



*Revelation
Revealed*

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REVELATION REVEALED

Twelve topics to analyze and appraise

by

Neal Waldrop

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a. *The spiritual crisis:* the fact that the true teachings of Jesus were in danger of being lost.

b. *The religious crisis:* the decline and relative decadence of organized, institutional religion, at least in many parts of the world with a traditional social and cultural background that was predominantly Christian.

c. *The philosophic crisis:* the intense threats stemming from secularism and materialism.

d. *The political and military crisis:* rampantly intolerant nationalism associated with immensely more destructive techniques of warfare.

e. *The social and cultural crisis:* the need for fundamental advances in many social and cultural dimensions, given the factors that a Melchizedek emphasizes in section 1 of Paper 99 (*i.e.*, 1086:4-6 / 99:1.1-3).

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN I CHOSE THE TITLE *Revelation Revealed*, I sought to evoke the vivid impressions that this striking and resonant phrase stimulates and inspires. Naturally I realized that some potential readers may find the combination repetitious, at least at first.

Not so, for the noun *revelation* bespeaks ideals that reign over the highest levels of philosophy, religion, and spiritual inspiration, whereas the verb *revealed* can easily transport us to prosaic domains. For example:

When she opened the curtains, she **revealed** the three tomcats brawling on the back fence whose cacophony of hisses and screeches had interrupted our conversation.

I shall willingly concede, however, that what I hope to have revealed in this analytical essay aimed at reflection and discussion is inestimably more consequential than three brawling tomcats! If it serves to stimulate readers of the fifth epochal revelation, helping them reach a more insightful, more comprehensive, and more balanced view of the revelators' aspirations — and of the scope and intent of their counsel for humanity — then I shall be content.

If I were obliged to condense my recommendations into a single sentence, this is what I would say: Respected colleague and friend in the spirit, do not just sit there tranquilly and let the words stream by as if you were staring at a teleprompter! To the contrary, *Revelation Revealed* is a framework for active and interactive discussion — if necessary by a single reader who proposes alternative theories to himself or herself while relaxing at home, but preferably in a group context that permits individuals to voice and explain a variety of diverse views while responding to the challenging, probing, and partly provocative questions that I have embedded in the text. After all, the fifth epochal revelation does not promote or foster uniformity! To the contrary,

the revelators themselves repeatedly demonstrated their own pluralism and diversity while maintaining a tone, context, and climate permeated and suffused with spiritual unity and mutual respect.

Each of the document's analytical segments implicitly serves as a scenario for intellectual and spiritual drama, thereby providing stage directions for the spirited exchanges of insight and inspiration that will almost invariably ensue when readers of *The Urantia Book* grapple with the questions for discussion. Since these semi-theatrical interludes can most certainly be staged during study group meetings, I encourage the hosts of study groups, and the members thereof, to sample the document as they think best.

The pioneers in these regards, however, will be those experienced readers who will participate in future weekly broadcasts of the Internet radio program "Cosmic Citizen." Although I greatly look forward to serving as their moderator, I must first seize this opportunity to express my gratitude to Christilyn Biek Larson, the program's courteous choreographer and companion. After all, it was Christilyn's invitation that sent my fingers scurrying to the keyboard, and I greatly appreciated her encouragement and patience throughout the fifteen months that the twelve topics required.

On January 19, 1955, William S. Sadler, Jr. circulated a rather pointed memorandum to cooperating colleagues who would soon join with him in founding a social organization, the former Urantia Brotherhood. In part, Mr. Sadler wrote as follows:

A CULTURAL CHRYSALIS IN RELATION TO PAROCHIAL AND PROVINCIAL THINKING

A chrysalis is an interesting thing. It acts as a sort of social or institutional incubator. The social grouping of the Forum served as a chrysalis for the ensuing Brotherhood. In a much larger sense Protestant Christianity serves as a chrysalis for the Urantia Papers. The function of a chrysalis appears to be inescapable, but the end products are not an unmixed blessing.

For example, Judaism served as a chrysalis for the gospel of Jesus. Without this chrysalis Jesus could not have taught. ... But this chrysalis proved to be in some respects embarrassing, not only to the Gospel, but even to Jesus himself. ...

The present problem. We as a group in the Forum are nurtured in the teachings of Protestant Christianity. And unless we make a determined effort to do otherwise, we are going to think in a parochial and in a provincial manner. ...

I think we should make a sincere and prayerful effort to rise above the bias which is inherent in our backgrounds. ...

This memorandum is a plea to attempt to think, not parochially, but ecumenically. This is a plea to rise above provincialism in thinking and to think internationally.

Sixty years thereafter, the reality that Mr. Sadler appears to have seen only dimly now looms evident and luminous: The revelators sought to advance, uplift, and inspire all humanity, not just heirs to the social, cultural, and religious traditions that dominated central North America in the middle decades of the 20th century.

Therefore, without further ado, I urge you to set aside any vestige of the parochial and provincial thinking that Mr. Sadler deplored in January 1955, while examining the fifth epochal revelation for what it truly is, not as an upside-down image viewed through some obsolete telescope turned backward.

I am convinced that you will find this task considerably more congenial if you do your best to grasp and absorb the long-standing policies and practices of our spiritual superiors as they pursue and perform their tasks associated with epochal revelation (topics 1 and 2) — and if, at the same time, you also devote careful attention to the six key aspects of the teachings that I have highlighted in topics 7 through 12.

In addition, I hope that certain perceptive persons who examine this essay will take an active interest in the Global Endeavor, an idealistic and altruistic initiative that remains in its formative stages (topics 3 through 6). Within the next few years, this extremely ambitious project will offer an attractive new path enabling many readers of the revelation to act on the teachings to benefit their fellow man.

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July 17, 2016

Derwood, Maryland, U.S.A.

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Part One

Epochal Revelation: Policy and Practice

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Topic 1

The characteristic patterns of epochal revelation: comprehensive coverage (*as in the first, second, and fifth epochal revelations*) versus a dominant focus on spiritual and religious aspects (*as in the third and fourth epochal revelations*).

The spiritual administration of our planet Urantia involves so many departures from standard practice that we have every right to call it government by exception. The Chief of Seraphim tells us, “the planetary government is unlike that of any other world in the Satania system, even in all Nebadon” [*the Chief of Seraphim, 1250:4 / 114:0.4*]. She then cites seven factors that explain this uniqueness, especially when they are considered together:

1. The life modification status of Urantia.
2. The exigencies of the Lucifer rebellion.
3. The disruptions of the Adamic default.
4. The irregularities growing out of the fact that Urantia was one of the bestowal worlds of the Universe Sovereign. Michael of Nebadon is the Planetary Prince of Urantia.
5. The special function of the twenty-four planetary directors.
6. The location on the planet of an archangels’ circuit.
7. The more recent designation of the onetime incarnated Machiventa Melchizedek as vicegerent Planetary Prince. [*The Chief of Seraphim, 1250:5-11 / 114:0.5-11*]

NOTE: This analytical paper can serve as an armchair or desktop document, in order to enhance personal understanding of the fifth epochal revelation in general and of the Global Endeavor in particular. On the other hand, the paper’s main purpose is to foster group discussion.

— Topics one, two, and seven through twelve focus on patterns and practices associated with epochal revelation, and on a range of diverse aspects of *The Urantia Book*. These eight topics can be considered individually or in any combination that seems suitable.

— In contrast, topics three through six focus on key aspects of the Global Endeavor, thereby providing a broad overview. These four topics should be considered together.

If we aspired to acquire a truly comprehensive understanding of the practice of epochal revelation and to what degree the sequence of five epochal revelations that the people of Urantia have received thus far is exceptional, we would have to find effective ways to adjust for all seven factors that the Chief of Seraphim has identified. Although it is reasonable to believe that at least part of this challenging task transcends the capabilities of human beings living in our era, the effort is meritorious in itself. Further, the limited insights that we are able to develop now may prove helpful to successors and heirs of ours who arrive on Urantia long after we have departed.

If we compare the series of epochal revelations that have transpired thus far on Urantia with the much more general account that a Mighty Messenger provides in Paper 52, "Planetary Mortal Epochs," it is clear that only the first epochal revelation (the regime of the Planetary Prince and his many cooperating partners) followed entirely standard patterns at the time when it began. A Melchizedek tells us: "From the arrival of Prince Caligastia, planetary civilization progressed in a fairly normal manner for almost three hundred thousand years. ... Urantia progressed very satisfactorily in its planetary career up to the times of the Lucifer rebellion and the concurrent Caligastia betrayal" [*a Melchizedek, 752.4 / 66:8.3*]. In the first paragraph of the next Paper, he sums up the implications in ways that could not be more categorical:

The problems associated with human existence on Urantia are impossible of understanding without a knowledge of certain great epochs of the past, notably the occurrence and consequences of the planetary rebellion. Although this upheaval did not seriously interfere with the progress of organic evolution, it did markedly modify the course of social evolution and of spiritual development. The entire superphysical history of the planet was profoundly influenced by this devastating calamity. [*A Melchizedek, 754.1 / 67:0.1*]

We cannot compete with the Melchizedek and other authors of *The Urantia Book* in narrating and analyzing these events, and that is certainly not our purpose here. At this point, it suffices to note that the second epochal revelation (the mission of Adam and Eve) incorporated many aspects resembling those that apply during missions of Material Sons and Daughters on other inhabited planets, but that the efforts of our own Adam and Eve began under highly unfavorable circumstances and eventually went awry. In comparison, our planet's third, fourth, and fifth epochal revelations have embodied very substantial adaptations that distinguish them from standard patterns, thereby giving us persuasive reasons to associate the adjective "emergency" with all three of them. This harmonizes very well with remarks by a Divine Counselor while he is describing the Bestowal Plan from a general perspective. He makes such prominent use of the word "emergency" as almost to justify charges of dereliction of duty if we were to neglect it here:

2. *The Bestowal Plan.* The next universal plan is the great Father-revelation enterprise of the Eternal Son and his co-ordinate Sons. This is the proposal of the Eternal Son and consists of his bestowal of the Sons of God upon the evolutionary creations, there to personalize and factualize, to incarnate and make real, the love of the Father and the mercy of the Son to the creatures of all universes. Inherent in the bestowal plan, and as a provisional feature of this ministration of love, the Paradise Sons act as rehabilitators of that which misguided creature will has placed in spiritual jeopardy. Whenever and wherever there occurs a delay in the functioning of the attainment plan, if rebellion, perchance, should mar or complicate this enterprise, then do **the emergency provisions of the bestowal plan** become active forthwith. The Paradise Sons stand pledged and ready to function as retrievers, to go into the very realms of rebellion and there restore the spiritual status of the spheres. And such a heroic service a co-ordinate Creator Son did perform on Urantia in connection with his experiential bestowal career of sovereignty acquirement. [*A Divine Counselor, 85:6 / 7:4.5 — emphasis added: the seven words in bold type*]

In effect, the third, fourth, and fifth epochal revelations appear to have drawn on the bestowal plan's emergency provisions, features that the Mighty Messenger who wrote Paper 52 did not describe or analyze — quite possibly because his instructions did not permit him to do that. (If we wished to continue in this hypothetical vein, it would be important to cite an insight that a Melchizedek attributes to a group of seraphim who are called "The Spirits of Trust": "... when ignorance is essential to success, it would be a colossal blunder for the creature to know the future" [*a Melchizedek, 438.2 / 39:5.9*].)

The first epochal revelation

A Melchizedek begins describing the activities and aims of the first epochal revelation by setting the stage as follows:

About five hundred thousand years ago and concurrent with the appearance of the six colored or Sangik races, Caligastia, the Planetary Prince, arrived on Urantia. There were almost one-half billion primitive human beings on earth at the time of the Prince's arrival, and they were well scattered over Europe, Asia, and Africa. The Prince's headquarters, established in Mesopotamia, was at about the center of world population. [*A Melchizedek, 741:2 / 66:0.2*]

In contrast with the subsequent epochal revelations of an emergency character during which Machiventa Melchizedek and Christ Michael of Nebadon (incarnate in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth) acted essentially alone, the Planetary Prince headed a very large staff that included rematerialized human beings, one hundred persons who had previously lived on other inhabited planets:

The Planetary Prince of Urantia was not sent out on his mission alone but was accompanied by the usual corps of assistants and administrative helpers. ...

The planetary staff included a large number of angelic co-operators and a host of other celestial beings assigned to advance the interests and promote the welfare of the human races. But from your standpoint the most interesting group of all were the corporeal members of the Prince's staff — sometimes referred to as the Caligastia one hundred.

These one hundred rematerialized members of the Prince's staff were chosen by Caligastia from over 785,000 ascendant citizens of Jerusem who volunteered for embarkation on the Urantia adventure. Each one of the chosen one hundred was from a different planet, and none of them were from Urantia. [*A Melchizedek, 742:1,3-4 / 66:2.1,3-4*]

The Melchizedek informs us, “The one hundred were organized for service in ten autonomous councils of ten members each” [*a Melchizedek, 745:7 / 66:5.1*]. He subsequently identifies these ten councils as follows [*a Melchizedek, 745:8-749:2 / 66:5.2-31*]:

1. The council on food and material welfare (*headed by Ang*).
2. The board of animal domestication and utilization (*directed by Bon*).
3. The advisers regarding the conquest of predatory animals (*led by Dan*).
4. The faculty on dissemination and conservation of knowledge (*chaired by Fad*).
5. The commission on industry and trade (*led by Nod*).
6. The college of revealed religion (*headed by Hap*).
7. The guardians of health and life (*led by Lut*).
8. The planetary council on art and science (*directed by Mek*).
9. The governors of advanced tribal relations (*led by Tut*).
10. The supreme court of tribal co-ordination and racial co-operation (*headed by Van*).

The preceding list of ten autonomous councils, considered by itself, suffices to establish that the work of the first epochal revelation pertained to the full range of human activity, not just spiritual and religious aspects.

If we now re-examine an excerpt cited earlier in this essay (*i.e.*, “[From the arrival of Prince Caligastia, planetary civilization progressed in a fairly normal manner for almost three hundred thousand years](#)” [*a Melchizedek, 752.4 / 66:8.3*]), it is clear that the Melchizedek was implicitly highlighting this revelation’s essential purpose, not just narrating a fact. In other words, his statement characterizes the initial effects of the first epochal revelation in terms of its fundamental intent: promoting the progress of civilization on our planet Urantia.

1. Why was it appropriate for the Planetary Prince and his staff to focus on the full range of human activity, thereby seeking to promote the progressive growth and development of civilization?
2. In your opinion, was this broad goal just a characteristic of the first epochal revelation on Urantia, or do you interpret it as a crucial aspect of plans for the entire series of epochal revelations that occur on a normal planet?

(Here the phrase “normal planet” should be understood to refer to an inhabited planet whose spiritual history has not been marred by rebellion or default, so that, as a result, the mindal and spiritual progression of its inhabitants harmonizes with the sequence of events that a Mighty Messenger portrays in Paper 52, “Planetary Mortal Epochs.”)

Please explain your answer.

The second epochal revelation

Solonia, the seraphic “voice in the Garden” who recounts the earnest efforts of Adam and Eve in the first Garden and then their tragic departure from the divine plan, is entirely frank in portraying the myriad perplexing challenges that they faced:

Adam and Eve found themselves on a sphere wholly unprepared for the proclamation of the brotherhood of man, a world groping about in abject spiritual darkness and cursed with confusion worse confounded by the miscarriage of the mission of the preceding administration. Mind and morals were at a low level, and instead of beginning the task of effecting religious unity, they must begin all anew the work of converting the inhabitants to the most simple forms of religious belief. Instead of finding one language ready for adoption, they were confronted by the world-wide confusion of hundreds upon hundreds of local dialects. No Adam of the planetary service was ever set down on a more difficult world; the obstacles seemed insuperable and the problems beyond creature solution. *[Solonia, 839:4 / 75:1.3]*

For ages Adam and Eve had been instructed in the technique of improving a world in readiness for their specialized contributions to the advancement of evolutionary civilization; but now they were face to face with pressing problems, such as the establishment of law and order in a world of savages, barbarians, and semicivilized human beings. Aside from the cream of the earth’s population, assembled in the Garden, only a few groups, here and there, were at all ready for the reception of the Adamic culture.

Adam made a heroic and determined effort to establish a world government, but he met with stubborn resistance at every turn. Adam had already put in operation a system of group control throughout Eden and had federated all of these companies into the Edenic league. But trouble, serious trouble, ensued when he went outside the Garden and sought to apply these ideas to the outlying tribes. The moment Adam’s associates began to work outside the Garden, they met the direct and well-planned resistance of Caligastia and Daligastia. The fallen Prince had been deposed as world ruler, but he had not been removed from the planet. He was still present on earth and able, at least to some extent, to resist all of **Adam’s plans for the rehabilitation of human society**. Adam tried to warn the races against Caligastia, but the task was made very difficult because his archenemy was invisible to the eyes of mortals. ...

Adam and Eve had come to institute representative government in the place of monarchical, but they found no government worthy of the name on the face of the whole earth. For the time being Adam abandoned all effort to establish representative government, and before the collapse of the Edenic regime he succeeded in establishing almost one hundred outlying trade and social centers where strong individuals ruled in his name. Most of these centers had been organized aforesaid by Van and Amadon. *[Solonia, 833:4-5, 834:1 / 74:5.4-5,7 — emphasis added: the eight words in bold type]*

Narrating the details of this sad saga is of course not our purpose here. The phrase “Adam’s plans for the rehabilitation of human society,” even when considered entirely in isolation, gives us ample grounds for concluding that the second epochal revelation served the same fundamental purpose as the first: promoting the progressive development of society and civilization. Further, we should bear in mind that Adam and Eve and their progeny made an immensely valuable contribution: “The influence of the violet race, though in numbers smaller than had been planned, produced an advance in civilization which, since the days of Adam, has far exceeded the progress of mankind throughout its entire previous existence of almost a million years” [*an Archangel, 900:2 / 81:0.2*].

3. The twelve Melchizedek receivers who headed the spiritual government of Urantia after Caligastia’s betrayal “continued in authority until the time of Adam and Eve” [*a Melchizedek, 1014:2 / 93:0.2*]. Solonia informs us that these receivers remained on duty for almost seven years after Adam and Eve arrived, but she then states that “the time finally came when they turned the administration of world affairs over to Adam and returned to Jerusem” [*Solonia, 833:1 / 74:5.1*]. The transition appears to have been quite formal; the twelve Melchizedeks carried out their plan to depart even though Adam had requested that they remain on Urantia as advisers:

The farewell of the receivers occupied the whole of a day, and during the evening the individual Melchizedeks gave Adam and Eve their parting advice and best wishes. Adam had several times requested his advisers to remain on earth with him, but always were these petitions denied. The time had come when the Material Sons must assume full responsibility for the conduct of world affairs. And so, at midnight, the seraphic transports of Satania left the planet with fourteen beings for Jerusem, the translation of Van and Amadon occurring simultaneously with the departure of the twelve Melchizedeks. [*Solonia, 833:2 / 74:5.2*]

Unfortunately, however, Adam and Eve did not fulfill their trust. To the contrary, they departed from the divine plan and therefore defaulted on their mission. Solonia states that “seventy days after the default of Eve ... the Melchizedek receivers returned to Urantia and assumed jurisdiction over world affairs” [*Solonia, 844:1 / 75:5.8*].

— Given all these extremely sad events and the fact that the most important result of the default of Adam and Eve was to deprive all subsequent inhabitants of Urantia of substantially more favorable circumstances associated with matter, mind, and spirit (thereby frustrating much of the essential intent of the second epochal revelation), do you believe that there are persuasive reasons for arguing that it would have been wiser for the twelve Melchizedeks to remain on Urantia when Adam asked them to stay? Please appraise this situation as broadly as possible, in order to compare the advantages and disadvantages of the two options (*i.e.*, departing and remaining).

4. Although Solonia stipulates that Adam and Eve faced enormous difficulties, she believes that they would have overcome them if they had been more patient:

In estimating the results of the Adamic mission on your world, justice demands the recognition of the condition of the planet. Adam was confronted with a well-nigh hopeless task when, with his beautiful mate, he was transported from Jerusem to this dark and confused planet. But had they been guided by the counsel of the Melchizedeks and their associates, and *had they been more patient*, they would have eventually met with success. [*Solonia, 846:3 / 75:8.4*]

In comparison, impatience also made a major contribution to the rebellion of Lucifer, the tragic events on Jerusem that precipitated Caligastia's betrayal on Urantia:

Most of the liberties which Lucifer sought he already had; others he was to receive in the future. All these precious endowments were lost by giving way to impatience and yielding to a desire to possess what one craves now and to possess it in defiance of all obligation to respect the rights and liberties of all other beings composing the universe of universes. Ethical obligations are innate, divine, and universal. [*A Mighty Messenger, 616:3 / 54:4.4*]

— Since the failures of the first and second epochal revelations are at least partly the result of impatience, is there room for concern that impatience may adversely affect mankind's responsiveness to *The Urantia Book*, the fifth epochal revelation? In addition, could impatience undermine efforts to stimulate interest in the Global Endeavor? If you foresee potential dangers in either or both contexts, please describe strategies that could help us avoid or diminish the damage that impatience might cause.

The third epochal revelation

Since the authors of *The Urantia Book* provide a clear and cogent account* of the third epochal revelation, the emergency bestowal of Machiventa Melchizedek in the days of Abraham, we do not need to summarize the events it encompassed, nor to analyze its profound effect on the evolution of spirituality and religion on Urantia.† To the contrary, our task is to explain how the third epochal revelation fits into the sequence of five epochal revelations that have occurred thus far on Urantia, and to what degree it relates to the other four.

The author of Paper 93 calls Machiventa Melchizedek an “**emergency Son**” in section 9 of that paper [*a Melchizedek, 1024:1 / 93:9.10*]. Further, the phrase “**emergency bestowal**” appears a total of four times in passages contained in section 8 or 10 [*i.e., 1022:3 / 93:8.1; 1024:4 / 93:10.2 (two occurrences in the same paragraph); and 1025:2 / 93:10.6*]. Even if we had no other information, these five prominent recourses to the adjective *emergency* would suffice to demonstrate that the third epochal revelation was not a standard event, instead departing quite markedly from patterns associated with epochal revelation on a normal planet. Fortunately, however, we have access to a substantial amount of other information that serves to confirm this point.

The Chief of Archangels explains the underlying capabilities:

The Melchizedeks are the first to act in all emergencies of whatever nature on all worlds where will creatures dwell. They sometimes act as temporary custodians on wayward planets, serving as receivers of a defaulting planetary government. In a planetary crisis these Melchizedek Sons serve in many unique capacities. It is easily possible for such a Son to make himself visible to mortal beings, and sometimes one of this order has even incarnated in the likeness of mortal flesh. **Seven times in Nebadon has a Melchizedek served on an evolutionary world in the similitude of mortal flesh**, and on numerous occasions these Sons have appeared in the likeness of other orders of universe creatures. They are indeed the versatile and volunteer emergency ministers to all orders of universe intelligences and to all the worlds and systems of worlds. [*The Chief of Archangels, 389.3 / 35:4.4 — emphasis added: statement in bold type*]

* The primary source is the narrative by a Melchizedek in Paper 93, “Machiventa Melchizedek.” In addition, the Chief of Archangels provides extremely interesting background in Paper 35, “The Local Universe Sons of God” — especially in section 1 (“The Father Melchizedek”) and section 2 (“The Melchizedek Sons”).

† Papers 94, 95, and 98 describe the influence and impact of the Melchizedek teachings in the Orient, the Levant, and the Occident. The author of Paper 98 calls the Melchizedek teachings “**a basic factor in all the religions of Occident and Orient that have arisen in the last four thousand years**” [*a Melchizedek, 1084:3 / 98:7.4*].

The emergency bestowal of Machiventa Melchizedek on Urantia was the seventh such event in Nebadon. The author of Paper 93 describes the specific circumstances:

Revealed truth was threatened with extinction during the millenniums which followed the miscarriage of the Adamic mission on Urantia. Though making progress intellectually, the human races were slowly losing ground spiritually. About 3000 B.C. the concept of God had grown very hazy in the minds of men.

The twelve Melchizedek receivers knew of Michael's impending bestowal on their planet, but they did not know how soon it would occur; therefore they convened in solemn council and petitioned the Most Highs of Edentia that some provision be made for maintaining the light of truth on Urantia. This plea was dismissed with the mandate that "the conduct of affairs on 606 of Satania is fully in the hands of the Melchizedek custodians." The receivers then appealed to the Father Melchizedek for help but only received word that they should continue to uphold truth in the manner of their own election "until the arrival of a bestowal Son," who "would rescue the planetary titles from forfeiture and uncertainty."

And it was in consequence of having been thrown so completely on their own resources that Machiventa Melchizedek, one of the twelve planetary receivers, volunteered to do that which had been done only six times in all the history of Nebadon: to personalize on earth as a temporary man of the realm, to bestow himself as an emergency Son of world ministry. [*A Melchizedek, 1014:3-5 / 93:1.1-3*]

We now know why the Mighty Messenger who wrote Paper 52, "Planetary Mortal Epochs," made no reference to the appearance of a Melchizedek in human form, for this was an extraordinary event that occurred under emergency circumstances, one that bore no intrinsic relationships to the standard sequence of epochal revelations. For example, the bestowal of Machiventa Melchizedek did not mark the end of one dispensation and the beginning of another; Machiventa, unlike an Avonal Son of Paradise, had no authority or power that would have enabled him to carry out or supervise a dispensational resurrection.*

* The author of Paper 52 tells us, "on Urantia the bestowal Son, even your own Creator Son, appeared at the close of the Adamic dispensation" [*a Mighty Messenger, 595:6 / 52:5.1*]. This statement, by implication, demonstrates that the emergency bestowal of Machiventa Melchizedek did not have any effect on the Adamic dispensation as an ongoing period during which the sleeping survivors were obliged to wait for the next general resurrection. Further, the Midwayer Commission informs us that it was our Creator Son Christ Michael, in morontia form and actively assisted by Gabriel and the archangels, who conducted the general resurrection that ended the Adamic dispensation [*the Midwayer Commission, 2024:3-4 / 189:3.1-2*].

Instead, Machiventa Melchizedek came to Urantia “to achieve two tasks: to keep alive on earth the truth of the one God and to prepare the way for the subsequent mortal bestowal of a Paradise Son of that Universal Father” [*a Melchizedek, 1018:4 / 93:4.15*]. In Paper 98, the same author sums up as follows:

And this is the long story of the teachings of Machiventa Melchizedek on Urantia. It is nearly four thousand years since this emergency Son of Nebadon bestowed himself on Urantia, and in that time the teachings of the “priest of El Elyon, the Most High God,” have penetrated to all races and peoples. And Machiventa was successful in achieving the purpose of his unusual bestowal; when Michael made ready to appear on Urantia, the God concept was existent in the hearts of men and women, the same God concept that still flames anew in the living spiritual experience of the manifold children of the Universal Father as they live their intriguing temporal lives on the whirling planets of space. [*A Melchizedek, 1085:1 / 98:7.12*]

Therefore we also know what Melchizedek did *not* do: He did not seek to promote the overall progress of society and civilization on our planet Urantia. This too was an important difference that distinguished the third epochal revelation from the first and second epochal revelations, those that had failed. Instead, Melchizedek focused solely on spiritual and religious matters.

5. The author of Paper 93 tells us: “Like Jesus, Melchizedek attended strictly to the fulfillment of the mission of his bestowal. He did not attempt to reform the mores, to change the habits of the world, nor to promulgate even advanced sanitary practices or scientific truths” [*a Melchizedek, 1018:4 / 93:4.15*]. In your opinion, were Melchizedek’s responsibilities during his emergency bestowal much more circumscribed: (a) *because* the first and second epochal revelations had failed; (b) *because* he was obliged to prepare the way for the arrival of our Creator Son Michael of Nebadon in his future role as Urantia’s bestowal son; or (c) for both of these reasons, in some interassociation of relative importance that you will endeavor to explain. In any case, please justify your answer by describing the factors that you assembled in order to develop it.

6. It is reasonable to infer that the twelve Melchizedek receivers formulated the mission statement that Machiventa heeded and fulfilled during his emergency bestowal. Do you believe that the wording of this mission statement may also have drawn on those emergency provisions of the bestowal plan that the receivers knew about, or do you prefer to believe that the Melchizedek receivers — high Sons of the local universe — had only a very general idea of the emergency provisions of this “[great Father-revelation enterprise of the Eternal Son and his co-ordinate Sons](#)” [[a Divine Counselor, 85:6 / 7:4.5](#)], instead of intimate awareness of everything they contain? Your reply will of course be hypothetical and rather speculative, but that is neither a defect nor a disadvantage.

The fourth epochal revelation

It was “[almost forty thousand years ago](#)” that our Creator Son Michael of Nebadon selected Urantia “[as the world for his final bestowal.](#)” When this was announced to senior personalities of his local universe, the Melchizedeks established a special college on Edentia where they would seek to master issues that arose [[Malavatia Melchizedek, 486:5 / 43:1.6](#)]. Michael’s decision, however, appears to have been held rather closely, for Adam and Eve were not aware of it when they “[arrived on Urantia, from the year A.D. 1934, 37,848 years ago](#)” [[Solonia, 828:1 / 74:0.1](#)]:

Adam ... did not know that Michael, the sovereign of this universe, was so soon to appear on Urantia; he expected that the next Son to arrive would be of the Avonal order. Even so, it was always a comfort to Adam and Eve, as well as something difficult for them to understand, to ponder the only personal message they ever received from Michael. This message, among other expressions of friendship and comfort, said: “I have given consideration to the circumstances of your default, I have remembered the desire of your hearts ever to be loyal to my Father’s will, and you will be called from the embrace of mortal slumber when I come to Urantia if the subordinate Sons of my realm do not send for you before that time.” [[Solonia, 852:2 / 76:5.3](#)]

Since Adam and Eve defaulted on their trust *after* Michael had chosen Urantia as the site of his seventh bestowal in the form of a will creature of his local universe, the failure of the second epochal revelation cannot have been a factor that influenced him. On the other hand, we have every right to infer that the failure of the first epochal revelation *was* a factor that Michael considered (*i.e.*, the fact that Urantia was one of the 37 inhabited worlds in Satania whose respective Planetary Princes joined the Lucifer rebellion).

Any effort of ours to identify other reasons for this choice will inevitably be speculative, but we may be able to acquire a certain amount of insight if we begin by citing an observation in Paper 136 that we owe to the Midwayer Commission: “Michael’s mortal bestowal was on Urantia but for all worlds of Nebadon” [the Midwayer Commission, 1514:2 / 136:4.1]. In these regards, it may be significant that the physical characteristics of our planet, as well as the personal characteristics of the human beings who live here, appear to put Urantia approximately in the middle of the range of adaptations that occur among the inhabited worlds of Nebadon. A Universal Censor tells us: “Urantia, in size, density, and location, is in many respects ideal for human habitation” [a Universal Censor, 173.5 / 15:6.15]. If we examine the planetary characteristics that a Melchizedek analyzes in Paper 49, “The Inhabited Worlds,” here is how Urantia compares with the other inhabited worlds in Satania:

Category	Possibilities	The situation on Urantia	Proportion
Atmospheric types	Subbreathers, mid-breathers, and superbreathers	Mid-breathers	98.5 percent
Elemental types	Water, air, land, and land and air combined	Land	70 percent
Gravity types	Height varying from about two and one-half feet (0.75 m) to around 10 feet (3.0 m), the average height being “a trifle under seven feet (2.1 m)” [562:4 / 49:2.20]	[In most parts of Urantia, the current average height of adult males seems to be between five and one-half feet (1.7 m) and six feet (1.8 m).]	
Temperature types	Five groups	Group no. 3	70 percent
Electric types	Ten groupings	Group no. 4	23 percent
Energizing types	Six types of animal and mortal nutrition	Type no. 3, used by mid-breathers	98.5 percent
Brain-type series	One-brained, two-brained, and three-brained types	Two-brained	[percentage not stated]
Spirit-reception series	One, two, or three glands comparable to the pituitary bodies	Two glands	65 percent

7. Do you believe that when Michael of Nebadon selected Urantia as the site of his final bestowal, he took into account the general pattern portrayed above, or perhaps one or more of the individual characteristics? In any case, please explain your answer.

Michael's selection of Urantia may also have been influenced by viewpoints that he had acquired, or by goals that he had formulated, during his previous bestowals as six different types of will creatures inhabiting his local universe of Nebadon. After all, his future bestowal on Urantia, the sole bestowal starting with birth as a helpless infant, was the final step in a series of seven life experiences associated with acquiring supreme sovereignty and with "augmenting the evolving sovereignty of God the Supreme":

In the course of these bestowals the Creator Son not only engaged in a descending exploration of the various natures of creature personality, but he also achieved the revelation of the variously diversified wills of the Paradise Deities, whose synthetic unity, as revealed by the Supreme Creators, is revelatory of the will of the Supreme Being. ...

The completion of these seven bestowals resulted in the liberation of Michael's supreme sovereignty and also in the creation of the possibility for the sovereignty of the Supreme in Nebadon. On none of Michael's bestowals did he reveal God the Supreme, but the sum total of all seven bestowals is a new Nebadon revelation of the Supreme Being. [*Gavalia, the Chief of the Evening Stars, 1318:2,4 / 119:8.3,5*]

The following table identifies Michael's seven bestowals, which extended over almost one billion years.

The seven bestowals of Michael of Nebadon

As described by Gavalia, the Chief of the Evening Stars, in Paper 119, “The Bestowals of Christ Michael”

	Bestowal identity	Era	Revealing the will of ...
1	A Melchizedek Son	Almost one billion years ago	The Father, the Son, and the Spirit
2	A primary Lanonandek Son serving as the acting System Sovereign	About 850 million years ago	The Father and the Son
3	A Material Son serving as the temporary Planetary Prince	<i>[not stated]</i>	The Father and the Spirit
4	A supreme seraphim assigned to the corps of teaching counselors	<i>[not stated]</i>	The Son and the Spirit
5	Eventod, an ascendant spirit mortal on Uversa	A little over three hundred million years ago	The Infinite Spirit
6	An ascendant morontia mortal at the courts of the Most High Fathers on the headquarters planet of the fifth constellation: the morontia mortal of Endantum	<i>[not stated]</i>	The Eternal Son
7	Incarnate on Urantia in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth	About two thousand years ago	The Universal Father

The next Paper, Paper 120, is the first Paper in Part IV, “The Life and Teachings of Jesus.” Although the author revisits some concepts that were already introduced in Paper 119, he also provides profound insights that illuminate the significance and implications of Michael’s seven bestowals:

In the course of each of these preceding bestowals Michael not only acquired the finite experience of one group of his created beings, but he also acquired an essential experience in Paradise co-operation which would, in and of itself, further contribute to constituting him the sovereign of his self-made universe. ... But Michael did not wish to rule Nebadon merely in his own isolated right, as a Creator Son. He desired to ascend through actual experience in co-operative subordination to the Paradise Trinity to that high place in universe status where he would become qualified to rule his universe and administer its affairs with that perfection of insight and wisdom of execution which will sometime be characteristic of the exalted rule of the Supreme Being. He aspired not to perfection of rule as a Creator Son but to supremacy of administration as the embodiment of the universe wisdom and the divine experience of the Supreme Being.

Michael, therefore, had a double purpose in the making of these seven bestowals upon the various orders of his universe creatures: First, he was completing the required experience in creature understanding which is demanded of all Creator Sons before they assume complete sovereignty. ... Second, he was aspiring to the privilege of representing the maximum authority of the Paradise Trinity which can be exercised in the direct and personal administration of a local universe. Accordingly, did Michael, during the experience of each of his universe bestowals, successfully and acceptably voluntarily subordinate himself to the variously constituted wills of the diverse associations of the persons of the Paradise Trinity. ...

Michael, therefore, combines in his personal sovereignty the divine will of the seven-fold phases of the universal Creators with the understanding experience of his local universe creatures. Thus has his administration become representative of the greatest possible power and authority although divested of all arbitrary assumptions. [*Man-tutia Melchizedek, the director of the revelatory commission that prepared Part IV, 1323:3-1324:2 / 120:0.3-5*]

Where does all this leave us? Well, it almost certainly means that our sovereign Creator Son Christ Michael will continue to take an intense interest in events on Urantia during all the eras to come. After all, he bears the highly unusual title of “Planetary Prince of Urantia”! In addition, it means that our disordered and rather backward planet has special standing among the inhabited worlds of Nebadon:

During the course of the long history of an inhabited planet, many dispensational adjudications will take place, and more than one magisterial mission may occur, but ordinarily only once will a bestowal Son serve on the sphere. It is only required that each inhabited world have one bestowal Son come to live the full mortal life from birth to death. Sooner or later, regardless of spiritual status, every mortal-inhabited world is destined to become host to a Magisterial Son on a bestowal mission except the one planet in each local universe whereon a Creator Son elects to make his mortal bestowal.

Understanding more about the bestowal Sons, you discern why so much interest attaches to Urantia in the history of Nebadon. Your small and insignificant planet is of local universe concern simply because it is the mortal home world of Jesus of Nazareth. It was the scene of the final and triumphant bestowal of your Creator Son, the arena in which Michael won the supreme personal sovereignty of the universe of Nebadon. [*A Perfector of Wisdom, 228:1-2 / 20:5.4-5*]

The archangel corps of Nebadon is directed by the first-born of this order, and in more recent times a divisional headquarters of the archangels has been maintained on Urantia. It is this unusual fact that soon arrests the attention of extra-Nebadon student visitors. Among their early observations of intrauniverse transactions is the discovery that many ascendant activities of the Brilliant Evening Stars are directed from the capital of a local system, Satania. On further examination they discover that certain archangel activities are directed from a small and apparently insignificant inhabited world called Urantia. And then ensues the revelation of Michael's bestowal on Urantia and their immediately quickened interest in you and your lowly sphere.

Do you grasp the significance of the fact that your lowly and confused planet has become a divisional headquarters for the universe administration and direction of certain archangel activities having to do with the Paradise ascension scheme? This undoubtedly presages the future concentration of other ascendant activities on the bestowal world of Michael and lends a tremendous and solemn import to the Master's personal promise, "I will come again." [*A Brilliant Evening Star, 408:6-409:1 / 37:3.3-4*]

Urantia is the sentimental shrine of all Nebadon, the chief of ten million inhabited worlds, the mortal home of Christ Michael, sovereign of all Nebadon, a Melchizedek minister to the realms, a system savior, an Adamic redeemer, a seraphic fellow, an associate of ascending spirits, a morontia progressor, a Son of Man in the likeness of mortal flesh, and the Planetary Prince of Urantia. And your record tells the truth when it says that this same Jesus has promised sometime to return to the world of his terminal bestowal, the World of the Cross. [*Gavalia, the Chief of the Evening Stars, 1319:1 / 119:8.8*]

8. If we consider the period of approximately two thousand years that has elapsed since our Creator Son Michael of Nebadon experienced his seventh and final bestowal on Urantia, do you see any reason to believe that human events here occurred more smoothly and more favorably (or, for that matter, less smoothly and less favorably) than would have been the case if the Paradise Son who appeared here in the flesh had been an Avonal Son instead of the Creator Son? Please explain the factors that led you to your answer.
9. Do you expect any events occurring on Urantia during the next two thousand years that might suffice to persuade most persons living here that our world, “the World of the Cross,” has special standing among the inhabited planets of the local universe of Nebadon? If so, please describe those events. If not, please explain why you are not convinced.

THE BESTOWAL COMMISSION. Immediately before Michael left Salvington, he met with “the ambassador of the Paradise Trinity — Immanuel of Salvington — the Union of Days assigned to the local universe of Nebadon” [*the formal assignment, name, and category of a spiritual being whom the Chief of Archangels identifies in Paper 33, almost one thousand pages earlier — 370:6 / 33:5.1*]. Immanuel’s bestowal commission and related counsel occupy five and one-half pages in the single-column edition of *The Urantia Book* (i.e., half of page 1325, plus the entirety of pages 1326 through 1330). Although these instructions of Immanuel’s seem long and detailed, the author of Paper 120 (Mantutia Melchizedek) tells us that what he is presenting is just “**excerpts**” from what Immanuel actually said — those excerpts that his own instructions enable him to pass along to us [*1325:2 / 120:0.9*].

This, however, is true only in substance, for the wording that we have is just a *translation of those excerpts*, which were certainly not delivered in English. After all, the English language had not yet been invented! To the contrary, Immanuel would normally have spoken to Michael in the language of Nebadon — unless, for some reason, he preferred to express himself in the tongue of Uversa.*

If we appraise all this information from a human perspective, reflecting that Michael, while incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth, did not have access to a Kindle or any other electronic device enabling him to skim back and forth through Immanuel’s extended instructions, the task of remembering and heeding them seems intimidating, to put the matter mildly. Well, we should remember that by the time that Jesus began his

* “Each superuniverse has its own language, a tongue spoken by its personalities and prevailing throughout its sectors. This is known as the tongue of Uversa in our superuniverse. Each local universe also has its own language. All of the higher orders of Nebadon are bilingual, speaking both the language of Nebadon and the tongue of Uversa.” [*An Archangel of Nebadon, 44:4.3 / 503.3*]

public ministry, he had long since acquired complete access to the divine mind of Michael of Nebadon, an instrument whose extraordinary and indeed unimaginable capabilities far exceeded those required for this particular purpose.

READING ASSIGNMENT. Please read sections 1 and 2 of Paper 120, entitled “The Seventh Bestowal Commission” and “The Bestowal Limitations” — which appear on pages 1325-1329 in the single-column edition. *(During a group discussion, participants should take turns in reading this material out loud.)*

10. Why does Immanuel advise Michael to terminate the Lucifer rebellion in the system of Satania while he is incarnate on Urantia in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth, rather than wait to do that until after he returns to Salvington as a Sovereign Creator Son possessing “unlimited control and direction of the universe of his own making” [*Gavalia, the Chief of the Evening Stars, 1318:1 / 119:8.2*]? May we infer that this was the Father’s will, on the grounds that Immanuel was counseling Michael on behalf of the Father (*i.e.*, as indicated in the final paragraph of section 1)?

11. In part, Immanuel counseled Michael as follows:

“5. As concerns the planet of your bestowal and the immediate generation of men living thereon at the time of your mortal sojourn, I counsel you to function largely in the role of a teacher. Give attention, first, to the liberation and inspiration of man’s spiritual nature. Next, illuminate the darkened human intellect, heal the souls of men, and emancipate their minds from age-old fears. And then, in accordance with your mortal wisdom, minister to the physical well-being and material comfort of your brothers in the flesh. Live the ideal religious life for the inspiration and edification of all your universe.” [*Mantutia Melchizedek, 1328.2 / 120:2.5*]

— Please compare and contrast these instructions with the mission of Melchizedek during the third epochal revelation.

— In addition, please compare and contrast Immanuel’s instructions with: (a) the original mission of the Planetary Prince during the first epochal revelation (*i.e.*, before Caligastia aligned himself with the Lucifer rebellion), and (b) the original mission of Adam and Eve during the second epochal revelation (*i.e.*, before they defaulted).

READING ASSIGNMENT. Please read section 3 of Paper 120 entitled, “Further Counsel and Advice” (which appears on pages 1329 and 1330 in the single-column edition).

12. In part, Immanuel counseled Michael as follows:

“3. In your relations to the social order we advise that you confine your efforts largely to spiritual regeneration and intellectual emancipation. Avoid all entanglements with the economic structure and the political commitments of your day. More especially devote yourself to living the ideal religious life on Urantia.

“4. Under no circumstances and not even in the least detail, should you interfere with the normal and orderly progressive evolution of the Urantia races. But this prohibition must not be interpreted as limiting your efforts to leave behind you on Urantia an enduring and improved system of *positive religious ethics*. As a dispensational Son you are granted certain privileges pertaining to the advancement of the *spiritual* and *religious* status of the world peoples.

“5. As you may see fit, you are to identify yourself with existing religious and spiritual movements as they may be found on Urantia but in every possible manner seek to avoid the formal establishment of an organized cult, a crystallized religion, or a segregated ethical grouping of mortal beings. Your life and teachings are to become the common heritage of all religions and all peoples.” [*Mantutia Melchizedek, 1329.5-1330:1 / 120:3.4-6*]

— On the understanding that Christ Michael of Nebadon is not personally responsible for what his immediate followers did after he completed his bestowal on Urantia, nor for the attitudes and actions of their successors and heirs over the course of the last two thousand years, how do you appraise the results thus far of the fourth epochal revelation in relation to “*spiritual regeneration*,” “*intellectual emancipation*,” and “*positive religious ethics*”?

— On the same understanding, how do you appraise the results of the fourth epochal revelation in terms of avoiding “*the formal establishment of an organized cult, a crystallized religion, or a segregated ethical grouping of mortal beings*”? How will the life and teachings of Christ Michael of Nebadon incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth become “*the common heritage of all religions and all peoples*”?

OVERTONES AND IMPLICATIONS. Even though the following two excerpts from Part IV appear in distinctly different contexts, and even though they are separated by more than 300 pages, it is interesting to consider them together and to reflect on whether and to what degree the underlying ideas are interrelated, mutually reinforcing, or both.

[EXCERPT A] He who was rejected by the Jerusalem religious leaders, even after he had demonstrated his leadership, was recognized and hailed as a master teacher by the businessmen and bankers of Damascus, and all this when he was an obscure and unknown carpenter of Nazareth.

He never spoke about this offer to his family, and the end of this year found him back in Nazareth going about his daily duties just as if he had never been tempted by the flattering propositions of his Damascus friends. Neither did these men of Damascus ever associate the later citizen of Capernaum who turned all Jewry upside down with the former carpenter of Nazareth who had dared to refuse the honor which their combined wealth might have procured.

Jesus most cleverly and intentionally contrived to detach various episodes of his life so that they never became, in the eyes of the world, associated together as the doings of a single individual. Many times in subsequent years he listened to the recital of this very story of the strange Galilean who declined the opportunity of founding a school in Damascus to compete with Alexandria.

One purpose which Jesus had in mind, when he sought to segregate certain features of his earthly experience, was to prevent the building up of such a versatile and spectacular career as would cause subsequent generations to venerate the teacher in place of obeying the truth which he had lived and taught. Jesus did not want to build up such a human record of achievement as would attract attention from his teaching. Very early he recognized that his followers would be tempted to formulate a religion about him which might become a competitor of the gospel of the kingdom that he intended to proclaim to the world. **Accordingly, he consistently sought to suppress everything during his eventful career which he thought might be made to serve this natural human tendency to exalt the teacher in place of proclaiming his teachings.** *[The Midwayer Commission, 1412:6-1413:2 / 128:4.3-6 — emphasis added: sentence in bold type]*

[EXCERPT B] Always respect the personality of man. Never should a righteous cause be promoted by force; spiritual victories can be won only by spiritual power. This injunction against the employment of material influences refers to psychic force as well as to physical force. Overpowering arguments and mental superiority are not to be employed to coerce men and women into the kingdom. Man's mind is not to be crushed by the mere weight of logic or overawed by shrewd eloquence. While emotion as a factor in human decisions cannot be wholly eliminated, it should not be directly appealed to in the teachings of those who would advance the cause of the kingdom. Make your appeals directly to the divine spirit that dwells within the minds of men. Do not appeal to fear, pity, or mere sentiment. In appealing to men, be fair; exercise self-control and exhibit due restraint; show proper respect for the personalities of your pupils. Remember that I have said: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, and if any man will open, I will come in." *[The Midwayer Commission, 1765:4 / 159:3.2]*

13. In Paper 92, “The Later Evolution of Religion,” a Melchizedek tells us:
- “Most great religious epochs have been inaugurated by the life and teachings of some outstanding personality; leadership has originated a majority of the worth-while moral movements of history. And men have always tended to venerate the leader, even at the expense of his teachings; to revere his personality, even though losing sight of the truths which he proclaimed. And this is not without reason; **there is an instinctive longing in the heart of evolutionary man for help from above and beyond. This craving is designed to anticipate the appearance on earth of the Planetary Prince and the later Material Sons.** On Urantia man has been deprived of these superhuman leaders and rulers, and therefore does he constantly seek to make good this loss by enshrouding his human leaders with legends pertaining to supernatural origins and miraculous careers.” [A Melchizedek, 1008:7 / 92:5.7 — *emphasis added: portion in bold type*]

— Please comment on the implicit irony that links this paragraph by a Melchizedek with excerpt B on the preceding page: In seeking to terminate the Lucifer rebellion while incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth and also to bring about the spiritual regeneration and intellectual emancipation of our planet Urantia, Christ Michael had to seek to compensate for innate tendencies of the human mind and character that assume the presence and favorable functioning of the regimes of the Planetary Prince and the Material Sons! Does this help explain why his intentions and best efforts did not prevent his followers from inventing a religion *about* him instead of a spiritual movement that would call attention to his true teachings and promote devotion to them? Have these objectives of Michael’s been frustrated on our planet Urantia, or just delayed? If the latter, how will they eventually be implemented and achieved?

14. While incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth, Christ Michael “**sought to segregate certain features of his earthly experience**” so as not to build up “**a versatile and spectacular career**” (as stated in excerpt A on the preceding page). If we compare this policy with the instructions that he gave to teachers and believers while visiting Thomas and his associates in Edrei (*i.e.*, section 3 in Paper 159, the context from which excerpt B is taken), does the comparison imply that in Jesus’ view, leaving the coherent public record of a versatile and spectacular career might amount to “**psychic force,**” thereby conflicting with his insistence at Edrei that teachers and believers always respect the personality of man? In other words, do you believe that excerpts A and B are interrelated, mutually reinforcing, or both?
15. In contrast, the revelators who gave us *The Urantia Book* unquestionably left us a replete record of Christ Michael’s versatile and spectacular career during his bestowal life on Urantia (*i.e.*, while he was incarnate in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth). Why this change in tactics?

16. In your view, to what degree do the various organized, institutional religions currently active on Urantia honor or violate Jesus' insistence that teachers and believers always respect the personality of man, on the understanding that "This injunction against the employment of material influences refers to psychic force as well as to physical force" [excerpt B]? Insofar as possible, please do your best to answer this question on a global basis, not just in terms of those organized, institutional religions that seem to descend from the fourth epochal revelation. Do current trends in these regards appear to be consistent and relatively uniform throughout the world, or are there a range of practices and tendencies that make it difficult for you to formulate a general summary that would be at least reasonably accurate? Which of the following viewpoints seems to be stronger: (a) sympathy, tolerance, and interpersonal respect, or (b) an intense desire that one's own religious convictions dominate and prevail? Are viewpoints (a) and (b) inconsistent and mutually exclusive, or can they coexist in proportions that vary over time and/or in different locations?

ADAPTING JESUS' LECTURES AT URMIA. In Paper 134, the Midwayer Commission tells us that during Jesus' thirtieth year, he served as the conductor of a caravan that proceeded from Palestine to the region southeast of the Caspian Sea, traveling via Damascus, Lake Urmia, Assyria, Media, and Parthia. While describing Jesus as "the extraordinary conductor of a commonplace caravan," the Midwayer Commission states that "the vast majority of those who met and talked with him were made better for the remainder of their natural lives" [the Midwayer Commission, 1484:6 / 134:2.2]. During the return trip, Jesus stopped at Lake Urmia, ceasing to function as the conductor of the caravan and instead delivering a series of twenty-four lectures in "a large building — a lecture amphitheater — dedicated to the 'spirit of religion'" [the Midwayer Commission, 1485:3 / 134:3.1]. In addition, he presided over "twelve evening sessions of questions, discussions, and debates" [the Midwayer Commission, 1485:6 / 134:3.4].

For the authors of Part IV, these lengthy lectures of Jesus appear to have been at least a migraine headache, for they clearly struggled with the task of writing about them:

[When we, the midwayers, first prepared the summary of Jesus' teachings at Urmia, there arose a disagreement between the seraphim of the churches and the seraphim of progress as to the wisdom of including these teachings in the Urantia Revelation. Conditions of the twentieth century, prevailing in both religion and human governments, are so different from those prevailing in Jesus' day that it was indeed difficult to adapt the Master's teachings at Urmia to the problems of the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of men as these world functions are existent in the twentieth century. We were never able to formulate a statement of the Master's teachings which was

acceptable to both groups of these seraphim of planetary government. Finally, the Melchizedek chairman of the revelatory commission appointed a commission of three of our number to prepare our view of the Master's Urmia teachings as adapted to twentieth-century religious and political conditions on Urantia. Accordingly, we three secondary midwayers completed such an adaptation of Jesus' teachings, restating his pronouncements as we would apply them to present-day world conditions, and we now present these statements as they stand after having been edited by the Melchizedek chairman of the revelatory commission.] [*The Midwayer Commission, 1486:3 / 134:3.8*]

[While the Master's teaching concerning the sovereignty of God is a truth — only complicated by the subsequent appearance of the religion about him among the world's religions — his presentations concerning political sovereignty are vastly complicated by the political evolution of nation life during the last nineteen hundred years and more. In the times of Jesus there were only two great world powers — the Roman Empire in the West and the Han Empire in the East — and these were widely separated by the Parthian kingdom and other intervening lands of the Caspian and Turkestan regions. We have, therefore, in the following presentation departed more widely from the substance of the Master's teachings at Urmia concerning political sovereignty, at the same time attempting to depict the import of such teachings as they are applicable to the peculiarly critical stage of the evolution of political sovereignty in the twentieth century after Christ.] [*The Midwayer Commission, 1487:8 / 134:5.1 — emphasis added: sentences in bold type*]

Although the authors ultimately left us fascinating adaptations of Jesus' lectures at Urmia, this document is not an appropriate context for us to analyze those substantive ideas in depth and detail — a task that will have to be left for another occasion. Instead, we will focus on certain implications of what the authors have told us about *the process* that they employed, while also seeking to reach conclusions about the net implications for society and civilization in Jesus' day and now.

17. Let us examine the authors' statement that Jesus' teaching concerning the sovereignty of God is a truth that is "only complicated by the subsequent appearance of the religion about him among the world's religions" [*the Midwayer Commission, 1487:8 / 134:5.1*]. Although the word *only* can be interpreted from various perspectives, some of the possible ways to explain it are ironic and perhaps even paradoxical. Do the authors seem to be declaring that the appearance of a religion about Jesus was not a major complication for them, or perhaps that the appearance of this religion about Jesus did not have much effect on the principle of the sovereignty of God? In short, how do you interpret this sentence?

18. In comparison, the authors tell us that they “departed more widely from the substance of the Master’s teachings at Urmia concerning political sovereignty” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1487:8 / 134:5.1*]. In your view, does this mean that it would be more accurate to attribute the subsequent ideas to the Midwayer Commission, rather than to Jesus? Do you believe that the technique of epochal revelation **required** the authors to update the analysis of political sovereignty so that it corresponded more closely to practical circumstances on Urantia during the twentieth century, or was this just an option that the revelators chose to exercise?
19. In your view, do the inferences and lessons that we should derive from the Midwayer Commission’s creative adaptation pertain solely to “the political evolution of nation life during the last nineteen hundred years and more” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1487:8 / 134:5.1*], or should we interpret this flexibility far more broadly, so that it implicitly epitomizes and models the entire “procession of changes, adjustments, and readjustments” that a Melchizedek describes in section 1 of Paper 99 [*a Melchizedek, 1086:4 / 99:1.1*]? Do you also see implications for original thinkers, innovators, and reformers, especially when they find themselves contending with entrenched customs, hallowed traditions, and longstanding interpretations of religious texts that many believers have revered as “the word of God,” both in earlier generations and even in this one? Please explain your answers, while permitting patience and tact to enhance and refine the dedication and persistence that will make crucial contributions throughout the new millennium.

ANALYSIS FROM PURPOSE AND FUNCTION. If possible, we would like to analyze the fourth epochal revelation in terms highlighting its relationships to the other four epochal revelations that have occurred on Urantia and, by implication, also explaining how it relates to the standard sequence of epochal revelations that a Mighty Messenger describes in Paper 52, “Planetary Mortal Epochs.” As a practical matter, however, these avenues of inquiry will not take us very far. Why? Because the fourth epochal revelation’s special and exceptional characteristics overwhelm a range of analytical factors that would be quite significant, and perhaps even crucial, under other circumstances.

In Paper 128, “Jesus’ Early Manhood,” the Midwayer Commission offers us two eloquent passages leading to the conclusions stated above:

Always be mindful of the twofold purpose of Michael's bestowal on Urantia:

1. The mastering of the experience of living the full life of a human creature in mortal flesh, the completion of his sovereignty in Nebadon.
2. The revelation of the Universal Father to the mortal dwellers on the worlds of time and space and the more effective leading of these same mortals to a better understanding of the Universal Father.

All other creature benefits and universe advantages were incidental and secondary to these major purposes of the mortal bestowal. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1407:2-5 / 128:0.2-5*]

Never lose sight of the fact that the prime mission of Jesus in his seventh bestowal was the acquirement of creature experience, the achievement of the sovereignty of Nebadon. And in the gathering of this very experience he made the supreme revelation of the Paradise Father to Urantia and to his entire local universe. Incidental to these purposes he also undertook to untangle the complicated affairs of this planet as they were related to the Lucifer rebellion. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1417:5 / 128:7.6*]

On the understanding that the Midwayer Commission has spoken clearly and precisely, there still appear to be several additional conclusions that we can reach by drawing on logic and reasoning:

- Christ Michael's bestowal on Urantia in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth was a major departure from the normal sequence, for the progression portrayed in Paper 52, "Planetary Mortal Epochs," would have led one to expect the initial magisterial mission of an Avonal Son. Why was Michael's bestowal so strikingly out of sequence? Because Michael so decided, having made this decision *before* Adam and Eve arrived (*a factor mentioned in prior discussion: see page 14 above*).
- Immanuel's advice calling on Michael to terminate the Lucifer rebellion while incarnate on Urantia suffices to associate the fourth epochal revelation with the emergency provisions of the bestowal plan. (*References: The long paragraph on the bestowal plan cited on page 5 above [i.e., 85:6 / 7:4.5]; Immanuel's advice to Michael in section 2 of Paper 120 [i.e., 1327:2 / 120:2.2]; and question 10 on page 21.*) In addition, the Midwayer Commission's remarks in section 7 of Paper 128 (*i.e., the second excerpt cited on this same page*) serve as a reminder.
- Like the third epochal revelation, but unlike the first and second, Christ Michael's bestowal on Urantia did not include substantial effort to promote the progressive growth and development of human society.

