

Translations bridging the gap between cultures

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Finland

BEFORE ADDRESSING THE SUBJECT matter itself, we must first examine what language and translations are and reach an understanding of the meaning of “culture.”

The Importance of Language

An Archangel of Nebadon instructs us:

The spread of civilization must wait upon language. Live and growing languages insure the expansion of civilized thinking and planning. During the early ages important advances were made in language. Today, there is great need for further linguistic development to facilitate the expression of evolving thought. [908:5]

Because language is based on and reflects human thinking, it must change, expand, and develop along with the expansion and development of human thought.

Language is man’s greatest and most serviceable thinking tool. [908:6]

Language is an indispensable feature of all human evolution and development. Language is the tool of all human thinking. Until we reach Havona, language is also our most important tool of expression and communication.

Language is a symbol system. Words and their grammatical modifiers that constitute a language are symbols of tangible things, actions, and abstract concepts. Words themselves are not tangible things, actions, or concepts. One important conclusion from this observation is that it is immaterial which words any language uses for those things and concepts that they symbolize. Because language is based on and



Finding the right words illustration

reflects human thinking, it must change, expand, and develop along with the expansion and development of human thought. This is one of the three reasons why every language undergoes changes: New words must be introduced and agreed upon by the speakers of any given language as soon as new concepts, tangible things, and actions appear in the environment where the language is spoken and written. This means that it is inaccurate to claim that this or that word does not “exist in our language.” The truth is that it **does** exist if there is a ▶

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GREETINGS FELLOW Urantia Book readers and aficionados of UAI Journal!

Welcome to the First Edition of the UAI Journal for 2010 and to the continued edification of the concepts and philosophies of our beloved tome, *The Urantia Book*. As one decade bridges us to the next decade of the 21st century, our contributors will construct several conceptual viaducts with which to connect theory and reality and show us how we might universally transcend from one epoch to another. *The wise man bridges the gap by laying out the path by means of which he can get from where he is to where he wants to go.* [J. P. Morgan]

Our first essay, *Translations — Bridging the Gap Between Cultures*, by long time reader, contributor, and translator, Seppo Kanerva of Finland, examines the quintessential missing link for world peace, and the one thing that portends the inauguration of the epoch of light and life — One Common Language! Seppo's perspective envisions and emphasizes what it will take to connect the countless canyons of cultural concourse. As an experienced translator, Seppo knows of what he speaks when he says, *Translations enable us to understand, comprehend, and grasp cultures other than our own. Each culture would benefit from and enjoy the best in other cultures.* He also harkens to what history has proven many times... *Each culture, however, comes also with features that others find curious, odd, unacceptable, disgusting, and disquieting.* The challenge that he presents to us we must accept — as it is not only terrestrial, it is universal and eternal. As Seppo and the revelators tell us, we all will eventually be speaking Satanian, Nebadonese, and Uversan, in that order, as we move along our

eternal adventure of finding God... English anyone?

The second article in question, by Polly Firedman, queries strategy in the *Differences in Question Methods?* You might ask... isn't a question just a question? Polly just might answer that as she compares the teaching methodology of Socrates and Jesus, inquisitively elucidating how both styles might lead us to a global understanding. She discerns their tactics clearly, *Socrates laid a foundation for exploration of truth. He appealed to the mind of reason whereas Jesus appealed to the heart through the mind and led the mortal to find his own truth.* I also ask you — should we not use both of these guiding principles while attempting to heighten understanding of any concept or ideal?

Our next essay, *A Bridge into the Future*, is a speculative foray into the unknown, by Carmelo Martinez, who shared his expose' at the UAI International conference in Malaga, Spain, 2009. Carmelo erects his perspective and offers a towering viewpoint of the current state our planet. He outlines the threshold of change in respect to planetary epochs and points to the limitations of human influence as an impediment. From atop his bridge into the future he gazes toward the coming dawn of a new age where *humanity may suffer certain delays, even backward steps in evolution, but in the long run, it is destined to pass through the different developing planetary epochs and end in the age of perfection of light and life.* I can only happily add... as all the evidence concerning this has not yet been collected, there is still hope!

Our final essay also asks a very hard question. This question has probably been asked by every man since Adam, and though made famous by Tina Turner in 1984 still begs for the

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real answer... *What DOES Love Have to do With IT?* Although directed at *The Urantia Book* itself, the latest investigation into the answer comes from Kathleen Swadling, William Wentworth and Nigel Nunn of Australia, and was a combined presentation to the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions, given on December 3-9, Melbourne, Australia, introducing *The Urantia Book*. This presentation is exceptional ▶

Translations bridging the gap between cultures, continued from page 1

need for such a word and if it is readily comprehensible, has been introduced, and adopted.

The very need to create words which symbolize abstract concepts or actions also explains why languages change and grow. Virtually all words that denote abstract concepts are borrowed from the world of words symbolizing very tangible things and actions; but, their meanings have undergone modifications and changes. For a while the two meanings—the concrete and the abstract—live side by side, but there is a tendency for the tangible denotation to disappear and be soon forgotten.

Likewise, the human tendency to simplify and modernize leads to changes in all languages. These changes concern grammatical rules and other conventions that govern their usage and tend to become simple and less cumbersome. In the dawn of the evolution of languages, the grammatical structures of all primitive languages were simple, enabling the expression of only very basic ideas. Soon, however, a need was felt to express much more complex ideas, and this resulted, finally, in unbelievably cumbersome grammatical conventions and rules. Now, it is realized that one can do without an excess of awkward grammatical rules. Languages change to the

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Editorial, continued from opposite page

and actually answers the question intelligently and succinctly.

Kathleen sets the anticipatory tone in her introduction stating, *The Urantia Papers reveal a fresh perspective on Personality. They then trace for us the rise and role of Love, from the eternal core of the Absolute directly into the human heart.* If that doesn't perk your interest the first line of William's intro certainly will... "*The Urantia Book is not in itself a religion. Rather, it focuses on the spiritual impulse which gives rise to religions. While there is some truth contained in all religions, it is to the common root of all religions that the book directs attention.* As I read through it I experienced the same joy and wonder that came to me the first time I read through *The Urantia Book*. Nigel's final presentation was the perfect capstone, utilizing his background in mathematics and astrophysics along with his cognitive diagrams he brought depth and dimension to the spiritual concepts that even non readers could grasp, *The Urantia Book is offering us two things: the first is simply a description of the way things are, a new and wider frame in which to think; the second is something that required this wider frame: a revelation about ourselves.*

Had I been unaware of *The Urantia Book* and had the pleasure of hearing the three speakers above, I would have bought a copy on the spot and started reading it before I left the building. After reading this article you too will know exactly what love has to do with *The Urantia Book* ... Everything!

Happy and enlightened reading!

Suzanne Kelly ■

extent that very early phases of any language are almost, even fully, incomprehensible to modern speakers of the same language.

One outcome that reflects language as a system of thinking is the stratification of language into distinct levels of language. These levels include street language, colloquial parlance, received or standard language, professional jargon, academic language, etc., each reflecting the thinking of their respective speakers. Many times people who master just the street and/or colloquial variants of a language find it hard or impossible to understand the language of scholars and academics.

All languages are inaccurate and open to interpretation. Ultimately, every human has his own unique language that doesn't necessarily conform to that of other speakers of the same common language. Although inaccuracy is sometimes intentional, in most cases it appears unwittingly. Intentional imprecision is used to create mental images and express sentiments rather than exact ideas. Poetry cultivates this linguistic tool profusely. Another feature of language that results in inaccuracies and can cause misunderstandings is the prolific cultivation of figures of speech. I would estimate that one tenth of what we say or write consists of figures of speech. Just to cite one example, when we write or say "the dawn of civilization," we are using a figure of speech. We are not discussing the **sun rising** over civilization, but rather the **early beginnings** of civilization. Some people find it difficult to understand figures of speech; they fail to interpret them and instead understand them literally, in other words, they take them at their **face value**, which again, is another figure of speech.

The fact that we have multifarious languages is deplorable and something that needs, in the long run, to be eliminated.

Multiplicity of Languages—a Richness?

The world boasts of thousands of languages and dialects and it is a universal belief that this multiplicity of languages constitutes a cultural treasure which must be preserved and conserved at any cost. Actions are taken to rescue dying languages and resources are allocated to a revitalization of small minority languages of a few hundred or thousand speakers.

The notion that the current multiplicity of languages would be something to preserve is false. Language is a symbol system; the words of any language are just symbols of things, actions, meanings, values, and abstract concepts. Words are not those concepts or meanings themselves. The symbols can be changed, yet the things and concepts that they symbolize remain as valid as before. The fact that we have multifarious languages is deplorable and something that needs, in the long run, to be eliminated. The revelation in many passages deplores the multiplicity of languages:

Language differences have ever been the great barrier to the extension of peace. The conquest of dialects must precede the spread of a culture throughout a race, over a continent, or to a whole world. A universal language promotes peace, insures culture, and augments happiness. Even when the tongues of a world are reduced to a few, the mastery of these by the leading cultural peoples mightily influences the achievement of world-wide peace and prosperity. [908:7]

[T]he barrier of language prevented the full reciprocation of the various Occidental nations. [899:3]

The English language is currently gaining ground as being the international language, used in trade, commerce, technology, academic education and research, navigation, air traffic, etc. The indispensability of learning the English language is widely recognized and respected.

