

A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF *THE UB*
by Dale E. Essary

PART II: The Presumption of Revelation

“The papers, of which this is one, constitute the most recent presentation of truth to the mortals of Urantia. . . . 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.”

(92:4.9)

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.”

(Isaiah 40:8)

Like the myriads of other extra-biblical “revelations” that came before it, *The UB* claims to be of the “highest” authority available to mankind, and allegedly answers many of life’s most perplexing questions, such as: Is there life after death? Who, or what, is God? Why do evil and suffering exist? What is heaven like? Who am I, and why am I here? What does the future hold for me and my family?¹ *The UB* provides answers to all these thought-provoking questions and more. Unfortunately, none of the “answers” provided are compatible with the teachings of the Bible. *The UB* denies all major orthodox doctrines of Scripture, including the Trinity, the Fall of Man, the absolute deity of Jesus, His virgin birth, His sacrificial death for our sins, His physical resurrection from the dead, and others. With such a radical departure from the biblical message, it should come as no surprise that, after all is said and done, *The UB* boldly declares: “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” (195:10.1; emphasis added)!

But by what authority does *The UB* present these alternative truth claims? For one thing, we have the testimony of the “celestial” authors themselves. A “Divine Counselor” ends Paper 1 by boasting the following credentials:

“I am commissioned to sponsor those papers portraying the nature and attributes of God because I represent the highest source of information available for such a purpose on any inhabited world. I have served as a Divine Counselor in all seven of the superuniverses and have long resided at the Paradise center of all things. Many times have I enjoyed the supreme pleasure of a sojourn in the immediate personal presence of the Universal Father. I portray the reality and truth of the Father’s nature and attributes with unchallengeable authority; I know whereof I speak.” (1:7.9)

PART II

Of course, we are already aware of the abject lack of credulity this profile holds (see “Context, Context, Context” section of *Introduction*). But never mind the self-endorsements. Do we have any historical or other independent evidence from which we can deduce the authors’ authenticity? Regarding historic evidence, the basic premise behind the teachings of *The UB* purports that there have been five epochs or periods when planet Earth (Urantia) has been given divine revelation (cf. 92:4):

- 1) The first of these “epochal revelations” occurred about 500,000 years ago with the arrival of an invisible celestial being named Caligastia and his incarnated staff of assistants in Mesopotamia, whose function it was to initiate cultural advances so as to transform primitive mankind from wandering clans of hunters into groups of herders, in the hopes that human society would eventually advance from there into farming communities (cf. 66:3.1). About 300,000 years later, however, Caligastia (who later became known as the “Devil”) and most of his corporeal staff joined a celestial rebellion led by Lucifer (a different being of higher status) and was deposed (Papers 53, 54, 67). As a result of this rebellion, all human progress made up to that point (including advances in animal husbandry, industry, trade, art, religion, and science) had supposedly been lost in the ensuing chaos.
- 2) The second “epochal revelation” took shape when an immortal pair of extraterrestrials known as “Adam and Eve” materialized on earth about 38,000 years ago, whose purpose was to provide a genetic contribution for improving the stock among the still-primitive races of humankind by way of interbreeding their progeny with human volunteers. After only 100 years of this breeding experiment, however, Adam and Eve “defaulted” at the suggestion of Caligastia, who remained on planet Urantia after having been deposed. By “default,” it is meant that Adam and Eve personally engaged in sexual intercourse with the local natives in an effort to “speed up” the interbreeding process, which was strictly taboo. The grand experiment became woefully incomplete and hastily compromised, and Adam and Eve tasted the bitter fruit of mortality as a result of their indiscretions (Papers 73-76).
- 3) The third “epochal revelation” came in 1980 B.C. when yet another celestial creature named “Machiventa Melchizedek” materialized in Palestine. Machiventa is supposedly the very same Melchizedek we read about in Genesis (Genesis 14:18), a contemporary of Abraham who supposedly taught Abraham everything he knew about “the one true God” (Paper 93). But despite his influence with Abraham, the teachings of Machiventa became diluted by the surrounding pagan cultures and were “lost” to history.
- 4) The fourth “epochal revelation” happened when the celestial creature “Michael of Nebadon” was incarnated as Jesus of Nazareth, the biological son of Joseph² and Mary, born precisely at noon on August 21, 7 B.C.³
- 5) The fifth “epochal revelation” occurred in the mid-twentieth century with the coming of the Urantia Papers. *The UB* claims itself to be “the most recent presentation of truth to the mortals of Urantia” (92:4.9) and, regarding the nature and attributes of God, the “reality and truth of the Father’s nature and attributes with unchallengeable authority” (1:7.9).