20. The following four sets of factors and circumstances create the context for the question that follows thereafter.

A. The fact that a Creator Son conducting a bestowal mission on an inhabited planet does not have the same spiritual partners as an Avonal Son on a bestowal mission: The latter is accompanied by “a corps of 144 bestowal attendants”: “completion seraphim [who] have all traversed the circles of Seraphington and have attained the Seraphic Corps of Completion” [*a Melchizedek, 427:4-5 / 39:1.4-5*]. Two Evening Stars (“The two attending superangels”) also accompany an Avonal Son on a bestowal mission, whereas Gabriel performed that function during Michael’s bestowal on Urantia [*a Brilliant Evening Star, 407:8 / 37:2.8*].

B. The pattern of concentrating almost entirely on spiritual and religious matters that Machiventa Melchizedek established during the immediately preceding epochal revelation on Urantia.

C. Michael’s key purpose of acquiring creature experience, a requirement that might not have harmonized with active and ambitious effort on his part aimed at promoting more advanced levels of society and civilization.

D. Michael’s task of revealing the Universal Father, a task requiring him to remain subject to the Father’s will throughout his entire bestowal as Jesus of Nazareth.

— In your opinion, do the preceding four factors (when considered together or in some combination of one, two, or three of them that you select) suffice to explain why Christ Michael of Nebadon did not make substantial effort to promote the progressive growth and development of human society during his bestowal on Urantia in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth?

If your basic answer is yes, please analyze these matters and identify any of the four factors that you consider significantly more important than the others. At your option, you may wish to cite additional elements that, in your view, supplement or reinforce those listed above.

If, on the other hand, your basic answer is no, please offer your own view as to why Michael of Nebadon, incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth, did not exert substantial effort to promote more advanced levels of human society.

The fifth epochal revelation

The Urantia Book, the fifth epochal revelation, displays many hallmarks of an exceptional measure, characteristics that unquestionably identify it as an emergency undertaking. The following four factors are so straightforward and so clear that the conclusion appears to be incontestable.

1. The Mighty Messenger who wrote Paper 52, “Planetary Mortal Epochs” — while thereby portraying standard patterns that generally apply to epochal revelations occurring on inhabited planets — makes no reference whatever to any epochal revelation transmitted in writing.

2. All epochal revelations identified in Paper 52, as well as the emergency endeavor by Machiventa Melchizedek (*i.e.*, the third epochal revelation on our planet Urantia), center on the activities and teachings of one or two spiritual beings (*e.g.*, Adam and Eve). These spiritual beings play extremely prominent roles in the planet’s history and evolution; their activities and actions are closely associated with public events of momentous importance.

3. In contrast, the fifth epochal revelation consists of a written text sponsored by many authors who do not hesitate to identify gaps in their own knowledge and to invite human beings to form our own opinions. The authors thereby embody and display pluralism and diversity, serving as role models who implicitly demonstrate how human beings living on Urantia can achieve spiritual unity amidst divergent views and sometimes heated controversy on matters of opinion and belief:

5. *The Urantia Papers*. The papers, of which this is one, constitute the most recent presentation of truth to the mortals of Urantia. These papers differ from all previous revelations, for they are not the work of a single universe personality but a composite presentation by many beings. But no revelation short of the attainment of the Universal Father can ever be complete. All other celestial ministrations are no more than partial, transient, and practically adapted to local conditions in time and space. While such admissions as this may possibly detract from the immediate force and authority of all revelations, the time has arrived on Urantia when it is advisable to make such frank statements, even at the risk of weakening the future influence and authority of this, the most recent of the revelations of truth to the mortal races of Urantia. [*A Melchizedek, 1008:2 / 92:4.9*]

4. Orvonton, the seventh of the seven superuniverses and thereby one-seventh of the grand universe, includes (or eventually will include) approximately one trillion inhabited worlds [*a Universal Censor, 167:15 / 15:2.24*]. Therefore it seems quite extraordinary for the Orvonton Ancients of Days to take an intense interest in the spiritual

administration of a single inhabited planet (*i.e.*, ours). Nonetheless, on the title page preceding the first Paper of Part I of *The Urantia Book* (*i.e.*, on page 19 in the single-column edition), we read the following laconic statement: “Sponsored by a Uversa Corps of Superuniverse Personalities acting by authority of the Orvonton Ancients of Days.”

It is also highly significant that on the title page preceding Part II (page 355 in the single-column edition), we read that this portion of *The Urantia Book* was “Sponsored by a Nebadon Corps of Local Universe Personalities acting by authority of Gabriel of Salvington.” On the other hand, the special circumstances pertaining to Urantia can be interpreted so as to explain this, at least in part. After all, it requires little imagination to be convinced that Christ Michael of Nebadon, the Sovereign Creator Son whom Gabriel serves, remains intensely interested in spiritual and administrative matters pertaining to the inhabited planet on which he experienced his seventh and final bestowal.

In comparison, there is one other aspect of the fifth epochal revelation that may seem exceptional at first glance, but that is actually the opposite. This is the fact that the revelators devote considerable thought and effort to Papers portraying society and civilization as they have developed thus far, while at least implicitly urging that we and all other inhabitants of our planet Urantia aspire to and attain more advanced levels.

These dimensions of their work actually appear to be *a standard feature of epochal revelation*: (1) as clearly implied in the Mighty Messenger’s extended narrative in Paper 52; and (2) as modeled during the early phases of the first epochal revelation when the situation on Urantia was entirely normal (*i.e.*, when the Planetary Prince arrived), or at the beginning of the second epochal revelation, when Adam and Eve adhered to their instructions and sought to overcome the handicaps that they had inherited. From these perspectives, the fact that Machiventa Melchizedek and Christ Michael focused almost entirely on spiritual and religious matters constitutes the true exception.

A REVELATION TRANSMITTED IN WRITING. In the final analysis, we do not know why the spiritual administrators who supervise and direct the destiny of our planet Urantia decided that the fifth epochal revelation would be transmitted in writing. This question, however, is puzzling and intriguing, and we are certainly entitled to exchange our own hypotheses and interpretations — while understanding that the entire discussion is speculative, but believing that it may nonetheless yield valuable insights. Here are eight possible explanations that seem to be worth examining:

- A. The personal visit of an Avonal Son of Paradise would not have been justified in the middle of the 20th century: (1) because there had been insufficient understanding and acceptance of the spiritual missions of Machiventa Melchizedek and Christ Michael; and/or (2) because there had been insufficient human progress in regard to the ideals proclaimed and goals pursued during the early phases of the first and second epochal revelations, so that many of the standard achievements that mark early eras on a normal planet remained an aspiration instead of a reality — thereby amounting to an accumulated backlog of homework assignments that humanity on Urantia still needed to turn in.

- B. The need to provide a spiritual and religious framework that would promote the transition from institutional religion to personal religion, thereby endowing perceptive and spiritually responsive individuals with a logical and inspiring context within which at least a significant number of them could break free of the domineering or even dictatorial claims advanced by many organized religions, without thereby abandoning belief in God and God's providence.
- C. The need to diminish the unhealthy reverence for previous written works regarded as "sacred texts" and/or as "the word of God," given that a number of them had intermingled misleading, discouraging, and counterproductive teachings with other ideas that were predominantly positive and inspiring.
- D. The need to promote pluralism, diversity, and mutual respect in relation to spirituality and religion. As a Melchizedek declares in Paper 92:

The future of Urantia will doubtless be characterized by the appearance of teachers of religious truth — the Fatherhood of God and the fraternity of all creatures. But it is to be hoped that the ardent and sincere efforts of these future prophets will be directed less toward the strengthening of interreligious barriers and more toward the augmentation of the religious brotherhood of spiritual worship among the many followers of the differing intellectual theologies which so characterize Urantia of Satania. [*A Melchizedek, 1010:4 / 92:5.16*]

- E. The need to promote broader and more balanced understanding of: (1) the word-symbol "GOD," while substituting love instead of fear as the principle fostering unity, attraction, and belief; (2) God's full set of purposes in the universe of universes; and (3) the underlying unity of matter, mind, and spirit, which operate in harmony pursuant to God's plan and certainly not in conflict or opposition.
- F. The need to help rebalance human society because the advances in science and technology during the last several centuries had greatly outpaced the comparatively limited and slow progress achieved in other aspects of human life.
- G. A possible decision whereby Christ Michael of Nebadon may have called for the next epochal revelation on Urantia to be delivered in the form of a written document, thereby drawing on the special authority and role that a Perfector of Wisdom explains in the following paragraph from Paper 21:

After his elevation to settled sovereignty in a local universe a Paradise Michael is in full control of all other Sons of God functioning in his domain, and he may freely rule in accordance with his concept of the needs of his realms. 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. [*A Perfector of Wisdom, 241:3 / 21:5.9*]

- H. Aspects of the emergency provisions of the bestowal plan that have not been revealed to us.

21. Please seek to reach conclusions about why the fifth epochal revelation was transmitted in the form of a written document, in part by commenting on each of the eight possibilities outlined above (*i.e.*, explanations A through H). While formulating these comments, please evaluate the degree to which each of the eight explanations seems plausible and persuasive.

THE EPOCHAL TIME LINE. Given the explanation that a Perfector of Wisdom provides in section 5 of Paper 21 (*i.e.*, as cited earlier on this same page), it is clear that Christ Michael of Nebadon will decide on the timing and approach that will apply to the next epochal revelation on our planet Urantia. Nonetheless, we are amply entitled to speculate, and our net conclusions may be a useful way to undermine and discredit any inclination to make rash predictions postulating sudden and rapid movement.

In effect, rash predictions along such lines would manifest the same impatience that has repeatedly proved disastrous on our planet. To the contrary, a Mighty Messenger counsels maturity of mind and spirit as the only antidote that is truly effective:

There is a direct relationship between maturity and the unit of time consciousness in any given intellect. The time unit may be a day, a year, or a longer period, but inevitably it is the criterion by which the conscious self evaluates the circumstances of life, and by which the conceiving intellect measures and evaluates the facts of temporal existence.

Experience, wisdom, and judgment are the concomitants of the lengthening of the time unit in mortal experience. As the human mind reckons backward into the past, it is evaluating past experience for the purpose of bringing it to bear on a present situation. As mind reaches out into the future, it is attempting to evaluate the future significance of possible action. And having thus reckoned with both experience and wisdom, the human will exercises judgment-decision in the present, and the plan of action thus born of the past and the future becomes existent.

In the maturity of the developing self, the past and future are brought together to illuminate the true meaning of the present. As the self matures, it reaches further and further back into the past for experience, while its wisdom forecasts seek to penetrate deeper and deeper into the unknown future. And as the conceiving self extends this reach ever further into both past and future, so does judgment become less and less dependent on the momentary present. In this way does decision-action begin to escape from the fetters of the moving present, while it begins to take on the aspects of past-future significance.

Patience is exercised by those mortals whose time units are short; true maturity transcends patience by a forbearance born of real understanding. [*A Mighty Messenger*, 1295:3-6 / 118:1.3-6]

In seeking to attain true maturity in regard to the timing and approach that will be associated with the next epochal revelation, we shall start with two key principles that appear to be self-evident axioms rather than casual or arbitrary assumptions:

- The revelators who bequeathed *The Urantia Book* to us did not do so for light, trivial, or transient reasons. To the contrary, they sought to achieve significant improvements on Urantia that will enhance human understanding and upgrade the characteristic patterns pertaining to human life.
- Christ Michael and the other spiritual personalities who will plan and implement the next epochal revelation on Urantia will exert the utmost wisdom in sorting through various factors that are associated with suitability, productiveness, and the capacity of the inhabitants of our planet to absorb advanced teachings while embracing and pursuing epochal goals associated with higher levels of society and civilization.

To restate the second point somewhat more briefly, we shall assume that Christ Michael and the other spiritual personalities will consider and evaluate *the preconditions on Urantia* that would make it appropriate to authorize and undertake the next epochal revelation.

What are these preconditions? Although we certainly do not have sufficient information and insight that would enable us to describe them precisely, the Mighty Messenger who wrote Paper 52, "Planetary Mortal Epochs," makes certain remarks pertaining to points of inflection, remarks that may lead us to productive comparisons and useful analogies:

When the original impetus of evolutionary life has run its biologic course, when man has reached **the apex of animal development**, there arrives the second order of sonship, and the second dispensation of grace and ministry is inaugurated. This is true on all evolutionary worlds. When the highest possible level of evolutionary life has been attained, when primitive man has ascended as far as possible in the biologic scale, a Material Son and Daughter always appear on the planet, having been dispatched by the System Sovereign. *[A Mighty Messenger, 592:6 / 52:3.1 — emphasis added: words in bold type]*

On normal and loyal planets this age opens with **the mortal races blended and biologically fit**. There are no race or color problems; literally all nations and races are of one blood. **The brotherhood of man flourishes**, and the nations are learning to live on earth in peace and tranquillity. Such a world stands on the eve of a great and culminating intellectual development.

When an evolutionary world becomes thus ripe for the magisterial age, one of the high order of Avonal Sons makes his appearance on a magisterial mission. *[A Mighty Messenger, 594:4-5 / 52:4.1-2 — emphasis added: words in bold type]*

When a certain standard of intellectual and spiritual development is attained on an inhabited world, a Paradise bestowal Son always arrives. On normal worlds he does not appear in the flesh until the races have ascended to the highest levels of intellectual development and ethical attainment. But on Urantia the bestowal Son, even your own Creator Son, appeared at the close of the Adamic dispensation, but that is not the usual order of events on the worlds of space.

When the worlds have become ripe for spiritualization, the bestowal Son arrives. These Sons always belong to the Magisterial or Avonal order except in that case, once in each local universe, when the Creator Son prepares for his terminal bestowal on some evolutionary world, as occurred when Michael of Nebadon appeared on Urantia to bestow himself upon your mortal races. Only one world in near ten million can enjoy such a gift; all other worlds are spiritually advanced by the bestowal of a Paradise Son of the Avonal order.

The bestowal Son arrives on a world of high educational culture and encounters a race spiritually trained and prepared to assimilate advanced teachings and to appreciate the bestowal mission. This is an age characterized by the world-wide pursuit of moral culture and spiritual truth. The mortal passion of this dispensation is the penetration of cosmic reality and communion with spiritual reality. The revelations of truth are extended to include the superuniverse. Entirely new systems of education and government grow up to supplant the crude regimes of former times. The joy of living takes on new color, and the reactions of life are exalted to heavenly heights of tone and timbre. *[A Mighty Messenger, 595:6-596:1 / 52:5.1-3 — emphasis added: words in bold type]*

The Sons of the next order to arrive on the average evolutionary world are the Trinity Teacher Sons, the divine Sons of the Paradise Trinity. Again we find Urantia out of step with its sister spheres in that your Jesus has promised to return. That promise he will certainly fulfill, but no one knows whether his second coming will precede or follow the appearances of Magisterial or Teacher Sons on Urantia.

The Teacher Sons come in groups to the spiritualizing worlds. A planetary Teacher Son is assisted and supported by seventy primary Sons, twelve secondary Sons, and three of the highest and most experienced of the supreme order of Daynals. This corps will remain for some time on the world, long enough to effect the transition from the evolutionary ages to the era of light and life — not less than one thousand years of planetary time and often considerably longer. This mission is a Trinity contribution to the antecedent efforts of all the divine personalities who have ministered to an inhabited world. [*A Mighty Messenger*, 598:4-5 / 52:7.1-2]

The considerations outlined in these passages from Paper 52 are just illustrative examples, for it is not difficult to imagine other criteria that our spiritual superiors might treat as preconditions for planning and undertaking the next epochal revelation:

- One language, or at least a language that has become the lingua franca for serious discussion among well educated people who live throughout the world.
- One religion, or at least broad agreement on key principles that facilitate understanding and mutual respect among the believers of all major religions.
- Widespread acceptance of the teachings of *The Urantia Book*, at least in a broad and general sense.

22. Please identify one or more preconditions that you believe that Christ Michael and other spiritual personalities are likely to consider while they are deciding on the timing and approach to be associated with the next epochal revelation on Urantia.
23. On the understanding that a guess on your part that proved to be wildly inaccurate would not disqualify you for prompt admission to the mansion worlds, please estimate how long *The Urantia Book* will remain the most recent epochal revelation that enlightens and inspires the people of Urantia. In other words, please estimate how long humanity will have to wait before we receive the next epochal revelation.

Future epochal revelations on Urantia

Given the information that we have already reviewed or discussed, it is clear that the extended future of Urantia will feature many additional epochal revelations, probably including one or more visits of a Paradise Avonal Son conducting a magisterial mission and eventually, in far distant ages, repeated visits of the Trinity Teacher Sons. Although it is difficult to go much beyond that very general statement, there are two factors that seem so reliable as to be considered certain: (1) Christ Michael of Nebadon will exert a strong influence, and probably a decisive voice, in regard to the timing and approach associated with future epochal revelations on Urantia; and (2) he has promised to return.

During the approximately two thousand years that have elapsed since Michael appeared on Urantia in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth, some traditional believers have preferred to look upon his return as an imminent event, one that might well occur within their lifetimes. In Paper 176, the Midwayer Commission offers us a detailed analysis that encompasses a range of possibilities. On balance, however, it seems substantially easier to associate this analysis with the probability that Michael's return will occur in the extended future, rather than relatively soon. Because this question has a direct bearing on the timing and characteristics of future epochal revelations, it seems appropriate for us to review the rather lengthy remarks that the Midwayer Commission has left us.

Of all the Master's teachings no one phase has been so misunderstood as his promise sometime to come back in person to this world. It is not strange that Michael should be interested in sometime returning to the planet whereon he experienced his seventh and last bestowal, as a mortal of the realm. It is only natural to believe that Jesus of Nazareth, now sovereign ruler of a vast universe, would be interested in coming back, not only once but even many times, to the world whereon he lived such a unique life and finally won for himself the Father's unlimited bestowal of universe power and authority. Urantia will eternally be one of the seven nativity spheres of Michael in the winning of universe sovereignty.

Jesus did, on numerous occasions and to many individuals, declare his intention of returning to this world. As his followers awakened to the fact that their Master was not going to function as a temporal deliverer, and as they listened to his predictions of the overthrow of Jerusalem and the downfall of the Jewish nation, they most naturally began to associate his promised return with these catastrophic events. But when the Roman armies leveled the walls of Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and dispersed the Judean Jews, and still the Master did not reveal himself in power and glory, his followers began the formulation of that belief which eventually associated the second coming of Christ with the end of the age, even with the end of the world.

Jesus promised to do two things after he had ascended to the Father, and after all power in heaven and on earth had been placed in his hands. He promised, first, to send into the world, and in his stead, another teacher, the Spirit of Truth; and this he did on the day of Pentecost. Second, he most certainly promised his followers that he would sometime personally return to this world. But he did not say how, where, or when he would revisit this planet of his bestowal experience in the flesh. On one occasion he intimated that, whereas the eye of flesh had beheld him when he lived here in the flesh, on his return (at least on one of his possible visits) he would be discerned only by the eye of spiritual faith.

Many of us are inclined to believe that Jesus will return to Urantia many times during the ages to come. We do not have his specific promise to make these plural visits, but it seems most probable that he who carries among his universe titles that of Planetary Prince of Urantia will many times visit the world whose conquest conferred such a unique title upon him.

We most positively believe that Michael will again come in person to Urantia, but we have not the slightest idea as to when or in what manner he may choose to come. Will his second advent on earth be timed to occur in connection with the terminal judgment of this present age, either with or without the associated appearance of a Magisterial Son? Will he come in connection with the termination of some subsequent Urantian age? Will he come unannounced and as an isolated event? We do not know. Only one thing we are certain of, that is, when he does return, all the world will likely know about it, for he must come as the supreme ruler of a universe and not as the obscure babe of Bethlehem. But if every eye is to behold him, and if only spiritual eyes are to discern his presence, then must his advent be long deferred.

You would do well, therefore, to disassociate the Master's personal return to earth from any and all set events or settled epochs. We are sure of only one thing: He has promised to come back. We have no idea as to when he will fulfill this promise or in what connection. As far as we know, he may appear on earth any day, and he may not come until age after age has passed and been duly adjudicated by his associated Sons of the Paradise corps. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1918:4-6, 1919:1-3 / 176:4.1-6*]

Since these analytic remarks by the Midwayer Commission seem more speculative than definitive, they offer us ample grounds for speculation of our own.

24. Please estimate the approximate timing of Michael's return to Urantia, either in terms of dates or by linking it with one or more foreseeable events that you choose to identify. In addition, please use a scale of 1 to 10 in order to appraise the likelihood that Michael will return at some unspecified moment during the 21st century (*i.e.*, no later than December 31, 2099). (*In this scale of possibilities, the number "1" could be interpreted to mean "extremely unlikely," whereas the number "10" would stand for "almost certain."*)

AVONAL SONS. As we near the end of our discussion of future epochal revelations on Urantia, there remains one factor that still deserves our attention: the nature and service of Avonal Sons of Paradise, as well as the circumstances that generally lead one of them to carry out a magisterial mission on an inhabited world. Since the inhabitants of Urantia have not yet benefited from the visit of an Avonal Son, we will have to rely on the general information that the revelators provide.

When the intellectual and ethical progress of a human race has reached the limits of evolutionary development, there comes an Avonal Son of Paradise on a magisterial mission ... [*A Melchizedek, 567:5 / 49:5.25*]

Prior to the planetary appearance of a bestowal Son, an inhabited world is usually visited by a Paradise Avonal on a magisterial mission. **If it is an initial magisterial visitation, the Avonal is always incarnated as a material being. He appears on the planet of assignment as a full-fledged male of the mortal races,** a being fully visible to, and in physical contact with, the mortal creatures of his day and generation. Throughout a magisterial incarnation the connection of the Avonal Son with the local and the universal spiritual forces is complete and unbroken. ...

Urantia may yet be visited by an Avonal commissioned to incarnate on a magisterial mission, but regarding the future appearance of Paradise Sons, not even "the angels in heaven know the time or manner of such visitations," for a Michael-bestowal world becomes the individual and personal ward of a Master Son and, as such, is wholly subject to his own plans and rulings. And with your world, this is further complicated by Michael's promise to return. Regardless of the misunderstandings about the Uranian sojourn of Michael of Nebadon, one thing is certainly authentic — his promise to come back to your world. In view of this prospect, only time can reveal the future order of the visitations of the Paradise Sons of God on Urantia. [*A Perfector of Wisdom, 226:5, 227:3 / 20:4.1,5 — emphasis added: words in bold type*]

Every time an original and absolute concept of being formulated by the Eternal Son unites with a new and divine ideal of loving service conceived by the Infinite Spirit, a new and original Son of God, a Paradise Magisterial Son, is produced. These Sons constitute the order of Avonals in contradistinction to the order of Michael, the Creator Sons. Though not creators in the personal sense, they are closely associated with the Michaels in all their work. The Avonals are planetary ministers and judges, the magistrates of the time-space realms — of all races, to all worlds, and in all universes. ...

Avonals are the Paradise Sons of service and bestowal to the individual planets of the local universes. And since each Avonal Son has an exclusive personality, since no two are alike, their work is individually unique in the realms of their sojourn ...

2. *Magisterial Missions.* A planetary visitation of this type usually occurs prior to the arrival of a bestowal Son. **On such a mission an Avonal appears as an adult of the realm by a technique of incarnation not involving mortal birth.** Subsequent to this first and usual magisterial visit, Avonals may repeatedly serve in a magisterial capacity on the same planet both before and after the appearance of the bestowal Son. On these additional magisterial missions an Avonal may or may not appear in material and visible form, but on none of them will he be born into the world as a helpless babe. ...

In all their work for and on the inhabited worlds, the Magisterial Sons are assisted by two orders of local universe creatures, the Melchizedeks and the archangels, while on bestowal missions they are also accompanied by the Brilliant Evening Stars, likewise of origin in the local creations. **In every planetary effort the secondary Paradise Sons, the Avonals, are supported by the full power and authority of a primary Paradise Son, the Creator Son of their local universe of service.** To all intents and purposes their work on the inhabited spheres is just as effective and acceptable as would have been the service of a Creator Son upon such worlds of mortal habitation. [*A Perfector of Wisdom, 224:6, 225:2,6,8 / 20:2.1,3,6,9 — emphasis added: sentences in bold type*]

25. Are there any aspects of the possible future visit of an Avonal Son on a magisterial mission that would resemble techniques used during the emergency bestowal of Machiventa Melchizedek in the days of Abraham? What important differences could we infer?

26. Is it reasonable to believe that an Avonal Son on a magisterial mission would labor in comparative obscurity in relation to humanity at large (thereby following the general model that Christ Michael employed while incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth), or would you be inclined to predict a spiritual mission that would be substantially more ambitious in seeking to attract the attention of a major share of the inhabitants of Urantia? Alternately, do you believe it would be premature or even rash to advance an opinion on this point, on the grounds that the techniques to be used during such a magisterial mission would be heavily influenced by the planet's spiritual situation at the time?

Topic 2

Why did the revelators bring forth the fifth epochal revelation during the first one-third of the 20th century? Do you believe that the timing of the revelation was influenced by one or more of the circumstances identified below? If so, please explain the relative significance and importance that you assign to each aspect.

- a. *The spiritual crisis*: the fact that the true teachings of Jesus were in danger of being lost.
- b. *The religious crisis*: the decline and relative decadence of organized, institutional religion, at least in many parts of the world with a traditional social and cultural background that was predominantly Christian.
- c. *The philosophic crisis*: the intense threats stemming from secularism and materialism.
- d. *The political and military crisis*: rampantly intolerant nationalism associated with immensely more destructive techniques of warfare.
- e. *The social and cultural crisis*: the need for fundamental advances in many social and cultural dimensions, given the factors that a Melchizedek emphasizes in section 1 of Paper 99 (*i.e.*, in 1086:4-6 / 99:1.1-3).

Since we certainly do not have access to a transcript of the deliberations of our spiritual superiors that led to their decision to prepare the text of the fifth epochal revelation and transmit it to the inhabitants of Urantia, we must stipulate at the outset that in discussing this topic, we are simply speculating about motivations that we will never be able to place in their true context on the spiritual level. Further, the wording of the question, at least on the surface, implicitly suggests that the revelators and their superiors did not make a decision to proceed with the revelation until they were already confronting the circumstances that the five subparagraphs identify, whereas this interpretation of the sequence of events is at least problematic and probably illusory. Although we shall never know how long it took the revelators and their spiritual superiors to decide on, develop, and

refine the wording in English that they ultimately presented to humanity in the form of *The Urantia Book*, it seems very plausible to assume that the time required was far more than just a few years and may well have involved several generations or even longer.

Given all the above, why does it still make sense for us to discuss topic 2? Well, let us begin our answer by pointing out that within the most recent few decades, human beings have become relatively skilled at adapting computer software so as to anticipate events or at least explore various possible scenarios, and it would be ludicrous to assume that the capabilities of our spiritual superiors in these regards are inferior to our own. To the contrary, it seems far more logical to believe that their accumulated understanding of the trends of human activity and action on a wide range of inhabited planets enables them to project “virtual reality” well into the future, doing so with far greater accuracy and sophistication than we could conceivably imagine in the early years of the 21st century.

To say this somewhat more succinctly, we can be confident that the revelators and their spiritual superiors *knew* long in advance that the trends of human activity and action would lead to exceedingly difficult circumstances in the first third of the 20th century — circumstances that would create a persuasive or even compelling case for going ahead with the fifth epochal revelation. For these reasons, and probably for many others that are likely to remain opaque to us until we eventually awaken on the mansion worlds, the revelators and their spiritual superiors decided to proceed. We are very pleased that they did, partly because this decision of theirs gives us an intriguing topic to discuss!

27. Since the circumstances summarized in subparagraphs a and b are closely related, it seems advisable to combine them for the purposes of this question, so that we can deal with the implications both severally and jointly.

a. *The spiritual crisis:* the fact that the true teachings of Jesus were in danger of being lost.

b. *The religious crisis:* the decline and relative decadence of organized, institutional religion, at least in many parts of the world with a traditional social and cultural background that was predominantly Christian.

— Do you believe that the timing of the revelation was influenced by either or both of these circumstances? If so, please explain the relative significance and importance that you assign to each aspect.

28. Although the conceptual and practical linkages between subparagraphs c and d are not quite as intense, it still seems appropriate to consider the two subparagraphs together.

c. *The philosophic crisis*: the intense threats stemming from secularism and materialism.

d. *The political and military crisis*: rampantly intolerant nationalism associated with immensely more destructive techniques of warfare.

— Do you believe that the timing of the revelation was influenced by either or both of these circumstances? If so, please explain the relative significance and importance that you assign to each aspect.

Subparagraph e cites three crucial paragraphs contained in section 1 of Paper 99. Here are the three paragraphs in question:

Mechanical inventions and the dissemination of knowledge are modifying civilization; certain economic adjustments and social changes are imperative if cultural disaster is to be avoided. This new and oncoming social order will not settle down complacently for a millennium. The human race must become reconciled to a procession of changes, adjustments, and readjustments. Mankind is on the march toward a new and unrevealed planetary destiny.

Religion must become a forceful influence for moral stability and spiritual progression functioning dynamically in the midst of these ever-changing conditions and never-ending economic adjustments.

Urantia society can never hope to settle down as in past ages. The social ship has steamed out of the sheltered bays of established tradition and has begun its cruise upon the high seas of evolutionary destiny; and the soul of man, as never before in the world's history, needs carefully to scrutinize its charts of morality and painstakingly to observe the compass of religious guidance. The paramount mission of religion as a social influence is to stabilize the ideals of mankind during these dangerous times of transition from one phase of civilization to another, from one level of culture to another. [*A Melchizedek, 1086:4-6 / 99:1.1-3*]

This, of course, now leads us to seek reactions to the final subparagraph associated with topic 2.

29. Subparagraph e reads as follows:

e. *The social and cultural crisis:* the need for fundamental advances in many social and cultural dimensions, given the factors that a Melchizedek emphasizes in section 1 of Paper 99 (i.e., in 1086:4-6 / 99:1.1-3).

— Do you believe that the timing of the revelation was influenced by these circumstances? If so, please explain the relative significance and importance that you assign to them.

30. While bearing in mind how you answered the preceding sequence of three questions, please now respond to the overarching question that pervades all aspects of topic 2: Why did the revelators bring forth the fifth epochal revelation during the first one-third of the 20th century?

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Part Two

The Global Endeavor: Four Key Characteristics

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Topic 3

Avoiding any effort to evangelize, while nonetheless providing information about *The Urantia Book* upon request. Whether it is reasonable to infer that idealistic service and assistance will eventually cause some people to take an interest in the teachings, as the outcome of personal cooperation and natural curiosity.

To understand this fundamental characteristic of the Global Endeavor, we must first examine the verb *to evangelize*, thereby acquiring a reasonably thorough understanding of the ideas it represents and the overtones it may embody in different contexts. Even though dictionary definitions cannot be our sole recourse, they provide insights that are useful as a point of departure.

NOTE

The definitions displayed in the following tables come from *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary Sixth Edition* (2002, 2007). Some details have been omitted, especially ideas associated with infrequent meanings that are identified in subsequent definitions under the same headword.

evangelist

1. Any of the writers of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
2.
 - a. A person, especially a layman, engaged in itinerant Christian missionary work.
 - b. A person who preaches the gospel or brings it to a non-Christian people.
 - c. A zealous advocate or promulgator of a cause or doctrine.

evangel*

1. The message of redemption of the world through Christ; the religious teaching contained in the New Testament; the Christian religion.
2.
 - a. The record of Christ's life as contained in the four Gospels.
 - b. Any of the Gospels.
3. A copy of the Gospels, especially as used in taking an oath.

* The authors of Paper 31 of *The Urantia Book* introduce the phrase "Evangel of Light" and define it as follows:

"Any celestial personality assigned to the service of any finaliter corps is denominated an Evangel of Light. These beings do not take the finaliter oath, and though subject to the corps organization they are not of permanent attachment. This group may embrace Solitary Messengers, supernaphim, seconaphim, Paradise Citizens, or their trinitized offspring — any being required in the prosecution of a transient finaliter assignment."
 [A Divine Counselor and One without Name and Number, 349.7 / 31:7.2]

Persons in society who do not read *The Urantia Book* are not familiar with this special meaning of the word *evangel*. Therefore this special meaning does not affect our analysis, which is considerably more general.

evangelical

► **A adjective.**

1. a. = evangelic adjective 1b.
b. Of, pertaining to, or in accordance with the teaching of the gospel or the Christian religion.
2. (Usually [capitalized as] Evangelical.)
 - a. Protestant; specifically of or designating certain Churches in Europe (especially that in Germany) which are, or were originally, Lutheran rather than Calvinistic.
 - b. Of, pertaining to, characteristic of, or designating the school of Protestants which lays particular stress on salvation by faith in the atoning death of Christ, and denies that good works and the sacraments have any saving efficacy.

► **B noun.** (Usually [capitalized as] Evangelical.)

1. A Protestant; specifically a member of any Church called Evangelical.
2. A member of the Evangelical school of Protestants, especially within the Church of England.

evangelize

1. *verb intransitive.* Proclaim the gospel; act as an evangelist.
2. *verb transitive.* Proclaim as good news; preach about.
3. *verb transitive.* Preach the gospel to; (seek to) convert to Christianity.
4. Imbue with the spirit of the gospel; interpret in an evangelical sense.

From the preceding definitions, it is obvious that the words *evangelist*, *evangel*, *evangelical*, and *evangelize* are intensely interwoven with the concepts, traditions, and practices of organized, institutional Christianity. In pursuing the purposes and goals that are associated with the Christian tradition, the technique of *evangelizing* most often involves the third meaning that the dictionary specifies: “Preach the gospel to; (seek to) convert to Christianity.” As a general rule, the process of conversion requires that the other person accept certain doctrines and creeds, while also accepting the collective authority of the congregation or church whose members are engaged in evangelizing.

These techniques of evangelization and conversion embody three sets of traits that are intrinsically *Roman* in an organizational and cultural sense. In other words, they reflect enduring attributes that institutional Christianity acquired in the middle of the fourth

century when it became the state religion of the Roman Empire: (1) hierarchy, authority, and subordination; (2) defined and delimited roles and duties; and (3) enforced uniformity of belief. (Here it is important to bear in mind that these Roman cultural birthmarks permeate all branches of the Christian tradition, thereby encompassing the full realm of orthodox Christianity and the many Western denominations that are entirely independent of the Roman Catholic Church.)

Many aspects of the preceding two paragraphs will undoubtedly cause committed readers of *The Urantia Book* to hesitate intently and perhaps even to shake their heads from side to side — thereby conveying a firm and definitive “No.” After all, there is nothing in the fifth epochal revelation that calls on readers to accept, propose, or promote doctrines or creeds. Further, there is no organization or other body of readers of *The Urantia Book* that is entitled to formulate interpretations of the revelators’ teachings or to insist that other readers accept them.

31. Are the core concepts of *evangelizing* compatible with the teachings of *The Urantia Book*? If so, how and to what degree? If not, why not?

Psychological overtones

The practice of evangelization and conversion also embodies **psychological overtones and implications** that are so interlinked with the Christian tradition that they cannot be disentangled from it. These overtones include a range of negative aspects that clearly bespeak fear, thereby conveying highly regrettable implications that conflict with the teachings that the revelators have enshrined in *The Urantia Book*.

- A prominent tenet of the original Christian faith was that in order “to be saved” (*i.e.*, in order “to go to heaven” and thereby avoid the pains of hell), a human being must believe in Jesus Christ and accept the core doctrines of Christianity — or, at least, the core teachings of a particular denomination. As a result, failing to cooperate with the process of evangelization and conversion was interpreted as an offense entailing damnation and punishment in hell for all eternity.
- As a corollary to the preceding set of beliefs, many Christian denominations proclaimed that the failure of Adam and Eve constituted “original sin,” a defect that was thought to taint all human beings and cause them to be destined for eternal punishment unless the ceremony of baptism were to overcome this taint — thereby enabling such persons to share in the spiritual merits that Jesus of Nazareth was believed to have acquired by dying on the cross.

Thus we see that the concept of evangelizing stems from convictions that are predominantly negative and profoundly unjust: the doctrine that God, depicted as a vindictive judge rather than a loving Father, would punish an individual human being for failing to believe in Jesus of Nazareth as the incarnate Son of God, or for some supposed sin committed by someone else long before that individual was born. These intense convictions created a tremendous burden that weighed on any Christian who sought to evangelize others: the moral responsibility of endeavoring to help them avoid damnation and eternal punishment in hell. For Christians who looked upon the duty to evangelize as a personal obligation, the urge to propagate their faith became intense and insistent.

32. Since very few people in society at large truly understand the teachings of *The Urantia Book*, how could we expect persons who are at least reasonably familiar with the Christian tradition to refrain from associating the practice of evangelizing with the psychology of fear and with Christian doctrines that emphasize the danger of hell and damnation?

Strong contrasts in principle and in practice

Since the revelators emphasize God's love rather than any set of beliefs contaminated with fear or the need to avoid eternal torment, committed readers of *The Urantia Book* are not burdened with the negative implications of Christianity's traditional theology, nor with the conviction that sincere belief must include acceptance of the ecclesiastical authority of some organized, institutional church. Therefore committed readers of *The Urantia Book* reinterpret the idea of "evangelizing" so that, for them, it simply refers to earnest efforts to stimulate interest in the teachings that the revelators have bequeathed to us and to all other inhabitants of Urantia.

- On the one hand, committed readers of *The Urantia Book* have every right to reinterpret the concept of *evangelizing* so that it embodies the meanings and implications that they consider appropriate and congenial.
- On the other hand, other inhabitants of Urantia who do not read *The Urantia Book* — the overwhelming majority at present — cannot be expected to understand this far more modest interpretation of *evangelizing*.
- To the contrary, persons in society who encountered energetic and relatively aggressive efforts to evangelize on behalf of the teachings of *The Urantia Book* would be likely to interpret such a campaign in terms of the overtones and implications that the Christian tradition entails. In circumstances that appeared intense and highly charged, there might even be a tendency to confound efforts to evangelize on behalf of the teachings of *The Urantia Book* with the psychology of domination and exploitation that pervades abusive cults. On the other hand, approaches that are friendly, calm, and

conversational are not likely to stimulate similar concerns, especially if discussion with the other person does not involve psychological pressure or any apparent desire to assert spiritual authority.

- 33.** In circumstances that have nothing to do with the Global Endeavor, what are the advantages and disadvantages of seeking to stimulate interest in the teachings of *The Urantia Book*:
- a.** By means of personal contact that begins with friendly, low-key conversation aimed at appraising the other person's views and interests in relation to religion and spirituality, on the understanding that this may lead to introductory remarks about *The Urantia Book* if the atmosphere of the conversation seems to be favorable?
 - b.** By providing tactful information to an inquirer who has taken the initiative: (1) by asking one or more questions about spiritual or religious matters, or (2) by visiting a promotional display associated with *The Urantia Book* (e.g., at a book fair or some similar event)?
 - c.** By means of substantially more active techniques such as distributing brochures door-to-door or speaking spontaneously in some prominent location (e.g., a public park)?
- 34.** Please comment on how the following two factors relate to and contrast with each other: (a) the relative intensity or aggressiveness of a technique for attracting attention, and (b) the likelihood of stimulating negative inferences or hostile reactions.

In our era, most human beings do not seem to be actively searching for new meanings and values, either because they are satisfied with those that they already have, or because other aspects of human life absorb their energies and leave them little time or inclination to ponder questions that seem abstract, theoretical, intangible, or impractical. In contrast, the great majority of persons who take an active interest in *The Urantia Book* appear to have the opposite trait in common. In other words, these persons really are searching for new meanings and values, even though they may not be consciously aware of this and might even deny it if they were asked the question in precisely this way.

Some sort of personal quest for greater understanding appears to be the most prominent path that may lead an individual to the fifth epochal revelation, although there is no guarantee that a particular person will choose to pursue this option. Nonetheless, wise efforts to stimulate interest in *The Urantia Book* will take account of whether or not an individual appears to be dissatisfied with the meanings, values, and concepts of personal identity that have preoccupied him or her thus far in life.

Experience demonstrates that human beings who seem to be entirely satisfied in these regards will very seldom be willing to mobilize the intense effort and energy that would enable them to understand and absorb the challenging teachings that the revelators have bequeathed to us. In partial compensation, however, we can take considerable comfort from knowing that their spiritual destiny does not depend on making an intense effort along these lines. The teachings of *The Urantia Book* are exceedingly stimulating and rewarding, but there is no spiritual requirement that obliges anyone to study them.

- 35.** In your opinion, does seeking to stimulate interest in the teachings of *The Urantia Book* mainly amount to finding individuals who are already searching for new meanings and values, so that one can offer them an option that they may not have considered? Alternately, do you believe that other factors are equally important or perhaps even more influential? Please give your reasons and explain your answer.

The specific context of the Global Endeavor

The relatively small number of people who really want to make a difference are the main source of innovation and inspiration that advance human life on our planet. Just as the seraphim help human beings without asking what they think or believe, so also will those readers of *The Urantia Book* who participate in the work of the Global Endeavor minister to the needs and interests of others without even inquiring into their religious beliefs or philosophic convictions.

Instead, participants will seek to foster the progressive growth of society and civilization by serving and assisting original thinkers, innovators, and reformers, persons who are determined to upgrade and reform the aspects of human life with which they are familiar. To restate this from the opposite perspective, the efforts of readers of *The Urantia Book* participating in the work of the Global Endeavor will not have any effect on society unless the members and associates of the substantive working groups find ways to serve and assist the idealistic individuals and groups described above. Participants in the Global Endeavor will be compelled to achieve all this entirely by attraction, for no one will be obliged to seek their assistance or advice.

The great majority of innovators and reformers operating in society focus on aspects of human life that have little or nothing to do with spirituality or religion. Therefore it seems reasonable to believe that such persons would reject any framework in which they were subjected to active efforts to evangelize them. Instead they would simply turn away, continuing to pursue their goals and objectives by other means.

Readers of *The Urantia Book* who participate in the work of the Global Endeavor must act in harmony with its fundamental purpose, fostering humanity's growth and development. *Therefore participants may not evangelize.* On the other hand, spiritual attraction will undoubtedly cause some persons who receive assistance and service to take an interest in the teachings, and participants will be alert to opportunities to provide information and encouragement. For all these reasons, nurturing potential interest in the revelation will be an indirect benefit, the outcome of personal cooperation and natural curiosity.

36. The draft plan for the Global Endeavor states that participants may not evangelize. Was this provision just an option chosen by those persons who prepared the plan, or was it a practical necessity? Please explain your answer.
37. Is it reasonable to believe that some persons who receive assistance and service from readers of *The Urantia Book* participating in the work of the Global Endeavor will eventually take an interest in the fifth epochal revelation? Why or why not?

Topic 4

The personal relationships that will link idealists, innovators, and reformers operating in society with the members and associates of the substantive working groups. The crucial requirement that the latter avoid any prominent public involvement in any specific initiative or cause.

The members and associates of a substantive working group will provide three main types of assistance and service that will link them with idealists, innovators, and reformers who are operating in society:

- Information activities;
- Networking and problem solving; and
- Private dialogue upon request.

Information activities

A working group's information activities will be its most prominent connection to society. Each substantive working group will assemble information about efforts that individuals and groups in the corresponding fields are carrying out in order to promote progressive growth and development. Members and associates will probably subdivide the fields they cover into relatively compact categories, so they can prepare tailored newsletters and bulletins that are attuned to the interests of particular individuals and groups. They should strive to be balanced and fair by including a representative sample of responsible views.

There is a fine line between analysis and advocacy, and the substantive working groups will have to walk it with care and caution. In any case, a working group must ensure that the bulletins and other articles that appear on its website do not amount to guidance or recommendations addressed to the public. If a working group were to advocate particular measures or proposals, it would lose the reputation for impartiality and balance that will make it a respected and influential resource for everyone who is active in the corresponding fields.

Since openness and transparency will attract public interest and help a working group earn stature and respect, a substantive working group should make its newsletters, bulletins, and other information readily available on its website. Individuals and groups who wish to receive specific newsletters or bulletins by E-mail would register and thereby become regular contacts.

Networking and problem solving

Networking and problem solving will be an intermediate phase of assistance to individuals and groups. Some contacts who benefit from networking or problem solving may eventually seek private dialogue as well, but in any case these services will give them a personal stake in the working group. That may suffice to make them supporters and contributors.

— Bulletin boards and computer forums would enable contacts to put forward comments, questions, and requests related to a wide range of issues.

— In addition, contacts may be able to obtain introductions and recommendations by seeking the help of working group members or associates. (Such personal information could enable them to connect with others in society who wish to explore a particular idea or to cooperate on a specific project.)

Private dialogue upon request

Private dialogue upon request will be a working group's most difficult and most challenging activity. As in many other aspects of human life, private dialogue will require patience, discretion, judgment, and abundant good will. Anyone who receives advice has a right to expect that members and associates will respect the privacy of these discussions, at least until the person operating in society has advanced specific ideas in public.

In any case, the members and associates of a substantive working group will have to pay close attention to the circumstances of their time and place, practices that currently prevail in the region where they operate, and the nature of the initiative or reform that an individual or group is contemplating or pursuing. To do justice to this full range of factors, members and associates will need to draw on their own personal experience, while also bearing in mind that counsel is consultation, not command.

The psychology of individuals and groups who are creative and innovative includes a substantial need to discuss their ideas with others, especially persons they respect and may admire. As a working group gains stature from experience and acquires a well-deserved reputation as a source of information that is useful and of counsel that is benevolent, disinterested, and evenhanded, it will become increasingly influential.

38. Since idealists, innovators, and reformers operating in society are and must be free to pursue their initiatives in ways that they consider effective and productive, it is clear that they will not seek out any assistance or service that a substantive working group makes available unless members and associates can draw on information and other resources that appear to be reliable and useful. Do the three main types of assistance and service seem likely to create personal relationships that will eventually link the members and associates of a substantive working group with idealists, innovators, and reformers who are operating in society?

Loyalty and commitment

From practical perspectives, it is reasonable to interpret the Global Endeavor as a support network for idealists, innovators, and reformers operating in society, a resource that they will draw on as they wish. Thus the members and associates of the substantive working groups will provide support and will not be entitled to give instructions or to advance their own proposals. To the contrary, members and associates must serve and assist other human beings in ways that are not only idealistic and altruistic, but also quiet, modest, and self-effacing. The first three paragraphs in Chapter 4 of the draft plan explain and enshrine these key features:

- (a) The ten substantive working groups will seek to serve, assist, and inspire individuals and groups in society who wish to propose or promote initiatives, innovations, or reforms that relate to their own fields of experience, knowledge, or interest.
- (b) The working groups will not advocate or advance proposals of their own. To the contrary, they will be a catalyst and resource for those who are active in society and who wish to develop or refine their ideas and approaches.
- (c) The working groups are therefore frameworks for altruistic and idealistic service aimed at fostering higher levels of human civilization. Members and associates will operate modestly and quietly; they will refrain from attracting attention to themselves and will stay well in the background.

Nonetheless, members and associates of a substantive working group may have strong personal views and perhaps an intense interest in certain initiatives or causes. On occasion, such personal convictions may tempt a member or an associate to deviate from the standard pattern of modest and quiet work that remains well in the background and out of the public eye.

A temptation of this nature might accord with the personal goals or spiritual ideals of some member or associate, but it would nonetheless pose a grave threat to the purpose of the working group. After all, prominent public involvement in efforts to promote a particular initiative or cause would endanger the working group's reputation for impartiality and balance. Further, public advocacy along such lines would implicitly create competition or even contention, thereby annoying or even antagonizing at least some of the idealists, innovators, and reformers operating in society whom the working group aspires to assist and serve.

Therefore certain members and associates of a substantive working group may have to sift through their goals from time to time, in order to decide which aims and aspirations rank higher than others. If loyalty to a working group's mission is not sufficiently strong to overcome the desire of a member or an associate to play a prominent public role in promoting a particular initiative or cause, then he or she must cease to participate in the activities of the working group.

- 39.** Since the fundamental purpose of the Global Endeavor is to serve, assist, and perhaps inspire idealists, innovators, and reformers operating in society, is it reasonable to require that the members and associates of a substantive working group carry out their efforts in ways that are modest and quiet, and that remain well in the background?
- 40.** If the members and associates of a substantive working group were to become prominent public advocates of a particular initiative or cause, how would their "customers" react, especially those whose opinions are different and perhaps conflicting?

Topic 5

Why regional associations are and must be the most important structural feature of the Global Endeavor. Why people living in one region will not tell people living in any other region what to do, whereas, on the other hand, it is very reasonable to believe that the members and associates of a substantive working group will benefit very substantially from exchanging ideas and experience with their counterparts in other regions. Why these spontaneous efforts to cooperate and coordinate will produce substantial added value, catalyzing and enhancing many of the new methods and approaches that will upgrade society and civilization on our planet Urantia.

Since our planet Urantia is a sphere embodying great diversity in practical circumstances and in the patterns of behavior that pervade personal relationships with other human beings in society, methods and approaches that would help improve a particular field in one region (*e.g.*, education) cannot automatically be applied in other regions where the situation differs in ways that are notable and significant.

To the contrary, idealists, innovators, and reformers must pay close attention to the circumstances of their time and place, and the same requirement applies to the members and associates of the substantive working groups. Therefore regional associations composed of twelve working groups (ten substantive working groups plus two working groups with managerial and administrative responsibilities) are and must be the most important structural feature of the Global Endeavor. (For a table depicting a regional association and identifying the twelve working groups that will compose it, see Annex 1.)

By implication, this organizational arrangement also serves to evade and nullify any potential implication that persons living in one region have a clearly superior understanding of reality, so superior that it entitles them to give orders or instructions to persons who live in other regions. Although this misconception is extremely repulsive, there appear to be some persons living on our planet who have not reached the level of maturity and wisdom that would inspire them to reject it. Therefore it seems important for us to reject it here and to do that most emphatically: No!

To the contrary, the members and associates of the substantive working groups carry out their efforts to serve and assist in ways that are quiet and modest, occurring in the background rather than through prominent public statements. Therefore it will be productive and useful for the members and associates of substantive working groups that address the same topics in different regions to exchange notes and insights, seeking to inspire each other and perhaps to generate original ideas that can be applied interactively, selectively, and discreetly. Further, these personal connections with idealists, innovators, and reformers operating in a particular region will enable the staff of its substantive working groups to make adjustments that take account of the characteristics of that region and the practical circumstances that prevail within it. Chapter 3 of the draft plan explains these efforts to share experience and insight:

ACTIVE COOPERATION ACROSS REGIONS. Each working group will benefit very substantially by exchanging ideas and experience with counterparts in other regions. In the long run these cooperative connections will yield invaluable inspiration and insight, resources far more closely attuned to the practical needs of any given working group than any set of abstract principles or general advice could be. The working groups should use their own initiative to create and maintain these horizontal connections, while honoring the policy and management guidelines that govern the work of each association.

Printed material and information available on working group websites will often be useful and inspiring. Given appropriate circumstances and sufficient resources, working groups that perform the same or similar tasks in different regions should also be encouraged to inspire each other through visits, personnel exchanges, and occasional gatherings that are aimed at exploring specific topics of mutual interest.

These voluntary consultations across regional lines automatically embody discretion and judgment. Since it is not the business of any working group in any regional association to tell idealists, innovators, and reformers operating in society what to do or what to believe, the members and associates of a working group that has benefited from ideas or insights that originally emerged in some other region will use their discretion in summarizing and analyzing such concepts in its newsletters and bulletins. In addition, the working group will be able to enhance its resources of accumulated wisdom that members and associates draw on during the private dialogue that they conduct with idealists, innovators, and reformers at their request.

Thus the process of sharing experience and insight across regions will occur along lines that are essentially spontaneous, without any implication that persons who live in one region are giving orders or instructions to persons living in another.

41. Compare and contrast a desire to share experience and insight across regions and the need to respect pluralism and diversity. Are these factors entirely separate, or so intertwined as to be interdependent?
42. If the members and associates of a working group in region A pass along certain insights and experiences to counterparts in region B, is it reasonable to believe that these counterparts will also be able to pass along certain insights and experiences of their own, either at the same time or perhaps after having made adjustments that are better suited to region B?
43. Do you believe that spontaneous efforts to cooperate and coordinate across regions will produce substantial added value, thereby catalyzing and enhancing methods and approaches that will serve to upgrade society and civilization on our planet Urantia? If so, why? If not, why not?

Topic 6

The path leading to the founding convention when the Global Endeavor will come to life.

In Paper 19 of *The Urantia Book*, a Divine Counselor describes the work of the Trinity Teacher Sons. In part, he states:

Even in the study of man's biologic evolution on Urantia, there are grave objections to the exclusive historic approach to his present-day status and his current problems. The true perspective of any reality problem — human or divine, terrestrial or cosmic — can be had only by the full and unprejudiced study and correlation of three phases of universe reality: origin, history, and destiny. The proper understanding of these three experiential realities affords the basis for a wise estimate of the current status.
[A Divine Counselor, 215:3 / 19:1.6]

If we treat the Global Endeavor as the reality problem that we are currently examining, it is clear that our analysis thus far pertains to the category “destiny” — or, if we wish to be more precise, short-term destiny, for we certainly cannot present a complete analysis of how the Global Endeavor will operate throughout the entire millennium of “changes, adjustments, and readjustments” that a Melchizedek predicts in section 1 of Paper 99 [1086:4 / 99:1.1]. Nonetheless, we have been compelled to talk about the Global Endeavor as if it actually existed, which is not the case. To the contrary, the Global Endeavor is, at present, just a concept and a plan.* The organization that is actively pursuing this concept is not the Global Endeavor itself, but the Committee *for* the Global Endeavor (emphasis added).

To understand the near future — the path that leads to the founding convention — we must first proceed a bit farther into the category “destiny,” thereby examining the key events that will occur during the founding convention and soon thereafter. This analytical approach may seem to involve yet another paradox, but the next few paragraphs will demonstrate its value.

* Although we could certainly talk about *the history of the origin of the concept*, and also about *the history of the practical steps* that have occurred up to now, we will have to save those topics for another occasion.

The Global Endeavor will be founded from the top down, for there is no alternative. Therefore the proceedings of the founding convention will mainly pertain to global supervision, even though regional associations are the most important structural feature of the Global Endeavor.

Those committed readers of *The Urantia Book* who attend the founding convention, as well as the other committed readers who send absentee ballots, will elect the five members and two alternates of each global body:

— **The Coordinating Commission** supervises the administrative side of the Global Endeavor, in part by developing policy principles and advisory guidelines that relate to organizational, managerial, financial, and legal aspects. (Thus the Commission corresponds to working group 1 in each regional association.)

— **The Consultative Forum** monitors pursuit of the underlying goals, in part by developing policy principles and advisory guidelines that relate to spiritual, philosophic, moral, ethical, and psychological aspects. (Thus the Forum corresponds to working group 12 in each regional association.)

After each global body has met separately to elect its own officers, **the Deliberative Council** will convene and will proceed to elect **the Administrator**. (The Deliberative Council will be a composite body consisting of the members and alternates of the Coordinating Commission and the Consultative Forum, all of them deliberating jointly. The Administrator will be the endeavor's most senior person; he or she will perform a number of important administrative duties and will represent the Global Endeavor in public.)

Thereafter, **the Deliberative Council** will elect **the Deputy Administrator** and **the Associate Administrator**, but for our current purposes it is important to bear in mind that provisions of the draft plan make it possible for a member of the Coordinating Commission or of the Consultative Forum to serve concurrently in either of these other roles. Therefore at least fifteen persons will be elected to senior responsibilities during the founding convention — five members and two alternates for each global body, plus the Administrator.

The scale of the event. It is reasonable to hope that approximately 30 committed readers of *The Urantia Book* will be candidates for possible election during the founding convention (*i.e.*, approximately two candidates for each position to be filled). In addition, it is also reasonable to hope that the number of committed readers of *The Urantia Book* who attend the founding convention will be at least twice the number of persons who are candidates. On that basis, we would be talking about a moderately large event that attracts approximately 60 committed readers of *The Urantia Book*.

Establishing a regional association. When the members of the Deliberative Council consider it appropriate and wise to establish a regional association, they will do that by appointing five or more members of each managerial working group (*i.e.*, WG1 and

WG12). These approximately ten persons will then be the nucleus that organizes and facilitates the assistance and service that the members and associates of the substantive working groups will later provide to idealists, innovators, and reformers operating in society, but none of that will be possible until the managerial working groups succeed in establishing one or more working groups whose responsibilities pertain to some set of substantive topics (*i.e.*, one or more substantive working groups). This task will be challenging and difficult, for all members of a substantive working group must have practical experience and/or professional training that relates to the same category of professions or occupations.

“Doing the math”

Readers of this document may have been puzzled at the need to trek through so many organizational names and functions that may seem abstract, difficult to understand, or both. Here is the reason: All these details, when considered together, finally enable us “to do the math.” That phrase, however, is essentially a euphemism, for the conclusions that follow below are just a consequence of logic and common sense.

- Given the preceding analysis, it would be unwise for the Committee for the Global Endeavor (acting in cooperation with the future provisional staff that the committee will have appointed) to convene the founding convention until there are excellent prospects for attracting about 60 committed readers of *The Urantia Book*, including approximately 30 candidates for election to senior responsibilities.
- In addition, however, the members of the Committee for the Global Endeavor have identified another criterion that may be even more important: We must also succeed in stimulating strong interest among readers of *The Urantia Book* who live in at least two regions. Why? Because any endeavor could hardly claim to be “global,” even in concept, if the activities it contemplates were to be limited to a single region. Further, such a situation would be even more inappropriate if the great majority of the persons participating in the work of that single regional association were to be citizens of only one country, a circumstance that will undoubtedly apply to the future regional association for North America.