Instead of finding one language ready for adoption, they [Adam and Eve] were confronted by the world-wide confusion of hundreds upon hundreds of local dialects. [839:4]

The Caligastia defection destroyed the hope of the world for a universal language, at least for untold ages. [747:0]

The post-Adamic epoch is the dispensation of internationalism....[G]radually the languages of the races give way to the tongue of the violet people. Universal peace and co-operation are seldom attained until the races are fairly well blended, and until they speak a common language. [594:1]

The absence of a common language has always impeded the growth of peace groups. [787:5]

During the post-bestowal Son age **there are many nations, mostly determined by land distribution, but only one race, one language, and one religion.** [597:1]

The realization of social brotherhood depends much on personal transformations and planetary adjustments, one of which is the **development of a common language and the multiplication of multilinguists** [597:4]

Ultimately, there must—and there will—be just one common language, that of the violet race. Although the violet race, as such, no longer exists, it is justified to believe that the English language comes the closest to what the “tongue of the violet race” might mean in this context. The path of evolution is this: In the beginning there are many languages, yet one which is generally recognized as **the** international language and which a majority of people learn and master. The English language is currently gaining ground as being **the** international language, used in trade, commerce, technology, academic education and research, navigation, air traffic, etc. The indispensability of learning the English language is widely recognized and respected. Meanwhile, polyglots and multilingual translators help people to become familiar with the cultures of other nations who speak different languages.

We may recall that Jesus mastered three languages and acted as a translator as well. Machiventa Melchizedek mastered as many as six languages.

All of the observations above concern only our planetary conditions. In the course of our ascension careers we need to learn several languages: Satanian, Nebadonese, and Uversan. The learning process up there is much like down here. Until we achieve the mastery of these much more advanced celestial languages, there will be morontia companions, interpreters, and other beings readily available to translate for us during our ascension.

Translations are Necessary and Imperative

Our world is well behind the normal development of other planets. One indication of this backwardness is the multiplicity of languages; the glaring absence of one global tongue. This situation will last far into the future. International interaction and communication, as well as understanding of other cultures, requires that there be people who, apart from their own language, master at least one more language.

International interaction is expanding exponentially; consequently, there is a great and growing need of translators and translations. Translators, people who are able to transmute the word symbols of one language to those of another, are necessary, and their products—translations—are indispensable. Because languages are inaccurate, because words have many meanings, and because there is a plethora of grammatical structures, inflections, and modifiers, it means that only humans can comprehend and translate languages. The circumstance that practically all words have multiple meanings is something that we do not usually realize. For example, the simple English verb “to realize” is listed with five different meanings in Finnish dictionaries. Thus, translating does not denote any mechanical act of changing the words of one language into those of another. All words, with their usually varied meanings, always appear in a context that enables us to grasp the intended meaning. No machine can understand context. No machine can grasp meanings. Hence, no computer can produce acceptable translations. The Internet is teeming with translation engines, but their output “translations” are incomprehensible, fraught with blunders, and oftentimes just ridiculous.

Yet, not everyone who understands or masters another language is capable of translating. The most common feature of poor translations is that they are almost, if not fully, mechanical transmutations of the words of one language into those of another. The figures of speech are poorly, if at all, understood, the intended inaccuracies have gone unnoticed, the rendering is slavishly following the grammatical structures of the translated language; the whole product is excessively literal.

The “translator” did not master the linguistic features, resources, and opportunities of his own language. Occasionally his mastery of grammar and orthography may leave much to desire. This “translator”

simply transmuted words; he failed to transform concepts and meanings. His product is difficult and unpleasant to read; occasionally impossible to comprehend. His work does not do much, if any, justice to the original. Faithful translations are the products of good translators, who are very few and far between. Quality translations do justice to the original, flow freely, are fluent, transmit and convey the original ideas, concepts, and meanings accurately; they do **not** feel like translations, rather, they feel as if they were the originals. We may, with full reason, consider a good translation a piece of art. All translations of *The Urantia Book* must meet these “artful” criteria.

As our intention is to study the interaction between translations and cultures, we may next try to understand what the word “culture” possibly means.

An Attempted Definition of Culture

As we are to examine language, translations, and cultures, it would seem proper to determine what we understand “culture” to be. In a narrow sense, “culture” means fine arts: literature, painting, sculpture, cinema, music, theatre, etc. The title of this discourse refers to a broader definition. It continues to denote arts (in the same meaning as in the narrow understanding), but also learning, science, education, philosophy, institutional religions, commerce, industry, sports, mores and customs, notions of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, what is tolerated and what is condemned, what is considered valuable and meaningful, respect or the absence of respect for human and individual rights, the extent of self-expression, etc. Language itself is considered an aspect of culture. Culture, in short, means the entire spectrum of human activities within a given community, nation, or region.

It is not possible to enumerate the currently existing cultures of our world; suffice it to say that they are many and multifarious. And, there exists a gap that signifies a failure of understanding between cultures.

Translations Bridging the Intercultural Gap

Let us first learn what *The Urantia Book* has to say about this subject. A Mighty Messenger left us with these messages and instructions:

Brotherhood is impossible on a world whose inhabitants are so primitive that they fail to recognize the folly of unmitigated selfishness. There must occur an exchange of national and racial literature. Each race must become familiar with the thought of all races; each nation must know the feeling of all nations. Ignorance breeds suspicion, and suspicion is incompatible with the essential attitude of sympathy and love. [597:5]

The quoted instructions do not fully address the intercultural gap that we are examining, yet they do give us a lead to follow. The Messenger says, among other things, There must occur an exchange of national and racial literature. Each race must become familiar with the

thought of all races; each nation must know the feeling of all nations [597:5]. We have good reason to interpret the Messenger’s words literature, thought, and feeling to denote “culture,” by and large.

In so many ways, it is in our interest to implement these instructions. It is imperative that every nation becomes familiar with the cultures of other nations. That familiarity eliminates suspicion and fosters global brotherhood, sympathy, and love. Each culture finds expression in a language. That very expression is a mighty obstacle; namely, since cultures are expressed in thousands of languages no one person can reach a complete and comprehensive understanding of a great many cultures. Nobody can master thousands of languages. Translations, produced by people who have taken the trouble to learn other languages, are the only realistic method of circumventing and overcoming this obstacle. Usually we think of translations as just translated novels or textbooks. However, modern means of communication, like the Internet, television documentaries and newscasts, the radio, newspapers, magazines, etc., make cultural exchange and interaction both rapid and effective. They spread translations everywhere. We may not always remember that many television documentaries, newscasts and other programs, theatrical plays, and newspaper or magazine articles are translations. These translations are very effectively bridging the gap between cultures; a gap characterized by the general ignorance of one culture about the essentials of another.

Translations enable us to recognize, comprehend, and grasp cultures other than our own. Each culture would benefit from and enjoy what is best in other cultures. However, each culture comes with features that others find curious, odd, unacceptable, disgusting, and disquieting. Such features are apt to breed and foster suspicion, even rejection and hostility. When we realize the need to understand other cultures we also understand that we do not necessarily need to approve of every feature within them. It is important that we understand the reasons why those disquieting features form part of a given culture, and quality translations help us to this gap of understanding.

The Urantia Book, the latest revelation, which is not part of any single culture but which will ultimately become a feature of our planetary culture, has been and will be a matter of suspicion if people cannot read it in their maternal language. The mission of the revelation has hardly begun, and consequently, the moment for it to be translated into a great number of languages is upon us. Only culturally accurate translations can enable its world-wide mission of personal religion, brotherhood, and love, to begin in earnest.

Seppo Kanerva

Málaga, 19 April 2009 ■

Quality translations do justice to the original, flow freely, are fluent, transmit and convey the original ideas, concepts, and meanings accurately; they do not feel like translations, rather, they feel as if they were the originals. We may, with full reason, consider a good translation a piece of art.

Differences in question methods

Polly serves as a teacher/facilitator with Urantia Book Internet School (UBIS) and is a member of the Board of Directors. She is a firm believer in the philosophy and purpose of UBIS which uses the Jesusonian approach and continues to define and refine that philosophy through its presentation and discussion of teachings found in *The Urantia Book*.

POLLY FRIEDMAN
USA

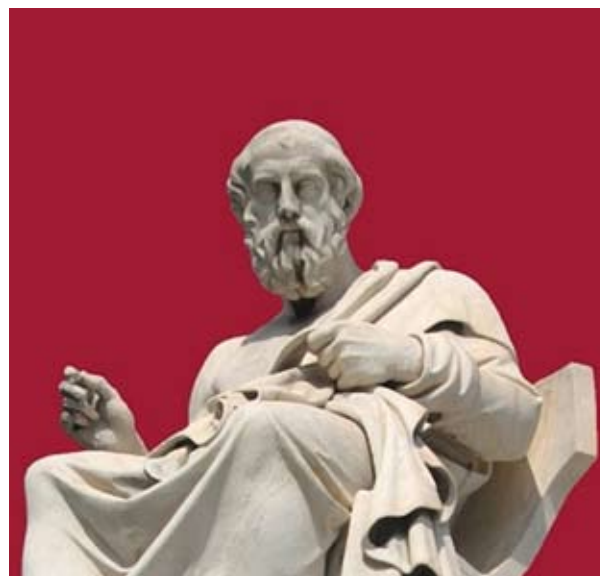
THESE DAYS WITH A RENEWED FOCUS ON education within the Urantia movement there is frequent referral to the “question method” of teaching as a single method. When the use of a question method is brought up, the Socratic method of teaching is often understood as the method referred to. The fact is, the Socratic question method is a particular method of questioning that laid a foundation in educating but is narrower in scope than the types of questions Jesus of Nazareth used.

Let us assume those of us who are educators primarily use Jesus as our model and guide in all facets of educating. The questions and methods that Jesus used are not even “method”—but rather an approach that not only expands the method that Socrates used but goes far beyond in scope. This, Jesus combined with many various ways of teaching—also using parables, sermons, dissertation, and of course, examples.

Because I have always been interested in education, I decided to explore these differences and illustrate why the so-called “Socratic method” and the questioning sometimes used by Jesus are distinctly different. If indeed Jesus is our teacher, and we are ideally using his kind of questions as one approach to educating, it would not necessarily be the kind of questioning Socrates used. Though Socrates and Jesus both used questions in their methods of educating, the purposes were entirely different. Socrates was interested in finding wisdom and knowledge. He also realized that he did not possess full wisdom.

He was, himself, a seeker. Jesus knew that he knew and was revealing truth to the seeker. He possessed wisdom, knowledge, and an understanding of men. He personified truth. Let us look more closely at Socrates’ method first in contrast with the approach Jesus used.

