

## THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF THE FOURTH EPOCHAL REVELATION

### – Part 4 –

By contributing Julian McGarry

#### 7. Proclaiming, Preaching, and Teaching the Fourth Epochal Revelation

*Religion does need new leaders, spiritual men and women who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings. If Christianity persists in neglecting its spiritual mission while it continues to busy itself with social and material problems, the spiritual renaissance must await the coming of these new teachers of Jesus' religion who will be exclusively devoted to the spiritual regeneration of men. [Paper 195:9.4; page 2082.9]*

Who are these new leaders “who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings”? The authors are daring us to depend solely on the gospel of Jesus...nothing else! Who are “these new teachers of Jesus’s religion who will be exclusively devoted to the spiritual regeneration of men”? One would naturally expect to find them within the institutions of Christianity but here lies the problem: Christianity long ago lost its way; it drifted away from the Master’s original commission and became wedded to a new gospel about Jesus. In modern times, it has got caught up in a worldly agenda and is now impotent to effect spiritual change in the hearts of mortals. There is a veiled warning here for the Urantia movement.

*Christianity has indeed done a great service for this world, but what is now most needed is Jesus. **The world needs to see Jesus living again on earth in the experience of spirit-born mortals who effectively reveal the Master to all men.** It is futile to talk about a revival of primitive Christianity; you must go forward from where you find yourselves. **Modern culture must become spiritually baptized with a new revelation of Jesus’ life and illuminated with a new understanding of his gospel of eternal salvation.** And when Jesus becomes thus lifted up, he will draw all men to himself. Jesus’ disciples should be more than conquerors, even overflowing sources of inspiration and enhanced living to all men. Religion is only an exalted humanism until it is made divine by the discovery of the reality of the presence of God in personal experience.*

*[Paper 195:10.1; page 2084.1. Emphasis added.]*

This is indeed ‘plain speak’! These words are addressed to us, not to the apostles and disciples of the first century. But, as in the first century, they can be easily overlooked by those who claim to be Jesus’s followers today. What is now most needed in the world is Jesus! not a

book! How is that possible? Not through the second coming of Jesus but by spirit-born mortals living the Master's gospel message in a way that reveals him to all men. These men and women will live lives that exemplify the new revelation and understanding of Jesus's gospel of salvation. Their lives will serve as an inspiration to others such that Jesus will be "lifted up", and will draw all peoples to himself, just as moths are attracted to the light of a lamp.

*This world has never seriously or sincerely or honestly tried out these dynamic ideas and divine ideals of Jesus' doctrine of the kingdom of heaven. [Paper 170:4.14, page 1863.12]*

What a tragic indictment of humanity! Surely the time has come for the world to hear and witness the gospel message of Jesus as enacted in the lives of his modern-day followers.

*The religion of Jesus is a new gospel of faith **to be proclaimed to struggling humanity**. This new religion is founded on faith, hope, and love. [Paper 194:3.2, page 2062.11. Emphasis added.]*

The time has come for a revival of Jesus's original teachings! The clarion call is clear and loud! Jesus's modern-day disciples have been commissioned, just like their first century brothers, to declare, proclaim, and teach the life-giving message of the kingdom of heaven.

*"Peace be upon you. That which my Father sent me into the world to establish belongs not to a race, a nation, nor to a special group of teachers or preachers. This gospel of the kingdom belongs to both Jew and gentile, to rich and poor, to free and bond, to male and female, even to the little children. And you are all to proclaim this gospel of love and truth by the lives which you live in the flesh. You shall love one another with a new and startling affection, even as I have loved you. You will serve mankind with a new and amazing devotion, even as I have served you. And when men see you so love them, and when they behold how fervently you serve them, they will perceive that you have become faith-fellows of the kingdom of heaven, and they will follow after the Spirit of Truth which they see in your lives, to the finding of eternal salvation.*

*"As the Father sent me into this world, even so now send I you. You are all called to carry the good news to those who sit in darkness. This gospel of the kingdom belongs to all who believe it; it shall not be committed to the custody of mere priests. Soon will the Spirit of Truth come upon you, and he shall lead you into all truth. Go you, therefore, into all the world preaching this gospel, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the ages."*  
[Paper 191:6.2,3; page 2044.3,4]

## 8. What this Means for the Urantia Movement

Does the foregoing discussion have any implications for the Urantia movement in this 21st century?

