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Birthday Celebration Invitation!

Today is my birthday. The first thing I did when I gave birth to the UBtheNEWS project was give it the motto: “Find a clue; THEN follow it!” Recently, I have been investigating two clues as to what Jesus might like for his birthday this year. This is an invitation to all Urantia Book readers to join me in the celebration of my birthday by helping me follow the clues about what to give Jesus for his birthday. I think if we follow them together, they will lead us someplace wonderful.

Clue number one: As most of you probably already know, Jesus has a spectacular show lined up for us on his birthday this year—a full solar eclipse with a trajectory that passes through Illinois, the birth state of *The Urantia Book*.

And were you also aware that, while passing over southern Illinois, it goes directly over the Bald Knob Cross of Peace and the Shawnee National Forest? Adding exponentially to the intrigue is the fact that seven years from now, on April 8, 2024 (right between the crucifixion and resurrection dates), another full solar eclipse will cross over that same southern area of Illinois.

Interestingly, regarding the Bald Knob Cross of Peace (from Wiki):

“In 2006, a legal dispute arose among the Board Members of the Cross. A two-year court battle ensued. All members of the organization were banned by court order from access to the grounds. During the legal wrangling, several community members formed the Friends of the Cross organization to raise funds for the eventual restoration of the Cross, which was falling into gross disrepair. **The litigation was resolved on Christmas Eve, 2008**, when all sides in the dispute signed an agreement to drop all charges and submit their own resignations from the Board of Directors if the court would delegate leadership of the organization to a two-year Transitional Board of Directors, made up mostly from Pastors in various communities and counties in the region. The Transitional Board met for their first meeting on Friday, January 16, 2009, when they elected officers. The Board is in the process of placing the organization on firm legal and financial footing as efforts to physically restore the Cross go forward as a priority.” [emphasis added]

Interestingly, regarding the Shawnee National Forest:

(90:2.9) “Ever and anon, true prophets and teachers arose to denounce and expose shamanism. Even the vanishing red man had such a prophet within the past hundred years, the Shawnee Tenskwatawa, who predicted the eclipse of the sun in 1806 and denounced the vices of the white man. Many true teachers have appeared among the various tribes and races all through the long ages of evolutionary history. And they will ever continue to appear to challenge the shamans or priests of any age who oppose general education and attempt to thwart scientific progress.”

The Urantia Book itself could be looked at as a macro level expression of the balance of forces described above, given how Christian fundamentalists, for instance, try to twist science “in Jesus’ name” to suit their misguided understanding of the Bible.

Jesus is giving us something special for his birthday this year. Maybe we should be asking ourselves, “What can we do for Jesus on his birthday to truly compliment this timely alignment of our sun and moon?” Is there something we could do beyond getting together to observe the pageantry of these local celestial bodies (not that there is anything wrong with that)? Is there something we could do with the alignment of our human institutions, perhaps, that would make a most excellent present to Jesus on his birthday this year!?!

Clue number two: Late last year, I received a document distributed by Nicholas Scalzo, which has come to be known as the “Unity Treatise.” I met him once almost ten years ago, while traveling for UBtheNEWS, and had not been in contact with him since then. He is a fifty-year reader-believer and one of the few people still living to have had direct contact with any of the Contact Commissioners.

Nicholas received a written manuscript for the Unity Treatise from a trusted friend of his, who wants to remain anonymous and gave no information about how the Unity Treatise manuscript was originally produced. Nicholas put it into a Word and then a pdf. Its origins and general nature are notably similar to *The Urantia Book* and notably dissimilar from channeling and/or the Teaching Mission.

Nicholas was directed to first present the Unity Treatise to the three main Urantia Book organizations, which he did. Further instructions directed a community wide circulation of it, if a positive response was not forthcoming from the leadership of the three main organizations. I received the Unity Treatise in the second round of broader distribution.

