

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

PART V: What Does *The UB* Say about Man and Sin?

“Any being who in any manner falls short of the divine and spiritual ideals of the eternal Father’s will is potentially evil, but such beings are in no sense sinful, much less iniquitous.”
(148:4.9)

“. . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
(Romans 3:23)

Introduction

The UB plays both ends of the playing field regarding man’s relationship with God. On one end, man is not “fallen” and hence is in no need of salvation in the biblical sense. On the other end, the Universal Father does not require atonement for man’s sins, but instead acknowledges a divine nature in man, which renders him automatically eligible for immortality and advancement into “heaven” after death. It is only those who fail to recognize their inner divine nature and continuously live a life of iniquity that lose their eligibility thereto.

The UB begins its campaign to rid mankind of its need for salvation (in the biblical sense) by redefining the meanings behind the words sin, evil, and iniquity:

“There are many ways of looking as sin, but from the universe philosophic viewpoint sin is the attitude of a personality who is knowingly resisting cosmic reality. . . . [S]in is a purposeful resistance to divine reality—a conscious choosing to oppose spiritual progress” (67:1.4)

And in Part IV of *The UB*, we learn from “Jesus” of the following “refined” definitions:

““Evil is the unconscious or unintended transgression of the divine law, the Father’s will. Evil is likewise the measure of the imperfectness of obedience to the Father’s will. Sin is the conscious, knowing, and deliberate transgression of the divine law, the Father’s will. Sin is the measure of unwillingness to be divinely led and spiritually directed. Iniquity is the willful, determined, and persistent transgression of the divine law, the Father’s will. Iniquity is the measure of the continued rejection of the Father’s loving plan of personality survival and the Sons’ merciful ministry of salvation. (148:4.3-5)

Note that the definitions for evil, sin, and iniquity are now assigned different levels of intent, according to Jesus of *The UB*. Evil is unintentional; sin is volitional, but not necessarily vocational; while iniquity is a vocational lifestyle choice. Indeed, *The UB* does not argue that man commits sins, but how God views and deals with sin. Whereas Jesus of the Bible said that “**whoever commits sin is a slave of**

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sin'" (John 8:34), the Jesus of *The UB* assures us that "To be imperfect or partial in natural endowment is not sinful" (148:4.6) and "Men are, indeed, by nature evil, but not necessarily sinful" (148:4.8). It is these subtle shades of meaning that allow "Jesus" to remove man from the burden of sin. Jesus of *The UB* goes on to say:

"Neither does this inherent presence of potential evil mean that man is in some mysterious way estranged from the Father in heaven so that, as an alien, foreigner, or stepchild, he must in some manner seek for legal adoption by the Father. All such notions are born, first, of your misunderstanding of the Father and, second, of your ignorance of the origin, nature, and destiny of man." (148:4.8)

In other words, evil is merely a characteristic of our natural state that God does not find objectionable. Nor does the commission of sinful acts necessarily get one in trouble with God, but only a commitment to a life of iniquity will warrant judgment. We are thus provided with a measuring stick of sorts, one that provides us with the comforting thought that we are doing just fine, so long as we distance ourselves from the likes of Adolph Hitler and Attila the Hun. Indeed, the *UB* authors implore us to rid ourselves of the sense of guilt associated with sin, as it is wholly unnecessary: "The sense or feeling of guilt is the consciousness of the violation of the mores; it is not necessarily sin" (89:10.3).

The Bible, on the other hand, uses the terms evil, sin, and iniquity interchangeably to describe both the actions and the attitudes of all mankind. *The UB* states: "Any being who in any manner falls short of the divine and spiritual ideals of the eternal Father's will is potentially evil, but such beings are in no sense sinful, much less iniquitous" (148:4.9). Conversely, the Bible says "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23; cf. Isaiah 59:2). The Bible also defines sin as a human predisposition, not merely as a specific act of disobedience (Romans 6:12; 7:17; cf. Psalm 53:3).