As it turns out, none of these five “epochal revelations” views the Bible as a revelation from God. The only trustworthy source recognized by *The UB* is *The UB* itself. It seems that in each of the first four

A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF *THE UB*

“epochal revelations,” the information “revealed” was lost to mankind in one fashion or another. In the case of Jesus (i.e., the New Testament), *The UB* claims that the apostles distorted the message of Jesus, such that His “true” revelation was grossly distorted (Paper 194).

The most obvious problem with taking any of these “epochal revelations” seriously is their lack of affirmation. These figures (their biblical namesakes notwithstanding) lack any validity in the historical or archaeological record. True revelation does not come from cosmic beings whose historic influence cannot be corroborated. By contrast, the Bible affirms that God Himself takes the initiative in disclosing His sovereign nature, law, will, and grace to mankind. God says of His word: “It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11, NIV). And unlike these “epochal revelations” whose purpose was apparently not realized, God’s Word is preserved by His power: **“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished”** (Matthew 5:18, NIV; cf. Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 24:35; 1Peter 1:25).

How does *The UB* deal with the Bible’s claims to divine inspiration and preservation? It’s a simple matter of leveling the field in order to lower the bar of expectation. First, *The UB* proclaims that any “true” revelation inevitably becomes fallible and incomplete by virtue of the reactions given by its recipients. Those who receive revelation are generally resistant to change, and therefore end up corrupting the revelation to suit their preferences. Belief in a final, infallible revelation is reviled by *The UB*’s authors as cultic and short-sighted:

“Evolutionary religion makes no provision for change or revision . . . Evolved religion commands respect because its followers believe it is *The Truth*; ‘the faith once delivered to the saints’ [Jude 3] must, in theory, be both final and infallible. The cult resists development because real progress is certain to modify or destroy the cult itself; therefore must revision always be forced upon it.” (92:3.4; emphasis original)

“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.” (92:4.9)

But *The UB* blurs the distinction between developing, or *progressive*, revelation as it is presented in the Bible, and supposedly *contradictory* revelations implied by the *UB* authors. The Bible indeed makes provision for change, such as when God promises a new covenant with His people (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-13). This “new” covenant is not “contradictory” to the previous covenant, but a progressive improvement thereof. True revelation is a prerogative of God, not the predilection of men (2Peter 1:21) or of angels, for that matter (Galatians 1:8). Revelation in Scripture is by no means *exhaustive*, as John 21:25 tells us that not all the deeds of Jesus are recorded. But Scripture is nevertheless complete for its intended purpose, even down to its choice of words (Mark 12:26; Galatians 3:16).

The *UB* authors secondly refute the Bible’s claim to divine authorship by silencing its lofty claims. Though *The UB* views the Bible as a source of much truth (from which *The UB* gleans as is convenient), it is proclaimed that the Bible also contains many errors and false claims about God. Hear what Jesus of *The UB* tells the apostle Nathaniel concerning biblical inspiration:

PART II

“The Scriptures are faulty and altogether human in origin Many of these books were not written by the persons whose names they bear” (159:4.3,4)

Jesus of *The UB* continues his admonition to Nathaniel regarding “this erroneous idea of the absolute perfection of the Scripture record and the infallibility of its teachings” (159:4.6): “Many earnest seekers after the truth have been, and will continue to be, confused and disheartened by these doctrines of the perfection of the Scriptures” (*ibid.*).

In stark contrast to the Jesus of *The UB*, the Jesus of the Gospels never denied the authenticity of the Old Testament. To the contrary, the strongest evidence we have for the inerrancy of Scripture comes from the testimony of Jesus Himself. Jesus spoke of the Scriptures in the highest of terms, stating that the Scriptures “cannot be broken” (John 10:35), that the prophecies contained in them “must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44), that they contain “the commandment of God” (Matthew 15:3-9; Mark 7:8-9), and that they are “the word of God” (Mark 7:13; John 10:35). Jesus even credited God as the author of Genesis (Matthew 19:4-5).

