

SYNOPTIC OVERVIEW FOR THE URANTIA BOOK

Introduction

1. **Basics for the Initiate:** In some ways The Urantia Book is like Whitehead's Process Theology; for the initiate it is helpful if the basic concepts are summarized and interpreted.
 - a. The Urantia Book was published by URANTIA Foundation, 533 Diversey Parkway, Chicago, IL 60614. The book contains 2097 pages, divided into four sections:
 - i. The Central and Superuniverses, 354 pages.
 - ii. The Local Universes, 294 pages.
 - iii. The History of Urantia, 671 pages.
 - iv. The Life and Teachings of Jesus, 778 pages.
 - b. The style and content of the book are of high quality. It supports the basic Judaeo-Christian theistic approach to central philosophic-religious positions and undergirds the best in all religions.
 - c. The Urantia Book claims to be new revelation but we would remind readers that claim or authority is not an adequate philosophic criterion of truth. The reader should evaluate the book entirely on the quality of its content. One can best evaluate spiritual reality by maintaining the critical philosophical attitude and applying the test of experience.
2. **General Introduction:** Leavening Our Religious Heritage.
 - a. There is a great need for a fresh and enlarged spiritual vision.
 - b. One should be suspicious of revelatory claims. The acid test is that of coherent philosophic evaluation and the pragmatic validity of experience.
 - c. The book presents a mature and holistic philosophical orientation. It enlarges, enhances, and integrates traditional concepts and values.
 - d. It is a resource, not an imperative.
 - e. The Urantia Book is not interested in creating a new church or a new religion but in leavening all of the traditional religious concepts, forms, and institutions.
3. **Specific Introduction:** Traditional Theology and The Urantia Book.
 - a. **Revelation:** Epochal revelation is periodic, successive, and evolutionary. Insofar as the indwelling Spirit reveals truth to individuals, revelation is continuous. Revelation always upsteps the religions of evolution.
 - b. **Doctrine of God:** The traditional static and the contemporary dynamic concepts of God are expanded, enhanced and integrated.
 - c. **Cosmology:** The book presents an expanded and complex physical and spiritual cosmology and an extensive hierarchical system of spiritual administrative and ministering personalities.
 - d. **Christology:** Jesus is portrayed as truly human and truly divine. In addition to acting as a mediator and saviour, he is pictured also as a Creator Son after the view presented in the prologue of the Gospel of John.
 - e. **Salvation:** All are saved who have faith in the highest source of truth, beauty, and goodness (God) available to them and achieve the Universal Father through the mediating ministry of Christ.
 - f. **Doctrine of Man:** Man is a mortal son or daughter of God who has great potential for both good and evil. Each person is indwelt by a fragment of God which, if followed, in time will lead unerringly to the Father by the way ordained by God the Son through the grace of the ministry of God the Spirit.
 - g. **The Church:** Religious institutions are necessary and good but are only social institutions. The Kingdom of God is a spiritual relationship which transcends social institutions.

h. Future Life: Our spiritual development is seen as a long, gradual, and experiential road leading to the Isle of Paradise at the center of the universe of universes and to the Universal Father. Our traditional concepts of heaven and hell are seen as puerile visions of a truly great destiny. A future of unimaginable grandeur and service is ahead.

- 4. Notes:** The basic theological positions of The Urantia Book reinforce the essential tenets of mainline Christianity but on a vastly enlarged universe scale. In the judgment of tens of thousands of discriminating people, including many ministers, the book contains the greatest stimulus to spiritual growth in contemporary literature. It certainly merits critical examination and evaluation by all who are seriously interested in the future of religion on our world.

Many of those with a traditional theological education who scan the table of contents, browse through random sections, and read occasional paragraphs often arrive at evaluations like “esoteric” or “gnostic” and lose interest in further examination of the book. This surface appearance is deceptive. The Urantia Book presents a relatively complete spiritual-mindal-material philosophy and cosmology of the universe which cannot be visualized, much less evaluated, by superficial examination. A complete reading of the papers covering the life and teachings of Jesus, some 775 pages, is probably the minimal sampling necessary to evaluate the quality, but not the scope, of the book.

Read the book as you would read any book on philosophy, theology, or religion -- critically, feeling free to agree or disagree with any and all statements. It is surprising that even some theologically educated people have emotional reservations about reading and criticizing material which claims to be revelatory. Hopefully, we have left behind those days of cultural naïveté when claim or authority have any meaning as criterion of truth. Quality of insight and content is the only criterion one should use in reading the book. Only after a thorough reading of the book and careful evaluation of its message is one in a position to speculate about authorship. You will find a wealth of insights which can be used in preaching and teaching.

A Concordex (topical index) of The Urantia Book is available (\$12) through local bookstores or by writing the compiler-author: Clyde Bedell, 1850 #310, Boulder, CO 80302. Prof. Duane L. Faw of the Pepperdine University School of Law has recently published an experimental edition of his research entitled Paramony (parallel and harmony) relating Biblical and URANTIA Book passages which is a great help in making a study of the content of the book as it relates to the Bible.

