

[The Purpose of Revelation](#)

[A Response to Martin Gardner's Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery](#)

An Essay by Meredith Sprunger

The purpose of revelation is to reveal and enlarge spiritual truth. All presentations of revelation are communicated in the intellectual-cultural frames of reference of the times in which they are given. These human concepts carrying the revelation are transitory, but the truth they proclaim is eternal. For instance, the seven-day creation story in the Bible which theologians now classify as myth, made sense in the simplistic cosmology of prescientific times and effectively transmitted the spiritual truth that God is the source of all creation.

Every epochal revelation and all religions giving expression to the truths of revelation have a history of development that have many commonalities because human nature tends to exhibit consistent patterns, and we can learn from studying these past religious developments. There is a tendency in the early stages of all personal and social responses to revelation to identify the temporal intellectual-scientific-cultural vehicle concepts with the enlarged spiritual truths presented. The enlarged spiritual vision is so captivating and fulfilling that individual religionists and groups not only identify the temporal vehicle concepts with the eternal truths, they regard both as infallible and inerrant. Such theological beliefs have come to be referred to under the rubric of fundamentalism. These fundamentalists are often dedicated, wonderful people.

Many individuals who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible have spent their lives attempting to harmonize its temporal human concept carriers with its eternal spiritual truths. It took centuries of experience and theological scholarship to finally separate the temporal Biblical carrier concepts associated with the Fourth Epochal Revelation from its eternal spiritual truths and prepare the planet for the Fifth Epochal

Revelation. It is the eternal spiritual truths pointed to by the Bible which make it an enduring document, not its outdated scientific-cultural carrier concepts.

Demythologizing The Urantia Book

Students of the Fifth Epochal Revelation are now experiencing this same inclination to identify its scientific-cultural carrier concepts with the enlarged and inspiring spiritual truths it presents. The historic dichotomy which our planet has experienced between science and religion no doubt inspired the revelators of the Fifth Epochal Revelation to present an integrated view of the relationships of science, philosophy, and religion in the universe. The mandates under which the revelators worked, in my judgment, are wise and spiritually sound. They were required to use contemporary scientific frames of reference which they acknowledge will soon be in need of revision. They were instructed to use concepts indigenous to our culture and only use their own formulations when they could not find a human expression that was relevant to their purposes. They tell us that they used thousands of the highest human formulations of truth. The research of Matthew Block is verifying these statements and showing us the ingenious ways they have improved these human sources. The central thing to remember about revelation, as we have mentioned, is that its purpose is to reveal and enlarge spiritual truth. The accompanying scientific facts and cultural folkways used to carry and present these spiritual truths are transitory. It is the genius of revelation that eternal spiritual truths can be presented using temporal facts and changing cultural customs. The cosmological and metaphysical concepts of revelation are important because they are the frames of reference which make its message relevant in

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the times in which the revelation is given. The enlarged spiritual cosmology of the Fifth Epochal Revelation is critically important for mainline, liberal Christianity-as well as all traditional religions. Since contemporary Christology is rooted in prescientific material cosmology and an extremely simplistic spiritual cosmology, theologians are regarding the doctrine of exclusive salvation through faith in the post-resurrection Jesus as increasingly unbelievable. They are no longer able to affirm what has been called the scandal of particularity.

Christian theology is in desperate need of the spiritual cosmology presented in The Urantia Book to envision a metaphysical conception of reality that will enable theologians to comprehend the glory of particularity in the post-resurrection personality of Jesus. The Fifth Epochal Revelation does synthesize the apparently divergent sciences of nature and the theology of religion into a consistent and logical universe philosophy, a co-ordinated and unbroken explanation of both science and religion, thus creating a harmony of mind and satisfaction of spirit which answers in human experience those questionings of the mortal mind which craves to know how the Infinite works out his will and plans in matter, with minds, and on spirit. (UB, Page 1106) The authors of The Urantia Book on page 1109-10 give an excellent description of the use of transitory knowledge and eternal truth in revelation. Truth may be but relatively inspired, even though revelation is invariably a spiritual phenomenon. While statements with reference to cosmology are never inspired, such revelations are of immense value in that they at least transiently clarify knowledge by:

1. The reduction of confusion by the authoritative elimination of error.
2. The co-ordination of known or about-to-be-known facts and observations.
3. The restoration of important bits of lost knowledge concerning epochal transactions in the distant past.
4. The supplying of information which will fill in vital missing gaps in otherwise earned knowledge.

