

THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF THE FOURTH EPOCHAL REVELATION

By Julian McGarry, Hobart, Australia

And men have always tended to venerate the leader, even at the expense of his teachings; to revere his personality, even though losing sight of the truths which he proclaimed. [Paper 92:5.5, page 1008.7]

The above statement by a Melchizedek is true for both religious and political leaders. The original teachings of the progenitors of the world's major faith traditions are often quite different from the religious doctrines and dogmas that developed within those traditions following the deaths of their leaders. In the case of Christianity, this truth has given rise to profound historical and spiritual consequences. The corruption of the original teachings of Jesus has delayed the inauguration of a global age of peace and unity. The Urantia papers contain critical information that has been given to us in order that we may correct the mistakes of the past and enable the fulfilment of the religion of Jesus for our planet. However, the Urantia community could inadvertently be repeating history. Are we venerating the book while losing sight of the truths which it proclaims?

In this article, I will endeavour to demonstrate:

1. The purpose of epochal revelation,
2. The emergency nature of the third epochal revelation,
3. The profound significance of the fourth epochal revelation,
4. The first century failure of the mission of the fourth epochal revelation,
5. The historical consequences of the failed mission of the fourth epochal revelation,
6. The re-emergence and prophetic significance of the fourth epochal revelation, and
7. What this all means for the Urantia movement of the 21st century.

I sincerely hope that the above dissertation will persuade the well-intentioned, devoted, and hard-working folk making up the world's various Urantia-Book based organisations to seriously re-consider the focus and direction of their endeavours on behalf of *The Urantia Book*.

1. The Purpose of Epochal Revelation

To begin with, revelation comes in two modes: autorevelation and epochal revelation.

Truth is always a revelation: autorevelation when it emerges as a result of the work of the indwelling Adjuster; epochal revelation when it is presented by the function of some other celestial agency, group, or personality. [Paper 101:4.3, page 1109.4]

Epochal revelations, as the name suggests, are periodic revelations of truth which may sometimes mark the end of one dispensation of human history and the beginning of another.

Revelation as an epochal phenomenon is periodic; as a personal human experience it is continuous. [Paper 101:2.12, page 1107.2]

They are designed to compensate for and correct the waywardness of evolutionary religion.

Revelation is evolutionary but always progressive. Down through the ages of a world's history, the revelations of religion are ever-expanding and successively more enlightening. It is the mission of revelation to sort and censor the successive religions of evolution.

A critical qualification of epochal revelation is that it must be progressive; however, it must not attempt to teach the world more than it can handle. It must be considerate of the prevailing cultural, social, and spiritual conditions of the age in which it is presented.

But if revelation is to exalt and upstep the religions of evolution, then must such divine visitations portray teachings which are not too far removed from the thought and reactions of the age in which they are presented. Thus must and does revelation always keep in touch with evolution. Always must the religion of revelation be limited by man's capacity of receptivity. [Paper 92:4.1, page 1007.1, see also Paper 92:3.5, page 1006.2]

The *Urantia Book* identifies five revelations of epochal significance:

There have been many events of religious revelation but only five of epochal significance. These were as follows:

1. The Dalamatian teachings....., 2. The Edenic teachings....., 3. Melchizedek of Salem....., 4. Jesus of Nazareth....., 5. The Urantia Papers..... [Paper 92:4.4, page 1007.4]

There seems to be a logical sequence to the revelations. Each one builds on the foundation of the teachings of the previous revelation. This is in keeping with the importance of revealing teachings that are not too advanced; that are not beyond the receptivity of the civilizations populating the planet at the time of the new revelation.

2. The emergency nature of the third epochal revelation

The third epochal revelation, the advent of Machiventa Melchizedek, is described as an “emergency.... revelation of truth on Urantia”. As is usually the case with Melchizedek Sons, Machiventa was sent on an emergency mission to revive humankind's dwindling spiritual flame following the default of Adam and Eve. This was preparatory to the impending bestowal visit of Michael of Nebadon, who would incarnate as the man Jesus of Nazareth in what would be the fourth epochal revelation.