Revelation

1. The origin of The Urantia Book.
 - a. The first thing most people wish to know about The Urantia Book.
 - i. A natural reaction because of our cultural conditioning.
 - ii. Revelatory claims should always be questioned.
 - iii. We should judge not by claim but by the quality of content.
 - b. The author’s account.
 - i. The authors speak of The Urantia Book as the fifth epochal revelation. The other four:
 - (1) Dalamatian Teachings - Planetary Prince;
 - (2) Edenic Teachings - Adam and Eve;
 - (3) Melchizedek of Salem - associate of Abraham;
 - (4) Jesus of Nazareth. (1007-8)
 - ii. Written by numerous supermortals and materialized in the English language. (648:7)
 - (1) Authors acknowledge difficulties in translating spiritual realities into human concepts and language. (17:2)
 - (2) Used thousands of human concepts and statements to facilitate comprehension and communication. (17:2, 1343)
 - (3) Authors were rigorously restricted; they are not allowed to anticipate developments in the future. (1109:4)

- (4) Contents of revelation dare not be too far removed from contemporary thought patterns. (1007:1)
- (5) The authors realize that human beings like to proceed from the simple to the complex but point out that spiritual wisdom is only achieved in a holistic approach, understanding the origin, history, and destiny of universe realities. (215:2, 3)
- iii. The Thought Adjuster (indwelling Spirit of God) of a human being was used in some way to materialize the URANTIA Papers in the English language. (1208:7, 1258:1)
 - (1) Midwayers (beings quite close to us who can operate in both the spiritual and material worlds) were used in the materialization process but no description of the process is given. (865:5)
 - (2) Midwayers are in no way associated with spiritualism or mediumistic phenomena and usually do not allow humans to witness their activities. (865:5)
- c. The human story.
 - i. A group of Chicago people received the URANTIA Papers.
 - (1) In the mid 1920's a group known as the forum organized to discuss medical and psychological issues. This group was contacted by the revelators and eventually became involved with the URANTIA Papers.
 - (2) In 1939 the leadership of the Forum asked for volunteers to systematically study the URANTIA Papers. Seventy responded and The Seventy were trained by directives from the revelators and their own leaders up to the time of the publication of The Urantia Book. They were told the book did not belong to the era in which they were living but would slowly take root in our society in the years to come.
 - ii. Over twenty-five years ago I was a member of a small group of ministers who discovered The Urantia Book, recognized its potential, and spent years researching the origins of the book.
 - (1) The people in the Chicago office of URANTIA Brotherhood answered all of our questions candidly but would not talk about two things: the name of the individual who was used in some way and the details associated with the materialization of the papers.
 - (2) They informed us that they were asked to take vows of secrecy concerning these things. When asked why these restrictions were imposed on them, they gave the following reasons:
 - (a) The revelators do not want any human being associated with this revelation -- no St. Peter or St. Paul.
 - (b) No human being knows just how this phenomenon was executed. The revelators want nothing which appears miraculous associated with the book. It must stand on its own merit.
 - (c) In interviewing people associated with the origin of The Urantia Book, we found them critical and objective. They had done considerable research into the origin of the papers and were convinced the techniques of the reception of the URANTIA Papers in no way parallels or impinges on mediumistic, psychic, or subconscious mental activity.

2. The Urantia Book View of Revelation

- a. Epochal revelation is periodic, successive, and evolutionary. Insofar as the indwelling Spirit reveals truth to individuals, revelation is continuous. (1107:3)
- b. Knowledge must be achieved by evolutionary discovery but it is integrated and given spiritual value orientation by revelation. This saves much time in eliminating the errors and distortions of evolution. (1110:2)
- c. Revelation is never too far removed from the thought process of the age in which it is given. It is rooted solidly in evolutionary foundations. (1007:1, 1106:2)
- d. Revelation expands and upstays the religions of evolution. (1007:1)
- e. Revelation co-ordinates and integrates science, philosophy, and religion with the truths of reality. It bridges man's conceptual deficiencies. (59:4, 1106:1, 1137:3, 1138:7)
- f. Revelation can only be validated by experience. (1106:6)

g. Revelation is never complete until we meet the Universal Father. (1008:3)

3. Summary

- a.** Man has a tendency to confuse language with reality, terminology with truth. The New Testament contains the same spiritual truths whether we classify it as revelation or general religious literature. A rose would look and smell the same if it were called an onion. The Urantia Book should be evaluated in this way -- by its truth content or lack of it, not by its revelatory claims.
- b.** Historically new spiritual truth has received characteristic treatment. The religious zealots or fundamentalists denounce it as “heresy” or label it “the work of the devil” as the Pharisees did the teachings of Jesus. The power structure of society usually either studiously ignore it or look down their noses at it, as the Sadducees did Jesus, until repercussions of its message begin to threaten their pocket books or their power. The common people, however, usually receive liberating spiritual truth gladly. The Urantia Book obviously presents new and enlarged spiritual truth; it will be interesting to observe its reception by society.

The Doctrine of God

1. The I AM concept -- The First Source and Center.

- a.** The concept of the I AM is a philosophic concession made to time-space limited minds which cannot adequately comprehend beginning and ending realities and relationships. (6:4) Exodus 3:14
 - i.** The I AM achieves personality by becoming the Father of the Eternal Son and the Infinite Spirit. Concomitant with the differentiation of the Son and the Spirit from the Father, the Isle of Paradise and the Central Universe came into being. (In actuality the Paradise Trinity, Paradise, and the Central Universe have always been in existence.) (6:3)
 - ii.** The I AM has reality existential and potential qualities embraced by seven Absolutes:
 - (1) The First Source and Center -- The Universal Father.
 - (2) The Second Source and Center -- The Eternal Son.
 - (3) The Third Source and Center -- The Infinite Spirit.
 - (4) The Isle of Paradise -- the source of all universe energy and gravity control.
 - (5) The Deity Absolute -- the source of universe causational and personality potentials.
 - (6) The Unqualified Absolute -- the source of universe static-reactive and infinite capacity potentials.
 - (7) The Universal Absolute -- the source of universe unity and integration. (1154 - 56)
- b.** God, as the First Source and Center, is primal in relation to total reality and is limited only by volition. (5:2)