I believe it does, profoundly so. Organizations such as Urantia Association International (UAI) and *The Urantia Book* Fellowship claim to have a mandate to disseminate the teachings of the Urantia revelation. Such a claim is based on events which directly followed the completion of the transcription of the papers. Of course, the dissemination of the book's teachings sounds like a noble and praiseworthy mission. But in the light of the abundant and unequivocal exhortations regarding the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom contained within the Jesus Papers, is such an objective appropriate for the current status of the world?

I would like to quote from The Publication Mandate, which was released to coincide with the publication of *The Urantia Book* in 1955. There are several key statements within this text regarding The Urantia Papers that should help us to develop the right perspective regarding our role in these momentous times.

### THE TIMING OF THE URANTIA BOOK

(Generally designated as "The Publication Mandate")

- "We regard *The Urantia Book* as a feature of the progressive evolution of human society. It is not germane to the spectacular episodes of epochal revolution, even though it may apparently be timed to appear in the wake of one such revolution in human society. The Book belongs to the era immediately to follow the conclusion of the present ideological struggle. That will be the day when men will be willing to seek truth and righteousness. When the chaos of the present confusion has passed, it will be more readily possible to formulate the cosmos of a new and improved era of human relationships. And it is for this better order of affairs on earth that the Book has been made ready.
- "But the publication of the Book has not been postponed to that (possibly) somewhat remote date. An early publication of the Book has been provided so that it may be in hand for the training of leaders and teachers. Its presence is also required to engage the attention of persons of means who may be thus led to provide funds for translations into other languages.
- "(You) must learn to possess (your) souls in patience. (You) are in association with a revelation of truth which is a part of the natural evolution of religion on this world. Over rapid growth would be suicidal. The book is being **given to those who are ready for it long before the day of its world-wide mission**. Thousands of study groups must be brought into existence and the book must be

translated into many tongues. Thus will the book be in readiness when the battle for man's liberty is finally won and the world is once more made safe for the religion of Jesus and the freedom of mankind." [Emphasis added.]

In the first paragraph cited above, we are told that *The Urantia Book* "is not germane to the spectacular episodes of epochal revolution, even though it may apparently be timed to appear in the wake of one such revolution in human society." The revolution being alluded to here could be the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. However, I believe it is more likely that it's referring to the protest against the extremes of the institutionalised Christian church by the forces of secularism, "the present superstition revolt". [Paper 195:9.1, page 2082.6]

*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.*

[Paper 195:8.2; page 2081.2. Emphasis added.]

Paragraph one goes on to say: "the Book belongs to the era immediately to follow the conclusion of the present ideological struggle." This could be referring to the 'cold war' between the communist bloc and the western alliance. However, I would again venture to suggest that the ideological struggle mentioned here is the same one described in Paper 195:4.5.... "In this gigantic struggle between the secular and the spiritual, the religion of Jesus will eventually triumph." It is after "the chaos of the present confusion has passed" that "men will be willing to seek truth and righteousness." "And it is for this better order of affairs on earth that the Book has been made ready."

It is stated clearly in this document that "The book is being given to those who are ready for it long before the day of its world-wide mission....so that it may be in hand for the training of leaders and teachers....and to engage the attention of persons of means who may be thus led to provide funds for translations into other languages." Until this "present ideological struggle" is finished, the world as a whole will not be ready for *The Urantia Book*. It will not receive widespread acceptance until the spiritualization process of the 4th epochal revelation has been completed. Until then, the Book has been published only for "those who are ready for it", for the training of teachers and leaders, and to attract benefactors.

This is a different agenda to that which the Book ascribes to the religion of Jesus. It is the true teachings of Jesus that will overthrow the barren ideologies of our secular, materialistic age. It is in the wake of this revolutionary process that *The Urantia Book* will come into its own.

If the fourth epochal revelation achieved its purpose in the first century, then why are 76 papers of the Book devoted to the life and teachings of Jesus? (This is 39% of the total number of papers) It is precisely because the divine business of the 4th epochal revelation was not completed

that these papers were included, giving us such extraordinary details about Jesus's life and teachings. We have been given such priceless information so that we can revive these teachings and bring about a worldwide spiritual renaissance.