Not surprisingly, all of the above passages are either grossly revised in, or altogether missing from, Part IV of *The UB*, which is the fifth epochal revelation’s altered rendition of the four Gospels.

Another step taken by The *UB* authors in refuting the Bible’s authority is to dismiss its divine preservation. Moses did not write the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament), according to *The UB*. The books of Genesis through Deuteronomy, traditionally credited to Moses, were allegedly compiled around 500 B.C., as was most of the Old Testament:

“The Old Testament account of creation dates from long after the time of Moses; he never taught the Hebrews such a distorted story.” (74:8.7).

“The Hebrews did little writing until about 900 B.C., and having no written language until such a late date, they had several different stories of creation in circulation, but after the Babylonian captivity they inclined more toward accepting a modified Mesopotamian version. . . . [A]lmost a thousand years after Moses’ sojourn on earth the tradition of creation in six days was written out and subsequently credited to him. . . . [T]he contemporary Hebrews of around 500 B.C. did not consider these writings to be divine revelations” (74:8.9,10,11)

“There is little on record of the great work of Moses because the Hebrews had no written language at the time of the exodus. The record of the times and doings of Moses was derived from the traditions extant more than one thousand years after the death of the great leader.” (96:5.2)

Contrary to this position, the Pentateuch claims Mosaic authorship throughout (Exodus 17:14; 24:4,7; 34:27; Leviticus 1:1; 4:1; 5:14; Numbers 1:1; 33:1-2; Deuteronomy 1:1; 4:44; 29:1; 31:9,11). In addition, Joshua, Moses’ immediate successor, attributed the book of Deuteronomy to Moses (Joshua 1:7), as does the rest of the Old Testament (Judges 3:4; 1Kings 2:3; 2Kings 14:6; Ezra 3:2; Nehemiah 1:7; Psalm 103:7; Daniel 9:11; Malachi 4:4). The New Testament often quotes Deuteronomy with attribution to Moses (Acts 3:22; Romans 10:19; 1Corinthians 9:9). Jesus also affirmed that the Law

A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF *THE UB*

came from Moses (Matthew 19:8), had quoted Deuteronomy 6:13 and 6:16 while resisting the Devil (Matthew 4:7,10), and attributed authorship of Deuteronomy to Moses (Mark 7:10; Luke 20:28). In other words, the celestials are making the Hebrews of the Babylonian captivity out to be redactors and Jesus a liar by stating that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch for lack of an alphabet.

But modern scholarship has rendered this once-popular concept invalid. The belief that the Hebrews had no written language in Moses' day is an artifact of the 19th-century Graf-Wellhausen theory, a commonly-held precept among liberal scholars when *The UB* was allegedly being "revealed" by "celestials." Since the 1930s, however, archaeological findings have yielded inscriptions in Hebrew and related Semitic languages dating before 1500 B.C.⁴ Ironically, *The UB* itself claims that Moses was an educated man whose mother was from "the royal family of Egypt" (96:3.1); he therefore would at least have been capable of jotting his thoughts down in Egyptian!

A discussion of the *UB* authors' derisive view on the Old Testament cannot be had without noting an astounding "clarification" provided by the author of Paper 95:

"The concept of judgment in the hereafter for the sins of one's life in the flesh on earth was carried over into Hebrew theology from Egypt. The word judgment appears only once in the entire Book of Hebrew Psalms, and that particular psalm was written by an Egyptian." (95:2.10)

The author does not elaborate as to which Psalm this is in reference to, except that later an inference is made that Psalm 1 was written by Amenemope (95:4.5). Any attempt to discover whether this or perhaps another Psalm is the exclusive repository of the word "judgment" will be fruitless if one consults Faw's *Paramony*, as it lists no biblical verse in reference to the above passage. Fortunately, we have *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* to aid us in such endeavors. Though it may be hard for some to accept, *Strong's Concordance* affords us the opportunity to expose yet another glaring mistake made by the *UB* authors. According to Strong of the mortal realm, there are no fewer than *twenty-two* Psalms in which the word "judgment" appears, all of thirty-two times! The verses are listed here for the reader's indulgence: Psalm 1:5; 7:6; 9:7,8,16; 25:9; 33:5; 35:23; 37:6,28,30; 72:2; 76:8,9; 89:14; 94:15; 97:2; 99:4 (twice); 101:1; 103:6; 106:3,30; 111:7; 119:66,84,121,149; 122:5; 143:2; 146:7; and 149:9.