What steps has the Committee for the Global Endeavor already taken in order to explore potential interest elsewhere? The documents of the Committee for the Global Endeavor have been translated into French, but there are not enough readers of *Le Livre d’Urantia* living in countries where French is spoken to create confidence that it will be possible to establish a regional association in any such location within the next decade. On the other hand, readers of *Le Livre d’Urantia* who live in Quebec and who are reasonably bilingual will certainly be welcome to participate in the work of the future regional association for North America. (Their participation will be a highly desirable way to enhance pluralism and diversity within that regional association.)

The truly crucial opportunity pertains to Latin America, for there are many readers of *El Libro de Urantia* who live in that region. Further, it is quite plausible to believe that efforts to stimulate interest in the Global Endeavor in Latin America will generate sufficient enthusiasm to make it possible to establish a regional association there.

1. The committee's documents consist of over 200 pages. Volunteers finished translating them into Spanish in late 2015, and the translated documents have now been reformatted so as to reproduce the general "look" and "feel" of the original wording in English. Final review, however, is still in progress. Thereafter, the committee will expand its modest website (<http://www.globalendeavor.net>) by adding a new home page in Spanish, so that persons who read Spanish can download the translated documents.
2. It will then be necessary to attract and recruit several committed readers of *El Libro de Urantia* who wish to become members of the Committee for the Global Endeavor, so that these new members will become catalysts and focal points for stimulating interest in their own countries and in nearby areas of Latin America.
3. When their work appears to be progressing satisfactorily, the expanded Committee for the Global Endeavor will intensify efforts to create or reinforce interest in all three language environments (countries where the people speak English, French, or Spanish). The goal will be to reach the "critical mass" of strong interest and support that will enable the committee, in cooperation with the future provisional staff, to convene the founding convention.

How long will all this take? The only realistic answer is to say, "No one knows." On the other hand, it seems reasonable to assume that the founding convention is at least five to seven years away.

44. The members of the Committee for the Global Endeavor believe that it would be intensely unwise to bring the endeavor to life if subsequent efforts to assist and serve idealists, innovators, and reformers would occur in only one region (*i.e.*, via only one regional association). Do you agree with this conclusion of theirs? If so, why? If not, why not?

45. Committed readers of *The Urantia Book* who attend the founding convention, along with the other committed readers who send absentee ballots, will elect fifteen persons who will carry out important responsibilities associated with global coordination. With this in mind, the members of the Committee for the Global Endeavor believe that it will be appropriate to convene the founding convention when there are excellent prospects for attracting about 60 committed readers of *The Urantia Book*, including approximately 30 candidates. Does an event on this scale seem a suitable way to bring the Global Endeavor to life? Alternately, would you recommend that the committee adopt other criteria and/or assign at least equal importance to other factors? Please explain your answer.

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Part Three

**The Fifth Epochal Revelation:
Six Key Aspects**

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Topic 7

The extended transition from institutional to personal religion.

A Melchizedek tells us that evolutionary religion developed from natural causes, arising initially because of the influence of the adjutant mind-spirits of worship and wisdom, but subsequently stimulated and reinforced by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Thought Adjusters, the seraphim, and the Spirit of Truth:

Man possessed a religion of natural origin as a part of his evolutionary experience long before any systematic revelations were made on Urantia. But this religion of natural origin was, in itself, the product of man's superanimal endowments. Evolutionary religion arose slowly throughout the millenniums of mankind's experiential career through the ministry of the following influences operating within, and impinging upon, savage, barbarian, and civilized man:

1. *The adjutant of worship* — the appearance in animal consciousness of superanimal potentials for reality perception. This might be termed the primordial human instinct for Deity.
2. *The adjutant of wisdom* — the manifestation in a worshipful mind of the tendency to direct its adoration in higher channels of expression and toward ever-expanding concepts of Deity reality.
3. *The Holy Spirit* — this is the initial supermind bestowal, and it unfailingly appears in all bona fide human personalities. This ministry to a worship-craving and wisdom-desiring mind creates the capacity to self-realize the postulate of human survival, both in theologic concept and as an actual and factual personality experience.

The co-ordinate functioning of these three divine ministrations is quite sufficient to initiate and prosecute the growth of evolutionary religion. These influences are later augmented by Thought Adjusters, seraphim, and the Spirit of Truth, all of which accelerate the rate of religious development. These agencies have long functioned on Urantia, and they will continue here as long as this planet remains an inhabited sphere. Much of the potential of these divine agencies has never yet had opportunity for expression; much will be revealed in the ages to come as mortal religion ascends, level by level, toward the supernal heights of morontia value and spirit truth. [A Melchizedek, 1003:1-5 / 92:0.1-5]

While Jesus, the apostles, and the evangelists were walking from Caesarea-Philippi to the coast of Phoenicia,* Jesus delivered a detailed and memorable discourse on true religion. The Midwayer Commission summarized his remarks in Paper 155, in part by identifying three broad categories of religious observance:

While the religions of the world have a double origin — natural and revelatory — at any one time and among any one people there are to be found three distinct forms of religious devotion. And these three manifestations of the religious urge are:

1. *Primitive religion.* The seminatural and instinctive urge to fear mysterious energies and worship superior forces, chiefly a religion of the physical nature, the religion of fear.
2. *The religion of civilization.* The advancing religious concepts and practices of the civilizing races — the religion of the mind — the intellectual theology of the authority of established religious tradition.
3. *True religion — the religion of revelation.* The revelation of supernatural values, a partial insight into eternal realities, a glimpse of the goodness and beauty of the infinite character of the Father in heaven — the religion of the spirit as demonstrated in human experience.

The religion of the physical senses and the superstitious fears of natural man, the Master refused to belittle, though he deplored the fact that so much of this primitive form of worship should persist in the religious forms of the more intelligent races of mankind. Jesus made it clear that the great difference between the religion of the mind and the religion of the spirit is that, while the former is upheld by ecclesiastical authority, the latter is wholly based on human experience. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1728:4-7, 1729:1 / 155:5.1-6*]

* An area on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean that approximates contemporary Lebanon, although ancient Phoenicia extended northward into regions now in Syria and southward into regions that belong to Israel.

Vocabulary. When members of the Midwayer Commission prepared the preceding excerpt, they used two groups of phrases to which they assigned essentially the same meanings:

- a. The religion of civilization**
 - = the religion of the mind
 - = the religion of authority
 - = established religious tradition
- b. True religion**
 - = the religion of revelation
 - = the religion of the spirit

46. Our topic today is “The extended transition from institutional to personal religion.” With this in mind, it seems reasonable to associate institutional religion with category a, and to associate personal religion with category b. Therefore we can identify personal religion as true religion, whereas organized, institutional religion does not deserve that description and instead amounts to the religion of authority.

— *If you believe that the immediately preceding statement is fundamentally accurate, please analyze the implications for the role and standing of individuals and groups who claim the authority to tell individuals what to do and believe, based on the tenets and practices of some religion of the mind.*

— *If you believe that the preceding statement would be more useful if it were refined to some degree, so as to become less unconditional and perhaps more subtle, please explain how, in your view, it may be possible to associate one or more aspects of an institutional religion with true religion, the religion of the spirit. Are the potential associations that you envision actually attributes of the institutional religion itself, or do they simply serve to highlight the possibility that an individual believer may be able to experience inner spiritual growth that is intense as well as profound? In other words, are you proclaiming that certain individual believers, although associated with an institutional religion and although outwardly accepting its tenets and practices, may nonetheless transcend it from a personal perspective, thereby attaining true religion, the religion of the spirit? After all, a Melchizedek declares: “The symbols of socialized religion are not to be despised as channels of growth, albeit the river bed is not the river” [a Melchizedek, 1098.4 / 100:5.1]. In your view, do any of these factors justify an assertion of doctrinal or disciplinary authority by anyone leading an institutional religion or speaking on its behalf?*

Social and cultural balance. In Paper 98, a Melchizedek compares how religious philosophy evolved among the Hebrew and Hellenic peoples of ancient times, drawing a sharp distinction between them [*a Melchizedek, 1079:4 / 98:2.7*]:

— “In Palestine, human thought was so priest-controlled and scripture-directed that philosophy and aesthetics were entirely submerged in religion and morality.”

— “In Greece, the almost complete absence of priests and ‘sacred scriptures’ left the human mind free and unfettered, resulting in a startling development in depth of thought. But religion as a personal experience failed to keep pace with the intellectual probings into the nature and reality of the cosmos.”

Each of these social and cultural patterns represented an extreme, creating essentially impenetrable barriers that amounted to strict separation or even antagonism. A balance based on interdependence and mutual respect would have been far wiser:

— “Religion stands above science, art, philosophy, ethics, and morals, but not independent of them. They are all indissolubly interrelated in human experience, personal and social.” [*The Midwayer Commission, 2096:4 / 196:3.28*].

These two sentences of the Midwayer Commission appear in the final Paper of *The Urantia Book*. In the immediately preceding Paper (*i.e.*, Paper 195), the same authors explain that the people of Western countries currently inhabit a cultural environment that is predominantly secular, partly because of the previous need to free Western peoples from “the withering grasp of a totalitarian ecclesiastical domination” [*the Midwayer Commission, 2081:4 / 195:8.4*]. That constructive course correction, however, went much too far, in some cases equating to an attack on God, either openly or by implication:

Modern secularism has been fostered by two world-wide influences. The father of secularism was the narrow-minded and godless attitude of nineteenth- and twentieth-century so-called science — atheistic science. The mother of modern secularism was the totalitarian medieval Christian church. Secularism had its inception as a rising protest against the almost complete domination of Western civilization by the institutionalized Christian church.

At the time of this revelation, the prevailing intellectual and philosophical climate of both European and American life is decidedly secular — humanistic. For three hundred years Western thinking has been progressively secularized. Religion has become more and more a nominal influence, largely a ritualistic exercise. The majority of professed Christians of Western civilization are unwittingly actual secularists.

It required a great power, a mighty influence, to free the thinking and living of the Western peoples from the withering grasp of a totalitarian ecclesiastical domination. Secularism did break the bonds of church control, and now in turn it threatens to establish a new and godless type of mastery over the hearts and minds of modern man. ...

Materialism denies God, secularism simply ignores him; at least that was the earlier attitude. More recently, secularism has assumed a more militant attitude, assuming to take the place of the religion whose totalitarian bondage it onetime resisted. Twentieth-century secularism tends to affirm that man does not need God. But beware! this godless philosophy of human society will lead only to unrest, animosity, unhappiness, war, and world-wide disaster.

Secularism can never bring peace to mankind. Nothing can take the place of God in human society. But mark you well! do not be quick to surrender the beneficent gains of the secular revolt from ecclesiastical totalitarianism. Western civilization today enjoys many liberties and satisfactions as a result of the secular revolt. The great mistake of secularism was this: In revolting against the almost total control of life by religious authority, and after attaining the liberation from such ecclesiastical tyranny, the secularists went on to institute a revolt against God himself, sometimes tacitly and sometimes openly. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2081:2-4, 2081:5-6 / 195:8.2-4, 195:8.5-6*]

Although some individuals and groups in Western society reject the predominantly secular outlook, most of them appear to be doing that from perspectives associated with organized, institutional religion. There seem to be sound reasons to doubt that these traditional perspectives can conceivably prevail, even to the degree of persuading most human beings living in Western countries to understand and accept religion as a crucial element of a cultural balance centered on interdependence and mutual respect.

47. In your opinion, will it be possible for humanity to overcome secularism while organized, institutional religion remains the dominant pattern of religious observance and expression on our planet Urantia? In other words, does the challenge of defeating secularism and establishing an overall cultural balance centered on interdependence and mutual respect require that personal religion become far more prominent and perhaps even prevalent? As you develop your reply, please consider the following remarks by the Midwayer Commission:

“But religious leaders are making a great mistake when they try to call modern man to spiritual battle with the trumpet blasts of the Middle Ages. Religion must provide itself with new and up-to-date slogans.” [*The Midwayer Commission, 2077:6 / 195:6.10*]

The characteristics of personal religion. Personal religion is an individual experience; it cannot be endowed or bequeathed, nor induced or evoked by some sort of magnetic energy radiating from one person to another. Quite to the contrary, personal religion requires that the individual exert intensely active effort, exhibiting and modeling a whole-personality commitment, the driving force that catalyzes, stimulates, and unifies the energies of life. During Jesus' discourse on true religion, he called it "the personal quest for truth" and "the determination to explore the realities of personal religious experience" [*the Midwayer Commission, 1729:5 / 155:5.10*]:

... that most thrilling and inspiring of all possible human experiences: the personal quest for truth, the exhilaration of facing the perils of intellectual discovery, the determination to explore the realities of personal religious experience, the supreme satisfaction of experiencing the personal triumph of the actual realization of the victory of spiritual faith over intellectual doubt as it is honestly won in the supreme adventure of all human existence — man seeking God, for himself and as himself, and finding him.

The religion of the spirit means effort, struggle, conflict, faith, determination, love, loyalty, and progress. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1729:5-6 / 155:5.10-11*]

A Melchizedek emphasizes the need for a believer to bear fruit by ministering to others, thereby living a life of service:

Spiritual development depends, first, on the maintenance of a living spiritual connection with true spiritual forces and, second, on the continuous bearing of spiritual fruit: yielding the ministry to one's fellows of that which has been received from one's spiritual benefactors. Spiritual progress is predicated on intellectual recognition of spiritual poverty coupled with the self-consciousness of perfection-hunger, the desire to know God and be like him, the wholehearted purpose to do the will of the Father in heaven. [*A Melchizedek, 1095:5 / 100:2.1*]

Evolutionary man does not naturally relish hard work. To keep pace in his life experience with the impelling demands and the compelling urges of a growing religious experience means incessant activity in spiritual growth, intellectual expansion, factual enlargement, and social service. There is no real religion apart from a highly active personality. [*A Melchizedek, 1120:4 / 102:2.7*]

But true religion is a living love, a life of service. The religionist's detachment from much that is purely temporal and trivial never leads to social isolation, and it should not destroy the sense of humor. Genuine religion takes nothing away from human existence, but it does add new meanings to all of life; it generates new types of enthusiasm, zeal, and courage. [*A Melchizedek, 1100:7 / 100:6.5*]

Personal religion catalyzes and stimulates this enthusiasm because of the believer's conviction that he or she is seeking to carry out God's will. Jesus declared to the apostles and evangelists that endeavoring to do God's will is the sole adventure that is more satisfying and thrilling than the attempt to discover it:

Never forget there is only one adventure which is more satisfying and thrilling than the attempt to discover the will of the living God, and that is the supreme experience of honestly trying to do that divine will. And fail not to remember that the will of God can be done in any earthly occupation. Some callings are not holy and others secular. All things are sacred in the lives of those who are spirit led; that is, subordinated to truth, ennobled by love, dominated by mercy, and restrained by fairness — justice. The spirit which my Father and I shall send into the world is not only the Spirit of Truth but also the spirit of idealistic beauty. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1732:4 / 155:6.11*]

48. In the passage cited immediately above, Jesus called on the apostles and evangelists “to remember that the will of God can be done in any earthly occupation.” He then added an even more explicit statement: “Some callings are not holy and others secular” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1732:4 / 155:6.11*]. Please analyze these sentences, partly by explaining what they imply for the unity and harmony of society and civilization. Is there any reason to maintain that professional religionists such as ministers, priests, monks, nuns, rabbis, or mullahs benefit from some special standing in God's eyes that entitles them to exert spiritual authority over individual believers?
49. In the final sentence of this same passage, Jesus declared: “The spirit which my Father and I shall send into the world is not only the Spirit of Truth but also the spirit of idealistic beauty” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1732:4 / 155:6.11*]. This sentence creates an intriguing linkage between truth and beauty, whereas Jesus did not also refer to goodness, the third of the three “comprehensible elements of Deity” that a Mighty Messenger analyzes in section 10 of Paper 56 [*a Mighty Messenger, 646:3 / 56:10.2*]. Nonetheless, it seems wiser not to draw any specific inference from this apparent omission, on the grounds that we cannot expect every sentence in *The Urantia Book* to constitute a replete statement. On the other hand, the relationship between truth and beauty that Jesus chose to highlight implicitly involves an intriguing parallel to emphatic and rather pointed statements that a Divine Counselor offers us in Paper 2:

“The great mistake of the Hebrew religion was its failure to associate the goodness of God with the factual truths of science and the appealing beauty of art. As civilization progressed, and since religion continued to pursue the same unwise course of over-emphasizing the goodness of God to the relative exclusion of truth and neglect of beauty, there developed an increasing tendency for certain types of men to turn away from the abstract and dissociated concept of isolated goodness. The overstressed and isolated morality of modern religion, which fails to hold the devotion and loyalty of many twentieth-century men, would rehabilitate itself if, in addition to its moral mandates, it would give equal consideration to the truths of science, philosophy, and spiritual experience, and to the beauties of the physical creation, the charm of intellectual art, and the grandeur of genuine character achievement.

“The religious challenge of this age is to those farseeing and forward-looking men and women of spiritual insight who will dare to construct a new and appealing philosophy of living out of the enlarged and exquisitely integrated modern concepts of cosmic truth, universe beauty, and divine goodness. Such a new and righteous vision of morality will attract all that is good in the mind of man and challenge that which is best in the human soul. Truth, beauty, and goodness are divine realities, and as man ascends the scale of spiritual living, these supreme qualities of the Eternal become increasingly co-ordinated and unified in God, who is love. [*A Divine Counselor, 43:2-3 / 2:7.9-10*]

— In the passage from Paper 2 cited immediately above, the Divine Counselor portrays “[t]he religious challenge of this age” [*a Divine Counselor, 43:3 / 2:7.10*]. Do you associate this challenge with evolutionary religion, with organized, institutional religion, or with personal religion? Please explain your answer, while identifying the factors that led you to it.

— The Divine Counselor points out that institutional religions operating in Western countries have tended to overemphasize the goodness of God “to the relative exclusion of truth and neglect of beauty” [*a Divine Counselor, 43:2 / 2:7.9*]. Why do you think this happened?

— How do you distinguish truth from the beliefs and convictions that various institutional religions have propounded in the form of doctrines and creeds?

READING ASSIGNMENT. Although we have already considered several short excerpts from Jesus' first and second discourses on true religion, reading through the entirety of these discourses will make the context much clearer, while providing far deeper understanding of the masterful analysis that Jesus shared with the apostles and evangelists. His two discourses consist of sections 5 and 6 in Paper 155, but the last paragraph in section 4 narrates the questions that Peter and Thomas asked, thereby implicitly setting the stage for Jesus' first discourse. Therefore participants should start with that paragraph on page 1728 of the single-column edition (*i.e.*, "While pausing for lunch under the shadow of an overhanging ledge of rock ..."), and should continue to take turns reading out loud until they reach the end of section 6, which is likewise the end of Paper 155. (*In the single-column edition, this extended excerpt begins on page 1728 and concludes on page 1733.*)

- 50.** The Midwayer Commission tells us that when it prepared a report on Jesus' discourse on true religion, the authors thereof summarized Jesus' ideas and restated them "in modern phraseology" [1728:3 / 155:5.1]. Their summary, however, is intriguing and profound, containing many thoughts that we can discuss at length and analyze in depth. We can do this because we have the advantage of a written text, whereas the original audience was listening to Jesus speak and was obliged to pay close attention in order to absorb as much as they could. Please comment on the degree to which Christ Michael of Nebadon, incarnate in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth, may have had the following audiences in mind:
- a. The apostles and evangelists who were accompanying Jesus on the journey to Phoenicia.
 - b. Contemporaries who may have heard about the discourse, or about some of its ideas, from one or more persons who were present.
 - c. Human beings living on Urantia who can now read the summary that the Midwayer Commission prepared, or who will be able to read it over the course of the next millennium.
 - d. Mortals who live on other inhabited planets in the local universe of Nebadon.

In answering this question, please remember that during his public ministry, Jesus of Nazareth could draw on the divine mind of Michael of Nebadon whenever he wished. The Midwayer Commission explains this in Paper 161:

“Consciousness of divinity was a gradual growth in the mind of Jesus up to the occasion of his baptism. After he became fully self-conscious of his divine nature, prehuman existence, and universe prerogatives, he seems to have possessed the power of variously limiting his human consciousness of his divinity. It appears to us that from his baptism until the crucifixion it was entirely optional with Jesus whether to depend only on the human mind or to utilize the knowledge of both the human and the divine minds. At times he appeared to avail himself of only that information which was resident in the human intellect. On other occasions he appeared to act with such fullness of knowledge and wisdom as could be afforded only by the utilization of the superhuman content of his divine consciousness.

“We can understand his unique performances only by accepting the theory that he could, at will, self-limit his divinity consciousness. We are fully cognizant that he frequently withheld from his associates his foreknowledge of events, and that he was aware of the nature of their thinking and planning. We understand that he did not wish his followers to know too fully that he was able to discern their thoughts and to penetrate their plans. He did not desire too far to transcend the concept of the human as it was held in the minds of his apostles and disciples.

“We are utterly at a loss to differentiate between his practice of self-limiting his divine consciousness and his technique of concealing his preknowledge and thought discernment from his human associates. We are convinced that he used both of these techniques, but we are not always able, in a given instance, to specify which method he may have employed. We frequently observed him acting with only the human content of consciousness; then would we behold him in conference with the directors of the celestial hosts of the universe and discern the undoubted functioning of the divine mind. And then on almost numberless occasions did we witness the working of this combined personality of man and God as it was activated by the apparent perfect union of the human and the divine minds. This is the limit of our knowledge of such phenomena; we really do not actually know the full truth about this mystery.”
[The Midwayer Commission, 1787:3-5 / 161:3.1-3]

The lengthy transition. The transition from institutional religion to personal religion will not occur suddenly, as if the spiritual government of our planet were able to flip a switch that would instantaneously transform all inhabitants of our planet Urantia. To the contrary, the transition will mainly be an individual matter, especially during the next few generations and perhaps throughout the next few centuries. An increasing number of Urantians will gradually adopt personal religion as their preference and practice, and in the early stages the net influence on society will be difficult to detect. Further, it would

be rash to predict that all the individuals who make a commitment to personal religion would just then have withdrawn from the practice of institutional religion, thereby amounting to “subtractions.” To the contrary, it seems reasonably likely that at least some of these individuals will have made the decision to disconnect from institutional religion at some prior moment, thereby initiating an explicit or implicit search that eventually led them to personal religion. Depending on individual inclinations and interests, a search along these lines could easily last months, years, or even decades.

Nonetheless, it is reasonable to believe that at some moment perhaps generations or centuries ahead, certain varieties of institutional religion will begin losing “the critical mass” that they need to operate, both in relation to people and also in terms of funding. Does this mean that institutional religion will cease to exist at some particular moment during this new millennium of ours? Before you venture a considered opinion on that possibility, please consider Jesus’ remarks about the factors that cause many human beings to prefer traditional, institutional religion:

Until the human race progresses to the level of a higher and more general recognition of the realities of spiritual experience, large numbers of men and women will continue to show a personal preference for those religions of authority which require only intellectual assent, in contrast to the religion of the spirit, which entails active participation of mind and soul in the faith adventure of grappling with the rigorous realities of progressive human experience.

The acceptance of the traditional religions of authority presents the easy way out for man’s urge to seek satisfaction for the longings of his spiritual nature. The settled, crystallized, and established religions of authority afford a ready refuge to which the distracted and distraught soul of man may flee when harassed by fear and tormented by uncertainty. Such a religion requires of its devotees, as the price to be paid for its satisfactions and assurances, only a passive and purely intellectual assent.

And for a long time there will live on earth those timid, fearful, and hesitant individuals who will prefer thus to secure their religious consolations ... [*The Midwayer Commission, 1729:3-5 / 155:5.8-10 — emphasis added: sentences shown in bold type*]

- 51.** How long will it take for the human race to progress to the level of a higher and more general recognition of the realities of spiritual experience? How long will there continue to be timid, fearful, and hesitant individuals living on earth, persons who prefer to secure their religious consolations by means of institutional religion? When will these traditional religions of the mind wither and die out, thereby yielding to personal religion as the dominant pattern for the inhabitants of Urantia?

Personal experience. Direct personal experience with God and other spiritual realities is the essential characteristic of personal religion. In the following paragraphs from Jesus' second discourse on religion, he repeatedly stresses the value and importance of personal experience, experience that does not depend on the perceptions, instructions, or advice of any other human being.

I have called upon you to be born again, to be born of the spirit. I have called you out of the darkness of authority and the lethargy of tradition into the transcendent light of the realization of the possibility of making for yourselves the greatest discovery possible for the human soul to make — **the supernal experience of finding God for yourself, in yourself, and of yourself, and of doing all this as a fact in your own personal experience.** And so may you pass from death to life, from the authority of tradition to **the experience of knowing God**; thus will you pass from darkness to light, from a racial faith inherited to **a personal faith achieved by actual experience**; and thereby will you progress from a theology of mind handed down by your ancestors to a true religion of spirit which shall be built up in your souls as an eternal endowment.

Your religion shall change from the mere intellectual belief in traditional authority to **the actual experience of that living faith** which is able to grasp the reality of God and all that relates to the divine spirit of the Father. The religion of the mind ties you hopelessly to the past; the religion of the spirit consists in progressive revelation and ever beckons you on toward higher and holier achievements in spiritual ideals and eternal realities.

While the religion of authority may impart a present feeling of settled security, you pay for such a transient satisfaction the price of the loss of your spiritual freedom and religious liberty. *[The Midwayer Commission, 1731:1-3 / 155:6.3-5 — emphasis added: phrases shown in bold type]*

52. The history of humanity thus far is littered with stories associated with active and aggressive human beings who have acted out their intense convictions in egotistical and self-serving ways, often propounding a personal mission or destiny that they imagined and arrogated to themselves. Some of them amounted to self-anointed "gurus" who claimed insight into or authority over religious values or beliefs. To put the matter mildly, the results were often destructive or even disastrous, both for themselves and for others.

— Is there any prospect that the personal experience that Jesus described may lead to dubious or dangerous outcomes? If so, why? If not, why not?

— Do you believe that Jesus' emphasis on personal experience with God and other spiritual realities is inconsistent with any effort to exert spiritual authority over others? If so, why? If not, why not?

Finding God in oneself and others. At first glance, the emphasis on direct personal experience with God and other spiritual realities may seem to imply that an individual believer is setting himself or herself apart from others, thereby creating psychological distance rather than understanding, sympathy, and engagement. This is not the case. As a Melchizedek informs us in one of the paragraphs that we previously reviewed (*i.e.*, on page 76 above): “[T]rue religion is a living love, a life of service. The religionist’s detachment from much that is purely temporal and trivial never leads to social isolation, and it should not destroy the sense of humor” [*a Melchizedek, 1100:7 / 100:6.5*]. Further, Jesus told the apostles and evangelists that finding God in oneself also enables a believer to find God in others:

When you once begin to find God in your soul, presently you will begin to discover him in other men’s souls and eventually in all the creatures and creations of a mighty universe. But what chance does the Father have to appear as a God of supreme loyalties and divine ideals in the souls of men who give little or no time to the thoughtful contemplation of such eternal realities? While the mind is not the seat of the spiritual nature, it is indeed the gateway thereto. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1733:1 / 155:6.13*]

53. In Paper 102, a Melchizedek tells us: “Religion, being a matter of inner or personal experience, can never develop very far in advance of the intellectual evolution of the races” [*a Melchizedek, 1128:2 / 102:8.6*]. Given the close relationship that the Melchizedek has noted, plus Jesus’ reminder about the need for thoughtful contemplation, is it reasonable to conclude that the progress of personal religion on our planet Urantia depends on the ongoing evolution of the human mind, at least to a degree that you will now proceed to describe? Please explain your answer and the factors that influenced you. (*NOTE: The evolution of the human mind is a complex but stimulating topic that we will examine at a later stage of the extended discussion associated with the different parts of this document; see pages 189 through 210 below.*)

Unity, not uniformity. Although the pagan religions of the Greco-Roman world were based on certain fundamental beliefs that might be described as philosophic or cultural conventions, these beliefs were neither elaborate nor precise, and they did not involve written creeds that individuals were obliged to accept. Instead the main requirements were to participate in the public ceremonies that occurred from time to time, and to offer occasional sacrifices to the pagan god or gods who were particularly revered in the location where one lived. Further, the Hebrew religion of Jesus’ day did not require complete uniformity of belief either, as illustrated by controversies over the afterlife that

pitted the Pharisees against the Sadducees. (The Midwayer Commission tells us that on Tuesday morning of the week during which Jesus was arrested and put to death, certain Jewish leaders asked him tendentious questions that were intended to entrap him. After Jesus showed great wisdom in the way he replied to a question posed by the spokesman for the Sadducees, “... some of the Pharisees so far forgot themselves as to exclaim, ‘True, true, Master, you have well answered these unbelieving Sadducees’” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1900:3 / 174:3.3*].)

Nonetheless, it is clear that the institutional religions of Jesus’ day featured basic beliefs that their leaders proclaimed and promoted, at least implicitly. Further, we should also bear in mind the explanation that the Midwayer Commission gave us as it began reporting on Jesus’ discourses on true religion: This report of the Midwayers has been “**summarized and restated in modern phraseology**” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1728:3 / 155:5.1*]. Therefore it seems quite possible that the Midwayer Commission has adapted Jesus’ teachings on the subject of religious beliefs so as to make the ideas clearer and more accessible to us. With all these caveats in mind, please consider the account that the Midwayer Commission provides, featuring remarks in which Jesus emphasized unity of experience and unity of insight — not uniformity of belief, and not uniformity of viewpoint and outlook:

The religions of authority can only divide men and set them in conscientious array against each other; the religion of the spirit will progressively draw men together and cause them to become understandingly sympathetic with one another. The religions of authority require of men **uniformity in belief**, but this is impossible of realization in the present state of the world. The religion of the spirit requires only **unity of experience** — uniformity of destiny — making full allowance for **diversity of belief**. The religion of the spirit requires only **uniformity of insight, not uniformity of viewpoint and outlook**. The religion of the spirit does not demand uniformity of intellectual views, only unity of spirit feeling. The religions of authority crystallize into lifeless creeds; the religion of the spirit grows into the increasing joy and liberty of ennobling deeds of loving service and merciful ministrations. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1732.2 / 155:6.9 — emphasis added: the phrases in bold type*]

- 54.** In Paper 103, a Melchizedek comments as follows: “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” [*a Melchizedek, 1135:2 / 103:5.12*]. In your view, what are the chances that one or more institutional religions currently active on Urantia will adopt this approach?

55. We have now concluded our formal examination of Jesus' discourses on true religion, but no one would venture to allege that we have exhausted all the intriguing observations and concepts that these discourses contain. Further, you devoted several minutes to reading them out loud, and this effort may have stimulated additional insights that one or more of you would like to share with the rest of us. If so, this is your opportunity.

Group prayer and group worship. Our discussion of personal religion has centered on the individual's original, imaginative, and creative effort to relate directly to God and to other spiritual realities: *the value and importance of personal experience*. On the other hand, many of the revelators whose remarks we have considered have emphasized service to others, and one of them explicitly declared that religion "**never leads to social isolation**" [*a Melchizedek, 1100:7 / 100:6.5*]. Therefore it is quite reasonable to believe that personal religion does not preclude group prayer or group worship. After all, the revelators confirm that these practices provide many benefits. For example, the Chief of Midwayers states that group or congregational praying is "very effective" and "highly socializing":

[P]rayer need not always be individual. Group or congregational praying is very effective in that it is highly socializing in its repercussions. When a group engages in community prayer for moral enhancement and spiritual uplift, such devotions are reactive upon the individuals composing the group; they are all made better because of participation. [*The Chief of Midwayers, 998:4-5 / 91:5.1-2*]

In contrast, however, a Melchizedek tells us that modern religions have overemphasized prayer. He then points out that worship is substantially more important:

Prayer is indeed a part of religious experience, but it has been wrongly emphasized by modern religions, much to the neglect of the more essential communion of worship. The reflective powers of the mind are deepened and broadened by worship. Prayer may enrich the life, but worship illuminates destiny. [*A Melchizedek, 1123:5 / 102:4.5*]

During evening conferences on Mount Gerizim in Samaria, Jesus analyzed worship and prayer in considerable depth:

Worship — contemplation of the spiritual — must alternate with service, contact with material reality. Work should alternate with play; religion should be balanced by humor. Profound philosophy should be relieved by rhythmic poetry. The strain of living — the time tension of personality — should be relaxed by the restfulness of worship. The feelings of insecurity arising from the fear of personality isolation in the universe should be antidoted by the faith contemplation of the Father and by the attempted realization of the Supreme.

Prayer is designed to make man less thinking but more *realizing*; it is not designed to increase knowledge but rather to expand insight.

Worship is intended to anticipate the better life ahead and then to reflect these new spiritual significances back onto the life which now is. Prayer is spiritually sustaining, but worship is divinely creative.

Worship is the technique of looking to the *One* for the inspiration of service to the many. Worship is the yardstick which measures the extent of the soul's detachment from the material universe and its simultaneous and secure attachment to the spiritual realities of all creation.

Prayer is self-reminding — sublime thinking; worship is self-forgetting — superthinking. Worship is effortless attention, true and ideal soul rest, a form of restful spiritual exertion.

Worship is the act of a part identifying itself with the Whole; the finite with the Infinite; the son with the Father; time in the act of striking step with eternity. Worship is the act of the son's personal communion with the divine Father, the assumption of refreshing, creative, fraternal, and romantic attitudes by the human soul-spirit. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1616:5-10 / 143:7.3-8*]

Like the Melchizedek whose remarks we examined on the previous page, Jesus stresses the value and importance of worship, although he also calls attention to the benefits of reflective prayer. There is certainly no implication that these spiritual practices are or should be exclusively associated with institutional religion, and Jesus' frequent sessions of personal prayer, meditation, and worship are eloquent evidence to the contrary.

On the other hand, the particular teachings of Jesus excerpted above do not specifically comment on whether or not it is appropriate and important for believers who have achieved direct personal experience with God and with other spiritual realities — thereby attaining the level of true personal religion — to carry out part of their obligation to serve others by participating in group prayer and group worship. Nonetheless, the conclusion seems reasonable and logical, and it also seems to harmonize with the remarks by the Chief of Midwayers and a Melchizedek that we examined on the preceding page. In answering the questions that follow below, you may wish, at your option, to identify and comment on other passages in *The Urantia Book* that yield additional insight.

56. How do you analyze the relationship between personal religion and the question of actively participating in group prayer and group worship? Is this, in your view, an affirmative obligation for a believer who has attained the level of direct personal experience with God and with other spiritual realities, or just an option that would benefit him or her, and that may also benefit other persons who are present?
57. Does your answer to the preceding question partly depend on the nature of the group that is conducting prayer and worship? For example, would it be appropriate for a believer who has attained the level of true personal religion to participate in group prayer or group worship in the context of an organized, institutional religion that appears to be oppressive, a religion of the mind that embodies an authoritarian approach to the opinions, beliefs, and personal practices of the individuals who belong to it? Would participating in group prayer or group worship in that context amount to endorsing, or appearing to endorse, the claims and pretensions of an oppressive institutional religion?
58. On the understanding that an organized, institutional religion is not the only possible framework that permits group prayer and group worship, what do you recommend?

Topic 8

Comparing and contrasting the true teachings of Jesus with the traditional tenets and practices of organized, institutional Christianity.

In effect, we have already examined the true teachings of Jesus, for the term *personal religion* is essentially a paraphrase that identifies the same ideas. Therefore we have every right to conclude that the true teachings of Jesus postulate and promote:

- Direct personal experience with God and other spiritual realities: “the personal quest for truth” and “the determination to explore the realities of personal religious experience” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1729:5 / 155:5.10*].
- “[A] living love, a life of service” [*a Melchizedek, 1100:7 / 100:6.5*]. This approach requires “continuous bearing of spiritual fruit: yielding the ministry to one’s fellows of that which has been received from one’s spiritual benefactors” [*a Melchizedek, 1095:5 / 100:2.1*].

Nonetheless, the following excerpts provide additional insights that will undoubtedly be helpful:

The religion of Jesus is the most dynamic influence ever to activate the human race. Jesus shattered tradition, destroyed dogma, and called mankind to the achievement of its highest ideals in time and eternity — to be perfect, even as the Father in heaven is perfect. [*A Melchizedek, 1091:2 / 99:5.3*]

The religion of Jesus demands living and spiritual experience. Other religions may consist in traditional beliefs, emotional feelings, philosophic consciousness, and all of that, but the teaching of the Master requires the attainment of actual levels of real spirit progression. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1782:3 / 160:5.12: remarks attributed to Rodan of Alexandria*]

The religion of Jesus fosters the highest type of human civilization in that it creates the highest type of spiritual personality and proclaims the sacredness of that person. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2063:5 / 194:3.7*]

During his first discourse on true religion, Jesus told the apostles and evangelists that the religion that he and they would soon proclaim in Palestine contrasted very substantially with the religion of authority that the religious leaders in Jerusalem maintained and promoted. The new religion, he said, “shall derive its authority from the fruits of its acceptance that will so certainly appear in the personal experience of all who really and truly become believers” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1730:0 / 155:5.12*]:

And Jesus went on to say: “At Jerusalem the religious leaders have formulated the various doctrines of their traditional teachers and the prophets of other days into an established system of intellectual beliefs, a religion of authority. The appeal of all such religions is largely to the mind. And now are we about to enter upon a deadly conflict with such a religion since we will so shortly begin the bold proclamation of a new religion — a religion which is not a religion in the present-day meaning of that word, a religion that makes its chief appeal to the divine spirit of my Father which resides in the mind of man; a religion which shall derive its authority from the fruits of its acceptance that will so certainly appear in the personal experience of all who really and truly become believers in the truths of this higher spiritual communion.” [*The Midwayer Commission, 1729:7 - 1730:0 / 155:5.12*]

59. What did Jesus mean by declaring that his religion “is not a religion in the present-day meaning of that word” [*a Melchizedek, 1135:2 / 103:5.12*]? Although approximately two thousand years have elapsed since he made that statement, would you be inclined to repeat it now? If so, why? If not, why not?

Christianity: how it evolved. Although the context of our discussion does not and should not enable us to rival histories of Christianity whose detailed narrative and scholarly analysis extend for over one thousand pages, we can examine certain highlights that will suffice for our purposes here. From an historical perspective, the fundamental reality that we must grasp and absorb is that “Christianity is an extemporized religion” [*the Midwayer Commission, 2086:4 / 195:10.18*], as the Midwayer Commission points out. Lest there be any hesitation about what this means and implies, let me paraphrase this thought in ways that are colloquial and very clear: “They made it up as they went along.”

Of course we must now explain that the word “They” refers to Christian leaders and theologians, and that the word “it” stands for Christianity. Given these minor clarifications, the sentence may seem shocking, at least to some persons who encounter it for the first time. Therefore I believe it wise to intensify the reader’s awareness by reiterating what I just said: “They made it up as they went along.” *Yes, they definitely did.*

(a) A religion *about* Jesus. Starting on the day of Pentecost, the teachings of Jesus suddenly mutated into a religion *about* Jesus. Peter unintentionally led the way, but the others appear to have followed his example without hesitation or delay:

The apostles had been in hiding for forty days. This day happened to be the Jewish festival of Pentecost, and thousands of visitors from all parts of the world were in Jerusalem. Many arrived for this feast, but a majority had tarried in the city since the Passover. Now these frightened apostles emerged from their weeks of seclusion to appear boldly in the temple, where they began to preach the new message of a risen Messiah. And all the disciples were likewise conscious of having received some new spiritual endowment of insight and power.

It was about two o'clock when Peter stood up in that very place where his Master had last taught in this temple, and delivered that impassioned appeal which resulted in the winning of more than two thousand souls. The Master had gone, but they suddenly discovered that this story about him had great power with the people. No wonder they were led on into the further proclamation of that which vindicated their former devotion to Jesus and at the same time so constrained men to believe in him. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2060:1-2 / 194:1.1-2*]

What has happened to these men whom Jesus had ordained to go forth preaching the gospel of the kingdom, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man? They have a new gospel; they are on fire with a new experience; they are filled with a new spiritual energy. Their message has suddenly shifted to the proclamation of the risen Christ: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man God approved by mighty works and wonders; him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you did crucify and slay. The things which God foreshadowed by the mouth of all the prophets, he thus fulfilled. This Jesus did God raise up. God has made him both Lord and Christ. Being, by the right hand of God, exalted and having received from the Father the promise of the spirit, he has poured forth this which you see and hear. Repent, that your sins may be blotted out; that the Father may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you, even Jesus, whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restoration of all things."

The gospel of the kingdom, the message of Jesus, had been suddenly changed into the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They now proclaimed the facts of his life, death, and resurrection and preached the hope of his speedy return to this world to finish the work he began. Thus the message of the early believers had to do with preaching about the facts of his first coming and with teaching the hope of his second coming, an event which they deemed to be very near at hand.

Christ was about to become the creed of the rapidly forming church. Jesus lives; he died for men; he gave the spirit; he is coming again. Jesus filled all their thoughts and determined all their new concepts of God and everything else. They were too much enthused over the new doctrine that "God is the Father of the Lord Jesus" to be concerned with the old message that "God is the loving Father of all men," even of every single individual. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2066:4-5, 2067:1 / 194:4.4-6*]

Some day a reformation in the Christian church may strike deep enough to get back to the unadulterated religious teachings of Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. You may preach a religion *about* Jesus, but, perforce, you must *live* the religion of Jesus. In the enthusiasm of Pentecost, Peter unintentionally inaugurated a new religion, the religion of the risen and glorified Christ. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2091:10 / 196:2.1*]

60. We can all join the Midwayer Commission in hoping that a reformation in the Christian church will someday cause at least certain denominations thereof to concentrate on the unadulterated religious teachings *of* Jesus, rather than continue to focus their faith and observance on teachings *about* him (*e.g.*, the importance and meaning of the events that occurred on Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday). Do you see any objective evidence that seems to point in this direction now? If you are willing to look well into the future, what do you predict?

(b) **Sacrifice and atonement.** The Apostle Paul appears to have invented “the Christian doctrines of the atonement — the teaching that Jesus was the sacrificed Son who would satisfy the Father’s stern justice and appease the divine wrath” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1670:4 / 149:2.3*]. In the sentences that complete the same paragraph, the Midwayer Commission comments as follows:

These teachings originated in a praiseworthy effort to make the gospel of the kingdom more acceptable to disbelieving Jews. Though these efforts failed as far as winning the Jews was concerned, they did not fail to confuse and alienate many honest souls in all subsequent generations. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1670:4 / 149:2.3*]

A Divine Counselor’s negative verdict is far more emphatic:

The barbarous idea of appeasing an angry God, of propitiating an offended Lord, of winning the favor of Deity through sacrifices and penance and even by the shedding of blood, represents a religion wholly puerile and primitive, a philosophy unworthy of an enlightened age of science and truth. Such beliefs are utterly repulsive to the celestial beings and the divine rulers who serve and reign in the universes. It is an affront to God to believe, hold, or teach that innocent blood must be shed in order to win his favor or to divert the fictitious divine wrath. ...

The bestowal of a Paradise Son on your world was inherent in the situation of closing a planetary age; it was inescapable, and it was not made necessary for the purpose of winning the favor of God. This bestowal also happened to be the final personal act of a Creator Son in the long adventure of earning the experiential sovereignty of his universe. What a travesty upon the infinite character of God! this teaching that his fatherly heart in all its austere coldness and hardness was so untouched by the misfortunes and sorrows of his creatures that his tender mercies were not forthcoming until he saw his blameless Son bleeding and dying upon the cross of Calvary!

But the inhabitants of Urantia are to find deliverance from these ancient errors and pagan superstitions respecting the nature of the Universal Father. The revelation of the truth about God is appearing, and the human race is destined to know the Universal Father in all that beauty of character and loveliness of attributes so magnificently portrayed by the Creator Son who sojourned on Urantia as the Son of Man and the Son of God. [*A Divine Counselor*, 60:3,5-6 / 4:5.3,5-6]

- 61.** When the Divine Counselor declares that “the inhabitants of Urantia are to find deliverance from these ancient errors” [*a Divine Counselor*, 60:6 / 4:5.6], is he essentially predicting that most human beings will eventually accept the teachings of *The Urantia Book*? Are you willing to predict that any institutional religion whose leaders proclaim Jesus as the Son of God will abandon its core doctrine that he died on the cross to redeem mankind and atone for our sins?

(c) **The perils of Pauline.** Another serious defect of the teachings of the Apostle Paul stemmed from his personal disregard for women, combined with his tendency to downgrade their spiritual role or even deny it entirely. For example, here are two excerpts from epistles of the New Testament that Christian tradition ascribes to Paul:

As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. [*1 Corinthians, Chapter 14, verses 33-35 — Revised Standard Version*]

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion. Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. [*1 Timothy, Chapter 2, verses 8-12 — Revised Standard Version*]

In addition, Paul promoted celibacy, another highly unfortunate theme of his. Here is the trenchant analysis that we owe to a Brilliant Evening Star:

It was only natural that the cult of renunciation and humiliation should have paid attention to sexual gratification. The continence cult originated as a ritual among soldiers prior to engaging in battle; in later days it became the practice of "saints." This cult tolerated marriage only as an evil lesser than fornication. Many of the world's great religions have been adversely influenced by this ancient cult, but none more markedly than Christianity. The Apostle Paul was a devotee of this cult, and his personal views are reflected in the teachings which he fastened onto Christian theology: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." "I would that all men were even as I myself." "I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them to abide even as I." Paul well knew that such teachings were not a part of Jesus' gospel, and his acknowledgment of this is illustrated by his statement, "I speak this by permission and not by commandment." But this cult led Paul to look down upon women. And the pity of it all is that his personal opinions have long influenced the teachings of a great world religion. If the advice of the tentmaker-teacher were to be literally and universally obeyed, then would the human race come to a sudden and inglorious end. Furthermore, the involvement of a religion with the ancient continence cult leads directly to a war against marriage and the home, society's veritable foundation and the basic institution of human progress. And it is not to be wondered at that all such beliefs fostered the formation of celibate priest-hoods in the many religions of various peoples. [*A Brilliant Evening Star, 977:1 / 89:3.6*]

In contrast, Jesus treated men and women as spiritual equals:

Of all the daring things which Jesus did in connection with his earth career, the most amazing was his sudden announcement on the evening of January 16: "On the morrow we will set apart ten women for the ministering work of the kingdom." ...

It was most astounding in that day, when women were not even allowed on the main floor of the synagogue (being confined to the women's gallery), to behold them being recognized as authorized teachers of the new gospel of the kingdom. The charge which Jesus gave these ten women as he set them apart for gospel teaching and ministry was the emancipation proclamation which set free all women and for all time; no more was man to look upon woman as his spiritual inferior. This was a decided shock to even the twelve apostles. Notwithstanding they had many times heard the Master say that "in the kingdom of heaven there is neither rich nor poor, free nor bond, male nor female, all are equally the sons and daughters of God," they were literally stunned when he proposed formally to commission these ten women as religious teachers and even to permit their traveling about with them. The whole country was stirred up by this proceeding, the enemies of Jesus making great capital out of this move, but everywhere the women believers in the good news stood stanchly behind their chosen sisters and voiced no uncertain approval of this tardy acknowledgment of woman's place in religious work. And this liberation of women, giving them due recognition, was practiced by the apostles immediately after the Master's departure, albeit they fell back to the olden customs in subsequent generations. Throughout the early days of the Christian church women teachers and ministers were called *deaconesses* and were accorded general recognition. But Paul, despite the fact that he conceded all this in theory, never really incorporated it into his own attitude and personally found it difficult to carry out in practice. [The Midwayer Commission, 1678:5, 1679:2 / 150:1.1,3]

On the whole, it is fair to state that traditional, institutional Christianity has treated women as second-class citizens. In the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox branches of Christianity, women have never been allowed to become priests. Most Protestant denominations, however, now impose no obstacle to a female believer who wishes to be ordained as a minister, and many women are currently serving in that capacity. In addition, most branches of the Anglican (Episcopal) Church permit a woman to be consecrated as a bishop, whereas there appear to be some locations where this relatively recent practice has not yet been accepted.

Since readers of *The Urantia Book* are committed to the principle of spiritual equality that Jesus proclaimed, we cannot express approval of any institutional practice that does not accord equal rights to women, or that otherwise treats them as inferior beings. On the other hand, there is nothing in *The Urantia Book* that would justify traditional practices whereby various organized, institutional religions have accorded special standing to the professional clergy, personal roles ostensibly entitling them to instruct individual believers or otherwise exert spiritual authority over them.

These two factors, taken together, do not seem to be compatible with any potential recommendation of ours that women be ordained as priests in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox branches of Christianity, even though that approach would help correct long-standing discrimination against them. (Since the revelators advocate and promote *personal religion*, not institutional religion, it would be incongruous, and perhaps even a contradiction, for us to recommend that anyone, male or female, be ordained as a priest.)

62. Contrary to Jesus' approach and at least partly because of the influence of the Apostle Paul, traditional, institutional Christianity adopted a range of practices that discriminate against women. Although this pattern of discrimination appears to have diminished in some contexts, there seems little reason to believe that full equality will prevail in all segments of institutional Christianity. Do you agree with this conclusion? In any case, how do you analyze the situation?

(d) **Doctrines and creeds.** Jesus emphasized spiritual unity, while repeatedly warning against creeds and traditions that would serve to guide and control believers:

“Your spirit unity implies two things, which always will be found to harmonize in the lives of individual believers: First, you are possessed with a common motive for life service; you all desire above everything to do the will of the Father in heaven. Second, you all have a common goal of existence; you all purpose to find the Father in heaven, thereby proving to the universe that you have become like him.”

Many times during the training of the twelve Jesus reverted to this theme. Repeatedly he told them it was not his desire that those who believed in him should become dogmatized and standardized in accordance with the religious interpretations of even good men. Again and again he warned his apostles against the formulation of creeds and the establishment of traditions as a means of guiding and controlling believers in the gospel of the kingdom.

[*The Midwayer Commission*, 1592:1-2 / 141:5.3-4]

It is clear that Jesus was advocating complete religious freedom, the individual's right to reach spiritual conclusions and formulate religious beliefs based on his or her personal experience. In contrast, the techniques that Jesus warned against amounted to monolithic practices aimed at promoting uniformity, a pattern whereby the group exercises authority over the beliefs and actions of individuals. This, of course, is exactly what happened.

We have no way of knowing whether the apostles were paying close attention to what Jesus said, but in any case they did not pass along his warnings to their successors with sufficient energy and intensity. For example, the epistles attributed to the apostle Paul make it obvious that he wanted all believers to adopt the same interpretation: his own.

In addition to emphasizing his intense conviction that Jesus had redeemed humanity by dying on the cross for our sins, Paul argued most strenuously that converts to Christianity did not need to be circumcised or to adopt the dietary restrictions and other traditional practices that would have made them Jewish. This disagreement seems to have reached a climax in the late forties or early fifties of our current era, at a time when Paul had journeyed to Jerusalem in order to confer with Peter and with James, the younger brother of Jesus.*

Although controversies over the nature and identity of Jesus simmered among diverse communities of Christian believers during the next 250 years, these disagreements did not become prominent and important in public until the Emperor Constantine decided to sponsor and patronize institutional Christianity in the year 313 CE. For his part, Constantine appears to have imagined his subjects intoning some semi-magical mantra that would amount to “One Empire, One Emperor, One God, One Faith.” To his chagrin, however, he rapidly discovered that many professional Christians of his day were fractious and bumptious, displaying a disarming tendency to exacerbate disagreements by hurling invective, instead of seeking to develop reasonable and perhaps subtle compromises that might enable them to reach agreement on key features of Christian belief and practice.

Since Christianity had unquestionably morphed into a religion *about* Jesus, Christian believers of that day found it necessary to define his nature and identity clearly and precisely. After all, the issues were complex and delicate:

* The Midwayer Commission implicitly refers to this argument in Paper 139, but the wording is general and does not identify the specific issues:

“Peter was the first of Jesus’ apostles to come forward to defend the work of Philip among the Samaritans and Paul among the gentiles; yet later on at Antioch he reversed himself when confronted by ridiculing Judaizers, temporarily withdrawing from the gentiles only to bring down upon his head the fearless denunciation of Paul.” [*The Midwayer Commission, 1551:3 / 139:2.7*]

In contrast, the Midwayer Commission’ subsequent analysis of what happened at Pentecost makes it much easier to understand the questions that Peter and Paul argued about:

“This day of Pentecost witnessed the great effort of the spirit to liberate the religion of Jesus from its inherited Jewish fetters. Even after this demonstration of pouring out the spirit upon all flesh, the apostles at first endeavored to impose the requirements of Judaism upon their converts. Even Paul had trouble with his Jerusalem brethren because he refused to subject the gentiles to these Jewish practices. No revealed religion can spread to all the world when it makes the serious mistake of becoming permeated with some national culture or associated with established racial, social, or economic practices.” [*The Midwayer Commission, 2064:1 / 194:3.9*]

- Was Jesus a divine person and a human person or only one of the above and, if so, which one?
- Did Jesus have one nature and one will, or two of each?
- How exactly did Jesus relate to the Father? Did he share the same spiritual substance (*homoousios*), or just manifest a similar substance (*homoiousios*)? (For any of you who are particularly adventurous — or perhaps particularly rash — you may wish to pronounce those two words in Greek and then explain to the rest of us why they are decisively different!)

Since the cacophony in these regards was intensifying, and since it gave no hint that it would soon subside, the Emperor Constantine decided to summon and convene the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) on his own authority, for no one dared to intimate to the Emperor that he needed to obtain anyone's approval or consent. The Council operated in Greek, not in Latin, and very few bishops from the western half of the Roman Empire traveled to Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) in order to attend. The bishop of Rome was not present, but Athanasius was:

It was a Greek, from Egypt, who so bravely stood up at Nicaea and so fearlessly challenged this assembly that it dared not so obscure the concept of the nature of Jesus that the real truth of his bestowal might have been in danger of being lost to the world. This Greek's name was Athanasius, and but for the eloquence and the logic of this believer, the persuasions of Arius would have triumphed. [*The Midway Commission, 2070.14 / 195:0.18*]

As it turned out, the Council of Nicaea was only the first of an extended series of church councils during which the assembled bishops exchanged views on the nature and identity of Jesus, and also on the spiritual relationships that characterize and define the Trinity. Some of them seem to have been procedurally irregular or defective for other reasons, but the extended series included two church councils that were almost as significant as the Council of Nicaea: those held at Constantinople (381 CE) and at Chalcedon (451 CE).

Thus the intense controversies and debates lasted for just over 125 years. Taken as a whole, the process was extremely contentious, encompassing sudden shifts of mood and numerous political intrigues that clearly affected the deliberations of the bishops. As a brief summary that will have to suffice for our current purposes, here are the titles of three relatively recent works written by well respected historians:

- *Voting About God in Early Church Councils* by Ramsay MacMullen (2006).
- *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* by R. P. C. Hanson (1988).
- *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years* by Philip Jenkins (2010).

At the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), the assembled bishops adopted the following detailed statement in which they portrayed the nature and identity of Jesus:*

THEREFORE, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge
one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood,
truly God and truly man,
consisting also of a reasonable soul and body;
of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead,
and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood;
like us in all respects, apart from sin;
as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages,
but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary
the Virgin, the Godbearer;
one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten,
recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division,
without separation;
the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union,
but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together
to form one person and subsistence,
not as parted or separated into two persons,
but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ;
even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ
himself taught us,
and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

(Translation from Bettenson, Henry. *Documents of the Christian Church*. Oxford University Press, 1947, page 73.)

* “Anglicans Online | The Chalcedon Formula, AD 451”: <http://anglicansonline.org/basics/chalcedon.html> (accessed on September 13, 2015).

This statement (which is often called “the Chalcedonian Definition,” “the Chalcedonian Creed,” or “the Chalcedonian Formula”) became standard doctrine of the institutional Christian church. As previously stated, the bishops who participated in the extended series of church councils also examined the spiritual relationships that characterize and define the Trinity. During the Council of Constantinople (381 CE), additional wording related to the Holy Spirit* was added to the Nicene Creed — which therefore, in a very formal sense, should actually be called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.

In the sentence that appears below, the words shown in italics are mainly those that were added during the Council of Constantinople. *On the other hand*, the three words within brackets (*i.e.*, “and the Son”) are an exception, for they were not adopted at that time. To the contrary, Western Christians inserted this idea long after the Council of Constantinople had adjourned, apparently making a definitive decision to do that after at least one hundred years had elapsed (and probably a longer period). In contrast, Eastern Orthodox Christians have never accepted the insertion.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.[†]

Relations between the ecclesiastical authorities in Rome and Constantinople (“New Rome”) were never warm and, to the contrary, were usually rather tense. From time to time over the next several centuries, the two halves of Christendom encountered serious differences that related to doctrine, liturgical practices, and the authority of the Pope and Patriarch. In April 1054, Pope Leo IX dispatched Cardinal Humbert (the Roman Catholic archbishop of Sicily) to Constantinople, instructing him to discuss the phrase “and the Son” and other issues with Michael Cerularius, the Patriarch of that city, and to urge that Eastern Orthodox Christians accept Western views.

* Here it is important to bear in mind that in traditional Christian theology, the phrase “the Holy Spirit” refers to the third person of the Trinity as Christians conceive it. In contrast, however, the revelators tell us that the third person of the Paradise Trinity is the Infinite Spirit, and they use the phrase “the Holy Spirit” to refer to the spiritual ministry that the Creative Mother Spirit of Nebadon carries out on her own behalf.

† If we remove the italics and the square brackets, then the sentence conforms to wording used in the current Roman Catholic translation (2011) of the Nicene Creed. SOURCE: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_versions_of_the_Nicene_Creed (accessed on September 13, 2015).

According to one well respected historian, Cardinal Humbert took his trip to Constantinople as an excuse to behave with “calculated rudeness.”* On July 16, 1054, after he and his companions had concluded that Michael Cerularius had no intention of yielding, they strode resolutely through the great basilica Hagia Sophia during a worship service. When Humbert reached the altar, he thrust upon it a document of excommunication that the Pope had signed in advance, presumably as a contingency. We have no way of knowing whether the Patriarch was shocked, but he subsequently managed to return the favor by excommunicating Cardinal Humbert and the other Western envoys.