In short, the Unity Treatise:

- 1) Claims to be an authoritative communication from our planetary government.
- 2) Says that because there is no longer a symbiotic relationship between Urantia Foundation and Urantia Brotherhood, as originally directed, our three main organizations are seriously off track in ways that must be corrected expeditiously.
- 3) Provides insightful commentary about the original plan for developing this epochal revelation.
- 4) Reviews important aspects of our Urantia community disunity problems.
- 5) Clarifies that three different types of *institutions* are to be fostered: religion, philosophy, and cosmology.
- 6) Gives reasonable instructions for restoring unity and rebooting the original plan.
- 7) Declares that if these correctives are not followed by August 21, 2017, then the leadership of this epochal revelation will be transferred to others, but it gives no particulars about how or with whom such a contingency would eventuate.

First to say, of course, the Unity Treatise passed my “truth from any source test” with flying colors. Otherwise, I would not be bringing it to your attention. As someone trained in law, I was especially impressed with its sensitivity to jurisprudence.

Some people find the “deadline” off putting. Personally, I think if any group in an authority position (human or not) is identifying a problem and saying how to fix it, “by when” is a natural and reasonable part of such an authoritative communication. But even more importantly, I find it to be a beautifully creative way to turn a corrective into a birthday present for Jesus!

Whether or not the leadership of the three main organizations end up returning to the original plan for and relationship between Urantia Foundation and Urantia Brotherhood by Jesus' birthday, as individuals, we each have the power in this moment to dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly to such an effort. Fortunately, Jesus actually knows our thoughts, right now. So, when it comes to dedicating ourselves to an effort to give him this birthday present, the old saying, "It's the thought that counts," could never be more true, meaningful, and of real spiritual value.

A Perspective on Contact

We have gone from Urantia Brotherhood working symbiotically with Urantia Foundation to two publishers and no symbiotic relationship with Urantia Brotherhood as originally directed. Recently, human efforts at unity failed to achieve results on these larger issues. Maybe Michael and his administration have something to say about all of this. But how are they supposed to help us get back on track?

21:5.9 "A Master Son may at will vary the order of the spiritual adjudication and evolutionary adjustment of the inhabited planets. And such Sons do make and carry out the plans of their own choosing in all matters of special planetary needs, in particular regarding the worlds of their creature sojourn and still more concerning the realm of terminal bestowal, the planet of incarnation in the likeness of mortal flesh."

The Unity Treatise inspired me to take a fresh look at why it may be hard for Urantia Book readers to work with the idea of ongoing communication from Michael's Revelatory Commission.

Consider that one of the biggest challenges faced by his Revelatory Commission is that whoever is directly involved with it will become a "special person," unless they remain anonymous. How do special people generally get treated on both an institutional and individual level?

Institutionally, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Catholic Church is the closest thing we have for comparison to the two institutions that were started to spread *The Urantia Book's* teachings.

The Reformation was in response to papal power over Catholics being misused and abused. When someone attempts to exercise authority in an overreaching or presumptive manner, a classic response is, "Who made you Pope?" In modern times, progress looks like freedom from the interference of ecclesiastical authority in one's religious life. Today, papal loyalty is seen as passé.

On the individual level, personality cult leaders, claiming to have a direct link to God (or other celestial authority), have long been viewed as crazy and dangerous.

Predictably, the fifth epochal revelation would be especially attractive to those deeply dissatisfied with the religious authorities and/or the religions with which they were raised. It arrived in the wake of Reformation era consciousness and just before the free spirited sixties culture captivated American consciousness. The "spiritual but not religious" mindset developed powerfully during this antiauthoritarian time period, even if it was not talked about exactly this way back then.

Naturally, with both religious and political trends being decidedly antiauthoritarian, the stage was set for Urantia culture to significantly under appreciate the special relationship the Revelatory

Commission has to Urantia Foundation. Not surprisingly, Urantia Book readers are known for saying that trying to get things done in the Urantia movement is like trying to herd cats. Such a cultural mindset was destined to be at odds with the re-establishment of an ongoing link between the spirit world and the material world and, one can imagine, such thinking patterns would be especially problematic when it comes to corrective communications.

The Unity Treatise has this to say on the subject of ongoing communication:

Likewise, it has been the intent of Michael for the Fifth Epochal Revelation, with the visible Contact Commissioners and their successors to be in continuous communication with the Revelatory Commission and by them to the Planetary Government, the Most Highs, Gabriel, even to Michael. It was intended that through these Contact personalities, the leaders of the Urantia movement would continue to have a continuous connection between God and the Revelators through this type of communication. The Urantia revelation was always intended to be in communication with and have continuous and direct guidance by the Revelators.

