

The Urantia Book

By Jason Barker

Founder: William S. Sadler.

Date: 1924.

Official Publications: The URANTIA Foundation holds the copyright on *The URANTIA Book*, and publishes the periodicals *Newsflash* and *Urantian News*. The URANTIA Book Fellowship publishes *The Fellowship Herald Magazine* and *Mighty Messenger Newsletter*. The Boulder School publishes *The Invisible Fellowship Magazine*.

Structure: Parent organization is the URANTIA Foundation. Break-offs from the Foundation include the URANTIA Book Fellowship and the Boulder Fellowship/Jesusionian Foundation.

Unique Terms: URANTIA, epochal revelation, revelators, Thought Adjuster, Isle of Paradise, morontia.

HISTORY

Dr. William Sadler a Seventh-day Adventist minister and associate of Ellen G. White, married Lena Celestia Kellogg (niece of cereal company founder, alternative medicine practitioner, and former Seventh-day Adventist J.H. Kellogg) in 1897.¹ The Sadlers became increasingly disenchanted with the Seventh-day Adventists after critiquing White's testimonials and visions, culminating in William Sadler writing a letter to White in which he challenged her teachings.²

After receiving his M.D. from Adventist American Medical Missionary College, Sadler worked from 1907–1915 as a popular orator on medicine on the Chautauqua circuit.³ In 1911, Sadler had his first session with the “sleeping subject” described in his book, *The Mind at Mischief*; this “sleeping subject” is believed by many to be a description of the process through which the fifth epochal revelation was received.⁴ Sadler (along with a stenographer) transcribed the statements of the “sleeping subject” during their 209 sessions that occurred over eighteen years. According to Sadler,

The communications which have been written, or which we have had the opportunity to hear spoken, are made by a vast order of alleged beings who claim to come from other planets to visit this world, to stop here as student visitors for study and observation when they are en route from one universe to another or from one planet to another.⁵

These sessions became particularly important in 24, when the celestial being Machiventa Melchizedek announced that this method of communication between the celestial group of revelators from the Melchizedek schools and the to-be-formed human Contact Commission would continue to be used.⁶ The Contact Commission consisted of Dr. William S. Sadler, Dr. Lena Sadler, William S. Sadler, Jr., Anna Kellogg (sister of Lena), and Wilfred Kellogg.⁷

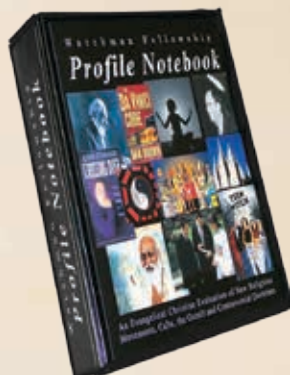
Sadler described the process of receiving and compiling the revelations in this way: the revelators, would leave a set of handwritten papers in a predetermined place. The Contact Commission would read the papers to “The Forum,” a group of humans formed to study

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the papers, who would then draft questions based on the revelations. The revelators then drafted a second series of papers in response to these questions.

The process by which the papers were transcribed by the Contact Commission is highly unique. According to Meredith Sprunger, former president of the URANTIA Brotherhood,

Whenever the original papers were copied, the originals always disappeared. Ten dollar bills were placed between the sheets and they found the original papers would disappear but the bills would remain in the locked safe [The Contact Commission] discovered that after some papers were read and placed in the safe, they disappeared. Other papers were altered after being read to the Forum. The assumption is that they were required to read these papers to the Forum so that these spirit beings could observe human reaction to the material presented.⁹

Interestingly, while Sadler was later willing to discuss in detail the transmission of The URANTIA Book, he refused to reveal two crucial facts: 1) the name of the individual who was used by the revelators as the channel between the revelators and the Contact Commission, and 2) the specific way in which the papers that formed The URANTIA Book appeared.¹⁰

The first 118 papers of The URANTIA Book were completed in 1934; Part IV — the “Jesus Papers” — was completed in 1935.¹¹ In 1939 a group of seventy volunteers, known as “the Seventy,” began studying the URANTIA papers; their study was led by the revelators until the publication of The URANTIA Book in 1955, at which point the revelators discontinued their contact with the message “You are on your own now.”¹²

The formation of the URANTIA Foundation, the central group affiliated with The URANTIA Books and the copyright holders of the publication, preceded the publication of the book by five years. Determined to avoid creating a church based upon The URANTIA Book, the Foundation instead created in 1955 a “fraternal organization” for URANTIA readers called the URANTIA Brotherhood.¹³