But in its attempt to lower the bar of expectation and ease the conscience of the would-be believer, *The UB* paints itself into a corner. In true self-contradictory fashion, a passage in Part IV equates our animal nature with our natural proclivity to commit evil, but nevertheless maintains that we have not inherited a sinful nature:

"The animal nature—the tendency toward evil-doing—may be hereditary, but sin is not transmitted from parent to child. Sin is the act of conscious and deliberate rebellion against the Father's will and the Sons' laws by an individual will creature." (188:4.5)

Note carefully from this last passage that *The UB*'s predilection toward splitting the difference between a hereditary "evil nature" and the actual commission of sin places the authors into a theological conundrum. We have inherited the capacity for evil, and yet when we actually do commit a sin, we are not to blame our inherent nature! The above passage attempts to foist a false dichotomy on the issue of evil vs. sin in that "sin is not transmitted from parent to child" while evil is inherent. And this is certainly true, insofar as *The UB* defines sin; the commission of a sinful act is obviously not passed down from parent to child, as we are all individually responsible for our own actions. It is our inherent evil *nature* (i.e., our *sinful* nature in Christian terminology) that endows us with the capacity to commit sinful *acts*, and that is precisely what is "transmitted from parent to child"! One cannot commit a deliberate sinful act unless one has the capacity to do so in the first place. If one did not inherit an evil

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nature, then one would be incapable of committing a sinful act. The two go intrinsically together, not one without the other.

Thou Sinner

One of the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity is original sin, or the belief that all mankind has inherited a sinful nature brought about by the fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3; Isaiah 43:27; Romans 5:12,19; 6:23; 1Corinthians 15:21,22). Yet *The UB* authors view this position as inherently unjust. To punish billions for the acts of one, so they would claim, is unwarranted: “Adam should not be regarded as the cause of a curse on the human race” (75:8.3). This same sentiment is carried over into Part IV of *The UB* and expressed in a passage that “explains” how the fact that Jesus of *The UB* was about to be crucified on the Day of Passover was merely a coincidence:

“Jesus is not about to die as a sacrifice for sin. He is not going to atone for the inborn moral guilt of the human race. *Mankind has no such racial guilt before God.*” (186:5.7; emphasis added)

In fact, the position held by *The UB* is that “Adam and Eve” were not the first humans whose fall into sin had repercussions on all of humanity, nor does man have a fallen nature that is passed from Adam and Eve. Instead, “Adam and Eve” are presented as extraterrestrials who tasted death as a result of their “default” by procreating with the natives. This “default” is not construed as a “sin,” but only as an “unfortunate and unwise” career choice (51:1.4). Therefore, to “blame” Adam and Eve as those responsible for passing a sinful nature onto the human race is looked upon by the celestials as a false accusation:

“Adam and Eve did default, but no mortal subsequently born on Urantia has suffered in his personal spiritual experience because of these blunders.” (67:7.7)

“Adam and Eve did fall from their high estate of material sonship down to the lowly status of mortal man. But that was not the fall of man. The human race has been uplifted despite the immediate consequences of the Adamic default. . . . There has been no ‘fall of man.’ The history of the human race is one of progressive evolution, and the Adamic bestowal left the world peoples greatly improved over their previous biologic condition.” (75:8.1,2)

The Bible affirms that human death is a consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve, having affected all of mankind (Genesis 2:17; 3:19; Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 5:12,19; 6:23; James 1:15). The great suffering and pain inflicted on one another throughout all of human history is irrefutable proof of the validity of the Bible’s position on the sinfulness of man.

In the same rationalistic vein, *The UB* must also re-define Jesus’ attitude towards these concepts such that his views are in tandem with those of the authors:

“The doctrine of the total depravity of man destroyed much of the potential of religion for effecting social repercussions of an uplifting nature and of inspirational value. Jesus sought to restore man’s dignity when he declared that all men are the children of God.” (99:5.5)

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“Jesus led men to feel at home in the world; he . . . taught them that the world was not fundamentally evil. . . . Jesus did not share Paul’s pessimistic view of humankind. The master looked upon men as the sons of God. . . . He saw most men as weak rather than wicked, more distraught than depraved. But no matter what their status, they were all God’s children and his brethren.” (196:2.9)

In stark contrast, the Bible portrays the natural world as a “very good” creation (Genesis 1:31), but the world of men who inhabit the earth as evil in that they are alienated against God (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Isaiah 64:6). Jesus’ view of the world was essentially parallel to that of the Old Testament, for He said, **“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”** (John 3:19).