Though Socrates and Jesus both used questions in their methods of educating, the purposes were entirely different. Socrates was interested in finding wisdom and knowledge.



Sculpture of the philosopher Socrates

The style of Socrates

Socrates was born in Athens, Greece in 470 B.C. and led a simple life of apparent hardship and poverty. He left no writings and what we know is from his pupil, Plato, who described his mentor’s life and philosophy in *The Dialogues*. Plato explained that Socrates had a strong belief in God as a ruler of the world. He also believed in the soul of man and that it is immortal. His prayer to God was, “Give me what is good.”

Through questioning, Socrates tried to find reason. He was concerned with ethics and used inductive argument to attempt to find logic. Even more, he looked for definitions for ethical character and conduct. He believed man’s goal was to make one’s soul as good as possible because he believed the soul is “the seat of character and intelligence.” The soul, he believed, is the essence of man. He knew he was not an authority, but was always exploring in the manner of conversation.

Technically, the term “Socratic questioning” is used to describe a kind of question in which the original question assumes the form of a hypothesis. It is a statement of fact in the form of a question. The definition of a hypothesis from Webster’s II is:

“A theory that explains a set of facts and can be treated as an investigation.”

It goes like this. The questioner asks a question that assumes a fact.

After the response, the questioner reformulates a new question in light of the nature of the discourse. Thus the discourse leads to a dialogue in an attempt to reach logic. This has also become a distinct technique which is used in a lawyer’s training to develop what seems to be a logical conclusion.

An interesting life parallel is that both Jesus and Socrates were not only great, innovative teachers who influenced the entire world, but both were put to death

for their beliefs and did not protest their arrests. They did not leave writings or records, yet they inspired men throughout the centuries.

The Urantia Book has this to say about Socrates:

Socrates and his successors, Plato and Aristotle, taught that virtue is knowledge, goodness, health of the soul; that it is better to suffer injustice than to be guilty of it, that it is wrong to return evil for evil, and that the gods are wise and good. Their cardinal virtues were: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice...In Greece, believing was subordinated to thinking; in Palestine thinking was held subject to believing. Much of the strength of Christianity is due to its having borrowed heavily from both Hebrew morality and Greek thought. [1079: 3 and 5] (emphasis added)

The style of Jesus

This last quote is a perfect lead-in to how the questions of Jesus were different from Socrates. Though his questions involved thinking and reason, they first appealed to the heart and soul of the individual. Although there are similarities of exploring and probing, Jesus did not use a method as such. I want to emphasize the word “approach” because it is bigger than method. Jesus was genuine in his concern and caring, wanting to lift up the individual to a new transformative experience.

Jesus’ approach was varied and diverse, depending on his audience. He always built on what the individual already understood to expand his vision, never tearing down a belief. He corrected at times, but did not debate or get caught up in semantics. The purpose of his questions was to open the mind in order to allow spirit influence to bring the light of truth. He was dealing with revelation, change, and the new dynamics of his time. It is fascinating to study the questions of Jesus because they are often a response to a question or remark that is addressed to him. The return question puts the focus on the person who is asking, and perhaps the “why” is as important as the literal question.

An example from *The Urantia Book* would be helpful here:

Jesus enters the home of Flavius whose house is adorned with art treasures that Jesus appears interested in. Flavius takes him on a tour and is amazed that Jesus does not rebuke him about his art collection. Jesus sees that Flavius is bewildered and asks,

Because you appreciate the beauty of things created by my Father and fashioned by the artistic hands of man, why should you expect to be rebuked? Because Moses onetime sought to combat idolatry and the worship of false gods, why should all men frown upon the reproduction of grace and beauty? [1600:3]

Jesus also asked personal questions showing his sincere interest and reaching an inner place that the listener could identify with in his or her life struggles. Jesus gently guided them to new vistas that stimulated and stretched the soul as well as the mind. He subtly made suggestions so the student could experience his own personal delight in delicious discovery. Jesus led people to gems of truth for further exploration; he did not deal with supposition or conjecture. A good shepherd takes his sheep to a pastoral table and then frees them to feast on the rewards. With Jesus, there is no “right” answer but there is a change in the way we look at the universe. From this new change in perception follows belief-faith and commitment. This is not rhetoric, this is healing!

Jesus’ approach was varied and diverse, depending on his audience. He always built on what the individual already understood to expand his vision, never tearing down a belief.

Socrates laid a foundation for exploration of truth. He appealed to the mind of reason whereas Jesus appealed to the heart through the mind and led the mortal to find his own truth. Greek thought joined with revelatory truth to bring man closer to God than ever before.

In our world today, we are far richer in knowledge and awareness than at any time in history. We have the advantage of a revelation and the technical means to reach millions of souls. This latest good news is right before us and we have the ability to go to it again and again for study, inspiration, and reality check. If we do not understand a particular passage or line we can go back to reread, ponder and even memorize. Together in small and large groups we can analyze, synthesize, and summarize. The teacher/facilitator does not need to give “answers” or interpret.

This is truly a **new** way of learning. We are exactly the opposite of theological pedagogy which lectures endless information. The teacher rather encourages self-discovery and discussion that will hopefully lead the student to spiritual experiences and an application of truth that he/she shares with others. This will take hold and grow, influencing not only the student but also the teacher, for each of us ideally becomes both learners and teachers as we pass by!

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The Urantia Book — a bridge into the future

[Transcribed from a speech given at the UAI Conference in Malaga, Spain in April 2009]

CARMELO MARTINEZ
Spain

ACCORDING TO SOME “PROPHETS OF THE future,” this room in which we find ourselves today will be, in some decades, flooded by the nearby Mediterranean Sea due to climate change. They assure us that the actions of man are harming our planet in such a way that in a very short time, the consequences will be irreversible; we are causing alterations in the earth’s natural balance, and they warn us that in case we do not take measures soon, the planet will not be able to recover.

Not long ago, it was said that the hole in the ozone layer eventually would render the planet uninhabitable and I remember that some decades ago they assured us that acid rain would make the earth an arid and barren desert.

We are being told that we are in serious danger of destroying the planet, and with it, humankind itself.

At the same time, social inequalities seem, today, to be larger than ever in the past. In contrast to a first world of opulence, the large populations on the planet have to survive with less than one dollar a day. Many inhabitants of this planet have no access to drinkable water and hundreds of millions of Urantians are going hungry, among them, many, many children.

Today, despite the many dictatorships that still exist, the trend toward universal suffrage and the representative system of government can be seen throughout the planet.

The exploitation by man of man, sometimes in a clear manner and other times more subtly, is the generalized method of production on our planet. The economies are guided, not by a social service purpose, but by exclusively pursuing personal profits.

And I wonder, is the current situation heralding the coming of the Horsemen of Apocalypse and the end of the world? Is humanity experiencing its worst time in history?

True, human activity has an influence on climate; it modifies natural balances, causes extinction of some species, over-exploits natural resources... But I wonder, is this action by itself sufficient to destroy the planet? We should not believe everything the television tells us.

And again I wonder, is humanity experiencing its worst time in history?



Cloud crossing bridge photo

My answer is that this is not the case. In spite of mass poverty, destitution, and hunger across the planet, humanity is in the best moment of its history; we have never had it better. I argue this, because I look at the forest of humanity’s evolution as a whole, not just at the trees of present trouble.

A couple of centuries ago, the awakening of yearnings for liberty, equality, and fraternity, triggered revolutions, American and French, and inaugurated an era of government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Today, despite the many dictatorships that still exist, the trend toward universal suffrage and the representative system of government can be seen throughout the planet.

Around two hundred years ago, man’s ambition and ingenuity flowed from England during the Industrial Revolution. This was the outset of the technological development process that is, in current times, culminating in the transformation of world communications and resulting in the planet as a global village.

The technological advances resulting from this revolution are unquestionable in many respects. Disease control has made important progress, although it is true that benefits thereof do not always reach everyone who needs them; life expectancy at birth, at least for a portion of world population, has increased significantly in the last century.

Machines of our invention are making life easier. They have increased productivity in the soils, and therefore food production; they have reduced total working time, therefore allowing more spare time for personal culture; they have improved the quality of life, and therefore the happiness of many people.

True, pollution, climate change, and weapons of mass destruction, as well as greed and exploitation between men are definite threats; social inequalities, poverty, and hunger are all serious problems; but from a global point of view, which aspects of life have not had positive advances in the last centuries?

In order to examine the evolution of humanity, let us look at the forest, not at the trees.

Planetary epochs

In *The Urantia Book*, we find the great forest of humanity's evolution: planetary epochs.

Two years ago, in this same room at our 7th National Conference, I gave a presentation of planetary ages on evolutionary worlds and their development on Urantia. I am not going to repeat now what I said in that presentation (you can find it in the August 2007 issue of UAI Journal), but I will emphasize that planetary epochs are actually unfolding on Urantia, even though they are following quite an irregular path. Current humanity status is just another stage in the unfolding of planetary epochs, and eventually, the future of our planet lies in the ages of light and life—the culmination in perfection of the various physical aspects of the planet on one hand, and of the evolution of humanity on the other.

In the forest of the evolution of our humanity, there are trees that are sick, even dying, but the forest itself is today in better shape than yesterday, and tomorrow it will be in better shape than today.

The message of *The Urantia Book* is clear in this respect: humanity may suffer certain delays, even backward steps in evolution, but in the long run, it is destined to pass through the different developing planetary epochs and end in the age of perfection of light and life. Actions of men (and also of heavenly administrators) can delay the evolutionary course of the planet, but the Father's will shall always be, in the end, completely fulfilled.