“The First Source and Center is that infinity who unqualifiedly transcends all mind, all matter, and all spirit.” (31:7)

2. God the Father

- a.** The Universal Father is the God of all creation. (21:1) God is spirit and we should think of him as the creator, controller, and infinite upholder of all things. (25:1) In science God is regarded as a cause, in philosophy an ultimate reality, and in religion as a loving Father. (59:4)
- b.** God is a person who can know and be known; he is personality. (28:6) God’s conduct is personal - conscious and volitional. He is not a slave to his own perfection and infinity. (138:2)

- c. God is not just a synonym for nature, law, beauty, or love. He is not “the noblest work of man” neither is he manlike or machinelike. He is transcendent reality. (23:5)
- d. God is infinite, eternal, righteous, just, loving, merciful, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and primal. (44 - 53)
- e. God is the bestower of personality and he dwells within us. In him we live and move and have our being. (70:3, 139:1)

3. God the Son

- a. The Son is the spiritual and personal nature of God made manifest to the universes. (79:4) He is the eternal Word of God. (74:7) The Eternal Son is the great mercy minister to all creation. (75:7)
“The Eternal Son is a complete, exclusive, universal, and final revelation of the spirit and personality of the Universal Father.” (88:7)
- b. The spirit-gravity pull of the Eternal Son constitutes the secret of the Paradise ascension of surviving mortals. (84:2)
- c. The Sons of the Eternal Son can incarnate in the likeness of mortal flesh. (86:2, 5)

4. God the Spirit

- a. The Infinite Spirit is the effective agent for the execution of the Father-Son plan for spiritual growth and Paradise attainment. God is love; the Son is mercy; and the Spirit is ministry. (93:7, 98:3)
- b. The Infinite Spirit is the correlator of all actual reality -- the manipulator of energy, the absolute mind and the source of the mind-gravity circuit, and a minister to personalities. (96:4, 99:3, 102:2, 103:7)
- c. The ministry of the Paradise Trinity is co-ordinated.
“God the Father, loves men; God the Son serves men; God the Spirit inspires the children of the universe to the ever-ascending adventure of finding God the Father by the ways ordained by God the Sons through the ministry of the grace of God the Spirit.” (53:7)

5. God the Supreme

- a. God the Supreme is the actualizing God of time and space. (4:4) He is the personalization of the totality of evolutionary universe experience. (1304:2) The Supreme grows as the personalities in the evolving universes attain God-likeness. (1265:6)
This concept is very close to the contemporary deity concepts in the writings of Jung, Tillich, Teilhard de Chardin, Whitehead. Process Theology, which stems from Whiteheadian philosophy, speaks about the “primordial” nature of God (I AM, Paradise Trinity, Absolutes) and the “consequent” nature of God (Supreme) and thus comes very close to the concept of God in The Urantia Book. God the Supreme is also essentially the same as the “immanence” concept of God in traditional theology.
- b. With God the Supreme one must do something as well as be something. (1260:1) The Supreme is the catalyser of all universe growth. (1283:3)
- c. At the end of the present universe age the Supreme Being will function as an experiential sovereign of the grand universe. (1280:7)

6. God the Sevenfold

- a. Man progressively discerns God through the ministry of God the Sevenfold. This is the “spiritual ladder” by which man ascends the universe from his planetary origin to Paradise. Mortals in our universe successively encounter God in the following order:
 - i. Christ Michael.

- ii. The Ancients of Days.
 - iii. The Seventh Master Spirit.
 - iv. The Supreme Being.
 - v. God the Spirit.
 - vi. God the Son.
 - vii. God the Father. (11:6, 1296:5)
- b. In spite of the complexity of the manifestations of Deity in the universe of universes, God is one and there is universal unity in his ministry. (637:1)
“Although Divinity may be plural in manifestation, in human experience Deity is singular, always one. Neither is spiritual ministry plural in human experience. Regardless of plurality of origin all spirit influences are one in function.” (380:4)

7. Summary

- a. The picture of God in The Urantia Book combines the best of the traditional static concepts of God with the most meaningful of the present day dynamic concepts (Tillich, Teilhard de Chardin, Whitehead) in a uniquely coherent system. To the best of my knowledge, it is the most comprehensive and insightfully structured holistic concept of deity in philosophic and religious literature.
- b. Although the concept of God is greatly expanded in The Urantia Book, it is solidly rooted in both the traditional and contemporary Christian views of God.
- c. The chief contribution of The Urantia Book view of God is that it enlarges and integrates traditional concepts in a way which preserves all of the old spiritual values while at the same time it has the potential of stimulating new and creative thinking in Christian theology and philosophy.

Cosmology

1. Physical Cosmography

- a. A simplified description of the astronomical universe from the center outward starts with the Isle of Paradise which is surrounded by the one billion perfect pattern worlds of the central universe, Havona. This central creation is encompassed by seven evolutionary superuniverses with their trillions of inhabited planets, all of which is encircled by four gigantic outer space levels. (129, 166)
 - i. Paradise, the central universe, and the seven superuniverses all taken together is known as the Grand Universe which is inhabited.
 - ii. The grand universe plus the four outer space levels, which are not now inhabited, is known as the Master Universe.
 - iii. The superuniverses are subdivided into major and minor sectors, local universes, constellations, systems, and individual planets.
- b. Paradise is the absolute source and eternal focal point of all energy-matter and material gravity. (125-6)
- c. This physical cosmography roughly parallels what is known or hypothesized by contemporary astronomy. Orvonton, the seventh superuniverse, for instance, is identified with the Milky Way galaxy and most of its major divisions have been identified by our astronomers. (167:7)
- d. The authors report that universe space expands and contracts in two billion year cycles. (123:3) They make many comments which relate to present astronomical concepts and data.
- e. The authors, however, caution us that because of restrictions placed on revelatory activity, the science and cosmology of The Urantia Book are not inspired. While spiritual insight is a revelatory gift, human knowledge and wisdom must evolve. Very soon, they tell us, the science of The Urantia Book will be out grown. (1109:4)