So if Adam and Eve were not the first human beings and hence not the parents of all mankind as the Bible purports, who was? Instead of Adam and Eve, the first human beings according to *The UB* were “Andon and Fonta”, a mating pair of hominids who evolved from lower primates almost one million years ago:

“. . . after almost nine hundred generations of development, covering about twenty-one thousand years from the origin of the dawn mammals, the Primates *suddenly* gave birth to two remarkable creatures, the first true human beings. . . . From the year A.D. 1934 back to the birth of the first two human beings is just 993,419 years.” (62:4.6; 62:5.1)

“Andon and Fonta were . . . the actual parents of all mankind” (63:1.1)

But *The UB*’s view of Adam and Eve runs contrary to both biblical history and empirical evidence. The biblical account presents Adam and Eve as the first humans created directly by God on planet Earth (Genesis 2:7), not as extraterrestrial visitors from another planet. The name “Adam” literally means “man” in Hebrew; hence, it is *The UB* that is taking liberties by borrowing a name and applying it to an invented character, not the other way around. Jesus confirmed the Genesis account when He said that **“He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female”**” (Matthew 19:4), quoting Genesis 1 as authoritative about the origin of mankind. First Corinthians 15:45 also states that the first man was Adam (citing Genesis 2:7), thus agreeing with Jesus.

From a scientific point of view, the placement of Andon and Fonta at approximately one million years ago (and further elaborations provided in Paper 64 of *The UB*) would place them as belonging to the hominid species *Homo erectus*, which paleontologists have long recognized as a side-branch of the hominid family that went extinct independently of the arrival of modern humankind (*Homo sapiens*), and which played no part in modern human evolution.¹ Moreover, *The UB* portrays Andon and Fonta as capable of planning for the future (63:2) and their descendants as having developed “a well-developed language” (63:4.6). However, modern analyses of *H. erectus* specimens indicate that they were incapable of speech² and lacked the advanced cognitive abilities of modern humans.³ The combined anatomical and archeological data indicate that these were non-human hominids distinct from modern humans.

What’s more, subsequent discoveries of this species of bipedal primate present a migration history that is not at all in agreement with that of the *UB* account. The history of *Homo erectus* has been

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documented directly from the many sites that have yielded their fossil remains subsequent to Dubois's original discovery of *Homo erectus* on the island of Java in 1891. During the 1930s and 1940s, it became "common knowledge" that Asia was the birthplace of humanity by virtue of a naturalistic interpretation of these fossil finds. But it now appears that *Homo erectus* most likely originated in Africa, not from the Eurasian continent as asserted by *The UB* (Papers 62-64). Modern forensic evidence indicates that *Homo erectus* seems to have been restricted to the African tropics for several hundred thousand years before gradually migrating into Asia and probably into parts of Europe. According to current standard views, *Homo erectus* evolved in Africa and did not migrate out of Africa until about one million years ago. The oldest African *Homo erectus* finds are between 1.6 million years old⁴ and 1.8 million years old,⁵ placing their appearance a full 600,000 to 800,000 years before Andon and Fonta, the supposed "first two human beings" according to *The UB* (62:5.1).

