

## A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF *THE UB*

by Dale E. Essary

### INTRODUCTION

“I portray the reality and truth of the Father’s nature and attributes with unchallengeable authority; I know whereof I speak.”

(A “Divine Counselor,” alleged celestial author of Papers 1 through 9 of *The UB*, 1:7.9)

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“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

(The Apostle John, from the *Holy Bible*, 1John 4:1)

The panoply of human literature produced through the ages is rife with fictional as well as non-fictional “revelations” claiming celestial authorship. The epic poetry of old produced a rich history of a common convention: the descent of an emissary god or angel from heaven bearing a message to earth’s inhabitants. Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, produced in the eighth century B.C., often repeat the theme of an immortal who has occasion to leave Mount Olympus, ethereal abode of the Greek gods, for the theater of human plight. Likewise, Virgil’s first-century B.C. epic the *Aeneid* has the Roman gods dispatching their emissaries to earth on missions of aid and comfort to mere mortals. In these classics, the hero of the story assumes the highest honor of receiving divine knowledge by way of celestial authorization, typically in the form of a literal descent from on high.

And the archangel Gabriel has had no shortage of authors willing to borrow his good name from the pages of Scripture. One of the earliest examples of the celestial messenger’s descent appears in a Renaissance Latin epic poem entitled *Antonios*, written by Maffeo Vegio in 1437. Vegio’s simplistic story tells of a journey made by one Saint Anthony who is implored by Gabriel to seek the aid of a certain hermit for divine purposes.<sup>1</sup> Prior to this decidedly Christian discourse, Mohammed supposedly received the *Koran* from Gabriel, which launched the religion of Islam. Indeed, Gabriel has garnered quite a colorful (and in some cases self-contradictory) portfolio of divine messages.

The pattern of celestial epiphany did not diminish in modern times. John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) tells of the descent of the angel Raphael to Adam<sup>2</sup> and Satan feigning cherubic splendor in an appearance to deceive Uriel.<sup>3</sup> Joseph Smith was given the *Book of Mormon* (1830) by Moroni. Other contributors to the parade of superhuman communiqués include Mary Baker Eddy’s *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (1875), John Ballou Newbrough’s *OAHSPÉ: A Kosmon Bible in the Words of Jehovih and His Angel Embassadors* (1882), Helena Blavatsky’s *Secret Doctrine* (1893), Alice Bailey’s *Consciousness of the Atom* (1922), the various writings of Edgar Cayce, and those of Ruth Montgomery. More recent entries include the Seth books of Jane Roberts, the Ramtha books of J. Z. Knight, James Jacob Hurtak’s *Keys of Enoch*, and *A Course in Miracles* by Helen Schucman.

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Add to this list a curious handful of “strange new gospels,” modern fictions masquerading as ancient works newly discovered and purporting to be genuine documents of Christian antiquity. These documents all offer the enticing promise of shedding new light upon the beginnings and early years of Christianity, and especially upon the figure of Jesus. And they all but begged to be tested as to their authenticity; but as it turns out, scholars who took the time to do so found them wanting.<sup>4</sup> Having failed the test miserably, they have since fallen onto the trash heap of irrelevance.

But unlike all of these messages from on high, in which a human being openly claims to be the author through whom the spirits have channeled their inspired message, *The UB*'s alleged human conduit remains unknown. Instead, it is the self-proclaimed celestial contacts themselves who claim direct authorship of the written word, having used the alleged human contact only as their unwitting instrument of communication. It is this uniqueness of supposed angelic authorship that sets *The UB* apart from all other purported revelations, and by which it arouses a sense of curiosity and intrigue for many.

### A Firm Foundation

This evaluation of *The UB* is written from the perspective of one who believes in the time-honored doctrine of the inerrant inspiration of the Bible, and in Scripture being the basis for truth regarding the nature of God and His plan for mankind's salvation. This doctrine of inerrancy posits that God superintended the writing of Scripture so that human authors, using their own style, personalities, and resources, wrote down word for word exactly what God intended them to write in the originals. The doctrine infers that God also supernaturally preserved the Bible throughout history and protected its message from corruption. The 66 books of the Bible are therefore held to be the complete and adequate canon of inspired Scripture.