Revealed truth was threatened with extinction during the millenniums which followed the miscarriage of the Adamic mission on Urantia. Though making progress intellectually, the human races were slowly losing ground spiritually. About 3000 B.C. the concept of God had grown very hazy in the minds of men. [Paper 93:1.1, page 1014.3]

And thus did Melchizedek prepare the way and set the monotheistic stage of world tendency for the bestowal of an actual Paradise Son of the one God, whom he so vividly portrayed as the Father of all, and whom he represented to Abraham as a God who would accept man on the simple terms of personal faith. And Michael, when he appeared on earth, confirmed all that Melchizedek had taught concerning the Paradise Father. [Paper 93:3.8, page 1017.2]

This fourth epochal revelation was to be very special! Painstaking preparations were needed to ensure the success of this extraordinary revelation of truth! This was to be the 7th and final bestowal mission of the Creator Son of our local universe, Michael of Nebadon.

3. The profound significance of the fourth epochal revelation

It is evident that Machiventa's emergency mission was highly successful, insofar as it engendered an age of unprecedented spiritual thinking and religious living, conditions that were most favourable for Michael's bestowal.

Jesus did not come to this world during an age of spiritual decadence; at the time of his birth Urantia was experiencing such a revival of spiritual thinking and religious living as it had not known in all its previous post-Adamic history nor has experienced in any era since. When Michael incarnated on Urantia, the world presented the most favorable condition for the Creator Son's bestowal that had ever previously prevailed or has since obtained. [Paper 121:1.1, page 1332.2]

For lots of reasons, this epochal revelation was to be different to any that had preceded it. From the outset, even before Michael had embarked on this extraordinary mission, his Paradise brother, Immanuel, had impressed upon him the unique and unprecedented nature of this, his seventh bestowal commission. [Paper 120:1.1, page 1325.3]

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To begin with, Michael's mission would effectively terminate the Lucifer rebellion in the system of Satania. [Paper 120:2.2, page 1327.2]

This was to be a dispensational revelation and would be climaxed by the pouring out of the Spirit of Truth upon the planet's inhabitants. [Paper 120:2.4, page 1328.1]

Michael was also to be a liberator and healer. [Paper 120:2.5, page 1328.2]

Moreover, this revelation was not just for the instruction and edification of Urantia but was also for the spiritual inspiration of every inhabitant of his entire universe. [Paper 120:2.7, page 1328.4]

Such was the importance of this mission, that it would require the Creator Son of this universe to execute it successfully. Right down to the finest detail, preparations were made for the incarnation of Michael as a helpless babe of the realm.

IT WILL hardly be possible fully to explain the many reasons which led to the selection of Palestine as the land for Michael's bestowal, and especially as to just why the family of Joseph and Mary should have been chosen as the immediate setting for the appearance of this Son of God on Urantia. [Paper 122:0.1-3, page 1344.1-3]

The records unambiguously declare that Jesus of Nazareth had successfully completed much of his mission following his baptism in the Jordan by John. Immediately after his baptism, he wandered in the Perean hills for forty days where he encountered his chief executive, Gabriel, who informed him, that technically his mission was finished. [Paper 136:3.4,5, page 1513.1,2]

But Jesus decided to go on living as a man among men rather than return to his rightful estate as Universal Sovereign of Nebadon, even though technically he had achieved everything that was required of him to successfully complete his seventh bestowal mission. He wanted to complete his Father's business regarding the kingdom – establishing the rule of God's spirit in the hearts and minds of mortals – and he wanted to experience to the full what it meant to be a human living on a rebellion-contaminated planet like Urantia. He wanted to prove that divine love could conquer all, even the ravages of sin and iniquity.

On the third day of this isolation Jesus promised himself he would go back to the world to finish his earth career, and that in a situation involving any two ways he would always choose the Father's will. And he lived out the remainder of his earth life always true to that resolve. Even to the bitter end he invariably subordinated his sovereign will to that of his heavenly Father. [Paper 136:4.6-9, page 1514.7-1515.1-3]

Notwithstanding that Jesus overwhelmingly maintained his integrity to the bitter end, devoted to the doing of his Father's will even as he gave out his final breath on the execution cross, *The Urantia Book* is very clear about one thing: In many respects, his first century mission to the world was a failure! This fact has had a profound impact on the course of human history over the past 2000 years. But it also has critical implications for modern day Christianity! Moreover, and this is the primary focus of this dissertation, it has disturbing ramifications for those of us who have been blessed with the detailed description of the Master's life expressed in Part IV of *The Urantia Book*. I am speaking broadly of what has come to be known as the Urantia movement or community.