5. Presenting cosmic data in such a manner as to illuminate the spiritual teachings contained in the accompanying revelation.

While the enlarged spiritual cosmology is basic in presenting expanded spiritual truth, the authors of The Urantia Book repeatedly warn against identifying the temporal scientific-cultural frames of reference of the book with its eternal spiritual truths. Urantia Book fundamentalists seem to have just as much trouble separating the temporal scientific-cultural carrying-vehicle concepts from the eternal truths of The Urantia Book as do the Biblical fundamentalists. They retort, The Urantia Book is not the Bible! Obviously not, but the human mind makes the same identity responses linking the temporal and eternal aspects of revelation. In all probability, they will spend their lives attempting to harmonize the book's contemporary carrier concepts with its eternal spiritual truths.

Martin Gardner's recent book, Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery, is designed to undermine the credibility of The Urantia Book. To accomplish this purpose Gardner deals almost entirely with the human concept carriers of the spiritual truths, not the spiritual truths themselves. In actuality, history may show that it helped to focus attention on the real spiritual quality of the Fifth Epochal Revelation (which he totally ignores) that will ensure its recognition and appreciation for centuries to come. Although Gardner's book abounds with misinformation, erroneous assumptions, and fantastic speculations, it may be fortuitous that it appeared early in the Urantia movement. Gardner is best known as the author of columns in the *Scientific American* and the *Sceptical Inquirer*. He is a professional debunker of psychic and esoteric phenomena. Gardner is an indefatigable researcher reporting facts, events, and rumours which make The Urantia Book appear in the worst possible light. Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery is a hodgepodge of information and speculation about Ellen White's revelations, Seventh-Day Adventism beliefs, OAH SPE revelations, numerology, scientific errors in The Urantia Book, deviant activities, and controversy in the Urantia movement. The book is focused on the scientific-cultural carrier-vehicle aspects of The

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Urantia Book and largely ignores its spiritual truths. He believes Wilfred Kellogg channelled The Urantia Book and Dr. William S. Sadler edited and revised it. Since the supermortal authors of the Urantia Papers tell us they have used the ideas of thousands of human beings in the production of the book and research is confirming this fact, it would not be surprising if Dr. Sadler's ideas were among this distinguished group. But, for many reasons, I am confident that Dr. Sadler did not write or revise the book.

Gardner attempts to denigrate the spiritual quality of The Urantia Book not by dealing directly with this issue but by using many of the classic logical fallacies:

- 1. The Genetic Fallacy.** Gardner asserts that The Urantia Book is the product of channeling; therefore, he implies, its message is inferior, or, at least the product of human authorship. The Urantia Book is not the product of channeling activity. In 1958 I arranged a meeting of a group of ministers who were making a critical study of The Urantia Book and Dr. William S. Sadler to discuss the origin of the Urantia Papers. When we arrived, he had prepared a paper for us listing every imaginable form of subconscious mind or psychic activity, including channeling. At the bottom of the outline he had a note saying, the technique of the reception of The Urantia Book in English in no way parallels or impinges upon any of the above phenomena of the marginal consciousness. He went on to tell us that as nearly as he could determine, the appearance of the Urantia Papers was associated with some form of superconscious mind activity. Even if the book were a product of channeling, or any other technique or source of authorship, the only way to ascertain its quality is by evaluating its content or teachings. The real issue of the spiritual quality is not seriously considered by Gardner.
- 2. The Post Hoc Ergo Hoc Fallacy.** Gardner points to the contradictions in Sister Ellen White's pronouncements, documents her plagiarisms, and recites disputes among Seventh-Day Adventists. Early in my correspondence with Gardner I observed that he had an emotional fixation of Seventh-Day Adventism. I was therefore not surprised to read on p181 ... I have always been interested in the history of Seventh-Day Adventism ever since as a young boy, for a period of about a year, I considered myself an Adventist. After these extensive references to Seventh-Day Adventism, Gardner implies that since Dr. Sadler as a young man was active in Seventh-Day Adventism ministry, The Urantia Book is in many ways an outgrowth of the beliefs of Seventh-Day Adventism. This is a vast distortion of fact and truth. The Urantia Book contains many theological and philosophical positions which are harmonious with insights in many of the world religions. Although it most closely parallels the insights of progressive mainline Christian theology, historical analysis may show that the Mormon movement, Seventh-Day Adventism, and other contemporary religious movements were instrumental in preparing for the advent of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. The Urantia Book at the same time differs, particularly in its spiritual cosmology, from all traditional religious positions. Gardner again fails to discuss the spiritual truths presented by The Urantia Book with which he may disagree.
- 3. The Faulty Generalization Fallacy.** Gardner cites the absurd dietary beliefs and practices of Dr. John Kellogg, Vern Grimsley's deceptive pronouncements, the strange visions of Joe Pope, and the controversial beliefs of the channeling movement,