It is not the intent of this series of articles to provide evidence in support of this position regarding the inspiration of Scripture, as many other resources are available that aptly defend said position.<sup>5</sup> (Nevertheless, this series will touch on pertinent topics regarding the veracity of Scripture as they are brought up by the authors of *The UB*, and as space will allow.) Rather, it is the intent of this series to demonstrate that *The UB* and the Bible are incompatible with one another in that they teach diametrically opposing views regarding the nature of God, the nature of Man, and the interrelationship between the two. It will also be demonstrated through other series on this website that *The UB* is an inferior document based both on its own merit and upon direct comparison with both modern scientific enlightenment and the Bible.

### Testing the Spirits

By all means, we should give due diligence to the celestial revelators' challenge to the reader's sense of reality. And so, it is in the spirit of the prophet Elijah, who challenged the prophets of Baal to a demonstration of their supernatural prowess on Mount Carmel, that this volume provides a response to *The UB* authors' bold claims. By all means, let us give the revelators audience as they make their case for the Gods of Urantia. If the celestials lack the propensity to demonstrate the veracity of their Gods,

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then perhaps the very existence of these phantom authors should be placed in question as well. And in the process of exposing their empty theology, perhaps they deserve to have their existence slain from the minds of those whose loyalty they have undeservedly earned.

Why is such an endeavor necessary? After all, many who have become familiar with both *The UB* and the Bible claim that the two are compatible with one another. A common selling point of *The UB* is that it merely affirms the central Christian concepts of an eternal, trinitized God (Father, Son, and Spirit) and an afterlife with Paradise as the destination for those who have faith in God. This all indeed sounds to be quite in agreement with biblical teachings at first, until one learns that all these concepts have been given new meanings that are quite antithetical to basic Christianity.

It is also said of *The UB* that it is a supplement to (or at least a “clarification” of) the concepts presented in the Bible, and the student will see the beauty in both once the “proper” perspective is realized. But this assertion ignores the obvious problem posed whenever a new “revelation” comes along attempting to ride on the coattails of biblical inspiration. The Bible makes a compelling claim for its own divine inspiration.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, *The UB* claims to have been revealed to the human race by representatives of God’s celestial agents, and therefore infers that it, too, is divinely inspired (or at least divinely sponsored). However, the Bible asserts that it is a complete revelation, and that no more “letters from God” are forthcoming.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, regardless of a person’s predisposition on whether the Bible is indeed the one true Word of God, it would seem prudent to test the validity of *The UB*’s claim by any and all means available prior to accepting it as an augmentation of the former. Indeed, the Bible instructs us to “test all things” (1Thessalonians 5:21) and, yes, to even “test the spirits” (1John 4:1) for validity. Even *The UB* itself mimics this admonition with the following: “. . . the truth never suffers from honest examination . . .” (153:2.11); and: “The modern age will refuse to accept a religion which is inconsistent with facts . . .” (195:9.5). Therefore, lest we disappoint the alleged celestial authors of *The UB*, let us heartily accept their challenge to a rigorous examination of their testimony!

### Context, Context, Context

Context is important when reading the Bible. Without proper context, one could claim that the Bible says “there is no God.” One might even convince a biblical novice of this statement by revealing that the Bible says so on more than one occasion (which it does; see 2Kings 1:3,6,16; Psalm 14:1; 53:1). But if we were to look up any of these verses and read the context around the quoted phrase, we would come to realize that the Bible is not refuting the existence of God at all. For example, Psalm 14:1 states: “The fool has said in his heart, ‘*There is no God*’” (emphasis added). We also see that Elijah was speaking these words as a rebuke toward Ahaziah for consulting a pagan god: “Is it because *there is no God* in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?” (2Kings 1:3; emphasis added).

Knowing how to read the Bible takes practice and devotion. There are two basic approaches to reading Scripture. Exegesis allows the text to speak for itself, or in other words, it seeks to draw the originally intended meaning solely from the text. Proper exegesis takes into consideration everything that shapes communication in written form, including historical background, literary context, and language

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(grammar, lexical meanings of words, etc.). Making the effort of exegetic interpretation shows respect for the original text. Eisegesis, on the other hand, is reading *into* a text a meaning its original author never intended. Engaging in eisegesis shows no respect for the original text or its author. Nobody likes to be misinterpreted or to have improper assertions, motivations, or conclusions attributed to us by careless reading of what we have written. We show respect for God's Word, therefore, by handling it with care and seeking to hear what it says without inserting our own thoughts, traditions, desires, or beliefs in the place of God's word.