But some might reason that the commission to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus was given to us as individuals and does not apply to the umbrella organizations, which have been created to socialize the 5th epochal revelation. In response to this it needs to be pointed out that Jesus not only allowed for but encouraged the establishment of institutions to socialize the gospel of the kingdom.

*Jesus foresaw that a social organization, or church, would follow the progress of the true spiritual kingdom, and that is why he never opposed the apostles' practicing the rite of John's baptism. [Paper 170:5.13; page 1865.3]*

*The church, as a social outgrowth of the kingdom, would have been wholly natural and even desirable. **The evil of the church was not its existence**, but rather that it almost completely supplanted the Jesus concept of the kingdom. Paul's institutionalized church became a virtual substitute for the kingdom of heaven which Jesus had proclaimed. [Paper 170:5.7; page 1864.7. **Emphasis added.**]*

*The church was an inevitable and **useful** social result of Jesus' life and teachings. [Paper 170:5.10; page 1864.10. **Emphasis added.**]*

Jesus provided for the training and well-being of his apostles and disciples; he realized that without the backing of the apostolic organization, these devotees of the kingdom message would have no hope of accomplishing the gospel programme. Surely today is no different! How can the Urantia organizations expect individual readers to engage in the preaching and teaching programme of the religion of Jesus without the backup of institutions devoted to the same programme.

In the earliest days of the development of the Urantia Brotherhood, key players like Dr William Sadler and Dr Meredith Sprunger proposed an organisational structure that looked like and operated like a religion. Larry Mullins, in his book "A History of the Urantia Papers" put it this way:

*It was the original vision of Dr Sadler that Urantia Societies would develop as bona fide religious groups. Under Dr Sadler's leadership, a key element of the Constitution of the Brotherhood was the development of ordained teachers. A school to train and ordain teachers was established shortly after publication of the Book.*

Dr Meredith Sprunger, who died in April 2012, had a remarkable career as a college president, professor, and executive administrator, a licensed psychologist and therapist, and an ordained minister. He was a devoted student of the Book, and served in numerous capacities within

the Urantia movement, including President of Urantia Brotherhood. Although Dr Sprunger did not advocate the establishment of a “Urantia religion”, he believed there was “*a great need for new religious institutions to serve the growing edge of spiritual development in this world – authentic religious institutions that will appeal to the highest spiritual aspirations of humankind*”. He believed the Urantia Papers would “*provide the inspiration for that coming spiritual renaissance*”. He further asserted “*that such religious institutions are a necessary step in fulfilling the mission of the Urantia Movement.*”

However, the notion of operating like a ‘Urantian religion’ has been and continues to be anathema to the movement in its various guises:

*As the Brotherhood developed, a view surfaced in Urantia Brotherhood that was very different from that of Dr Sadler and Dr Sprunger. A developing majority of the members of the early Brotherhood shared both a strong fear of what they derisively termed “Churchification” and a biased attitude against institutionalized religion. There was even a marked uneasiness in the original group toward the use of an opening prayer for meetings....The Brotherhood now defined itself, not as a religious organization, but as “an educational-social organization with a religious purpose”.*

This fear and distrust of religious institutions is understandable given the historical and contemporary extremes of religions in general, and Christendom in particular. But these poor examples of evolutionary religion should not discourage us from promoting religion at its finest – the religion of Jesus! Indeed, A Brilliant Evening Star of Nebadon was unequivocal in stating:

*Notwithstanding that the cult has always retarded social progress, it is regrettable that so many modern believers in moral standards and spiritual ideals have no adequate symbolism — no cult of mutual support — nothing to belong to.*

*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.*

**[Paper 87:7.3,6; pages 965.7 & 966.1. Emphasis added.]**

*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.*

[Paper 87:7.7; page 966.2. *Emphasis added.*]

We are being told plainly and simply that despite all the problems of organized religion, every new revelation of truth will give rise to a “new cult”, meaning a system of religious worship having a set of rites centering around a group’s sacred symbols. Even the “restatement of the religion of Jesus”, Part IV of *The Urantia Book*, needs “new and appropriate symbolism”, which “must arise out of religious living, spiritual experience”, “predicated on the concept of the Fatherhood of God” and “pregnant with the mighty ideal of the brotherhood of man.” This new cult “is the skeletal structure around which grows the living and dynamic body of personal spiritual experience — true religion” [Paper 87:7.10; page 966.5].