4. The first century failure of the mission of the fourth epochal revelation

Michael came to Urantia to carry out his Father's business, to declare the good news or gospel of the kingdom of heaven, a spiritual kingdom, the likes of which the world had never beheld. He selected twelve men to be his apostles and ambassadors, and he trained them to teach a specific message, variously denoted by terms such as the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, the gospel of Jesus, the gospel of the kingdom, or the religion of Jesus. His instructions to the twelve were straightforward:

“Simply go forth proclaiming: This is the kingdom of heaven - God is your Father and you are his sons, and this good news, if you wholeheartedly believe it, is your eternal salvation.” [Paper 141:6.4, page 1592.6]

In answer to Thomas’s question, “Who is this God of the kingdom?” Jesus replied: “God is your Father, and religion — my gospel — is nothing more nor less than the believing recognition of the truth that you are his son. And I am here among you in the flesh to make clear both of these ideas in my life and teachings.” [Paper 141:4.2, page 1590.5]

The substance of Jesus’s message was:

- 1. The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*
- 2. By faith in the fatherhood of God you may enter the kingdom of heaven, thus becoming the sons of God.*
- 3. Love is the rule of living within the kingdom — supreme devotion to God while loving your neighbor as yourself.*
- 4. Obedience to the will of the Father, yielding the fruits of the spirit in one’s personal life, is the law of the kingdom.*
[Paper 142:1.2-5, page 1596.4-7]

However, Jesus wasn’t naïve; he was a realist! He was aware of the proclivity of humans to venerate the messenger rather than the message. This often took the form of imaginative myths and legends based on some spectacular incident that occurred in the life of such a divine messenger.

Most great religious epochs have been inaugurated by the life and teachings of some outstanding personality; leadership has originated a majority of the worth-while moral movements of history. And men have always tended to venerate the leader, even at the expense of his teachings; to revere his personality, even though losing sight of the truths which he proclaimed. [Paper 92:5.5, page 1008.7]

Jesus endeavored to make clear to his apostles the difference between his teachings and his life among them and the teachings which might subsequently spring up about him. Said Jesus: “My kingdom and the gospel related thereto shall be the burden of your message. Be not sidetracked into preaching about me and about my teachings. Proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and portray my revelation of the Father in heaven but do not be misled into the bypaths of creating legends and building up a cult having to do with beliefs and teachings about my beliefs and teachings.” But again they did not understand why he thus spoke, and no man dared to ask why he so taught them. [Paper 138:6.3, page 1543.1]

One purpose which Jesus had in mind, when he sought to segregate certain features of his earthly experience, was to prevent the building up of such a versatile and spectacular career as would cause subsequent generations to venerate the teacher in place of obeying the truth which he had lived and taught. Jesus did not want to build up such a human record of achievement as would attract attention from his teaching. Very early he recognized that his followers would be tempted to formulate a religion about him which might become a competitor of the gospel of the kingdom that he intended to proclaim to the world. Accordingly, he consistently sought to suppress everything during his eventful career which he thought might be made to serve this natural human tendency to exalt the teacher in place of proclaiming his teachings. [Paper 128:4.6, page 1413.2]

Jesus took every opportunity to exhort his apostolic representatives to proclaim the life-saving message of the gospel of the kingdom, right up until his arrest and execution and finally when bidding them farewell as he ascended into the heavens.