To this end, the Revelators have been looking for another loyal and trustworthy contact group to continue this dialogue after the last Contact Commissioner “graduated.” But with the *defaults* and *unsanctioned* social institutions, many members of which believe such things as direct communication impossible, the Revelators, for many reasons, dare not contact any one of those three organizations from within.

It has been attempted a few times before, but the efforts proved unsuccessful, for it takes the right group of men and women. The Revelators are hoping that UF, TUBF and UAI by following their original mandates, by first accepting the Judgment/Solution of the Conciliating Commission, and by taking the immediate steps toward unity as listed below, will make possible this communication with them again in the future.

The Revelators would prefer to have Urantians in Unity rather than continue in organizational factions that show to the world your spiritual disunity, consequently reflecting this upon the teachings of *The Urantia Book*. These factions, if continued, will delay the purpose of *The Urantia Book*, and will quickly disqualify these three organizations from ever having the support of the Revelators to obtain the purpose and goals they set, and if so, this human responsibility will be handed to the watch care of others who prove trustworthy.

In connection with permission finally being given to print *The Urantia Book*, apparently, something was said to Bill Sadler, Jr. about us now being “on (y)our own.” Whatever factual reality relates to the origin of this story, I think the interpretation of it must be off. Quarantines are to keep the infected area from spreading bad ideas. They are not for the purpose of keeping good ideas from getting into the infected area. Correctives to the divine plan are not a matter of interfering with the evolutionary process; they make sure there actually is evolution.

What has always impressed me so much about *The Urantia Book* is that it never offended my sensibilities about how a loving God would do things. When I compare what the Unity Treatise says about ongoing contact with the “on (y)our own” meme, I find the Unity Treatise consistent with my reflections on how a loving God would want to do things. And I find the “on (y)our own” idea rather incongruent with how a loving and wise parent would operate in this type of situation.

Maybe it is time to take stock of what we can do to make it socially safe for the Revelatory Commission to give guidance to our leaders rather than being the kind of people who make it so difficult for true leaders to receive “help from above.” Maybe we have been failing our leaders in this regard as much as they have been failing in their duties to follow directions and to create leadership groups that are up to the challenge of receiving communications. Maybe we would do well to take a whole new look at this issue and start to have new discussions about it.

A Perspective by Analogy

If the progress of the fifth epochal revelation is undermined by the antiauthoritarian predisposition described above, then working with an analogy that does not bring up those tendencies should help liberate us a bit from our unproductive proclivity.

Consider that the Revelatory Commission is like an extremely reclusive, genius Inventor. The Inventor has been working on the discovery of something that will “change everything,” like the internal combustion engine or discovering a new source of energy. Imagine that development of the technology cannot be accomplished alone. Some years and resources will be required to build prototypes before the technology can be presented to the world. So, the Inventor needs some Helpers, people who can be trusted to keep secrets and follow directions.

In this analogy, the Inventor, of course, represents the Revelatory Commission, and the Helpers represent both the Contact Commission and its successor, Urantia Foundation.

Naturally, the selection of Helpers is not a democratic process; it is the Inventor’s prerogative. There are essential benefits that come with such prerogatives, like the growth of loyal relationships and the fostering of expertise and institutional wisdom within an inner circle of trust. Understanding the importance of not being overly controlling in one’s management style, the Inventor may give the Helpers substantial, though limited, powers to self-govern. Nonetheless, sharing the Inventor’s intention to be of service to humanity with the invention does not change the fundamental nature of the relationship between the Inventor and the Helpers. The invention belongs to the Inventor. The Helpers serve at the discretion of the Inventor and on the Inventor’s terms.

If a Helper inserts his own beliefs, opinions, or agendas into the Inventor’s program, as Paul did with Jesus’ teachings, this is a serious problem, not the Helper’s prerogative. Helpers are told what to do and need to do as they are told. Helpers need to work effectively with others. If Helpers cannot get along with others, like Abner and his associates, then the ability of such a loyal group to carry out the actual instructions can fail because they are unable to be influential, to be culturally competitive enough to endure. In order to build enduring institutions, leaders must be true to their trust and be able to work effectively with others.