Dissemination of The URANTIA Book was rapid. 4,291 copies had been distributed by 1960, over 100,000 copies by 1980, and by 1996 over 30,000 copies were being distributed each year.¹⁴ The 1970s marked a period of remarkable growth for URANTIA. Several readers began reading excerpts from The URANTIA Book on southern California radio stations, and in 1972 the University of California, Bakersfield, offered the course, “An Introduction to The URANTIA Book.”¹⁵ The URANTIA Foundation also successfully cornered the market on The URANTIA Book, copyrighting the words “URANTIA” in 1972 and “URANTIAN” in 1973, and signing confirmatory and licensing agreements in 1974.¹⁶

Despite URANTIA’s success, this period of growth was also the beginning of schism within the movement. The URANTIA Foundation sued member Bob Burton in 1975 for giving URANTIA materials to all the members of Congress, and in 1976 pressured the URANTIA Brotherhood to sell their rights to URANTIA to the Foundation for one dollar.¹⁷ The schism reached its climax in 1990 when the URANTIA Foundation disenfranchised the URANTIA Brotherhood, sending a massive Special Report in April, 1990 to URANTIA readers explaining that the Foundation was forming a “new URANTIA Brotherhood Association -- one that will make the new Association less easily politicized and more likely to concentrate on its spiritual mission.”¹⁸

The current situation within URANTIA circles is strained but improving. The URANTIA Foundation lost its copyright to The URANTIA Book in 1995; the book is now in the public domain. A threatened lawsuit by the Foundation against the URANTIA Brotherhood and the Jesusonian Foundation [a Boulder, Colorado-based URANTIA organization] was dropped in 1996. Finally, in 1997, the URANTIA Foundation and the URANTIA Brotherhood agreed to jointly engage in translation of The URANTIA Book into foreign languages.¹⁹

DOCTRINE

Cosmology: The cosmos are roughly divided into five concentric rings. The center ring is the Isle of Paradise, the dwelling place of God²⁰ and the source of all existing things; the Master Universe revolves around this stationary Isle.²¹ Surrounding the Isle of Paradise in seven bands are the Havona, billions of perfect worlds that serve as the pattern for creation.²² Surrounding the Havona are dark gravity belts which insulate the Havona and Isle of Paradise from the developing superuniverses. Outside the gravity belts are the seven superuniverses of evolutionary creation; our superuniverse is approximately 500 million light-years in diameter.²³ Beyond the superuniverses are four uninhabited outer space levels; some celestial beings speculate that an unrevealed creation may begin outside the fourth outer space level.²⁴

The Trinity: The URANTIA Book speaks of a Trinity of Trinities; the most important is the existential Paradise Trinity consisting of the Universal Father, the Eternal Son and the Infinite Spirit. The second Trinity, currently in the process of universe realization to become gods, is the experiential Ultimate Trinity; it will consist of the Supreme Being, the Supreme Creator Personalities, and the Architects of the Master Universe. The third Trinity, currently in the process of actualization, is the experiential Absolute Trinity: it will consist of God the Supreme, God the Ultimate, and the “unrevealed Consummator of Universe Destiny.”²⁵

God the Father: The URANTIA Book teaches, “The Universal Father is the God of all creation, the First Source and the Center of all things and beings. First think of God as a creator, then as a controller, and lastly as an infinite upholder.”²⁶ The Universal Father is a personal being who should be understood as the father of humanity: “as a father, a real father, a true father, loves his children, so the Universal Father loves and forever seeks the welfare of his created sons and daughters.”²⁷ The ultimate aspiration of humans is to know and be like the Universal Father.

Jesus Christ: The Eternal Son, along with the Universal Father, created all the “only-begotten” Creator Sons who, as part of the Order of Michael, are responsible for the creation of humanity.²⁸ Before incarnating on this planet as Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus was Michael of Nebadon, the 611,121st original concept of the Paradise Father and Son.²⁹ Despite being the “original concept,” Jesus was not the Eternal Son, but rather he possessed “additional power and authority, for he not only personifies the Eternal Son but also fully represents and actually embodies the personality presence of the Universal Father.”³⁰

Part IV of The URANTIA Book ostensibly covers, in addition to its elaboration of the gospel accounts, a record of the “lost years” of Jesus’ life. Papers 123–28 go year-by-year through Jesus’ childhood, even examining the events of each day he spent in the Temple at the age of twelve.³¹ It also explains that Jesus went to Rome as the tutor to the sons of a wealthy merchant from India.³²