These dramatic events launched the Great Schism that still separates Eastern Orthodox Christians from those who follow the Western tradition. As previously stated, Eastern Orthodox believers have never agreed to insert the words “and the Son” in the phrase of the Nicene Creed that proclaims how the Holy Spirit proceeds.

(e) Reformation postscript. The Protestant reformers of the 16th century sought to purify the doctrines and practices of the institutional Christian church, in part by encouraging believers to read the Bible for themselves, but also by attacking and disavowing many Roman Catholic doctrines and practices for which they (the reformers) could not find a solid basis in Christian scriptures. The following slogan in Latin summarizes the principles that they endeavored to apply: *“sola scriptura, sola fide, sola gratia”* (“scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone”).

On the other hand, there seem to be persuasive reasons to conclude that the reformers did not apply these principles in ways that would have been completely consistent. For example, they emphatically affirmed the complex Christian doctrines that had emerged from the councils of Nicaea (325 CE), Constantinople (381 CE), and Chalcedon (451 CE) — the doctrines pertaining to the nature and identity of Jesus and to the spiritual relationships that characterize and define the Trinity. To make the same point in more explicit terms, the Protestant reformers of the 16th century chose to maintain an intense devotion to those traditional doctrines even though it was impossible to assert that they met the criterion *“sola scriptura”* (“scripture alone”). After all, no one could identify scriptural passages justifying all the philosophic concepts and subtle distinctions that the bishops assembled at Chalcedon wove into the celebrated definition that they adopted in the year 451 CE!

On August 13, 1553, well over one thousand years after the Council of Chalcedon concluded and adjourned, civil officials of Geneva, Switzerland, acting on the wishes of John Calvin, arrested the Spanish theologian and physician Michael Servetus. They charged him with heresy for writings in which he had disputed Christian doctrines pertaining to the Trinity, while also taking issue with traditional teachings about original sin and the practice of baptizing infants.

* *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* by Diarmaid MacCulloch (Viking: New York, New York, U.S.A., 2010), page 374.

The trial of Michael Servetus lasted from August 14 to October 25, 1553. At the conclusion thereof, the civil court of the city of Geneva convicted Servetus of heresy and sentenced him to be burned at the stake — a punishment that was carried out two days later (*i.e.*, on October 27, 1553).

Although John Calvin had unquestionably urged that Servetus be tried and punished, he did not participate in the trial, since he was not a civil official. According to some scholars, however, Calvin recommended to the court that Servetus be beheaded instead of being burned alive.*

- 63.** In your view, why did institutional religion (*i.e.*, the Christian church) ignore Jesus' warnings against creeds and traditions that would serve to guide and control believers? Do you see any prospect that one or more Christian denominations will set aside such practices and will cease to operate along such lines?
- 64.** The Christian doctrines of the Trinity are fundamentally mistaken in a factual and philosophic sense, for the Eternal Son of Paradise did not bestow himself on Urantia in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth, and the Creative Mother Spirit of Nebadon is not the Infinite Spirit. Do these mistakes in any way detract from or otherwise influence the mindal and spiritual ministry that assists, serves, and inspires every Urantian, regardless of an individual's spiritual convictions or religious beliefs (*i.e.*, the efforts of the adjutant mind-spirits, of the guardian seraphim, of the Thought Adjusters, of the Holy Spirit, and of the Spirit of Truth)?

* In one of the works of Michael Servetus on theological matters, he had mentioned that blood circulates in the lungs, a discovery he made as a physician. The following sources include the information about him that appears in the text:

— "Servetus, Michael." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015.

— "Michael Servetus," an article in the online encyclopedia called Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Servetus (accessed on September 15, 2015).

65. On the other hand, we must also consider these factual and philosophic mistakes concerning the nature and significance of the Paradise Trinity from broader perspectives, viewpoints related to cosmic consciousness and more accurate concepts of God. In Paper 4, a Divine Counselor states:

“One of the greatest sources of confusion on Urantia concerning the nature of God grows out of the failure of your sacred books clearly to distinguish between the personalities of the Paradise Trinity and between Paradise Deity and the local universe creators and administrators. During the past dispensations of partial understanding, your priests and prophets failed clearly to differentiate between Planetary Princes, System Sovereigns, Constellation Fathers, Creator Sons, Superuniverse Rulers, the Supreme Being, and the Universal Father. Many of the messages of subordinate personalities, such as Life Carriers and various orders of angels, have been, in your records, presented as coming from God himself. Urantian religious thought still confuses the associate personalities of Deity with the Universal Father himself, so that all are included under one appellation.” *[A Divine Counselor, 60:1 / 4:5.2]*

There also seem to be good reasons to wonder whether Christian mistakes about the Trinity implicitly exaggerate how our planet Urantia relates to the grand universe, thereby contributing to a kind of spiritual egotism whereby God’s love for us could be misinterpreted so as to imply that Urantia and its inhabitants are the sole beneficiaries of God’s active concern for human beings.

Please comment on any or all of the factors mentioned above, while seeking to concentrate on aspects that you consider particularly significant.

(f) **Theology: its value and limitations.** Theology receives decidedly mixed reviews from the authors of *The Urantia Book*. On the one hand, the revelators note that theology is the only discipline that can aspire to explain the logic and psychology of belief. On the other hand, one of the authors points out that religion produces theology, not the reverse, and that when theology masters religion, religion dies.

Religious experience, being essentially spiritual, can never be fully understood by the material mind; hence the function of theology, the psychology of religion. [*A Divine Counselor, 69:1 / 5:5.6*]

Psychology may indeed attempt to study the phenomena of religious reactions to the social environment, but never can it hope to penetrate to the real and inner motives and workings of religion. Only theology, the province of faith and the technique of revelation, can afford any sort of intelligent account of the nature and content of religious experience. [*A Melchizedek, 1107:7 / 101:2.17*]

Religion persists in spite of revolutionary changes in religious beliefs. Theology does not produce religion; it is religion that produces theologic philosophy. [*A Melchizedek, 1130:3 / 103:1.4*]

When theology masters religion, religion dies; it becomes a doctrine instead of a life. The mission of theology is merely to facilitate the self-consciousness of personal spiritual experience. Theology constitutes the religious effort to define, clarify, expound, and justify the experiential claims of religion, which, in the last analysis, can be validated only by living faith. [*A Melchizedek, 1141:4 / 103:9.6*]

While personal religion precedes the evolution of human morals, it is regretfully recorded that institutional religion has invariably lagged behind the slowly changing mores of the human races. Organized religion has proved to be conservatively tardy. **The prophets have usually led the people in religious development; the theologians have usually held them back.** [*A Melchizedek, 1128:2 / 102:8.6 — emphasis added: sentence in bold type*]

Theology may fix, formulate, define, and dogmatize faith, but in the human life of Jesus faith was personal, living, original, spontaneous, and purely spiritual. This faith was not reverence for tradition nor a mere intellectual belief which he held as a sacred creed, but rather a sublime experience and a profound conviction which *securely held him*. His faith was so real and all-encompassing that it absolutely swept away any spiritual doubts and effectively destroyed every conflicting desire. Nothing was able to tear him away from the spiritual anchorage of this fervent, sublime, and undaunted faith. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2087:5 / 196:0.5*]

In view of the rather pointed remarks cited above, and given the not entirely pleasant aftertaste of the various Christian doctrines and dogmas that we have already examined, it would be reasonable to nourish the hope that we can now turn in different directions, accelerating well away from all this and consigning it to the rear-view mirror.

Unfortunately, however, there remains one more aspect of Christian theology that we cannot evade or neglect. Examining it will enable us to acquire the knowledge and understanding that we would need in order to repulse a potentially vicious attack on the teachings of *The Urantia Book*, an attack featuring intellectual aggression that would amount to name calling.

Here is the essential issue: How would you respond if a theologian or some other aficionado of Christian doctrine and history were to assert that *The Urantia Book* is “Pelagian,” on the understanding that he or she intended that epithet as a badge of opprobrium, ignominy, and shame, and was wielding it as an all too convenient excuse that dispensed him or her from making the effort to analyze the teachings in substance and discuss them in detail?

Some of you might surprise me by tossing off an answer now, but I assure the rest of you that I shall repeat the question after I have done my best to provide sufficient background. As a practical matter, this story takes us to the final decades of the fourth century and to the first few decades of the fifth, well after Constantine had designated Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire (a step that he took in the year 313 CE or shortly thereafter).

(g) Pelagius and Augustine. One of the intense theological controversies of that era (although certainly not the only one) pitted Pelagius, a relatively obscure British monk who was then preaching in Rome, against Augustine, bishop of Hippo in north Africa, an ecclesiastical superstar whose extant works in Latin have made him the most prolific author who ever wrote in that language and, not incidentally, the most influential theologian who lived and taught in Western Europe during Christianity’s first few centuries.

This brief account of the protagonists will undoubtedly enable a perceptive reader to infer who won the argument, but the underlying contention will not be clear unless I provide reasonably detailed information about Pelagius and Pelagianism, the teachings named after him. With that goal in mind, I shall start by reproducing two articles from the current edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (an edition available solely in the form of computer software).

Pelagius

Born c. 354, probably Britain
Died after 418, possibly Palestine

Monk and theologian whose heterodox theological system known as Pelagianism (*q.v.*) emphasized the primacy of human effort in spiritual salvation.

Coming to Rome c. 380, Pelagius, though not a priest, became a highly regarded spiritual director for both clergy and laymen. The rigorous asceticism of his adherents acted as a reproach to the spiritual sloth of many Roman Christians, whose moral standards greatly distressed him. He blamed Rome's moral laxity on the doctrine of divine grace that he heard a bishop cite from the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine, who in his prayer for continence beseeched God to grant whatever grace the divine will determined. Pelagius attacked this teaching on the grounds that it imperilled the entire moral law and soon gained a considerable following at Rome. Henceforth his closest collaborator was a lawyer named Celestius.

After the fall of Rome to the Visigoth chieftain Alaric in 410, Pelagius and Celestius went to Africa. There they encountered the hostile criticism of Augustine, who published several denunciatory letters concerning their doctrine, particularly Pelagius' insistence on man's basically good moral nature and on man's own responsibility for voluntarily choosing Christian asceticism for his spiritual advancement.

Pelagius left for Palestine c. 412. There, although accused of heresy at the synod of Jerusalem in 415, he succeeded in clearing himself and avoiding censure. In response to further attacks from Augustine and the Latin biblical scholar Jerome, Pelagius wrote *De libero arbitrio* ("On Free Will") in 416, which resulted in the condemnation of his teaching by two African councils. In 417 Pope Innocent I endorsed the condemnations and excommunicated Pelagius and Celestius. Innocent's successor, Zosimus, at first pronounced him innocent on the basis of Pelagius' *Libellus fidei* ("Brief Statement of Faith"), but after renewed investigation at the council of Carthage in 418, Zosimus confirmed the council's nine canons condemning Pelagius. Nothing more is known of Pelagius after this date.

SOURCE: "Pelagius." Encyclopædia Britannica. [Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite](#). Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015.

Pelagianism

Also called *Pelagian Heresy*

A 5th-century Christian heresy taught by Pelagius (*q.v.*) and his followers that stressed the essential goodness of human nature and the freedom of the human will. Pelagius was concerned about the slack moral standards among Christians, and he hoped to improve their conduct by his teachings. Rejecting the arguments of those who claimed that they sinned because of human weakness, he insisted that God made human beings free to choose between good and evil and that sin is a voluntary act committed by a person against God's law. Celestius, a disciple of Pelagius, denied the church's doctrine of original sin and the necessity of infant Baptism.

Pelagianism was opposed by Augustine, bishop of Hippo, who asserted that human beings could not attain righteousness by their own efforts and were totally dependent upon the grace of God. Condemned by two councils of African bishops in 416, and again at Carthage in 418, Pelagius and Celestius were finally excommunicated in 418; Pelagius' later fate is unknown.

The controversy, however, was not over. Julian of Eclanum continued to assert the Pelagian view and engaged Augustine in literary polemic until the latter's death in 430. Julian himself was finally condemned, with the rest of the Pelagian party, at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Another heresy, known as Semi-Pelagianism (*q.v.*), flourished in southern Gaul until it was finally condemned at the second Council of Orange in 529.

SOURCE: "Pelagianism." Encyclopædia Britannica. [Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite](#). Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015.

To supplement this background information, I shall now cite two paragraphs from another reference work, an encyclopedic dictionary that is unfortunately out of print.* (I am doing this because I believe that these two paragraphs contain additional insights that will be useful to you, as well as interesting.)

* Nonetheless, used copies are currently available from Amazon.com. (Information accessed on September 17, 2015.)

Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism (*excerpt*)

Pelagianism can be reconstructed from authentic writings. It was a teaching about divine grace, and it hinged on two principles. First, grace comes from man's own choice, since human free will requires an equipoise before right and wrong, and it is by an act of his own that man takes the initiative in salvation. Second, infant baptism is useless, since Adam's sin was personal and therefore does not damn others. The massive attack launched by Augustine was directed against the denial of original sin and the gratuitousness of divine grace; the controversy was cleanly conducted without vituperation. ...

Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism are not, however, simply episodes in Christian history. They represent a perennial human response in the search to express the place of human cooperation with grace. **In the controversies of the Reformation, as well as within Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, those who have defended human cooperation have been called Pelagians by their adversaries.** In preaching, devotional literature, and in the thought of the ordinary Christian, the naturalness of a Pelagian mentality manifests itself. Those who defend the transcendence and gratuitousness of divine grace regard as a practical Pelagianism the reduction of the gospel of grace and the Christian life to the level of good behavior benignly regarded and vaguely assisted by God.

(Emphasis added above: the sentence shown in bold type.)

SOURCE: These two paragraphs come from the article "Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism" signed T. Gilby. They appear on page 2715 of *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*, a three-volume work edited by Paul Kevin Meager, OP. S.T.M, Thomas C. O'Brien, and Sister Consuelo Maria Aherne, SSJ (Washington, DC, U.S.A.: Corpus Publications and Mount St. Joseph, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.: the Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia, 1979).

Note:

The edition that is currently available from Amazon.com is dated March 1984; it was published by the Catholic University of America (information accessed on September 17, 2015).

ANALYSIS

— Pelagius appears to have been an austere figure who may also have been Puritanical, but we agree with him that human nature is fundamentally good, that human beings are free to choose between good and evil, and that sin occurs only by deliberate choice, not as a consequence of another person's actions at some previous moment.

— In other words, we agree with Celestius and other followers of Pelagius that the doctrine of original sin is a myth, that infants are not born with some imaginary stain, and that initiating a sound and favorable relationship with God does not require baptism or any other ceremony carried out by some representative of institutional religion.

A SIDE EFFECT AND ITS APPALLING IMPLICATIONS

During Augustine's extended struggle with Pelagius and Pelagianism, his views on how God bestows grace became increasingly restrictive; he ended up proclaiming that God has made arbitrary decisions that some persons will be saved and that others will not. According to Augustine, God made such decisions before time began, and therefore before any individual was born.

These repulsive teachings most assuredly amount to predestination. They clearly influenced John Calvin and, through him, the entire spectrum of Evangelical thought among Protestant Christians.

One well respected historian describes how Augustine's views evolved while he was crusading against Pelagius and his followers:*

In the process, Augustine's thoughts about the nature of grace and salvation were pushed to ever more extreme positions, which can be traced both through *The City of God* and the long series of tracts which he wrote attacking Pelagian thought. Eventually he could say not simply that all human impulses to do good are a result of God's grace, but that it is an entirely arbitrary decision on the part of God as to who receives this grace. God has made the decision before all time, so some are foreordained to be saved through grace — a predestined group of the elect. The arbitrariness is fully justified by the monstrosity of Adam's original fall, in which we all have a part through original sin ... There was much criticism of this theology of grace at the time, and it has alternately repelled and fascinated both Catholic and Protestant down to the present day. ... Eastern theologians, so influenced by the Eastern monastic tradition of spiritual endeavour which encompasses both Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians, have never found Augustine's approach to grace congenial.

* *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* by Diarmaid MacCulloch (Viking: New York, New York, U.S.A., 2010), page 308.

66. How would you respond if a theologian or some other aficionado of Christian doctrine and history were to assert that *The Urantia Book* is “Pelagian,” on the understanding that he or she intended that epithet as a badge of opprobrium, ignominy, and shame, and was wielding it as an all too convenient excuse that dispensed him or her from making the effort to analyze the teachings in substance and discuss them in detail?

Christianity: key features and practices. Thus far we have mainly examined Christianity by describing how it evolved, especially during the first few centuries. Now we shall adopt a more analytical approach, in order to identify the religion’s key features and practices. For clarity and completeness, the following list includes relatively brief remarks pertaining to characteristics that we have already examined.

(a) **A religion about Jesus instead of the religion of Jesus.** Therefore Christian doctrine devotes intense attention to defining who Jesus was, and the broad pattern of Christian observance focuses on crucial events that occurred during Jesus’ life (especially his birth, death, and resurrection).

(b) **The atonement.** Christianity’s core contention, almost ranking as a trademark, is the assertion that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, thereby redeeming humanity and creating a spiritual pathway that enables a sincere believer to be saved (*i.e.*, “to go to heaven”) — but only if he or she has also honored the commandments and the other moral precepts that Christianity propounds. The religion’s most prominent symbol is the cross or crucifix, a constant reminder of its central theme.

(c) **Doctrines and creeds.** Although the atonement can correctly be considered Christianity’s most prominent doctrine, the religion also advances a range of other standard teachings amounting to methods intended to guide and control believers, while simultaneously promoting uniformity and discouraging original, imaginative, or creative thinking.

(d) **Special status for the clergy.** Institutional Christianity distinguishes quite sharply between professional religionists (the clergy) and ordinary believers (the laity). Here we must note, however, that the clergy’s prestige, privileges, and authority are crucial in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox branches of Christianity, whereas Protestant denominations are substantially less hierarchical, and some of them come close to being democratic.

(e) **Monasticism.** The special roles and prestige associated with monks and nuns were a key feature of Christianity for over one thousand years, but these convictions and practices have declined in relative importance since the 16th century (*i.e.*, since the

Reformation). Most Protestant denominations do not make any provision for monks or nuns, but the Anglican (Episcopal) Church does and is therefore an exception. The initial and most fundamental concept of monasticism was to separate oneself from society and live in relative isolation, implicitly concentrating on one's own spiritual advancement rather than the progressive growth and development of humanity. In the centuries that followed the year 1000, however, the members of new religious orders sought to serve individuals and groups in society by various different methods (*e.g.*, preaching, teaching, ministering to the sick, and assisting persons who are impoverished or otherwise in difficulty).

(f) Second-class status for women. Traditional Christianity assigns subordinate roles to female believers, and the disparity is especially evident in its Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox branches. On the other hand, relatively recent reforms have expanded the roles and responsibilities that are now open to women, especially within Protestant denominations.

(g) Emphasis on celibacy. Mainly because of the enduring influence of the Apostle Paul, traditional Christian culture is associated with the view that believers who remain celibate are holier than those who marry. (Given the practices summarized in the immediately preceding paragraph, this emphasis on celibacy appears to be stronger within the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox branches of Christianity than among Protestant believers. On the other hand, Protestant believers attach particular importance to the New Testament as a source of Christian beliefs and values, and that document includes various remarks of Paul's associated with the continence cult — as a Brilliant Evening Star points out in the passage cited on page 93 above.)

(h) Reverence for saints and for objects believed to be sacred. Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox believers display particular reverence for deceased persons whom the institutional Church has declared to be saints, and also for material objects that are thought to be sacred (*e.g.*, relics) or that are treated as reminders stimulating or facilitating the bestowal of grace (*i.e.*, icons, as honored in the Eastern Orthodox tradition). Because Mary, the mother of Jesus, was undoubtedly the most prominent saint for at least the first thousand years of the Christian faith, the institutional Church proclaimed several prominent doctrines pertaining to her. In the 16th century, however (*i.e.*, during the Reformation), Protestant reformers rejected traditional teachings that postulate an active spiritual role on Mary's part.

(i) "A personal relationship with Jesus Christ." Some Christians proclaim that they enjoy and greatly benefit from "a personal relationship with Jesus Christ," a statement that appears to be more frequent among Protestant believers than among others. Since the name "Jesus" or "Jesus of Nazareth" corresponds to the personal identity that Christ Michael of Nebadon assumed during his seventh and final bestowal, and since the experiences and memories that our Sovereign Master Son acquired during his bestowal life on Urantia are now an integral and inseparable part of his completed spiritual identity (along with the experiences and memories associated with his first

six bestowals*), the statement mentioned above cannot possibly be accurate in a factual and literal sense. On the other hand, there is no reason to doubt or take issue with the spiritual experience that such an individual believer has sought to describe. First, no human being can presume to interpret or appraise someone else's inner spiritual experience. Second, the inner experience of an individual believer who proclaims that he or she has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ may at least partly reflect the ministry and influence of the Spirit of Truth. The Midwayer Commission's remarks seem to harmonize with that possibility:

Do not make the mistake of expecting to become strongly intellectually conscious of the outpoured Spirit of Truth. The spirit never creates a consciousness of himself, only a consciousness of Michael, the Son. From the beginning Jesus taught that the spirit would not speak of himself. The proof, therefore, of your fellowship with the Spirit of Truth is not to be found in your consciousness of this spirit but rather in your experience of enhanced fellowship with Michael.

The spirit also came to help men recall and understand the words of the Master as well as to illuminate and reinterpret his life on earth.

Next, the Spirit of Truth came to help the believer to witness to the realities of Jesus' teachings and his life as he lived it in the flesh, and as he now again lives it anew and afresh in the individual believer of each passing generation of the spirit-filled sons of God.

Thus it appears that the Spirit of Truth comes really to lead all believers into all truth, into the expanding knowledge of the experience of the living and growing spiritual consciousness of the reality of eternal and ascending sonship with God. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2061:2-5 / 194:2:4-7*]

- 67.** Please do your best to evaluate and explain the concept of "a personal relationship with Jesus Christ" from analytical and intuitive perspectives, but certainly without calling into question the seriousness, sincerity, or integrity of any believer. Do you interpret this perception and belief as just a natural corollary of institutional Christianity's rapid transformation into a religion *about* Jesus rather than the religion *of* Jesus, or do you postulate one or more additional factors that might be equally important? Do you see anything in the concept of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that implies service to others or, for that matter, a diligent effort to enhance and upgrade the existing patterns of human life on our planet Urantia?

* See the table on page 17 above.

(j) **Social ministry and charitable activities.** The various branches of institutional Christianity demonstrate a general desire to assist human beings in structured and organized ways, including counseling and other forms of social ministry, sponsoring and administering educational institutions, and assisting persons who are ill or otherwise in need.

(k) **Intense respect for scripture.** This characteristic appears at the end of our list of Christianity's key features and practices because we will need to consider it in reasonable depth and detail, certainly not because it is less important than the others that we have already discussed. In brief, however, it is clear that traditional Christian reverence for the Bible as a sacred text — especially on the part of believers who are inclined to proclaim that all elements of this complex document are uniformly “the word of God” — raises a range of issues that are problematic at best.

A Brilliant Evening Star starts with the premise that swearing on a “**holy book**” is a form of refined fetishism, although he concedes that venerating “**a superb collection**” of disparate writings does represent “**real evolutionary progress**” that raises this practice well above primitive customs that might involve reverence for the fingernail trimmings of a savage chief:

To take an oath on a “**holy book**” or to swear by some object of supreme veneration is a form of refined fetishism.

But it does represent real evolutionary progress to advance from the fetish fear of a savage chief's fingernail trimmings to the adoration of a superb collection of letters, laws, legends, allegories, myths, poems, and chronicles which, after all, reflect the winnowed moral wisdom of many centuries, at least up to the time and event of their being assembled as a “**sacred book.**” [*A Brilliant Evening Star*, 969:6-7 / 88:2.8-9]

In terms of content and substance, the paramount concerns associated with the Old Testament stem from the distortions and misrepresentations that the Hebrew priests propounded during their exile in Babylon, while conducting their systematic editing of previous writings. These efforts of the Hebrew priests ultimately produced “**a fiction of sacred history**” that has been “**disastrously exploited by both Jewish and Christian writers**” [*a Melchizedek*, 1071:3-4 / 97:8.5-6]:

The custom of looking upon the record of the experiences of the Hebrews as sacred history and upon the transactions of the rest of the world as profane history is responsible for much of the confusion existing in the human mind as to the interpretation of history. And this difficulty arises because there is no secular history of the Jews. After the priests of the Babylonian exile had prepared their new record of God's supposedly miraculous dealings with the Hebrews, the sacred history of Israel as portrayed in the

Old Testament, they carefully and completely destroyed the existing records of Hebrew affairs — such books as “The Doings of the Kings of Israel” and “The Doings of the Kings of Judah,” together with several other more or less accurate records of Hebrew history. *[A Melchizedek, 1070:4 / 97:8.1]*

When the Jewish priests returned to Jerusalem, they had already completed the writing of their narrative of the beginning of things. Soon they made claims that this recital was a recently discovered story of creation written by Moses. **But the contemporary Hebrews of around 500 B.C. did not consider these writings to be divine revelations; they looked upon them much as later peoples regard mythological narratives.**

This spurious document, reputed to be the teachings of Moses, was brought to the attention of Ptolemy, the Greek king of Egypt, who had it translated into Greek by a commission of seventy scholars for his new library at Alexandria. And so this account found its place among those writings which subsequently became a part of the later collections of the “sacred scriptures” of the Hebrew and Christian religions. And through identification with these theological systems, such concepts for a long time profoundly influenced the philosophy of many Occidental peoples. *[Solonia, 838:3-4 / 74:8.11-12 — emphasis added: sentence in bold type]*

All modern religions have seriously blundered in the attempt to put a miraculous interpretation on certain epochs of human history. While it is true that God has many times thrust a Father’s hand of providential intervention into the stream of human affairs, it is a mistake to regard theologic dogmas and religious superstition as a supernatural sedimentation appearing by miraculous action in this stream of human history. The fact that the “Most Highs rule in the kingdoms of men” does not convert secular history into so-called sacred history.

New Testament authors and later Christian writers further complicated the distortion of Hebrew history by their well-meant attempts to transcendentalize the Jewish prophets. Thus has Hebrew history been disastrously exploited by both Jewish and Christian writers. Secular Hebrew history has been thoroughly dogmatized. It has been converted into a fiction of sacred history and has become inextricably bound up with the moral concepts and religious teachings of the so-called Christian nations. *[A Melchizedek, 1071:3-4 / 97:8.5-6]*

When the apostle Nathaniel approached Jesus privately, asking him to explain his view of the traditional Jewish writings, Jesus replied with total candor, revealing extensive distortions and deceptions that Nathaniel clearly had not imagined: “Nathaniel was enlightened, and shocked, by the Master’s pronouncement” *[the Midwayer Commission, 1769:2 / 159:4.11]*. Further, it is eminently reasonable to conclude that now, almost two thousand years later, Jesus’ detailed reply would still shock many sincere believers who are pursuing the traditional paths of institutional Christianity:

And then went Jesus over to Abila, where Nathaniel and his associates labored. Nathaniel was much bothered by some of Jesus' pronouncements which seemed to detract from the authority of the recognized Hebrew scriptures. Accordingly, on this night, after the usual period of questions and answers, Nathaniel took Jesus away from the others and asked: "Master, could you trust me to know the truth about the Scriptures? I observe that you teach us only a portion of the sacred writings — the best as I view it — and I infer that you reject the teachings of the rabbis to the effect that the words of the law are the very words of God, having been with God in heaven even before the times of Abraham and Moses. What is the truth about the Scriptures?" When Jesus heard the question of his bewildered apostle, he answered:

"Nathaniel, you have rightly judged; I do not regard the Scriptures as do the rabbis. I will talk with you about this matter on condition that you do not relate these things to your brethren, who are not all prepared to receive this teaching. The words of the law of Moses and the teachings of the Scriptures were not in existence before Abraham. Only in recent times have the Scriptures been gathered together as we now have them. While they contain the best of the higher thoughts and longings of the Jewish people, they also contain much that is far from being representative of the character and teachings of the Father in heaven; wherefore must I choose from among the better teachings those truths which are to be gleaned for the gospel of the kingdom.

"These writings are the work of men, some of them holy men, others not so holy. The teachings of these books represent the views and extent of enlightenment of the times in which they had their origin. As a revelation of truth, the last are more dependable than the first. The Scriptures are faulty and altogether human in origin, but mistake not, they do constitute the best collection of religious wisdom and spiritual truth to be found in all the world at this time.

"Many of these books were not written by the persons whose names they bear, but that in no way detracts from the value of the truths which they contain. If the story of Jonah should not be a fact, even if Jonah had never lived, still would the profound truth of this narrative, the love of God for Nineveh and the so-called heathen, be none the less precious in the eyes of all those who love their fellow men. The Scriptures are sacred because they present the thoughts and acts of men who were searching for God, and who in these writings left on record their highest concepts of righteousness, truth, and holiness. The Scriptures contain much that is true, very much, but in the light of your present teaching, you know that these writings also contain much that is misrepresentative of the Father in heaven, the loving God I have come to reveal to all the worlds.

"Nathaniel, never permit yourself for one moment to believe the Scripture records which tell you that the God of love directed your forefathers to go forth in battle to slay all their enemies — men, women, and children. Such records are the words of

have, and always will, reflect the intellectual, moral, and spiritual status of those who create them. Have you not noted that the concepts of Yahweh grow in beauty and glory as the prophets make their records from Samuel to Isaiah? And you should remember that the Scriptures are intended for religious instruction and spiritual guidance. They are not the works of either historians or philosophers. ...

“But the greatest error of the teaching about the Scriptures is the doctrine of their being sealed books of mystery and wisdom which only the wise minds of the nation dare to interpret. The revelations of divine truth are not sealed except by human ignorance, bigotry, and narrow-minded intolerance. The light of the Scriptures is only dimmed by prejudice and darkened by superstition. A false fear of sacredness has prevented religion from being safeguarded by common sense. The fear of the authority of the sacred writings of the past effectively prevents the honest souls of today from accepting the new light of the gospel, the light which these very God-knowing men of another generation so intensely longed to see. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1767:3-6, 1768:1,5 / 159:4.1-5,9*]

- 68.** When Jesus spoke to Nathaniel, he certainly did not criticize the entirety of the Hebrew scriptures as they stood then. To the contrary, Jesus stated that these writings “constitute[d] the best collection of religious wisdom and spiritual truth to be found in all the world at [that] time” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1767:5 / 159:4.3*]. In your view, could one or more denominations of institutional Christianity resolutely set aside the creation narrative and those portions of the Old Testament that recount the supposed history of the Hebrew people, so that Christian observance would no longer be compelled to bear the weight of these deceptions and could, as a result, pay even more attention to those portions of the Old Testament that remain truly inspiring, such as the Psalms and the books that depict the efforts, insights, and teachings of the prophets? Alternately, are you more inclined to believe that the “fiction of sacred history” has become so “inextricably bound up” [*a Melchizedek, 1071:4 / 97:8.6*] with Christianity’s moral concepts and religious teachings that no branch of this institutional religion of authority could conceivably carry out the adjustment outlined above? Would the traditional conviction that the Bible is “the word of God” make it impossible even to undertake the attempt?

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament did not exist in the year 100 or 200 CE, not because there were no devotional documents circulating in manuscript form among the scattered communities of Christian believers, but because the process of analyzing, evaluating, and authenticating these texts took much longer. It was not until the middle of the fourth century that Christians settled on the exact list of 27 books that could subsequently be described as the New Testament.* One well respected historian describes these events as follows:†

In his Easter letter of 367, the ebullient bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius, referred to a set of Christian writings that he regarded as authoritative. He described them as ‘canonised’ in the sense of being texts that held the core of Christian belief. There were twenty-seven of them. This was the earliest reference to the complete New Testament, as we know it today, although less complete lists are known from the end of the second century onwards, notably in the Muratorian fragment of about 200. In 393, at a provincial council of bishops meeting in Carthage, further approval of this ‘canon’ was given. A New Testament was never consolidated in the first decades of the Christian church, it was a process that took centuries to complete. In fact the very idea that one should close off a selection of ‘New Testament’ texts and declare it a canon was a very late one.

By AD 100 a wide variety of texts were circulating in the Christian communities, some of which would make it into the New Testament, some of which would not. Copies, on papyrus rolls, or the parchment *codices* that were becoming more common, were difficult to come by and would have been valued by those who owned them. Many communities were isolated so that some texts may never have travelled beyond their sources. No Christians at this time would have had access to all the texts which were finally included (and some, the Second Letter of Peter, for instance, had not been written by this date).

* The article “Bible, Canon of” signed J. R. McRay on pages 155-156 of *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Second Edition*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A., 2001 and Paternoster Press: Carlisle, Cumbria, UK, 2001). In comparison, a rather humorous friend of mine once remarked that although the early Christians displayed substantial energy and attention when they endorsed a Canon, they showed considerable self-restraint by steadfastly refusing to endorse a Nikon or a Sony. This, he said, left ample room for originality and innovation on the part of Japanese industrialists who started hawking their wares during the second half of the 20th century.

† *A New History of Early Christianity* by Charles Freeman (Yale University Press: New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A. and London, England, UK, 2009), page 97.

Since the epistles of Paul were written first, we shall start our analysis there and, in doing so, shall call attention to certain thoughtful and considerate statements that a Melchizedek offers us in Paper 98:

Paul little dreamed that his well-intentioned letters to his converts would someday be regarded by still later Christians as the “word of God.” Such well-meaning teachers must not be held accountable for the use made of their writings by later-day successors. *[A Melchizedek, 1084:8 / 98:7.9]*

During recent generations, Biblical scholars have meticulously examined the 14 books of the New Testament that have traditionally been ascribed to Paul, analyzing their content, vocabulary, and literary style in Greek. The following table is a general summary of their findings, which are not unanimous in all respects.

Accepted as written by Paul <i>(either unanimously or by the great majority of Bible scholars)</i>	Disputed, but probably not written by Paul	Generally believed to have been written by a follower of Paul who lived in a subsequent generation
Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians <i>(some scholars express doubts or concerns)</i> Philemon	Ephesians Hebrews	1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus

The conclusions summarized in the preceding table are based on analytical articles appearing in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (three volumes), ed. J. D. Douglas *et al.* (InterVarsity Press: Leicester, England, 1980 and Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, Illinois, U.S.A., 1980). For details identifying the individual articles in that reference work, see Annex 2.

Given the extraordinary influence of the epistles that were actually written by Paul, plus almost equal regard for other epistles traditionally ascribed to him but apparently written by a follower who identified with Paul's convictions and doctrines, it is not difficult to accept and agree with the Midwayer Commission's conclusion that the New Testament is "a superb Christian document" but "only meagerly Jesusonian" [*the Midwayer Commission, 2091.10 / 196:2.1*]:

In the enthusiasm of Pentecost, Peter unintentionally inaugurated a new religion, the religion of the risen and glorified Christ. The Apostle Paul later on transformed this new gospel into Christianity, a religion embodying his own theologic views and portraying his own *personal experience* with the Jesus of the Damascus road. The gospel of the kingdom is founded on the personal religious experience of the Jesus of Galilee; Christianity is founded almost exclusively on the personal religious experience of the Apostle Paul. Almost the whole of the New Testament is devoted, not to the portrayal of the significant and inspiring religious life of Jesus, but to a discussion of Paul's religious experience and to a portrayal of his personal religious convictions. The only notable exceptions to this statement, aside from certain parts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are the Book of Hebrews and the Epistle of James. Even Peter, in his writing, only once reverted to the personal religious life of his Master. The New Testament is a superb Christian document, but it is only meagerly Jesusonian. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2091.10 / 196:2.1*]

We should also bear in mind that Abner, during his last years at Philadelphia, "denounced Paul as the 'clever corrupter of the life teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God'" [*the Midwayer Commission, 1832.1 / 166:5.5*]. Lest any of you discount this criticism on the grounds that Abner also disagreed with all the other leaders of the early Christian church, please reflect on what the Midwayer Commission tells us in the immediately succeeding sentence: "During the later years of Abner and for some time thereafter, the believers at Philadelphia held more strictly to the religion of Jesus, as he lived and taught, than any other group on earth" [*the Midwayer Commission, 1832.2 / 166:5.6*].

69. The Midwayer Commission states: "It was the apparent misfortune of Abner to be at variance with all of the leaders of the early Christian church" [*the Midwayer Commission, 1831:7 / 166:5.4*]. How do you interpret the word "apparent" in this sentence? Does it hint at a rather different scale of values, and perhaps a timeline extending well into the ascendant life, that might not entail the word "misfortune"?

One of the unfortunate temptations confronting persons who speak on or write about traditional Christian themes is to ferret out passages from scripture that seem to support the entrenched views that they began with, while disregarding or attacking other passages that might lead to different conclusions. As an example that will serve to illustrate this temptation, please examine the following verses from chapter 2 of the Epistle of James:

What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. [*James 2:14-17 — Revised Standard Version*]

Those of you who are familiar with the key events of the Reformation already know that Martin Luther's fundamental contention was that believers are justified (saved) by faith, not by works. In other words, Luther's entire theology centered on the doctrine of "justification by faith alone."* Therefore Luther was not overly fond of the Epistle of James; to the contrary, he called it "an epistle of straw."[†]

* A friend of mine who has long detested the ubiquitous software program Microsoft Word once quipped that he believes in justification by WordPerfect alone.

† SOURCE: "Luther and the 'Epistle of Straw'," as posted by Jordan Ballor on June 13, 2013 on the website "The Calvinist International" (<https://calvinistinternational.com/2013/06/13/luther-and-the-epistle-of-straw/>, accessed on September 22, 2015). Ballor states that this phrase comes from the following paragraph in Luther's preface to the New Testament:

"In a word St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it. (LW 35:362)"

Ballor's explanation is essentially the same as in the Wikipedia article "Luther's canon" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luther's_canon, accessed on September 20, 2015). For additional comments explaining that Luther had a low opinion of four New Testament books (Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation) and placed them in a separate category when he published his translation of the New Testament in 1522, see "Luther's Anti-legomena" (<http://www.bible-researcher.com/antilegomena.html>, accessed on September 20, 2015).

THE FOUR GOSPELS

Although the Midwayer Commission provides a description of the four gospels that is rather long, it seems advisable to reproduce this section of Paper 121 verbatim, instead of endeavoring to prepare an accurate and insightful summary.

8. Previous Written Records

As far as possible, consistent with our mandate, we have endeavored to utilize and to some extent co-ordinate the existing records having to do with the life of Jesus on Urantia. Although we have enjoyed access to the lost record of the Apostle Andrew and have benefited from the collaboration of a vast host of celestial beings who were on earth during the times of Michael's bestowal (notably his now Personalized Adjuster), it has been our purpose also to make use of the so-called Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

These New Testament records had their origin in the following circumstances:

1. *The Gospel by Mark.* John Mark wrote the earliest (excepting the notes of Andrew), briefest, and most simple record of Jesus' life. He presented the Master as a minister, as man among men. Although Mark was a lad lingering about many of the scenes which he depicts, his record is in reality the Gospel according to Simon Peter. He was early associated with Peter; later with Paul. Mark wrote this record at the instigation of Peter and on the earnest petition of the church at Rome. Knowing how consistently the Master refused to write out his teachings when on earth and in the flesh, Mark, like the apostles and other leading disciples, was hesitant to put them in writing. But Peter felt the church at Rome required the assistance of such a written narrative, and Mark consented to undertake its preparation. He made many notes before Peter died in A.D. 67, and in accordance with the outline approved by Peter and for the church at Rome, he began his writing soon after Peter's death. The Gospel was completed near the end of A.D. 68. Mark wrote entirely from his own memory and Peter's memory. **The record has since been considerably changed, numerous passages having been taken out and some later matter added at the end to replace the latter one fifth of the original Gospel, which was lost from the first manuscript before it was ever copied.** This record by Mark, in conjunction with Andrew's and Matthew's notes, was the written basis of all subsequent Gospel narratives which sought to portray the life and teachings of Jesus.

2. *The Gospel of Matthew.* The so-called Gospel according to Matthew is the record of the Master's life which was written for the edification of Jewish Christians. The author of this record constantly seeks to show in Jesus' life that much which he did was that "it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." Matthew's Gospel portrays Jesus as a son of David, picturing him as showing great respect for the law and the prophets.

The Apostle Matthew did not write this Gospel. It was written by Isador, one of his disciples, who had as a help in his work not only Matthew's personal remembrance of these events but also a certain record which the latter had made of the sayings of Jesus directly after the crucifixion. This record by Matthew was written in Aramaic; Isador wrote in Greek. There was no intent to deceive in accrediting the production to Matthew. It was the custom in those days for pupils thus to honor their teachers.

Matthew's original record was edited and added to in A.D. 40 just before he left Jerusalem to engage in evangelistic preaching. It was a private record, the last copy having been destroyed in the burning of a Syrian monastery in A.D. 416.

Isador escaped from Jerusalem in A.D. 70 after the investment of the city by the armies of Titus, taking with him to Pella a copy of Matthew's notes. In the year 71, while living at Pella, Isador wrote the Gospel according to Matthew. He also had with him the first four fifths of Mark's narrative.

3. *The Gospel by Luke.* Luke, the physician of Antioch in Pisidia, was a gentile convert of Paul, and he wrote quite a different story of the Master's life. He began to follow Paul and learn of the life and teachings of Jesus in A.D. 47. Luke preserves much of the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" in his record as he gathered up these facts from Paul and others. Luke presents the Master as "the friend of publicans and sinners." He did not formulate his many notes into the Gospel until after Paul's death. Luke wrote in the year 82 in Achaia. He planned three books dealing with the history of Christ and Christianity but died in A.D. 90 just before he finished the second of these works, the "Acts of the Apostles."

As material for the compilation of his Gospel, Luke first depended upon the story of Jesus' life as Paul had related it to him. **Luke's Gospel is, therefore, in some ways the Gospel according to Paul. But Luke had other sources of information.** He not only interviewed scores of eyewitnesses to the numerous episodes of Jesus' life which he records, but he also had with him a copy of Mark's Gospel, that is, the first four fifths, Isador's narrative, and a brief record made in the year A.D. 78 at Antioch by a believer named Cedes. Luke also had a mutilated and much-edited copy of some notes purported to have been made by the Apostle Andrew.

4. *The Gospel of John.* The Gospel according to John relates much of Jesus' work in Judea and around Jerusalem which is not contained in the other records. This is the so-called Gospel according to John the son of Zebedee, and though John did not write it, he did inspire it. **Since its first writing it has several times been edited to make it appear to have been written by John himself.** When this record was made, John had the other Gospels, and he saw that much had been omitted; accordingly, in the year A.D. 101 he encouraged his associate, Nathan, a Greek Jew from Caesarea, to begin the writing. John supplied his material from memory and by reference to the three records already in existence. He had no written records of his own. The Epistle known as "First John" was written by John himself as a covering letter for the work which Nathan executed under his direction.

All these writers presented honest pictures of Jesus as they saw, remembered, or had learned of him, and as their concepts of these distant events were affected by their subsequent espousal of Paul's theology of Christianity. And these records, imperfect as they are, have been sufficient to change the course of the history of Urantia for almost two thousand years. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1341:2-6, 1342:1-6 / 121:8. 1-11 — emphasis added: sentences shown in bold type*]

- 70.** From our perspective, some aspects of the Midwayer Commission's account seem to manifest an insufficiently diligent effort to protect and preserve these important written records in their original form. For example, the final one-fifth of the Gospel of Mark was lost from the first manuscript thereof. Further, the persons who were safeguarding the Gospel of John apparently believed that they had every right to alter the wording so that the revised text would appear to have been written by the apostle John himself.

Now we must of course bear in mind that all these events occurred in a far different era — more than one thousand years before Gutenberg invented the printing press as we know it — and that, as a result, all documents of any kind had to be written and copied by hand, for there was no alternative. Nonetheless, certain aspects of the Midwayer Commission's account seem puzzling, to say the least. How do you explain what happened?

- 71.** In the final paragraph of the passage cited above, the Midwayer Commission indicates that **“All these writers presented honest pictures of Jesus as they saw, remembered, or had learned of him,”** but then mentions a factor that undoubtedly introduced distortions: **“as their concepts of these distant events were affected by their subsequent espousal of Paul's theology of Christianity”** [*the Midwayer Commission, 1342:6 / 121:8.11*]. Why was Paul's theology so pervasive, so persuasive, and so influential, even in relation to persons who had actually been present during Jesus' public ministry in Palestine? After all, Paul never met Christ Michael of Nebadon while he was incarnate in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth!

The revelators identify several other aspects of the gospels that are misleading or inaccurate:

In Jesus' time divorce practices were lax in Palestine and throughout the Roman Empire. **He repeatedly refused to lay down laws regarding marriage and divorce, but many of Jesus' early followers had strong opinions on divorce and did not hesitate to attribute them to him.** All of the New Testament writers held to these more stringent and advanced ideas about divorce except John Mark. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1581:1 / 140:8.14 — emphasis added: clause in bold type*]

While the other apostles toiled against the wind and the waves, Peter dreamed a dream; he saw a vision of Jesus coming to them walking on the sea. When the Master seemed to walk on by the boat, Peter cried out, "Save us, Master, save us." And those who were in the rear of the boat heard him say some of these words. As this apparition of the night season continued in Peter's mind, he dreamed that he heard Jesus say: "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." This was like the balm of Gilead to Peter's disturbed soul; it soothed his troubled spirit, so that (in his dream) he cried out to the Master: "Lord, if it really is you, bid me come and walk with you on the water." And when Peter started to walk upon the water, the boisterous waves frightened him, and as he was about to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" And many of the twelve heard him utter this cry. Then Peter dreamed that Jesus came to the rescue and, stretching forth his hand, took hold and lifted him up, saying: "O, you of little faith, wherefore did you doubt?"

In connection with the latter part of his dream Peter arose from the seat whereon he slept and actually stepped overboard and into the water. And he awakened from his dream as Andrew, James, and John reached down and pulled him out of the sea.

To Peter this experience was always real. He sincerely believed that Jesus came to them that night. He only partially convinced John Mark, which explains why Mark left a portion of the story out of his narrative. Luke, the physician, who made careful search into these matters, concluded that the episode was a vision of Peter's and therefore refused to give place to this story in the preparation of his narrative. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1703:2-4 / 152:4.2-4*]

Of all the discourses which the Master gave his apostles, none ever became so confused in their minds as this one, given this Tuesday evening on the Mount of Olives, regarding the twofold subject of the destruction of Jerusalem and his own second coming. There was, therefore, little agreement between the subsequent written accounts based on the memories of what the Master said on this extraordinary occasion. Consequently, when the records were left blank concerning much that was said that Tuesday evening, there grew up many traditions; and very early in the second century

a Jewish apocalyptic about the Messiah written by one Selta, who was attached to the court of the Emperor Caligula, was bodily copied into the Matthew Gospel and subsequently added (in part) to the Mark and Luke records. It was in these writings of Selta that the parable of the ten virgins appeared. No part of the gospel record ever suffered such confusing misconstruction as this evening's teaching. But the Apostle John never became thus confused. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1915:5 / 176:2.8*]

In addition, the Midwayer Commission states that the Book of Revelation: “contains the surviving fragments of a great revelation, large portions of which were lost, other portions of which were removed, subsequent to John's writing. It is preserved in only fragmentary and adulterated form” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1555:7 / 139:4.14*].

Here is my net conclusion. Although it has certainly been appropriate for us to take note of various mistakes and other inaccuracies that crept into the Christian scriptures over the course of two millennia, we should pay far more attention to the key factor that unifies our analysis: The extended narrative that the revelators have bequeathed to us in Part IV of *The Urantia Book* — over 700 pages! — is far more inspiring and enormously more insightful than the relatively limited amount of information that one can extract from the gospels, epistles, and other books of the New Testament.

Let us now end our examination of institutional Christianity. To do that, we shall review three passages from *The Urantia Book* that will serve as a friendly farewell:

[EXCERPT A] As the original teachings of Jesus penetrated the Occident, they became Occidentalized, and as they became Occidentalized, they began to lose their potentially universal appeal to all races and kinds of men. Christianity, today, has become a religion well adapted to the social, economic, and political mores of the white races. It has long since ceased to be the religion of Jesus, although it still valiantly portrays a beautiful religion about Jesus to such individuals as sincerely seek to follow in the way of its teaching. It has glorified Jesus as the Christ, the Messianic anointed one from God, but has largely forgotten the Master's personal gospel: the Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of all men. [*A Melchizedek, 1084:10 / 98:7.11*]

[EXCERPT B] Many earnest persons who would gladly yield loyalty to the Christ of the gospel find it very difficult enthusiastically to support a church which exhibits so little of the spirit of his life and teachings, and which they have been erroneously taught he founded. Jesus did not found the so-called Christian church, but he has, in every manner consistent with his nature, *fostered* it as the best existent exponent of his lifework on earth. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2085:1 / 195:10.9*]

[EXCERPT C] Christianity is an extemporized religion, and therefore must it operate in low gear. High-gear spiritual performances must await the new revelation and the more general acceptance of the real religion of Jesus. But Christianity is a mighty religion, seeing that the commonplace disciples of a crucified carpenter set in motion those teachings which conquered the Roman world in three hundred years and then went on to triumph over the barbarians who overthrew Rome. This same Christianity conquered — absorbed and exalted — the whole stream of Hebrew theology and Greek philosophy. And then, when this Christian religion became comatose for more than a thousand years as a result of an overdose of mysteries and paganism, it resurrected itself and virtually reconquered the whole Western world. Christianity contains enough of Jesus' teachings to immortalize it. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2086:4 / 195:10.18*]

72. In these three passages, the revelators have interwoven a series of contrasting factors that amount to point-counterpoint, almost as if they were composing classical music in the baroque era or were scripting a video in which journalists with opposing political views exchanged conflicting insights. As a result, it is difficult to harmonize and synthesize the disparate thoughts that the revelators have presented. In contrast, it would be quite possible for readers of *The Urantia Book* who start with entrenched views to examine these passages specifically for the sake of zeroing in on aspects that seem to justify their original convictions, thereby exempting themselves from the challenge of nuance and equilibrium that may even encompass some degree of ambiguity. Nonetheless, we will grapple with that challenge, and I rely on you to do your best.

a. If “Christianity ... has long since ceased to be the religion of Jesus” and “has largely forgotten the Master’s personal gospel: the Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of all men” (excerpt A), why has “Jesus ... in every manner consistent with his nature, *fostered* it as the best existent exponent of his lifework on earth” (excerpt B)? How do you interpret the phrase “the best existent exponent”?

b. If “High-gear spiritual performances must await the new revelation and the more general acceptance of the real religion of Jesus” (excerpt C), why has the Midwayer Commission declared that “Christianity contains enough of Jesus’ teachings to immortalize it” (excerpt C)? Does the word “immortalize” imply that Christianity is essentially eternal in its current form? Do you believe it is possible for organized, institutional Christianity to evolve in such fundamental ways as to become the eventual scaffolding for the real religion of Jesus?

The Hallelujah aftermath. In recent years, Internet websites have displayed at least five semi-viral videos showing members of a choir and orchestra who had surreptitiously infiltrated the central court of a large department store or shopping mall, and then — to the surprise and delight of the assembled shoppers, who had merely migrated to their favorite site for shopping so as to purchase gizmos or doodads or whatever else may have caught their fancy — suddenly arose from their seats and emitted the thunderous lyrics and chords of the Hallelujah chorus from the celebrated oratorio *The Messiah* by George Frideric Handel.*

Although opinion polls seldom examine such topics, it is quite possible that the Hallelujah chorus is the most beloved choral work ever to emerge from the realm of classical music and acquire great popular renown, at least in locations where English is spoken. The words read as follows:

Hallelujah!
for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,
The kingdom of this world is become
the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ;
and he shall reign for ever and ever,
King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

In the Paper entitled, “[The Paradise Sons of God](#)” (*i.e.*, Paper 21), a Perfector of Wisdom duplicates the phrase “[King of Kings and Lord of Lords](#)” [*a Perfector of Wisdom, 240:1 / 21:4.5*]. On the other hand, this seems substantially more likely to be an implicit reference to the corresponding verse in the Christian scriptures (*i.e.*, Revelation 19:16), rather than a citation from the Hallelujah chorus. Nonetheless, we should bear in mind that the implicitly political overtones of the phrase “the kingdom of God” gave the early Christians considerable trouble, as the Midwayer Commission points out in Paper 170:

By the time the Apostle John began to write the story of Jesus’ life and teachings, the early Christians had experienced so much trouble with the kingdom-of-God idea as a breeder of persecution that they had largely abandoned the use of the term. John talks much about the “eternal life.” Jesus often spoke of it as the “kingdom of life.” He also frequently referred to “the kingdom of God within you.” He once spoke of

* Composed in 1741, but first performed in 1742.

such an experience as “family fellowship with God the Father.” Jesus sought to substitute many terms for the kingdom but always without success. Among others, he used: the family of God, the Father’s will, the friends of God, the fellowship of believers, the brotherhood of man, the Father’s fold, the children of God, the fellowship of the faithful, the Father’s service, and the liberated sons of God. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1861:6 / 170:2.24*]

When Handel composed his oratorio, the word *king* was by no means bereft of political meaning, and the word *lord*, although considerably less imposing than it had been a few centuries earlier, still retained substantial overtones associated with social hierarchy and the ruling class. This may be easier to understand if we illustrate the point by citing the title of a literary work that was widely read during the second half of the 20th century and that, when converted into cinematic fantasy, acquired extraordinary popularity during the initial years of the 21st: *The Lord of the Rings*.

Having said all the above, it is only reasonable to stipulate that the Hallelujah chorus of Handel’s oratorio *The Messiah* remains stirring and moving, at least for persons with cultural backgrounds that are predominantly Christian. In the final analysis, this majestic choral work of the mid-18th century has definitely earned its popularity and renown among persons who speak English.

Now, however, we shall be obliged to bid a reluctant adieu to the various shopping malls where choirs and orchestras suddenly burst forth with their favorite chorus, so that we can migrate to a concert hall where we may have the opportunity to hear the air “I know that my redeemer liveth” — the succeeding segment of Handel’s oratorio, one that will feature a single soprano standing in splendid isolation, preferably a coloratura soprano who will be able to engage in a series of runs, trills, and other vocal exploits demonstrating extraordinary talent and great virtuosity. In this discussion, however, we do not have those advantages; we cannot rely on rhythm, melody, or lyrical expression. To the contrary, we must confine ourselves to examining the words that the soprano will proceed to sing:

I know that my redeemer liveth,
and that He shall stand
at the latter day upon the earth:
and though worms destroy this body,
yet in my flesh shall I see God.
For now is Christ risen from the dead,
the first fruits of them that sleep.

Here we are immediately in trouble, for Christ Michael of Nebadon, incarnate in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth, was definitely not a “redeemer.” Further, calling him “my redeemer” creates overtones of exclusiveness and possessiveness that are unappealing and unpleasant, to say the least.

When we continue to examine the text, we are obliged to state that the word “liveth” is either highly misleading or simply false, for the phrase “Jesus of Nazareth” now identifies an integral and inseparable part of the completed spiritual identity of our Sovereign Creator Son, Christ Michael of Nebadon, not a separate individual who is currently active and alive in the spiritual realm. Although Michael definitely will keep his promise to return to Urantia, it is not accurate to state that “He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth” (a reference to the events that Christians call “the Last Judgment”).

The soprano’s statement “in my flesh shall I see God” also involves a serious misunderstanding, one that seems to stem from a fundamental mistake in interpreting a spiritual reality, the resurrection of Jesus:

The Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus has been based on the fact of the “empty tomb.” It was indeed a *fact* that the tomb was empty, but this is not the *truth* of the resurrection. The tomb was truly empty when the first believers arrived, and this fact, associated with that of the undoubted resurrection of the Master, led to the formulation of a belief which was not true: the teaching that the material and mortal body of Jesus was raised from the grave. Truth having to do with spiritual realities and eternal values cannot always be built up by a combination of apparent facts. Although individual facts may be materially true, it does not follow that the association of a group of facts must necessarily lead to truthful spiritual conclusions.

The tomb of Joseph was empty, not because the body of Jesus had been rehabilitated or resurrected, but because the celestial hosts had been granted their request to afford it a special and unique dissolution, a return of the “dust to dust,” without the intervention of the delays of time and without the operation of the ordinary and visible processes of mortal decay and material corruption.

The mortal remains of Jesus underwent the same natural process of elemental disintegration as characterizes all human bodies on earth except that, in point of time, this natural mode of dissolution was greatly accelerated, hastened to that point where it became well-nigh instantaneous.

The true evidences of the resurrection of Michael are spiritual in nature, albeit this teaching is corroborated by the testimony of many mortals of the realm who met, recognized, and communed with the resurrected morontia Master. He became a part of the personal experience of almost one thousand human beings before he finally took leave of Urantia. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2023:5-6, 2024:1-2 / 189:2.6-9*]

Let us now return to the soprano solo's first line, "I know that my redeemer liveth." We have already demonstrated that "my redeemer" and "liveth" cannot be justified, which leaves only the first three words, "I know that" As a practical matter, the words "know that" must likewise be deleted, for it is impossible to know something that is false. Therefore we must annotate the statement as follows:

~~I know that my redeemer liveth~~

In effect, this mark-up also interprets all seven lines of the soprano solo, for we have encountered a perspective that appears to be entirely egotistical. These seven lines focus overwhelmingly on proclaiming and celebrating the purportedly privileged status of an individual believer; they offer no hint of a desire to serve other human beings or to participate in joint efforts aimed at helping to improve and upgrade society. Therefore, in my view, we are implicitly confronting selfishness that is intrinsic and intense. Further, this selfishness turns out to be the true Hallelujah aftermath. I regret that this is so, and I also regret that I am obliged to bring these unpleasant realities to your attention.

On the other hand, we must not neglect other crucial implications of these seven lines sung by a virtuoso soprano. The purpose of this part of our discussion is not just to indulge in rather acid observations keyed to an intriguing cultural artifact that we have inherited from the 18th century, but also, by implication, to focus on the intense anxieties about salvation (survival) that institutional Christianity almost invariably stimulates and fosters.