Earlier in this article I spoke about the critical requirement that epochal revelations should not introduce information, be it scientific, philosophical, or spiritual, that the world is not ready for.

*But if revelation is to exalt and upstep the religions of evolution, then must such divine visitations portray teachings which are not too far removed from the thought and reactions of the age in which they are presented. Thus must and does revelation always keep in touch with evolution. Always must the religion of revelation be limited by man’s capacity of receptivity.* [Paper 92:4.1; page 1007.1]

For similar reasons, Jesus warned his disciples not to “teach the deep things of the spirit to those who have been born only of the flesh; first see that men are born of the spirit before you seek to instruct them in the advanced ways of the spirit.” [Paper 141:6.4; page 1592.6]

The world is manifestly not ready for the advanced truths of the 5th epochal revelation. This is because the Master’s original teachings were never properly introduced by his first century followers and the historical church that bears his name. People need the ‘milk’ of the gospel message before they can digest the solid food of the Urantia Papers.

The world desperately needs the religion of Jesus. The Urantia community has been blessed with the most comprehensive and accurate account of Jesus’s life and teachings that the planet has ever seen. Unfortunately, the major Urantia organisations seem determined to function like secular entities rather than religious ones. Moreover, they are totally focused on promoting the entire book rather than the saving message of the gospel of Jesus. This is history repeating itself. The world is not ready for *The Urantia Book* but is ripe for receiving the gospel of Jesus.

*The world needs more firsthand religion. Even Christianity — the best of the religions of the twentieth century — is not only a religion about Jesus, but it is so largely one which men experience*

*secondhand. They take their religion wholly as handed down by their accepted religious teachers. **What an awakening the world would experience if it could only see Jesus as he really lived on earth and know, firsthand, his life-giving teachings!***

*[Paper 195:9.8; page 2083.4. Emphasis added.]*

**The Urantia Book** makes this extraordinary prediction:

*Sooner or later another and greater John the Baptist is due to arise proclaiming “the kingdom of God is at hand” — meaning a return to the high spiritual concept of Jesus, who proclaimed that the kingdom is the will of his heavenly Father dominant and transcendent in the heart of the believer — and doing all this without in any way referring either to the visible church on earth or to the anticipated second coming of Christ. There must come a revival of the actual teachings of Jesus, such a restatement as will undo the work of his early followers who went about to create a sociophilosophical system of belief regarding the fact of Michael’s sojourn on earth.*

*[Paper 170:5.19, page 1866.2]*

Who is this modern-day John the Baptist who will proclaim to the world “the kingdom of God is at hand” and bring about “a revival of the actual teachings of Jesus”? The momentous opportunity to respond to the call is before us. The Urantia community has no excuse; they cannot say at the judgement that they did not know about the unfinished business of the fourth epochal revelation, the gospel of Jesus! The final Papers of the book are addressed to us, living in these times of global upheaval. Let us pay close attention to what they have to say:

*The modern age will refuse to accept a religion which is inconsistent with facts and out of harmony with its highest conceptions of truth, beauty, and goodness. The hour is striking for a rediscovery of the true and original foundations of present-day distorted and compromised Christianity — the real life and teachings of Jesus.*

*[Paper 195:9.5, page 2083.1]*

*The call to the adventure of building a new and transformed human society by means of the spiritual rebirth of Jesus’ brotherhood of the kingdom should thrill all who believe in him as men have not been stirred since the days when they walked about on earth as his companions in the flesh. [Paper 195:10.6; page 2084.6]*

The call to establish the religion of Jesus as the means for “building a new and transformed human society” should thrill us and move us to whole-heartedly devote our lives to the business of completing the worldwide spiritual programme of the 4th epochal revelation. Let us resolve as individuals and associations of individuals to be faithful to our Master in accepting his commission

to proclaim the good news of the loving Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of his children.

If not us, then who?

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