Remember that you are commissioned to preach this gospel of the kingdom — the supreme desire to do the Father’s will coupled with the supreme joy of the faith realization of sonship with God — and you must not allow anything to divert your devotion to this one duty. Let all mankind benefit from the overflow of your loving spiritual ministry, enlightening intellectual communion, and uplifting social service; but none of these humanitarian labors, nor all of them, should be permitted to take the place of proclaiming the gospel. [Paper 178:1.11, page 1931.2]

“As the Father sent me into this world, even so now send I you. You are all called to carry the good news to those who sit in darkness. This gospel of the kingdom belongs to all who believe it; it shall not be committed to the custody of mere priests. Soon will the Spirit of Truth come upon you, and he shall lead you into all truth. Go you, therefore, into all the world preaching this gospel, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the ages.” [Paper 191:6.3, page 2044.4]

Jesus now prepared to say his last farewell to the apostles before he took leave of Urantia. As he stood there before them, without being directed they knelt about him in a circle, and the Master said:

“I bade you tarry in Jerusalem until you were endowed with power from on high. I am now about to take leave of you; I am about to ascend to my Father, and soon, very soon, will we send into this world of my sojourn the Spirit of Truth; and when he has come, you shall begin the new proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom, first in Jerusalem and then to the uttermost parts of the world.” [Paper 193:5.1,2, page 2057.3,4]

Notwithstanding Jesus’s persistent attempts to maintain the focus and purity of the gospel message, the apostles, and later disciples succumbed to the natural tendency of mortals to exalt the teacher and to lose sight of and distort his message of salvation. This process began while the apostles were hiding in the upper chamber in Jerusalem, subsequent to Jesus’s death and resurrection.

On Thursday night the apostles had a wonderful meeting in this upper chamber and all pledged themselves to go forth in the public preaching of the new gospel of the risen Lord except Thomas, Simon Zelotes, and the Alpheus twins. Already had begun the first steps of changing the gospel of the kingdom — sonship with God and brotherhood with man — into the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus. Nathaniel opposed this shift in the burden of their public message, but he could not withstand Peter’s eloquence, neither could he overcome the enthusiasm of the disciples, especially the women believers.

And so, under the vigorous leadership of Peter and ere the Master ascended to the Father, his well-meaning representatives began that subtle process of gradually and certainly changing the religion of Jesus into a new and modified form of religion about Jesus. [Paper 192:4.6-8, page 2051.3-5] emphasis added

Following the outpouring of the Spirit of Truth at Pentecost, the apostles were imbued with renewed joy, confidence, and enthusiasm for the kingdom. However, their message had changed!

These men had been trained and instructed that the gospel which they should preach was the fatherhood of God and the sonship of man, but at just this moment of spiritual ecstasy and personal triumph, the best tidings, the greatest news, these men could think of was the fact of the risen Master. And so they went forth, endowed with power from on high, preaching glad tidings to the people — even salvation through Jesus — but they unintentionally stumbled into the error of substituting some of the facts associated with the gospel for the gospel message itself. Peter unwittingly led off in this mistake, and others followed after him on down to Paul, who created a new religion out of the new version of the good news.

The gospel of the kingdom is: the fact of the fatherhood of God, coupled with the resultant truth of the sonship-brotherhood of men. Christianity, as it developed from that day, is: the fact of God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, in association with the experience of believer-fellowship with the risen and glorified Christ.

These believers felt themselves suddenly translated into another world, a new existence of joy, power, and glory. The Master had told them the kingdom would come with power, and some of them thought they were beginning to discern what he meant.

And when all of this is taken into consideration, it is not difficult to understand how these men came to preach a new gospel about Jesus in the place of their former message of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. [Paper 194:0.3-7, page 2059.3-7]

Had the apostles been obedient to Jesus and preserved the original content of the good news of the spiritual kingdom, as Jesus himself had taught them, what would have been the historical repercussions? What effect on the

world did changing the message have at that time? The answer to these questions is nothing short of astounding! When ordaining the twelve apostles, Jesus foretold that the whole earth would be filled with his Father's praise and that all men would come to a saving knowledge of his Father, as a consequence of the words and actions of his disciples.

"Whosoever would become great in my Father's kingdom shall become a minister to all; and whosoever would be first among you, let him become the server of his brethren. But when you are once truly received as citizens in the heavenly kingdom, you are no longer servants but sons, sons of the living God. And so shall this kingdom progress in the world until it shall break down every barrier and bring all men to know my Father and believe in the saving truth which I have come to declare. Even now is the kingdom at hand, and some of you will not die until you have seen the reign of God come in great power.