*The UB* is loaded with flagrant examples of runaway eisegetic license. Though its authors are quick to quote liberally from Scripture, they rarely do so with regard to its historical and grammatical context. One need not read very far into the pages of *The UB* to get a sense of the redactory license the so-called celestial authors have bestowed upon themselves. *The UB* interacts profusely with the Bible and devotes much of its time re-inventing the meaning of many concepts and facts presented in Scripture. For example, in the very first paragraph of the very first Paper of *The UB* we read this "revelation:"

"The truth about the Universal Father had begun to dawn upon mankind when the prophet said: 'You, God, are alone; there is none beside you. You have created the heaven and the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts; you preserve and control them. By the *Sons of God* were the *universes* made. The Creator covers himself with light as with a garment and stretches out the heavens as a curtain.'" (1:0.1; emphasis added)

Without properly citing the biblical verses quoted, the "Divine Counselor" who "presented" these words has burdened the verses with completely new meanings (for which the details and reasons will be forthcoming). To demonstrate the Counselor's gross revisions, I present the cited verses as they appear in the New King James translation of the Bible:

"You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, *the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them*, and You preserve them all. *The host of heaven worships You*. . . . By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, *and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth*. . . . You are clothed with honor and majesty, Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain." (Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 33:6; 104:1,2; emphasis added).

The italicized portions in the above biblical verses are those that the Counselor chose not to include in his divine treatise, while those that are both italicized and underlined were revised on self-ascribed divine authority (compare with the italicized passages from the above *UB* passage). The celestial composer does not provide any justification for his Scripture-bending; it is just assumed that the reader will accept the version by virtue of the dominion from whence the author claims to hail: "I portray the reality and truth of the Father's nature and attributes with unchallengeable authority; I know whereof I speak" (1:7.9). Be that as it may, the uppity Divine Counselor fails to realize that he has quoted the works of not just one prophet as claimed, but from at least two and likely three different authors.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, regardless of whether or not the cited verses do not quite fit his paradigm, the Divine

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Counselor ought not tamper with references if he wishes to cite them with honesty and integrity. Or did he think we simple-minded mortals would not bother to check his sources?

Lest the reader think that this author is poking fun at the “Divine Counselor” by capitalizing on a fluke incident, rest assured that the evidence will demonstrate complicity on the part of the Counselor and his co-authors. The alleged celestial revelators unabashedly wield their revisionist prowess upon sacred Scripture whenever and as often as they see fit. Moreover, they rarely provide appropriate reference to the biblical verse or verses cited, and when they do, it is done so in the most generic of terms such as “the prophet said” or “the Psalmist exclaimed.” I will give the reader just one more example of gross revisionism on the Divine Counselor’s part, for the sake of brevity:

“The Father rules through his Sons; on down through the universe organization there is an unbroken chain of rulers . . . who direct the destinies of the evolutionary spheres of the Father’s vast domains. It is no mere poetic expression that exclaims: . . . ‘The Most Highs rule in the kingdoms of men.’” (3:5.2)

Now compare the biblical verse which the Divine Counselor misquotes: “. . . the Most High rules the kingdoms of men . . .” (Daniel 4:17,25,32). Notice the subtle yet profound change in meaning between the two versions. The prophet Daniel was referring to God Himself (see also Daniel 5:21), while the Divine Counselor is introducing a sort of celestial consortium. Again this notion begs many a question: Why even refer to Scripture at all if it does not fit the paradigm that the author is introducing? Why tamper with the biblical passages (and covertly at that) without giving due explanation? Is the “Divine Counselor” citing from a heretofore-undiscovered manuscript that would render the modern translations of the Bible inaccurate? We must assume for one thing that the author is quite familiar with these biblical passages, but for some reason feels compelled to “adjust” them to their “correct” form. However, note that the “Divine Counselor” does not suggest that the modern English versions of Daniel’s verses are faulty; he merely tweaks them as he goes along, in hopes that nobody would dare question his authority for doing so. As we shall see, this trend continues throughout *The UB* with ever-increasing frequency and sophistication.