These fears are endemic and pervasive, for we may trace them from Paul to Augustine, from Augustine to Luther and Calvin, and then from their era, now almost five centuries ago, right onward into our own, since the underlying truth is that many traditional believers living in the new millennium remain preoccupied, entangled, and perhaps even intensely afraid because of the characteristic teachings of Christianity about hell and damnation. In effect, these fears amount to the unfortunate psychological debilities that inspired Charles Jennens, Handel's scribe, to identify and compile these verses, that led George Frideric Handel to compose the score that enables a soprano to sing them, and that have evoked virtuoso performances of this solo air in every generation ever since.

To be sure, it is entirely appropriate for us to sympathize with every human being mentioned in the preceding paragraph, whether directly or indirectly, but the far more important point is that the revelators have bequeathed to us a vastly more encouraging account of the transition leading to the ascendant life:

Eternal survival of personality is wholly dependent on the choosing of the mortal mind, whose decisions determine the survival potential of the immortal soul. When the mind believes God and the soul knows God, and when, with the fostering Adjuster, they all *desire* God, then is survival assured. Limitations of intellect, curtailment of education, deprivation of culture, impoverishment of social status, even inferiority of the human standards of morality resulting from the unfortunate lack of educational, cultural, and social advantages, cannot invalidate the presence of the divine spirit in such unfortunate and humanly handicapped but believing individuals. The indwelling of the Mystery Monitor constitutes the inception and insures the possibility of the potential of growth and survival of the immortal soul. [*A Divine Counselor*, 69:8 / 5:5.13]

Orvonton, the seventh superuniverse, the one to which your local universe belongs, is known chiefly because of its tremendous and lavish bestowal of merciful ministry to the mortals of the realms. It is renowned for the manner in which justice prevails as tempered by mercy and power rules as conditioned by patience, while the sacrifices of time are freely made to secure the stabilization of eternity. Orvonton is a universe demonstration of love and mercy. [*A Universal Censor*, 182:1 / 15:14.2]

The physical body of mortal flesh is not a part of the reassembly of the sleeping survivor; the physical body has returned to dust. The seraphim of assignment sponsors the new body, the morontia form, as the new life vehicle for the immortal soul and for the indwelling of the returned Adjuster. The Adjuster is the custodian of the spirit transcript of the mind of the sleeping survivor. The assigned seraphim is the keeper of the surviving identity — the immortal soul — as far as it has evolved. And when these two, the Adjuster and the seraphim, reunite their personality trusts, the new individual constitutes the resurrection of the old personality, the survival of the evolving morontia identity of the soul. Such a reassociation of soul and Adjuster is quite properly called a resurrection, a reassembly of personality factors; but even this does not entirely explain the reappearance of the surviving *personality*. Though you will probably never understand the fact of such an inexplicable transaction, you will sometime experientially know the truth of it if you do not reject the plan of mortal survival. [*A Mighty Messenger*, 341:5 / 30:4.15]

On the mansion worlds the resurrected mortal survivors resume their lives just where they left off when overtaken by death. When you go from Urantia to the first mansion world, you will notice considerable change, but if you had come from a more normal and progressive sphere of time, you would hardly notice the difference except for the fact that you were in possession of a different body; the tabernacle of flesh and blood has been left behind on the world of nativity. [*A Brilliant Evening Star*, 532:7 / 47:3.1]

Your Adjuster memory remains fully intact as you ascend the morontia life. Those mental associations that were purely animalistic and wholly material naturally perished with the physical brain, but everything in your mental life which was worth while, and which had survival value, was counterparted by the Adjuster and is retained as a part of personal memory all the way through the ascendant career. You will be conscious of all your worth-while experiences as you advance from one mansion world to another and from one section of the universe to another — even to Paradise. [*A Brilliant Evening Star, 535:1 / 47:4.5*]

Confusion, being puzzled, even sometimes discouraged and distracted, does not necessarily signify resistance to the leadings of the indwelling Adjuster. Such attitudes may sometimes connote lack of active co-operation with the divine Monitor and may, therefore, somewhat delay spiritual progress, but such intellectual emotional difficulties do not in the least interfere with the certain survival of the God-knowing soul. Ignorance alone can never prevent survival; neither can confusional doubts nor fearful uncertainty. Only conscious resistance to the Adjuster's leading can prevent the survival of the evolving immortal soul. [*A Solitary Messenger, 1206:3 / 110:3.5*]

If ever there is doubt as to the advisability of advancing a human identity to the mansion worlds, the universe governments invariably rule in the personal interests of that individual; they unhesitatingly advance such a soul to the status of a transitional being, while they continue their observations of the emerging morontia intent and spiritual purpose. Thus divine justice is certain of achievement, and divine mercy is accorded further opportunity for extending its ministry.

The governments of Orvonton and Nebadon do not claim absolute perfection for the detail working of the universal plan of mortal repersonalization, but they do claim to, and actually do, manifest patience, tolerance, understanding, and merciful sympathy. We had rather assume the risk of a system rebellion than to court the hazard of depriving one struggling mortal from any evolutionary world of the eternal joy of pursuing the ascending career. [*A Solitary Messenger, 1233:3-4 / 112:5.7-8*]

There are two difficulties that hamper my efforts to explain just what happens to *you* in death, the surviving *you* which is distinct from the departing Adjuster. One of these consists in the impossibility of conveying to your level of comprehension an adequate description of a transaction on the borderland of the physical and morontia realms. The other is brought about by the restrictions placed upon my commission as a revelator of truth by the celestial governing authorities of Urantia. There are many interesting details which might be presented, but I withhold them upon the advice of your immediate planetary supervisors. But within the limits of my permission I can say this much:

There is something real, something of human evolution, something additional to the Mystery Monitor, which survives death. This newly appearing entity is the soul, and it survives the death of both your physical body and your material mind. This entity is the conjoint child of the combined life and efforts of the human you in liaison with the divine you, the Adjuster. This child of human and divine parentage constitutes the surviving element of terrestrial origin; it is the morontia self, the immortal soul.

This child of persisting meaning and surviving value is wholly unconscious during the period from death to repersonalization and is in the keeping of the seraphic destiny guardian throughout this season of waiting. You will not function as a conscious being, following death, until you attain the new consciousness of morontia on the mansion worlds of Satania. [*A Solitary Messenger*, 1233:7, 1234:1-2 / 112:5.11-13]

The Thought Adjuster will recall and rehearse for you only those memories and experiences which are a part of, and essential to, your universe career. If the Adjuster has been a partner in the evolution of aught in the human mind, then will these worthwhile experiences survive in the eternal consciousness of the Adjuster. But much of your past life and its memories, having neither spiritual meaning nor morontia value, will perish with the material brain; much of material experience will pass away as onetime scaffolding which, having bridged you over to the morontia level, no longer serves a purpose in the universe. But personality and the relationships between personalities are never scaffolding; mortal memory of personality relationships has cosmic value and will persist. On the mansion worlds you will know and be known, and more, you will remember, and be remembered by, your onetime associates in the short but intriguing life on Urantia. [*A Solitary Messenger*, 1235:4 / 112:5.22]

- 73.** If you wish to comment on any of the passages that we have just read, or on any other aspect of *The Urantia Book* associated with the survival of human beings who are destined to be repersonalized on one of the mansion worlds in order to begin the ascendant life, please feel free to do so.

Possible punishment in the afterlife. Rather than focus on positive and inspiring teachings resembling those that the revelators have shared with us, the early Christians appear to have maintained and developed ideas about potential punishment in the afterlife that they inherited from the Jewish tradition. The Midwayer Commission tells us that when Peter recounted a story of the Nazarite brotherhood that John the Baptist had repeated while preaching in public — a parable concerning a rich man named Dives and a beggar named Lazarus — Peter initiated his narrative by declaring, “**this olden parable is not according to the gospel we preach**” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1854:5 / 169:3.1*]:

3. The Rich Man and the Beggar

When the meeting became too noisy, Simon Peter, standing up, took charge, saying: “Men and brethren, it is not seemly thus to dispute among yourselves. The Master has spoken, and you do well to ponder his words. And this is no new doctrine which he proclaimed to you. Have you not also heard the allegory of the Nazarites concerning the rich man and the beggar? Some of us heard John the Baptist thunder this parable of warning to those who love riches and covet dishonest wealth. **And while this olden parable is not according to the gospel we preach, you would all do well to heed its lessons until such a time as you comprehend the new light of the kingdom of heaven.** The story as John told it was like this:

“There was a certain rich man named Dives, who, being clothed in purple and fine linen, lived in mirth and splendor every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at this rich man’s gate, covered with sores and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table; yes, even the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried away by the angels to rest in Abraham’s bosom. And then, presently, this rich man also died and was buried with great pomp and regal splendor. When the rich man departed from this world, he waked up in Hades, and finding himself in torment, he lifted up his eyes and beheld Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And then Dives cried aloud: ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send over Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am in great anguish because of my punishment.’ And then Abraham replied: ‘My son, you should remember that in your lifetime you enjoyed the good things while Lazarus in like manner suffered the evil. But now all this is changed, seeing that Lazarus is comforted while you are tormented. And besides, between us and you there is a great gulf so that we cannot go to you, neither can you come over to us.’ Then said Dives to Abraham: ‘I pray you send Lazarus back to my father’s house, inasmuch as I have five brothers, that he may so testify as to prevent my brothers from coming to this place of torment.’ But Abraham said: ‘My son, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And then answered Dives: ‘No, No, Father Abraham! but if one go to them from the

dead, they will repent.’ And then said Abraham: ‘If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded even if one were to rise from the dead.’”

After Peter had recited this ancient parable of the Nazarite brotherhood, and since the crowd had quieted down, Andrew arose and dismissed them for the night. **Although both the apostles and his disciples frequently asked Jesus questions about the parable of Dives and Lazarus, he never consented to make comment thereon.** [*The Midwayer Commission, 1854:5-6, 1855:1 / 169:3.1-3 — emphasis added: sentences in bold type*]

Peter’s disclaimer, however, does not appear in the New Testament (Luke 16:19-31). To the contrary, the immediately preceding verses in chapter 16 of the Gospel according to Luke consist of statements by Jesus. Therefore the context implies that Jesus told the story about Dives and Lazarus and that he agreed with the ideas it contains, including the assertion that Dives was being tormented in hell. As a result, this reference to potential punishment in the afterlife was ascribed to Jesus and became an integral part of Christian teachings. In contrast, the Midwayer Commission comments as follows in Paper 188, which is entitled, “The Time in the Tomb”:

All this concept of atonement and sacrificial salvation is rooted and grounded in selfishness. Jesus taught that *service* to one’s fellows is the highest concept of the brotherhood of spirit believers. Salvation should be taken for granted by those who believe in the fatherhood of God. The believer’s chief concern should not be the selfish desire for personal salvation but rather the unselfish urge to love and, therefore, serve one’s fellows even as Jesus loved and served mortal men.

Neither do genuine believers trouble themselves so much about the future punishment of sin. The real believer is only concerned about present separation from God. True, wise fathers may chasten their sons, but they do all this in love and for corrective purposes. They do not punish in anger, neither do they chastise in retribution. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2017:4-5 / 188:4.9-10*]

By implication, the passage cited immediately above confirms and reinforces our prior analysis of the soprano solo, “I know that my redeemer liveth.” Let us return, however, to the parable about Dives and Lazarus, the story that Peter told while quoting John the Baptist. Since the Midwayer Commission states that Jesus was frequently asked to comment on this parable but “**never consented**” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1855:1 / 169:3.3*], it is natural for us to wonder why he declined. Perhaps we shall have a better insight into Jesus’ motivations for remaining silent if we review his reply to a question that

the apostle Simon asked under entirely different circumstances, at a time when Jesus and the apostles had just begun their public work and were teaching in Amathus. Simon, it seems, had been seeking to interest a Persian named Teherma, but had made little progress.

When Simon Zelotes and Jesus were alone, Simon asked the Master: “Why is it that I could not persuade him? Why did he so resist me and so readily lend an ear to you?” Jesus answered: “Simon, Simon, how many times have I instructed you to refrain from all efforts to take something *out* of the hearts of those who seek salvation? How often have I told you to labor only to put something *into* these hungry souls? Lead men into the kingdom, and **the great and living truths of the kingdom will presently drive out all serious error.**” [*The Midwayer Commission, 1592:4 / 141:6.2 — emphasis added: the clause shown in bold type*]

In effect, the spirit of this reply to Simon closely resembled the methods that Jesus had drawn on during his discussions with religious teachers whom he met in Rome many years before launching his public ministry in Palestine:

Jesus learned much about men while in Rome, but the most valuable of all the manifold experiences of his six months’ sojourn in that city was his contact with, and influence upon, the religious leaders of the empire’s capital. ... And this was his method of instruction: Never once did he attack their errors or even mention the flaws in their teachings. In each case he would select the truth in what they taught and then proceed so to embellish and illuminate this truth in their minds that **in a very short time this enhancement of the truth effectively crowded out the associated error**; and thus were these Jesus-taught men and women prepared for the subsequent recognition of additional and similar truths in the teachings of the early Christian missionaries. It was this early acceptance of the teachings of the gospel preachers which gave that powerful impetus to the rapid spread of Christianity in Rome and from there throughout the empire. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1455:4 / 132:0.4 — emphasis added: the clause shown in bold type*]

Now that the revelators have enormously enhanced the truth available to humanity concerning the plan of mortal repersonalization that the governments of Orvonton and Nebadon sponsor and implement, we can hope that this truth will crowd out the accumulated apprehension and fear that Christianity has stimulated and fostered for almost two thousand years — personal terror that was intensified and exacerbated by such cultural landmarks as Dante’s *Inferno* (an epic poem consisting of about five thousand lines, one-third of the highly complex cycle *The Divine Comedy* that Dante completed in 1321) and the intensely terrifying, Renaissance-era fresco that Michelangelo spent over six years

infusing into the plaster wall of the Sistine Chapel in Rome (1534-1541), thereby endeavoring, to the best of his ability, imagination, and understanding, to depict essential aspects of Christianity's appalling teachings concerning "the Last Judgment."

- 74.** The revelators clearly wished to foster appreciation for the plans that our spiritual superiors have developed for the survival of human beings, so that sincere believers can look forward to the ascendant life with confidence, can take salvation for granted, and can draw on higher levels of spiritual energy and inspiration that may enable them to heed Jesus' call to serve others. With all these goals in mind, please comment on and compare the importance and significance of the following two factors:
- a. The relatively detailed explanations that the revelators provide.
 - b. The fact that there is no hell, no place of eternal torment to be inflicted on former mortals who did not meet the exacting requirements that Christianity, or some other institutional religion, postulated or imposed.

The influence of Jesus. In a number of passages that are dispersed through *The Urantia Book*, appearing in contexts that are not closely related and that seem to be entirely independent, the revelators refer to Jesus in ways that seem to portray him as a separate, identifiable person who is currently active in the spiritual realm and who makes a substantial contribution to the spiritual destinies of persons living on our planet, as well as the spiritual destinies of those human beings who will succeed us in future generations and centuries. Although each of you will soon have an opportunity to formulate interpretations that are cogent and convincing, these passages seem paradoxical at first glance and perhaps even anomalous. For example:

1

Jesus was the perfectly unified human personality. And today, as in Galilee, he continues to unify mortal experience and to co-ordinate human endeavors. He unifies life, ennobles character, and simplifies experience. He enters the human mind to elevate, transform, and transfigure it. It is literally true: “If any man has Christ Jesus within him, he is a new creature; old things are passing away; behold, all things are becoming new.”
[*A Melchizedek, 1103:6 / 100:7.18*]

2

Many earnest persons who would gladly yield loyalty to the Christ of the gospel find it very difficult enthusiastically to support a church which exhibits so little of the spirit of his life and teachings, and which they have been erroneously taught he founded. Jesus did not found the so-called Christian church, but he has, in every manner consistent with his nature, *fostered* it as the best existent exponent of his lifework on earth. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2085:1 / 195:10.9*]*

3

And ever since that day this same Jesus has been building that living temple upon that same eternal foundation of his divine sonship, and those who thereby become self-conscious sons of God are the human stones which constitute this living temple of sonship erecting to the glory and honor of the wisdom and love of the eternal Father of spirits. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1747:5 / 157:4.7*]

* As you may recall, we previously examined this passage, but for a substantially different purpose. (See page 124.)

4

Jesus does not require his disciples to believe in him but rather to believe *with* him, believe in the reality of the love of God and in full confidence accept the security of the assurance of sonship with the heavenly Father. The Master desires that all his followers should fully share his transcendent faith. Jesus most touchingly challenged his followers, not only to believe what he believed, but also to believe as he believed. This is the full significance of his one supreme requirement, “Follow me.”
[The Midwayer Commission, 2089:3 / 196:0.13]

5

Even on Urantia, these seraphim teach the everlasting truth: If your own mind does not serve you well, you can exchange it for the mind of Jesus of Nazareth, who always serves you well.
[An Archangel of Nebadon, 553:7 / 48:6.26]

In contrast, the revelators have told us that Jesus of Nazareth was just one of the transient personal identities that Christ Michael of Nebadon assumed during his seven bestowals in the form of subordinate beings living in his local universe.* Therefore the transient personal identity that we call Jesus of Nazareth is now an integral and inseparable part of Michael’s completed, permanent identity as a Sovereign Creator Son, not a separate, identifiable person. With all this in mind, it is difficult to interpret the five paragraphs excerpted above. Here are two sets of factors that you may wish to reflect on while you are developing your interpretations.

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In Paper 194, the Midwayer tells us that the Spirit of Truth “creates ... a consciousness of Michael, the Son” *[the Midwayer Commission, 2061:2 / 194:2:4]*. Here is the description of the roles and responsibilities of the Spirit of Truth that we examined once before, while we were seeking to interpret the statement of an individual believer who proclaimed that he or she had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ:†

* See the table on page 17 above.

† See pages 110-111 above.

Do not make the mistake of expecting to become strongly intellectually conscious of the outpoured Spirit of Truth. The spirit never creates a consciousness of himself, only a consciousness of Michael, the Son. From the beginning Jesus taught that the spirit would not speak of himself. The proof, therefore, of your fellowship with the Spirit of Truth is not to be found in your consciousness of this spirit but rather in your experience of enhanced fellowship with Michael.

The spirit also came to help men recall and understand the words of the Master as well as to illuminate and reinterpret his life on earth.

Next, the Spirit of Truth came to help the believer to witness to the realities of Jesus' teachings and his life as he lived it in the flesh, and as he now again lives it anew and afresh in the individual believer of each passing generation of the spirit-filled sons of God.

Thus it appears that the Spirit of Truth comes really to lead all believers into all truth, into the expanding knowledge of the experience of the living and growing spiritual consciousness of the reality of eternal and ascending sonship with God. *[The Midwayer Commission, 2061:2-5 / 194:2:4-7 — emphasis added: sentence shown in bold type]*

PREVIOUS HUMAN CONCEPTS

In relation to the contents of Part IV, the head of the Midwayer Commission tells us that in many ways, he “served more as a collector and editor than as an original narrator.” He explains the underlying principle by declaring: “the majority of the ideas and even some of the effective expressions which I have thus utilized had their origin in the minds of the men of many races who have lived on earth during the intervening generations” *[the Midwayer Commission, 1343:1 / 121:8.12]*. Here is the complete passage that includes these remarks:

[Acknowledgment: In carrying out my commission to restate the teachings and retell the doings of Jesus of Nazareth, I have drawn freely upon all sources of record and planetary information. My ruling motive has been to prepare a record which will not only be enlightening to the generation of men now living, but which may also be helpful to all future generations. From the vast store of information made available to me, I have chosen that which is best suited to the accomplishment of this purpose. As far as possible I have derived my information from purely human sources. Only when such sources failed, have I resorted to those records which are superhuman. When ideas and concepts of Jesus' life and teachings have been acceptably expressed

by a human mind, I invariably gave preference to such apparently human thought patterns. Although I have sought to adjust the verbal expression the better to conform to our concept of the real meaning and the true import of the Master's life and teachings, as far as possible, I have adhered to the actual human concept and thought pattern in all my narratives. I well know that those concepts which have had origin in the human mind will prove more acceptable and helpful to all other human minds. When unable to find the necessary concepts in the human records or in human expressions, I have next resorted to the memory resources of my own order of earth creatures, the midwayers. And when that secondary source of information proved inadequate, I have unhesitatingly resorted to the superplanetary sources of information.

The memoranda which I have collected, and from which I have prepared this narrative of the life and teachings of Jesus — aside from the memory of the record of the Apostle Andrew — embrace thought gems and superior concepts of Jesus' teachings assembled from more than two thousand human beings who have lived on earth from the days of Jesus down to the time of the inditing of these revelations, more correctly restatements. The revelatory permission has been utilized only when the human record and human concepts failed to supply an adequate thought pattern. My revelatory commission forbade me to resort to extrahuman sources of either information or expression until such a time as I could testify that I had failed in my efforts to find the required conceptual expression in purely human sources.

While I, with the collaboration of my eleven associate fellow midwayers and under the supervision of the Melchizedek of record, have portrayed this narrative in accordance with my concept of its effective arrangement and in response to my choice of immediate expression, nevertheless, the majority of the ideas and even some of the effective expressions which I have thus utilized had their origin in the minds of the men of many races who have lived on earth during the intervening generations, right on down to those who are still alive at the time of this undertaking. In many ways I have served more as a collector and editor than as an original narrator. I have unhesitatingly appropriated those ideas and concepts, preferably human, which would enable me to create the most effective portraiture of Jesus' life, and which would qualify me to restate his matchless teachings in the most strikingly helpful and universally uplifting phraseology. In behalf of the Brotherhood of the United Midwayers of Urantia, I most gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to all sources of record and concept which have been hereinafter utilized in the further elaboration of our restatement of Jesus' life on earth.] [*The Midwayer Commission, 1343:1-3 / 121:8.12-14*]

In a paragraph appearing at the end of the Foreword, the Divine Counselor informs us of the mandate whereby the superuniverse rulers required him and his colleagues to “give preference to the highest existing human concepts pertaining to the subjects to be presented” [*a Divine Counselor, 16:8 / 0:12.11*]. Therefore, he states, the Corps of Superuniverse Personalities who sponsored Part I “selected as the basis of these papers more than one thousand human concepts representing the highest and most advanced planetary knowledge of spiritual values and universe meanings” [*a Divine Counselor, 17:1 / 0:12.12*]. The complete acknowledgment reads as follows:

In formulating the succeeding presentations having to do with the portrayal of the character of the Universal Father and the nature of his Paradise associates, together with an attempted description of the perfect central universe and the encircling seven superuniverses, we are to be guided by the mandate of the superuniverse rulers which directs that we shall, in all our efforts to reveal truth and co-ordinate essential knowledge, give preference to the highest existing human concepts pertaining to the subjects to be presented. We may resort to pure revelation only when the concept of presentation has had no adequate previous expression by the human mind.

Successive planetary revelations of divine truth invariably embrace the highest existing concepts of spiritual values as a part of the new and enhanced co-ordination of planetary knowledge. Accordingly, in making these presentations about God and his universe associates, we have selected as the basis of these papers more than one thousand human concepts representing the highest and most advanced planetary knowledge of spiritual values and universe meanings. Wherein these human concepts, assembled from the God-knowing mortals of the past and the present, are inadequate to portray the truth as we are directed to reveal it, we will unhesitatingly supplement them, for this purpose drawing upon our own superior knowledge of the reality and divinity of the Paradise Deities and their transcendent residential universe.

We are fully cognizant of the difficulties of our assignment; we recognize the impossibility of fully translating the language of the concepts of divinity and eternity into the symbols of the language of the finite concepts of the mortal mind. But we know that there dwells within the human mind a fragment of God, and that there sojourns with the human soul the Spirit of Truth; and we further know that these spirit forces conspire to enable material man to grasp the reality of spiritual values and to comprehend the philosophy of universe meanings. But even more certainly we know that these spirits of the Divine Presence are able to assist man in the spiritual appropriation of all truth contributory to the enhancement of the ever-progressing reality of personal religious experience — God-consciousness. [*A Divine Counselor, 16:8, 17:1-2 / 0:12.11-13*]

Although we do not have access to similar statements on behalf of the spiritual beings who sponsored parts II and III, it is reasonable to infer that they operated in much the same way. After all, they confronted the same basic challenge: communicating effectively with human beings who live on our planet Urantia.

- 75.** Please explain and interpret the five passages concerning the influence of Jesus that appear on pages 137 and 138 above, doing this to the best of your ability. You may wish to mention either or both of the factors identified on pages 138 through 142, but you are not obliged to draw on any of these ideas. If you believe that the five passages require a range of explanations that are not entirely uniform, please explain your views.

New symbolism associated with the true teachings of Jesus. In the final section of Paper 87, a Brilliant Evening Star offers us a challenging remark that may seem surprising at first glance: “Regardless of the drawbacks and handicaps, every new revelation of truth has given rise to a new cult, and even the restatement of the religion of Jesus must develop a new and appropriate symbolism” [*a Brilliant Evening Star, 966:1 / 87:7.6*]. For reasons related to deplorable social and political events that have occurred in recent decades, we must first parse the word *cult* before we can take a calm and coherent view of the challenge that the Brilliant Evening Star presents. Here are the definitions that appear in two well respected dictionaries:

<p>cult, noun</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>[obsolete]</i> Worship; reverential homage rendered to a divine being. 2. A system of religious worship, especially as expressed in ceremonies, ritual, etc. 3. Devotion or homage paid to a person or thing; <i>especially</i> a fashionable enthusiasm; <i>derogatory</i> a transient fad of an in-group. 	<p>cult, noun</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A particular system of religious worship, especially with reference to its rites and ceremonies. 2. An instance of great veneration of a person, ideal, or thing, especially as manifested by a body of admirers: <i>the physical fitness cult.</i> 3. The object of such devotion. 4. A group or sect bound together by veneration of the same thing, person, ideal, etc. 5. <i>Sociology.</i> A group having a sacred ideology and a set of rites centering around their sacred symbols. 6. A religion or sect considered to be false, unorthodox, or extremist, with members often living outside of conventional society under the direction of a charismatic leader. 7. The members of such a religion or sect. 8. Any system for treating human sickness that [was] originated by a person usually claiming to have sole insight into the nature of disease, and that employs methods regarded as unorthodox or unscientific.
<p><i>The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary Sixth Edition (2002, 2007)</i></p>	<p><i>Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, V3.0 for 32-bit Windows systems (1999)</i></p>

Thus *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* does not even take note of the politically inflammatory meaning of the word *cult* that has unfortunately become all too familiar to us, whereas the *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* lists it as meaning number 6. In contrast, the Brilliant Evening Star clearly has meaning number 1 in mind: "A particular system of religious worship, especially with reference to its rites and ceremonies."

Now we are ready to examine the context in which the Brilliant Evening Star poses his challenge:

Regardless of the drawbacks and handicaps, every new revelation of truth has given rise to a new cult, and even the restatement of the religion of Jesus must develop a new and appropriate symbolism. Modern man must find some adequate symbolism for his new and expanding ideas, ideals, and loyalties. This enhanced symbol must arise out of religious living, spiritual experience. And this higher symbolism of a higher civilization must be predicated on the concept of the Fatherhood of God and be pregnant with the mighty ideal of the brotherhood of man.

The old cults were too egocentric; the new must be the outgrowth of applied love. The new cult must, like the old, foster sentiment, satisfy emotion, and promote loyalty; but it must do more: It must facilitate spiritual progress, enhance cosmic meanings, augment moral values, encourage social development, and stimulate a high type of personal religious living. The new cult must provide supreme goals of living which are both temporal and eternal — social and spiritual.

No cult can endure and contribute to the progress of social civilization and individual spiritual attainment unless it is based on the biologic, sociologic, and religious significance of the *home*. A surviving cult must symbolize that which is permanent in the presence of unceasing change; it must glorify that which unifies the stream of ever-changing social metamorphosis. It must recognize true meanings, exalt beautiful relations, and glorify the good values of real nobility.

But the great difficulty of finding a new and satisfying symbolism is because modern men, as a group, adhere to the scientific attitude, eschew superstition, and abhor ignorance, while as individuals they all crave mystery and venerate the unknown. No cult can survive unless it embodies some masterful mystery and conceals some worthy unattainable. Again, the new symbolism must not only be significant for the group but also meaningful to the individual. The forms of any serviceable symbolism must be those which the individual can carry out on his own initiative, and which he can also enjoy with his fellows. If the new cult could only be dynamic instead of static, it might really contribute something worth while to the progress of mankind, both temporal and spiritual.

But a cult — a symbolism of rituals, slogans, or goals — will not function if it is too complex. And there must be the demand for devotion, the response of loyalty. Every effective religion unerringly develops a worthy symbolism, and its devotees would do well to prevent the crystallization of such a ritual into cramping, deforming, and stifling stereotyped ceremonials which can only handicap and retard all social, moral, and spiritual progress. No cult can survive if it retards moral growth and fails to foster spiritual progress. The cult is the skeletal structure around which grows the living and dynamic body of personal spiritual experience — true religion. [*A Brilliant Evening Star*, 966:1-5 / 87:7.6-10]

These intriguing but daunting recommendations appear to outline an agenda that is destined to preoccupy readers of *The Urantia Book* for a lengthy period, one that may last several generations or even several centuries — on the understanding that the challenge of developing an inspiring new cult may also stimulate other human beings who decide independently that they too wish to adopt, implement, and *live* personal religion, the real religion of Jesus.

By implication, these remarks of the Brilliant Evening Star are at least somewhat ironic, for at a much earlier stage we discussed the fact that “[Christianity is an extemporized religion](#)” [[the Midwayer Commission, 2086:4 / 195:10.18](#)] and also a religion *about* Jesus.* Now we are confronting the challenge of imagining and inventing an inspiring new cult symbolizing personal religion, the real religion *of* Jesus. Further, the extended process that leads humanity to imagine and develop the new cult will undoubtedly be evolutionary and gradual, entailing numerous preliminary efforts that will not be fully satisfactory. To say this more simply, the new cult will be extemporized!

I would be delighted if I could summarize the challenge in just a few words or phrases, but I cannot. The Brilliant Evening Star has offered us an intriguing recipe that is quite complex; he has synthesized and unified a series of mindal and spiritual factors that appear to lead in different directions, at least on the surface and at least at first glance. My tentative attempts to summarize what he said led me right back to the exact words that he uses, thereby making my summary longer and longer until I finally concluded that the effort was pointless. Perhaps we should reread the Brilliant Evening Star’s remarks before any of you ventures to answer the following questions.

76. Please comment on the Brilliant Evening Star’s suggestion that believers seek to develop a new cult symbolizing the real religion of Jesus and the mindal and spiritual realities that are closely linked with it. If you wish to offer your own recommendations or suggestions, please feel free to do that.
77. Some readers of *The Urantia Book* have begun holding annual gatherings on or about August 21, in order to commemorate the actual birthday of Jesus rather than December 25, the day hallowed by the traditional customs of institutional Christianity. In addition, during certain previous conferences of readers of *The Urantia Book* that occurred in the United States, some persons chose to participate in an optional evening event called a remembrance supper. On most such occasions, one or more persons read section 5 (“Establishing the Remembrance Supper”) in Paper 179 (“The Last Supper”), and those participating in the event consumed small servings of bread and wine.

* See page 89 above.

— Please comment on the practices described above. In your view, do they seem to contribute to developing a new cult that would symbolize the real religion *of* Jesus, along the lines that the Brilliant Evening Star suggests, or are you more inclined to interpret them as relatively minor updates to traditional practices that originated within Christianity, an institutional religion *about* Jesus? If you believe that the two practices deserve different appraisals, please feel free to evaluate them individually.

Topic 9

Comparing and contrasting the ministry of the guardian seraphim and the work of the master seraphim.

As the words imply, the phrases “guardian seraphim” and “master seraphim” identify spiritual beings who are fundamentally the same, but who have substantially different degrees of experience and ability. The master seraphim are grizzled veterans who triumphed over many perplexing challenges during their exhilarating ascent to Seraphington, and who were subsequently assigned to one of the superuniverses so that they could apply their accumulated wisdom to the situation of an inhabited world (in this case, ours).

We have no way of knowing whether the master seraphim currently serving on Urantia are daughters of our own Creative Mother Spirit, the colleague and consort of Michael of Nebadon. To the contrary, it seems substantially more likely that many of them, and probably most of them, began their original careers as seraphim in some other local universe, quite possibly a local universe that is not part of Orvonton.* In one sense, this may not be important, for a Melchizedek tells us:

The seraphim are all fairly uniform in design. From universe to universe, throughout all seven of the superuniverses, they show a minimum of variation; they are the most nearly standard of all spirit types of personal beings. Their various orders constitute the corps of the skilled and common ministers of the local creations. [A Melchizedek, 418:3 / 38:0.3]

On the other hand, the realm of mind is the context for the ministry and service that all seraphim provide, and this applies to the guardian seraphim as well as to the master seraphim. Further, the cosmic mind is not uniform throughout the grand universe.

* Since newly commissioned finaliters are required to serve in all six other superuniverses before returning to the superuniverse in which they lived as human beings and as morontia ascenders, it is reasonable to wonder whether a similar requirement may apply to the initial assignments of the master seraphim. (REFERENCE: paragraph 345:10 / 31:0.10 in Paper 31 by a Divine Counselor and One without Name and Number.)

Quite to the contrary, for a Mighty Messenger states that the cosmic mind “is the sevenfold *diversified* mind of time and space, one phase of which is ministered by each of the Seven Master Spirits to one of the seven superuniverses” [*a Mighty Messenger, 481:3 / 42:10.6 — emphasis added*]. For example, a Universal Censor informs us that human beings on Urantia have been endowed with “the Nebadon order of the *Orvonton series* of the cosmic mind of parental reproductive pattern” [*a Universal Censor, 195:2 / 16:8.15 — emphasis added: the phrase in italics*]. Since mind itself differs from one superuniverse to another, it would not be surprising if the seraphic techniques of mind ministry also differ, at least to some degree.*

In contrast, the great majority of the guardian seraphim serving on Urantia seem likely to be daughters of our own Creative Mother Spirit, although it is possible that some of them hail from another local universe in Orvonton. (A Melchizedek states: “When once seraphim are commissioned, they may range all Nebadon, even Orvonton, on assignment” [*a Melchizedek, 421:3 / 38:5.4*].)

Seeking to understand and love the angels. A Melchizedek tells us that angels “love human beings, and only good can result from your efforts to understand and love them” [*a Melchizedek, 419:1 / 38:2.1*]. Here is the paragraph that includes these insights, plus two other passages that will serve to complete our personal introduction to the psychological and mindal characteristics of angels.

Angels do not have material bodies, but they are definite and discrete beings; they are of spirit nature and origin. Though invisible to mortals, they perceive you as you are in the flesh without the aid of transformers or translators; they intellectually understand the mode of mortal life, and they share all of man’s nonsensuous emotions and sentiments. They appreciate and greatly enjoy your efforts in music, art, and real humor. They are fully cognizant of your moral struggles and spiritual difficulties. They love human beings, and only good can result from your efforts to understand and love them. [*A Melchizedek, 419:1 / 38:2.1*]

The angels develop an abiding affection for their human associates; and you would, if you could only visualize the seraphim, develop a warm affection for them. Divested of material bodies, given spirit forms, you would be very near the angels in many attributes of personality. They share most of your emotions and experience some additional ones. The only emotion actuating you which is somewhat difficult for them to comprehend is the legacy

* For a general analysis of the realm of mind and how it channels human perceptions and experience, see subsequent discussion associated with topic 11 (*i.e.*, on pages 189 through 210 below).

of animal fear that bulks so large in the mental life of the average inhabitant of Urantia. The angels really find it hard to understand why you will so persistently allow your higher intellectual powers, even your religious faith, to be so dominated by fear, so thoroughly demoralized by the thoughtless panic of dread and anxiety. [*The Chief of Seraphim, 1243:2 / 113:2.5*]

The seraphim are so created as to function on both spiritual and literal levels. There are few phases of morontia or spirit activity which are not open to their ministrations. While in personal status angels are not so far removed from human beings, in certain functional performances seraphim far transcend them. They possess many powers far beyond human comprehension. For example: You have been told that the “very hairs of your head are numbered,” and it is true they are, but a seraphim does not spend her time counting them and keeping the number corrected up to date. Angels possess inherent and automatic (that is, automatic as far as you could perceive) powers of knowing such things; you would truly regard a seraphim as a mathematical prodigy. Therefore, numerous duties which would be tremendous tasks for mortals are performed with exceeding ease by seraphim. [*A Melchizedek, 419:2-3 / 38:2.2-3*]

“The daughters of God.” In the section of Paper 38 that is entitled, “Angelic natures,” a Melchizedek declares: “Though seraphim are very affectionate and sympathetic beings, they are not sex-emotion creatures. ... Nevertheless, in dealing with sex creatures it is our custom to speak of those beings of more direct descent from the Father and the Son as the sons of God, while referring to the children of the Spirit as the daughters of God. Angels are, therefore, commonly designated by feminine pronouns on the sex planets” [*a Melchizedek, 419:2 / 38:2.2*]. Therefore a sentence in this document referring to an individual seraphim may well include the feminine pronoun *she* or *her*, whereas the masculine equivalent *he* or *him* will certainly not appear.

78. Given the Melchizedek’s explanation that angels are the daughters of God, does it make sense for us to understand the ministry of the guardian seraphim, and the work of the master seraphim, from some of the psychological perspectives that have traditionally been considered feminine — for example, a disposition to serve, assist, and support without manifesting an active effort to direct, dominate, or control?

— Would this interpretation harmonize with the unequivocal and unconditional requirement that the seraphim show complete respect for the free-will choices of each individual human being?

— If, on the other hand, you do not accept the conclusions outlined above, please explain your reasons, while analyzing the work of the seraphim from psychological perspectives that you believe are more accurate.

Complete respect for the free-will choices of every human being. Since the revelators are quite categorical in emphasizing that complete respect for human free will is a crucial characteristic of the entire grand universe, this principle most certainly applies to all the active efforts of both categories of seraphim:

Man does not have unfettered free will; there are limits to his range of choice, but within the radius of this choice his will is relatively sovereign. [*A Mighty Messenger, 1303:3 / 118:9.2*]

Angels do not invade the sanctity of the human mind; they do not manipulate the will of mortals; neither do they directly contact with the indwelling Adjusters. The guardian of destiny influences you in every possible manner consistent with the dignity of your personality; under no circumstances do these angels interfere with the free action of the human will. Neither angels nor any other order of universe personality have power or authority to curtail or abridge the prerogatives of human choosing. [*The Chief of Seraphim, 1245:7 / 113:5.1*]

In the Paper in which a Mighty Messenger analyzes the numerous deceptions and frauds that pervaded Lucifer's self-serving and egotistical rebellion against our Creator Son, the author is particularly vehement in denouncing Lucifer's vicious assault on the free-will choices of the human ascenders and other personal beings who were then living in Satania:

There is no error greater than that species of self-deception which leads intelligent beings to crave the exercise of power over other beings for the purpose of depriving these persons of their natural liberties. The golden rule of human fairness cries out against all such fraud, unfairness, selfishness, and unrighteousness. Only true and genuine liberty is compatible with the reign of love and the ministry of mercy.

How dare the self-willed creature encroach upon the rights of his fellows in the name of personal liberty when the Supreme Rulers of the universe stand back in merciful respect for these prerogatives of will and potentials of personality! No being, in the exercise of his supposed personal liberty, has a right to deprive any other being of those privileges of existence conferred by the Creators and duly respected by all their loyal associates, subordinates, and subjects. ...

Every creature of every evolving universe who aspires to do the Father's will is destined to become the partner of the time-space Creators in this magnificent adventure of experiential perfection attainment. Were this not true, the Father would have hardly endowed such creatures with creative free will, neither would he indwell them, actually go into partnership with them by means of his own spirit.

Lucifer's folly was the attempt to do the nondoable, to short-circuit time in an experiential universe. Lucifer's crime was the attempted creative disenfranchisement of every personality in Satania, the unrecognized abridgment of the creature's personal participation — freewill participation — in the long evolutionary struggle to attain the status of light and life both individually and collectively. In so doing this onetime Sovereign of your system set the temporal purpose of his own will directly athwart the eternal purpose of God's will as it is revealed in the bestowal of free will upon all personal creatures. [A Mighty Messenger, 614:3-4,7-8 / 54:1.8-9, 54:2.2-3]

79. It is intensely satisfying to know that spiritual beings whose understanding and experience greatly exceed our own must show complete respect for our free-will choices. Some readers, however, go well beyond that, declaring that this requirement was not only praiseworthy and appropriate, but also an inevitable and crucial condition for pursuing the Universal Father's "Plan of Progressive Attainment" — his "plan of evolutionary ascension" [a Divine Counselor, 85:5 / 7:4.4]. Do you agree with this interpretation? If so, why? If not, how do you analyze these matters?

The ministry of the seraphic guardians. The Chief of Seraphim describes the efforts of the guardian seraphim in terms that are intriguing and perhaps fascinating, but her account mainly involves identifying aspirations and goals. In other words, the Chief of Seraphim tells us very little about *techniques*, how the guardian seraphim actually operate in the realm of mind.

This cannot be an accident, and it seems quite possible that her instructions did not permit her to talk about these methods. After all, it would be difficult to exclude the possibility that some human beings, intending to be uncooperative or even obstructive, might exploit such knowledge so as to complicate or impede the constructive influence that the guardian seraphim intend to exert. Here, on the other hand, is what she does tell us:

The guardian seraphim are not mind, though they do spring from the same source that also gives origin to mortal mind, the Creative Spirit. Seraphim are mind stimulators; they continually seek to promote circle-making decisions in human mind. They do this, not as does the Adjuster, operating from within and through the soul, but rather from the outside inward, working through the social, ethical, and moral environment of human beings. ...

Seraphim function as teachers of men by guiding the footsteps of the human personality into paths of new and progressive experiences. To accept the guidance of a seraphim rarely means attaining a life of ease. In following this leading you are sure to encounter, and if you have the courage, to traverse, the rugged hills of moral choosing and spiritual progress. ...

The guarding seraphim is constantly manipulating the mortal environment for the purpose of augmenting the cosmic insight of the human ascender to the end that such a survival candidate may acquire enhanced realization of the presence of the indwelling Adjuster and thus be enabled to yield increased co-operation with the spiritual mission of the divine presence. [*The Chief of Seraphim, 1245:1,3,4 / 113:4.1,3,4*]

The phrase “manipulating the mortal environment” is particularly difficult to understand, for the intellectual and political characteristics of our era cause many human beings to interpret the environment solely in terms of material factors.

To have any hope of understanding how the guardian seraphim operate and what they are seeking to achieve, we must edit the phrase so as to nudge it into the realm of mind. For example, we could speak of manipulating “the social environment,” “the intellectual environment,” “the emotional environment,” or “the personal environment.” In all likelihood, the Chief of Seraphim had at least some of these possibilities *in mind* when she wrote the passage that we are examining. Further, this interpretation harmonizes with remarks by the Chief of Seraphim in the paragraph of the preceding excerpt shown at the bottom of page 151: The guardian seraphim “[work] through the social, ethical, and moral environment of human beings” [*the Chief of Seraphim, 1245:1 / 113:4.1*].

80. In Paper 65, a Life Carrier states:

Life Carriers may employ every possible natural resource and may utilize any and all fortuitous circumstances which will enhance the developmental progress of the life experiment, but we are not permitted mechanically to intervene in, or arbitrarily to manipulate the conduct and course of, either plant or animal evolution. [*A Life Carrier, 733:8 / 65:3.2*]

— This sentence about the work of the Life Carriers during the evolution of plant and animal life on Urantia appears to have certain elements in common with the current efforts of the guardian seraphim. We would seem to be entitled to say that they “may employ every possible natural resource” and “may utilize any and all fortuitous circumstances,” on the understanding that the natural resources available to the guardian seraphim are mindal rather than material. Do you agree? If not, please tell us why.

— Although it is more difficult to construct an analogy that would apply to the second half of the sentence (the part that follows the conjunction “but”), the verb expression “are not permitted mechanically to intervene in, or arbitrarily to manipulate ...” seems quite plausible, depending on the direct object(s) that would finish the sentence. If you were required to adjust this statement so that it really does apply to the work of the guardian seraphim, what concluding words or phrases would you supply?

— Do the following instructions that Jesus gave to teachers and believers at Edrei also seem to apply to the work of the guardian seraphim, at least in theory and in principle?

Always respect the personality of man. Never should a righteous cause be promoted by force; spiritual victories can be won only by spiritual power. This injunction against the employment of material influences refers to psychic force as well as to physical force. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1765:4 / 159:3.2*]*

* For the context in which we previously considered this passage, see excerpt B on page 23 above.

The guardian seraphim: proportionate and variable methods. Discussions of the guardian seraphim occurring among readers of *The Urantia Book* almost invariably embody the premise that each person present benefits from the care and ministry of an individual seraphic guardian (or actually a pair of seraphim, the two angels who therefore rank as guardians of destiny). This is because every single reader of *The Urantia Book* whom I have ever met appears to be convinced that he or she has already attained the third psychic circle — or perhaps the second or the first.

Without passing judgment on the conclusions and convictions of any individual reader, it still seems reasonable to wonder whether this praiseworthy pattern really does apply. Well, let us endeavor to be tactful by saying that the rows of the following table depict the diverse situations of the entire population of Urantia, for no intelligent observer would assert that every single person living on our planet has attained the third psychic circle, much less the second or the first.

Guardian seraphim

REFERENCE: Paper 113, section 1, paragraphs 7 and 8 (*the Chief of Seraphim*)

Human context	Number of persons guarded	Ministering angels
7th psychic circle	One thousand persons	One seraphim plus one company of cherubim
6th psychic circle	Five hundred persons	A pair of seraphim plus one company of cherubim
5th psychic circle	One hundred persons	A pair of seraphim plus one company of cherubim
4th psychic circle	Ten persons	A pair of seraphim plus one company of cherubim
3rd, 2nd, and 1st psychic circles	A single human being	A pair of seraphim, now called guardians of destiny

- 81.** Please interpret the preceding assignment pattern in terms of the following three factors, stating whether or not you believe that each of them applies and, if so, to what degree.
- (a) A desire to manage scarce resources efficiently (*i.e.*, the seraphim), so as to deploy them as appropriate and as needed but without causing them to devote energy and effort to work that others can carry out effectively (*i.e.*, the cherubim).
 - (b) Methods that enable the seraphim to build on and benefit from many diverse experiences acquired in the context of service to groups of human beings, so that they will be substantially more effective when they eventually assume the crucial and highly sensitive responsibilities of destiny guardians.
 - (c) Providing the degree of attention and assistance that individual human beings really can benefit from and absorb, in proportion to their relative receptivity to mindal ministry as they ascend the psychic circles.

At your option, please feel free to identify and describe any other factor(s) that you believe may also play a role.

- 82.** In the excerpt from section 2 of Paper 113 that starts at the bottom of page 148 above, the Chief of Seraphim calls attention to the legacy of animal fear that remains a prominent element of human consciousness on Urantia, even though it is reasonable to hope that these tendencies will diminish as humanity advances.

a. If a guardian seraphim sought to help the person whom she is guarding abandon this legacy of animal fear, or at least seek to weaken it and rise above it, what methods might she adopt? Do you believe that the guardian seraphim must apply guidelines and restrictions resembling the instructions that Jesus gave to Simon while they were working in Amathus* — so that, as a consequence, the guardian seraphim would not be permitted to attempt to take something *out* of the human mind and would instead be required to seek to strengthen and enhance the positive inclinations, ideas, and ideals that were already present?

b. In your view, does there seem to be an inverse relationship between the legacy of animal fear and an individual's progression through the seven psychic circles?

* As explained in the paragraph from section 6 of Paper 141 that we examined on page 135 above.

c. Alternately, do you believe that personal perceptions relating to actual or potential fear are more significantly influenced by the practical context of an individual's life, especially aspects pertaining to his or her material circumstances, upbringing, and education, as well as collective factors such as social tensions, disease, crime, and war?

d. Does the legacy of animal fear tend to diminish when one encounters *The Urantia Book* and comes to understand and accept its teachings? If so, does this outcome seem to be consistent and essentially automatic, or does it appear to vary according to an individual's personal circumstances and psychological characteristics?

The work of the master seraphim. Unlike the guardian seraphim, who seek to foster the personal growth and development of individuals, the master seraphim endeavor to promote the progressive growth and development of society as a whole. On the other hand, each of the 12 corps of master seraphim focuses on one specific segment of human life and activity, and the master seraphim assigned to the various corps are rotated from time to time. The following table summarizes the pattern of temporary assignments that the Chief of Seraphim explains in section 6 of Paper 114:

The Chief of Seraphim	2nd primary supernaphim since Pentecost
1. The epochal angels	3rd group since Pentecost
2. The progress angels	2nd group since Pentecost
3. The religious guardians	5th group since Pentecost
4. The angels of nation life	4th group since Pentecost
5. The angels of the races	1st group since Pentecost
6. The angels of the future	1st group since Pentecost
7. The angels of enlightenment	3rd group since Pentecost
8. The angels of health	6th group since Pentecost
9. The home seraphim	5th group since Pentecost
10. The angels of industry	7th group since Pentecost
11. The angels of diversion	3rd group since Pentecost
12. The angels of superhuman ministry	1st group since Pentecost

- 83.** How do you analyze the rotational patterns summarized above? In your opinion, what factors influence the timing and frequency of personnel rotations?

As in the case of the activities of the guardian seraphim, the Chief of Seraphim describes the activities of the master seraphim in broad, general terms that are difficult for human beings to understand. All in all, it seems quite reasonable to infer that the Chief of Seraphim intended to be obscure, for she certainly succeeded! Well, colleagues, each of you will soon have an opportunity to explain what the Chief of Seraphim tells us:

None of these angelic groups exercise direct or arbitrary control over the domains of their assignment. They cannot fully control the affairs of their respective realms of action, but they can and do so manipulate planetary conditions and so associate circumstances as favorably to influence the spheres of human activity to which they are attached.

The master seraphim of planetary supervision utilize many agencies for the prosecution of their missions. They function as ideational clearinghouses, mind focalizers, and project promoters. While unable to inject new and higher conceptions into human minds, they often act to intensify some higher ideal which has already appeared within a human intellect.

But aside from these many means of positive action, the master seraphim insure planetary progress against vital jeopardy through the mobilization, training, and maintenance of the reserve corps of destiny. The chief function of these reservists is to insure against breakdown of evolutionary progress; they are the provisions which the celestial forces have made against surprise; they are the guarantees against disaster. [*The Chief of Seraphim, 1256:8-10 / 114:6.18-20*]

- 84.** In Paper 9, a Divine Counselor tells us: “Cosmic force responds to mind even as cosmic mind responds to spirit” [*a Divine Counselor, 102:5 / 9:4.5*]. If we start with the premise that the master seraphim are spiritual beings who operate in mind, what does it mean to say that they “manipulate planetary conditions and so associate circumstances as favorably to influence the spheres of human activity to which they are attached” [*the Chief of Seraphim, 1256:8 / 114:6.18*]?
- 85.** Since you did so well with the last question, here is the next one: What does it mean to say that the master seraphim “function as ideational clearinghouses, mind focalizers, and project promoters” [*the Chief of Seraphim, 1256:9 / 114:6.19*]? (If any of you has had practical experience in serving as an ideational clearinghouse, please describe your exploits!)

- 86.** The Chief of Seraphim states that the master seraphim are “unable to inject new and higher conceptions into human minds” [*the Chief of Seraphim, 1256:9 / 114:6.19*]. In your opinion, is this because the task exceeds their abilities, or because they have received categorical instructions that prohibit it? If you choose the second option, please explain why you believe that these instructions were fully justified.
- 87.** The Chief of Seraphim also tells us that the master seraphim “often act to intensify some higher ideal which has already appeared within a human intellect” [*the Chief of Seraphim, 1256:9 / 114:6.19*]. What does this mean? Does the phrase imply that as a result of the intervention of one or more of the master seraphim, the higher ideal becomes clearer, stronger, or more persuasive, and, if so, to whom?

The master seraphim: strategy and tactics. The three paragraphs by the Chief of Seraphim that we examined on the preceding page (*i.e., 1256:8-10 / 114:6.18-20*) describe the work of the master seraphim from two perspectives that are distinct and quite diverse. In effect, the third paragraph stands alone, for it pertains to the master seraphim’s efforts to “insure planetary progress against vital jeopardy ... to insure against breakdown of evolutionary progress” [*the Chief of Seraphim, 1256:10 / 114:6.20*]. As the Chief of Seraphim indicates, the master seraphim pursue these crucial objectives “through the mobilization, training, and maintenance of the reserve corps of destiny” [*the Chief of Seraphim, 1256:10 / 114:6.20*].

To discuss those activities of theirs properly and thoroughly, we would have to analyze almost the entirety of section 7 of Paper 114 (text appearing on pages 1257 through 1259 of the one-column edition). As a practical matter, however, that section does not contain enough specific information about methods and approaches that would permit us to compare the rather general ministry of the guardian seraphim with the highly specialized work of the master seraphim related to the reserve corps of destiny. Therefore we shall attempt to compare the ministry of the guardian seraphim with operational principles applying to the “many means of positive action” that the Chief of Seraphim mentions in the first two paragraphs of the excerpt (*i.e., in 1256:8-9 / 114:6.18-19*). (This range of possible methods was of course the basis for questions 84 through 87 above.)

Who are the human beings whom the master seraphim will seek to influence in these ways? Certainly not the entire human population of Urantia, for that would implicitly duplicate the efforts of the guardian seraphim. Further, it would be quite unreasonable to assert that every single inhabitant of Urantia has interests, aptitudes, and abilities that could help the master seraphim carry out their fundamental task: fostering the progressive growth and development of society and civilization on our planet Urantia.

To the contrary, it is clear that the master seraphim must be selective, endeavoring to apply their efforts and energies where they will do the most good. The following question will enable you to express your own view of what that means.

88. Please evaluate and comment on each of the following approaches that the master seraphim might wish to employ, so as to focus most of their attention and effort on human beings whose motivations and intent appear to harmonize with goals that that the master seraphim are pursuing.

A. All adult human beings who are actively engaged in some specific field of human endeavor, including the upbringing of children (*a pursuit of intense interest to seraphic corps 9, the home seraphim*).

B. All adult human beings who have attained the third psychic circle and who are actively engaged in some specific field of human endeavor, including the upbringing of children.

C. Individuals and groups who are strongly motivated “to make a difference” in a particular field or some other specific context of human life and behavior.

D. Individuals and groups who have acquired renown in their respective fields and professions, leaders whose ideas and opinions are frequently cited by media commentators who analyze trends and opportunities.

— In your view, how does the work of the master seraphim relate to human beings whose activities, interests, and concerns are almost entirely associated with traditional practices or current patterns, persons who seem at least reasonably content with the status quo and who show little interest in promoting innovations that may be disruptive? Do you believe that the master seraphim exert significant effort aimed at such persons, or that they mainly concentrate on other individuals and groups?

— Would you describe the strategies of the master seraphim as being “elitist”? If you say yes, why do you think so? If you say no, what factors justify your appraisal?

Six orders of unrevealed angels, six unrevealed purposes. In section 3 of Paper 38, a Melchizedek refers to “[six other orders of related beings, the unrevealed angels, who are not in any specific manner connected with those universe activities pertaining to the Paradise ascent of evolutionary mortals](#)” [*a Melchizedek, 420:1 / 38:3.1*]. Since the Melchizedek tells us little more than that, his remarks stimulate far more questions than answers. This, in turn, makes us wonder why he chose to introduce the topic. Here is what he says:

3. Unrevealed Angels

Numerous orders of spirit beings function throughout the domains of the local universe that are unrevealed to mortals because they are in no manner connected with the evolutionary plan of Paradise ascension. In this paper the word “angel” is purposely limited to the designation of those seraphic and associated offspring of the Universe Mother Spirit who are so largely concerned with the operation of the plans of mortal survival. There serve in the local universe six other orders of related beings, the unrevealed angels, who are not in any specific manner connected with those universe activities pertaining to the Paradise ascent of evolutionary mortals. These six groups of angelic associates are never called seraphim, neither are they referred to as ministering spirits. These personalities are wholly occupied with the administrative and other affairs of Nebadon, engagements which are in no way related to man’s progressive career of spiritual ascent and perfection attainment. [*A Melchizedek, 420:1 / 38:3.1*]

89. Although this question is predominantly speculative, grappling with it may enhance our understanding of the spiritual goals, mindal motivations, and revelatory philosophy that the fifth epochal revelation embodies. Please comment on each of the following possibilities, evaluating whether or not any or all of them may have played a part in the Melchizedek’s decision to mention the unrevealed angels.

A. Preference for being completely candid, at least insofar as his instructions permit.

B. Desire to supplement and reinforce the following crucial statements that we read in section 4 of Paper 92:

5. The Urantia Papers. The papers, of which this is one, constitute the most recent presentation of truth to the mortals of Urantia. These papers differ from all previous revelations, for they are not the work of a single universe personality but a composite presentation by many beings. But no revelation short of the attainment of the Universal Father can ever be complete. All other celestial ministrations are no more than partial, transient, and practically adapted to local conditions in time and space. While such admissions as this may possibly detract from the immediate force and authority of all revelations, the time has arrived on Urantia when it is advisable to make such frank statements, even at the risk of weakening the future influence and authority of this, the most recent of the revelations of truth to the mortal races of Urantia. [*A Melchizedek, 1008:2 / 92:4.9*]

C. Revelatory self-restraint that will not “deprive the thinking mortals of the next thousand years of that stimulus to creative speculation which these partially revealed concepts supply” [*a Mighty Messenger, 330:2 / 30:0.2*].

D. Intent to reinforce awareness of the limits of human knowledge and understanding, thereby promoting a healthy humility that would weaken any potential tendency of an individual reader to become proud, condescending, or even arrogant after he or she had managed to absorb the essential teachings of the revelators.

If you wish to identify some other factor that may also have contributed to the Melchizedek’s decision to mention the unrevealed angels, please feel free to do that.

