Think of the time you first opened The Urantia Book. Think also of how you began to realize that the teachings of the book are what they purport to be: the Fifth Epochal Revelation of truth to our world, Urantia. Long isolated from the universe through no fault of our own, we learn that mortals on our sphere are just as “lovingly cherished and just as faithfully watched over (p. 1259:2)” as on any other world. God loves us each of us personally, sharing our lives by indwelling our minds, while fully respecting our free will choices. We are destined for a life of loving service, eternal service, as ascending sons of God!

What has this gift of revelation meant to you? Most readers say The Urantia Book changed their lives. As we give thanks to God for the truth, beauty, and goodness of this revelation, think how the Contact Commissioners and Forum members must have felt on October 12, 1955, when the first printed, hardbound copies of The Urantia Book were delivered to 533 Diversey Parkway, Chicago, Illinois. For almost 50 years, since the first contacts began no later than 1906, these early pioneers had labored to make that day possible.

For the first time, these devoted men and women could read their own copies of the book in their own homes, having read until that day only type-written copies at the Sadler home and offices on Diversey Parkway. Parents could tell their children, along with other loved ones, friends, and neighbors, where they had been going on Sunday afternoons and Wednesday evenings. Of course, some of them had attended the open social gatherings of the Forum, and some had joined the Forum, which is how it grew from 1923-1956 to include over 500 people, many of whom had moved away from Chicago by the time of the 1955 publication of the book.

October 12, 1955, was a Wednesday evening, so the members of The Seventy, an intensive study group Forum members started in 1939, received their first books at their regularly scheduled meeting. Everyone wanted to get a book that day! The “momentous transaction took place—the publication of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.” Appointments were interrupted, overseas telephone calls were made: the great day had finally arrived!!!

It has been described by those present as a “thrilling” and “awesome” moment. One said, “I still remember men excitedly leaving the building with boxes of books carried on their heads.” One woman recalls mixed feelings including “sadness.” She said, “I felt an era was ending and none of us knew what we were facing.”

Until the time of its publication, The Urantia Book had been under the direct guidance of the Revelatory Commission.* Think how the revelation came into the world: through a slow and gradual process, the revelation evolved. Service was always required from the human partners who followed the guidance of the revelators to bring the Urantia Papers into the world to be published in book form. The documentary evidence of the history of the Fifth Epochal Revelation details the following highlights of the first fifty years.

**Preliminary Contacts: 1900-1924**

From the first decade of the 1900s until 1924, medical doctors William and Lena Sadler, and their family members Anna and Wilfred Kellogg along with other colleagues, studied the phenomena associated with the human subject through whom the Urantia papers were eventually transmitted.*

During this time, Dr. William Sadler writes, “We were introduced to many new and, to us, somewhat strange concepts of the universe of universes and as concerned man his life on earth.” These “new ideas of cosmology and philosophy” included a new concept of a far-flung cosmos, millions of other inhabited worlds, and introduction to scores of different and varied echelons of celestial personalities.” “Numerous theologic concepts were presented to us, including terms such as the first Source and Center, Havona, superuniverses, the Supreme Being, and Thought Adjusters.” *

“The midwayers,” an order of personalities midway between humans and angels (p. 864-86), “were very real to us,” he wrote. “We frequently talked with them during our varied ‘contacts.’ We fully understood that the secondary midwayers supervised the contacts.” He continued, “We gained the impression that there special reasons for Jesus’ bestowal on Urantia…” and “listened to occasional references to Jesus’ life and teachings….While we did not hear the term ‘Corps of The Finality,’ we did pick up a hazy idea that Paradise might be the destination of surviving mortals.” *
He concluded, “Our superhuman friends thus spent upward of two decades in extending our
cosmic horizons, enlarging our theologic concepts, and expanding our overall philosophy. We never
realized how much our religious thinking had been expanded until the Papers began to arrive. As the
Revelation progressed we came to more fully appreciate how we had been prepared for the vast alteration
of our religious beliefs by these preliminary contacts extending over a period of twenty years of pre-
education.”*

The Development of The Urantia Book—1924-1942

The period of preliminary contact, described by Dr. William Sadler as “our apprenticeship training
for subsequent service” and “thoroughgoing testing of the contact personality, rehearsing the technique of
communication, selecting the Contact Commissioners,” ended in 1924.* On February 11, 1924,
Machiventa Melchizedek announced to the contact group, who had been joined in 1923 by E. L.
Christensen (Christy), that the revelators had approved a plan to initiate the Urantia Papers for eventual
publication as a book.***

The first five Contact Commissioners were designated at that time. Christy had moved into the
Sadler’s third floor home, socially accepted as an adopted daughter of Drs. William and Lena Sadler,
although at age 23 she was too old to be legally adopted. The doctors’ son, William S. Sadler, Jr., became a
Contact Commissioner when he returned from home from U.S. military service. He lived with his family
on the second floor of 533 Diversey Parkway, upon which was located the large room on the front of the
building facing north that was used by the Forum for their meetings. Anna and Wilfred Kellogg lived in
the apartment above the garage, adjacent to the 533 building.

