "tend to sprout, ripen, then vanish or splinter" and have not been counted reliably.^[24] Readers sometimes join study groups after reading on their own for years or decades, others join them soon after developing an interest in the book, while "for most, worship remains as individual as the act of reading."^[24] Disagreements over the legal ownership of the book, its interpretation, and the reception of new revelations have led to some splintering, though these disagreements appear to have been settled to the satisfaction of most adherents.^[38] The movement generally incorporates a nonsectarian view, contending that individuals with different religious backgrounds can receive the book's teachings as an enrichment rather than as a contradiction of their faiths.^[39]

The small movement inspired by *The Urantia Book* has not developed clergy or institutions such as churches, reading rooms, or temples.^{[24][38]} As of 2006, the Urantia Foundation had one office in Chicago and five people on staff.^[8]

Sarah Lewis notes that, "The Urantia Revelation is not securing legitimacy through historically known and accepted means to any great degree, nor is it even using common language that would increase the likelihood of understanding and therefore acceptance. It introduces new concepts and a new language, and this does not make acceptance any easier." She assesses that the movement is uncontroversial compared to other ones, "lacking the zealous proselytizing found within many other groups", and that it is therefore likely to remain small and unaffected by opposing views.^[3]

Urantia Foundation advocated a "slow growth" policy in the past and had not significantly marketed the book. Sales by Urantia Foundation went from 7,000 in 1990 to 24,700 in 1997, and steadily increased to nearly 38,000 in 2000, an "upturn that seems to represent a genuine trend rather than just some spike on a sales chart",^[24] however by 2006 the foundation reported worldwide annual sales of 13,380 copies.^[8] Approximately half of the books distributed by Urantia Foundation are in languages other than English, particularly Spanish and Russian.^[8] Since the book was determined to be in the public domain in 2001, other organizations, such as The Urantia Book Fellowship under the publishing name Uversa Press, have also published the book. Copies of *The Urantia Book* are on the Internet in various formats and it has been adapted to more recent platforms such as the Kindle and the iPhone / iPod Touch App Store. Several audio books of the text are also on the Internet.

The International Urantia Association had twenty-six reader associations worldwide as of 2002, and the Urantia Book Fellowship (formerly the Urantia Brotherhood, founded in 1955 with Urantia Foundation as the original social fraternal organization of believers) claimed roughly twelve hundred official members, with the highest concentrations in the West of the United States and the Sun Belt, especially California, Colorado, Florida, and Texas.^[24] It appears an increasing number of people are forming study groups, participating in Internet discussion groups, and hosting or visiting websites about it.^[24] Reader conferences take place around the world.^[40]

Symbols



One symbol described in *The Urantia Book* consists of three concentric azure circles on a white background. The circles are said to have symbolized several trinity associations in the history of humankind. The authors of *The Urantia Book* indicate its revealed meaning as being "the infinity, eternity, and universality of the Paradise Trinity of divine maintenance and direction."

Urantia Foundation, the original publisher, placed the concentric circles on the cover of *The Urantia Book* and has a United States trademark. The circles are used to indicate other organizations affiliated with the foundation.

The Urantia Association International, one of the main readership organizations in the movement, has been licensed by Urantia Foundation to use the three azure concentric circles on a white background.

Some other groups use the symbol in various altered forms. The Urantia Book Fellowship, an independent reader organization established in 1955, uses a similar symbol.



Popular culture

- Stevie Ray Vaughan (1954–1990), American blues-rock guitarist: "Stevie often brought along the book of Urantia and read Lindi passages from the strange publication."^[41]
- Robert Venosa, American artist-exhibited worldwide, represented in major collections, including noted museums, rock stars and European aristocracy: "As is obvious in my work, *The Urantia Book* is very present as a main source of inspiration. After my first reading of the book in 1968, I had a number of visions that, being an artist, I could only make manifest through painting."^[42]
- Kerry Livgren: The influence of the teachings of *The Urantia Book* can be felt in the lyrics of Kansas' 1979 album *Monolith*.
- In the book *Six Feet Under: Better Living through Death*, an in-universe companion piece to the television series *Six Feet Under*, *The Urantia Book* is highlighted in a past correspondence held by one of the main characters.
- In the 1983 book *Angels* by Denis Johnson, one character carries around *The Urantia Book* and prosylectizes to drug addicts.
- Karlheinz Stockhausen based his seven-opera cycle *Licht* on the cosmology of *The Urantia Book*.^[43]

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External links

- Urantia Foundation (<http://www.urantia.org/>) the original publisher but now one of several
- The Urantia Book Historical Society (<http://www.ubhistory.org/>)

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