

The Origin of The Urantia Book



Years of experience reveal that the first thing people wish to know about The Urantia Book is who wrote it. What are the circumstances of its origin? It does little good to tell them the book should be judged by its content, not by claims of authorship. Because of the conditioning of our culture, we are naturally inclined to depend on sources and authority when evaluating publications. Religious literature, in particular, is appraised in this way.

The authenticity of individuals, religious groups, or literature which claim revelatory authority is always open to question. Authority is never a philosophical criterion of truth. There are only two ways this question can be approached with credibility. First, a personal judgment can be made based on the quality of the material being evaluated. The other way revelatory authenticity is established is by the judgment of society over years of historical experience. Social tradition is an especially powerful influence. From a religious context, even when biblical scholars like Rudolf Bultmann declared that our reliable historical knowledge is so meager that “we can know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus,” few people are troubled by such statements. Our historical experience has socially validated the quality of the New Testament story of the life and teachings of Jesus. In the fields of science and philosophy similar historical experience add weight to the authenticity of source material.

There are, however, no established social traditions associated with The Urantia Book. It must be analyzed and evaluated on the quality of its content. Although they have little

relevance in determining the quality of The Urantia Book, following are two sources of information regarding its origin.

The Authors' Account

The first account of the origin of The Urantia Book lies within its own pages. We are told the papers were commissioned by high deity authorities and written by numerous super-mortal personalities. These papers are designated as the Fifth Epochal Revelation to our planet, Urantia, as The Urantia Book.

The authors (revelators) acknowledge the difficulty of portraying the realities of eternity in the language of time. We are told several limitations were placed on the knowledge they were permitted to share with us. They explain that all time-space revelation is partial and incomplete, needing to be periodically upstepped in the process of planetary development.

In general terms the authors discuss the problems they encountered communicating between their spiritual level of universe reality and our material level of mortal existence. They reveal that they made contact through the indwelling spirit of God of a particular human being in Chicago during the early part of the 20th century. We are assured, however, that this communication technique is not related to “spiritualism,” “mediumship,” or “channeling.” Specific details are not discussed.

The Human Story

The second source of information relating to the origin of The Urantia Book is my own human side of the story. Following my discovery of the book in December of 1955 and after introducing it to some of my clerical friends, we spent years researching the human account of the origin of the book. The following information summarizes our findings.

We quickly discovered the papers were received by a small group of people in Chicago. Their leader was Dr. William S. Sadler. Dr. Sadler was a highly respected psychiatrist who taught at the Post-Graduate School of Medicine at Chicago University. For almost thirty years he was also a lecturer in Pastoral Counseling at McCormick Theological Seminary.

Dr. Sadler told me that in the mid 1920's a group of people from all walks of life met at the Sadler residence to discuss psychological and medical topics. This group was known as the Forum. Through a series of events in this discussion group, communications were established between the revelators and members of the Forum. Much later, Forum members established Urantia Foundation in order to publish The Urantia Book..

Dr. Sadler candidly discussed any question we asked him, but he would not talk about two things: the name of the individual used by the high deity authorities to indict the Urantia papers and the unique way in which the papers appeared. Dr. Sadler said they were asked to take vows of secrecy regarding these two subjects. When I asked why these restrictions were imposed upon them, he gave me the following reasons:

1. “The main reason for not revealing the identity of the contact personality is that the revelators do not want any human being—any human name—ever to be associated with The Urantia Book. They want this revelation to stand on its own declarations and teachings. They are determined that future generations shall have the book wholly free of all mortal connections—they do not want a St. Peter, St. Paul, Luther, Calvin, or Wesley.” The original printings of the book do not even bear the name or any mark of the printer who brought it into being.

2. “There is much about the appearance of the Urantia papers which no human being fully understands. No one really knows just how this phenomenon was executed. There are numerous missing links in the story of

how this revelation came to appear in written English. If anyone should tell all he really knows about this technique and the methods employed in getting this revelation, such a narration would satisfy no one, there are too many missing links.”