The threshold of an age change

A million years ago Life Carriers managed to culminate the evolution of species in the emergence of human beings on Urantia. Five hundred thousand years ago Caligastia arrived, bringing along organization and culture to our planet, though he later destroyed a large portion of what he achieved. Thirty-eight thousand years ago Adam and Eve came, and despite their failings, they were able to infuse our races with certain genetic uplifts, allowing us to better receive and assimilate spirit influences. Five thousand years ago Machiventa Melchizedek appeared and rekindled the concept of a loving God the Father that had nearly been lost. Two thousand years ago, in Bethlehem, there was born as a helpless infant our Creator Son, Michael of Nebadon, heralding to us the arrival of the kingdom of heaven—the brotherhood of the sons of God on this planet.

Today, humanity finds itself with the capability of destroying its own environment—it is realizing that it is unbalanced and disoriented, and it is undergoing a profound crisis of values. In spite of all of this, humanity has been able to run a long track in its evolution and has received sufficient influences along its history as to be prepared to take the next step.

We do not have a single planetary government, but the almost instantaneous communication across the planet is growing a consciousness of planetary citizenship. We do not have a single race, but the ease of travel and migration in the search for a better future are efficiently

mixing the diverse ethnicities. We do not have a single culture, but the communications that we have on hand are causing our planet to become a global village. We do not have a single religion, but many men and women do not find satisfaction in the existing religions and are looking for something better.

Without any doubt we are on the threshold of a new age.

Next age on Urantia

The midwayers who wrote Part IV describe our future by telling us:

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. [2083:1]

Jesus of Nazareth ushered in the arrival of the kingdom of heaven, but his apostles and disciples did not understand him. In consequence, the concept dozed in the larval stage inside the cocoon of Christian churches. But it has not disappeared; it was inaugurated by Jesus two thousand years ago and is still alive. Its growth started two thousand years ago, and it will run without stopping until reaching its climax of highest perfection in the ages of light and life.

I do believe that the time is coming for such a larva to wake-up and emerge from its lethargy and that such an occasion will become the next Urantia age. The current state of humanity is the appropriate stimulus for the larva of the brotherhood of sons of God to revive and to begin exhibiting its influence in the evolution of the planet.

Without any doubt we are on the threshold of a new age

Midwayers advise us not to ...*become discouraged by the apparently slow progress of the kingdom idea on Urantia. Remember that the order of progressive evolution is subjected to sudden and unexpected periodical changes in both the material and the spiritual worlds.* [1863:12]

The midwayers exclaim:

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! [2083:4]

The “Master’s program”—his teachings about the kingdom of heaven—has such a strength that, in knowing it, ...*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.* [2085:2]

This will be the engine soon to move the evolution of humanity, and to support my belief, I will quote something that Jesus preached in his sermon at Pella on the five “phases, or epochs.” He referred to two of them that I believe, on the one hand, are the next steps for man, and on the other hand, are our evolutionary goal. They are:

The prospect of the more perfect fulfillment of the will of God, the advance toward the dawn of a new social order in connection with improved spiritual living — the next age of man. [1863:3]

The kingdom in its fullness, the future spiritual age of light and life on earth. [1863:4]

Midwayers also remind us that *...Jesus referred one phase of the kingdom to the future and did, on numerous occasions, intimate that such an event might appear as a part of a world crisis.* [1863:13]

As I have mentioned, Jesus gave life to the larva of the kingdom of heaven two thousand years ago; this larva has lain slumbering until today, but its time has arrived. Humanity has reached an evolutionary state in which this larva will wake up and drive human society onward until reaching the fullness of the kingdom in the ages of light and life.

The Urantia Book: a bridge into the future

But, the kingdom is not a social organization or a religious institution. Rather, it lies within every single one of us. The kingdom of heaven that Jesus proclaimed is *...the will of his heavenly Father dominant and transcendent in the heart of the believer* [1866:2]; it is *...that inward and spiritual fellowship with God the Father which so certainly and directly manifests itself as outward and loving service for man* [1862:6]. *The religion of the kingdom is personal, individual; the fruits, the results, are familial, social* [1862:7].

Many more similar statements can be found in *The Urantia Book*, and they show us that the advancement toward the next step of evolution rises up, first inside men and women, and is then able to influence the overall society. Therefore, we are dealing with a new social order: a social order of cooperation—not of competition; of mutual support—not of confrontation, of brotherhood—not of enmity; of peace—not of war. Its foundation and starting point, though, is within every individual; it is the kingdom of heaven within us. Therefore, let us not search for a new society, let us try to establish the kingdom in our hearts, and the new society will be its unavoidable consequence.

It is stated that *The Urantia Book* is for the future, and it is not difficult to believe so. I can easily imagine a future in which humanity knows the real message of Jesus and is in the pursuit of implementing it. It is a future in which the quarantine is finished and universe communications have been restored. A future in which people begin to know how the Father's will—such a superb scheme— unfolds in creation. Apparently, *The Urantia Book* is planned for that future time.

...a future in which the quarantine is finished and universe communications have been restored.



Bridge over river painting

However, we have the book in advance, and it is stated that such a circumstance is for the purpose of providing its translation to as many planet languages as possible and to advance in the training of leaders and teachers.

The book is here, furthermore, to serve as a bridge into the future of humanity, to make easier the stepping into the next planet age. And for such a function we all have a role to play. For some reason, *The Urantia Book* has a special significance to certain people, like us, versus a majority to whom the book tells nothing. In some way, *The Urantia Book* has found us, and there must be a reason for that.

Without any doubt we have to disseminate the teachings of *The Urantia Book* as well as study and deepen our own understanding of its message. But above all, we have to establish the kingdom in our hearts. This is the real engine of humanity progress, and this is what is expected from us, those “crazy people” who read this book.

The Urantia Papers explain to us many things about Deity and the unfolding of its plans for creation, that fantastic organization of systems, constellations, universes, and superuniverses; they rediscover for us our forgotten history, and marvel us with the amazing life of a very close-to-us Jesus of Nazareth. But the core message of the book is: we all have a Father that loves us infinitely, who has a house—his own house—ready for us, with countless mansions for our development and happiness, and who expects from us to present him with the only gift which we can really give: our will to do his will.

And this is the message of *The Urantia Book* for the next age—the ideals that will inspire the next human advance. It is expected of us to be the pioneers of this advance—for us to cross the gap that *The Urantia Book* bridges into the future, thus establishing the kingdom in our hearts and becoming the seeds for a better society, a society which will be one step nearer the perfection of light and life. ■

The Urantia Book— what's love got to do with it?

A combined presentation by readers from Australia to the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions, December 3–9, Melbourne, Australia.

KATHLEEN SWADLING, WILLIAM
WENTWORTH & NIGEL NUNN
Australia

Part 1: Kathleen Swadling (Sydney)

GOOD AFTERNOON AND THANKS FOR coming along to our workshop: *The Urantia Book—What's Love got to do it?* The theme for this Parliament of the World's Religions is *Make a World of Difference: Hearing Each Other, Healing the Earth*. No doubt most of us attending this event do so because we care, because we *desire* to make a difference. And unless we really *desire* to make a difference, unless we *desire* to help, to hear and to heal, then we won't.

But where does this desire come from? How does one move beyond old attitudes and narrow motivations? How do we get to that place where we become truly interested in one another? And how does this interest become friendship and ripen into *love*? Well if we can answer this, we've found the key; for once we love someone, the desire wells up to help, to hear and to heal.

But where does this desire to *love* one another come from? It appears naturally enough among family and friends; it builds between neighbours who work together; and it begins between strangers once trust is won. And why is Love so powerful and so efficient at resolving knots in our relationships? To understand this we need to know more about what and who we are.

The Urantia Papers offer new answers to these age old questions. As well as providing a larger frame in which to think—one that may satisfy scientists, philosophers and religionists alike—the Urantia Papers reveal a fresh perspective on Personality. They then trace for us the rise and role of Love, from the eternal core of the Absolute directly into the human heart.

This afternoon we'd like to share with you a little bit about *The Urantia Book*—a book that many people from every walk of life and from every cultural and religious background are finding truly inspiring. They are finding the teachings have profoundly impressed and changed their lives, stimulating them to new levels of spiritual growth and enlightened living. I'll introduce our main speakers to you



Urantia books and roses collage

in just a few moments, but first a very brief overview of this 2,097 page book.

The Urantia Book was first published in 1955 in the United States by the Urantia Foundation. The first two questions people usually ask is who wrote this book and what does *Urantia* mean?

To be receptive to the teachings of this book, it's advisable to be open minded to the assumption that the universe is teeming with highly intelligent life and that it's possible that from time to time some of these supermortal personalities find ways of revealing information to us that may assist us in our spiritual journey. This is what we believe happened with *The Urantia Book*.

The story of how the book came about over several decades in the early part of the 20th century is intriguing but is not the subject of today's workshop. Suffice to say there are no human authors of this book. It is a compilation of information given to us by a variety of universe personalities. They tell us that much of the time they've drawn from the highest levels of human philosophical thought. We're told that Urantia is the name they have given to our world—to our planet. We are told about the origin, history and destiny of our world and of the human race.

They've given us first hand accounts of familiar stories, stories that have survived in fragmented legendary forms, such as Adam and Eve, the downfall of Lucifer, the role of Melchizedek who was around in the times of Abraham, and the life and teachings of Jesus. Historical information is presented to us against a backdrop of an amazingly broadened view of the universe, of spiritual reality, and of the nature and character of God.

Close on a million books are now in circulation since its beginnings in the 1950's. It has been translated and

...it's advisable to be open minded to the assumption that the universe is teeming with highly intelligent life and that it's possible that from time to time some of these supermortal personalities find ways of revealing information to us that may assist us in our spiritual journey.

published into 11 of the world's major languages with around 14 translations into other languages in progress. The entire text is on the internet and an audio version is available on MP3 and can be downloaded from the internet for free for anyone to hear.

The Urantia Book is not in itself a religion. Rather, it focuses on the spiritual impulse which gives rise to religions.

The authors don't describe or advocate a new religion, rather they build on the religious heritage of the past and present, encouraging a personal and living religion based on service to one's fellows. The central message is that all human beings are one family, the sons and daughters of a loving God whose attitude toward his creation is that of a Universal Father. He's given us a fragment of himself to indwell us and if we so choose to follow the leadings of that indwelling spirit then there's an amazing voyage of eternal discovery ahead of us.