In Paper 106, which is entitled, “Universe Levels of Reality,” a Melchizedek states that his efforts to explain the various levels of reality are constrained and limited by seven factors, including our “ignorance of the six prime purposes of superuniverse development which do not pertain to the mortal ascent to Paradise” [*a Melchizedek, 1163:8 / 106:0.14*]. Here is the complete context in which that clause appears:

These levels of reality are convenient compromise symbolizations of the present universe age and for the mortal perspective. There are a number of other ways of looking at reality from other-than-mortal perspective and from the standpoint of other universe ages. Thus it should be recognized that the concepts herewith presented are entirely relative, relative in the sense of being conditioned and limited by:

1. The limitations of mortal language.
2. The limitations of the mortal mind.
3. The limited development of the seven superuniverses.
- 4. Your ignorance of the six prime purposes of superuniverse development which do not pertain to the mortal ascent to Paradise.**
5. Your inability to grasp even a partial eternity viewpoint.
6. The impossibility of depicting cosmic evolution and destiny in relation to all universe ages, not just in regard to the present age of the evolutionary unfolding of the seven superuniverses.
7. The inability of any creature to grasp what is really meant by pre-existentials or by postexperientials — that which lies before beginnings and after destinies. [*A Melchizedek, 1163:4-11 / 106:0.10-17 — emphasis added: the paragraph in bold type*]

Although it would be tempting to seek to prove the Melchizedek wrong by asking each person who is participating in this discussion to share with us his or her luminously clear explanation of pre-existentials and postexperientials, we shall bequeath that opportunity to successors and heirs of ours who will live on Urantia in one or more subsequent centuries! Instead, we shall spend a bit more time talking about the six unrevealed purposes of the superuniverses — so that each of you will eventually have the opportunity to postulate that these six unrevealed purposes are, or are not, at least tangentially related to the work of the six orders of unrevealed angels.

In Paper 15, a Universal Censor begins his discussion of the purposes of the seven superuniverses by offering us the following two paragraphs:

There are seven major purposes which are being unfolded in the evolution of the seven superuniverses. Each major purpose in superuniverse evolution will find fullest expression in only one of the seven superuniverses, and therefore does each superuniverse have a special function and a unique nature.

Orvonton, the seventh superuniverse, the one to which your local universe belongs, is known chiefly because of its tremendous and lavish bestowal of merciful ministry to the mortals of the realms. It is renowned for the manner in which justice prevails as tempered by mercy and power rules as conditioned by patience, while the sacrifices of time are freely made to secure the stabilization of eternity. Orvonton is a universe demonstration of love and mercy. [*A Universal Censor, 181:7 and 182:1 / 15:14.1-2*]

90. The final paragraph of the immediately preceding excerpt has overtones and implications that many readers will find intensely inspiring. In your view, is that because the facts truly justify this enthusiasm, or because the Universal Censor took care to write in ways that would be appealing to his audience (*i.e.*, human beings living in a local universe that falls within Orvonton)? Does it seem reasonably likely that revelators carrying out similar functions in a different superuniverse could find ways to make their remarks equally appealing to the human beings who live there? If they were to do that, would this be likely to involve emphasizing the major purpose that finds fullest expression in that other superuniverse?

91. When the Universal Censor tells us that “Orvonton is a universe demonstration of love and mercy” [*a Universal Censor, 182:1 / 15:14.2*], is he thereby implying that the other six superuniverses are less loving and less merciful? Do these remarks seem specifically focused on the mindal and spiritual practices associated with the lives of human beings on the inhabited planets and with their potential destinies as morontia ascenders? If not, how do you interpret these remarks?

Since the Universal Censor’s two succeeding paragraphs are more philosophic and more conceptual, we find it significantly more difficult to interpret the ideas they contain:

It is, however, very difficult to describe our conception of the true nature of the evolutionary purpose which is unfolding in Orvonton, but it may be suggested by saying that in this supercreation we feel that the six unique purposes of cosmic evolution as manifested in the six associated supercreations are here being interassociated into a meaning-of-the-whole; and it is for this reason that we have sometimes conjectured that the evolved and finished personalization of God the Supreme will in the remote future and from Uversa rule the perfected seven superuniverses in all the experiential majesty of his then attained almighty sovereign power.

As Orvonton is unique in nature and individual in destiny, so also is each of its six associated superuniverses. A great deal that is going on in Orvonton is not, however, revealed to you, and of these unrevealed features of Orvonton life, many are to find most complete expression in some other superuniverse. The seven purposes of superuniverse evolution are operative throughout all seven superuniverses, but each supercreation will give fullest expression to only one of these purposes. To understand more about these superuniverse purposes, much that you do not understand would have to be revealed, and even then you would comprehend but little. This entire narrative presents only a fleeting glimpse of the immense creation of which your world and local system are a part. [*A Universal Censor, 182:2-3 / 15:14.3-4*]

92. In part, the Universal Censor states that in Orvonton, “the six unique purposes of cosmic evolution as manifested in the six associated supercreations are here being interassociated into a meaning-of-the-whole” [*a Universal Censor, 182:2 / 15:14.3*]. The implications appear to be closely related to a passage in the next Paper whereby the Universal Censor portrays the spiritual nature and identity of Master Spirit Number Seven:

The Seventh Master Spirit is not organically representative of the Paradise Trinity; but it is a known fact that his personal and spiritual nature *is* the Conjoint Actor’s portraiture in equal proportions of the three infinite persons whose Deity union *is* the Paradise Trinity, and whose function as such is the source of the personal and spiritual nature of God the Supreme. Hence the Seventh Master Spirit discloses a personal and organic relationship to the spirit person of the evolving Supreme. Therefore in the Master Spirit councils on high, when it becomes necessary to cast the ballot for the combined personal attitude of the Father, Son, and Spirit or to depict the spiritual attitude of the Supreme Being, it is Master Spirit Number Seven who functions. He thus inherently becomes the presiding head of the Paradise council of the Seven Master Spirits. [*A Universal Censor, 188:3 / 16:3.15*]

— Since the evolutionary purpose unfolding in Orvonton appears to be closely related to the Supreme and to Master Spirit Number Seven, at least in a symbolic and conceptual sense, do you believe that we could hope to develop perceptive theories about the other six major purposes by reflecting on the identity and character of the other six Master Spirits? If you have developed a specific hypothesis pertaining to any of these six cases, please share it with us.

— Is it possible that the seven major purposes associated with the seven superuniverses, when considered together, operate so as to synthesize the Paradise Trinity’s collective relationship to personal experience on the finite level, whereas, in contrast, the plan of progressive attainment, the bestowal plan, and the plan of mercy ministry are projects of the Universal Father, the Eternal Son, and the Infinite Spirit as the three persons of Deity, not as the Trinity? [*REFERENCES: (a) section 4 of Paper 7 by a Divine Counselor, corresponding to pages 85 and 86 of the one-column edition; and (b) section II of the Foreword, likewise by a Divine Counselor, corresponding to pages 3 and 4 of the one-column edition.*]

93. Are you inclined to believe that the work of the six orders of unrevealed angels is at least tangentially related to the unrevealed major purposes of the other six superuniverses? Does your answer amount to an intuition that you advance without evidence, or can you cite one or more logical reasons that appear to justify your reply? If so, please explain this to the rest of us!

94. In your view, are the six orders of unrevealed angels and the six unrevealed major purposes of the superuniverses entirely separate from and unrelated to the work of the guardian seraphim and master seraphim here on Urantia?

In contrast, do you prefer to postulate some kind of linkage that is at least implicit, so as to take into account the role of the Supreme Being in synthesizing, completing, and unifying all finite experience and all finite reality?

In either event, please tell us how you arrived at your answer, either by citing specific factors or by explaining the reasoning that led you to it.

Colleagues, we have now concluded our discussion of the ministry of the guardian seraphim and the work of the master seraphim. As a postscript and final farewell, we shall reflect on rather pointed counsel that Jesus offered his apostles on the Thursday preceding his arrest the next day, while he was speaking to them about sonship and citizenship:

Tempt not the angels of your supervision to lead you in troublous ways as a loving discipline designed to save your ease-drifting souls. [The Midwayer Commission, 1931:1 / 178:1.10]

95. Please comment on the overtones and implications of Jesus' remark, a statement that some analysts might interpret as a warning.

Topic 10

Dangers to the home and to family life that stem from the rising tide of self-gratification.

In section 1 of Paper 82, the Chief of Seraphim tells us: “The mating instinct is one of the dominant physical driving forces of human beings” [*the Chief of Seraphim, 914:3 / 82:1.7*]. A few paragraphs later, she develops this thought by delivering a stern warning:

No human emotion or impulse, when unbridled and overindulged, can produce so much harm and sorrow as this powerful sex urge. Intelligent submission of this impulse to the regulations of society is the supreme test of the actuality of any civilization. Self-control, more and more self-control, is the ever-increasing demand of advancing mankind. Secrecy, insincerity, and hypocrisy may obscure sex problems, but they do not provide solutions, nor do they advance ethics. [*The Chief of Seraphim, 914:6 / 82:1.10*]

These remarks by the Chief of Seraphim are not theoretical and do not just float on air. To the contrary, they seem prescient and pointed, for they implicitly target many of the psychological and social trends that became prominent in Western society during the final one-third of the 20th century, tendencies that have prevailed ever since. For convenience, let us call all this “the sexual revolution” and stipulate that, as in the case of various other revolutions that have occurred from time to time over the course of the last few centuries, the results have been intensely disruptive. Here is the trenchant but highly perceptive analysis of Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom:*

Sex has become, for the first time since the conversion to Christianity of the Roman Emperor Constantine, an almost value-free zone. Whatever happens between two consenting adults in private is, most people now believe, entirely a matter for them. The law may not intervene; neither may social sanction. It is simply not other people’s business. Together with a whole series of other changes, the result has been that what marriage brought together has now split apart. There has been a divorce between sex and love,

* Jonathan Sacks, *The Home We Build Together: Re[-]creating Society* (London, England, UK: Continuum, 2007), page 210. [As cited on pages 322 and 323 of the book *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition, Second Edition* by John Witte Jr. (Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012).]

love and marriage, marriage and reproduction, reproduction and education and nurture. Sex is for pleasure. Love is a feeling, not a commitment. Marriage is now deeply unfashionable. Nurture has been outsourced to specialized child carers. Education is now the responsibility of the state. And the consequences of failure are now delegated to social workers.

Unlike the other nine topics that we have considered thus far, topic 10 is predominantly a matter of human behavior. Therefore this topic is not one we can hope to assimilate by analysis and logic, nor even by exploiting some innovative process that we might call intuition. Nonetheless, we shall assemble certain rational factors and see where they lead, on the understanding that the topic intermingles a wide range of issues that are problematic as well as complex. In brief, the current situation appears to require major adjustments in the attitudes and practices involving and affecting myriad human beings. We cannot expect readymade solutions to descend from heaven.

[EXCERPT A] The normal urges of animal beings and the natural appetites and impulses of the physical nature are not in conflict with even the highest spiritual attainment except in the minds of ignorant, mistaught, or unfortunately overconscientious persons. *[A Mighty Messenger, 383:1 / 34:7.7]*

[EXCERPT B] Jesus had little to say about the social vices of his day; seldom did he make reference to moral delinquency. He was a positive teacher of true virtue. He studiously avoided the negative method of imparting instruction; he refused to advertise evil. He was not even a moral reformer. *He well knew, and so taught his apostles, that the sensual urges of mankind are not suppressed by either religious rebuke or legal prohibitions.* His few denunciations were largely directed against pride, cruelty, oppression, and hypocrisy. *[The Midwayer Commission, 1582:2 / 140:8.21 — emphasis added: sentence in italics]*

[EXCERPT C] The flesh, the inherent nature derived from the animal-origin races, does not naturally bear the fruits of the divine Spirit. ...

Evolutionary mortals inhabiting normal worlds of spiritual progress do not experience the acute conflicts between the spirit and the flesh which characterize the present-day Urantia races. But even on the most ideal planets, pre-Adamic man must put forth positive efforts to ascend from the purely animalistic plane of existence up through successive levels of increasingly intellectual meanings and higher spiritual values. *[A Mighty Messenger, 382:1-2 / 34:7.1-2]*

[EXCERPT D] The Urantia peoples are suffering the consequences of a double deprivation of help in this task of progressive planetary spiritual attainment. The Caligastia upheaval precipitated world-wide confusion and robbed all subsequent generations of the moral assistance which a well-ordered society would have provided. But even more disastrous was the Adamic default in that it deprived the races of that superior type of physical nature which would have been more consonant with spiritual aspirations.

Urantia mortals are compelled to undergo such marked struggling between the spirit and the flesh because their remote ancestors were not more fully Adamized by the Edenic bestowal. It was the divine plan that the mortal races of Urantia should have had physical natures more naturally spirit responsive.

Notwithstanding this double disaster to man's nature and his environment, present-day mortals would experience less of this apparent warfare between the flesh and the spirit if they would enter the spirit kingdom, wherein the faith sons of God enjoy comparative deliverance from the slave-bondage of the flesh in the enlightened and liberating service of wholehearted devotion to doing the will of the Father in heaven. *[A Mighty Messenger, 382:4-6 / 34:7.4-6]*

[EXCERPT E] Forewarn all believers regarding the fringe of conflict which must be traversed by all who pass from the life as it is lived in the flesh to the higher life as it is lived in the spirit. To those who live quite wholly within either realm, there is little conflict or confusion, but all are doomed to experience more or less uncertainty during the times of transition between the two levels of living. In entering the kingdom, you cannot escape its responsibilities or avoid its obligations, but remember: The gospel yoke is easy and the burden of truth is light. *[The Midwayer Commission, 1766:3 / 159:3.7 — part of Jesus' remarks at Edrei: instructions for teachers and believers]*

[EXCERPT F] Those God-knowing men and women who have been born of the Spirit experience no more conflict with their mortal natures than do the inhabitants of the most normal of worlds, planets which have never been tainted with sin nor touched by rebellion. Faith sons work on intellectual levels and live on spiritual planes far above the conflicts produced by unrestrained or unnatural physical desires. *[A Mighty Messenger, 383:1 / 34:7.7]*

Taken together, these six excerpts embark in many directions at once, embodying multiple dimensions and numerous implications that affect individuals. In addition, they entail a range of consequences, both conceptual and practical, that are closely associated with the tone and spirit of civil society. Since we are obliged to begin with some subset of these issues, we shall first seek to examine ethical and moral aspects, especially in relation to the traditional teachings of various organized, institutional religions that have proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth as the incarnate Son of God.

96. During the approximately two thousand years that we can associate with the Christian tradition, many theologians and other professional religionists have depicted the flesh as a source of temptation and have even proceeded to call the flesh evil. How do such teachings compare with the Mighty Messenger's views identified as excerpt A on page 167 above? In the context of that sentence, what does the word "mistaught" suggest and imply?
97. According to the Midwayer Commission, Jesus taught his apostles that "the sensual urges of mankind are not suppressed by either religious rebuke or legal prohibitions" (excerpt B on page 167 above). Jesus' practical realism, however, seems to stand in marked contrast with the predominantly Puritanical views of many professional religionists who claimed to have taught in his name over the course of the next two thousand years.
- a. Why do you think they embarked in directions that were so different from the actual teachings of Jesus?
- b. Some commentators have maintained that the austere and Puritanical teachings of many Christian theologians and other professional religionists have stemmed from their wish to emphasize religious devotion and spiritual inspiration, while depicting the issue of intimate personal relationships associated with physical urges and mindal desires as a decidedly less important part of human life, an aspect that, in their view, should be minimized and weakened. Other analysts, however, have called this approach unrealistic and unbalanced, while pointing out that austere and Puritanical teachings have effectively operated to increase the degree to which individual Christian believers depend on the clergy, either to assuage their own personal convictions of unworthiness and guilt or because certain professional religionists have claimed to act for God by administering "the remission of sins." How do you analyze these net implications, either in relation to the alternative viewpoints summarized above or from any other perspective that you find more insightful?
98. A Mighty Messenger declares that the inhabitants of Urantia "are compelled to undergo such marked struggling between the spirit and the flesh" because of "a double deprivation of help" that stems from "[t]he Caligastia upheaval" and from the fact that "their remote ancestors were not more fully Adamized by the Edenic bestowal" (excerpt D on page 168 above). In your view, is this a valid justification for exploitative behavior that treats other human beings as objects? To what degree does the spirit of your preceding answer apply, or fail to apply, to actions of unattached adults who appear to be motivated, both jointly and separately, by a mutual desire for satisfaction, enjoyment, and pleasure?

99. When Jesus instructed teachers and believers at Edrei, he recommended that they “Forewarn all believers regarding the fringe of conflict which must be traversed by all who pass from the life as it is lived in the flesh to the higher life as it is lived in the spirit” (*the Midwayer Commission, excerpt E on page 168 above*). Do you interpret Jesus’ instructions in terms of physical desires, in relation to religious practices and beliefs, or perhaps from both perspectives?
100. A Mighty Messenger tells us that “God-knowing men and women who have been born of the Spirit ... work on intellectual levels and live on spiritual planes far above the conflicts produced by unrestrained or unnatural physical desires” (*excerpt F on page 168 above, corresponding to paragraph 383:1 / 34:7.7*). Does this mean that “God-knowing men and women” have ceased to experience physical desires pertaining to sexual matters, or just that they are no longer subject to certain conflicts — those produced by physical desires that are “unrestrained or unnatural”? Please bear in mind that in *The Urantia Book*, excerpt F appears immediately before excerpt A, which is the final sentence in the same paragraph: “The normal urges of animal beings and the natural appetites and impulses of the physical nature are not in conflict with even the highest spiritual attainment except in the minds of ignorant, mistaught, or unfortunately overconscientious persons.”

Insufficient self-control and the rising tide of self-gratification. In excerpt D that we read on page 168 above, a Mighty Messenger explains that the marked struggles between the spirit and the flesh that human beings experience on Urantia are closely associated with the default of Adam and Eve and with the relative failure of their mission of racial and biologic uplift. From essentially the same perspective, the Chief of Seraphim associates all-absorbing sex passion with race mixtures and with the imagination and beauty appreciation of the Nodites and Adamites, plus the fact that the Andite inheritance was absorbed in very limited amounts:

The all-absorbing sex passion of the more highly civilized peoples is chiefly due to race mixtures, especially where the evolutionary nature has been stimulated by the associative imagination and beauty appreciation of the Nodites and Adamites. But this Andite inheritance was absorbed by the evolutionary races in such limited amounts as to fail to provide sufficient self-control for the animal passions thus quickened and aroused by the endowment of keener sex consciousness and stronger mating urges. [*The Chief of Seraphim, 913:5 / 82:1.2*]

By the mid-twentieth century, increasing indulgence of this all-absorbing sex passion had brought about “the menacing rising tide of self-gratification, the modern pleasure mania” that the Chief of Seraphim describes in section 8 of Paper 84 as “[t]he great threat against family life” [*the Chief of Seraphim, 942:2 / 84:8.1*]. In the next few paragraphs, she underscores the dangers that humanity faces:

[M]arriage is often viewed only as a means of pleasure. And this overindulgence, this widely spread pleasure mania, now constitutes the greatest threat that has ever been leveled at the social evolutionary institution of family life, the home. ...

There is real danger in the combination of restlessness, curiosity, adventure, and pleasure-abandon characteristic of the post-Andite races. The hunger of the soul cannot be satisfied with physical pleasures; the love of home and children is not augmented by the unwise pursuit of pleasure. Though you exhaust the resources of art, color, sound, rhythm, music, and adornment of person, you cannot hope thereby to elevate the soul or to nourish the spirit. ...

Let man enjoy himself; let the human race find pleasure in a thousand and one ways; let evolutionary mankind explore all forms of legitimate self-gratification, the fruits of the long upward biologic struggle. Man has well earned some of his present-day joys and pleasures. But look you well to the goal of destiny! Pleasures are indeed suicidal if they succeed in destroying property, which has become the institution of self-maintenance; and self-gratifications have indeed cost a fatal price if they bring about the collapse of marriage, the decadence of family life, and the destruction of the home — man’s supreme evolutionary acquirement and civilization’s only hope of survival. [*The Chief of Seraphim, 942:3,5 & 943:1 / 84:8.2,4,6*]

The author of a widely respected analysis of the Western tradition of marriage brings these perils to life by highlighting recent trends in the United States:*

Traditional norms and forms of marriage and the family are in trouble today. Statistics tell the bald American story, which has parallels in other Western cultures. Since 1975, roughly one-quarter of all pregnancies were aborted. One-third of all children were born to single mothers. One-half of all marriages ended in divorce. Two-thirds of all African American children were raised without a father present. Children from broken homes proved two to three times more likely to have behavioral and learning problems than

* John Witte Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition, Second Edition* (Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), page x (excerpted from the preface to the second edition).]

children from two-parent homes. Single mothers faced four times the rates of bankruptcy and eviction. More than two-thirds of juveniles and young adults convicted of major felonies came from single- or no-parent homes. So much is well known. Though these numbers have improved over the past decade, they bring little cheer.

Western traditions of marriage. To understand the current situation of marriage and family life in the West, we need to examine the origin of Western traditions and conduct at least a brief review of the paths that brought us to where we are. As a practical matter, the Western traditions of marriage all developed from the contractual approach embodied in Roman law as it operated under Constantine* and the other Christian emperors who succeeded him in the fourth and fifth centuries of the current era. Roman law envisioned marriage as a contract between equals, and this principle of equality was not consistent with circumstances involving two persons of distinctly different social classes. On the other hand: †

Roman law recognized the institution of concubinage. Concubinage was a quasi-marital relation that was generally reserved for men of ample means who sought a long-standing monogamous relationship with a woman for sex and companionship. ... Such was the case with Augustine of Hippo, who took a lowborn woman as a concubine before he converted to Christianity. He could not marry her because of her inferior social status, and he painfully dismissed her after he turned to the faith and turned against concubinage as a violation of the Christian view of marriage.

Yes, the immediately preceding quotation focuses on the same Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 CE) whom we previously encountered as the renowned Christian theologian who attacked and condemned the teachings of Pelagius, and who also concocted repulsive doctrines of his own that amounted to predestination (*as discussed on pages 104-108 above*). Two biographers, ‡ however, cite practical circumstances, not Christian teachings,

* As stated on pages 96 and 97 above, Constantine decided to sponsor and patronize institutional Christianity in the year 313 CE and then, twelve years later, summoned and convened the Council of Nicaea, acting entirely on his own authority.

† John Witte Jr., *op. cit.*, page 26.

‡ (a) Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.: University of California Press, 2000 [the second edition of a work first published in 1967]), pages 51-52.

(b) Henry Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo: A Life* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, England, United Kingdom, 2009), pages 11 and 19-20.

as the reason why Augustine dismissed his concubine — a woman whom he had lived with for fourteen years and who had borne his son Adeodatus (who subsequently died in adolescence).

Augustine's mother Monica had social ambitions for her son and wanted him to marry an heiress (the daughter of another wealthy family). This is why he agreed to send his concubine away. On the other hand, Augustine was obliged to wait a few years before he could please his mother by marrying the wealthy young woman whom she had chosen. (The girl was underage.)

As a practical matter, however, Augustine of Hippo eventually decided to pass up the opportunity to savor another bout of conjugal bliss. Instead, he succumbed to a temptation with profoundly different overtones: reinventing himself as the celibate priest, bishop, and theologian whose collected works eventually recast him as the most prolific author ever to write in Latin.*

Christian theologians reinvent the concept of marriage. Enough diverting stories, at least for now, since our essential task compels us to return to narrative that is far more general. For the next 600 years, the tradition of Roman law, embodying a contractual approach to marriage, remained the norm in Western Europe, even though the barbarian peoples who overran the Western half of the Roman Empire, founding kingdoms on various portions thereof (*e.g.*, the Ostrogoths, the Visigoths, the Vandals, the Lombards, and, most notably, the Franks), applied a thin overlay of their own ceremonies and customs. These marriage practices, however, retained a contractual and predominantly civil character, for they were not explicitly associated with Christianity or with any other organized, institutional religion.

As the first Christian millennium yielded to the second, Christian theologians and the clergy sensed the opportunity to extend and deepen their domination of Western society by laying hands on another crucial aspect: marriage. During the century that began in the year 1000 CE, Christian theologians and the clergy gradually succeeded in proclaiming that marriage was a sacrament subject to the authority and jurisdiction of "*Sancta Mater Ecclesia Romana*" ("Holy Mother Roman Church"), and that any marriage concluded without benefit of clergy was unlawful, illegitimate, and sinful. Within a few generations, these dictatorial doctrines had generated a profusion of canon law, canon lawyers, and canon law courts responsible for enforcing and adjudicating extensive details, especially in relation to marriages that were not quite standard or from which one or both parties sought to escape.

* Augustine's most celebrated writings are the *Confessions* and a much longer work, *The City of God*, that he composed after Alaric and his Visigothic army sacked Rome in the year 410 CE. (A humorous friend of mine once commented that under the rules of criminal proceedings that currently prevail in the United States, Augustine's *Confessions* would have to be thrown out, since there is no record that anyone read Augustine his rights before he confessed.)

In effect, the marriage doctrines that Christian clergy and theologians invented after the year 1000 CE amounted to yet another example of a broad principle that we examined on page 89 above: “Christianity is an extemporized religion” [*the Midwayer Commission, 2086:4 / 195:10.18*]. As previously indicated, the underlying realities can be summarized via the statement “They made it up as they went along” — on the understanding that in this more intuitive explanation, the word “They” refers to Christian leaders and theologians.

Approximately one thousand years later, are the people of Western countries bound by doctrines of theirs proclaiming that marriage occurs by permission from, and at the behest of, some organized, institutional religion? Most certainly not! The Chief of Seraphim takes direct aim at the key ideas embodied in these authoritarian teachings:

Marriage which culminates in the home is indeed man’s most exalted institution, but it is essentially human; it should never have been called a sacrament. The Sethite priests made marriage a religious ritual; but for thousands of years after Eden, mating continued as a purely social and civil institution.

The likening of human associations to divine associations is most unfortunate. The union of husband and wife in the marriage-home relationship is a material function of the mortals of the evolutionary worlds. True, indeed, much spiritual progress may accrue consequent upon the sincere human efforts of husband and wife to progress, but this does not mean that marriage is necessarily sacred. Spiritual progress is attendant upon sincere application to other avenues of human endeavor.

Neither can marriage be truly compared to the relation of the Adjuster to man nor to the fraternity of Christ Michael and his human brethren. At scarcely any point are such relationships comparable to the association of husband and wife. And it is most unfortunate that the human misconception of these relationships has produced so much confusion as to the status of marriage. [*The Chief of Seraphim, 929:4-6 / 83:8.1-3*]

Another extraordinary distortion stemmed from the Roman Catholic doctrine that marriage, once validly concluded, was permanent and indissoluble, so that divorce was not just forbidden, but actually impossible. As stated in a paragraph from Paper 140 that we previously reviewed (*i.e.*, on page 123 above), this is not what Jesus taught:

In Jesus’ time divorce practices were lax in Palestine and throughout the Roman Empire. **He repeatedly refused to lay down laws regarding marriage and divorce, but many of Jesus’ early followers had strong opinions on divorce and did not hesitate to attribute them to him.** All of the New Testament writers held to these more stringent and advanced ideas about divorce except John Mark. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1581:1 / 140:8.14 — emphasis added: clause in bold type*]

Therefore we know that the following verse from the New Testament is inaccurate and fundamentally misleading: “**What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder**” (*Matthew 19:6 — Revised Standard Version*). Again in this case, the Chief of Seraphim registers a resonant, emphatic, and decisive dissent:

It is also unfortunate that certain groups of mortals have conceived of marriage as being consummated by divine action. Such beliefs lead directly to the concept of the indissolubility of the marital state regardless of the circumstances or wishes of the contracting parties. But the very fact of marriage dissolution itself indicates that Deity is not a conjoining party to such unions. If God has once joined any two things or persons together, they will remain thus joined until such a time as the divine will decrees their separation. But, regarding marriage, which is a human institution, who shall presume to sit in judgment, to say which marriages are unions that might be approved by the universe supervisors in contrast with those which are purely human in nature and origin? [*The Chief of Seraphim, 929:7 / 83:8.4*]

During the Middle Ages, most wealth and social standing stemmed from owning land that was transmitted from one generation to another by inheritance. As a practical matter, the many restrictions on marriage embodied in canon law greatly limited the number of potential heirs, since a person whose parents were not legitimately married in the eyes of the church (or who were not married at all) could not inherit. If circumstances made it impossible for a person who owned land to identify a legitimate heir, he or she might well bequeath it to the church, thereby aspiring to acquire “merit in heaven.”

- 101.** Why did Christian clergy and theologians invent their new doctrines about marriage during the century that followed the year 1000 CE? Please analyze and comment on each of the following possible reasons.
- A.** The belief that marriage is a sacrament and a source of spiritual uplift or grace.
 - B.** The conviction that ties between husband and wife resemble the relationship between Jesus and the church or between Jesus and an individual believer.
 - C.** A desire to increase the power and authority of the clergy — and of the church in general — by exerting greater control over the private lives of individual believers.

- D. A desire to enhance the professional roles of the clergy and increase the financial resources accruing to them by virtue of the fees pertaining to marriage services and marriage records, and because of the substantial complexities and expense associated with any case pursued in a canon law court (*i.e.*, in order to obtain an annulment or a formal separation, on the understanding that divorce as such was not permitted and that there was certainly no prospect of divorce and remarriage).
- E. The hope that extensive restrictions on marriage would eventually enable the church to accumulate additional land and wealth, as a result of bequests by owners of property having no potential heir whom the church considered legitimate.
102. In your view, did any of the preceding motivations, either individually or in some combination that you select, justify the new doctrines concerning marriage that Christian clergy and theologians invented early in the second millennium of the Christian faith?

Canon law unexpectedly wreaks havoc. After approximately 500 years during which the Roman Catholic Church successfully micromanaged marriage by calling it a sacrament and adjudicating the complexities of canon law (a process that yielded considerable income), a case arose that ultimately proved calamitous, a case causing King Henry VIII (reigned 1509 – 1547) to secede from the Roman Catholic Church and proclaim himself the Supreme Head of the Church in England. This landmark of the Reformation and of the history of Christianity ultimately turned the people of England into Protestants, although the transformation did not become definitive and permanent until Henry's second daughter Elizabeth (reigned 1558 – 1603) had created a stable framework.*

The original issue stemmed from the fact that Henry's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, did not produce a male heir who survived infancy and who could therefore succeed Henry. Henry desired to put Catherine aside and marry Anne Boleyn, his new romantic

* For his own part, Henry VIII proved to be an equal-opportunity faggot feeder: He was quite prepared to consign Roman Catholics to the flames (*i.e.*, persons who remained loyal to the Pope and thereby disputed Henry's new title as the Supreme Head of the Church in England), but he was equally willing to burn believers who adhered to newfangled Protestant doctrines of Martin Luther or John Calvin — teachings that Henry resolutely rejected and condemned.

interest but not his mistress.* To do that, Henry needed the Pope's permission in the form of an annulment declaring his first marriage invalid.

That, however, proved too high a hurdle. Catherine of Aragon was the daughter of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, the same Queen Isabella who funded the voyages of Christopher Columbus. More importantly, Catherine was the aunt of the reigning Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, the Emperor who had failed to intimidate Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms (1521 CE) and who concurrently reigned as the King of Spain.

For complex reasons associated with the era's intricate European politics, the troops of Charles V had actually sacked Rome in 1527, a not altogether pleasant episode during which Pope Clement VII fled the Vatican in considerable haste and took refuge in Castel Sant'Angelo. When Henry's petition arrived at the Vatican just a few years later, Clement concluded that it would be politically incorrect to side with the King of England and thereby antagonize the Emperor.† After all, the troops of Charles V might savor a second season of tourist escapades in Rome!

Protestant perspectives. Martin Luther and the other Protestant Reformers who became prominent and influential during the middle decades of the 16th century all disputed the pretensions of the Roman Catholic Church to comprehensive and exclusive jurisdiction over marriage and family life. These practices conflicted with important theological principles that the Reformers proclaimed, and they also believed that at least some aspects of the authority that the Catholic Church exercised should properly belong to civil rulers:‡

Many of the core issues of the Protestant Reformation were implicated by the Roman Catholic theology and canon law of marriage that prevailed throughout much of the West on the eve of the Reformation. The Catholic Church's jurisdiction over marriage was, for

* Anne Boleyn appears to have learned crucial lessons from the experiences of her older sister Mary, who had been Henry's mistress several years beforehand. Strict application of Roman Catholic canon law would actually have made it impossible for Henry to marry Anne, for canon law impediments included a prohibition on marrying anyone who was closely related to an illicit sexual partner.

† The theological merits of Henry's case were significantly less clear, although most scholars consider them problematic. (Granting Henry an annulment would have compelled Clement to contradict a ruling issued by one of his predecessors.)

‡ John Witte Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition, Second Edition* (Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), pages 112-113.

the Reformers, a particularly flagrant example of the church's usurpation of the magistrate's authority. The Catholic sacramental concept of marriage, on which the church predicated its jurisdiction, raised deep questions of sacramental theology and scriptural interpretation. The canon-law impediments to marriage, its prohibitions against complete divorce, its close regulation of sexuality, parenting, and education all stood in considerable tension of biblical teaching.

Therefore all Protestant churches rejected the Roman Catholic doctrine that marriage is a sacrament, and the diverse understandings that they developed all had the net effect of increasing the role of the state and the community in regard to marriage and family life.*

— **Lutheran teachings and practices.** Lutherans assigned much of the legal responsibility for marriage to the state and to the local community. Civil law, not canon law, governed marriage, and marital disputes were adjudicated by civil courts. On the other hand, the civil authorities carried out these responsibilities in the context of their Christian faith, convinced that they were acting on God's behalf. Further, Lutheran theologians, ministers, and other officials of the church were responsible for advising and counseling magistrates on their duties related to marriage and family life, based on their common faith and the spiritual perspectives that it embodied. When the social unity of a particular couple had been broken irretrievably (*e.g.*, because of adultery or desertion), the innocent party could sue for divorce. After a divorce was granted, the parties were free to marry again.

— **Calvinist teachings and practices.** Calvinists divided legal authority over marriage between the church and the state, assigning approximately equal roles to each. In Geneva, Calvin's headquarters and home, a consistory composed of elders and ministers operated as if it were a court conducting preliminary hearings on marriage and family matters, but it was limited to theological remedies (*e.g.*, admonition, remonstrance, public confession) and could not decree legally binding consequences such as annulment or divorce. In a case that might lead to an outcome along such lines, or even a term in prison, the consistory was obliged to refer the matter to a civil court. Divorce and subsequent remarriage were permitted if adultery or desertion were proved, but procedures for proving desertion were simpler and less time-consuming for a husband than for a wife. From a theological perspective, Calvin called attention to and relied on the Biblical doctrine of covenant, while applying it not only to the vertical relationship between God and human beings, but also to the horizontal relationship between a husband and a wife. A marriage was legal and valid if and only if the ceremony occurred in a church, thereby demonstrating that both church and state had consented, not just the married couple.

* The brief descriptions of Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican practices appearing in the text are based on the detailed analysis contained in chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the same book by John Witte Jr..

— **Anglican teachings and practices.** Anglicans eventually restored much of the authority over marriage and family life that church courts had previously enjoyed under Roman Catholic canon law, but the exercise of these prerogatives was now subject to legislation enacted by Parliament and the occasional interventions of a civil court.

An early attempt to adopt Protestant practices resembling those of Lutherans and Calvinists proved unsuccessful, for Parliament declined to enact the comprehensive reform of ecclesiastical law that a body of thirty-two persons led by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer proposed in 1552. Although the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (1571) rejected the Roman Catholic concept of marriage as a sacrament, the Anglican Church also rejected the Protestant concept of divorce and potential remarriage:*

A decree of *divorce* required proof of adultery, desertion (for more than seven years), or protracted ill treatment — beyond the normal physical beatings that English law allowed a husband to visit upon a recalcitrant or belligerent wife. A judgment of divorce was an order for separation from bed and board alone, with no right of remarriage for either party while the other spouse was still alive.

Parliament, however, could enact a law granting a true divorce to the individuals specifically named in the text, as had occurred in the case of King Henry VIII. This costly and cumbersome procedure amounted to a special privilege that was available only to wealthy persons who were at least somewhat influential. Parliament enacted such laws only once every five or six years in the period between 1660 and 1750, but at least once per year thereafter: “a rate that slowly increased until the Divorce Reform Acts of 1857 and following years instituted causes of action for divorce in the common-law courts.”†

103. If you wish to comment on one or more of the Protestant perspectives portrayed above (*i.e.*, the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican traditions), please feel free to do that.

* John Witte Jr., *op. cit.*, pages 249-250.

† *Ibid.*, page 268.

Union of church and state. The Protestant perspectives described above embodied approaches to marriage and family life that blended the authority of church and state in varying proportions. In general, however, it is accurate to conclude that the state exercised considerably more authority over marriage and family life in the Lutheran and Calvinist traditions than had been the case under Roman Catholic canon law, and that Anglican practices also operated to increase the authority of the state, but to a lesser degree.

Since this shared authority over marriage and family life affected everyone who lived in a European country or principality, at least at certain stages of his or her life, it is useful to consider whether this amounted to an exception to the standard patterns for day-to-day living, or whether, on the contrary, we should understand this shared authority as strong evidence that church and state were now interlinked, effectively operating as two facets of a single structure for political rule and social control. Since the second possibility seems to me considerably more persuasive, I ask your indulgence for the following detour into political matters that, on balance, yield substantial insight.

The Treaty of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years War in Germany (1618-1648) and, by implication, over 100 years of intermittent warfare during which Protestants killed Roman Catholics and vice-versa. This treaty was also a landmark from a diplomatic perspective, for it established the general framework for the nation-state system that remains the norm today, although international institutions and treaty regimes have substantially weakened the premise that national sovereignty is unconditional and unlimited.*

For our current purposes, however, the crucial point is that the provisions of the Treaty of Westphalia embodied the Latin maxim *cuius regio, ejus religio* — a political formula that, if translated literally, would read, “Whose realm, his [or her] religion.” Since that wording may be a bit obscure, I prefer a paraphrase that seems smoother and more fluent: “The religion of the ruler shall be the religion of the people.”

It should now be obvious that these provisions of the Treaty of Westphalia implicitly entailed the union of church and state, one of the twelve dangers that human beings must prevent if we are to remain free [[a Melchizedek, 798:16 / 70:12.17](#)]. These provisions were the direct opposite of the principle of the freedom of religion that we take for granted in our era, for they meant that the ruler (or, in effect, the government) was entitled to dictate to the individual in religious matters, requiring that he or she embrace the beliefs of some organized, institutional religion and observe its customs and traditions. Further, the governments of European countries and principalities reserved the right to punish persons who refused to comply, and they frequently exercised that right.

* For example, the Nuremberg trials (1945-1949) established that “following orders” is no longer a valid excuse for crimes against humanity, if indeed it ever was.

In fairness, we must bear in mind that these authoritarian customs were not an invention that dated from the middle of the 17th century. To the contrary, medieval Christianity likewise insisted on religious conformity, a requirement that the state enforced at the request of, and in partnership with, the organized, institutional church.

Nonetheless, it is reasonable to conclude that the Protestant Reformation made the question of religious tyranny substantially worse for everyone concerned, for the governments of all European countries and principalities now became obsessed with religious conformity as a matter of social and political stability. The only way to enjoy a framework for Christian belief other than the particular tradition that one's ruler espoused was "to vote with one's feet": to move to a location whose ruler had views more in keeping with one's own. This option was certainly not a theoretical matter, for Protestant dissenters who did not accept the teachings of the Church of England amounted to a large share of the English-speaking settlers who migrated to North America during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Of the three sets of Protestant practices described on the previous pages, I consider the Calvinist approach adopted in Geneva to be the most threatening and the most likely to amount to tyranny from a practical perspective. After all, the consistory was a mixed body that was composed of elders from the community and persons who represented the organized, institutional church (*i.e.*, ordained ministers). Therefore the consistory constituted a living, practical demonstration of the union of church and state. Further, its functions were broad and intensely invasive:*

The consistory was designed to control the behavior of the entire population, to see to it that all Genevans not only accepted the new Reformed teachings set out in sermons and statutes but also lived them in their daily lives. It penetrated life in almost all of its variety in sixteenth-century Geneva. Some of the consistory's work was remarkably officious — intruding on the intimacies of bed and board with unusual alacrity.

Practical aspects. No committed reader of *The Urantia Book* could conceivably advocate that any organized, institutional religion exert comprehensive authority over marriage and family life, as was the case in Western Europe between 1000 and 1500 CE, when the Roman Catholic Church had no competitors and enforced its own canon law. Although this conclusion seems so obvious that we need not justify it, here are two factors that more than suffice:

* John Witte Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition, Second Edition* (Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), page 167.

1. Arrangements along such lines would amount to the union of church and state, one of the great dangers to personal liberty that a Melchizedek warns against in Paper 70 [[a Melchizedek, 798:16 / 70:12.17](#)].
2. The revelators advocate and promote *personal* religion, not any sort of organized, institutional religion that exerts doctrinal or disciplinary authority over individuals or groups.

Nonetheless, respect for the principle of the freedom of religion obliges us to remember that in our era, a substantial number of human beings desire that an institutional religion of their choice approve and bless their marriage, perhaps by means of a formal ceremony occurring in a place of worship. The range of possibilities that civil society contemplates should certainly be broad enough to encompass and accommodate that desire of theirs.

- 104.** Please consider the following categories of persons, commenting on whether or not it may be appropriate for them to be authorized to conduct a marriage ceremony or to certify that a marriage took place — on the understanding that they would subsequently be responsible for notifying the appropriate office of government with jurisdiction over the local area.
- A.** Clergy or other persons representing an organized, institutional religion.
 - B.** Personnel of an affinity group, a social or fraternal association, or a charitable organization that the parties identify with and have selected. *(Please bear in mind that captains have traditionally been authorized to marry passengers while at sea, perhaps on the theory that a prospective bride and groom might just as well receive official authorization to indulge in their favorite pastimes.)*
 - C.** A personal friend or any other individual operating under the provisions of some law or regulation that would enable him or her to act in such matters.
 - D.** Judicial personnel such as a judge, magistrate, or justice of the peace.
 - E.** Attorneys admitted to the practice of law and qualified to draw up a binding contract of marriage, on the understanding that a notary public or another person entrusted with similar public duties would have to notarize or certify the signatures of the bride and groom.

Philosophic perspectives. In spite of the concerns that the Chief of Seraphim expresses in section 8 of Paper 84 (as excerpted on page 171 above), the overall analysis that she presents in Papers 82, 83, and 84 includes a number of favorable, forward-looking remarks that we should call attention to and remember:

[EXCERPT A] Primitive marriage was primarily industrial; and even in modern times it is often a social or business affair. Through the influence of the mixture of the Andite stock and as a result of the mores of advancing civilization, marriage is slowly becoming mutual, romantic, parental, poetical, affectionate, ethical, and even idealistic. [*The Chief of Seraphim*, 922:8 / 83:1.5]

[EXCERPT B] Increasing love, romance, and personal selection in premarital courtship are an Andite contribution to the world races. The relations between the sexes are evolving favorably; many advancing peoples are gradually substituting somewhat idealized concepts of sex attraction for those older motives of utility and ownership. Sex impulse and feelings of affection are beginning to displace cold calculation in the choosing of life partners. [*The Chief of Seraphim*, 923:5 / 83:2.5]

[EXCERPT C] Monogamy is the yardstick which measures the advance of social civilization as distinguished from purely biologic evolution. Monogamy is not necessarily biologic or natural, but it is indispensable to the immediate maintenance and further development of social civilization. It contributes to a delicacy of sentiment, a refinement of moral character, and a spiritual growth which are utterly impossible in polygamy. A woman never can become an ideal mother when she is all the while compelled to engage in rivalry for her husband's affections.

Pair marriage favors and fosters that intimate understanding and effective co-operation which is best for parental happiness, child welfare, and social efficiency. Marriage, which began in crude coercion, is gradually evolving into a magnificent institution of self-culture, self-control, self-expression, and self-perpetuation. [*The Chief of Seraphim*, 927:8, 928.1 / 83:6.7-8]

[EXCERPT D] The high degree of imagination and fantastic romance entering into courtship is largely responsible for the increasing divorce tendencies among modern Occidental peoples, all of which is further complicated by woman's greater personal freedom and increased economic liberty. Easy divorce, when the result of lack of self-control or failure of normal personality adjustment, only leads directly back to those crude societal stages from which man has emerged so recently and as the result of so much personal anguish and racial suffering.

But just so long as society fails to properly educate children and youths, so long as the social order fails to provide adequate premarital training, and so long as unwise and immature youthful idealism is to be the arbiter of the entrance upon marriage, just so long will divorce remain prevalent. And in so far as the social group falls short of providing marriage preparation for youths, to that extent must divorce function as the social safety valve which prevents still worse situations during the ages of the rapid growth of the evolving mores. *[The Chief of Seraphim, 929:1-2 / 83:7.7-8]*

[EXCERPT E] Marriage always has been and still is man's supreme dream of temporal ideality. Though this beautiful dream is seldom realized in its entirety, it endures as a glorious ideal, ever luring progressing mankind on to greater strivings for human happiness. But young men and women should be taught something of the realities of marriage before they are plunged into the exacting demands of the interassociations of family life; youthful idealization should be tempered with some degree of premarital disillusionment.

The youthful idealization of marriage should not, however, be discouraged; such dreams are the visualization of the future goal of family life. This attitude is both stimulating and helpful providing it does not produce an insensitivity to the realization of the practical and commonplace requirements of marriage and subsequent family life.

The ideals of marriage have made great progress in recent times; among some peoples woman enjoys practically equal rights with her consort. In concept, at least, the family is becoming a loyal partnership for rearing offspring, accompanied by sexual fidelity. But even this newer version of marriage need not presume to swing so far to the extreme as to confer mutual monopoly of all personality and individuality. Marriage is not just an individualistic ideal; it is the evolving social partnership of a man and a woman, existing and functioning under the current mores, restricted by the taboos, and enforced by the laws and regulations of society.

Twentieth-century marriages stand high in comparison with those of past ages, notwithstanding that the home institution is now undergoing a serious testing because of the problems so suddenly thrust upon the social organization by the precipitate augmentation of woman's liberties, rights so long denied her in the tardy evolution of the mores of past generations. *[The Chief of Seraphim, 930:2-5 / 83:8.6-9]*

[EXCERPT F] In the ideals of pair marriage, woman has finally won recognition, dignity, independence, equality, and education; but will she prove worthy of all this new and unprecedented accomplishment? Will modern woman respond to this great achievement of social liberation with idleness, indifference, barrenness, and infidelity? Today, in the twentieth century, woman is undergoing the crucial test of her long world existence! *[The Chief of Seraphim, 937:7 / 84:5.10]*

- 105.** If you wish to comment on one or more of the six passages excerpted above, please feel free to do so. At your option, you could also analyze or interpret trends that the Chief of Seraphim summarized in the quotations from *The Urantia Book* that appear on pages 170 and 171 above (*i.e.*, paragraphs excerpted from Paper 82 or Paper 84).
- 106.** In excerpt F and in the final paragraph of excerpt E, the Chief of Seraphim focuses quite intently on the roles and responsibilities of women, rather than those of men. Please comment on the following statements, in part by indicating which of them you consider more accurate. If you are not satisfied with either statement, please explain why and share your own interpretation of the Chief of Seraphim's intent when she wrote the paragraphs that we are discussing.
- A.** Men and women are equally responsible for marriage and family matters, but the adjustments that have occurred in recent generations have greatly increased the opportunities and options that are now available to women, whereas the social horizons associated with the situation of men have not changed very much. Since the Chief of Seraphim is obliged to highlight and clarify aspects that have changed relatively recently, she has devoted particular attention to the roles and responsibilities of women.
- B.** Although men and women certainly do share responsibility for marriage and family matters, the biological and emotional consequences of childbirth and a woman's role as a mother have always caused women to take a greater interest in marriage and the family, and they always will. After all, the Chief of Seraphim states: "Man was woman's superior on the battlefield and in the hunt; but at home woman has usually outgeneraled even the most primitive of men" [*the Chief of Seraphim, 934:4 / 84:3.5*].
- 107.** Now that we have examined many factors that are closely associated with marriage and family life, you may have reached conclusions of your own about current circumstances in society and/or about recent trends that seem to entail important lessons. At your option, please feel free to share your insights with us.

"The solution." Since we have devoted quite a few pages to the topic, "Dangers to the home and to family life that stem from the rising tide of self-gratification," some of you may be wondering whether we should now proceed to formulate "the solution." No, we shall not arrogate that task to ourselves, nor even attempt to craft guidelines that might assist other human beings who take an active interest in these matters.

Why not? Well, colleagues, I shall venture to suggest that there are at least three cogent and convincing reasons:

1. Although almost all of our specific analytical remarks have focused on the situation of marriage and family life in Western society, we must remain acutely aware that the ideas and ideals that the revelators have enshrined in *The Urantia Book* constitute an epochal revelation that is intended to inspire humanity as a whole. Simply stated, we are manifestly unqualified to craft guidelines that would apply so broadly.
2. No one can predict the specific steps that will be appropriate and necessary in regard to marriage and family life while society repeatedly regenerates itself over the next thousand years. Actions and measures will come and go, and a particular step that is appropriate and useful in one region may be premature or disadvantageous in another. In contrast, the process of creativity and innovation must and will persist, and that will be the case in every region of the world throughout the entire millennium.
3. As indicated in Annex 1, each regional association of the Global Endeavor will include a working group on the home and the family (*i.e.*, working group 9). The members and associates of that working group will seek to serve and assist individuals and groups who are operating in fields related to the home and the family, and who wish to propose or promote initiatives, innovations, or reforms. The initiative to upgrade and uplift marriage and family life must rest with individuals and groups operating in society, not with the members and associates of working group 9 — and certainly not with us.

The plan for the Global Endeavor assigns the following responsibilities to a regional association's working group on the home and the family:

SCOPE. Working group 9 will assist and serve those who are active in fields that relate to the preservation and advancement of the home, or who write or teach about such topics. These efforts will include service to those who seek to prepare or train individuals for the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood, those who provide moral, intellectual, or material assistance that helps parents raise their children, and those who promote appropriate concern and care for elders who can no longer function without assistance. In addition, working group 9 will assist and serve counselors and advisers who help resolve conflicts and maintain healthy personal relationships within the family, those who facilitate adoption or appropriate care and nurture in foster homes, and those whose activities of a legal, administrative, or judicial character are mainly associated with family matters.

As explained on pages 57 and 58 above, the members and associates of working group 9 will provide three main types of assistance and service that will link them with idealists, innovators, and reformers operating in society:

- Information activities;
- Networking and problem solving; and
- Private dialogue upon request.

As in the case of the other nine substantive working groups of each regional association of the Global Endeavor, working group 9 will be required to operate modestly and remain in the background:*

- (a) The ten substantive working groups will seek to serve, assist, and inspire individuals and groups in society who wish to propose or promote initiatives, innovations, or reforms that relate to their own fields of experience, knowledge, or interest.
- (b) The working groups will not advocate or advance proposals of their own. To the contrary, they will be a catalyst and resource for those who are active in society and who wish to develop or refine their ideas and approaches.
- (c) The working groups are therefore frameworks for altruistic and idealistic service aimed at fostering higher levels of human civilization. Members and associates will operate modestly and quietly; they will refrain from attracting attention to themselves and will stay well in the background.

108. The draft plan for the Global Endeavor does not permit working group 9, nor any other working group of a regional association, to advocate or advance proposals of its own. In addition, the plan states that a working group must not issue pronouncements appraising specific ideas and innovations, nor statements declaring that particular proposals should be supported or opposed. Instead, the plan stipulates that the staff of a working group should provide advice and counsel only in private and only upon request.

Please comment on each of the following explanations, indicating whether or not you believe that it supports and/or justifies the provisions of the draft plan that are summarized above.

* These provisions were previously excerpted on page 59 above; they constitute the first three paragraphs in Chapter 4 of the draft plan for the Global Endeavor.

A. If a working group were to advocate or advance one or more proposals of its own, it would implicitly become a competitor of the individuals and groups whom it hoped to serve and assist.

B. If a working group were to become a public advocate of a specific proposal advanced by some individual or some other group, it would lose the reputation for impartiality and balance that will make it a respected and influential resource for everyone who is active in the corresponding fields.

Postscript and farewell. During our extended examination of questions associated with our fundamental topic, “Dangers to the home and to family life that stem from the rising tide of self-gratification,” we have repeatedly drawn on insight and analysis contained in a highly informative book by John Witte Jr.: *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition, Second Edition*. His summary of relatively recent trends that have adversely affected marriage and family life in the United States, as cited on page 171 above, appears in the preface to the second edition of his work. Here, however, is the immediately succeeding paragraph:*

What is less well known, and what brings more cheer, is that the Western tradition has faced family crises on this scale before. And apocalyptic jeremiads about the end of civil society have been uttered many times before. What brings cheer is that the Western tradition of marriage has always found the resources to heal and reinvent itself, to strike new balances between orthodoxy and innovation, order and liberty, with regard to our enduring and evolving sexual, marital, and familial norms and habits. The prospect of healing and reinvention is no less likely today — as long as academics, activists, advocates, and political, religious, and civic leaders ponder these problems in good faith and direct their resources to good works.

In effect, the final sentence of Witte’s paragraph identifies essentially the same individuals and groups whom working group 9 will seek to serve and assist. It is more than reasonable to hope that their efforts will ultimately prove positive and productive, and that the members and associates of working group 9 will succeed in stimulating and inspiring at least some of them.

In the final analysis, colleagues, marriage and family life remain works in progress, as is this document. Therefore we shall go on to the next topic.

* John Witte Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition, Second Edition* (Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), page x (excerpted from the preface to the second edition).]

Topic 11

The ongoing evolution of the human mind as a crucial contribution to more advanced levels of society and civilization on our planet Urantia.

Mind is not a riddle traced subtly in shifting sand, nor an ancient artifact that we must discover and reconstruct in a pilgrimage to ages past. Archaeologists may unearth arrowheads and helmets and shields as they recover the residue of epic battles, but they will not find mind or the consciousness of anyone who fought or died there. Linguists may reanimate dead tongues and tell us what scribes were striving to say when they inscribed in clay in olden epochs, but the tablets and their words attest to circuits of mind that long ago expired.

Nonetheless, in all such explorations and in everything else we do or attempt, it is the evidence, the functioning, the reality of mind that we are exploring or exploiting. Every single adventure of ours with matter and in association with spirit is conducted — inevitably, invariably, irretrievably — *in mind*. In mind we are aware, in mind we are adapting, in mind we are alive.*

Mind as a constituent reality

Although the Infinite Spirit is also the Infinite Mind, he ministers cosmic mind to the finite realms of time and space through the activities of his immediate children the Seven Master Spirits.[†] In our case, the active ministry of mind descends from the Seventh Master Spirit (the Master Spirit whose energies pervade Orvonton, the seventh superuniverse) and from the Creative Mother Spirit of Nebadon. As a practical matter, mind on Urantia consists of “the Nebadon variant of the Orvonton type of cosmic mind” [*a Divine Counselor*, 102:3 / 9:4.3].

The two intelligence-ministry circuits that affect us are those of the Seventh Master Spirit and of the Creative Spirit[‡]; the latter includes the functioning presence of the adjutant mind-spirits. In addition, far more general circuits pertaining to mind pervade

* For passages that confirm this statement, see: (a) *a Solitary Messenger*, 1216:4-5 / 111:1.3-4; and (b) *a Melchizedek*, 1120:2 / 102:2.5.

† See: (a) *a Mighty Messenger*, 1269:2 / 116:1.3; (b) *a Perfector of Wisdom*, 162:9 / 14:6.34; and (c) *a Divine Counselor*, 92:3 / 8:2.2.

‡ A Universal Censor identifies these circuits in 177:3 / 15:9.4 and 177:13 / 15:9.14.

the universe of universes. In part, a Divine Counselor tells us that the Infinite Spirit maintains the mind-gravity circuit and “is personally conscious of every *mind*, every intellect, in all creation”:

The Third Source and Center, the universal intelligence, is personally conscious of every *mind*, every intellect, in all creation, and he maintains a personal and perfect contact with all these physical, morontial, and spiritual creatures of mind endowment in the far-flung universes. All these activities of mind are grasped in the absolute mind-gravity circuit which focalizes in the Third Source and Center and is a part of the personal consciousness of the Infinite Spirit. ...

While mind is energy associated in purely material beings and spirit associated in purely spiritual personalities, innumerable orders of personality, including the human, possess minds that are associated with both energy and spirit. The spiritual aspects of creature mind unfailingly respond to the spirit-gravity pull of the Eternal Son; the material features respond to the gravity urge of the material universe.

Cosmic mind, when not associated with either energy or spirit, is subject to the gravity demands of neither material nor spiritual circuits. Pure mind is subject only to the universal gravity grasp of the Conjoint Actor. Pure mind is close of kin to infinite mind, and infinite mind (the theoretical co-ordinate of the absolutes of spirit and energy) is apparently a law in itself. [*A Divine Counselor*, 103:6, 104:3-4 / 9:6.1,5-6]

To supplement this very general account, a Divine Counselor tells us that mind circuits associated with spirit are subject to the oversight of the Universe Circuit Supervisors, whereas mind circuits associated with physical energy (matter) are under the jurisdiction of the Universe Power Directors [*a Divine Counselor*, 263:3-4 / 24:1.13-14]. Although human beings cannot perceive any of these mind circuits, nor the mind-gravity circuit of the Infinite Spirit, the essential point is that these circuits are real and that mind itself is *a constituent reality* of the finite realm in which we live, not just a characteristic of the consciousness of personal beings. A Perfector of Wisdom declares:

Though it is hardly possible for the mortal mind to comprehend the seven levels of relative cosmic reality, the human intellect should be able to grasp much of the meaning of three functioning levels of finite reality:

1. *Matter*. Organized energy which is subject to linear gravity except as it is modified by motion and conditioned by mind.
2. *Mind*. Organized consciousness which is not wholly subject to material gravity, and which becomes truly liberated when modified by spirit.