Once in a great while, an alleged celestial author will simply invent a biblical quote out of thin air to validate a theological concept, such as the passage below:

“It is literally true: ‘In all your afflictions he is afflicted.’ ‘In all your triumphs he triumphs in and with you.’” (1:5.16)

The first quote is loosely taken from a biblical passage that reads: “In all their afflictions He was afflicted . . .” (Isaiah 63:9). The verse is considered a Messianic passage prophesying the suffering that the Messiah would endure. The second quote has no biblical equivalent whatsoever. But it sure sounds good coming from a “Divine Counselor,” does it not?!

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Another advantage of not properly referencing quoted biblical verses when one should is that the reader may not be aware of where the biblical quotations end and the extra-biblical citations begin. An excellent example of this deceptive maneuver can be found in a paragraph of a section discussing the infinite nature of the Universal Father, which is repeated below with the appropriate biblical and extra-biblical verses appropriately referenced:

“‘There is but one God, the infinite Father [1Corinthians 8:6], who is also a faithful Creator [1Peter 4:19].’ ‘The divine Creator is also the Universal Disposer [*Atharva Veda* 13.4.3,12,20], the source and destiny of souls [*Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad* 3.9.1,10]. He is the Supreme Soul [*Bhagarata Purana* 11.18.32], the Primal Mind [*Bhagavada Gita* 10.12,13,1,16], and the Unlimited Spirit of all creation [*Vishnu Purana* 1.1.35].’ ‘The great Controller makes no mistakes [*Shi Jing* 3.3.3.12.8-10]. He is resplendent in majesty and glory [*Koran* 57:3].’ ‘The Creator God is wholly devoid of fear and enmity. He is immortal, eternal, self-existent, divine, and bountiful [*Jopji* preamble].’ ‘How pure and beautiful, how deep and unfathomable is the supernal Ancestor of all things! [*Tao-Teh-King* 4.2,1]’ ‘The Infinite is most excellent in that he imparts himself to men [*Tao-Teh-King* 41,3]. He is the beginning and the end, the Father of every good and perfect purpose [*Yasna* 31.8].’ ‘With God all things are possible [Matthew 19:26]; the eternal Creator is the cause of causes [*Vishnu Purana* 1.1.35].’” (2:1.2)<sup>9</sup>

As we can clearly see now that we have donned our magic decoder spectacles, the “Divine Counselor” pays tribute to the sacred writings of several other world religions in this treatise of “God’s” infinitude, including those of Hinduism (*Atharva Veda*, *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*, *Bhagarata Purana*, *Bhagavada Gita*, *Vishnu Purana*), Islam (*Koran*), Sikhism (*Jopji*), Taoism (*Tao-Teh-King*, *Shi Jing*), and Zoroastrianism (*Yasna*). Unfortunately, all these other world religions consider “God” as unknowable and/or impersonal. To be sure, these verses do no harm to the infinite character and power of the God of the Bible. However, two strikes must be entered against the plagiaristic author of this treatise. First of all, we have no need for these extra-biblical citations to learn of God’s infinite attributes, because there are plenty of biblical verses that settle the matter.<sup>10</sup> The other is that this blind attempt at ecumenism is deceptive both in its intent and its method. What tangled webs these celestial minds weave!

### Convention

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical verses are quoted herein from the New King James translation. Passages quoted from *The UB* are cited adopting the universal referencing system introduced by the Uversa Press edition (see below). The text of *The UB* consists of a Foreword and 196 numbered chapters, referred to as “Papers.” Each Paper is divided into numbered and titled sections, and each section is divided into numbered paragraphs. The universal referencing system locates a passage using three numbers to identify its Paper, section, and paragraph, respectively, much like the way the Bible verses are located by book, chapter, and verse. For instance, the notation 123:4.5 refers to the fifth paragraph in Section 4 of Paper 123. A list comprised of indented, numbered entries are counted as part of the paragraph which introduces the list, unless the entries are construed as severable paragraphs.

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Most papers of *The UB* have an introductory passage or preamble prior to their numbered sections, which is referred to as Section “0” if cited. For example, the second paragraph in the introductory section of paper 23 would be cited as 23:0.2. The Foreword of *The UB* is denoted as though it were numbered Paper “0.” Moreover, although the twelve sections of the Foreword are numbered with Roman numerals in the Urantia Foundation editions, the sections therein will be referred to using the Cartesian numerical designation, as is done in the Uversa Press editions. Therefore, the third paragraph in Section IX (9) of the Foreword would be denoted as 0:9.3, as an example. The Foreword also has an introductory section; therefore, the fourth paragraph of the introductory section of the Foreword would be cited as 0:0.4.