Only the Contact Commissioners had direct contact with the Revelatory Commission from that
time until those formal contacts ended on August 21, 1952. The identity of the human subject was
protected by physician/patient privacy during the preliminary contact period, although both the doctors and
The Urantia Book (p. 1209) state that the health of the subject was good. The Revelatory Commission
directed the Contact Commissioners that the identity of human subject, identified in The Urantia Book as a
male, remain anonymous, and they took an oath never to reveal his identity.*

At the invitation of the Sadlers, a group that came to be known as The Forum had begun meeting
at their home since January 1923 to discuss various topics.

In the course of delivering a series of talks, Dr. William Sadler, who by now had begun to specialize in
psychiatry, mentioned an exception to cases of delusion or fraud in psychic phenomena, which intrigued
the group.***

“It was while those informal discussions were going on from week to week that the challenge
came to us suggesting that if we would ask more serious questions, we might get information of value to all
mankind,” he reported. * The Contact Commissioners told the Forum about a challenge issued by the
revelators and Dr. Sadler invited them “to join us in the presentation of questions. We decided to start out
with questions pertaining to the origin of the cosmos, Deity, creation, and such other subjects as were far
beyond the present-day knowledge of all humankind.”

On the following Sunday, “several hundred questions were brought in. We sorted out these
questions, discarding duplicates, and in a general way, clarifying them,” he said. “Shortly thereafter, the
first Urantia Paper appeared in answer to
these questions. From first to last, when Papers appeared, the questions disappeared. This was the
procedure followed for many years of he reception of the Urantia Papers. No questions, no Papers.”*

The first Paper was read to the Forum on January 18, 1925. The Forum continued to ask
questions. Fifty-seven Papers were received by this method from 1925-1929. The Revelatory Commission
then suggested that since the group could now ask more intelligent questions, the superhuman agencies and
personalities responsible for transmitting the 57 Papers would expand the Papers in accordance with new
questions. The first three parts of The Urantia Book, 119 Papers, were completed in 1934 (p. 648) and
1935 (p. 1319). Throughout the process, the revelators would revise the Papers after a Contact
Commissioner read them to the Forum, which met on Sunday afternoons, from three to five o’clock.***

There was a delay of about one year in reception of the “Jesus Papers,” Part IV of The Urantia
Book, while the midwayers waited for an answer to their petition for permission from universe courts to
publish this new narration of Jesus’ life. The Uversa court ruling not only assured them they “were not in
contempt of court,” but also granted them “a mandate to perform this service and admonishing any and all
persons connected therewith to refrain from interfering with, or in any way hindering, the execution of such an undertaking."

The Forum asked questions about the Jesus Papers from 1935 to 1942, following the same procedure they had for the preceding Papers. During that time, the Forum also completed their third and final reading, with minor revisions by the revelators, of the entire 196 Papers of The Urantia Book.

Dr. William Sadler asserts, “The Papers were published just as we received them. The Contact Commissioners had no editorial authority. Our job was limited to spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.”

**Organizational Development—1930s to 1950s**

As custodians of the manuscript of The Urantia Papers, the Contact Commissioners made inquiries to the copyright office of the United States in 1932 and proceeded with the necessary steps to copyright The Urantia Book internationally. Typesetting of The Urantia Book began in 1941 and continued, including extensive proofreading by Contact Commissioners and Forum volunteers, until the plates for The Urantia Book were made ready and funds for publication were raised. Dr. Lena Sadler was especially instrumental in fund-raising until she graduated to the mansion worlds in 1939.

The revelators continued to guide the Contact Commission and the Forum during this period, advising in 1946 that “we cannot expect widespread acceptance of the Urantia revelation until 90% of the followers attain unity of purpose, just as there will not be peace in the world until 90% of the nations want peace.” Unity was often a theme of the counsel given by the revelators to the Contact Commission and shared with the Forum.

At long last, the permission to publish The Urantia Book was given by the Revelatory Commission to the Contact Commission. The introduction to this mandate reads:

“We regard The Urantia Book as a feature of the progressive evolution of human society. It is not germane to the spectacular episode of epochal revolution, even though it may apparently be timed to appear in the wake of one such revolution in human society. The Urantia 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 Urantia 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 translation into other languages.”