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and implies that these reflect the content of The Urantia Book teachings. He cleverly avoids comparing any of these activities with Urantia Book teachings-for there are none!

4. **The Irrelevant Conclusion Fallacy.**

Gardner analyses and uses the scientific errors in The Urantia Book to depreciate its value even though the authors clearly state that the science and cosmology of the book are not inspired and will soon need to be updated. He also notes that human sources were used, which he labels as plagiarism, and thereby implies that the spiritual quality of the book is equally erroneous and human. As we mentioned earlier, the authors of The Urantia Book clearly state that they have used human sources and why they are using them. The use of these human sources is often handled in such a way as to arrive at a position differing from that of the human author. To accuse the superhuman authors of plagiarism is a bit far fetched, as they are not concealing the use of human sources and they deliberately avoided reference to specific human personalities-they do not want any St. Peter or St. Paul connected with the Fifth Epochal Revelation. This, in my judgment, is certainly a wise decision. There is very little in The Urantia Book which would support Urantia Book fundamentalism! Nonetheless, revelation always gives rise to fundamentalists.

5. **The Ad Hominem Fallacy.** Since Gardner is apparently not interested in grappling with the spiritual content of Urantia Book teachings, he attacks the activities of people he assumes are associated with its origin or who are Urantia Book readers: Seventh-Day Adventists, the atypical people in the Urantia movement, as well as Dr. Sadler. He quotes Harry Loose (So far as I

know, no one in the Urantia movement has ever heard of him except Harold Sherman) as saying, "The truth is that Sadler is mentally unsound. A paranoiac with religio-power complex - feverishly grasping for greater jurisdiction of the mentalities of the many." (p149) Gardner suggests that Sherman was convinced that after Lena died Sadler became paranoid, his mind perverse and deranged. Both he and his son Bill, Sherman wrote, will lie and frame anybody and [do] anything to accomplish their purposes (p150) Gardner's personal opinion of Sadler is a little more reserved, Although I do not question Sadler's honesty and sincerity, I am convinced that he fell victim in his declining years to delusions of self-importance and grandeur of the sort that occasionally descend on the elderly. (p403)

Anyone who knew Dr. Sadler will recognize that these statements are ridiculous. Dr. Sadler was an exceptionally well balanced, rational individual. He did not try to control people and usually did not express his opinion about an issue unless asked. He deliberately removed himself from leadership responsibilities in the Urantia Foundation and the Urantia Brotherhood and did not try to influence their decisions. He did everything he could to prevent his name from being associated with The Urantia Book. I was amazed at his ability to remove himself from leadership influence and allow younger people to assume responsibilities without his interference. He was also a very competent leader and I assume he could be autocratic with anyone who wanted to alter the content of The Urantia Book. Christy (Emma Christensen, a member of the contact commission who received the Urantia Papers) told me that Harold Sherman wanted to enter material on extra sensory perception in the book and was categorically refused.

Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery is the first extensively researched public record of events surrounding the origin of The Urantia Book written by a skilled debunker who does everything possible to undermine credibility in

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its teachings. Although Martin Gardner's book contains many things which I think are erroneous and has evaluations with which I disagree, I think it is important in an open society to have such criticism available, and it helps prevent a cult mentality in the Urantia movement. Even the impartial reviewer of the book in the Library Journal recognizes its patronizing tone and gross editorializing and concludes the review by saying ... it would be difficult to recommend this book to any library. The high spiritual quality of the Fifth Epochal Revelation will survive such attacks much as the spiritual truths of the Fourth Epochal Revelation survived the persecutions of the early Christian community.