3. *Spirit*. The highest personal reality. True spirit is not subject to physical gravity but eventually becomes the motivating influence of all evolving energy systems of personality dignity. [A Perfectioner of Wisdom, 140:5-8 / 12:8.9-12]

Unfortunately, however, many human beings living on Urantia “tend towards the error of viewing matter as basic reality and mind, together with spirit, as postulates rooted in matter” [a Divine Counselor, 92:4 / 8:2.3]. This mistake makes a major contribution to the pervasive confusion whereby many Urantians fail to distinguish the mind from the brain, a physical organ of the material body. To the contrary, the Divine Counselor who sponsored the Foreword identifies the mind, not the brain, as “[t]he thinking, perceiving, and feeling mechanism of the human organism”:

2. *Mind*. The thinking, perceiving, and feeling mechanism of the human organism. The total conscious and unconscious experience. The intelligence associated with the emotional life reaching upward through worship and wisdom to the spirit level. [A Divine Counselor, 8:8 / 0:5.8]

Because many human beings of our era do not understand that all these capabilities pertain to the mind, they are inclined to infer that sensations, ideas, and other mental processes all originate in some segment of the brain. This misunderstanding constitutes a key ingredient of materialism, an entrenched and resilient fallacy that has entrapped many fellow Urantians. Could we hope to overcome and dismiss such errors by drawing on observation, logic, and reasoning? To paraphrase this question from a slightly different perspective, is it possible to imagine that scientists living on Urantia will someday be able to detect mind, as such?

The theories of Dr. Rupert Sheldrake. British biologist Rupert Sheldrake (1942–) has advanced a number of scientific theories intended to interpret or explain memory and other mindal phenomena that, in his view, do not originate within the brain, nor depend on it. “Morphic resonance” is the general name that Sheldrake associates with his best known theory, the view that growing organisms acquire their shape and other characteristics by means of energy fields that pervade and surround them. According to Sheldrake, these energy fields supply the fundamental patterns that cause an organism to grow and develop.

Sheldrake portrays these patterns as if they were essentially automatic, as if they emanated or proceeded from living entities absent any creative design or active intent. Thus his theories seem tangentially related to the abstract, archetypal, and static “Forms” that Plato postulated in his classic dialogues; but Plato misses the concept of purposeful, progressive development, and both of them (*i.e.*, Sheldrake as well as Plato) miss the crucial

role of living ministry. Since a Divine Counselor stipulates that mind is “a phenomenon connoting the presence-activity of *living ministry* in addition to varied energy systems” [*a Divine Counselor, 9:10 / 0:6.8*], we can reinterpret the patterns that Sheldrake is endeavoring to portray, instead recognizing them as the net consequences of the ministry of the adjutant mind-spirits and how their efforts interact with the cosmic mind. This perspective, however, requires us to remain aware that the seven adjutant mind-spirits are an integral part of the personal ministry of the Creative Mother Spirit. A Vorondadek Son tells us that the adjutant mind-spirits are more like circuits than entities, actually constituting “a level of consciousness of the Divine Minister” [*a Vorondadek, 402:1 / 36:5.4*].

If we turn to other aspects of Sheldrake’s work, it is reasonable to interpret his concepts of “psychic dogs” and a “sixth sense” enabling a person to perceive that someone else is staring at him or her as outcomes attesting to the net effect of one of the adjutant mind-spirits — probably the first one, the spirit of intuition. In addition, however, we should commend a significant achievement of Sheldrake’s, the fact that he does not accept the materialistic thesis that memory is an integral feature of the brain and that it resides therein.

Since the views of Dr. Rupert Sheldrake contrast quite substantially with the predominantly naturalistic and materialistic interpretations that many other biologists have embraced in our era, his theories are highly controversial. Many other scientists have criticized Sheldrake intensely, not only in regard to his conclusions, but also in relation to his experimental methods and process of reasoning.

Although we are not qualified to adjudicate these professional quarrels, it is reasonable to hope that scientific successors of Sheldrake’s will eventually build on his original insights so as to make further advances in interpreting *the net results, the net consequences, the net outcomes* of how mind operates in various contexts that are associated with matter.

The deeper dilemma. We must remain aware that although detecting how mind operates in association with matter is interesting and useful, this does not amount to detecting mind itself. To be sure, scientists are carrying out all their efforts to detect and analyze matter by making use of their personal circuits of *mind* (or, to be more precise, by means of the consciousness that their mind circuits afford).

Nonetheless, consciousness does not constitute mind as such, but personal awareness *occurring in mind*. Further, memory also does not amount to mind in itself, but ideas, impressions, and experiences *recorded in mind*. Here is the fundamental reality that we must focus on and emphasize: Mind provides the underlying framework for human consciousness and memory, but consciousness and memory do not exhaust the role and functions of mind — especially when we remember that mind is a living reality, encompassing energy circuits that far transcend the awareness of human beings.

Given all of the above, it is exceedingly difficult to imagine how scientists could make use of consciousness in order to detect mind itself, the framework for human consciousness that is also capable of performing many different roles in a wide range of variations and permutations — thereby serving many other types of personal beings and also functioning

as an active channel for countless tasks associated with the administration and management of the universe of universes. Perhaps one of you can offer insights that may enable other human beings to resolve this quandary. If so, we would all be deeply grateful!

- 109.** Do you believe that scientists living on Urantia will ever be able to detect mind in itself and, if so, how? If not, do you believe that some scientists may eventually be willing to infer that an energy level called mind exists because of the net results, the net outcomes, the net consequences that they detect, especially in association with the activities or behavior of animals or human beings?
- 110.** In relation to the mindal domains of philosophy and psychology, can you identify any individual(s), or any school of thought, who have propounded one or more theories that appear to resemble the concept of mind as the revelators have presented it to us, or who have advanced interpretations or conclusions that at least seem to share certain aspects in common?

Mind as a personal operating system

From a practical perspective, the human mind is a living system, a structured arrangement of mindal energy that receives, reacts to, rearranges, and processes sensations, desires, ideas, and ideals. The fact that we cannot see or measure mindal energy does not make the mind any less real than the brain. Based on the realities that many human beings do claim to perceive, however, it seems reasonable to infer that the human mind projects some kind of radiant energy that pervades the body and that may extend a bit beyond it. Some readers of *The Urantia Book* have wondered whether the mind sponsors the reality that certain Oriental mystics claim to see and interpret when they describe “the aura.” Well, that question concatenates too many unknowns for us to respond unconditionally and unreservedly, but the implications are intriguing.

A Perfector of Wisdom calls the human mind “a personal-energy system existing around a divine spirit nucleus and functioning in a material environment” [*a Perfector of Wisdom, 142:1 / 12:9.6*]. In comparison, a Solitary Messenger declares, “Mortal mind is a temporary intellect system loaned to human beings for use during a material lifetime” [*a Solitary Messenger, 1216:6 / 111:1.5*]. About sixteen pages later, he indicates that personal identity stems from the fact that a human being possesses “a mind circuit which has been placed in subordination to the acts and choosing of the will of the human personality” [*a Solitary Messenger, 1232:5 / 112:5.4*].

In these brief excerpts, we have already found three key terms that the revelators apply to the human mind: *energy*, *system*, and *circuit*. From other passages, we know that each human mind participates in “The intelligence-ministry circuit of a local universe, including the diversely functioning presence of the adjutant mind-spirits” [*a Universal Censor*, 177:13 / 15:9.14].

Does this resolve the matter? No, certainly not, for we know from practical experience that the mind of any individual who can discern right from wrong grows and matures from childhood through adolescence and on into the middle years of life on Urantia, on the understanding that the minds of individuals who remain perceptive and aware will continue growing and developing for an even longer interval. Further, it is entirely reasonable to associate the customs and traditions of humanity’s many branches with habits and convictions that are essentially mindal — conventional patterns of behavior that many individuals carry out without inquiring into the underlying reasons and without making an active effort to analyze them from logical perspectives.

Since I realize that all this is abstract and may seem a bit vague, let me offer you a comparison, a metaphor that is certainly not perfect but that seems to have a degree of immediacy and vividness for those who live in our era. With your indulgence, I shall compare the human mind to the operating system of a computer, its basic structure for receiving information, conducting activities, and producing results.

To continue the comparison, I believe that we could associate the electronic and mechanical elements of a computer (for example, its hard drive, keyboard, and monitor) with the human brain and nerves. In turn, we could compare software programs and data with social and intellectual traditions, and with personal experience and memory.

If we then take the analogy to the collective level, it is reasonable to infer that the Internet (or, at least, *the programs and data* that are available on the Internet) are also an integral part of humanity’s social and intellectual resources. To be sure, the underlying electronic bits reside on many servers that are dispersed throughout the world, but what about the corresponding ideas? To ask this question more explicitly, do these mindal resources of humanity simply float on air — quite literally! — or, at any given moment, can we associate them with one or more specific locations? Well, a Mighty Messenger’s remarks in section 3 of Paper 118 create considerable doubt that we will ever be able to reach reliable conclusions as to whether or not ideas, as ideas, bear some relationship to space:

All patterns of reality occupy space on the material levels, but spirit patterns only exist in relation to space; they do not occupy or displace space, neither do they contain it. But to us the master riddle of space pertains to the pattern of an idea. When we enter the mind domain, we encounter many a puzzle. Does the pattern — the reality — of an idea occupy space? We really do not know, albeit we are sure that an idea pattern does not contain space. But it would hardly be safe to postulate that the immaterial is always nonspatial. [*A Mighty Messenger*, 1297:8 / 118:3.7]

If we return to the personal level, however, so as to interpret the analogy in terms of how the human mind operates, the comparison does help us make striking improvements on the commercial practices that are commonly associated with computers and computer software. Even if an individual makes significant and sustained mindal progress — perhaps upgrading his or her perceptions and levels of understanding almost continuously — no one will assess upgrade fees or insist on payment of a premium!

- 111.** Please comment on the metaphor whereby the human mind can be compared with the operating system of a personal computer. What similarities do you perceive? In what aspects, however, does the metaphor seem to fall short of the reality?
- 112.** Although the Mighty Messenger's comments in section 3 of Paper 118 (*i.e.*, those cited on page 194 above) seem to be more successful in stimulating questions than in providing answers, it seems reasonable to infer some process whereby ideas (mindal patterns) circulate in space. If you accept that hypothesis, would this mean that the human mind is at least partly a receiver, an instrument that may be able to register and react to ideas that happen to be circulating in the human environment? Does the concept of a receiver also hint at possible techniques that the guardian seraphim, the master seraphim, the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of Truth may be able to employ, on the understanding that human will is sovereign and that all these influences must operate so as to embody complete respect for an individual's choices and decisions?
- 113.** Do you agree with the idea that the human mind projects some kind of radiant energy that pervades the body and that may extend a bit beyond it? If so, does this concept correlate with the perception that some persons carry with them a personal atmosphere or presence that others notice when these individuals enter a room? If, on the other hand, you do not agree that the human mind projects some kind of radiant energy, please explain your reasons and offer your own interpretation of how the mind relates to the body from spatial and conceptual perspectives.

114. As mentioned in the text, certain Oriental mystics claim to see and interpret phenomena that they describe as “the aura,” perhaps amounting to subtle wave patterns that may appear to pervade and surround the body — and perhaps even including perceptions whereby these mystics discern certain colors or shapes. Without passing judgment on the validity of these claims (which seem to differ from one mystic to another and which also vary in relation to the individuals whose auras are being described), are you inclined to believe that these perceptions are somehow associated with the human mind, perhaps in terms of the energies, inclinations, and aspirations that an individual embodies, encompasses, or projects? Please explain your answer and the factors that led you to it.

Consciousness and choice. In the excerpt that follows below, a Solitary Messenger associates the human mind with personal identity, portraying the mind as the fundamental framework within which an individual makes decisions and choices:

Material mind is the arena in which human personalities live, are self-conscious, make decisions, choose God or forsake him, eternalize or destroy themselves. ...

Mortal mind is a temporary intellect system loaned to human beings for use during a material lifetime, and as they use this mind, they are either accepting or rejecting the potential of eternal existence. **Mind is about all you have of universe reality that is subject to your will**, and the soul — the morontia self — will faithfully portray the harvest of the temporal decisions which the mortal self is making. **Human consciousness rests gently upon the electrochemical mechanism below and delicately touches the spirit-morontia energy system above. Of neither of these two systems is the human being ever completely conscious in his mortal life; therefore must he work in mind, of which he is conscious.** ...

Mind is the cosmic instrument on which the human will can play the discords of destruction, or upon which this same human will can bring forth the exquisite melodies of God identification and consequent eternal survival. [*A Solitary Messenger, 1216:4,6 1217:1 / 111:1.3,5,6 — emphasis added: sentences in bold type*]

In section 3 of the same Paper, the Solitary Messenger explains how the human will gradually moves from its current association with the material mind circuits toward progressively greater identification with the emerging morontia-soul — the morontia framework that will become the vehicle for an ascender’s personality identity on the mansion worlds:

During life the mortal will, the personality power of decision-choice, is resident in the material mind circuits; as terrestrial mortal growth proceeds, this self, with its priceless powers of choice, becomes increasingly identified with the emerging morontia-soul entity; after death and following the mansion world resurrection, the human personality is completely identified with the morontia self. The soul is thus the embryo of the future morontia vehicle of personality identity. *[A Solitary Messenger, 1219:1 / 1111:3.2]*

115. In the excerpts cited on page 196 above, the Solitary Messenger emphasizes that the human mind is the framework for consciousness and for exercising free will while we are alive on Urantia — the framework for making the decisions for which a human being is responsible. While stating this, however, the Solitary Messenger advances analytical conclusions that we should examine with care and attention.

a. Please interpret and explain the following key thought: A human being is never completely conscious of “**the electrochemical mechanism below.**”

b. In addition, please interpret and explain the other key thesis that the Solitary Messenger advances: A human being is never completely conscious of “**the spirit-morontia energy system above.**”

116. In Paper 103, a Melchizedek portrays the mind as the essential and inevitable gateway that enables human beings to become aware of matter and spirit:

Always must man’s inner spirit depend for its expression and self-realization upon the mechanism and technique of the mind. Likewise must man’s outer experience of material reality be predicated on the mind consciousness of the experiencing personality. Therefore are the spiritual and the material, the inner and the outer, human experiences always correlated with the mind function and conditioned, as to their conscious realization, by the mind activity. **Man experiences matter in his mind; he experiences spiritual reality in the soul but becomes conscious of this experience in his mind.** The intellect is the harmonizer and the ever-present conditioner and qualifier of the sum total of mortal experience. Both energy-things and spirit values are colored by their interpretation through the mind media of consciousness. *[A Melchizedek, 1136:1 / 103:6.6 — emphasis added: the sentence in bold type]*

— Please interpret and explain the following conclusion that the Melchizedek has bequeathed to us: “**Man experiences matter in his mind.**”

— Given the preceding principle, it is obvious that all scientific observations, as well as all scientific comments on and analyses of the properties and behavior of matter, are and must be mindal, not material. Does this, in itself, make it illogical for a scientist (or, for that matter, for anyone else) to maintain an entirely materialistic approach to human life and experience? Please explain your answer.

In section 6 of Paper 110, a Solitary Messenger describes the seven psychic circles of human growth and development. In part, he states that the successive conquest of these circles represents “[t]he sum total of personality realization on a material world” [*a Solitary Messenger, 1209:1 / 110:6.1*]. Further, he explains that traversing these levels “demands the harmonious functioning of the *entire personality*, not merely of some one phase thereof” [*a Solitary Messenger, 1209:3 / 110:6.3*]:

The growth of the parts does not equal the true maturation of the whole; the parts really grow in proportion to the expansion of the entire self — the whole self — material, intellectual, and spiritual.

When the development of the intellectual nature proceeds faster than that of the spiritual, such a situation renders communication with the Thought Adjuster both difficult and dangerous. Likewise, overspiritual development tends to produce a fanatical and perverted interpretation of the spirit leadings of the divine indweller. Lack of spiritual capacity makes it very difficult to transmit to such a material intellect the spiritual truths resident in the higher superconsciousness. It is to the mind of perfect poise, housed in a body of clean habits, stabilized neural energies, and balanced chemical function — when the physical, mental, and spiritual powers are in triune harmony of development — that a maximum of light and truth can be imparted with a minimum of temporal danger or risk to the real welfare of such a being. By such a balanced growth does man ascend the circles of planetary progression one by one, from the seventh to the first. [*A Solitary Messenger, 1209:3-4 / 110:6.3-4*]

Before the Solitary Messenger reaches the conclusion whereby he emphasizes “balanced growth” via the “triune harmony of development” of a human being’s “physical, mental, and spiritual powers,” he identifies twin dangers that amount to polar opposites from a personal perspective. In relation to society as a whole, however, these twin dangers appear to stimulate and reinforce each other.

- It is reasonable to associate materialism and secularism with the Solitary Messenger's concern about the intellectual nature developing more rapidly than spiritual perceptions.
- It is also reasonable to associate overspiritual development with intolerance, fanaticism, and/or a desire to dominate other human beings by means of some authoritarian or extremist interpretation of an organized, institutional religion.

117. How will humanity overcome the two behavior patterns described above? In your view, will it be possible to eradicate either of them while ignoring the other one?

118. From conceptual and philosophic perspectives, the understanding that mind is a constituent reality and an active principle conflicts with a purely materialistic approach to human life and destiny. In your view, to what degree will the concept of mind, linked with an awareness of the active ministry that pervades the circuits of mind, assist in overcoming materialism?

The outcome of balanced growth and positive decisions: the assurance of survival.

In a range of passages that are emphatic and conclusive, the revelators assure us that all human beings of good will — all human beings who maintain positive relationships with spiritual aspirations and values — will survive into the ascendant life, thereby achieving a destiny that, at least in broad and general terms, corresponds to the idea of “salvation” proclaimed in the traditional teachings of various institutional religions.

[I]t is not so much what mind comprehends as what mind desires to comprehend that insures survival; it is not so much what mind is like as what mind is striving to be like that constitutes spirit identification. It is not so much that man is conscious of God as that man yearns for God that results in universe ascension. What you are today is not so important as what you are becoming day by day and in eternity. *[A Solitary Messenger, 1216:6 / 111:1.5]*

Orvonton, the seventh superuniverse, the one to which your local universe belongs, is known chiefly because of its tremendous and lavish bestowal of merciful ministry to the mortals of the realms. It is renowned for the manner in which justice prevails as tempered by mercy and power rules as conditioned by patience, while the sacrifices of time are freely made to secure the stabilization of eternity. Orvonton is a universe demonstration of love and mercy. *[A Universal Censor, 182:1 / 15:14.2]*

Though the cosmic circles of personality growth must eventually be attained, if, through no fault of your own, the accidents of time and the handicaps of material existence prevent your mastering these levels on your native planet, if your intentions and desires are of survival value, there are issued the decrees of probation extension. You will be afforded additional time in which to prove yourself.

If ever there is doubt as to the advisability of advancing a human identity to the mansion worlds, the universe governments invariably rule in the personal interests of that individual; they unhesitatingly advance such a soul to the status of a transitional being, while they continue their observations of the emerging morontia intent and spiritual purpose. Thus divine justice is certain of achievement, and divine mercy is accorded further opportunity for extending its ministry.

The governments of Orvonton and Nebadon do not claim absolute perfection for the detail working of the universal plan of mortal repersonalization, but they do claim to, and actually do, manifest patience, tolerance, understanding, and merciful sympathy. We had rather assume the risk of a system rebellion than to court the hazard of depriving one struggling mortal from any evolutionary world of the eternal joy of pursuing the ascending career.

[*A Solitary Messenger*, 1233:2-4 / 112:5.6-8]

- 119.** In your experience, do the overwhelming majority of readers of *The Urantia Book* actually take salvation for granted, as the Midwayer Commission recommends (*i.e.*, survival into the ascendant life and repersonalization on the mansion worlds)? Alternately, have you noted undertones of hesitation, doubt, or perhaps even active concern on the part of quite a few of them? In the latter event, please seek to identify one or more reasons why these attitudes seem to persist.

(NOTE: When you respond to this question, please be sure not to mention anyone else by name.)

Mind as evolutionary and evolving awareness

In Paper 65, “The Overcontrol of Evolution,” a Life Carrier states: “The seven adjutant spirits do not make contact with the purely mechanical orders of organismal environmental response. Such preintelligent responses of living organisms pertain purely to the energy domains of the power centers, the physical controllers, and their associates” [*a Life Carrier*, 739:1 / 65:7.5]. In much the same vein, he also declares:

The lower forms of plant life are wholly responsive to physical, chemical, and electrical environment. But as the scale of life ascends, one by one the mind ministries of the seven adjutant spirits become operative, and the mind becomes increasingly adjustive, creative, co-ordinative, and dominative. ...

The physical brain with its associated nervous system possesses innate capacity for response to mind ministry just as the developing mind of a personality possesses a certain innate capacity for spirit receptivity and therefore contains the potentials of spiritual progress and attainment. Intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual evolution are dependent on the mind ministry of the seven adjutant spirits and their superphysical associates. [*A Life Carrier*, 737:7, 738:3 / 65:6.7,10]

At first only the *spirit of intuition* could function in the instinctive and reflex behavior of the primordial animal life. With the differentiation of higher types, the *spirit of understanding* was able to endow such creatures with the gift of spontaneous association of ideas. Later on we observed the *spirit of courage* in operation; evolving animals really developed a crude form of protective self-consciousness. Subsequent to the appearance of the mammalian groups, we beheld the *spirit of knowledge* manifesting itself in increased measure. And the evolution of the higher mammals brought the function of the *spirit of counsel*, with the resulting growth of the herd instinct and the beginnings of primitive social development.

Increasingly, on down through the dawn mammals, the mid-mammals, and the Primates, we had observed the augmented service of the first five adjutants. But never had the remaining two, the highest mind ministers, been able to function in the Urantia type of evolutionary mind.

Imagine our joy one day — the twins were about ten years old — when the *spirit of worship* made its first contact with the mind of the female twin and shortly thereafter with the male. We knew that something closely akin to human mind was approaching culmination; and when, about a year later, they finally resolved, as a result of meditative thought and purposeful decision, to flee from home and journey north, then did the *spirit of wisdom* begin to function on Urantia and in these two now recognized human minds. [*A Life Carrier*, 709:4-6 / 62:6.3-5]

Thus in the case of Andon and Fonta, the first human beings to have emerged from animal ancestors on our planet Urantia, the initial exercise of intelligence activating the spirit of wisdom, the seventh adjutant mind-spirit, was not a sudden sinking feeling on Andon's part that he had better figure out what Fonta was up to. That would certainly have been wise, and males living on Urantia have been wrestling with similar conundrums ever since. Instead, the Life Carrier has declared that the first activity of mind attesting to human wisdom was actually a joint decision by Andon and Fonta that they should flee from home and journey north.

On balance, however, it does not seem entirely wise to interpret this narrative of the Life Carrier's as implicit advice whereby he would be counseling the inhabitants of the United States to move to Canada. Nonetheless, in a different context the same author tells us, "human evolution has made progress only in the open and in the higher latitudes" [*a Life Carrier, 718:5 / 64:1.3*]. Even so, it is more important for us to refrain from pursuing this thought and instead examine certain poignant remarks by the Chief of Seraphim:

Male and female are, practically regarded, two distinct varieties of the same species living in close and intimate association. Their viewpoints and entire life reactions are essentially different; they are wholly incapable of full and real comprehension of each other. Complete understanding between the sexes is not attainable. ...

The differences of nature, reaction, viewpoint, and thinking between men and women, far from occasioning concern, should be regarded as highly beneficial to mankind, both individually and collectively. Many orders of universe creatures are created in dual phases of personality manifestation. ...

Men and women need each other in their morontial and spiritual as well as in their mortal careers. The differences in viewpoint between male and female persist even beyond the first life and throughout the local and superuniverse ascensions. And even in Havona, the pilgrims who were once men and women will still be aiding each other in the Paradise ascent. ...

While the sexes never can hope fully to understand each other, they are effectively complementary, and though co-operation is often more or less personally antagonistic, it is capable of maintaining and reproducing society. [*The Chief of Seraphim, 938:7,9, 939:1,2 / 84:6.3, 5,6,7*]

The Chief of Seraphim certainly sympathizes with the situation of women, for she refers to "woman's liberties, rights so long denied her in the tardy evolution of the mores of past generations" [*the Chief of Seraphim, 930:5 / 83:8.9*]. On the other hand, she also make a number of statements that implicitly conflict with certain long-cherished convictions proclaimed by contemporary activists who seek to promote women's rights in North America:

Woman is man's equal partner in race reproduction, hence just as important in the unfolding of racial evolution; therefore has evolution increasingly worked toward the realization of women's rights. But women's rights are by no means men's rights. Woman cannot thrive on man's rights any more than man can prosper on woman's rights.

Each sex has its own distinctive sphere of existence, together with its own rights within that sphere. If woman aspires literally to enjoy all of man's rights, then, sooner or later, pitiless and emotionless competition will certainly replace that chivalry and special consideration which many women now enjoy, and which they have so recently won from men.

Civilization never can obliterate the behavior gulf between the sexes. From age to age the mores change, but instinct never. Innate maternal affection will never permit emancipated woman to become man's serious rival in industry. Forever each sex will remain supreme in its own domain, domains determined by biologic differentiation and by mental dissimilarity. *[The Chief of Seraphim, 938:1-3 / 84:5.11-13]*

If we consider the overall trend of events that have occurred within the last century, especially those associated with concepts and convictions pertaining to the roles of men and women in society, it is clear that many people living on Urantia have already made profound adjustments in their own mindal patterns and in the corresponding practices of day-to-day life.

Two other conclusions seem equally obvious: (1) the process of adaptation and adjustment has certainly not concluded; and (2) practices associated with social roles and expectations are far from uniform around the world. On the understanding that all we can do right now is to comment on the situation of men and women in society as it appears to stand at present, each of you will nonetheless have the opportunity to offer us your own well-considered appraisal — or, if you prefer, a rash one!

120. Do you believe that men and women living in developed countries have already reached a reasonable equilibrium in regard to their respective roles in society — an equilibrium that seems likely to endure for the next few generations? Or, on the contrary, do you foresee major controversies or even confrontations that you believe are likely to occur during that period?

121. At your option, please feel free to comment on the degree of respect for the rights of women that seems to characterize contemporary life in developing countries, on the understanding that your remarks could pertain to China, India, and/or to any of the great majority of countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. If you wish to focus more narrowly, so that your reply will relate to one or more specific countries rather than the full range of possibilities identified above, you certainly may do that.

In tracing the lineage and descent of Mary the mother of Jesus of Nazareth, the Midwayer Commission starts with interesting comments, then lists nine illustrious ancestors (“Annon, Tamar, Ruth, Bathsheba, Ansie, Cloa, Eve, Enta, and Ratta”). Thereafter, she proceeds to declare: “No Jewish woman of that day had a more illustrious lineage of common progenitors or one extending back to more auspicious beginnings” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1345:1 / 122:1.2*]. Please note that all nine of these ancestors are females; not a single man is mentioned.

In comparison, Joseph’s lineage did not include as many illustrious individuals, and the Midwayer Commission does not cite specific names. To the contrary, the revelators mainly confine themselves to stating that Joseph’s immediate ancestors “were mechanics — builders, carpenters, masons, and smiths.” His family “belonged to a long and illustrious line of the nobility of the common people, accentuated ever and anon by the appearance of unusual individuals who had distinguished themselves in connection with the evolution of religion on Urantia” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1344:4 / 122:1.1*]. Although this description is not as striking as the account of Mary’s lineage, it is significant that Joseph’s female ancestors are not mentioned at all.

- 122.** Given the Midwayer Commission’s analysis of the lineage and descent of Mary and Joseph, the parents of Jesus of Nazareth, please comment on the following possible inferences:
- The mindal characteristics of women are significantly influenced by mind traits that they have inherited from female ancestors, whereas the mindal attributes of their male ancestors are not equally important.
 - The mindal characteristics of men are significantly influenced by mind traits that they have inherited from male ancestors, whereas the mindal attributes of their female ancestors are not equally important.
- 123.** While bearing in mind your answer to the preceding question, please comment on personal realities that are frequently observed within individual families: (a) a daughter may well share intellectual, cultural, or professional interests associated with her father; and (b) a son may well share intellectual, cultural, or professional interests associated with his mother.

*(NOTE: The preceding lexical ambiguity was by no means accidental, for we are indeed compelled to bear all these factors **in mind!**)*

Kindred minds. In section 6 of Paper 16, a Universal Censor portrays the cosmic mind and analyzes its influence on human beings. While doing so, he offers us intriguing remarks about mindal kinship. These statements deserve to be examined carefully:

The fact of the cosmic mind explains the kinship of various types of human and superhuman minds. Not only are kindred spirits attracted to each other, but **kindred minds** are also very fraternal and inclined towards co-operation the one with the other. Human minds are sometimes observed to be running in channels of astonishing similarity and inexplicable agreement. [*A Universal Censor, 191:6 / 16:6.3 — emphasis added: the phrase in bold type*]

- 124.** To put the matter simply, the preceding statements by a Universal Censor stimulate many challenging questions, while lacking details that would enable us to be confident when we attempt to develop answers. Therefore you will certainly be free to speculate, but please do your best to identify any logical or practical factors that appear to justify or, at least, to harmonize with, your replies.
- a.** Do you have any insight into what may be the types of human and superhuman minds? In addition, please feel free to comment on how these types may differ.
 - b.** Can you offer any impressions or intuitions about the categories and principles of mindal kinship?
 - c.** Do you believe that mindal kinship is transmitted by biological descent? If that were the case, how would the features of the material mechanism (the human body) influence the development of the mind?
 - d.** Do you believe that mindal kinship is instead transmitted, or perhaps *also* transmitted, by other means, such as factors associated with the social, cultural, and/or intellectual environment? Please explain your conclusions and the process of reasoning that led you to them.

In the succeeding paragraphs of the same section in Paper 16, the Universal Censor identifies *causation, duty, and worship* as “**the reality response**” that saves will creatures “**from becoming helpless victims of the implied a priori assumptions of science, philosophy, and religion**” [*a Universal Censor, 191:7 / 16:6.4*]. In addition, the Universal Censor declares:

These scientific, moral, and spiritual insights, these cosmic responses, are innate in the cosmic mind, which endows all will creatures. The experience of living never fails to develop these three cosmic intuitions; they are constitutive in the self-consciousness of reflective thinking. But it is sad to record that so few persons on Urantia take delight in cultivating these qualities of courageous and independent cosmic thinking. ...

It is the purpose of education to develop and sharpen these innate endowments of the human mind; of civilization to express them; of life experience to realize them; of religion to ennoble them; and of personality to unify them. [*A Universal Censor, 192:5,7 / 16:6.9,11*]

The mind of Jesus. After two paragraphs in which an Archangel describes the group of morontia world seraphim who are called “Mind Planners,” he offers us an assurance that is remarkable, to say the least, and that may even deserve the adjective *astounding*.*

Even on Urantia, these seraphim teach the everlasting truth: If your own mind does not serve you well, you can exchange it for the mind of Jesus of Nazareth, who always serves you well. [*An Archangel, 553:7 / 48:6.26*]

Now since all of you responded with aplomb and distinction when I asked you to speculate about mindal kinship, this time I shall do part of the work by presenting a preliminary explanation of what the Archangel appears to have told us. After that, I shall of course offer you an opportunity to object, if that indeed is what you decide to do.

In part, I believe that when the Archangel states that we can exchange our minds for the mind of Jesus of Nazareth, he is not referring to the memory of any event that occurred while Christ Michael of Nebadon was incarnate in the human form of Jesus, nor to any aspect of the personal relationships that Jesus of Nazareth maintained with other individuals who were alive at that time. To the contrary, I believe that the Archangel is referring to Jesus’ mind as a living system, a structured arrangement of mindal energy that receives, reacts to, rearranges, and processes sensations, desires, ideas, and ideals (*i.e.*, in accordance with the concept of the human mind that we developed on page 193 above). Our ensuing transition to the mind of Jesus would occur via the unified ministry of the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, and the adjutant mind-spirits.

* For the very different context in which we previously reviewed this intriguing statement, see page 138. You may also wish to review a three-paragraph excerpt in which the Midwayer Commission comments on how Jesus’ divine and human minds operated during his bestowal on Urantia, an excerpt that you would find on page 80.

- 125.** Please appraise the preliminary explanation that appears in the text (*i.e.*, in the immediately previous paragraph), while feeling free to agree or disagree with any aspect thereof. In addition, you are entitled to elaborate in any other manner that you may choose.

Well, colleagues, I doubt it will surprise you to hear that you are not home free and that this certainly does not conclude the matter. As is clear from the three-paragraph excerpt from Paper 161 shown on page 80, by the time that Jesus of Nazareth had begun his public ministry, he could draw on the divine mind of Michael of Nebadon whenever he wished. Surely we can all agree, however, that the Archangel is not offering us access to the divine mind of Michael of Nebadon! That, on the other hand, is much less problematic than the fact that Michael “[was incarnate in the mind of a first-century human being](#)”:

[In your consideration of the life and experience of the Son of Man, it should be ever borne in mind that the Son of God was incarnate in the mind of a first-century human being, not in the mind of a twentieth-century or other-century mortal. By this we mean to convey the idea that the human endowments of Jesus were of natural acquirement. He was the product of the hereditary and environmental factors of his time, plus the influence of his training and education. His humanity was genuine, natural, wholly derived from the antecedents of, and fostered by, the actual intellectual status and social and economic conditions of that day and generation. While in the experience of this God-man there was always the possibility that the divine mind would transcend the human intellect, nonetheless, when, and as, his human mind functioned, it did perform as would a true mortal mind under the conditions of the human environment of that day. \[The Midwayer Commission, 1521:2 / 136:8.7\]](#)

- 126.** Now that you have read the Midwayer Commission’s statement that from a human perspective, Jesus was “[the product of the hereditary and environmental factors of his time, plus the influence of his training and education,](#)” and that he was likewise a person whose human characteristics were “[wholly derived from the antecedents of, and fostered by, the actual intellectual status and social and economic conditions of that day and generation,](#)” do you wish to revisit your answers to the previous questions about mindal kinship — especially in regard to how mindal kinship is transmitted (*i.e.*, questions [124c](#) and [124d](#))?
- 127.** If we were to follow the Archangel’s suggestion whereby we would exchange our minds for the mind of Jesus of Nazareth, would the net result be for us to receive the mind of a human being of the first century?

During Jesus' lengthy travels around the Mediterranean (a trip that he undertook with the Indian merchant Gonod and his son Ganid, long before beginning his public ministry in Palestine), Jesus counseled many human beings whom he met en route. Here is one paragraph of the narrative in which the Midwayer Commission summarizes Jesus' personal work in Corinth:

To the condemned criminal he said at the last hour: "My brother, you have fallen on evil times. You lost your way; you became entangled in the meshes of crime. From talking to you, I well know you did not plan to do the thing which is about to cost you your temporal life. But you did do this evil, and your fellows have adjudged you guilty; they have determined that you shall die. **You or I may not deny the state this right of self-defense in the manner of its own choosing.** There seems to be no way of humanly escaping the penalty of your wrongdoing. Your fellows must judge you by what you did, but there is a Judge to whom you may appeal for forgiveness, and who will judge you by your real motives and better intentions. You need not fear to meet the judgment of God if your repentance is genuine and your faith sincere. The fact that your error carries with it the death penalty imposed by man does not prejudice the chance of your soul to obtain justice and enjoy mercy before the heavenly courts." [*The Midwayer Commission, 1475:5 / 133:4.12 — emphasis added: the sentence in bold type*]

- 128.** As you review the remarks that Jesus addressed to the condemned criminal in Corinth, do you consider these statements to be the product of the divine mind of Christ Michael of Nebadon, a result of the practical operation of the human mind of Jesus of Nazareth, or perhaps a synthesis that drew elements from both frameworks for his personal consciousness? Please explain your answer.
- 129.** Do you interpret these same remarks as an implication and indirect consequence of the social and political circumstances existing in the first century, or as a statement that, in your view, remains valid in substance now, during the early years of the twenty-first century? To paraphrase this question from a more explicit perspective, do you believe that if Jesus of Nazareth were alive today, he would continue to countenance capital punishment? Alternatively, do you believe that Jesus' views would have changed quite substantially, as a result of the heightened respect for human life that may eventually make a significant contribution to some future decision whereby humanity will finally abandon "the barbarous arbitrament of war" [*a Mighty Messenger, 598:1 / 52:6.6*]?

Horizons near and far. In the section of Paper 71 entitled, “The Ideals of Statehood,” a Melchizedek comments:

The laws of the ideal state are few in number, and they have passed out of the negativistic taboo age into the era of the positive progress of individual liberty consequent upon enhanced self-control. The exalted state not only compels its citizens to work but also entices them into profitable and uplifting utilization of the increasing leisure which results from toil liberation by the advancing machine age. Leisure must produce as well as consume. [A Melchizedek, 803:7 / 71:3.7]

On an even more general level, an Archangel offers us an exceedingly intriguing statement in section 6 of Paper 81:

At first life was a struggle for existence; now, for a standard of living; next it will be for quality of thinking, the coming earthly goal of human existence. [An Archangel, 910:1 / 81:6.28]

Therefore it becomes luminously clear that the ongoing evolution of the human mind will make crucial contributions to more advanced levels of society and civilization on our planet Urantia. From essentially the same perspective, a Mighty Messenger’s description of “Planetary Mortal Epochs” (Paper 52) provides many inspiring insights into circumstances that will prevail during future eras, achievements that we can take great satisfaction in foreseeing:

... new interest in art, music, and literature ... the universal interest in intellectual realities, true philosophy. [A Mighty Messenger, 594:2 / 52:3.11]

Great ethical advancement ... World-wide peace — the cessation of race conflict and national animosity ... [A Mighty Messenger, 594:3 / 52:3.12]

... the flowering of art, music, and higher learning. The physical sciences have already reached their height of development. ... the fullness of a great religious awakening, a world-wide spiritual enlightenment. [A Mighty Messenger, 595:3 / 52:4.8]

... a world of high educational culture ... a race spiritually trained and prepared to assimilate advanced teachings ... The mortal passion ... is the penetration of cosmic reality and communion with spiritual reality. [A Mighty Messenger, 596:1 / 52:5.3]

... human character undergoes tremendous transformations and experiences phenomenal development. It becomes possible to put the golden rule into practical operation. [*A Mighty Messenger*, 596:6 / 52:5.8]

... the problems of disease and delinquency are virtually solved. ... The average length of life ... climbs well above the equivalent of three hundred years of Urantia time. [*A Mighty Messenger*, 596:7 / 52:5.9]

130. Given the excerpts that you have just read, do you envy our eventual successors and heirs, remote descendants who will inhabit Urantia during far distant eras? If so, do you believe that at least some of them may envy your opportunity to share in the ferment and excitement that pervaded the first 100 years of humanity's encounter with the fifth epochal revelation?

Topic 12

Promoting understanding of, loyalty to, and active cooperation with God immanent, especially via our close association with God the Mother, the Supreme Being.

For any reader of *The Urantia Book* who finds it difficult to absorb the reality of the revelators' refrain, "**in Him we all live and move and have our being,**"* it may be helpful to reflect that the Father—I AM is the Infinite and also infinity,[†] and that "**The seven prime relationships within the I AM eternalize as the Seven Absolutes of Infinity.**"[‡] These axioms, however, do not help us understand why a Mighty Messenger subsequently declares, "**From the finite standpoint, we actually live, move, and have our being within the immanence of the Supreme**" [*a Mighty Messenger, 1283:1 / 117:3.12*].

The paradox of immanence

If we endeavor to examine these underlying perplexities from an analytical perspective, applying human logic and reason, we immediately encounter conceptual constraints that are innate to the human mind and that flow from our cosmic situation in time and space. A Divine Counselor tells us that it is nearly impossible for a human being to harmonize the concept of divine immanence with the idea of God's transcendence:

* This crucial teaching occurs thrice: (1) a Divine Counselor, 29:6 / 1:5.16; (2) a Divine Counselor, 35:4 / 2:1.11; and (3) a Melchizedek, 1155:4 / 105:2.11. In the third case, there is a slight difference in grammar, for the pronoun *him* is not capitalized: "... **the primacy of the First Source and Center; in him we all live and move and have our being,** from the creatures of space to the citizens of Paradise; and this is just as true of the master universe as of the infinitesimal ultimaton, just as true of what is to be as of that which is and of what has been" (*emphasis added: the phrases shown in bold type*). In another passage that appears to involve only a minor variation in expression, the author substitutes the noun *God*: "**The affectionate dedication of the human will to the doing of the Father's will is man's choicest gift to God ... In God, man lives, moves, and has his being; there is nothing which man can give to God except this choosing to abide by the Father's will ...**" [*a Divine Counselor, 22:5 / 1:1.2 — emphasis added: the phrases shown in bold type*]. As a practical matter, this alternative phrasing seems to evoke exactly the same reality, for the author refers to "**the Father's will**" in the second half of the sentence. Further, "**God the Father**" is the first of the seven meanings of the word *God* that the same Divine Counselor identifies in section II of the Foreword [4:2 / 0:2.8].

† A Melchizedek, 1152:6 / 104:1.3.

‡ A Melchizedek, 1155:5 / 105:3.1.

The essential doctrine of the human realization of God creates a paradox in finite comprehension. It is well-nigh impossible for human logic and finite reason to harmonize the concept of divine immanence, God within and a part of every individual, with the idea of God's transcendence, the divine domination of the universe of universes. These two essential concepts of Deity must be unified in the faith-grasp of the concept of the transcendence of a personal God and in the realization of the indwelling presence of a fragment of that God in order to justify intelligent worship and validate the hope of personality survival. *[A Divine Counselor, 69:1 / 5:5.6]*

Of course we are all delighted that a Thought Adjuster, a fragment of the nature and substance of the Universal Father, indwells the mind of every morally-conscious human being on Urantia, every person living on our planet who can discern right from wrong. That inspiring reality, however, cannot possibly delimit the profoundly complex implications of the teaching “in him we all live and move and have our being,” for immediately after the Melchizedek says that, he goes on to declare that the principle applies “from the creatures of space to the citizens of Paradise” and “is just as true of the master universe as of the infinitesimal ultimatons” *[a Melchizedek, 1155:4 / 105:2.11]*.

Therefore God's immanence unquestionably pervades the Melchizedek himself and all the other revelators who bequeathed the fifth epochal revelation to us in order to carry out the mandates they received from their superiors in Uversa, Salvington, and Jerusalem. Further, the concept of immanence also implies that God maintains a numinous, sacred presence pervading the entire master universe on all levels — absolute, absonite, and finite.

Perhaps we can achieve a slightly better grasp of the spiritual truth of immanence if we examine certain intriguing statements that a Mighty Messenger makes about space, while hoping that these analytical remarks may implicitly suggest a broad paradigm that we can put to effective use. Here are the comments that I would like to bring to your attention:

Space comes the nearest of all nonabsolute things to being absolute. Space is apparently absolutely ultimate. The real difficulty we have in understanding space on the material level is due to the fact that, while material bodies exist in space, space also exists in these same material bodies. While there is much about space that is absolute, that does not mean that space is absolute.

It may help to an understanding of space relationships if you would conjecture that, relatively speaking, space is after all a property of all material bodies. Hence, when a body moves through space, it also takes all its properties with it, even the space which is in and of such a moving body. *[A Mighty Messenger, 1297:6-7 / 118:3.5-6]*

Now please permit me to make the conceptual leap that this passage implicitly suggests: Just as material bodies exist in space, while space likewise exists in those material bodies, so also does the truth of immanence demonstrate that we exist in God and that God also exists in us. (If you are not convinced, you will soon have the opportunity to challenge this conclusion of mine.)

Before I start asking questions, I have one final point that I would like to share with you, a thought that may involve another paradox. This time, however, we shall venture into the realm of relatively primitive religion. During such an era, many of the gods in a pluralistic pantheon were thought to have an affinity with a specific city or with some other assortment of human beings, and their power, influence, or presence was often closely linked with some specific location such as a “sacred grove.”

The people who cherished such beliefs were at least partly right, for God is indeed present in a grove of trees — on the understanding that he is also present everywhere else! In contrast, quite a few current-day environmentalists have turned the concept on its head, for these single-minded enthusiasts are the “believers” who express considerable concern for the practical welfare of the material environment but have lost sight of a personal God. These contrasting examples teach us an important lesson: Human beings must understand God from both perspectives, transcendent as well as immanent.

131. Do you agree that the truth of immanence demonstrates that we exist in God and that God exists in us? If so, why? If not, why not?

132. The following statements represent possible viewpoints, but none of them is a quotation from a specific reader of *The Urantia Book*. While bearing that in mind, please comment on each statement.

— **Statement A.** I am very reluctant to challenge a Divine Counselor or a Melchizedek, but I wish they had developed the concept of immanence in greater depth and had elaborated on the implications. Quite frankly, I am having difficulty getting my head around this teaching.

— **Statement B.** I am used to thinking of God as a transcendent *person*, and nothing in these passages undermines that. To the contrary, the revelators confirm it far too many times to enumerate. All right, I will now ponder their teaching that God is *also* an active presence, immanent everywhere. I hope I can eventually take hold of this idea, but I am not sure when that will happen.

— **Statement C.** A Divine Counselor says it is nearly impossible for a human being to harmonize the concept of divine immanence with the idea of God’s transcendence. That is good enough for me, for I certainly cannot!

The immanence of the Supreme. Having immersed ourselves (quite literally!) in the immanence of God the Father, we must now go on to examine why we are *also* immersed in the immanence of God the Mother, God the Supreme.* As yet another paradox, there may even be persuasive reasons to proclaim that for the citizens of Urantia — and likewise for mortals living on all other inhabited planets of the seven superuniverses — our association with the immanence of God the Supreme is more tangible and more practical than our spiritual and philosophic association with the immanence of God the Father. (Please rest assured that you will soon have an opportunity to state your views, perhaps by contesting that conclusion!)

Human beings are confined to time and space, the level of finite reality that the Supreme pervades, synthesizes, and unifies. In part, a Mighty Messenger tells us:

The experience of every evolving creature personality is a phase of the experience of the Almighty Supreme. The intelligent subjugation of every physical segment of the superuniverses is a part of the growing control of the Almighty Supreme. The creative synthesis of power and personality is a part of the creative urge of the Supreme Mind and is the very essence of the evolutionary growth of unity in the Supreme Being. *[A Mighty Messenger, 1268:6 / 116:1.1 — emphasis added: the sentence shown in bold type]*

God the Supreme is the personalization of all universe experience, the focalization of all finite evolution, the maximation of all creature reality, the consummation of cosmic wisdom, the embodiment of the harmonious beauties of the galaxies of time, the truth of cosmic mind meanings, and the goodness of supreme spirit values. *[A Mighty Messenger, 1304:2 / 118:8.9]*

Truth, beauty, and goodness are correlated in the ministry of the Spirit, the grandeur of Paradise, the mercy of the Son, and the experience of the Supreme. **God the Supreme is truth, beauty, and goodness, for these concepts of divinity represent finite maximums of ideational experience.** The eternal sources of these triune qualities of divinity are on superfinite levels, but a creature could only conceive of such sources as supertruth, superbeauty, and supergoodness. *[A Mighty Messenger, 1279:5 / 117:1.7 — emphasis added: the sentence shown in bold type]*

Though man's spiritual nature reaches up in the worship experience to the Father who is infinite, man's intellectual comprehension capacity is exhausted by the maximum conception of the Supreme Being. Beyond the Supreme, concepts are increasingly names; less and less are they true designations of reality; more and more do they become the creature's projection of finite understanding toward the superfinite. *[A Mighty Messenger, 1262:1 / 115:3.4]*

* For analysis of the phrases “God the Father” and “God the Mother” in relation to human vocabulary and expression, while also taking into account our planet's religious traditions and the teachings that prevailed during previous epochal revelations, see pages 236 through 243 below.

Given these clarifications, you may now find it less difficult to grasp yet another statement of the Mighty Messenger's, one I previously cited just as we were launching our analysis of immanence (*i.e.*, on page 211 above): “From the finite standpoint, we actually live, move, and have our being within the immanence of the Supreme” [*a Mighty Messenger, 1283:1 / 117: 3.12*].

133. Please comment on the following three sets of remarks, treating them as a general framework that will help you voice your own views — which may be quite different from everything that follows below. (Once again, none of these statements is a quotation from a specific reader of *The Urantia Book*.)

— **Statement A.** It is easier to understand the immanence of God the Father than the immanence of God the Mother, the Supreme Being.

— **Statement B.** It is easier to understand the immanence of God the Mother, the Supreme Being, than the immanence of God the Father.

— **Statement C.** It is equally easy to understand the immanence of God the Father and the immanence of God the Mother, the Supreme Being (*or, if you prefer, equally difficult!*).

I caution you against the views of a male friend of mine who told me that he preferred statement A “because it is obvious that the Father is in charge and that the Mother attends to the details.” I then asked him whether he had deduced this because he had transcended the finite level of time and space, and therefore had been able to commune with the Father as an absolute being in infinity. To that, of course, he did not reply.

Creative synthesis

The revelators who portray “God the Supreme,” “the Supreme,” and “the Supreme Being” often intermix these three phrases as if they were close synonyms and perhaps even exact equivalents. In some passages, the author seems to distinguish various meanings that are not entirely the same, but in other cases it is difficult to discern the differences. Here are four paragraphs from the Foreword in which the Divine Counselor appears to be distinguishing God the Supreme (a spirit person who already exists) from the Supreme Being (an evolving deity who is operating in time and space but who is not yet a discrete person).

God the Supreme in Havona is the personal spirit reflection of the triune Paradise Deity. This associative Deity relationship is now creatively expanding outward in God the Sevenfold and is synthesizing in the experiential power of the Almighty Supreme in the grand universe. Paradise Deity, existential as three persons, is thus experientially evolving in two phases of Supremacy, while **these dual phases are power-personality unifying** as one Lord, the Supreme Being.

The Universal Father achieves freewill liberation from the bonds of infinity and the fetters of eternity by the technique of trinitization, threefold Deity personalization. The Supreme Being **is even now evolving as a subeternal personality unification** of the sevenfold manifestation of Deity in the time-space segments of the grand universe.

The Supreme Being is not a direct creator, except that he is the father of Majeston, but he is a synthetic co-ordinator of all creature-Creator universe activities. The Supreme Being, **now actualizing in the evolutionary universes**, is the Deity correlator and synthesizer of time-space divinity, of triune Paradise Deity in experiential association with the Supreme Creators of time and space. **When finally actualized**, this evolutionary Deity will constitute the eternal fusion of the finite and the infinite — the everlasting and indissoluble union of experiential power and spirit personality.

All time-space finite reality, under the directive urge of **the evolving Supreme Being**, is engaged in an ever-ascending mobilization and perfecting unification (power-personality synthesis) of all phases and values of finite reality, in association with varied phases of Paradise reality, to the end and for the purpose of subsequently embarking upon the attempt to reach absonite levels of supercreature attainment. [*A Divine Counselor*, 11:1-4 / 0:7.7-10 — *emphasis added: the phrases shown in bold type*]

The net implications appear to be approximately the same as in the following paragraph by a Mighty Messenger, in which he depicts the Supreme Being *as an active reality*:

The Supreme Being **is** the unification of three phases of Deity reality: God the Supreme, the spiritual unification of certain finite aspects of the Paradise Trinity; the Almighty Supreme, the power unification of the grand universe Creators; and the Supreme Mind, the individual contribution of the Third Source and Center and his co-ordinates to the reality of the Supreme Being. [*A Mighty Messenger*, 251:1 / 22:7.11 — *emphasis added: the word shown in bold type*]

I will concede that the preceding paragraph does involve a certain degree of ambiguity, depending on what the meaning of the word *is* is! In other words, is the Mighty Messenger just giving us a conceptual definition in the sense of a dictionary, or is he doing far more than that? Well, we should bear in mind that the wording of this paragraph, considered by itself, does not amount to telling us that the Supreme Being is a spiritual person who is currently discrete and identifiable. Even so, however, in another intriguing paragraph we read that the Supreme Being already has an “**active functional mind**”:

The personality realities of the Supreme Being come forth from the Paradise Deities and on the pilot world of the outer Havona circuit unify with the power prerogatives of the Almighty Supreme coming up from the Creator divinities of the grand universe. God the Supreme as a person existed in Havona before the creation of the seven superuniverses, but he functioned only on spiritual levels. The evolution of the Almighty power of Supremacy by diverse divinity synthesis in the evolving universes eventuated in a new power presence of Deity which coordinated with the spiritual person of the Supreme in Havona by means of the Supreme Mind, which concomitantly translated from the potential resident in the infinite mind of the Infinite Spirit to **the active functional mind** of the Supreme Being. *[A Mighty Messenger in collaboration with Machiventa Melchizedek, 641:3 / 56:6.2 — emphasis added: the phrase shown in bold type]*

Further, when the Divine Counselor tells us how the fifty Reflective Spirits were created “**in the dawn of time**,” he treats us to two intriguing phrases associated with the Supreme Being that may seem paradoxical. at least at first glance: “**the actuality of the Supreme Being**” and “**new personality prerogatives**”:

The Reflective Spirits are of divine Trinity origin. There are fifty of these unique and somewhat mysterious beings. Seven of these extraordinary personalities were created at a time, and each such creative episode was effected by a liaison of the Paradise Trinity and one of the Seven Master Spirits.

This momentous transaction, **occurring in the dawn of time**, represents the initial effort of the Supreme Creator Personalities, represented by the Master Spirits, to function as cocreators with the Paradise Trinity. This union of the creative power of the Supreme Creators with the creative potentials of the Trinity is the very source of **the actuality of the Supreme Being**. Therefore, when the cycle of reflective creation had run its course, when each of the Seven Master Spirits had found perfect creative synchrony with the Paradise Trinity, when the forty-ninth Reflective Spirit had personalized, then a new and far-reaching reaction occurred in the Deity Absolute which imparted **new personality prerogatives** to the Supreme Being and culminated in the personalization of Majeston, the reflectivity chief and Paradise center of all the work of the forty-nine Reflective Spirits and their associates throughout the universe of universes. *[A Divine Counselor, 199:5-6 / 17:2.1-2 — emphasis added: the phrases shown in bold type]*

134. Please explain how the Supreme Being — who is “now actualizing in the evolutionary universes” and who “is even now evolving as a subeternal personality unification” — is not yet a true person, even though this experiential deity already has an “active functional mind” and “personality prerogatives.”

Sorry, colleagues, but you are not authorized “to go out to lunch” at exactly this moment! On the other hand, you may wish to draw on some of the ideas that a Mighty Messenger offers to us in the following paragraph:

“It may be that on the upper limits of the finite, where time conjoins transcended time, there is some sort of blurring and blending of sequence. It may be that the Supreme is able to forecast his universe presence onto these supertime levels and then to a limited degree anticipate future evolution by reflecting this future forecast back to the created levels as the Immanence of the Projected Incomplete. Such phenomena may be observed wherever finite makes contact with superfinite, as in the experiences of human beings who are indwelt by Thought Adjusters that are veritable predictions of man’s future universe attainments throughout all eternity.”

[A Mighty Messenger, 1291:10 / 117:7.6]

The problem of evil. Given the consequences of the catastrophic failures that beset the early history of our planet Urantia, overcoming these pervasive and endemic defects seems to us an exceedingly difficult task, and we find it intimidating even to imagine the objective of achieving finite perfection in some far distant age. Why is this exercise of the creative imagination so intensely challenging for us? Because we persist in contemplating the expanses of time from the perspective of a single human lifespan!

Since the revelators adopt a far different view, they are quite prepared to describe events that will occur when the entire grand universe has reached finite perfection, the moment when all seven superuniverses will be just as perfect as Havona has always been. In this much earlier era of ours, however, it is useful for us to contemplate the problem of evil, a philosophic and theological conundrum afflicting all three monotheistic religions that have attracted broad acceptance among many of our fellow human beings living on Urantia.* If we were to replicate the underlying difficulty rather colloquially, we could paraphrase it as follows: “If God created the world and is all-wise as well as all-powerful, why is the world he created such a conspicuous mess?”

In effect, the proponents of traditional, institutional religion are obliged to reply along these general lines: (a) God has his own purposes that human beings are not in a position to comprehend; and (b) we mere mortals must not be so presumptuous as to challenge the plans and decisions of God. In contrast, however, a Mighty Messenger offers persuasive insights that contribute to a far better answer:

* Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

If man recognized that his Creators — his immediate supervisors — while being divine were also finite, and that the God of time and space was an evolving and nonabsolute Deity, then would the inconsistencies of temporal inequalities cease to be profound religious paradoxes. No longer would religious faith be prostituted to the promotion of social smugness in the fortunate while serving only to encourage stoical resignation in the unfortunate victims of social deprivation.

When viewing the exquisitely perfect spheres of Havona, it is both reasonable and logical to believe they were made by a perfect, infinite, and absolute Creator. But that same reason and logic would compel any honest being, when viewing the turmoil, imperfections, and inequities of Urantia, to conclude that your world had been made by, and was being managed by, Creators who were subabsolute, preinfinite, and other than perfect. [*A Mighty Messenger*, 1269:1-2 / 116:0.1-2]

135. In your view, what does the Mighty Messenger mean when he refers to “the promotion of social smugness in the fortunate”? What is he stating and implying?

136. How do you respond to our informal paraphrase of the so-called problem of evil: “If God created the world and is all-wise as well as all-powerful, why is the world he created such a conspicuous mess?”