- i. In 1957 I asked a nationally known nuclear scientist and the head of a university physics department to evaluate Papers 41 and 42 which deal with physics and energy. To my surprise, they both said that this was about where leading physicists were in the early 1950's but they thought they were a little beyond this now.
- ii. Conversely, the book makes a number of scientific observations which were not discovered until after the papers were received or even after the book was published. (70:3, 139:1)

2. Spiritual Cosmology

- a. Post-mortals morontial (part material, part spiritual) and spiritual activities and training take place on architectural spheres. These specially constructed headquarters worlds and their satellites are distributed throughout the grand universe paralleling the geographic and hierarchical cosmography of the material creations: systems, constellations, local universe headquarters, minor sectors, major sectors, superuniverse headquarters, the one billion spheres of the central universe, and the Isle of Paradise.
- b. Presiding over each of these ascending spheres is a hierarchy of spiritual administrative personalities. At each level the spiritual activities and training becomes progressively higher. (330-44)
 - i. Our system, Satania, is supervised by a Lanonadek Son, Lanaforge, who is known as our System Sovereign. Lucifer at one time was our System Sovereign but was deposed following the Lucifer rebellion. (511)
 - ii. Our constellation, Norlatiadek, is governed by three Vorondadek Sons who are known as the Most Highs. Because of the Lucifer rebellion they have been particularly active in the supervision of our planet. (488)
 - iii. Our local universe, Nebadon, composed of ten million inhabited worlds, is ruled by a Sovereign Michael Son often referred to as Christ Michael. Following his bestowal on our planet the Universal Father gave him complete authority in our universe. He is a perfect revelation of the Universal Father and the Eternal Son to all in our universe. All who go to the Father in our universe proceed through his loving local universe ministry. (366)
- c. The physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of the diverse levels of creation are integrated, correlated, and unified by a superb divine plan and an eternal purpose. (637)

"Every impulse of every electron, thought, or spirit is an acting unit in the whole universe...The universe is whole; no thing or being exists or lives in isolation." (647:6)

3. Summary

- a. The portrayal of this gigantic material-mindal-spiritual cosmology is the most revolutionary and shocking aspect of The Urantia Book for most people. This new spiritual cosmology is something like going from the Ptolemaic view of the material universe not just to the Copernican view but to the new astronomy of Gamow, Hoyle, and Whipple all in one jump! It presents a picture of the spiritual universe which matches and surpasses the vast astronomical universe our scientists have discovered.
 - i. My suggestion is that you at present neither accept or reject this cosmology. Hold it in your mind. Examine its nature and implications. After you get used to the concept, you may find it stimulates superior spiritual insights and possesses many advantages over the simplistic Ptolemaic spiritual cosmology we inherited from our prescientific ancestors.
 - ii. Even if you should eventually reject this cosmological picture, it will not interfere with your appreciation of the magnificent portrayal of the life and teachings of Jesus and the superb philosophical concepts and spiritual insights of The Urantia Book.
- b. This new cosmological picture does not seem quite so revolutionary when one contemplates some of the implications of theories advanced by contemporary physicists such as Geoffrey Chew's S-matrix theory, David Bohm's view of the real universe existing on a deeper "non-manifest" level, and Stephen Hawking's vision of unifying the predictable world of Einstein's theory of general relativity with the random world of quantum-mechanics theory. The time is certainly here for an enlarged spiritual cosmology.

Christology and the Plan of Salvation

1. The divine prebestowal status of Jesus.
 - a. Jesus was the incarnation of a Creator Son of the order of Michael. He is known in our Universe as Christ Michael. (234) Dan. 12:1, Rev. 12:7
 - i. The Creator Sons are created by the Universal Father and the Eternal Son. Each is unique in nature as well as personality. (234 - 5)
 - ii. They are the creators and rulers of the local universes as described in the prologue of the Gospel of John. John 1: 1-18 Christ Michael is the creator of our universe, Nebadon. (235:4, 366)
 - iii. In their local universes these Creator Michaels are the “only begotten son.” To a local universe, for all practical purposes, a Michael Son is God. He is the local universe personification of the Universal Father and the Eternal Son. None who live in his universe proceed to the Father except through his ministry. (66:3) John 14:6
 - b. Each Michael Son must earn his sovereignty by incarnating in the likeness of the various orders of created beings in his universe. Jesus of Nazareth was the seventh and final bestowal of Christ Michael. (1323)
2. The bestowal of Christ Michael on our planet as Jesus of Nazareth.
 - a. The purposes of Jesus’ mission were to:
 - i. Reveal the Father. (1407:2)
 - ii. Acquire mortal experience. (1407:2, 1424:3,4)
 - iii. Terminate the Lucifer rebellion. (1494:3)
 - iv. Prepare the way for the universal bestowal of Thought Adjusters and the Spirit of Truth. (1328:3)
 - v. Become the inspiration for religious living for all of his universe. (1328:4)
 - vi. Establish a new and living way from man to God. (1426:1, 1965:4)
 - vii. Acquire sovereignty. (1323:2)
 - b. The events of Jesus’ bestowal.
 - i. Jesus was born August 21, 7 BC (1351:5)
 - ii. The early training and education of Jesus was received in the home and synagogue. He graduated from the synagogue school during his 13th year. When he was 14 his father was killed in a construction accident and Jesus became the sole support and comfort of his family. (1373, 1387 - 8)
 - iii. From the age of 15 to 26 Jesus served as the head of his family following which his brother, James, took over the family responsibilities.
 - iv. During the years from age 27 to 32 Jesus conducted a private personal ministry traveling widely about the Roman world and the Caspian Sea region and working in the Zebedee boat building shop.
 - v. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist 1/14/26 in his 32nd year. He spent most of the next year selecting and training his apostles. His public ministry began 1/19/27 and terminated at his crucifixion 4/7/30. (1504:5, 1587, 2006 - 7)
 - vi. On 4/9/30 Jesus came forth from the tomb with a morontia body - the same kind of body mortals will have when they are resurrected from the sleep of death. (2022 - 3)