In this analogy, the Government represents Urantia Brotherhood. This is the institution that brings the value of a democratic process into the picture, group wisdom in contrast to Inventor prerogatives. Inventors do not invent things like the dynamic properties of explosive power or a new form of energy. Useful expressions of these forces and energies are what get invented. The role of Government, of course, is to honor both the direct connection that people have to existential energies and dynamic forces while also protecting original and creative expressions related to these same phenomena.

A Perspective on the Original Plan

As the years pass by since the Urantia Foundation was the sole publisher of *The Urantia Book* and since the existence of Urantia Brotherhood, increasingly reader-believers have no experience of these times. This makes it ever more difficult for today's community of reader-believers to think about the wisdom and potentials inherent in the original plan. And this may be part of the reason why recent efforts to create unity between the social organizations failed to make progress on the larger issues of having one publisher and returning to the days of one main fraternal group.

What are the implications of having two founding institutions in the service of an epochal revelation, neither of which are religions themselves, but structurally exist above yet-to-be-created Urantia Book-based religions (churches)? If Urantia Foundation and Urantia Brotherhood were meant to foster institutions of religion, philosophy, and cosmology, then this is an altogether new institutional structure in the course of human affairs that places not only religious institutions but also philosophical and cosmological institutions into a new cultural context.

After reading the Unity Treatise, I reflected on the challenges faced by the UBtheNEWS project, in particular, and by the Urantia community from a more structural perspective.

Oddly, given the cosmological nature of the UBtheNEWS project, the importance of how to interpret the directive to foster religion, philosophy, and cosmology never captured my interest before. What if this is a directive to foster three different types of Urantia Book-based *institutions*, rooted in the threefold energy system of life—spirit, mind, and matter? From this perspective, I started to see how other people's projects and interest areas fit well into one of the three different categories of religion, philosophy, and cosmology.

We need intelligently designed institutions (consistent with the instructions of the Revelatory Commission) that are wisely managed, supporting us in our efforts to advance the fifth epochal revelation to Urantia. These things go together or things fall apart, apparently.

Even though not all of the guidance and directives given by the Revelatory Commission to the Contact Commission for the development of Urantia Foundation and Urantia Brotherhood are to be found in their Charters, generally accepted beliefs about these communications have developed and can be summarized as:

- 1) Train teachers and leaders.
- 2) Foster the development of thousands of study groups.
- 3) Foster (institutions) of religion, philosophy, and cosmology.
- 4) Translate *The Urantia Book* into other languages.

Additionally, Urantia Foundation is not supposed to raise funds independently of Urantia Brotherhood. (Analogies only go so far.) Presumably, this is because there are inherent psychosocial problems associated with claiming to represent the spirit world's administration and then soliciting contributions from believers. It puts believers in an unnecessary and awkward relationship with the human representatives of our celestial government. We were wisely given instructions on how to avoid the problem. The Foundation needs funds and the Brotherhood needs to be licensed. If leaders allow it to be so, the balance of power between Urantia Foundation and Urantia Brotherhood creates a dynamic stability in the founding institutions; it forces them to work together cooperatively or suffer being in default.

The fourth epochal revelation was a simple message, intended for a whole universe, which could be delivered effectively by an average human being. No instructions were provided for institutionalizing the spread of the gospel message.

In contrast, the fifth epochal revelation is a complex message, specifically formulated for our planet and which needed to be delivered in book form. The Contact Commission was instructed to create two institutions. These institutions are directed to foster the revelation on both a personal level (through the development of study groups) and an institutional level (through the development of religious, philosophical, and cosmological institutions). The directive to create translations globalizes this twofold approach.

While humanity is still “quivering on the brink” of a new era, crucial preparatory steps need to be accomplished. We need to create translations, while also fostering Urantia Book-based study groups and institutions of religion, philosophy, and cosmology. This, apparently, is what there is to do now and why the revelation was given in advance of going over “the brink.” If we fail to follow crucial preparatory instructions, we should expect the job to be given to people who will do as instructed.