The Supreme emerges. Most readers of *The Urantia Book* are at least reasonably familiar with the truth of God the Sevenfold, while realizing that the revelators often refer to the first three levels of this deity grouping as “the Supreme Creators.”*

5. *God the Sevenfold* — Deity personality anywhere actually functioning in time and space. The personal Paradise Deities and their creative associates functioning in and beyond the borders of the central universe and power-personalizing as the Supreme Being on the first creature level of unifying Deity revelation in time and space. [*A Divine Counselor*, 4:10 / 0:3.16]

* The Folio Views program identifies 19 paragraphs of the fifth epochal revelation in which this phrase occurs. Here is reference information for four such paragraphs: (1) a Divine Counselor, 11:3 / 0:7.9; (2) a Divine Counselor, 60:2 / 4:5.3; (3) a Mighty Messenger, 362:2 / 32:3.13; and (4) a Mighty Messenger in collaboration with Machiventa Melchizedek, 640:7 / 56:5.3.

VIII. God the Sevenfold

To atone for finity of status and to compensate for creature limitations of concept, the Universal Father has established the evolutionary creature's sevenfold approach to Deity:

1. The Paradise Creator Sons.
2. The Ancients of Days.
3. The Seven Master Spirits.
4. The Supreme Being.
5. God the Spirit.
6. God the Son.
7. God the Father.

This sevenfold Deity personalization in time and space and to the seven superuniverses enables mortal man to attain the presence of God, who is spirit. **This sevenfold Deity, to finite time-space creatures sometime power-personalizing in the Supreme Being,** is the functional Deity of the mortal evolutionary creatures of the Paradise-ascension career. *[A Divine Counselor, 11:5-12 / 0:8.1-9 — emphasis added: phrases appearing in bold type]*

- 137.** Please explain, interpret, or at least comment on the Divine Counselor's statement that God the Sevenfold is "sometime power-personalizing in the Supreme Being."

On the other hand, readers of *The Urantia Book* are less likely to have focused on the fact that "Throughout the evolutionary ages the physical power potential of the Supreme is vested in the Seven Supreme Power Directors" *[a Mighty Messenger, 1269:2 / 116:1.3]* — the third level of the Sevenfold Controllers. Further, all seven groups of these controllers "are functionally inseparable from God the Sevenfold and constitute the physical-control level of this Deity association" *[a Mighty Messenger, 1273:13 / 116:5.9]*. The same author identifies them as follows:

1. The Master Physical Controllers.
2. The Supreme Power Centers.
3. The Supreme Power Directors.
4. The Almighty Supreme.
5. The God of Action — the Infinite Spirit.
6. The Isle of Paradise.
7. The Source of Paradise — the Universal Father.

[A Mighty Messenger, 1273:6-12 / 116:5.2-8]

Here is the key factor that we must bear in mind: The completed evolution and personal emergence of the Supreme Being requires *not only* extraordinary spiritual achievement throughout every constellation of every local universe that comprise the seven super-universes, *but also* total harmony and perfect equilibrium throughout all corresponding domains of matter and energy.

The present goal of the superuniverses is to become, as they are and within their potentials, perfect, even as is Havona. This perfection pertains to physical and spiritual attainment, even to administrative, governmental, and fraternal development. It is believed that, in the ages to come, the possibilities for disharmony, maladjustment, and misadaptation will be eventually exhausted in the superuniverses. The energy circuits will be in perfect balance and in complete subjugation to mind, while spirit, in the presence of personality, will have achieved the dominance of mind.

It is conjectured that at this far-distant time the spirit person of the Supreme and attained power of the Almighty will have achieved co-ordinate development, and that both, as unified in and by the Supreme Mind, will factualize as the Supreme Being, a completed actuality in the universes — an actuality which will be observable by all creature intelligences, reacted to by all created energies, co-ordinated in all spiritual entities, and experienced by all universe personalities. *[A Mighty Messenger, 1292:7-8 / 117:7.13-14]*

The union of the power and personality attributes of Supremacy is the function of Supreme Mind; and the completed evolution of the Almighty Supreme will result in one unified and personal Deity — not in any loosely co-ordinated association of divine attributes. From the broader perspective, there will be no Almighty apart from the Supreme, no Supreme apart from the Almighty. *[A Mighty Messenger, 1269:1 / 116:1.2]*

138. On the understanding that all three of the following statements are conceptual, impressionistic, and perhaps a bit speculative, please consider whether any of them approximates your own views and, if so, proceed to explain why you agree with that statement, at least in general. If, on the other hand, none of the following three statements is an approximate match for your personal views on how and to what degree the spiritual progression of the seven superuniverses relates to the need for overcontrol and equilibrium in the physical domains of matter and energy, please explain how you approach this question and the conclusions that you have reached.

— **Statement A.** The spiritual progression of the seven superuniverses is entirely independent of and unrelated to the need for overcontrol and equilibrium in the physical domains of matter and energy.

— **Statement B.** Although the various stages of the spiritual progression of the seven superuniverses do not depend on specific achievements related to increasing current levels of overcontrol and relative equilibrium in the domains of matter and energy, the two processes of evolutionary growth are not entirely independent. To the contrary, they are mutually beneficial. It might be possible to imagine some unfortunate event occurring in one of the two contexts that would adversely affect progressive growth in the other, but our limited knowledge and understanding do not permit us to construct an example that would prove persuasive.

— **Statement C.** Although the interrelationships between spiritual progression and the achievement of overcontrol and equilibrium are difficult to discern in a relatively local context (*e.g.*, in association with a group of inhabited planets that belong to the same local system), they undoubtedly become more notable and more influential as we enlarge the context so as to embrace an entire local universe or an entire superuniverse. If we consider the grand universe as a whole, it is clear that the Supreme Being cannot emerge as an identifiable person until the physical and spiritual characteristics of all seven superuniverses have become as perfect as those of Havona.

Human parallels and ascendant implications. In section 3 of Paper 117, a Mighty Messenger points out: “The Supreme Being did not create man, but man was literally created out of, his very life was derived from, the potentiality of the Supreme” [*a Mighty Messenger, 1283:1 / 117:3.12*]. We can also take note of similarities in the respective patterns of growth and development, partly by drawing on a number of the Mighty Messenger’s other insights that make important contributions to the following table.*

	The Supreme Being	A human being
Origin	The pre-existent unity of the Paradise Trinity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The original designs and plans of the Life Carriers. — Biological descent and the accumulated experience of the human race.
Growth & development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The acts and achievements of the Supreme Creator Personalities. — Operation on the finite level of the Triodity of Actuality and the Triodity of Potentiality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The strength, power, and persistency of human decisions. — The mind ministry of the Creative Mother Spirit and of the guardian seraphim. — Development by the Thought Adjuster of new techniques for reaching down from the spiritual level to the levels of the morontia soul.
Creative contributions	Partly self-evolved and self-derived, operating as a volitional, creative participant in the process of deity actualization.	Once the soul comes into being, it begins to grow in and of itself, becoming a volitional, cocreative partner in its own immortalization.

* Many ideas summarized in the table come from statements by the Mighty Messenger that appear on the preceding page of *The Urantia Book* (i.e., in paragraphs 1282:1-2 / 117:3.6-7). For background information and analysis that relate to the triodities, see: (a) a Melchizedek, 1151:1-12 / 104:5.1-12; (b) a Mighty Messenger, 1266:5 / 115:7.4; and (c) a Melchizedek, 1165:5 / 106:2.8.

139. Please compare and contrast the general patterns of growth and development that apply to the Supreme Being with those that apply to a human being, while analyzing the similarities and differences.

In doing this, please draw on the aspects highlighted in the second row of the preceding table, using them as the basic framework for your reply. At your option, however, you may wish to identify and explain additional factors that you consider important.

140. Please compare and contrast the methods and approaches whereby: (a) the Supreme Being makes creative contributions to the process of actualization; and (b) the morontia soul of a human being grows in and of itself, becoming a volitional, cocreative partner in its own immortalization. Insofar as possible, please comment on the similarities and differences, including those associated with the degrees to which the Supreme mind and the human mind are consciously aware of their evolutionary growth and progressive transformation.

A few pages later (*i.e.*, in section 6 of Paper 117), a Mighty Messenger analyzes the relative influence of the Universal Father and the Supreme Being on the morontia soul of an evolving mortal, portraying patterns that evolve and change as we ascend to Paradise and then begin serving as finaliters. Since these remarks of his are intriguing and not entirely intuitive, I prefer to present them in a table arranged according to the successive eras of a human being's ascent and subsequent service.

<p>Local universe childhood</p>	<p>The morontia soul of an evolving mortal is really the son of the Adjuster action of the Universal Father and the child of the cosmic reaction of the Supreme Being, the Universal Mother. The mother influence dominates the human personality throughout the local universe childhood of the growing soul.</p>
<p>Superuniverse career</p>	<p>The influence of the Deity parents becomes more equal after the Adjuster fusion and during the superuniverse career, ...</p>
<p>While traversing Havona</p>	<p>but when the creatures of time begin the traversal of the central universe of eternity, the Father nature becomes increasingly manifest, attaining its height of finite manifestation upon the recognition of the Universal Father and the admission into the Corps of the Finality.</p>

<p>Finaliter attainment</p>	<p>In and through the experience of finaliter attainment the experiential mother qualities of the ascending self become tremendously affected by contact and infusion with the spirit presence of the Eternal Son and the mind presence of the Infinite Spirit.</p>
<p>Finaliter activity in the grand universe</p>	<p>Then, throughout the realms of finaliter activity in the grand universe, there appears a new awakening of the latent mother potential of the Supreme, a new realization of experiential meanings, and a new synthesis of experiential values of the entire ascension career. It appears that this realization of self will continue in the universe careers of the sixth-stage finaliters until the mother inheritance of the Supreme attains to finite synchrony with the Adjuster inheritance of the Father. This intriguing period of grand universe function represents the continuing adult career of the ascendant and perfected mortal.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SOURCE: <i>A Mighty Messenger</i>, 1288:4-5 / 117:6.5-6.</p>	

141. In part, the Mighty Messenger has told us that “the Supreme Being, the Universal Mother ... dominates the human personality throughout the local universe childhood of the growing soul” [*a Mighty Messenger*, 1288:4-5 / 117:6.5-6]. Since the era that the Mighty Messenger is describing obviously includes life on an inhabited planet, he seems to be stating that while we are living on Urantia, the spiritual influence of God the Mother is greater than the spiritual influence of God the Father!

Do you agree with this implication of the Mighty Messenger’s thesis? If so, please identify the realities that are closely associated with it and then analyze its corollaries, both from a practical perspective and in relation to long-standing patterns of philosophic reflection and religious belief. If not, please identify the mindal and spiritual factors that, in your view, justify a different conclusion.

As a key factor conditioning and governing the ascent of human beings to Paradise via the local universe, the superuniverse, and Havona, a Melchizedek points out: “The existential realities of the seven Absolutes are not perceivable by the technique of experience; only the *personality realities* of the Father, Son, and Spirit can be grasped by the personality of the finite creature in the prayer-worship attitude” [a Melchizedek, 1165:4 / 106:2.7]. When the Supreme Being has been fully actualized, however, having thereby become the cumulative synthesis of all finite experience associated with every aspect and every era of the current universe age, our association will not be restricted to personality realities. In the first sentence of the same paragraph, the Melchizedek states: “God the Supreme is experiential; therefore is he completely experiential.”

To achieve replete understanding of the Supreme Being as the sum and substance of all finite experience, we will have to serve as finaliters in all seven superuniverses — thereby acquiring intimate awareness of all the diverse patterns of cosmic mind that have been designed and disseminated by the Seven Master Spirits:

Ascendant finaliters, having been born in the local universes, nurtured in the superuniverses, and trained in the central universe, embrace in their personal experiences the full potential of the comprehension of the time-space divinity of God the Sevenfold unifying in the Supreme. Finaliters serve successively in superuniverses other than those of nativity, thereby superimposing experience upon experience until the fullness of the sevenfold diversity of possible creature experience has been encompassed. Through the ministry of the indwelling Adjusters the finaliters are enabled to *find* the Universal Father, but it is by these techniques of experience that such finaliters come really to *know* the Supreme Being, and they are destined to the service and the *revelation* of this Supreme Deity in and to the future universes of outer space. [A Mighty Messenger in collaboration with Machiventa Melchizedek, 643:5 / 56:8.2]

How shall we describe the realities of the Supreme Being that we shall come to *know* and, during the next universe age, that we shall *reveal* in and to the future universes of outer space? Are these realities solely those aspects of the Supreme Being that are personal?

That does not seem to be the case, for when the Supreme Being is fully actualized, this experiential deity will include important factors that were previously associated with the Almighty Supreme — the net outcome of the extended efforts of the Sevenfold Controllers to produce total harmony and perfect equilibrium throughout all finite domains of matter and energy (as discussed on pages 220 and 221 above). As a Mighty Messenger declares in a passage that we previously reviewed (*i.e.*, on page 221), “there will be no Almighty apart from the Supreme, no Supreme apart from the Almighty” [a Mighty Messenger, 1269:1 / 116:1.2].

Further, a Melchizedek offers us the view that during the next universe age, when ascenders have reached “the postulated seventh stage of spirit existence,” our direct access to the realities of the Supreme Being will include “a new meaning-value of the absoluteness and infinity of the triodities as such is revealed on subabsolute levels” [a Melchizedek, 1165:5 / 106:2.8]. Here is the full paragraph in which he makes that astonishing statement:

Within the completed power-personality synthesis of the Supreme Being there will be associated all of the absoluteness of the several triodities* which could be so associated, and this majestic personality of evolution will be experientially attainable and understandable by all finite personalities. When ascenders attain the postulated seventh stage of spirit existence, they will therein experience the realization of a new meaning-value of the absoluteness and infinity of the triodities as such is revealed on subabsolute levels in the Supreme Being, who is experiential. But the attainment of these stages of maximum development will probably await the co-ordinate settling of the entire grand universe in light and life. [A Melchizedek, 1165:5 / 106:2.8]

Since our current discussion pertains to the far distant era after the entire grand universe has been settled in light and life, one possible reaction would be to set all these reflections aside, calling them too speculative and too hypothetical to engage our attention while we are living on Urantia! On the assumption, however, that not all of you will react that way, let me cite two more passages from *The Urantia Book* and then offer you an opportunity to comment on how we, as seventh-stage spirits, will eventually be destined to assist, serve, and perhaps inspire the inhabitants of the future universes of outer space.

Bear in mind, all that God the Father and his Paradise Sons do for us, we in turn and in spirit have the opportunity to do for and in the emerging Supreme Being. The experience of love, joy, and service in the universe is mutual. God the Father does not need that his sons should return to him all that he bestows upon them, but they do (or may) in turn bestow all of this upon their fellows and upon the evolving Supreme Being. [A Mighty Messenger in collaboration with Machiventa Melchizedek, 644:1 / 56:8.3]

In the early days of universe building even the Paradise Creators are primarily concerned with material equilibrium. The pattern of a local universe takes shape not only as a result of the activities of the power centers but also because of the space presence of the Creative Spirit. **And throughout these early epochs of local universe building the Creator Son exhibits a little-understood attribute of material control**, and he does not leave his capital planet until the gross equilibrium of the local universe has been established. [A Mighty Messenger, 1274:3 / 116:5.13 — *emphasis added: the clause appearing in bold type*]

* As previously stated (*i.e.*, in the footnote on page 223), the following three passages provide background information and analysis related to the triodities: (a) a Melchizedek, 1151:1-12 / 104:5.1-12; (b) a Mighty Messenger, 1266:5 / 115:7.4; and (c) a Melchizedek, 1165:5 / 106:2.8.

- 142.** Displaying a frankness that is admirable but perhaps a bit disappointing, a Mighty Messenger who is collaborating with Machiventa Melchizedek does not hesitate to confess: “we have not the slightest concept of what technique of deity approach may become operative in the future universes of outer space” [*a Mighty Messenger in collaboration with Machiventa Melchizedek, 643:2 / 56:7.8*].

You are amply entitled to adopt their caution and reticence as a valid reason to decline to speculate about our potential roles as seventh-stage spirits who will seek to minister to, assist, and perhaps inspire the inhabitants of the future universes of outer space. If, on the other hand, you prefer to advance your own inferences or interpretations, believing that your impressions and inferences may prove stimulating or even intriguing, please feel free to seize this opportunity.

- 143.** Although time and space as we know them constitute the essential framework for the finite reality that will expire with the age of the Supreme, the revelators have not given us any reason to believe that the characteristics of matter and energy will change in any fundamental sense. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the accumulated experience of achieving material equilibrium and harmony in the grand universe will remain relevant and useful during the age of the Ultimate.

a. Given that premise, and since we will then have access to the Supreme Being as a reality who is complete, replete, and fully actualized, do you believe that our roles as seventh-stage spirits operating in the future universes of outer space may include some activities or functions that will pertain to matter and energy?

b. Do you see certain conceptual parallels in the material control that a Creator Son exhibits during early epochs of building a local universe during the age of the Supreme (*i.e.*, a local universe belonging to one of the seven superuniverses)?

Please explain your replies and the factors that led you to them.

Reflectivity and the illusion of reincarnation

Since the Supreme Being sums up and synthesizes all finite reality, he intrinsically unifies all seven varieties of cosmic mind that pervade the seven superuniverses, as a result of the differential and varied ministry of the Seven Master Spirits acting individually and separately. This synthesis that the Supreme embodies is a consequence of immanence, but it can also be understood as an expression of reflectivity, at least in a conceptual and cumulative sense.

On page 217, we reviewed a passage from Paper 17 in which a Divine Counselor states that the personalization of the forty-ninth Reflective Spirit led to a new and far-reaching reaction in the Deity Absolute **“which imparted new personality prerogatives to the Supreme Being and culminated in the personalization of Majeston, the reflectivity chief”** [*a Divine Counselor, 199:6 / 17:2.2*]. After two intervening paragraphs, the Divine Counselor emphasizes this event’s extraordinary implications by appending the following comment: **“The Deity response to the creative wills of the Supreme Being and his associates was vastly beyond their purposeful intent and greatly in excess of their conceptual forecasts”** [*a Divine Counselor, 200:3 / 17:2.5*]. Therefore we can quite reasonably conclude that in this instance, the Supreme Being’s creative intent activated certain aspects of the Triodity of Potentiality,* a foretaste of even more sweeping transformations that will undoubtedly occur as the grand universe approaches finite perfection.

Since the convictions and beliefs of many current readers of *The Urantia Book* remain intensely aligned with traditional Western teachings that center on a transcendent, personal God, some of them may find the revelators’ portrayal of immanence and reflectivity rather difficult to grasp. Further, such readers may also consider it surprising that a Melchizedek expresses a certain degree of sympathy with the Oriental concept of the oversoul. In part, he states that **“In certain phases the concept of the One Universal Oversoul as the totality of the summation of all creature existence led the Indian philosophers very close to the truth of the Supreme Being.”** Later in the same sentence, however, he stipulates that **“this truth availed them naught because they failed to evolve any reasonable or rational personal approach to the attainment of their theoretic monotheistic goal of Brahman-Narayana”** [*a Melchizedek, 1030:4 / 94:3.4*].

In the immediately succeeding paragraph, the same Melchizedek comments on the concept of karma, a teaching that is even better known and one that both Hindus and Buddhists endorse and proclaim:

* The Deity Absolute, the Universal Absolute, and the Unqualified Absolute, as a Melchizedek explains in section 5 of Paper 104 (*i.e.*, in **1151:7-11 / 104:5.7-11**).

The karma principle of causality continuity is, again, very close to the truth of the repercussional synthesis of all time-space actions in the Deity presence of the Supreme; but this postulate never provided for the co-ordinate personal attainment of Deity by the individual religionist, only for the ultimate engulfment of all personality by **the Universal Oversoul**. ...

In the doctrine of the merging of the self-soul with the Oversoul, the theologians of India failed to provide for the survival of something human, something new and unique, something born of the union of the will of man and the will of God. [*A Melchizedek, 1030:5,7 / 94:3.5,7 — emphasis added: the phrase shown in bold type*]

In contrast, a Mighty Messenger calls the Supreme Being “[t]he Oversoul of Creation” and “the cosmic oversoul of the grand universe”:

5. The Oversoul of Creation

The great Supreme is **the cosmic oversoul of the grand universe**. In him the qualities and quantities of the cosmos do find their deity reflection; his deity nature is the mosaic composite of the total vastness of all creature-Creator nature throughout the evolving universes. And the Supreme is also an actualizing Deity embodying a creative will which embraces an evolving universe purpose. [*A Mighty Messenger, 1285:4 / 117:5.1 — emphasis added: the phrase shown in bold type*]

Further, a Divine Counselor states that when a “sin-identified being instantly becomes as though he had not been,” then, “upon cosmic dissolution, such an isolated personality is absorbed into **the oversoul of creation**, becoming a part of the evolving experience of the Supreme Being” [*a Divine Counselor, 37:2 / 2:3.4 — emphasis added: the phrase shown in bold type*].

This outcome, of course, pertains to the personal realities that were formerly associated with a non-survivor, whereas the revelators provide ample assurances pertaining to the repersonalization on the mansion worlds of all human beings who do not consciously resist the Thought Adjuster’s efforts to promote positive spiritual values and the growth of the morontia soul. (*For a detailed explanation, see the excerpts presented on pages 130 through 132.*)

144. Please analyze and explain “the truth of the repercussional synthesis of all time-space actions in the Deity presence of the Supreme” [*a Melchizedek, 1030:5 / 94:3.5*], especially since the Melchizedek stated at the beginning of the same sentence that “[t]he karma principle of causality continuity” is very close to this truth. How does the underlying concept of a repercussional synthesis relate to the Mighty Messenger’s statement that in the Supreme, “the qualities and quantities of the cosmos do find their deity reflection” [*a Mighty Messenger, 1285:4 / 117:5.1*]? When you comment on this point, please identify any conceptual parallels or spiritual relationships that you may have noticed.
145. How does the revelators’ explanation of the oversoul of creation differ from the concept of “the Universal Oversoul” that Indian philosophers postulated? Do you believe that the revelators’ teachings about personality and personal survival make a crucial contribution to the differences and distinctions? If so, please elaborate and explain.

From popular perspectives, the Oriental concept of karma is closely associated with the idea of reincarnation, a teaching that has attracted considerable interest among quite a few persons who live in Western countries. On the other hand, the Melchizedek who provided a relatively nuanced view of the Indian concept of the Universal Oversoul is far more emphatic in rejecting the doctrine of reincarnation. On balance, we are fully entitled to call his comments categorical:

The undue concentration on self led certainly to a fear of the nonevolutionary perpetuation of self in an endless round of successive incarnations as man, beast, or weeds. And of all the contaminating beliefs which could have become fastened upon what may have been an emerging monotheism, none was so stultifying as this belief in transmigration — the doctrine of the reincarnation of souls — which came from the Dravidian Deccan. This belief in the weary and monotonous round of repeated transmigrations robbed struggling mortals of their long-cherished hope of finding that deliverance and spiritual advancement in death which had been a part of the earlier Vedic faith.

This philosophically debilitating teaching was soon followed by the invention of the doctrine of the eternal escape from self by submergence in the universal rest and peace of absolute union with Brahman, the oversoul of all creation. Mortal desire and human ambition were effectually ravished and virtually destroyed. [*A Melchizedek, 1029:1-2 / 94:2.3-4*]

For any reader to whom the Melchizedek's rejection of the doctrine of reincarnation might not seem sufficiently decisive, it may be useful to review an Archangel of Nebadon's remarks in Paper 46 concerning the spornagia — the highly intelligent animals whom he describes as “the landscape gardeners of the headquarters worlds,” while indicating that “they are both original and artistic in their treatment of the open spaces of Jerusem” [*An Archangel, 527:16, 46:7.2*]. In the three succeeding paragraphs, the Archangel portrays their lengthy lives:

Spornagia are not Adjuster indwelt. They do not possess survival souls, but they do enjoy long lives, sometimes to the extent of forty to fifty thousand standard years. Their number is legion, and they afford physical ministry to all orders of universe personalities requiring material service.

Although spornagia neither possess nor evolve survival souls, though they do not have personality, nevertheless, they do evolve an individuality which can experience reincarnation. When, with the passing of time, the physical bodies of these unique creatures deteriorate from usage and age, their creators, in collaboration with the Life Carriers, fabricate new bodies in which the old spornagia re-establish their residences.

Spornagia are the only creatures in all the universe of Nebadon who experience this or any other sort of reincarnation. They are only reactive to the first five of the adjutant mind-spirits; they are not responsive to the spirits of worship and wisdom. But the five-adjutant mind equivalates to a totality or sixth reality level, and it is this factor which persists as an experiential identity. [*An Archangel, 528:1-3 / 46:7.3-5 — emphasis added: the sentence shown in bold type*]

For those who are convinced that *The Urantia Book* is the fifth epochal revelation and that the revelators have been candid within the limits specified in their mandates “to reveal truth and co-ordinate essential knowledge” [*a Divine Counselor, 16:8 / 0:12.11*], there seems to be only one logical reaction: “Case closed.”

Certain other persons, however (fellow human beings who share our planet Urantia but who do not share these convictions of ours) claim in all sincerity that reincarnation is itself a truth — because of personal experiences of their own that they associate with past lives on Urantia that they have imagined, or because of the personal experiences of yet other human beings whose stories they have read.

Can we construct one or more plausible theories that may explain these claims of theirs? Well, perhaps, and as a first step it may be worthwhile to consider whether such fellow human beings may conceivably have found some way to tap into reflectivity.

- (a) A Divine Counselor defines universe reflectivity as “that unique and inexplicable power to see, hear, sense, and know all things as they transpire throughout a superuniverse, and to focalize, by reflectivity, all this information and knowledge at any desired point” [*a Divine Counselor, 105:1 / 9:7.1*]. Further, he states:

... we conjecture that certain features of the phenomenon of reflectivity can be accounted for only by postulating the activity of the Supreme Mind. If the Supreme is not concerned in reflectivity, we are at a loss to explain the intricate transactions and unerring operations of this consciousness of the cosmos.

Reflectivity appears to be omniscience within the limits of the experiential finite and may represent the emergence of the presence-consciousness of the Supreme Being. If this assumption is true, then the utilization of reflectivity in any of its phases is equivalent to partial contact with the consciousness of the Supreme. [*A Divine Counselor, 105:4-5 / 9:7.4-5*]

- (b) If we consider reflectivity as an activity and a process, we discover that its main sponsors are the forty-nine Reflective Spirits and Majeston, the chief of reflectivity. The Divine Counselor explains the work of the Reflective Spirits as follows:

The forty-nine Reflective Spirits are of Trinity origin, but each of the seven creative episodes attendant upon their appearance was productive of a type of being in nature resembling the characteristics of the coancestral Master Spirit. Thus they variously reflect the natures and characters of the seven possible combinations of the association of the divinity characteristics of the Universal Father, the Eternal Son, and the Infinite Spirit. ...

The attribute of reflectivity, the phenomenon of the mind levels of the Conjoint Actor, the Supreme Being, and the Master Spirits, is transmissible to all beings concerned in the working of this vast scheme of universal intelligence. ...

The personnel of the reflectivity service, with the exception of Majeston and the Reflective Spirits, are all the creatures of the Infinite Spirit and his immediate associates and subordinates. [*A Divine Counselor, 200:5, 201:1, 201:2 / 17:3.1,3,4*]

- (c) The revelators give us no reason to believe that a human being living on Urantia can make direct contact with reflectivity. The Divine Counselor informs us that ascending mortals do not do this:

As a class, ascending mortals do not intimately contact with reflectivity. Always some being of the reflective nature will be interposed between you and the actual operation of the service. [*A Divine Counselor, 202:3 / 17:4.3*]

- (d) On the other hand, the Thought Adjusters appear to be fully aware of reflectivity and all the information it entails:

While Thought Adjusters do not participate in the operation of the universal reflectivity system, we have every reason to believe that all Father fragments are fully cognizant of these transactions and are able to avail themselves of their content. [*A Divine Counselor*, 201:5 / 17:3.9]

- (e) On the third hand — if you happen to have that many! — a Solitary Messenger tells us that most human beings will seldom hear the voice of the Adjuster during their lifetimes:

While the voice of the Adjuster is ever within you, most of you will hear it seldom during a lifetime. Human beings below the third and second circles of attainment rarely hear the Adjuster's direct voice except in moments of supreme desire, in a supreme situation, and consequent upon a supreme decision. [*A Solitary Messenger*, 1213:4 / 110:7.9]

- (f) We should also bear in mind that the revelators have not shared any concept or insight implying that reflectivity information about previous events on Urantia would have priority or would be prominent for any other reason. To the contrary, this seems exceedingly unlikely, given the enormous number of other inhabited planets in Orvonton and given the fact that reflectivity data must also include a full account of all activities that have ever occurred on the various headquarters worlds (*i.e.*, those for the planetary systems, constellations, and local universes, as well as all headquarters worlds that are associated with the minor and major sectors).

146. While taking into account the various aspects outlined under subparagraphs (a) through (f) above, please appraise the possibility that some persons who cite personal experiences (either their own, or those of other human beings) as valid reasons to believe in reincarnation may actually have found some way to tap into reflectivity. When you reply, please explain the factors that led to your answer.

- (g) Another possibility — and perhaps a more plausible one — would be to focus on mindal energies, circuits, and patterns, the realities that we previously pondered when we examined topic 11. For example, on page 194 above I wondered whether the mindal resources of humanity simply float on air or whether, at any given moment, we can associate them with one or more specific locations. In question 112 on page 195, I asked participants whether the human mind may be at least partly a receiver, an instrument that may be able to register and react to ideas that happen to be circulating in the human environment. Therefore you will now have an opportunity to grapple with a concrete instance of the question that I formerly explored as a general concept.

147. In your view, is it possible that some persons who cite personal experiences (either their own, or those of other human beings) as valid reasons to believe in reincarnation may actually have registered impressions from mindal energies and patterns that were circulating in the human environment?

In your response, please indicate whether you believe that such mindal energies and patterns necessarily corresponded to real experience (events that actually occurred in the life of some human being), or whether it may also be possible that these mindal energies and patterns just represent someone's mental processes (*e.g.*, therefore equating to an exercise in personal imagination or fantasy).

- (h) For those of you who favor explanations that are straightforward and at least relatively simple, here is the third alternative.

148. Please comment on whether or not the personal experiences that some people cite as evidence of reincarnation may actually have emanated from their own minds (or from the minds of other individuals who were involved), thereby amounting to exceptionally vivid dreams or to intense inner perceptions that may have stemmed from self-suggestion or fantasy.

“God the Father” and “God the Mother”

We have been using the phrase “God the Mother” as a convenient way to refer to the Supreme Being, and there were good reasons for us to do that. After all, we are discussing a topic whose title reads as follows: “Promoting understanding of, loyalty to, and active cooperation with God immanent, especially via our close association with God the Mother, the Supreme Being” (page 211). In addition, a number of previous passages have featured the phrase “God the Mother,” “the Universal Mother,” “the mother influence,” or “the mother inheritance” (see pages 214, 215, 224, and 225).

Now, however, we must confront the rather puzzling reality that in relation to these inspiring ideas, quite a few passages contained in *The Urantia Book* do not seem to conform to standard grammar in English. Is it possible that certain revelators missed the grammatical lecture during which the instructor pointed out that *she* and *her* are the standard ways to refer to someone who has been identified as a mother? On the other hand, did quite a few of the revelators have some reason of their own for ignoring that grammatical rule and resorting to *he*, *him*, or *his* instead?

THE SUPREME BEING: Contexts that involve masculine expressions [emphasis added: the words shown in bold type]

<p><i>The Supreme Being</i> is not a direct creator, except that he is the father of Majeston, but he is a synthetic co-ordinator of all creature-Creator universe activities.</p>	<p>A Divine Counselor, 11:3 / 0:7.9</p>
<p>God the Supreme as a person existed in Havona before the creation of the seven superuniverses, but he functioned only on spiritual levels.</p>	<p>A Mighty Messenger in collaboration with Machiventa Melchizedek, 641:3 / 56:6.2</p>
<p>The Supreme Being has a threefold function in the experience of mortal man: First, he is the unifier of time-space divinity, God the Sevenfold; second, he is the maximum of Deity which finite creatures can actually comprehend; third, he is mortal man’s only avenue of approach to the transcendental experience of consorting with absonite mind, eternal spirit, and Paradise personality.</p>	<p>A Mighty Messenger in collaboration with Machiventa Melchizedek, 643:4 / 56:8.1</p>
<p>God the Supreme is experiential; therefore is he completely experientible.</p>	<p>A Melchizedek, 1165:4 / 106:2.7</p>

THE SUPREME BEING: Contexts that involve masculine expressions [emphasis added: the words shown in bold type]

God the Supreme does not appear to have been inevitable in unqualified infinity, but **he** seems to be on all relativity levels. **He** is the indispensable focalizer, summarizer, and encompasser of evolutionary experience, effectively unifying the results of this mode of reality perception in his Deity nature. And all this **he** appears to do for the purpose of contributing to the appearance of the *inevitable eventuation*, the superexperience and super-finite manifestation of God the Ultimate.

A Mighty Messenger,
1266:7 / 115:7.6

The Supreme is the beauty of physical harmony, the truth of intellectual meaning, and the goodness of spiritual value. **He** is the sweetness of true success and the joy of everlasting achievement. **He** is the oversoul of the grand universe, the consciousness of the finite cosmos, the completion of finite reality, and the personification of Creator-creature experience.

A Mighty Messenger,
1278:5 / 117:1.1

This is somewhat like the way in which the Supreme Being expands. **His** sovereignty grows in and out of the acts and achievements of the Supreme Creator Personalities; that is the evolution of the majesty of **his** power as the ruler of the grand universe. **His** deity nature is likewise dependent on the pre-existent unity of the Paradise Trinity. But there is still another aspect to the evolution of God the Supreme: **He** is not only Creator-evolved and Trinity-derived; **he** is also self-evolved and self-derived. God the Supreme is **himself** a volitional, creative participant in **his** own deity actualization.

A Mighty Messenger,
1282:2 / 117:3.7

The Supreme Being did not create man, but man was literally created out of, his very life was derived from, the potentiality of the Supreme. Nor does **he** evolve man; yet is the Supreme **himself** the very essence of evolution.

A Mighty Messenger,
1283:1 / 117:3.12

The great Supreme is the cosmic oversoul of the grand universe. In **him** the qualities and quantities of the cosmos do find their deity reflection; **his** deity nature is the mosaic composite of the total vastness of all creature-Creator nature throughout the evolving universes.

A Mighty Messenger,
1285:4 / 117:5.1

THE SUPREME BEING: Contexts that involve masculine expressions [emphasis added: the words shown in bold type]

We seek the Supreme in the universes, but we find **him** not. “**He** is the within and the without of all things and beings, moving and quiescent. Unrecognizable in his mystery, though distant, yet is **he** near.” The Almighty Supreme is “the form of the yet unformed, the pattern of the yet uncreated.” The Supreme is your universe home, and when you find **him**, it will be like returning home. **He** is your experiential parent, and even as in the experience of human beings, so has **he** grown in the experience of divine parenthood. **He** knows you because **he** is creaturelike as well as creatorlike.

If you truly desire to find God, you cannot help having born in your minds the consciousness of the Supreme. As God is your divine Father, so is the Supreme your divine Mother, in whom you are nurtured throughout your lives as universe creatures. “How universal is the Supreme — **he** is on all sides! The limitless things of creation depend on **his** presence for life, and none are refused.”

It is not only man’s own limitations which prevent him from finding the finite God; it is also the incompleteness of the universe; even the incompleteness of all creatures — past, present, and future — makes the Supreme inaccessible. God the Father can be found by any individual who has attained the divine level of Godlikeness, but God the Supreme will never be personally discovered by any one creature until that far-distant time when, through the universal attainment of perfection, all creatures will simultaneously find **him**.

Despite the fact that you cannot, in this universe age, personally find **him** as you can and will find the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, nevertheless, the Paradise ascent and subsequent universe career will gradually create in your consciousness the recognition of the universe presence and the cosmic action of the God of all experience. The fruits of the spirit are the substance of the Supreme as **he** is realizable in human experience. ...

The Supreme is not infinite, but **he** probably embraces all of infinity that a finite creature can ever really comprehend. To understand more than the Supreme is to be more than finite!

A Mighty Messenger,
1287:6, 1288:1 / 117:6.
1-2

A Mighty Messenger,
1290:2-3 ,5 / 117:6.
16-17,19

THE SUPREME BEING: Contexts that involve masculine expressions [emphasis added: the words shown in bold type]

Man can discover the Father in his heart, but he will have to search for the Supreme in the hearts of all other men; and when all creatures perfectly reveal the love of the Supreme, then will **he** become a universe actuality to all creatures.

A Mighty Messenger,
1290:9 / 117:6.23

It may be that on the upper limits of the finite, where time conjoins transcended time, there is some sort of blurring and blending of sequence. It may be that the Supreme is able to forecast **his** universe presence onto these supertime levels and then to a limited degree anticipate future evolution by reflecting this future forecast back to the created levels as the Immanence of the Projected Incomplete.

A Mighty Messenger,
1291:10 / 117:7.6

God the Supreme may not be a demonstration of the time-space omnipresence of Deity, but **he** is literally a manifestation of divine ubiquity.

A Mighty Messenger,
1296:5 / 118:2.3

Colleagues, I assume that none of you will wish to parse these quotations by claiming that the Supreme Being, God the Mother, constitutes some kind of spiritual chameleon who is effectively bisexual, or even androgynous or hermaphroditic. Therefore I shall offer you other options that may be more appealing — or, at least, substantially more polite!

- 149.** In relation to wording in *The Urantia Book* whereby the revelators refer to the Supreme Being or to God the Supreme, please evaluate and comment on each of the following statements.
- **Statement A.** The revelators employ male and female expressions with complete indifference, making no effort to distinguish the two possibilities.
 - **Statement B.** The linguistic default seems to be *he*, *him*, or *his* unless the immediate context includes the word *mother*.
 - **Statement C.** For someone to be a mother, the context must include a child or children, at least in principle. When a particular passage concerns spiritual relationships involving human beings or ascenders, the revelators often employ the phrase “God the Mother,” or wording that is quite similar. When the context is substantially more general or entirely abstract, they prefer the masculine expressions *he*, *him*, and *his*.

Now, in contrast, we must examine the phrases “God the Father” and “God the Mother” from conceptual and philosophic perspectives that are far more general. This analysis rapidly makes it obvious that the two phrases certainly do not embody equal resonance and renown, for the idea of God as a father has dominated monotheistic beliefs on our planet for at least 4,000 years, whereas the conviction that God is also a mother amounts to an insightful innovation that is relatively recent.

The desire of the Melchizedek receivers to preserve and enhance human understanding that God is a father was the dominant reason why they decided to dispatch Machiventa Melchizedek on the emergency mission that began in Palestine 1,973 years before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth [*a Melchizedek, 1015:1 / 93:2.1*].

Like Jesus, Melchizedek attended strictly to the fulfillment of the mission of his bestowal. He did not attempt to reform the mores, to change the habits of the world, nor to promulgate even advanced sanitary practices or scientific truths. He came to achieve two tasks: to keep alive on earth the truth of the one God and to prepare the way for the subsequent mortal bestowal of a Paradise Son of that Universal **Father**. [*A Melchizedek, 1018:4 / 93:4.15 — emphasis added: the word shown in bold type*]

Melchizedek taught his followers all they had capacity to receive and assimilate. Even many modern religious ideas about heaven and earth, of man, God, and angels, are not far removed from these teachings of Melchizedek. But this great teacher subordinated everything to the doctrine of one God, a universe Deity, a heavenly Creator, a divine **Father**. Emphasis was placed upon this teaching for the purpose of appealing to man’s adoration and of preparing the way for the subsequent appearance of Michael as the Son of this same Universal **Father**. [*A Melchizedek, 1016:8 / 93:3.6 — emphasis added: the words shown in bold type*]

In effect, these achievements of Melchizedek’s were a precondition for the subsequent bestowal of our Paradise Creator Son, Christ Michael of Nebadon, in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth:

Jesus never gave his apostles a systematic lesson concerning the personality and attributes of the **Father** in heaven. He never asked men to believe in his **Father**; he took it for granted they did. Jesus never belittled himself by offering arguments in proof of the reality of the **Father**. His teaching regarding the **Father** all centered in the declaration that he and the **Father** are one; that he who has seen the Son has seen the **Father**; that the **Father**, like the Son, knows all things; that only the Son really knows the **Father**, and he to whom the Son will reveal him; that he who knows the Son knows also the **Father**; and that the **Father** sent him into the world to reveal their combined natures and to show forth their conjoint work. He never made other pronouncements about his **Father** except to the woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well, when he declared, “God is spirit.” [*The Midway Commission, 1855:3 / 169:4.2 — emphasis added: the words shown in bold type*]

Readers of *The Urantia Book* do not need to be told that the revelators were not free to set aside or disregard these crucial insights. To the contrary, they were obliged to build upon the idea of God as a father and then do their utmost to enhance it.

In formulating the succeeding presentations having to do with the portrayal of the character of the Universal **Father** and the nature of his Paradise associates, together with an attempted description of the perfect central universe and the encircling seven superuniverses, we are to be guided by the mandate of the superuniverse rulers which directs that we shall, in all our efforts to reveal truth and co-ordinate essential knowledge, give preference to the highest existing human concepts pertaining to the subjects to be presented. We may resort to pure revelation only when the concept of presentation has had no adequate previous expression by the human mind. [*A Divine Counselor, 16:8 / 0:12.11 — emphasis added: the word shown in bold type*]

Inasmuch as man's highest possible concept of God is embraced within the human idea and ideal of a primal and infinite personality, it is permissible, and may prove helpful, to study certain characteristics of the divine nature which constitute the character of Deity. The nature of God can best be understood by the revelation of the **Father** which Michael of Nebadon unfolded in his manifold teachings and in his superb mortal life in the flesh. The divine nature can also be better understood by man if he regards himself as a child of God and looks up to the Paradise Creator as a true spiritual **Father**. [*A Divine Counselor, 33:1 / 2:0.1 — emphasis added: the words shown in bold type*]

Conceptual frames of the universe are only relatively true; they are serviceable scaffolding which must eventually give way before the expansions of enlarging cosmic comprehension. The understandings of truth, beauty, and goodness, morality, ethics, duty, love, divinity, origin, existence, purpose, destiny, time, space, even Deity, are only relatively true. God is much, much more than a **Father**, but the **Father** is man's highest concept of God; nonetheless, the **Father**-Son portrayal of Creator-creature relationship will be augmented by those supermortal conceptions of Deity which will be attained in Orvonton, in Havona, and on Paradise. Man must think in a mortal universe frame, but that does not mean that he cannot envision other and higher frames within which thought can take place. [*A Mighty Messenger, 1260:3 / 115:1.2 — emphasis added: the words shown in bold type*]

And God-consciousness is equivalent to the integration of the self with the universe, and on its highest levels of spiritual reality. Only the spirit content of any value is imperishable. Even that which is true, beautiful, and good may not perish in human experience. If man does not choose to survive, then does the surviving Adjuster conserve those realities born of love and nurtured in service. And all these things are a part of the Universal **Father**. The **Father** is living love, and this life of the **Father** is in his Sons. And the spirit of the **Father** is in his Sons' sons — mortal men. When all is said and done, the **Father** idea is still the highest human concept of God. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2097:3 / 196:3.35 — emphasis added: the words shown in bold type. Please bear in mind that this is the last paragraph contained in the text of The Urantia Book, the final paragraph that concludes the last Paper.*]

Unfortunately, the idea of “God the Mother” is not a time-honored concept that emerges from millennia of devotion and belief, and there is much less that we can say about it. Further, the reverential title “the mother of God” that many denominations of organized, institutional Christianity bestow upon Mary, the mother of Jesus, is far from being a favorable precedent, and therefore it seems best to refrain from elaborating on it.

On the other hand, it seems quite reasonable to conclude that the human concepts and human vocabulary that are inescapably embedded in the phrases “God the Father” and “God the Mother” are closely associated with the characteristics of human society and the psychology of human beings. In contrast, we have no access to any evidence that would serve to link these human expressions with the innate realities of the corresponding spiritual beings — one of them existential, absolute, and infinite, the other one an experiential synthesis of all activities, events, and values associated with time and space, whether material, mindal, or spiritual. After all, the inhabitants of Urantia have long transcended the era of anthropomorphic gods, and we are well aware that there is no Deity person who is either a man or a woman!*

Therefore the revelators’ use of the phrase “God the Mother” implicitly accords greater recognition to the crucial contributions that women make to human society, human thought, and all other aspects of human life and experience. After all, the Chief of Seraphim tells us that men and women need each other:

Men and women need each other in their morontial and spiritual as well as in their mortal careers. The differences in viewpoint between male and female persist even beyond the first life and throughout the local and superuniverse ascensions. And even in Havona, the pilgrims who were once men and women will still be aiding each other in the Paradise ascent. Never, even in the Corps of the Finality, will the creature metamorphose so far as to obliterate the personality trends that humans call male and female; always will these two basic variations of humankind continue to intrigue, stimulate, encourage, and assist each other; always will they be mutually dependent on co-operation in the solution of perplexing universe problems and in the overcoming of manifold cosmic difficulties. [*The Chief of Seraphim, 939:1 / 84:6.6*]

* While Christ Michael of Nebadon was incarnate on Urantia in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth, he recited a number of parable prayers to his apostles without revealing that many of them had been composed by human beings living on other inhabited planets. One of these parable prayers begins as follows: “[Glorious Father and Mother, in one parent combined ...](#)” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1623:4 / 144:5.55*].

- 150.** In relation to the phrases “God the Father” and “God the Mother,” please evaluate and comment on each of the following statements.
- **Statement A.** “God the Father” expresses ideas that are enormously more powerful and more evocative than “God the Mother,” and that will remain the case on our planet for as long into the future as I am able to imagine.
 - **Statement B.** As human society and civilization advance and progress, understanding and acceptance of the concept “God the Mother” will increase steadily and substantially.
 - **Statement C.** Seeking to comprehend the reality and roles of Deity persons via approximate equivalents in human society is at least misleading and perhaps problematic, but it appears to be the best option that we have available. We can be quite content, however, that no one has imagined a Deity person called “God the Mother-in-law”!

Triumph & vindication

One of the Life Carriers who designed life patterns on Urantia tells us that their extended , experimental efforts eventually generated twenty-eight significant improvements to the Satania adaptation of life designs in Nebadon [*a Life Carrier, 734:5 / 65:4.1*]. After he conveys his regret at “tragic perversions beyond our control: the Caligastia betrayal and the Adamic default” [*a Life Carrier, 736:4 / 65:5.1*], he nonetheless stipulates that the Life Carriers’ “greatest disappointment grew out of the reversion of certain primitive plant life to the prechlorophyll levels of parasitic bacteria on such an extensive and unexpected scale,” an eventuality that “caused many distressful diseases in the higher mammals, particularly in the more vulnerable human species” [*a Life Carrier, 736:5 / 65:5.2*]. Even so, the Life Carrier concludes with a resolute and resonant view of Urantia’s destiny: “But irrespective of all such considerations, the later celestial supervisors of this planet express complete confidence in the ultimate evolutionary triumph of the human race and in the eventual vindication of our original plans and life patterns” [*a Life Carrier, 736:7 / 65:5.4*].

Although we too can be entirely confident of the eventual outcome, we definitely owe the Life Carrier — and, for that matter, the Supreme Being — our own dedication and commitment. The Life Carrier has telescoped the extended process, but the energetic and determined efforts of human beings are essential elements that make crucial contributions to the confident prediction that the Life Carrier paraphrases. In spite of the Caligastia betrayal and the Adamic default, we, the citizens of Urantia, must still turn in our homework!

In the very first lines of Paper 115, a Mighty Messenger emphasizes: “With the Father, sonship is the great relationship. With God the Supreme, achievement is the prerequisite to status — one must do something as well as be something” [*a Mighty Messenger, 1260:1 / 115:0.1*]. In addition, a Solitary Messenger helps us understand that it is our actions that link us with the Supreme as a cosmic reality: “The motivation of faith makes experiential the full realization of man’s sonship with God, but *action*, completion of decisions, is essential to the evolutionary attainment of consciousness of progressive kinship with the *cosmic actuality* of the Supreme Being” [*a Solitary Messenger, 1211:2 / 110:6.17*]. In effect, the Father says to each of us, “You are my beloved son” or “You are my beloved daughter,” whereas the Supreme Being inquires, “What have you done for me lately?”

This question may seem to be a humorous remark, but it is actually a challenge. Perfecting the finite realm is a precondition for the Supreme Being to emerge as an entirely identifiable spiritual person who is complete and replete, and human efforts during our lives on Urantia are certainly part of the progressive growth and development of the grand universe that will lead to this immensely desirable outcome.

Further, the Midwayer Commission emphasizes that “*service to one’s fellows is the highest concept of the brotherhood of spirit believers*” [*the Midwayer Commission, 2017:4 / 188:4.9*], while telling us that this is precisely what Jesus taught. Therefore our actions aimed at fulfilling our responsibilities to the Supreme Being, God the Mother, are entirely in harmony with the teachings of our Sovereign Creator Son, Christ Michael of Nebadon, who is, of course, and who will always remain, a Paradise Son of the Eternal Son and the Universal Father.

151. Please analyze and comment on the intrinsic linkages among the immanence of the Father, the immanence of the Supreme, and the standard goals that are usually associated with epochal revelation — especially the desire of our spiritual superiors to promote the progressive growth and development of society and civilization.
152. In your view, does our responsibility to act in ways that will contribute to the steadily increasing actuality of God the Mother, the Supreme Being, harmonize with and reinforce our spiritual standing as sons and daughters of God the Father? Alternately, are you inclined to believe that these roles and responsibilities are distinct and entirely separate? In any case, please explain your answer.
153. Does the relatively new concept of God the Mother, when linked with the long-established and traditional concept of God the Father, operate to enhance understanding of the value of service to others, in part by demonstrating that such service constitutes a crucially important aspect of human life, identity, and destiny? If so, how and why? If not, why not?

A Mighty Messenger describes circumstances on a normal planet when a Paradise bestowal Son arrives:

The bestowal Son arrives on a world of high educational culture and encounters a race spiritually trained and prepared to assimilate advanced teachings and to appreciate the bestowal mission. This is an age characterized by the world-wide pursuit of moral culture and spiritual truth. The mortal passion of this dispensation is the penetration of cosmic reality and communion with spiritual reality. The revelations of truth are extended to include the superuniverse. Entirely new systems of education and government grow up to supplant the crude regimes of former times. The joy of living takes on new color, and the reactions of life are exalted to heavenly heights of tone and timbre. *[A Mighty Messenger, 596:1 / 52:5.3]*

This certainly does not describe our world's condition when Jesus arrived, nor at any time since. On the next page, under the heading "Urantia's Postbestowal Age," the Mighty Messenger warns: "Urantia is not proceeding in the normal order. Your world is out of step in the planetary procession" *[a Mighty Messenger, 597.2 / 52:6.1]*. He stipulates, "Jesus has shown the way to the immediate attainment of spiritual brotherhood," but then goes on to say, "the realization of social brotherhood on your world depends much on the following personal transformations and planetary adjustments" *[a Mighty Messenger, 597:3 / 52:6.2]*.

This leads the Mighty Messenger to make a series of sage suggestions under five headings: (1) social fraternity; (2) intellectual cross-fertilization; (3) ethical awakening; (4) political wisdom; and (5) spiritual insight. Now please allow me to point out that of the five general endeavors that he considers essential for our planet's growth and advancement, *only one is spiritual*. We might possibly describe another, "ethical awakening," as partly spiritual, but there can be no doubt that the remaining three are entirely social or intellectual. On balance, it would therefore be difficult to argue that we could fulfill all our duties to the Supreme Being — and to the cause of progressive growth and development on our planet Urantia — if we were just to sit in a corner, read the fifth epochal revelation, and marvel at its spiritual inspiration.

In section 6 of Paper 81, an Archangel of Nebadon depicts 15 factors that are key to the development of civilization on Urantia. Shortly thereafter he states, "**only by adherence to these essentials can man hope to maintain his present-day civilizations while providing for their continued development and certain survival**" *[an Archangel, 911:8 / 81:6.43]*. Now please allow me to point out that none of the Archangel's 15 factors is overtly spiritual, although some have spiritual overtones. It would therefore be exceedingly difficult to argue that we could fulfill all our obligations to God the Father, interlaced and interlinked with our obligations to God the Mother, if we were just to sit in a corner, read the fifth epochal revelation, and marvel at its spiritual inspiration.

As participants in the growth of the Supreme, we are not participating in finite growth of a solely *spiritual* character. The Supreme is also growing on *mindal* and *material* levels, and we are active partners in that growth as well. If we reflect on a Mighty Messenger's statement that "[God the Supreme is truth, beauty, and goodness](#)" [[a Mighty Messenger, 1279:5 / 117:1.7](#)], it is reasonable to conclude that at least two of the three aspects — truth and beauty — have dimensions that are mindal and material as well as spiritual.

If we, as individuals, were to continue to pursue spiritual life from a separatist perspective, if we were to continue to treat spiritual impulses as a closed, isolated, and self-righteous sphere that distinguishes itself from society and stands at least in partial opposition to it, that attitude of ours would tend to reinforce rather than overcome the divisive and pervasive outlook "secular" vs. "sacred." In terms of teachings put forward by the authors of the fifth epochal revelation, our defects in this regard could be described as a failure to combine and integrate our visions of God transcendent and God immanent. Another way of explaining our shortcomings would be to say that we had failed to give due attention and cooperation to the plans and programs of the Supreme Being, God the Mother.

In section 4 of Paper 117 on God the Supreme, a Mighty Messenger calls attention to our paramount duties to this experiential Deity, the sum and synthesis of emerging finite perfection which it is our privilege to join in fostering:

The great struggle of this universe age is between the potential and the actual — the seeking for actualization by all that is as yet unexpressed. ...

Into the keeping of mortal man has been given not only the Adjuster presence of the Paradise Father but also control over the destiny of an infinitesimal fraction of the future of the Supreme. For as man attains human destiny, so does the Supreme achieve destiny on deity levels.

And so the decision awaits each of you as it once awaited each of us: Will you fail the God of time, who is so dependent upon the decisions of the finite mind? will you fail the Supreme personality of the universes by the slothfulness of animalistic retrogression? will you fail the great brother of all creatures, who is so dependent on each creature? can you allow yourself to pass into the realm of the unrealized when before you lies the enchanting vista of the universe career — the divine discovery of the Paradise Father and the divine participation in the search for, and the evolution of, the God of Supremacy? [[A Mighty Messenger, 1284:7, 1285:1-2 / 117:4.11-13](#)]

154. In your opinion, would we fulfill all our obligations to God the Father, interlaced and interlinked with our obligations to the Supreme Being, God the Mother, if we were just to sit in a corner, read the fifth epochal revelation, and marvel at its spiritual inspiration? Please explain the reasons for your answer.
155. On the understanding that each person would have to take appropriate account of his or her education, experience, character, and judgment before deciding how he or she might contribute to advancing and uplifting society and civilization on our planet Urantia, please describe a range of options that individuals may wish to consider.

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Annex 1

A regional association of the Global Endeavor

The substantive working groups seek to serve, assist, and inspire individuals and groups in society who wish to propose or promote initiatives, innovations, or reforms related to their own fields of experience, knowledge, or interest. None of the substantive working groups advocates or advances proposals of its own; to the contrary, each one is a catalyst and resource for those in society who wish to develop or refine their own ideas and approaches. Each substantive working group cooperates actively with its counterparts in other regions.

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 2 | Working group on personal growth and development |
| 3 | Working group on philosophy and religion |
| 4 | Working group on civic life, public service, and global cooperation |
| 5 | Working group on social harmony |
| 6 | Working group on science |
| 7 | Working group on education |
| 8 | Working group on health |
| 9 | Working group on the home and the family |
| 10 | Working group on industry, agriculture, and commerce |
| 11 | Working group on literature, the arts, and entertainment |

The managerial working groups manage the internal affairs of the regional association. Each of them cooperates actively with its counterparts in other regions.

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1 | Coordinates and administers the regional association. Exerts financial and managerial oversight. Responsible for fiscal accountability and auditing; supervises all forms of fund raising. Reports to the Coordinating Commission. |
| 12 | Provides internal advice and counsel. Monitors and evaluates ongoing activities of the entire regional association from spiritual, philosophic, moral, ethical, and psychological perspectives. Reports to the Consultative Forum. |

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Annex 2

The articles listed below appear in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (three volumes), ed. J. D. Douglas *et al.* (Inter-Varsity Press: Leicester, England, 1980 and Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, Illinois, U.S.A., 1980). The authors of these articles analyze the 14 books of the New Testament that have traditionally been ascribed to the apostle Paul, reaching the conclusions summarized on page 117 of the text.

Epistle(s)	Appraisal	Reference
Romans	Accepted as written by Paul.	The article "Romans, Epistle to the" signed D. G., pages 1346-1351.
1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians	Accepted as written by Paul.	The article "Corinthians, Epistles to the" signed D. R. de L., pages 314-319.
Galatians	The great majority of scholars agree that this epistle was written by Paul, although this view is not quite unanimous.	The article "Galatians, Epistle to the" signed F. F. B., pages 535-537.
Ephesians	Authorship disputed.	The article "Ephesians, Epistle to the" signed F. F., pages 459-461.
Philippians	Accepted as written by Paul.	The article "Philippians, Epistle to the" signed R. P. M., pages 1216-1218.
Colossians	Generally accepted as written by Paul, but a few scholars advance contrary arguments.	The article "Colossians, Epistle to the" signed F. F., pages 304-306.
1 Thessalonians	Accepted as written by Paul.	The article "Thessalonians, Epistles to the" signed F. F. B., pages 1555-1557.
2 Thessalonians	Most scholars believe that it was written by Paul, but some express reservations or concerns.	
1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus	Most scholars believe that these three epistles were not written by Paul, but by one or more followers of his who lived in a subsequent generation.	The article "Timothy and Titus, Epistles to" signed D. G., pages 1568-1571.
Philemon	Accepted as written by Paul.	The article "Philemon, Epistle to" signed A. F. W., pages 1212-1213.
Hebrews	Authorship disputed.	The article "Hebrews, Epistle to the" signed D. G., pages 627-632.

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“... the later celestial supervisors of this planet express complete confidence in the ultimate evolutionary triumph of the human race and in the eventual vindication of our original plans and life patterns.”

— A Life Carrier of Nebadon

[736:7 | 65:5.4]