For several reasons, this convention is the preferred choice over the conventional method of citing page numbers, but primarily for ease of reference. In 2003, Uversa Press, the publishing arm of the Urantia Fellowship, began printing the Uversa Press Edition of *The UB*. This newer edition, in addition to providing an edition supposedly containing the full text of the first printing of *The UB* from its initial publication in 1955, utilizes the two-column format. As all Urantia Foundation editions of *The UB* utilize the single-column printing format, Uversa Press’s two-column format has resulted in a reduction of the number of pages in the book, thus skewing the pagination of the text with that of the Urantia Foundation editions. The universal referencing system eliminates the obvious confusion that would result from citing page numbers of quoted text.

In addition to the issue of practicality, there are other considerations for choosing to utilize the universal referencing system. Many copies of *The UB* have been translated into languages other than English by the Urantia Foundation. The process of translating *The UB* into other languages continues. As a result, many of the passages cited herein may be on a different page number in the translated copies than that of the English translation from which the text has been cited. This way, a person who is reading from a translated copy of *The UB* will still be able to find the cited passage and read it in the language translated. This technique should also allow those who are discussing a particular issue with a person that is more comfortable reading *The UB* in a language other than English to cite the appropriate passage, despite the potential language barrier brought on by translated copies.

On those occasions when it was not practical to completely provide the entire text as quotes from which the intended point is being made, references to other passages or other aspects of the text have been given, assuming the reader has a copy of *The UB* on hand. However, there is no intention of keeping anything from the readers not so equipped; therefore, this will only happen in cases when the idea or comparison has already been adequately put across with quotes.

### A Proper Perspective

Many concepts and characters portrayed in *The UB* are described herein, not to promote or acknowledge them as reliable sources of information, but to make the reader conversant with the pertinent issue(s) and to provide a better understanding when dialoguing with a *UB* devotee. It is both because of the sometimes subtle changes in the meanings behind Christian terminology used by the authors of *The UB*

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and its broad scope of concepts covered (overt and covert alike) that a study of its contents requires those who are unfamiliar with its teachings to undergo a topical survey. What many promoters of *The UB* are counting on is a degree of uncertainty (if not an abject unfamiliarity) with even the rudimentary concepts of a Christian's faith tenets, in an effort to disarm his or her ability to provide an answer to what will undoubtedly be a challenge to their beliefs. It is this author's hope that this and other series on this website will help provide the necessary means for preparing the Christian reader with a gentle yet firm response to those challenges (1Peter 3:15). These writings also hopefully provide a means of exposing the erroneous teachings of *The UB* to the Urantian devotee and, to whatever degree he or she has invested spiritually and/or emotionally into it, assessing its intrinsic worth as a document worthy of faithful adherence thereto.

## ENDNOTES

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2. Milton, John, *Paradise Lost* (1667), Book Five.
3. Milton, John, *Paradise Lost* (1667), III.636-644.
4. Goodspeed, Edgar J., *Strange New Gospels*; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931. [[http://www.tertullian.org/articles/goodspeed\\_strange\\_new\\_gospels.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/articles/goodspeed_strange_new_gospels.htm)]
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6. Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; 2Timothy 3:16; 2Peter 1:21; 3:15-17.
7. Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:19.
8. According to historians, Nehemiah was probably composed by Ezra ca. 430 B.C.; the two Psalms were probably authored during different periods of the pre-exilic times (see *NIV Study Bible*, pp. 662, 663, 772, 773).
9. For further details, see Norm Duval's "Bibliography: A Partial List of Some Possible Human Sources Used by the Revelators to Interface with Existing Human Evolutionary Knowledge and Previous Epochal Revelation," [www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/3847/Bibliography.pdf](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/3847/Bibliography.pdf).

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10. God's nature is infinite: Job 5:9; 9:10; 11:7; Psalm 147:5; Ecclesiastes 3:11; 8:17; Isaiah 40:28; Jeremiah 23:18; Romans 11:33.