A Critical Approach to The Urantia Book

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

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

My personal view, after almost forty years of critical study and evaluation, is that The Urantia Book is of superior quality in at least four categories:

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

Generations of scholars will be probing the human aspects and personalities whose concepts were the temporal carriers of the eternal spiritual truths of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. This is both interesting and appropriate research which may, along with the confines of the English language, shed some light on the limitations of the latest epochal revelation. But the real quality of The Urantia Book will be determined by its spiritual truths and insights. In my judgment, they are without peer on our planet.

The Ascendancy of the Fifth Epochal Revelation

During the first forty years of its history the Urantia movement has evolved from a handful of readers in Chicago to hundreds of study groups and tens of thousands of readers throughout the world. Without mass publicity or promotion over 250,000 copies of The Urantia Book have been sold and translations are available in French, Spanish, and Finnish. Work continues on the Dutch and Russian translations, with editions of Korean, German, Swedish, Hungarian, and Italian translations on the drawing board. Audio and computer versions of the book are available and numerous study aids have been published. Regional and International Conferences are

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being held and secondary works are proliferating.

All this is impressive but of much greater importance is the tempering and structuring of the Urantia movement in preparation for its world-wide mission. The rugged struggle of these early years has established solid foundations for carrying a new paradigm of spiritual reality to humankind. The Urantia movement very early in its history has encountered most of the challenges that have threatened religious transitions down through history. We have received an experiential vaccination against these viruses which have threatened creative spiritual growth in the past. The Fifth Epochal Revelation has demonstrated its dynamic and power in steering the movement repeatedly through critical periods and controversial encounters in our journey. The Urantia movement has been confronted by centralized organizational control and we have witnessed the power of individual initiative and creative diversity to establish a pluralistic foundation for outreach ministry. We have escaped oligarchical-authoritarian direction in the triumph of participatory democracy and openness. We weathered the threat of legalistic-power strategies through the dominance of cooperative team work.

Soon after regional and national conferences were held, students of The Urantia Book were captivated and challenged by the intrigues of charismatic control of the Urantia movement. With the passing of time, we recognized the danger of charismatic influence and witnessed the emergence of evolutionary-rational decision-making. On the heels of this tempering experience, we were confronted by a more subtle form of charismatic influence in the captivating channeling movement among readers of The Urantia Book. Following the example of the Christian church in dealing with similar movements in its history, we have achieved the spiritual maturity to allow individual freedom to evaluate the authenticity of spiritual experience.

We are now entering the intellectual-spiritual struggle which took mainline Christianity centuries to largely resolve: distinguishing between the contemporary, fallible human carrier concepts used in revelation from its

eternal spiritual truths. Martin Gardner's book, *Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery*, may help to shorten this period in the Urantia movement. It may also help to guard against cult attitudes among those who have living faith in the enlarged spiritual truths of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

The solid core of the Urantia movement has come through these tribulations with renewed dedication and balance. We have come of age. Spiritual freedom and participatory democracy have taught us that there can be unity of purpose in the midst of intellectual and political diversity. The Fifth Epochal Revelation will make its way and overcome any barriers placed in its way. We are standing at the threshold of one of the most amazing and enthralling epochs of social readjustment, moral quickening, and spiritual enlightenment on our planet (TUB 195/9/2082). The preliminary, orienting growth developments of the Urantia movement are largely behind us. The Most Highs have prepared us and our planet for the most thrilling vision of spiritual reality since Jesus of Nazareth walked on our world. This outreach mission will be many-faceted, pluralistic, and victorious!

Clergy Evaluate *The Urantia Book*

Many of us as we read the Gospels marvel that the Pharisees and Sadducees did not perceive the high spiritual quality and wisdom of the teachings of Jesus. We tend to forget the great influence of tradition and the power of authority in institutional religion. Prophetic messages are usually opposed by institutional power structures for decades before the truth of their insights is generally recognized. This is the nature of religious growth. All individual and social development has a basic evolutionary component.

Some thirty-five years ago while serving as vice-president of what was then the Indiana-Michigan Conference of the United Church of Christ, Judge Louis Hammerschmidt, the lay member of our conference board, gave me a copy of *The Urantia Book*. My life has not been the same since. After several years of critical study and thought, I became convinced that it had an authentic revelatory message. It seemed that my entire existence and

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experience had been prepared for its transcendent spiritual vision.