- vii. During his post-resurrection sojourn on our world Jesus made 19 appearances to mortals. His ascension took place 5/18/30. (2057)

3. The plan of salvation.

- a. Jesus' death on the cross was not to atone for any sin of Adam or for man's supposed racial guilt. Jesus is saviour but not ransomer or redeemer. (2016:7, 2017:2)
 - i. Evil, sin, and judgment are stern and sober realities in the universe; nevertheless, the Universal Father is not a spirit despot who requires blood sacrifice or atonement for sins. (2017 - 19)
"The cross forever shows that the attitude of Jesus toward sinners was neither condemnation nor condonation, but rather eternal and loving salvation." (2018:2)
 - ii. By allowing misguided mortals to put him to death, Jesus made the cross an eternal symbol of the triumph of love over hate and the victory of truth over evil. (2018)
- b. Survival is determined by the affirmation of truth, beauty, and goodness (God) as the person sincerely understands these values. We are saved by faith. (63, 69 - 70)
- c. Death works no magic whereby we are instantaneously transformed from animal-origin material beings into perfect spirit beings. We advance in the universe by evolutionary growth and experience. The entire universe is a vast school for perfecting mortals.
 - i. This is because of the Father's supreme mandate:
"From the Universal Father who inhabits eternity there has gone forth the supreme mandate, 'Be you perfect, even as I am perfect.' In love and mercy the messengers of Paradise have carried this divine exhortation down through the ages and out through the universes, even to such lowly animal-origin creatures as the human race on Urantia." (21:3)
 - ii. We have a long Paradise journey ahead.
"Evolutionary mortals are born on the planets of space, pass through the morontia worlds, ascend the spirit universes, traverse the Havona spheres, find God, attain Paradise, and are mustered into the primary Corps of the Finality, therein to await the next assignment of universe service...And as we view this sublime spectacle, we all exclaim: 'What a glorious destiny for the animal-origin children of time, the material sons of space.'" (354:3)
- d. In spite of the imperfection, suffering, and disappointments which are a part of this life, we have ahead a great destiny of boundless opportunity, unlimited progress, and endless service. (365, 498, 1194)
"The confusion and turmoil of Urantia do not signify that the Paradise Rulers lack either interest or ability to manage affairs differently. The Creators are possessed of full power to make Urantia a veritable Paradise, but such an Eden would not contribute to the development of those strong, noble, and experienced characters which the Gods are so surely forging out on your world between the anvils of necessity and the hammers of anguish. Your anxieties and sorrows, your trials and disappointments, are just as much a part of the divine plan on your sphere as are the exquisite perfection and infinite adaptation of all things their supreme purpose on the worlds of the central and perfect universe." (258:5)

4. Summary

- a. The Urantia Book prebestowal status of Jesus differs from that of tradition Christian views in fact but not truth. In our ignorance of universe cosmology, we assumed Jesus was the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. He, in truth, does have all of the prerogatives of the second person of the Trinity in our universe. Christ Michael is even more important The Urantia Book picture -- being both creator and savior -- than in traditional Christianity.

- b. The centrality of Jesus to salvation is identical with that of orthodox Christianity but because of the enlarged spiritual cosmology salvation is open, not just to Christians, but to all who live on our planet and in our universe.
- c. The enlarged and enhanced presentation of the life and teachings of Jesus has great potential for revitalizing the churches of Western Civilization and stimulating a spiritual renaissance among all religions.
- d. The Urantia Book reminds us that all religions have admirable qualities and that they have much to learn from each other.

The Church and the Kingdom of Heaven

1. Distinctions between the Christian Church and Jesus' concept of the Kingdom of Heaven: the church is largely a social institution; the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual relationship.
 - a. The Christian Church.
 - i. Christianity often promotes a religion about Jesus; the kingdom of heaven is the religion of Jesus.

“Jesus founded the religion of personal experience in doing the will of God and serving the human brotherhood; Paul founded a religion in which the glorified Jesus became the object of worship and the brotherhood consisted of fellow believers in the divine Christ.” (2092:5)
 - ii. The church has become the socialized and humanized shadow of the spiritual brotherhood and has often taken the place of Jesus' concept of the kingdom of heaven. (1865)

“The church as a social outgrowth of the kingdom would have been wholly natural and even desirable. The evil of the church was not its existence, but rather that it almost completely supplanted the Jesus concept of the kingdom.” (1864:6)

“And so, for centuries, the Christian church has laboured under great embarrassment because it dared to lay claim to those mysterious powers and privileges of the kingdom, powers and privileges which can be exercised and experienced only between Jesus and his spiritual believer brothers.” (1866:1)
 - iii. In order to control the dynamic religion of Jesus the church has thoroughly traditionalized, dogmatized, and institutionalized it -- thus unwittingly becoming an obstacle to the growth of the real teachings of Jesus and the fellowship of believers. (1088:2, 2085:1)
 - iv. Secularism broke the bonds of church authoritarianism but now threatens to establish a godless society. many Christians are unwittingly secularists. (2081:3,4)
 - b. **The Kingdom of Heaven**
 - i. The kingdom of heaven is an inner spiritual relationship centered in the truth of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. It is the rule of God in the hearts of men.