Our group of ministers discovered a possible reference to the individual somehow involved in the materialization of The Urantia Book. It is found in the appendix of Dr. Sadler's book, The Mind at Mischief, published in 1929. He says, “Eighteen years of study and careful investigation have failed to reveal the psychic origin of these messages. I find myself at the present time just where I was when I started. Psychoanalysis, hypnotism, and intensive comparison fail to show that the written or spoken messages of this individual have origin in his own mind. Much of the material secured through this subject is quite contrary to his habit of thought, to the way in which he has been taught, and to his entire philosophy. In fact, of much that we have secured, we have failed to find anything of its nature in existence. Its philosophic content is quite new, and we are unable to find where very much of it has ever found human expression.” (p. 383)

During Dr. Sadler's investigation of this phenomenon, he consulted men like Howard Thurston, the renowned slight-of-hand artist who devoted considerable time to exposing fraudulent mediums and psychics. He also conferred with Sir Hubert Wilkins, the noted scientist and arctic explorer involved in investigating psychic phenomena. They all agreed that the phenomena connected with this individual could not be classified with other types of psychic phenomena such as automatic writing, telepathy, clairvoyance, trances, spirit mediumship, channeling, or split personality.

On May 7, 1958 our group of ministers met with Dr. Sadler to discuss the origin of The Urantia Book. He gave us a paper listing every imaginable form of subconscious mind of psychic activity. At the bottom of the outline a note said: “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 so nearly as he could determine, the appearance of Urantia papers was associated with some form of superconscious mind activity. On numerous occasions Dr. Sadler told me that he did not know how the materialization was accomplished. He said that almost everything known about the origin of The Urantia Book is found in various places in the book.

In 1939 the revelators requested that the leaders of the Forum ask for volunteers who would meet each Wednesday evening to seriously and systematically study the Urantia papers. Seventy persons volunteered and they became known as “The Seventy.” The Seventy were trained by directives from the revelators and their own leaders up to the time of the publication of The Urantia Book. Special emphasis was placed on the evolutionary process involved in the acceptance of new truth. The danger of using broadcast, indiscriminate, or revolutionary methods in presenting the message of The Urantia Book was stressed.

In preparation for publication of The Urantia Book, Dr. Sadler and his son Bill Sadler wrote an introduction. At a contact session they were told that although they meant well, this was not acceptable—“a candle can hardly illuminate the sun.” At the proper time, they were assured, an introduction would be given. When they received the Foreword, Dr. Sadler observed that they full realized the inadequacy of their own introduction.

They were, however, given permission to compose a “table of contents” for the book. Bill Sadler compiled the titles, the section headings, and in some various parts of the book outlined some of the material, thus making up the “Table of Contents.” Dr. Sadler and other members of the Contact Commission assured me that no human being wrote any of the book. One individual, not a member of the Contact Commission, who made suggestions to “improve” one of the papers was vigorously informed that no human additions to the book

would be allowed. Every precaution was made to publish the message of the text just as the revelators had given it.

After many years of study, they were given permission to publish the book. They were told that although many people would welcome this enlarged presentation of spiritual truth, the population as a whole was not ready for it. The Fifth Epochal Revelation was given as an evolutionary phenomenon which would slowly take root in our society. An early publication of the book was given, they explained, so that leaders and teachers could be trained and people of means could be found to fund translations into other languages. The cost of the first printing was \$75,000. This money was raised by voluntary contributions from members of the Forum.

The Urantia Foundation was established as a nonprofit organization in 1950. The Urantia Book was published under international copyright October 12, 1955. The Urantia Brotherhood was organized in 1955 as an ecumenical fellowship for studying and disseminating the teachings of The Urantia Book. The name “Urantia Brotherhood” was officially changed to “The Fellowship” (for readers of The Urantia Book) in 1991.

Judge by Content

The events associated with the origin of The Urantia Book have nothing to do with its verification of truth or spiritual quality. This you must judge by its contents and by the spiritual fruit it produces. The message of The Urantia Book has amazing self-authentication and historical-philosophical consistency. But, in the final analysis, your indwelling spirit of God is the ultimate reality which must evaluate its message.

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