The Ultimate Sacrifice

The UB is also quick to disassociate the Christian claim that Jesus died on the cross for our sins from the doctrine of human depravity. This campaign begins early in *The UB*'s treatise on the "evolution of religion" by associating the concept of original sin with primitive man's supposed rationalization of death:

"Death was the supreme shock to evolving man, the most perplexing combination of chance and mystery. Not the sanctity of life but the shock of death inspired fear and thus effectively fostered religion. . . . All human disease and natural death was at first believed to be due to spirit influence. . . . Later and more complex systems of theology still ascribe death to the action of the spirit world, all of which has led to such doctrines as original sin and the fall of man." (86:3.1,3)

One of the more outspoken papers on the subject of "evolved" (i.e., man-derived) religion is Paper 89, entitled "Sin, Sacrifice, and Atonement." In its attempt to "set the record straight," Paper 89 tells us that the doctrines of original sin and salvation are derived from primitive human thought, and that propitiation for sins evolved from religious practices involving ritualistic sacrifice:

"Primitive man regarded himself as being in debt to the spirits, as standing in need of redemption. As the savages looked at it, in justice the spirits might have visited much more bad luck upon them. As time passed, this concept developed into the doctrine of sin and salvation. The soul was looked upon as coming into the world under forfeit—original sin. The soul must be ransomed; a scapegoat must be provided. The head-hunter, in addition to practicing the cult of skull worship, was able to provide a substitute for his own life, a scapeman." (89:0.1)

The *UB* authors take this tact because, in their world view, human physical death is not the consequence of sin, but only the alternative to not attaining sufficient spiritual progress:

"Most human beings die because, having failed to achieve the [appropriate] spirit level . . . , the metamorphosis of death constitutes the only possible procedure whereby they may escape the fetters of time and the bonds of material creation, thereby being enabled to strike spiritual step with the progressive procession of eternity." (32:5.4)

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No doubt, then, *The UB* has its task set out to convince us that we are the unwitting victims of our own ancient superstitions!

And Paper 89 provides the pitch. The original concept of sin (the transgression of taboo) evolved out of the envisaging of good vs. evil spirits, and became the logical conclusion of primitive minds as to the cause of physical death (89:2). The origins of sacrifice took shape early in the evolution of religion with the emergence of two concepts: those being the gift sacrifice, or thanksgiving; and the debt sacrifice, or redemption (89:4). These ideas eventually merged into the doctrine of sacrifice for the atonement of “racial” sin. The idea of original sin implied racial guilt, which placed everyone in a position of great debt to the powers that be. This “primitive” concept grew into the ritual practice of animal sacrifice, which in turn led to cannibalism and finally human sacrifice: “Human sacrifice has been virtually universal; it persisted in the religious customs of the Chinese, Hindus, Egyptians, *Hebrews*, Mesopotamians, Greeks, Romans, and many other peoples . . .” (89:6.2; emphasis added).

Regarding the Hebrews’ alleged involvement with ritual human sacrifices, Faw’s *Paramony* lists Genesis 22 for this passage, which is the biblical account of God’s testing Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son Isaac. But the biblical account indicates that Abraham did not actually kill Isaac, as God’s angel prevented him from doing so at the last moment (Genesis 22:11,12). The purpose of this exercise was to test Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his only begotten son (by Sarah) to God as a test of his faith. This passage serves as a foreshadowing of what God was willing to do as a means for man’s needed redemption because of Adam’s original sin (cf. John 3:16; 1Corinthians 15:22,45). In fact, nowhere do the Hebrew Scriptures condone human sacrifice. To the contrary, human sacrifice was strictly and repeatedly forbidden by God, as reflected in the Mosaic Law. Several Old Testament passages (Leviticus 18:21; Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:10-12) define child sacrifice as a detestable profanity. Leviticus 20:2 prescribes the death penalty for any parent who does so.

So far as “evolved religion” is concerned, *The UB* is obviously echoing the sentiments of early twentieth century books such as James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1922) and E. Washburn Hopkins’ *Origin and Evolution of Religion* (1923), which provide an evolutionary twist to the history of religions. Frazer proposed that all religions evolved from magic through animism and polytheism to henotheism and finally to monotheism. Hopkins theorized that the religious progression included the worship of natural objects, animals, and even man himself. In fact, Martin Gardner’s *Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery* points out *The UB*’s heavy reliance on Hopkins’ book by comparing several snippets from both books that read with uncanny similarity.⁶