Upon receipt of these instructions, the Contact Commissioners entered upon the task of publishing The Urantia Book and preparation of plans for its distribution.

The plates of The Urantia Book constituted the basis for the formation of Urantia Foundation, the organization approved by the revelators to succeed the Contact Commission, and was created on January 11, 1950. The first Board of Trustees, appointed for life, consisted of three men and two women, William M. Hales, William S. Sadler, Jr., Wilfred Kellogg, Emma L. Christensen, and Edith E. Cook.

The Contact Commissioners created the draft of the constitution for Urantia Brotherhood in 1937 and presented a revised draft to the Forum for the first time in 1939. The first draft of the Declaration of Trust Creating Urantia Foundation was formulated at the same time. In 1942 the Revelatory Commission advised the Contact Commission about protecting the name Urantia as registered trademark, which was accomplished and is maintained by Urantia Foundation.

After receiving further instructions from the Revelatory Commission about the organizations and publication of The Urantia Book, the last of which was received on August 21, 1952, Urantia Foundation proceeded to publish the book. On January 1, 1955, a full five years after the founding of Urantia Foundation, the authority for the functions of Urantia Foundation was assumed by the Trustees when they met to proceed with plans to publish The Urantia Book. They announce their “Declaration of Intention to Print The Urantia Book” on the following day, immediately following the formation of Urantia Brotherhood. On February 11, 1955, formal arrangements were made for the production of The Urantia Book.
Urantia Brotherhood was founded January 2, 1955, when 36 Forum members became the charter members and the first General Councilors of Urantia Brotherhood, to govern the Brotherhood for its first nine years, after which the Brotherhood would be ordered by the action of the Triennial Delegate Assembly composed of delegates of the various societies. Urantia Brotherhood had thus been functioning for nine months before The Urantia Book was published.

The Forum continued to meet as a study group until First Society was chartered on June 17, 1956.***

Advice that had been given by the revelators over the years was recorded in organizational memoranda and various histories produced by the organizations over the years. Original handwritten and typewritten copies of the Papers and other communications were destroyed as instructed by the revelators. As Dr. William Sadler said, “It was the design of our unseen friends to prevent the appearance of an ‘Urantia Aprocrypha’ subsequent to the publication of The Urantia Book.”*

Thus the ship of the revelation left its protected harbors to set sail upon the seas of high adventure. The Contact Commissioners and Forum members continued to read and study the book, charter societies, and set to the task of forming the first of “thousands of study groups” that the revelators instructed us to establish.

In 1957, a year after the death of Wilfred Kellogg, William S. Sadler, Jr, known as “Bill,” gave his report as the first president of Urantia Brotherhood: “This is a historic period of considerable moment in the evolution of religion on this planet. Never before has a group of human beings organized themselves by deliberate action into a social vehicle for the promotion of religious truth.” Bill passed on in 1963, followed by his father in 1969. Anna Kellogg passed on in 1960. Christy continued as the last Contact Commissioner until 1982 when she passed the torch to younger readers.***

Extraordinary Trust—2005

Today The Urantia Book has been translated into many languages and study groups have been established in many nations, among readers from all walks of life and all faiths. Our numbers are still small, but in a short fifty years, we have a worldwide family with numerous local, regional, and international conferences.

The early leaders were told by the revelators that:

“You are spiritual explorers, cosmic citizens engaged in the fascinating adventure of searching for God and dedicated to the supreme passion of doing His Divine Will.”

“Of all the emergency corps of mortal selectmen on Urantia, none is charged with a more solemn obligation than your group. You have been called to a great work of taking the first step in offering to mortal man a new light, a new revelation, of the love.”

And from the Melchizedek serving as Personal Regent to the Vicegerent Planetary Prince, Machivent:

“I admonish you to be alert to the importance of the extraordinary trust which has been placed in your hands.”***

This trust remains with us even today. “The religious challenge of this age is to those farseeing and forwards-looking men and women of spiritual insight who will dare to construct a new and appealing philosophy of living out of the enlarged and exquisitely integrated modern concepts of cosmic truth, universe beauty and divine goodness. Such a new and righteous vision of morality will attract all that is good in the mind of man and challenge that which is best in the human soul. Truth, beauty, and goodness are divine realities, and as man ascends the scale of spiritual living, these supreme qualities of the Eternal become increasingly co-ordinated and unified in God, who is love.” (p. 43:3)

References

[Editors Note: Barbara Newsom began studying The Urantia Book in a study group in Wichita, Kansas, in 1965. In 1975, she moved to Chicago to work for Urantia Brotherhood and Urantia Foundation. Now a training consultant, she lives in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, a Chicago suburb. A member of First Society and Greater Lake Michigan Urantia Association, she co-hosts the Western Suburbs Study Group.]