I knew that my life must be dedicated to building an interface between this amazing book, which claims to be the Fifth Epochal Revelation in the history of our planet, and mainline Christianity. I spent years thinking about how this could be done wisely and effectively. After decades of bootlegging Urantia Book concepts in my preaching and teaching, it became clear to me that no amount of evolutionary eloquence or insight is an adequate substitute for the revelation itself. Through experience I became convinced that only the Fifth Epochal Revelation has the integrated spiritual dynamics to bring a spiritual renaissance in our society. Therefore, in 1979 we organized and incorporated the Christian Fellowship of Students of The Urantia Book to serve as an aegis for such a ministry.

Starting in 1983, we sent letters along with a pamphlet and an offer of a loan book to all of the United Church of Christ ministers in the United States and the United Methodist ministers in the North Indiana Conference. From the 8,000 personal letters sent, there were 330 ministers who asked for loan books. This 4% request for loan books was greater than the 1% which we hypothesized would ask for books. Around 25% of those who examined the book have purchased their own personal copy. As anticipated, we received both positive and negative comments on the book. The following is a representative sample of each.

"Thank you for introducing me to The Urantia Book. I noticed it in a bookstore years ago, but passed it by...I already feel the need to find a forum for some discussion about this book. Even within the political restrictions of the professional ministry, there are some persons I can speak to regarding this work...reading it has invigorated my preaching and restored much of my faith in Jesus as the Son of God rather than just a wise speaker and just man. While I am at liberty to refer to The Urantia Book with my secretary and friends here (at church), I still feel stifled as the urge moves me to use the book as a source document!"

"Having examined in considerable detail The Urantia Book, I am now returning it to you under separate cover. The process of evaluating the

book was challenging and interesting and there is much therein to commend this mysterious work. However, I have come to the tentative conclusion that this is a product of human reasoning and imagination, not divine, extraterrestrial revelation. Given that the book came into being in the mid-1930's I see a number of concepts that reflect the paradigms of that period, not necessarily what we know today, especially in terms of scientific concepts...Finally, the organization of the universe follows hierarchical patterns reminiscent of the centralized 1930's. Using Occam's Razor, this explanation seems to me to be overly-complex and bureaucratic. Based on these criteria, I find it difficult to accept the authenticity of The Urantia Book. Thank you so much for sharing it with me."

"Even as a neophyte student of The Urantia Book it is clear to me that this book can at the very least be classified as first class wisdom literature. One major theme appears to be that of understanding all change as some form of evolutionary process. While this is a thesis I have long held The Urantia Book carries it out in a grand and convincing scale. Thanks for introducing us."

"Its a fascinating book. I've read large parts of it and the other materials you sent me but I must admit I don't know what to make of it. I am a liberal thinker, well read in biblical criticism, ancient mythology, Jungian Psychology, World religions, the history and theology of the Christian faith and the history of art, ritual and culture. I have an open mind. But I find it very difficult to relate the Urantia material to my world view of reality and my faith perspective. It seems to be a literal projection of the inner spiritual' realm of the Psyche on to the outer historical world. This is very dangerous...If you have other material which might help me understand the origin and intent of the book (right now I am very suspicious of its esoteric nature and doubtful of its authorship and revelation') I would still be interested (even purchasing) in further reading." "The book has made a tremendous impact on the thought life of a number of faculty at the University of _____when I recently introduced it to them. I'm completing my doctoral studies this year...Since the book is making the 'rounds' at present could you possibly send another copy

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as well, since my wife and I are making a 4th reading of it."

"I already have a copy of The Urantia Book. But I am so excited to find a group of kindred souls within the church who want to take it seriously. Please send me more information about becoming a part of your Fellowship, and about any interpretive literature you may have. Praise God and thanks."

"Thank you for your letter regarding The Urantia Book; it helped give additional credibility to my frequent use of the guidance and revelation the book has provided me since I acquired it over three years ago. I showed it to another retired U.C.C. minister a couple of years ago and his response was something like 'although parts of it seem far-fetched, the well written book seems to offer some truthful insight.' Thank you for the work you are doing."

"Thank you very much for sending me The Urantia Book...I was glad to get a look at it, as it is an extraordinary book indeed, though I had never heard of it before your brochure came in the mail. Whoever wrote it had an incredible imagination and also a complex and beautifully structured mind, since as your brochures indicate, even a brief reading of parts of it give the impression of a highly unusual consistency amidst all the exuberant imagination.