The problem with the “evolution of religion” thesis is that it is without foundation, but is merely a presupposition based on several unproved assumptions. It assumes that biological evolution is a fact, and that evolution also describes events at the sociological and religious levels. The evolutionary view of religion was itself late, only gaining popularity in the wake of the theory of biological evolution popularized by Charles Darwin. Even Theodore Gaster’s revision of Frazer’s book admits that the revised edition “eliminates, for example, Frazer’s lengthy discussion of the relation between magic and Religion, because the view which is there expressed that the two things stand in genealogical succession . . . has now been shown to be a mere product of late nineteenth-century evolutionism, without adequate basis.”⁷

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The Problem with Paul (Part I)

Just as *The UB* considers the Old Testament to be a derivative of uninspired primitive thought, so does it come full circle to Paul and his alleged contribution to the “evolution” of sin, sacrifice, and atonement:

“Paul started out to build a new Christian cult on ‘the blood of the everlasting covenant.’ [Hebrews 13:20] And while he may have unnecessarily encumbered Christianity with teachings about blood and sacrifice, he did once and for all make an end of the doctrines of redemption through human or animal sacrifices. His theological compromises indicate that even revelation must submit to the graduated control of evolution. According to Paul, Christ became the last and all-sufficient human sacrifice; the divine Judge is now fully and forever satisfied.” [1Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 7:27; 9:11-28; 10:10-18; 13:12] (89:9.3)

But the New Testament clearly shows that Paul was not the originator of the idea of Jesus dying for our sins. Paul makes statements in this regard that are formulaic in nature and therefore obviously derived from his apostolic predecessors at the Jerusalem church. As an example, Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth was written about A.D. 55, toward the end of his three-year stay in Ephesus (see 1Corinthians 16:5-9; Acts 20:31). Paul writes: “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures . . .” (1Corinthians 15:3). What follows is a recitation of the heart of the gospel, as if Paul is reciting an oral tradition already formulated within the early Christian church. He concludes his recitation with “Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed” (1Corinthians 15:11). We can conclude from this final statement that Paul was indeed repeating the same message (Jesus’ death on the cross as the propitiation for their sins) he had heard recited by the other apostles, and that the body of believers had received and believed the message as truth, regardless of whether Paul or the other apostles had preached the message. We therefore see a common unity in belief among the leadership (the apostles) and the laypersons of the early church, and not a personal agenda foisted upon the embryonic congregation by an “outsider” as *The UB* suggests.

We see similar corroboration in the book of Acts. It has been established by evidence outside Scripture (and acknowledged by *The UB*; 121:8.8) that the Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke, a Gentile convert and companion of the apostle Paul. It was during Paul’s return to Jerusalem from his third missionary journey into Macedonia and Greece that Luke records Paul’s exhortation to the elders at Ephesus: “Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Luke presents here a statement uttered by Paul and accepted by the church elders at Ephesus. This statement was made before Paul had written his letter to the Ephesians, which he likely wrote during his imprisonment in Rome following his third and last missionary journey, and in which we see reference to the blood atonement (Ephesians 1:7; 2:13).

Connecting the Dots

Orthodox Christianity connects the atoning death of Jesus with human depravity. If God were not unchangeably just, and mankind not incurably depraved, the death of Christ for our sins would not have been necessary. However, contrary to the *UB* belief system, mankind *is* depraved and, hence, the suffering and death of Christ *was* necessary.

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When all is said and done, *The UB*'s rejection of total depravity is without foundation. Even *The UB* acknowledges that human beings are sinful, if only potentially. Despite its soft or "relaxed" position on evil, sin, and iniquity, *The UB* nevertheless also warns that some humans do not advance to "Paradise" based on the degree of evil committed in one's lifetime. It is therefore not a matter of *if* a person is depraved according to *The UB*, but *how much* depravity one chooses to embrace. But a truly just and righteous God cannot simply close his eyes to sin regardless of degree. Unless someone capable of paying the debt of sin owed to God does so, then God is obligated to express His wrath, not His mercy. Lacking the Crucifixion as the means by which the debt has been paid, the *UB* system has no way to explain how God can be merciful when He is also just.

ENDNOTES

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