Here are a couple of quotes from the book:

There is in the mind of God a plan which embraces every creature of all his vast domains, and this plan is an eternal purpose of boundless opportunity, unlimited progress, and endless life. And the infinite treasures of such a matchless career are yours for the striving! The goal of eternity is ahead! The adventure of divinity attainment lies before you! [p. 365, par. 3]

There is a great and glorious purpose in the march of the universes through space. All of your mortal struggling is not in vain. We are all part of an immense plan, a gigantic enterprise, and it is the vastness of the undertaking that renders it impossible to see very much of it at any one time and during any one life. We are all a part of an eternal project which the Gods are supervising and outworking. The whole marvelous and universal mechanism moves on majestically through space to the music of the meter of the infinite thought and the eternal purpose of the First Great Source and Center. [p. 364, par. 3]

I'd like to introduce you now to our main speakers William Wentworth from Towamba on south coast of New South Wales, and then Nigel Nunn from Canberra. William and Nigel are long time students of the book and have some interesting insights to share with you.

* * *

Part 2: William Wentworth (Towamba)

The Urantia Book is not in itself a religion. Rather, it focuses on the spiritual impulse which gives rise to religions. While there is some truth contained in all religions, it is to the common root of all religions that the book directs attention. It seeks to strip away the fear of God, the dread of sin and transgression, and replace it with faith in the friendly nature of God, who is wholly benevolent and fatherly in his attitude to his creatures. He understands his creatures, knows their limitations, and loves them, and wants them to know him as an inspiration rather than as something to be feared.

Figure 1 illustrates a generalised view of the structure of a religion. Underlying it is spiritual experience—often the

experience of a great man such as Gautama Siddhartha or Mohammed—but there is no conceptual language to express this experience. Man cannot describe his direct experience with God. It remains a marvellous mystery. But it does give rise to values which are remarkably similar, which the book generalises as Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

At this point the followers of the great man—the source of the motivating spiritual experience—begin to try to make sense of that experience, and their interpretations are conditioned by their cultural traditions. These interpretations crystallise in time into the beliefs, doctrines, rituals, customs and laws which reflect the flavour of the cultural civilisation the interpreters inhabit. And so spiritual experience and values which are initially very similar become very different institutional religions, illustrated in Figure 2.

The Urantia Book proclaims that the things portrayed inside those egg shaped ovals are but the external trappings of religion. The essence of religion lies in the spiritual experience underlying that structure. And while some who devote themselves to the egg find their way to true spiritual experience, many do not, but remain stranded in a maze of dogma which is no substitute for true religion.

The book contends that religions and civilisations will conflict with one another until men make it their business to strive for spiritual experience—personal experience of God. It points out that God yearns for man to know him, and when man responds to that yearning he makes God the inspiration of his daily life. Even notions of sacredness and holiness have

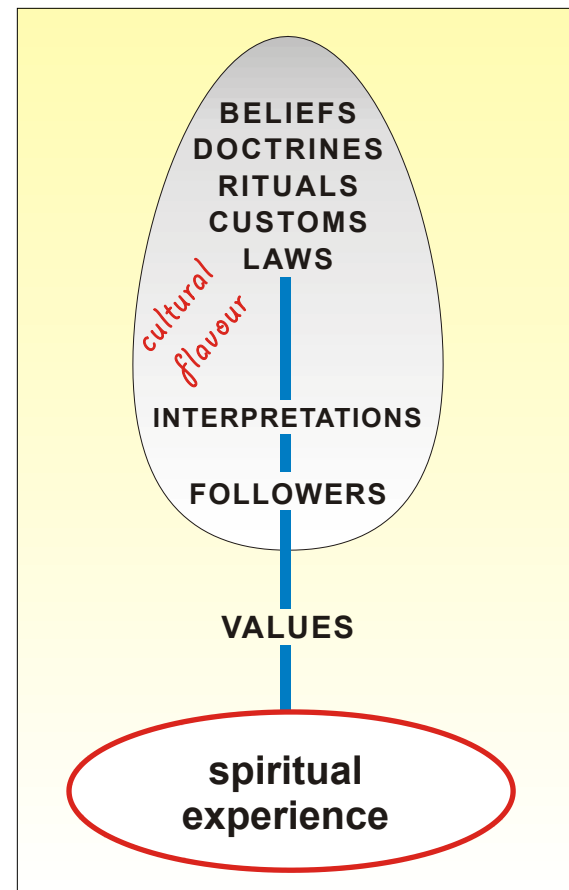


figure 1: a generalized view

been exaggerated to the point where they undermine God’s friendliness. *The Urantia Book* suggests that it is natural and normal for man to bring God into his everyday life as a friend and inspiration, to share his inner life.

The book reiterates again and again that God yearns to conserve all men, and that his attitude is friendly and fatherly. Men can experience sonship with God by including him in their inner life. This personal spiritual experience is what constitutes true religion.

In order to help us understand the nature of spiritual experience, *The Urantia Book* uses many concepts, and some of the most significant are **Personality, Thought Adjuster and Soul**. Thought Adjuster is something new, but Personality and Soul are familiar. The book does use those terms in quite unusual ways, however.

Personality the book portrays as something far grander and more mysterious than our common usage. Along with matter, mind and spirit, personality is one of the fundamental realities of the universe. It does not evolve. It is a direct bestowal by deity. Evolution resulted in a body/mind system capable of harbouring personality, more or less as our scientists have discovered. But God bestows personality on that evolved system, which becomes a human person as a result of that bestowal. From the perspective of *The Urantia Book*, a human being is an animal with personality.

The astonishing quality of personality is that it exhibits some freedom from antecedent causation. As far as we know, it is the only reality in existence with this characteristic. Everything else, matter, mind and spirit, is governed and bound by that chain of causation which originates with God and operates unfailingly throughout reality as cause and effect. But personality, within its sphere of operation, is not so bound. Within a human mind, personality has freedom of moral choice, and that freedom is absolute. God wants to salvage all his creatures—but **only if they want**

to be saved. God does not force us to believe in him, or to accept salvation. As freewill personalities we can choose. It is entirely up to us. God bestows personality, and promptly relinquishes control of it. He retains control of everything else, either directly or through agencies which he originates. He originates personality, but allows it to be free.

In practice, we experience this freedom of will as those moral choices which life throws up at us. We can choose to harbour resentment, or let bygones be bygones; we can choose to seek revenge or to forgive; we can choose to excuse or to retaliate; we can choose to seek God or ignore him. In these moral choices we are free--free to go it alone, or take advice; to love or hate; to learn or ignore--as we choose.

The Thought Adjuster is a new concept introduced by *The Urantia Book* to describe the influence of God within us. And the book pulls no punches here. This influence is more than just an influence. The thought adjuster is an actual portion—a bit, a piece, a chunk—the book uses the term fragment—of absolute eternal deity, indwelling our mind. I repeat; this is not a metaphor for the influence of God, or for an attenuation of God, or for a disembodied presence of God. This is a piece of the real thing, a chip off the old block, an actual fragment of deity. And it sits in our mind as the indwelling adjuster. It indwells us as a guiding light, to point us Godward, but it is subservient to our will. When God relinquishes control of freewill personality, that means free, and even the fragment of eternal deity indwelling our minds cannot coerce us.

Thought Adjuster is something new, but Personality and Soul are familiar. The book does use those terms in quite unusual ways, however.

How it works we do not know—it is a mystery. But somehow, without forcing us against our will, it guides us towards the light of life, towards the way of living which leads us Godward. Because God’s plan is so far beyond our comprehension, we have a long period of learning before

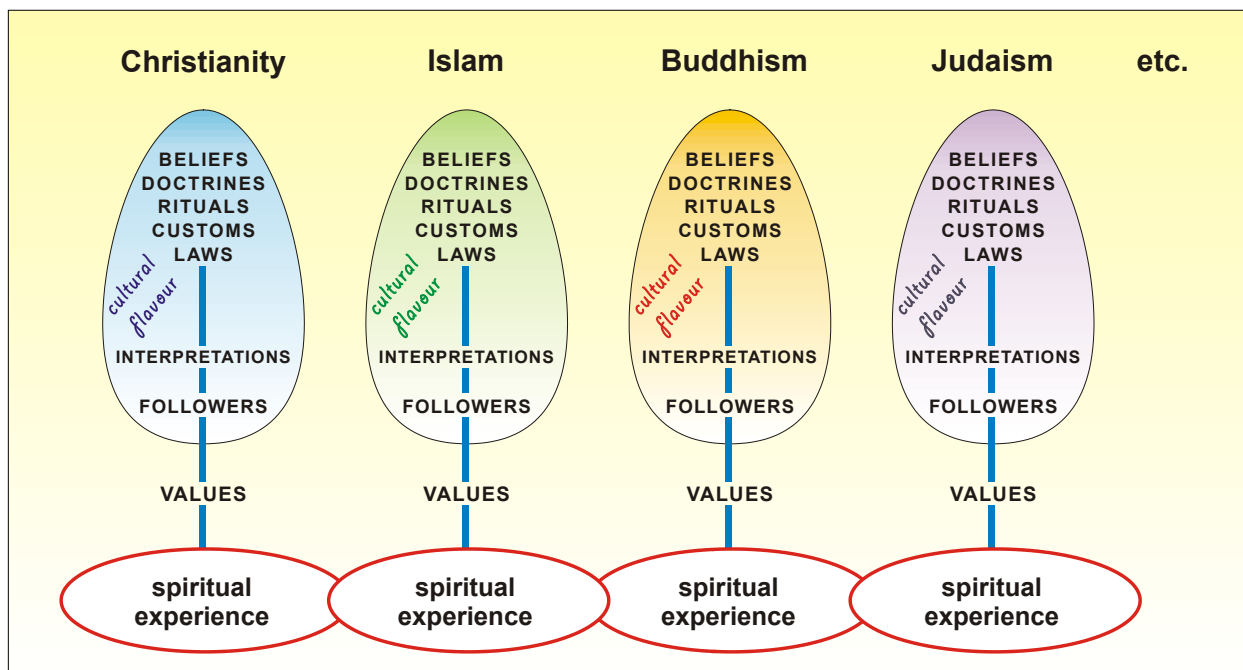


figure 2: from spiritual experience to institutionalised "religions".

we can consciously co-operate with it. But the adjuster is there, never resting, working to guide us toward God's way. And it is not interested in making us too comfortable. Its task is to prepare us for our future life, after our earthly life is finished, and that requires some strenuous learning experiences and energetic choices—things a bed of roses is unlikely to provide.