Devotees of *The UB* are faced with a difficult choice when such a grievous error is exposed. Either the alleged celestial author of Paper 95 is indeed human, as exhibited by his or her proclivity to err, or (s)he is, in his/her/its divine glory, blatantly lying to us all. With these two choices in mind, one must seriously question the authority the *UB* authors claim for themselves regarding the authorship and veracity of the Old Testament.

The New Testament does not escape the scrutiny of the celestials, either. The apostle Paul, author of roughly two-thirds of the New Testament, had grossly misrepresented Jesus' teachings, so say the *UB* authors:

"Paul, in an effort to utilize the widespread adherence to the better types of the mystery religions, made certain adaptations of the teachings of Jesus so as to render them more acceptable to a larger number of prospective converts." (121:5.13)

PART II

“Paul’s theory of original sin, the doctrines of hereditary guilt and innate evil and redemption therefrom, was partially Mithraic in origin, having little in common with Hebrew theology . . . or Jesus’ teachings. Some phases of Paul’s teachings regarding original sin and the atonement were original with himself.” (121:6.5)

“In his last years Abner denounced Paul as the ‘clever corrupter of the life teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God.’” (166:5.5)⁵

But if the apostle Paul was so unreliable as the “celestials” claim, why did Luke, the author of Acts, speak so highly of him? The latter half of Acts portrays Paul faithfully proclaiming the Gospel (Acts 13 - 28), including his teaching that the church of God was purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). Luke also records that the apostles in Jerusalem approved of Paul’s ministry (Acts 11; 13; 15). In addition to Luke’s endorsement, Peter affirms Paul’s letters as inspired Scripture (2Peter 3:15-16).

This attack on Paul by the celestials also does not take into consideration God’s sovereignty. As has already been discussed, God is both able and willing to protect His word from distortion (Deuteronomy 29:29; Psalm 111:7-8; Proverbs 30:5-6). *The UB*, on the other hand, is openly admitting to the Universal Father’s inability to prevent such gross distortions of the “true” gospel message, which places the Universal Father’s alleged “omnipotence” (see “Attributes of the Universal Father” section of *Part III: What Does The UB Say about God?*) into serious question.

In its final, if not desperate, act to level the playing field of revelatory license, *The UB* goes so far as to claim that even it, too, contains factual errors that will eventually be in need of correction. The apparent intent of this blunt admission is to minimize the impact of the errors to be found in this fifth epochal “revelation,” such that the discoveries thereof are not a stumbling block to the would-be devotee. In doing so, *The UB* is attempting to relieve itself from providing any reliable evidence that would lend credulity to its claim of revelation, thus relying on self-endorsement and the esoteric responses of the reader to do the convincing.

Let us now turn our attention to the better-known disclaimer, for the purpose of studying its intricacies:

“We full well know that, while the historic facts and religious truths of this series of revelatory presentations will stand on the records of the ages to come, within a few short years many of our statements regarding the physical sciences will stand in need of revision in consequence of additional scientific developments and new discoveries. These new developments we even now foresee, but we are forbidden to include such humanly undiscovered facts in the revelatory records. Let it be made clear that revelations are not necessarily inspired. The cosmology of these revelations is *not inspired*.” (101:4.2; emphasis original)

Note first that the above statement divides revelatory material into three categories: historic facts; religious truths; and statements on cosmology and the physical sciences. *The UB* views its information in the first two categories as true and correct, but its scientific statements are admittedly uninspired or even false. While the disclaimer is made for its cosmology, it does not make similar disclaimers with regard to its statements on theology or history.