Certified Teachers and Official Leaders

Not surprisingly, to support this new approach to spreading a written and intellectually demanding epochal revelation, we were directed to train teachers and leaders. There are different types of teacher and leadership roles to consider.

The act of teaching puts one in a leadership role. But passing a test that certifies one as a Urantia Book Teacher would not necessarily make one a Urantia Book reader-believer, let alone a Urantia Book leader. For instance, a Religious Studies professor, who wants to advance their career by demonstrating expertise in the area of New Religious Movements, could benefit from passing a standardized test administered by the Urantia Brotherhood.

By analogy, certifying teachers is a role for Government to play. Introducing a new product into the world does not give an inventor the right to set community standards for competent use of the technology.

There could be different areas and different levels of certification, even periodic retesting to ensure standards are maintained and/or improved. Because the intention to translate *The Urantia Book*, to foster study groups, and to foster institutions of religion, philosophy, and cosmology is already known, we have a context for how to structure various levels and types of teaching credentials.

In (representative) democracies, leaders get elected. If one of the primary functions of Urantia Brotherhood is to certify teachers, this would tend to inspire those seeking office to acquire such credentials. A more thorough understanding of the text would, by its nature, help elected officials serve their trust more effectively and demonstrate their commitment to the teachings, as well as tending to raise the general credibility of the organization.

Inventors of game changing technologies are first-movers by definition. Being a first-mover is a form of cultural leadership based on personal convictions and personal relationships. For all kinds of reasons, first-movers get varying degrees of popular support. Naturally, *The Urantia Book* is destined

to inspire a second generation of first-movers to engage a wide variety of efforts related to outreach, education, and culture.

These second generation first-movers will have greater or lesser degrees of personal charisma (social skills) and their efforts will have greater or lesser degrees of timeliness, inherent wisdom, and execution. They will want to start study groups. They will want to start institutions of religion, philosophy, and cosmology. They will want to translate the book into other languages. Managing all of these diverse and spiritually motivated human beings needs to be respected as a terribly challenging undertaking.

The Inventor gets to choose the Helpers and to entrust them with licensing (and de-licensing, as necessary) the technology. The revelation moves forward more quickly and effectively to the degree that Helpers are able to develop good working relationships with second-generation first-movers. Where teaching credentials provide cultural stability, leadership credentials accelerate cultural progress. When it comes to Urantia Foundation designating first-movers official leaders, if such individuals have advanced teaching credentials, this helps the reputation of both Urantia Foundation and the (however designated) leader.

Study Groups

Jesus taught the Apostles to go door-to-door as a way to spread the gospel message. Spreading this revelation in a similar manner is an obvious idea. But it almost never happens. Why?

Consider that certifying teachers is fundamental to the process of going door-to-door for the purpose of starting study groups. As well, being an official leader would be enormously helpful. Designating certified teachers and official leaders pre-establishes credibility at the door, making the whole experience more effective and enjoyable for everyone.

(Maybe having a degree of success with starting study groups, while not being an official leader, should be required before someone gets designated an official (Study Group Development?) leader. These are the types of particulars that Helpers would need to work out with Licensees.)

Consider that a beneficial dynamic tension is created for study groups when the teacher and host roles are distinct by design from the beginning. "Institutionalizing" the teacher/leader role within study groups fosters peace and harmony amongst the participants because, when the teacher and host get along well, this sets the tone for the whole event. Separating the teacher role from the host role works as a stabilizing juxtaposition of social forces.

A successful effort to apply the door-to-door approach taught by Jesus to developing study groups might look something like this . . .

A certified teacher goes door-to-door, giving introductions to *The Urantia Book* and encouraging residents to host an introductory presentation for their family and friends. Doing well with introductory presentations will lead to being invited to teach a weekly study group. When a teacher cannot handle any more study groups in their schedule, it is time to stop going door-to-door. Such efforts could be made with or without having a long-term plan of consolidating them later. Consolidation could be simply for the purpose of finding a place that can accommodate multiple study groups at once,

allowing for people to socialize with a larger group of readers. Or it could also develop into a new local religion.