"And this which your eyes now behold, this small beginning of twelve commonplace men, shall multiply and grow until eventually the whole earth shall be filled with the praise of my Father. And it will not be so much by the words you speak as by the lives you live that men will know you have been with me and have learned of the realities of the kingdom. And while I would lay no grievous burdens upon your minds, I am about to put upon your souls the solemn responsibility of representing me in the world when I shall presently leave you as I now represent my Father in this life which I am living in the flesh." And when he had finished speaking, he stood up. [Paper 140:1.6,7, page 1569.3,4] emphasis added

So long as the rulers of earthly governments seek to exercise the authority of religious dictators, you who believe this gospel can expect only trouble, persecution, and even death. But the very light which you bear to the world, and even the very manner in which you will suffer and die for this gospel of the kingdom, will, in themselves, eventually enlighten the whole world and result in the gradual divorcement of politics and religion. The persistent preaching of this gospel of the kingdom will some day bring to all nations a new and unbelievable liberation, intellectual freedom, and religious liberty. [Paper 178:1.9, page 1930.6] emphasis added

Jesus's early followers created a new religion *about* their Master which was designed to appeal to certain audiences but which inadvertently stumbled many others.

Jesus understood the minds of men. He knew what was in the heart of man, and had his teachings been left as he presented them, the only commentary being the inspired interpretation afforded by his earth life, all nations and all religions of the world would speedily have embraced the gospel of the kingdom. The well-meant efforts of Jesus' early followers to restate his teachings so as to make them the more acceptable to certain nations, races, and religions, only resulted in making such teachings the less acceptable to all other nations, races, and religions. [Paper 149:2.1, page 1670.2] emphasis added

Even nations dominated by Islam today would have been receptive to Jesus's original teachings in the first century had the Christian missionaries adhered to them.

Here and there throughout Arabia were families and clans that held on to the hazy idea of the one God. Such groups treasured the traditions of Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, and Zoroaster. There were numerous centers that might have responded to the Jesusionian gospel, but the Christian missionaries of the desert lands were an austere and unyielding group in contrast with the compromisers and innovators who functioned as missionaries in the Mediterranean countries. Had the followers of Jesus taken more seriously his injunction to "go into all the world and preach the gospel," and had they been more gracious in that preaching, less stringent in collateral social requirements of their own devising, then many lands would gladly have received the simple gospel of the carpenter's son, Arabia among them. [Paper 95:7.3, page 1051.1] emphasis added

Understandably, but tragically, the early Christians developed a cult based on the personality of Jesus, which only served to detract from his glorious teachings, that otherwise would have had universal appeal.

...The second great blunder of the Master's early followers, and one which all subsequent generations have persisted in perpetuating, was to organize the Christian teaching so completely about the person of Jesus. This overemphasis of

the personality of Jesus in the theology of Christianity has worked to obscure his teachings, and all of this has made it increasingly difficult for Jews, Mohammedans, Hindus, and other Eastern religionists to accept the teachings of Jesus. We would not belittle the place of the person of Jesus in a religion which might bear his name, but we would not permit such consideration to eclipse his inspired life or to supplant his saving message: the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. [Paper 149:2.4, page 1670.5]

Indeed, rather than bringing all peoples and nations into a state of peace and unity, the message promoted by these early Christians ultimately created catastrophic divisions that persist to the present day.

5. The historical consequences of the failed mission of the fourth epochal revelation.

As the original teachings of Jesus penetrated the Occident, they became Occidentalized, and as they became Occidentalized, they began to lose their potentially universal appeal to all races and kinds of men. Christianity, today, has become a religion well adapted to the social, economic, and political mores of the white races. It has long since ceased to be the religion of Jesus, although it still valiantly portrays a beautiful religion about Jesus to such individuals as sincerely seek to follow in the way of its teaching. It has glorified Jesus as the Christ, the Messianic anointed one from God, but has largely forgotten the Master's personal gospel: the Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of all men. [Paper 98:7.11, page 1084.10]

Jesus's programme for the tiny mustard seed of the fledgling spiritual kingdom to become a tree large enough to support the birds of heaven, had hit a snag. But all was not lost! Such is the power and potency of the kingdom message that it would endure for centuries to come, albeit in a dormant, concealed condition, waiting for that glorious day when it would once again emerge to transform the world.