“Concerning the kingdom, (Jesus') last word always was, ‘The kingdom is within you.’” (1859:3) Luke 17:21

“To Jesus the kingdom was the sum of those individuals who had confessed their faith in the fatherhood of God, thereby declaring their wholehearted dedication to doing the will of God, thus becoming members of the spiritual brotherhood of man.” (1865:1)
 - ii. The essentials of entering the kingdom are faith, sincerity, and the hunger for truth, beauty, and goodness. (1861:2)
 - iii. The cardinal features of the kingdom are:
 - (1) The pre-eminence of the individual.

- (2) The will as the determining factor in human experience.
- (3) Spiritual fellowship with God the Father.
- (4) The supreme satisfaction of the loving service of man.
- (5) The transcendency of the spiritual over the material in human personality.” (1863:3)

2. The social dynamics of religious institutions.

a. The dangers of religious institutionalism:

“But as religion becomes institutionalized, its power for good is curtailed, while the possibilities for evil are greatly multiplied. The dangers of formalized religion are: fixation of beliefs and crystallization of sentiments; accumulation of vested interests with increase of secularization; tendency to standardize and fossilize truth; diversion of religion from the service of God to the service of the church; inclination of leaders to become administrators instead of ministers; tendency to form sects and competitive aristocratic “chosen-people” attitude; fostering of false and exaggerated ideas of sacredness; the routinizing of religion and the petrification of worship; tendency to venerate the past while ignoring present demands; failure to make up-to-date interpretations of religion; entanglement with functions of secular institutions; it creates the evil discrimination of religious castes; it becomes an intolerant judge of orthodoxy; it fails to hold the interest of adventurous youth and gradually loses the saving message of the gospel of eternal salvation.” (1092:4)

b. The need and purpose of religious institutions:

“There is a real purpose in the socialization of religion. It is the purpose of group religious activities to dramatize the loyalties of religion; to magnify the lures of truth, beauty, and goodness; to foster the attractions of supreme values; to enhance the service of unselfish fellowship; to glorify the potentials of family life; to promote religious education; to provide wise counsel and spiritual guidance; and to encourage group worship. And all live religions encourage human friendship, conserve morality, promote neighbourhood welfare, and facilitate the spread of the essential gospel of their respective messages of eternal salvation.” (1092:3)

c. Religion, religious institutions, or religious groups should not become organically involved in secular work, social reconstruction, or economic reorganization but as civilization advances they should constantly update their religious position by making vigorous restatements of their moral mandates and spiritual principles. (1087:3)

- i. It is wise for religious groups to confine their activities to religious causes. (1087:6, 1089:3, 2085:6, 2086:6,7)
- ii. Religionists should function in society, in industry, and in politics as individuals, not as religious groups. (1089)

3. Jesus' concept of the kingdom will prevail.

a. In spite of its limitations Christianity is the best religion of the twentieth century. It is one of the greatest powers for good on earth. (2083:5, 2085:2)

b. The church is the larval stage of the thwarted spiritual kingdom. The kingdom inaugurated by Jesus is still alive and will emerge as the dominant spiritual force on our planet. (1866:4)

c. We are living in one of the pivotal periods of history.

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.” (2083:2)

“The time is ripe to witness the figurative resurrection of the human Jesus from his burial tomb amidst the theological traditions and the religious dogmas of nineteen centuries.” (2090:3)

“But paganized and socialized Christianity stands in need of the new contact with the uncompromised teachings of Jesus; it languishes for lack of a new vision of the Master’s life on earth. A new and fuller revelation of the religion of Jesus is destined to conquer an empire of materialistic secularism and to overthrow a world sway of mechanistic naturalism. Urantia is now quivering on the very brink of one of its most amazing and enthralling epochs of social readjustment, moral quickening, and spiritual enlightenment.” (2082:8)

“Religion does need new leaders, spiritual men and women who will date to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings...who will be exclusively devoted to the spiritual regeneration of men. And then will these spirit-born souls quickly supply the leadership and inspiration requisite for the social, moral, economic, and political reorganization of the world.” (2082:10)

“The call of the adventure of building a new and transformed human society by means of the spiritual rebirth of Jesus’ brotherhood of the kingdom should thrill all who believe in him as man has not been stirred since the days when they walked about on earth as his companions in the flesh.” (2084:6)

4. The kingdom of God is an invisible and spiritual brotherhood which is destined to become a living organism transcending social institutions. We are called to spiritual unity, not uniformity.

- a. Spiritual unity is based on common ideals, purposes, and goals, not on the same theological beliefs and creeds.

“There is great hope for any church that worships the living God, validates the brotherhood of man, and dares to remove all creedal pressure from its members.” (1135:3)

“This pitiful subdivision of Christian believers results from failure to discern in the Master’s manifold teachings the divine oneness of his matchless life. But someday the true believers in Jesus will not be thus spiritually divided...Always we may have diversity of intellectual comprehension and interpretation, even varying degrees of socialization, but lack of spiritual brotherhood is both inexcusable and reprehensible.” (1866:3)

“But in this brotherhood of Jesus there is no place for sectarian rivalry, group bitterness, nor assertions of moral superiority or spiritual infallibility.” (2085:7)

- b. The great hope of our world is that this expanded revelation of truth will unite the churches and religions of our planet in common and fraternal purposes and ideals.