There are exciting potentials for directly applying Jesus' methods to this revelation that are hardly ever discussed, let alone actually explored. But it starts with certifying teachers and would be fostered further by the designation of official leaders. With this type of fostering, who knows, perhaps some people could work themselves into community-supported positions within local religions that evolved out of their door-to-door efforts?

Institutions of Religion, Philosophy, and Cosmology

On an institutional level, consider that Urantia Brotherhood was never designed to be a religious, philosophical, or cosmological institution anymore than secular government is intended as the primary institution for the expression of art, a free press, and commerce.

By having Urantia Foundation and Urantia Brotherhood foster institutions of religion, philosophy, and cosmology, these founding institutions become structurally distinct and separate from the controversies associated with those types of institutions. Religions have their variously preferences for rituals and practices. Philosophies get applied to politics. And scientists will have disagreements as they try to make cosmological progress. The Revelatory Commission gave us institutional structures and instructions that would protect the founding institutions from the types of problems long associated with evolutionary religion, politics, and science.

Without a process of teacher certification, efforts to create Urantia Book-based institutions are thwarted. Institutional integrity requires developing and maintaining fair standards for acknowledging expertise. Institutions rely on accreditation processes for developing their credibility before and value to the communities that they serve.

Translations

No other book truly has the hope of inspiring all the peoples of the world to unify around a common language. Creating translations of *The Urantia Book* paves the road to global peace and harmony. And the topic of translations is useful for appreciating how a variety of talents and personalities types are needed and need to be coordinated.

Naturally, some reader-believers will get inspired to translate *The Urantia Book* into their native language. If such first-movers were to work cooperatively with Urantia Foundation and Urantia Brotherhood in getting certified as a teacher and official leader, then the translation enjoys an enhanced level of credibility and the process of getting the work done becomes a more cooperative effort. Having effective programs and policies in place for certifying teachers and leaders fosters the creation of quality translations and the introduction of them into their respective cultures.

Final Comments and Requests

Perhaps part of the problem has been that with such a new and small community of reader-believers, people invariably have to wear many different hats. This is how upstarts get started. But *The Urantia Book* is more than a new technology or form of energy. Michael's Revelatory Commission is not a human inventor and *The Urantia Book* is not a product. The fifth epochal revelation to Urantia is designed to truly guide us towards the perfection of a global civilization. This is why we must respect institutional purposes, boundaries, and symbiotic relationships.

It is not just my own service projects that have been adversely affected by disunity in the Urantia community and what I now see as the failure of our primary institutions to truly foster institutions of religion, philosophy, and cosmology. I imagine this point can be appreciated without my getting into the specifics of other people's efforts. Disunity deeply affects everyone.

We cannot enjoy the benefits of the original plan if we do not enact it. Having two publishers and two social groups undermines the whole process of training teachers and leaders. And the development of teachers and leaders is essential to fostering study groups, institutions of religion, philosophy, and cosmology, and creating and introducing translations.

I would love to take part in an effort to carry out the original plan! And I would love to sing the praises of our current leaders for getting us back on track with the original plan!

This is not about making our current leaders wrong; this is about making our current leaders right. Please join with me in taking whatever further steps you feel would be useful in inspiring our organizational leaders to enact by August 21st the very reasonable and logical correctives specified in the Unity Treatise.

A petition was created to help inspire our leaders to follow the correctives outlined in the Unity Treatise. Please add your name to the Unity Treatise Petition. The link at the beginning of the essay will take you to a copy of the Petition.

Feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss these ideas or would like contact information for the leaders of the various organizations. Over the next three months I will be making every effort to reach out personally by phone and email to institutional leaders and reader-believers to offer encouragement.

This year, for my birthday, I want us to give to Jesus what he seems to want for his birthday. Please join me in this celebration. I believe somewhere in every reader-believer's heart is the sincere desire to give Jesus the most obvious and wonderful of gifts for his birthday this year. Whether or not the Unity Treatise is what it claims to be, it provides a workable solution to our problems. What could be better than giving Jesus Urantia community unity—the original plan—for his birthday this year?

I say, "Let's do it!" What do you say?

In harmony,
Halbert