Jesus' ideal concept largely failed, but upon the foundation of the Master's personal life and teachings, supplemented by the Greek and Persian concepts of eternal life and augmented by Philo's doctrine of the temporal contrasted with the spiritual, Paul went forth to build up one of the most progressive human societies which has ever existed on Urantia. [Paper 170:5.16, page 1865.6] emphasis added

In the first three centuries of our common era, the original kingdom concept taught by Jesus to his apostles had become identified with the Christian church itself, as the following quotes demonstrate:

The concept of Jesus is still alive in the advanced religions of the world. Paul's Christian church is the socialized and humanized shadow of what Jesus intended the kingdom of heaven to be — and what it most certainly will yet become. [Paper 170:5.17, page 1865.7] emphasis added

Christ was about to become the creed of the rapidly forming church. Jesus lives; he died for men; he gave the spirit; he is coming again. Jesus filled all their thoughts and determined all their new concept of God and everything else. They were too much enthused over the new doctrine that "God is the Father of the Lord Jesus" to be concerned with the old message that "God is the loving Father of all men," even of every single individual....They made the great mistake of using the living and illustrative commentary on the gospel of the kingdom for that gospel, but even that represented the greatest religion mankind had ever known. [Paper 194:4.6, page 2067.1] emphasis added

Wisely or unwisely, these early leaders of Christianity deliberately compromised the ideals of Jesus in an effort to save and further many of his ideas. And they were eminently successful. But mistake not! these compromised ideals of the Master are still latent in his gospel, and they will eventually assert their full power upon the world. [Paper 195:0.12, page 2070.8 emphasis added]

It is particularly noteworthy that Jesus was not against the institutionalisation of religion per se. He expected it to happen and could foresee the benefits that it would offer to believers. This fact should not be overlooked by the current organisations making up the Urantia movement. It is something that I will address later in this article.

The church, as a social outgrowth of the kingdom, would have been wholly natural and even desirable. The evil of the church was not its existence, but rather that it almost completely supplanted the Jesus concept of the kingdom. Paul's

institutionalized church became a virtual substitute for the kingdom of heaven which Jesus had proclaimed. [Paper 170:5.7, page 1864.7]

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

The Christian church, with all its institutional baggage, would become the protective cocoon in which the original teachings of Jesus would lay dormant until the day of its awakening.

Mistake not! there is in the teachings of Jesus an eternal nature which will not permit them forever to remain unfruitful in the hearts of thinking men. The kingdom as Jesus conceived it has to a large extent failed on earth; for the time being, an outward church has taken its place; but you should comprehend that this church is only the larval stage of the thwarted spiritual kingdom, which will carry it through this material age and over into a more spiritual dispensation where the Master's teachings may enjoy a fuller opportunity for development. Thus does the so-called Christian church become the cocoon in which the kingdom of Jesus' concept now slumbers. The kingdom of the divine brotherhood is still alive and will eventually and certainly come forth from this long submergence, just as surely as the butterfly eventually emerges as the beautiful unfolding of its less attractive creature of metamorphic development. [Paper 170:5.21, page 1866.4]

6. The re-emergence and prophetic significance of the fourth epochal revelation

So far in this essay, I believe I have established the validity of the following assertions:

- Michael of Nebadon, our brother, Master, and universal sovereign, incarnated on Urantia as Jesus of Nazareth, brought to this planet the 4th epochal revelation, variously known as “the religion of Jesus” or “the gospel of the kingdom”. He commissioned his twelve apostles to preach this message to the world.
- The gospel of the kingdom would have united all nations, peoples, and tongues of the world into a spiritual family had the apostles and disciples of Jesus fulfilled their commission.
- The apostles became so enamoured of their Master that they gradually changed his original gospel of the kingdom, the religion of Jesus, to a religion about Jesus.
- Over the following three centuries, the concept of the spiritual kingdom became associated with the institutional Christian church.
- The core teachings of Jesus's original gospel have remained embedded within the Christian church in a state of slumber until the time of their foretold re-emergence.
- Despite the apparent demise of the kingdom message, we can be totally confident that its original purpose will be fulfilled!