The URANTIA Book also fills in details about the resurrection. After the crucifixion, Jesus underwent “the Morontia Transit,” in which the resurrected morontia form and personality of Jesus [i.e., the spirit of Jesus without the physical body] went forth from the tomb and met with Gabriel and other celestial administrators.³³ His initiation into the morontia world [the next level of existence] normally takes about an hour, but was twice interrupted because Jesus wanted to explain to his followers what was happening.³⁴

Sin and Atonement: An understanding of what The URANTIA Book teaches about sin is vital to understanding what it teaches about Christ and the Atonement. According to the Jesus of The URANTIA Book, “Evil is the immature choosing and the thinking misstep of those who are resistant to goodness, rejectful of beauty, and disloyal to truth. Evil is that which is dark and untrue, and which, when consciously embraced and willfully endorsed, becomes sin.”³⁵ A person can overcome evil simply by choosing to do good: “There is

mighty power in the expulsive energy of a new and sincere spiritual affection. And again I say to you, be not overcome by evil but rather overcome evil with good.”³⁶

Because avoiding sin is simply a matter of choice, the crucifixion did not accomplish the forgiveness of sin.³⁷ Instead, humans must work to emulate the example of love and faith in God shown by Jesus. This striving for perfection is worked out over many lifetimes on many planets. A URANTIA follower states that “the entire stellar itinerary of our inconceivably long evolutionary journey toward spirit status [includes] graduate courses on the billion worlds of Havona. . . such is the long, alluring path to Paradise.”³⁸

BIBLICAL RESPONSE

Humans are not to accept a new gospel from spirit beings (Galatians 1:8), but instead should rely on the Bible as the authoritative source of truth (2 Timothy 3:15–17; Acts 17:11).

Jesus is not merely an example of God, but rather is the one in whom the Godhead fully dwells (Colossians 2:9).

Humans will not be born many times, but instead live only once before facing judgment from God (Hebrews 9:27). Furthermore, salvation does not come through anything that humans can do, but instead is given only through the unmerited grace of God (Romans 3:28).

RECOMMENDED READING

Alien Obsession by Ron Rhodes (Hrvest House). Answers the question, “Are we alone?” This book explores the popularity and significance of UFO theories and reveals what the Bible says about extraterrestrials. 252 pages.

Notes

¹ David Kantor, *The First Century of the Fifth Epochal Revelation: An Historical Timeline of the URANTIA Movement*, http://www.ubfellowship.org/archive/history/h_timlin.htm (accessed 1998).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ William Sadler, *The Mind at Mischief*, edited by Mark Turin (n.p.: n.p.), 1929 http://www.ubfellowship.org/archive/history/m_at_m.htm (accessed 1998).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Kantor, *The First Century of the Fifth Epochal Revelation*, c.f. The URANTIA Book 35:3:15.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Meredith J. Sprunger, *The Origin of The URANTIA Book* (Boulder, Co: The Jesusonian Foundation, 1981), 3.

¹¹ Kantor, “The First Century of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.”

¹² Ibid.

¹³ William Sadler, *A History of the URANTIA Movement* (Chicago, Il: n.p., 1960) <http://www.ubfellowship.org/archive/history/histumov.htm> (accessed 1998).

¹⁴ Kantor, *The First Century of the Fifth Epochal Revelation*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Trustees of the URANTIA Foundation, letter to readers of The URANTIA Book, 16 April 1990.

¹⁹ Patricia Mundelius and Janet Farrington Graham, letter to readers of The URANTIA Book, 10 October 1997.

²⁰ Ruth Burton, *Basic Concepts of The URANTIA Book* (Chicago, Il: The URANTIA Brotherhood, n.d.), 1.

²¹ *A Guided Tour of The URANTIA Book* (Boulder, Co: The Invisible Fellowship Magazine, 1994), 7.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The URANTIA Book, Foreword, 16.

²⁶ Ibid., 21:1.

²⁷ Ibid., 40:1.

²⁸ Dean Halverson, “Urantia...the Brotherhood, the Book,” *SCP Newsletter* 7.3 (1981), 3.

²⁹ The URANTIA Book, 33:1.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 125:3–6.

³² Ibid., 129–133.

³³ Ibid., 189:1.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 130:1.

³⁶ Ibid., 156:5.

³⁷ Ibid., 188:4.

³⁸ Burton, *Basic Concepts of The URANTIA Book*, 2.



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