“The great hope of Urantia lies in the possibility of a new revelation of Jesus with a new and enlarged presentation of his saving message which would spiritually unite in loving service the numerous families of his present-day professed followers.” (2086:2)

5. Summary

- a. The Urantia Book presents a truly ecumenical approach to religion. It emphasizes that you may belong to any religious group or to no religious group and still be in the kingdom of God. It, hopefully, will become a might influence which will some day virtually eliminate the narrow sectarianism and the conflict and antagonism which exists among religious groups on our world.
- b. Its mature, evolutionary, universe oriented frames of reference free us from the compulsive desire to “save” people by urging them to adopt our religious or philosophic views. It helps us to be patient, understanding, and loving with the immature, the fearful, the angry, and the egocentric people of our world. The Urantia Book helps us, as mankind has seldom been helped, to identify with the world-wide family of God.

Prayer and Worship

1. The distinction between prayer and worship and their relational aspects.

- a.** Prayer has an element of self or creature interest and concern. Worship is the contemplation of God; it is an end in itself.

“Worship is for its own sake; prayer embodies a self- or creature-interest element; that is the greatest difference between worship and prayer.” (65:6)

“Prayer is self-reminding -- sublime thinking; worship is self-forgetting -- superthinking.” (1619:9)

- b.** Prayer may lead to worship and be an aid to worship.

“As prayer may be likened to recharging the spiritual batteries of the soul, so worship may be compared to the act of tuning in the soul to catch the universe broadcasts of the infinite spirit of the Universal Father.” (1621:7)

2. The nature and effect of prayer.

- a.** The nature of prayer.

- i.** Prayer is communication with God designed to expand insight. (1616, 1848)
- ii.** Prayer is both a sound psychological practice which augments self-realization and an effective spiritual technique to expand the soul. (997, 999, 1621)
- iii.** Prayer is not a technique to escape life’s difficulties but a way in which we can learn to face conflict and suffering meaningfully and courageously. Prayer does not change God’s mind but it may change the person praying. (1001-2, 1619, 1621)

- b.** The distortion of prayer.

- i.** Primitive and immature prayer attempts to plead or bargain with God for health, wealth, power, or preference.

“Early prayer was hardly worship; it was a bargaining petition for health, wealth, and life. And in many respects prayers have not much changed with the passing of the ages.” (983:7)

“Prayer, unless in liaison with the will and actions of the personal spiritual forces and material supervisors of a realm, can have no direct effect upon one’s physical environment. While there is a very definite limit to the province of the petitions of prayer, such limits do not equally apply to the faith of those who pray.”

“Prayer is not a technique for curing real and organic diseases, but it has contributed enormously to the enjoyment of abundant health and to the cure of numerous mental, emotional, and nervous ailments. And even in actual bacterial disease, prayer has many times added to the efficacy of other remedial procedures. Prayer has turned many an irritable and complaining invalid into a paragon of patience and made him an inspiration to all other human sufferers.” (999:4,5)

- ii.** Prayer cannot be used to circumvent universe laws and the limitations of time and space.

“That prayer which is inconsistent with the known and established laws of God is an abomination to the Paradise Deities.” (1638:3)

“Prayer may not be employed to avoid the delays of time or to transcend the handicaps of space.” (1639:5)

- iii.** The spiritual level of people is revealed by the nature of their prayers; however, the more mature should not criticize or ridicule the naive and the immature.” (999:3)

- c.** Conditions of effective prayer.

- i.** Words are not important in prayer; God responds only to the true and sincere attitudes of the mind and soul.

“Words are irrelevant to prayer; they are merely the intellectual channel in which the river of spiritual supplication may chance to flow. The word value of a prayer is purely auto-suggestive in private devotions and socio-suggestive in group devotions. God answers the soul’s attitude, not the words.” (1002:5)

- ii. We should pray for divine guidance to solve our human problems, not for some cosmic, miraculous solution. (1002)
- iii. To pray effectively you must face reality honestly and intelligently, attempt to solve problems by the resources which you have, be dedicated to doing the will of God, and have living faith.
- iv. “If you would engage in effective praying, you should bear in mind the laws of prevailing petitions:
 - (1) You must qualify as a potent prayer by sincerely and courageously facing the problems of universe reality. You must possess cosmic stamina.
 - (2) You must have honestly exhausted the human capacity for human adjustment. You must have been industrious.
 - (3) You must surrender every wish of mind and every craving of soul to the transforming embrace of spiritual growth. You must have experienced an enhancement of meanings and an elevation of values.
 - (4) You must make a wholehearted choice of the divine will. You must obliterate the dead center of indecision.
 - (5) You not only recognize the Father’s will and choose to do it, but you have effected an unqualified consecration, and a dynamic dedication, to the actual doing of the Father’s will.
 - (6) Your prayer will be directed exclusively for divine wisdom to solve the specific human problems encountered in the Paradise ascension -- the attainment of divine perfection.
 - (7) And you must have faith -- living faith.” (1002:7)
- v. “Jesus taught that effective prayer must be:
 - (1) Unselfish -- not alone for oneself.
 - (2) Believing -- according to faith.
 - (3) Sincere -- honest of heart.
 - (4) Intelligent -- according to light.
 - (5) Trustful -- in submission to the Father’s all-wise will.” (1620:6)
- vi. We can learn much by observing the prayer life of Jesus. Prayer encompassed the total expression of his balanced and creative life on our world.