It now remains to be seen what part the 5th Epochal revelation, *The Urantia Papers*, will play in the revival and fulfillment of the unfinished business of the 4th Epochal revelation. When will the original gospel of the heavenly kingdom emerge as a beautiful butterfly from its larval slumber within the cocoon of the Christian church? How will this happen? What will signal its emergence and what is it destined to achieve? And what role, if any, should we as readers and students of the revelation perform in the outworking of this spiritual drama on the world stage?

The Urantia Book has some amazing answers to these questions, particularly in Papers 195 and 196.

When Jesus finally departed this planet following his morontia resurrection, he sent his Spirit of Truth to live in the hearts of believers to equip them for the critical work of completing the commission he gave to his apostles.

Jesus lived on earth and taught a gospel which redeemed man from the superstition that he was a child of the devil and elevated him to the dignity of a faith son of God. Jesus' message, as he preached it and lived it in his day, was an effective solvent for man's spiritual difficulties in that day of its statement. And now that he has personally left the world, he sends in his place his Spirit of Truth, who is designed to live in man and, for each new generation, to restate the Jesus message so that every new group of mortals to appear upon the face of the earth shall have a new and up-

to-date version of the gospel, just such personal enlightenment and group guidance as will prove to be an effective solvent for man's ever-new and varied spiritual difficulties. [Paper 194:2.1, page 2060.6] emphasis added

This clearly states that the Spirit of Truth will supply *our* troubled generation with a new, up-to-date version of Jesus' original gospel message, that will provide the guidance we need to solve our present-day problems.

But is it time for the glorious butterfly to emerge from its chrysalis? Does *The Urantia Book* give us any indication of when that might happen? Well let's begin with this dramatic statement:

All Urantia is waiting for the proclamation of the ennobling message of Michael, unencumbered by the accumulated doctrines and dogmas of nineteen centuries of contact with the religions of evolutionary origin. The hour is striking for presenting to Buddhism, to Christianity, to Hinduism, even to the peoples of all faiths, not the gospel about Jesus, but the living, spiritual reality of the gospel of Jesus. [Paper 94:12.7, page 1041.5] emphasis added

This quote is taken from Paper 94 which was transcribed more than 80 years ago! And yet it states categorically that the hour was striking *then* for presenting "to the peoples of all faiths...the living, spiritual reality of the gospel of Jesus". So what about now? Is Urantia still waiting for the proclamation of the ennobling message of Michael? And where would we find such a message, "unencumbered by the accumulated doctrines and dogmas of nineteen centuries of contact with the religions of evolutionary origin"? Certainly not in the Bible! The answer of course is within the pages of *The Urantia Book*. Part IV of the book, "The Life and Teachings of Jesus", is the most comprehensive, detailed, and reliable description of the Master's life and teachings that the world has ever seen. This is where the original, authentic gospel of Jesus is to be found. But who will proclaim this message? Who will present this incomparable message of good news to the peoples of all faiths?

Here is another quote that emphasizes that we are on the precipice of worldwide social, moral, and spiritual change:

But paganized and socialized Christianity stands in need of new contact with the uncompromised teachings of Jesus; it languishes for lack of a new vision of the Master's life on earth. A new and fuller revelation of the religion of Jesus is destined to conquer an empire of materialistic secularism and to overthrow a world sway of mechanistic naturalism. Urantia is now quivering on the very brink of one of its most amazing and enthralling epochs of social readjustment, moral quickening, and spiritual enlightenment. [Paper 195:9.2, page 2082.7] emphasis added

Once again, where can one find these uncompromised teachings of Jesus, this new vision of the Master's life on earth? In addition, how could such a vision be transmitted to languishing Christianity? We encounter here a prophetic statement of monumental proportions. This new revelation of the religion of Jesus is destined to conquer the dominant world ideology of secular materialism! But how could such a seemingly unlikely scenario eventuate? Whatever the answer to this question is, we must be close to realizing it's fulfilment. "Urantia is now quivering on the very brink...", and that was transcribed almost 80 years ago!