There really is no logical problem with freewill following God's will. Our freewill is not being subverted by God's will. Once we realise that God does whatever is done in the best way there is to do it, there is no problem in aligning our will with God's. Naturally, we want to do whatever we do in the best possible way too. And it is our indwelling adjuster who somehow or other makes known to us what the best way of doing things is. This does sometimes lead to conflict between what our indwelling adjuster is urging us to do, and what our cultural loyalty requires of us. Our freewill has to referee such conflicts, and they can be confusing. Sometimes we get it right, and sometimes we blunder, but our adjuster never gives up. It keeps presenting us with opportunities to choose—choosing the best way to proceed, or an inferior way—God's way or some other way.

The Soul is a concept familiar to many religions, but *The Urantia Book* uses it in a slightly different way. The soul is that part of us which survives bodily death, but *The Urantia Book* conceives of the soul as an evolving reality, brought into being and growing according to our moral choices.

Humans are endowed with freewill personalities capable of moral choice, and indwelling adjusters are continuously offering opportunities to exercise such choice for or against God's will. Daily life, in its interactions with others in family, work, leisure, play and so on offers myriad incidents where choice must be exercised. In some manner beyond our comprehension, our indwelling adjuster manages to cast such choices into the form of **in accord with** God's will—the best solution—or **not in accord with** God's will. Choices in accord with God's will contribute to soul growth. Whenever a choice is made which is in accord with God's will, a little bit is added to our soul, and as habits build up which reiterate these choices, our soul becomes a powerful presence in our selfhood.

The Urantia Book thus regards the soul as the evolutionary product of the interaction between two realities at work within us, namely freewill personality and the indwelling adjuster. Though we are not conscious of our soul, or its growth, we nevertheless experience some indication of those spiritual experiences which bring about its growth, but such indications are purely personal and difficult to generalise. However, many people find that their attempts to do the will of God lead them to experience increased appreciation for their fellow men, and greater desire to serve them. Someone once suggested that love is the business of personalities. That love is greatly enhanced by the desire to do the will of God.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that *The Urantia Book* fills a great gap in our religious lives in that it provides a concept vocabulary which has been lacking until now. So

much of our spiritual striving is unconscious that we have no agreed set of concepts with which to think about our experience. We have not had any reference frame spanning the gaps between the various religious philosophies which allows us to understand what might be happening to us, or which allows us to compare notes with others whose experience might be comparable. Up until now, the mystery of our inner life has been so profound that we have readily become confused and disheartened when confronted by scientific hubris, materialistic worldly wisdom or dogmatic certitude. *The Urantia Book* suggests a conceptual vocabulary which allows intellectual enquiry consistent with the modern viewpoint and helps us to make sense of religious striving.

As you can see, I think it's a great book!

* * *

Part 3: Nigel Nunn (Canberra)

Hi, my name is Nigel Nunn. My background is mathematics and astrophysics. I study how stars collapse and the shape of space & time. So what am I doing at a parliament of religions, talking about Love?

Well, when I was about 16, I suffered one of those moments of "peace that passes all understanding." For a minute or two, my anxieties and fears, my desires and illusions all just melted away. This peace, together with feelings of such clarity and love, were so intense (and so interesting!) that those usual things that move teenagers, like sex, drugs and rock & roll, began to seem pale in comparison. As we know, idealistic teenagers are excited by the idea of a "Quest", and I now had mine: to discover what it is about ourselves that can experience such intensity of peace, such depth of love.

I survived a final year of school, then soon found myself in that extraordinary Adyar Bookshop in Sydney, run by the Theosophical society. Over the next 8 or 9 months, I read my way through much of their stock of theological and philosophical works, sacred texts and mystical manuscripts.

I became aware of surrendering and submitting to God, of being "slain by the spirit" and "born again," of chakras and yogas, of etheric bodies and astral travel, of that well-mapped path through my squirming addictions, past the death of my delusions, into the nearness of Nirvana. And of taking holidays, blissed out in the right hemisphere of our brain.

But what did it all mean? When personal, one-on-one contact with God is so available, so beautiful, so free, why all these systems of faith, these rituals and doctrines? How and why did they evolve? What on earth is going on? I felt it was time to take a different tack.

I approached the lady behind the counter and thanked her for allowing me to read all her books, then I asked: "Have you got something... bigger, something *comprehensive*, something that brings together and explains all these experiences and beliefs?"

"Well," she said, reaching under the counter and pulling out *The Urantia Book*, "There is *this*."

* * *

That was 1979, 30 years ago. Over those 30 years, I have continued to be intrigued by these papers. And I have

The Urantia Book fills a great gap in our religious lives in that it provides a concept vocabulary which has been lacking until now.

evolved some ideas and images that for me, help answer those questions of what and who and why we are. But most especially, some ideas have been ripening on the origin, the nature and the purpose of *Love*—what is this thing we call love, and what role does love play in the universe?

This afternoon, I would like to try and share with you a glimpse of the insights I have found within these extraordinary & unexpected papers.

But first, let's begin with the reason we are all here in Melbourne, and consider this Parliament's theme:

*Making a difference,
hearing each other,
healing the earth.*

Anyone who has done time working as a peace-maker or mediator will notice some challenges implied by this theme. For example, when two or more of us try to work together, to "make a difference," what if we are not on the same page? What if, after listening, hearing and understanding each other, we discover that our aspirations diverge? That our *plans for Peace* actually conflict?

We can all point to heroic attempts to foster "peace and understanding..." that have failed. This makes one wonder: why do so many such "well-laid plans" unravel? Why (so often) do we see such small return from such big investment of good intentions? Has there been something missing in previous attempts to "make a difference," to hear each other, to repair the damage we cause?

Has there been something missing? A few fundamental things come to mind: we have never had a shared, planet-wide understanding of who and what we really are; we have never had a shared, planet-wide understanding of what this world is for; and there has been an obvious shortage of *Love*, that essential *desire to do good to each other*.

These Urantia Papers offer some ideas about all these things, but first, let's consider what we—this parliament—represent, this attempted interaction of our separated faiths. It was *religious insight*, through revelation or through prophets, that fostered these *systems-of-faith* (these *separated systems of faith*) that now require our *inter-faith* effort. As we know, each of these systems-of-faith have their more adventurous members, those who go deep, to the roots, to the very heart of their tradition. Should we be surprised if they each discover one God, one Source of Truth, one Center of Love? Yet when they return from their experience with the divine, back to their culture, back to their system of faith, when they try to describe what they discover—their personal insights into *Truth*, their experience of *Love*—they are held back: by language, by those boxes of concept and culture within which we live, by those frames in which we think. Is it any wonder that those who actually walk with God are forced simply to say "*too deep for words*"?

But what if they *had* words? What if such pioneers could share a vocabulary, a *vocabulary of concepts*, one big enough not only to describe, but also to explain their experience with God? What if each of us were offered a new perspective, one in which our true nature becomes clear? What if we all knew exactly what this world is for, so that peace-makers and mediators at least could begin on the same

page? Could new truth about ourselves—about who and what we are, about what this world is for—help us as we try to make a difference, to help, to hear, to heal? But how do we access *new truth* about ourselves?

This is where these Urantia Papers may be able to help.

You remember that poet, in Palestine, almost 3,000 years ago, whispering to his God:

"What is man, that you are mindful of him?" [psalm 8:4]

Even today this remains a really good question: Why should the Author of Reality be interested in us? What's one more planet-full of humans to the Creator of an eternal infinity? Well, this is precisely the question addressed by *The Urantia Book*.

Now, at first glance some may say, "Well, they were a bit *long-winded*, weren't they? 196 separate papers? Over 2,000 pages of dense text?" Others, like those of you who *know* the source of truth and love, may say "Yes, but... they've made some *simple truths* way too complex."

OK. But if this answer is to be appropriate for the sceptical, scientific age ahead, if it is to be *sufficient*, satisfying for scientists and philosophers, for mystics and religionists alike, think what was required:

Before they could begin to explain our bodies and our minds, they had to adjust our basic assumptions about biology and psychology. *Before they could begin to explain* how worlds and stars and galaxies like ours evolve, they had to rework the foundations of our entire physics and cosmology. And before they could even BEGIN to explain how we are salvaged from death—how we are *salvaged from death*—they had to reveal something of that extraordinary domain which bridges the material and the spiritual. And of course our beliefs, ideas and experiences of "the spiritual" could do with some... clarification.

All this preliminary explaining and setting up implies... a biggish book. And here it is, all 2kg worth, as first printed. (No wonder they used to call it *Big Blue*!)

So, how do the authors of these papers answer that poet's simple questions? What, do they say, is Man? Why, do they say, might God be "mindful of" us? Who *are* we? What *are we doing* here? What fresh ideas do these papers bring to the table? What revelations about ourselves do these revelators reveal?

Well, here we face an issue: while *personal* revelation of truth and love unfolds within, in ways "too deep for words", a planetary, or *epochal* revelation, as these papers claim to be, must be planted in a form that we can (easily) share: as "words", as a set of those "ideas who's time has come," as a framework of concepts that can be grafted onto those paradigms our various cultures have evolved.

And this is what is being attempted here. To allow them to present appropriate answers to these simple, crucial questions, the authors of these papers had to sketch out a cosmology, a "universe frame," big enough and consistent enough to contain the answers they are attempting to give.