A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF *THE UB*

The science in *The UB* is indeed rife with information that is not consistent with current scientific knowledge. *The UB* states that the Sun exhibits a surface temperature of 6000 degrees Fahrenheit and a core temperature of 35,000,000° F (41:7.2). But in fact, the Sun's surface is about 10,000° F (or 6,000° C) and its internal temperature about 27,000,000° F. The number of chromosomes in the human genome is 48 according to *The UB*, not 46 as has been known since the discovery of a counting mistake in 1953. Martin Gardner's book *Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery* devotes two full chapters on the scientific errors contained in *The UB*.

Much of *The UB*'s vast science content has predictably been rendered outdated because of discoveries made since (and in some cases prior to) its publication in 1955. Some of the scientific data, however, is outright erroneous to begin with (such as the surface temperature of the sun and the number of chromosomes in a human cell). In yet another demonstration of its cosmic ignorance, *The UB* maintains that the moon, which always turns the same face toward planet Earth, does not rotate on its axis (57:6.2)! These alleged higher minds of the heavenly host attempt to excuse the "outdated" (i.e., erroneous) science by evoking a "prime directive" (101:4; see quote above) supposedly handed down by their celestial superiors, which admonishes them not to reveal any unearned science to us evolving mortals and to present their scientific treatises within the limits of our then-current vernacular. However, this excuse does not bode well because at the same time these intergalactic messengers are bedazzling us with their brilliance as pertains to things known, they also baffle us with a fantastic model of the universe that is beyond our wildest dreams and which is, by definition, unearned science.

But if this exposed bluff is not enough to embarrass the wings off these celestial hosts, stay tuned. It seems that *The UB*'s incongruities are not confined within the scientific realm only. Much of what is scientifically inaccurate in *The UB* is, by virtue of the nature of how the information is presented, also incongruent with historic rote. *The UB* claims that our part of the Milky Way galaxy was created 875 billion years ago (57:1.6). Big Bang cosmology tells us that all the material that makes up the universe was created no more than approximately 14 billion years ago. *The UB* informs us that our solar system was once comprised of 12 planets (57:5.7), of which now 11 remain. Astronomers know of only nine planets. According to *The UB*, a former planet orbiting between Mars and Jupiter became the asteroid belt because the planet came too close to Jupiter and fragmentized (57:6.5). Astronomers maintain the opposite point of view, which is that the asteroid belt is debris left over from the birth of the solar system that failed to coalesce into a full-sized planet because of the disturbing gravitational pull of Jupiter. *The UB*'s description of the solar system leads to the conclusion that the other two planets supposedly exist beyond the orbits of Neptune, Uranus, and Pluto. But to date, even with powerful ground-based and orbiting telescopes at our avail, no such "missing" planets have been discovered. (See the article "Dark Star" on the "Science" page of this website for a discussion of the recent discoveries of objects orbiting our Sun beyond Pluto's orbit.) The Sun is said by *The UB* to have formed 6 billion years ago (57:4.8), while the planets formed 4.5 billion years ago during a close encounter with another celestial body (57:5.4). Meanwhile, earthbound astronomers have pinpointed the simultaneous birth of the Sun and its primordial planets to 4.6 billion years ago. And while *The UB* claims that the first primitive life-forms appeared on planet Urantia about 550 million years ago (58:4), modern scientific evidence now tells us that life first appeared on Earth around 3.86 billion years ago.

These are but a handful of the myriad erroneous notions to be found in *The UB* that, while describing aspects of the physical sciences, are couched within a historical context and are therefore presented as "factual" data which are in fact inaccurate. The very disclaimer in which *The UB* excuses itself from

PART II

scientific blunder informs us that the authors maintain their journalistic integrity so far as their dissemination of historical and religious facts are concerned: “We full well know that . . . the historic facts and religious truths of this series of revelatory presentations will stand on the records of the ages to come . . .” (101:4.2). Out of the frying pan, into the fire!

ENDNOTES

1. Duane Faw and Mo Siegel, “The Twenty Most Asked Questions”, <http://www.urantiabook.org/archive/readers/doc170.htm>.
2. See 122:1.1.
3. See 122:8.1.
4. Archer, Gleason, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), pp. 173-189.
5. There is no Abner recorded in the New Testament, who is most likely one of several fictional characters invented by the *UB* authors in an effort to provide historical validity to those who “heard” and “believed” in the “true” gospel message as it is presented in Part IV of *The UB*.