“Jesus never prayed as a religious duty. To him prayer was a sincere expression of spiritual attitude, a declaration of soul loyalty, a recital of personal devotion, an expression of thanksgiving, an avoidance of emotional tension, a prevention of conflict, an exaltation of intellection, an ennoblement of desire, a vindication of moral decision, an enrichment of thought, an invigoration of higher inclinations, a consecration of impulse, a clarification of viewpoint, a declaration of faith, a transcendental surrender of will, a sublime assertion of confidence, a revelation of courage, the proclamation of discover, a confession of supreme devotion, the validation of consecration, a technique for the adjustment of difficulties, and the mighty mobilization of the combined soul powers to withstand all human tendencies toward selfishness, evil, and sin. He lived just such a life of prayerful consecration to the doing of his Father’s will and ended his life triumphantly with just such a prayer. The secret of his unparalleled religious life was this consciousness of the presence of God; and he attained it by intelligent prayer and

sincere worship -- unbroken communion with God -- not and not by leadings, voices, visions, or extraordinary religious practices." (2089:1)

- d. The answer to prayer.
 - i. Only prayers which are rooted in spiritual reality and sustained by faith are answered in the frames of reference of the petitioner. Prayers are answered in terms of true spiritual needs. (1638-9:9)
 - ii. We should not attempt to use prayer as a substitute for human ingenuity and action. It cannot be used to escape reality. (997:7, 8)
 - iii. Some prayers, because of their visionary aspirations and all-encompassing nature can only be fully answered in eternity. (1848-9)
- e. The effect of prayer.
 - i. Prayer is a vital and indispensable factor in spiritual growth. Even immature and futile prayers expand the soul's potential. (1621:1)

"But real praying does attain reality. Even when the air currents are ascending, no bird can soar except by outstretched wings. Prayer elevates man because it is a technique to progressing by the utilization of the ascending spiritual currents of the universe.

"Genuine prayer adds to spiritual growth, modifies attitude, and yields that satisfaction which comes from communion with divinity. It is a spontaneous outburst of God-consciousness." (1002:2, 3)
 - ii. Prayer is a major resource for the achievement of human self-realization, effectiveness, and inner peace.

"Remember, even if prayer does not change God, it very often effects great and lasting changes in the one who prays in faith and confident expectation. Prayer has been the ancestor of much peace of mind, cheerfulness, calmness, courage, self-mastery, and fair-mindedness in the men and women of the evolving races." (998:3)
 - iii. Prayer has great social repercussions and is an antidote to personality isolation. (996:6, 998:5)

3. The Nature and Effect of Worship

- a. Primitive forms of worship.
 - i. In man's long history he has worshipped almost everything. He has even deified and sainted himself. To the primitive mind fear and worship were virtually synonymous. (994)

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 - ii. Worship should not be confused with psychic or mystical experiences.

"The direct communion with one's Thought Adjuster, such as occurred in the later years of Jesus' life in the flesh, should not be confused with these so-called mystical experiences. The factors which contribute to the initiation of mystic communion are indicative of the danger of such psychic states. The mystic status is favoured by such things as: physical fatigue, fasting, psychic dissociation, profound aesthetic experiences, vivid sex impulses, fear, anxiety, rage, and wild dancing. Much of the material arising as a result of such preliminary preparation has its origin in the subconscious mind." (1100:2)
- b. Communion with God.

- i. Worship is spiritual communion with God; it is the part identifying with the Whole.

“True religious worship is not a futile monologue of self-deception. Worship is a personal communion with that which is divinely real, with that which is the very source of reality. Man aspires by worship to be better and thereby eventually attains the best.” (2095:6)

- ii. God-consciousness is man’s greatest opportunity and challenge.

“The great challenge to modern man is to achieve better communication with the divine [Spirit] that dwells within the human mind. Man’s greatest adventure in the flesh consists in the well-balanced and sane effort to advance the borders of self-consciousness out through the dim realms of embryonic soul-consciousness in a wholehearted effort to reach the borderland of spirit-consciousness -- contact with the divine presence.” (2097:2)

- c. Accompaniments of worship.

- i. The atmosphere of simple beauty or nature and the structure of appealing ritual can be conducive to worship. (1076:4, 1840:6)

- ii. Worship should alternate with service. (1616:5)

- d. The effect of worship.

- i. Worship is the most creative activity of man. It renews the mind, stimulates soul growth, eliminates insecurity and personality isolation, and greatly increases the total resources of the individual. (192, 1095, 1616, 1774, 1777)

- ii. Worship is ancestor to the highest joys of man.

“Worship is the highest privilege and the first duty of all created intelligences. Worship is the conscious and joyous act of recognizing and acknowledging the truth and fact of the intimate and personal relationships of the Creators with their creatures. The quality of worship is determined by the depth of creature perception; and as the knowledge of the infinite character of the Gods progresses, the act of worship becomes increasingly all-encompassing until it eventually attains the glory of the highest experiential delight and the most exquisite pleasure known to created beings.” (303:6)

4. Summary

- a. There is much good literature on prayer and worship. The Urantia Book reinforces the best of these writings. It’s teachings are mature, balanced, and reality oriented. In addition, the book clarifies the many facets of spiritual ministry which, heretofore, have been only vaguely sensed. The Urantia Book makes the spiritual world conceptually tangible and real, not just a vague, largely formless mythology.
- b. It takes the magic out of prayer and separates psychic and mystical states from worship. At the same time it makes prayer, worship, and service central in religious living. These teachings reinforce what is generally recognized as the best views and practices of prayer and worship in the religions of the world.