**...we have never
had a shared,
planet-wide
understanding
of who and what
we really are;
we have never
had a shared,
planet-wide
understanding of
what this world is
for; and there has
been an obvious
shortage of
Love,...**

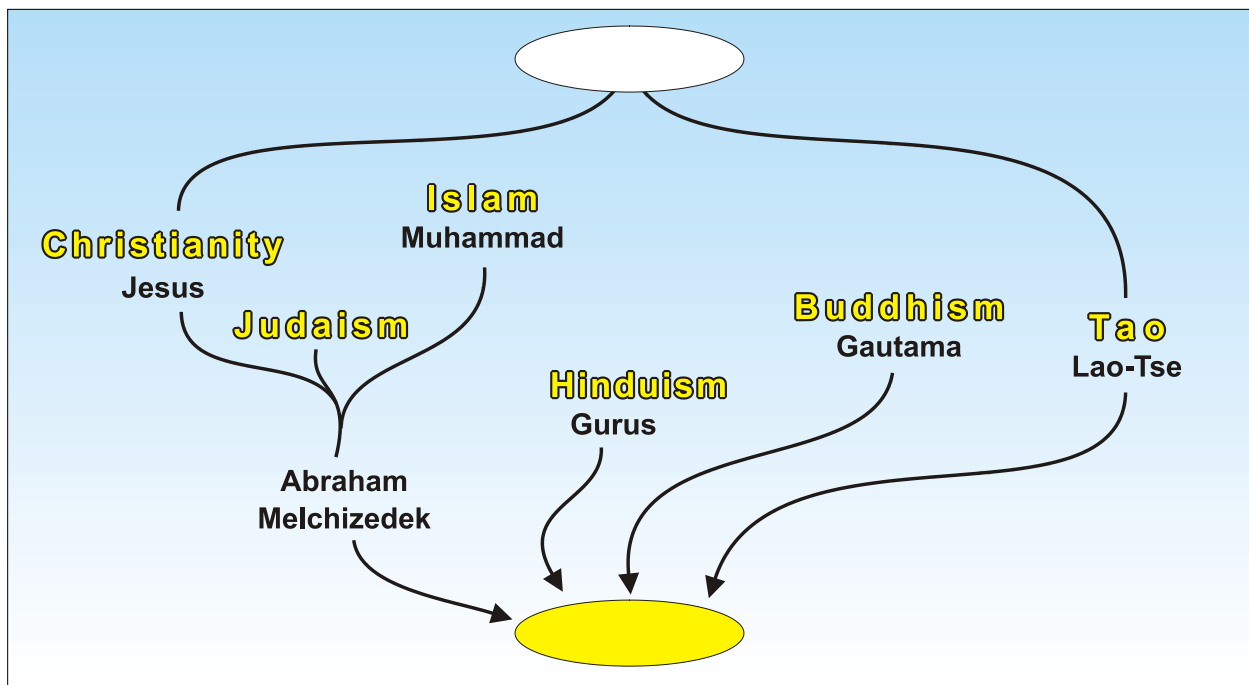


figure 3: from spiritual experience to institutionalised "religions" (version 2)

So *The Urantia Book* is offering us two things: the first is simply a description of the way things are, a new and wider **frame in which to think**; the second is something that required this wider frame: a **revelation about ourselves**.

* * *

OK, so why should a new frame-in-which-to-think be interesting, let alone valuable? Well, just think about the struggles we have when we try simply to work together, to co-operate. When we talk about two people "being on the same page," we imply they share similar assumptions and aspirations, a similar world-view. In this sense, we people of this world are not quite on the same page. Some of us are on a page that explains, in logical detail, how we can get to Paradise by blowing up a crowd of struggling souls; some of us are on a page that utterly fails to mention the Author of Reality, and explains, in logical detail, why "greed is good." And many of us are on a page that is almost blank, wandering along alone, wondering what on Earth is going on.

In this sense, our very neighbors—our classmates and workmates—may be living a world apart, separated by conflicting beliefs about the world. In this same sense, these papers may be able to serve as a *Rosetta Stone*, helping translate our experience of reality, while helping reveal to us all a larger world.

To get a feel for the scope, and breadth of this larger view, we need only glance at the very first section of the book, those first 6 pages called Titles of the Papers. To anyone with some background in archaeology or philosophy, theology or physics, each of these titles will be provocative (if not outrageous!). But when read sequentially, and taken

together, the more descriptive, narrative papers help to set up an entire world view, a new and surprising description of reality. And this larger, deeper view will be needed if we are to understand the essence and purpose wrapped up within this book. This "essence and purpose" is a revelation about ourselves, which brings us to where William left off: consideration of Personality, Adjuster and Soul.

Now, *personality*: we all know what personality is. It's ... hmmm. Well, *soul*: we all know precisely what the soul is. It's... hmmm. Well, *God*: we all know about this presence of God within. It's...

I think we would all agree, each of these rather important things have not been well understood. However, as William explained, these papers present each of these concepts in an entirely new light.

First, they reveal the true nature of Personality, an order of reality distinct from (and antecedent to) matter, mind and spirit.

Second, they reveal the true nature of the presence of God within—our ancient and higher self, the incarnating essence of eternal deity. Such mystical hints at some marvellous truth are expanded, clarified and made real to our minds via the concept of the "Adjuster," the indwelling fragment of "our Father who art in Heaven," the gift of spirit essence which is destined to define what we will be.

And third, they redefine the concept of the soul. They reveal soul to be the culmination of our mortal life, a phenomenon *created* by our wilful personality responding to our potential higher self. They also reveal how our soul, bridging the gulf between material life and spirit destiny, serves as a *technique* for salvaging us from death.

To help set the scene, let's hear something from the authors themselves about each of these things:

...a planetary, or epochal revelation, as these papers claim to be, must be planted in a form that we can (easily) share: as "words," as a set of those "ideas who's time has come"...

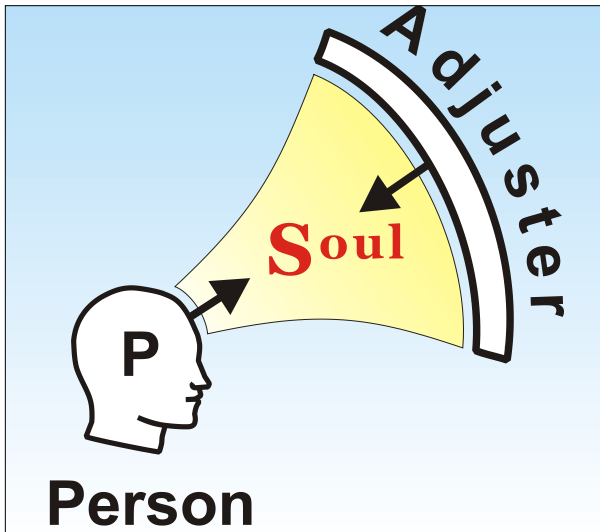


figure 4: Soul—a technique for salvaging us from death.

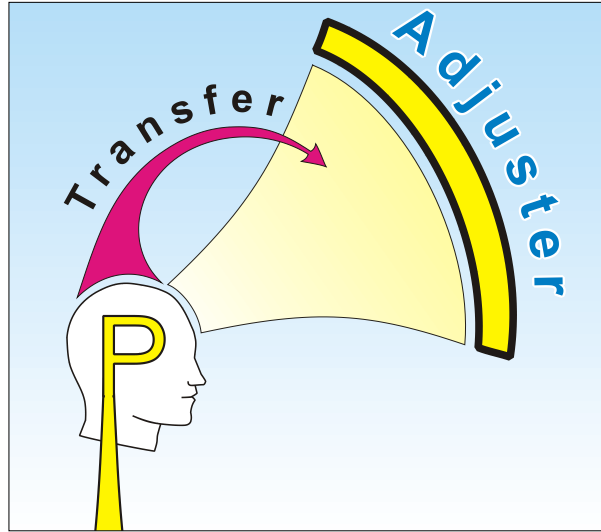


figure 5a: Soul—transferring the seat of identity.

About personality, they say this:

The love of the Father absolutely individualizes each personality as a unique child of the Universal Father, a child without duplicate in infinity, a will creature irreplaceable in all eternity. [p.138:4]

Personality is the one changeless reality in an otherwise ever-changing creature experience; and it unifies all other associated factors of individuality. The personality is the unique bestowal which the Universal Father makes upon the living and associated energies of matter, mind, and spirit, and which survives with the survival of the morontial soul. [p.9:1]

About the Adjuster, they say this:

The Adjusters are the actuality of the Father's love incarnate in the souls of men... [p.1176:2]

The Adjuster is an absolute essence of an infinite being... [p.1176:6]

And about the soul, they say this:

Personality may survive mortal death with identity in the surviving soul. The Adjuster and the personality are changeless; the relationship between them (in the soul) is nothing but change... [p.1226:3]

Our separate cultures and our systems of faith have each evolved beliefs about these things. Such ideas may have been ideal and appropriate—within a culture, once upon a time. But now that our cultures overlap, how do we share our ideas and experiences? There are now so many different beliefs about the nature of *the soul* that it becomes hard to discuss the idea. Our experiences of the presence of God within are simply *too deep for words*, so how can we even begin to discuss this? And we tend to think of *personality* merely as the way we react and respond, more an issue of

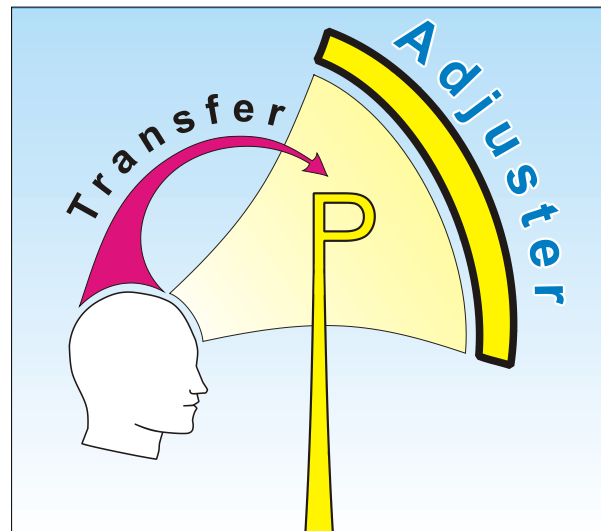


figure 5b: personality on the move...