"It reminds me a little of Emmanuel Swedenborg, yet without Swedenborg's concern for virtue and the ethical life. It strikes me that the author could have made a tremendous career in modern science fiction. I don't say that disparagingly. We need people and literature which widen our horizons spiritually, and let us know that there are more things in heaven and on earth than dreamt of in our philosophy.

"Where I find the book unsatisfying is first, the lack of relationship to the concrete realities of our world, the obstacles and difficulties which we actually face in living. It is like 'Dungeons and Dragons,' seductively capable of drawing someone off into the higher spheres and losing all touch with earth. Second, the fact that the author or authors chose to conceal themselves is very unsatisfying. That again bespeaks the minimizing of history and of historical connections which the book presupposes. It's a

kind of mammoth 'Gnostic' document for our time, attractive, I'm sure, to those who need to feel that they have some kind of superior esoteric knowledge not available to most poor mortals. Finally, for all its claim to represent entirely new, indeed infinite levels of knowledge, there are already aspects of its language which sound quaint, passé, as in the references to the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.' At least in the U.C.C., such one-sidedly sexist language is no longer acceptable."

"I am finding the book interesting and thought-provoking, and thank you for making it available to me." "I am absolutely intrigued with The Urantia Book. My only regret is that I have less time to read and think than I would like." "Didn't get finished with the book. Super piece of work." "Thank you for loaning me a copy of The Urantia Book. It was fascinating reading!" "It's a great book. Thank you for sharing it with me." "This book was very enjoyable. Thanks."

We received many more comments but all pretty much reflecting these same positive and negative observations. Most of these ministers had the book for only three months and obviously did not have the time for an in depth, critical evaluation. The Christian Fellowship of Students of The Urantia Book is interested in stimulating knowledgeable people in all fields of learning, especially those with backgrounds in theology, philosophy, and science, to undertake critical evaluations of the book. This is the way revelation is validated or invalidated in our society and culture. We believe The Urantia Book will hold up under such examination. In any case this is the acid test of truth which determines whether spiritual teachings live and nourish humankind or are passing phenomena on the human scene.

I should like to close this brief paper by quoting from a letter we received from a Professor of Philosophy who teaches in one of the well known universities of the country. He first heard of The Urantia Book in the early 70's and was unimpressed. Some time ago a former student suggested that he read the book. Since he respected the student's judgment, he got a copy of The Urantia Book and started reading it. Although this professor has not finished reading the book and therefore does not want his name

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attached to any recommendation, he is amazed at its substantive content. He comments:

It is, in my judgment, an amazingly sophisticated, spiritually moving, and metaphysically insightful document, this Urantia Book! I have been reading philosophical and theological tracts (my major work has been in Heidegger and German philosophy) for many years, and I have never come across a work that is both so philosophically satisfying in its depiction of the Divine, as well as so uplifting, reassuring, and spiritually profound. Clearly, the appearance of this book is an important event in world history. Its description of and justification of the existence of a truly personal, although infinite, Divinity is simply beautiful. I'm not sure what else I need to say to you, except that I am interested in becoming somehow involved in a network of people who have encountered this text and who have been moved by it in a way similar to the way in which it is effecting me...

What is it about this book that makes it, for me and for so many other people, such a compelling, persuasive, and moving work? I've read a great many spiritual tracts from a great

many religious traditions, but none of them has had the penetrating power of this book. I really am a loss of what to make of it, except to conclude that it really is what it purports to be. Of course, the very idea that--in effect--angelic entities communicated this work through a human being is absurd to the contemporary secular mind, but such a mind is very limited. We humans are barely evolved beyond the level of animals, so it is not surprising that we have difficulty imagining and taking seriously levels of reality that transcend our own.

This professor voices the reaction which most of us "religious professionals" have when we first look at The Urantia Book--"gnostic," "esoteric," "absurd." Then those of us who take the time to actually read the book find something quite different than we anticipated. It has substance, balance, spiritual insight, and an amazingly coherent universe picture of Reality. Because of its great potential to contribute to the spiritual enhancement and well being of humanity, we think it is important for ministers, theologians, philosophers, and others to engage in a scholarly study, criticism, and evaluation of the book.

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