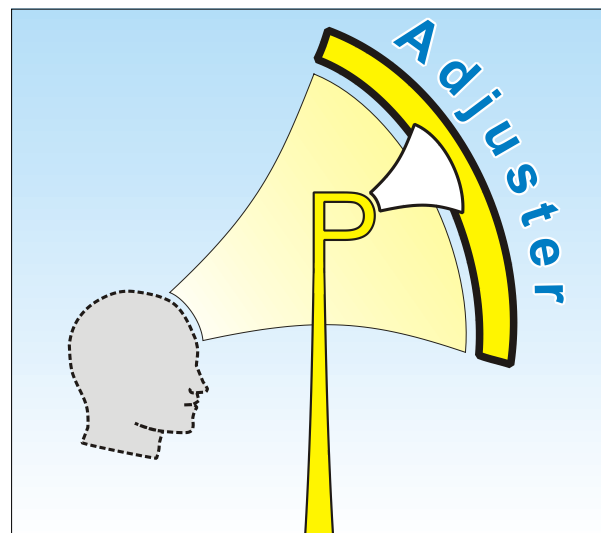


figure 5c: a new relationship – two, about to become One.

psychology than of truth. Our reflection and discussion about these things has been stuck in those boxes of concept and culture within which we live, bound by those *frames* within which we think.

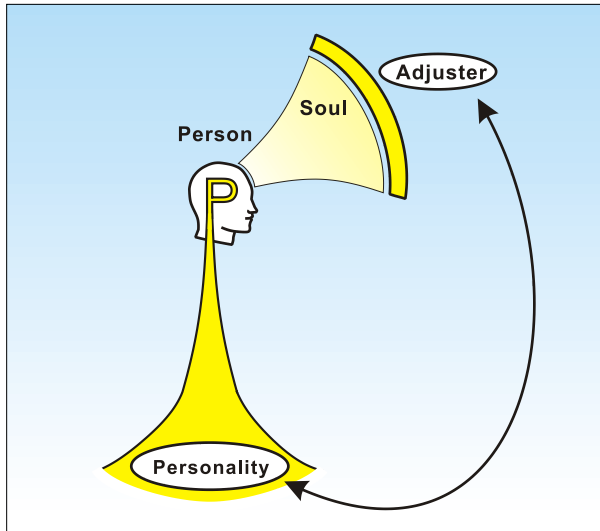


fig 6: the simplicity of our situation, the beauty of these relationships

Man must think in a mortal universe frame, but that does not mean that he cannot envision other and higher frames within which thought can take place. [p.1260:3]

Simplicity and complexity

But the simplicity of our situation, the beauty of these relationships, can be hidden by old words, and new jargon. Jesus said that we are the children of God. Jesus—the fourth epochal revelation of Truth to this world—revealed that

the Universal Father is our Father; “Our Father, who art in Heaven....” Simple. The most important and most simple truth a Person can ever know. A simple truth that trumps all the fourth epochal theology and philosophy our world has suffered.

But simplicity can hide a true complexity. Think of a child switching on a light. What could be more simple? But to the electrician, this is many problems to be solved: getting all that wiring in place, connecting with the power grid, the guarantees of safety... so that even a child need only flick a switch to fill a room with light.

Something like this is happening in space-time, and for us. Our father has made of this little world a home where we



figure 7: simplicity from complexity

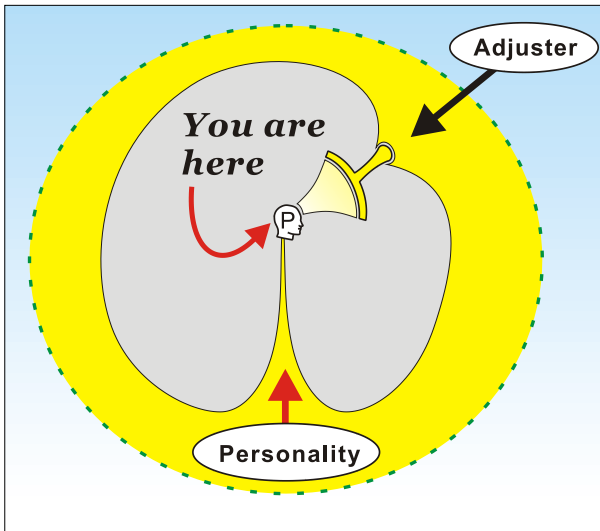


figure 7: baby persons – embryos in a larger frame.

need only “flick a switch” to come to life. To be filled with that “true light which lights every man who comes into the world” we need only say “Yes!” and then hang on for the ride of our life!

This simple, central Truth, that God is our Father, is the tip of an iceberg; the simple, beautiful tip of a vast mountain of details, of mind boggling complexity. The relationships and interactions of spirit, mind and matter that allow us to exist; the tapestry of meanings and values that forms the fabric of the finite creation. But this is not our problem. Our Father’s Paradise Sons, have volunteered to resolve this complexity, to make smooth the way, to make possible our creation and perfection. All we need do is to live loyally each moment as tadpoles, to work our little tails off in the joyful adventure of growing up:

The quickest way for a tadpole to become a frog is to live loyally each moment as a tadpole. [p.1094:6]

Conclusion

The Urantia Papers reveal *personality* to be so fundamental—as first source of everything and the destiny of all—that the Universal Father did not, or could not, delegate its care. The Papers also reveal an absolute transition—of particles of personality into free-will universe Sons.

This transition is caused by the Universal Father, and powered by love: “Let us make mortal man in our own image.” This request by the Father becomes a command through the Son. The hosts of Havona stir, the machinery of Paradise responds, the most wondrous adventure begins: Sons, made as if from nothing to become ones like the Father; made from mortal stuff on the worlds of time; in the quiet places of a qualified, finite space. We are told that such transformations are an opportunity unique to this brief Age of Time, but we are left to guess what ramifications may ripple from our birth.

So what’s *Love* got to do with it? Jesus was once asked by his apostles if it was really a good idea to make *love* the central theme of their message. How could a mere ideal like love compete with Roman swords?

Jesus rarely showed strong emotion, but that day in Archelais, when it became clear that his team of apostles still had almost no idea about love, he could not hold himself back. He knew love, he came to us directly from it’s Source and Center:

But I declare to you that my Father in Paradise does rule a universe of universes by the compelling power of his love. Love is the greatest of all spirit realities. Truth is a liberating revelation, but love is the supreme relationship. [p.1608:1]

Within the frame set up by these papers, we can now trace the rise and role of *LOVE*, from the eternal core of the Absolute directly into the human heart. We were meant to be here, we are not alone, and every single one of us is very greatly *LOVED*. ■

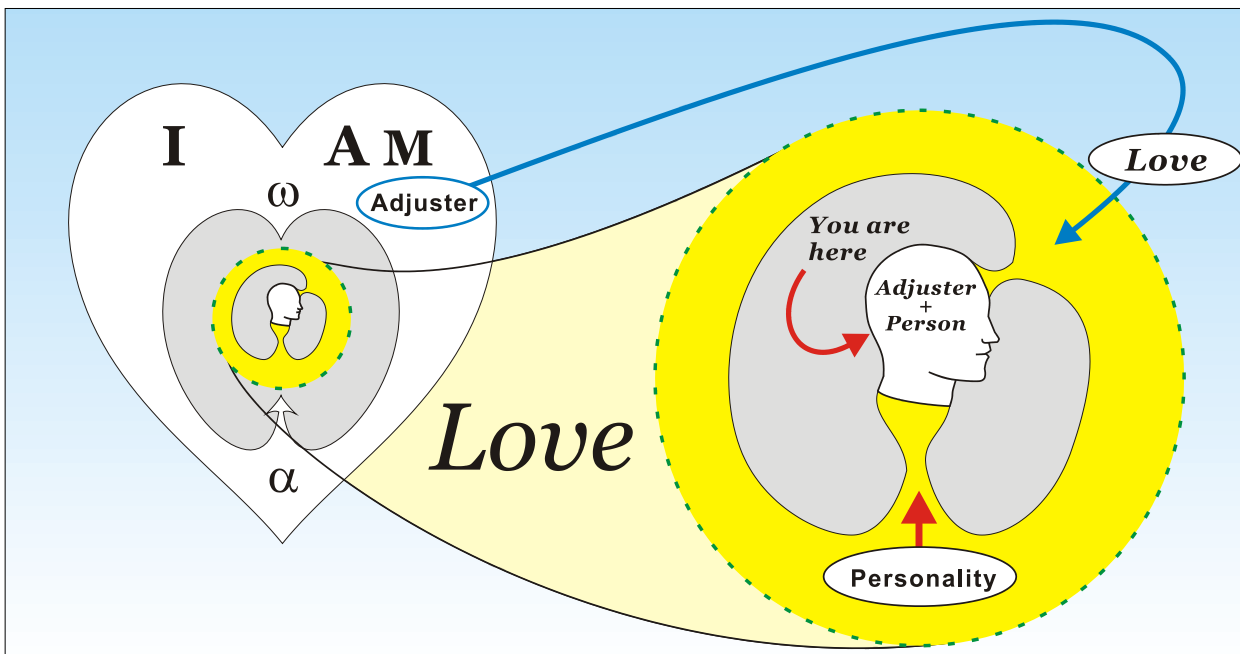


figure 8: “Let us make mortal man in our own image.” [pp. 78:3, 85:5, 110:7]



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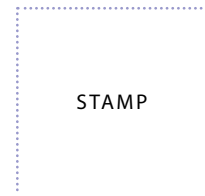
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