This extraordinary prediction is amplified by these pronouncements:

Religion is now confronted by the challenge of a new age of scientific minds and materialistic tendencies. In this gigantic struggle between the secular and the spiritual, the religion of Jesus will eventually triumph. [Paper 195:4.5, page 2075.3] emphasis added

And, sooner or later, these concealed truths of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men will emerge to effectually transform the civilization of all mankind. [Paper 194:2.8, page 2061.6] emphasis added

Let me state emphatically before citing additional evidence, that these colossal earth-wide movements are destined to occur as a result of the emergence of the religion of Jesus, also known as the gospel of Jesus or the gospel of the kingdom. Why must this point be emphasized? Because the Urantia movement tends to conflate "the religion of Jesus" with the fifth epochal revelation and sees the dissemination of the latter as fulfilling these predictions. But this is manifestly not the case! Since its initial publication in 1955, *The Urantia Book* is still virtually unknown and unheard of by the world's masses. It is hardly conceivable that it could "conquer an empire of materialistic

secularism” or “overthrow a world sway of mechanistic naturalism”. Which isn’t to say that at some point in the future it won’t enjoy widespread popular acclaim! But now is not the time. The authors of the Papers make that clear, as I will explain later.

The Urantia Book will never be embraced by the bulk of the world’s population as long as their minds are held captive by the ideological propaganda of secular materialism. A spiritualization process must take place first.

Do not overlook the value of your spiritual heritage, the river of truth running down through the centuries, even to the barren times of a materialistic and secular age. In all your worthy efforts to rid yourselves of the superstitious creeds of past ages, make sure that you hold fast the eternal truth. But be patient! when the present superstition revolt is over, the truths of Jesus’ gospel will persist gloriously to illuminate a new and better way. [Paper 195:9.1, page 2082.6]

We do indeed live in the “barren times of a materialistic and secular age”. But we are also told that these times, which stretch back to the 17th century Age of Reason and the 18th century Age of Enlightenment, represent our worthy efforts to rid ourselves of “the superstitious creeds of past ages”, the damaging excesses of institutionalised Christianity. We are then told to “be patient”, to not succumb to despair, to cleave to our “spiritual heritage, the river of truth running down through the centuries”. And then there’s the good news: this necessary and “present superstition revolt” will come to an end but “the truths of Jesus’ gospel will persist gloriously to illuminate a new and better way”. The fifth epochal revelation must be preceded by the spiritually transformative power of the fourth epochal revelation, the religion of Jesus!

The religion of Jesus is the most dynamic influence ever to activate the human race. Jesus shattered tradition, destroyed dogma, and called mankind to the achievement of its highest ideals in time and eternity — to be perfect, even as the Father in heaven is perfect. [Paper 99:5.3, page 1091.2] emphasis added

The religion of Jesus is the most powerful unifying influence the world has ever known. [Paper 194:3.17, page 2065.5]

No matter what the apparent conflict between materialism and the teachings of Jesus may be, you can rest assured that, in the ages to come, the teachings of the Master will fully triumph. [Paper 195:6.2, page 2076.7]

I have asked a series of rhetorical questions concerning the manner in which the kingdom message is to be revived in modern times. Who will deliver this message? Who will proclaim this message to the world? How will this message transform the civilization of all mankind? What is the source and mechanism of the incomparable unifying power of the gospel of Jesus? Let’s now find answers to these highly pertinent, challenging, and critical questions.

7. Proclaiming, preaching, and teaching the fourth epochal revelation

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

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

Christianity has indeed done a great service for this world, but what is now most needed is Jesus. The world needs to see Jesus living again on earth in the experience of spirit-born mortals who effectively reveal the Master to all men. It is futile to talk about a revival of primitive Christianity; you must go forward from where you find yourselves. Modern

culture must become spiritually baptized with a new revelation of Jesus' life and illuminated with a new understanding of his gospel of eternal salvation. And when Jesus becomes thus lifted up, he will draw all men to himself. Jesus' disciples should be more than conquerors, even overflowing sources of inspiration and enhanced living to all men. Religion is only an exalted humanism until it is made divine by the discovery of the reality of the presence of God in personal experience. [Paper 195:10.1, page 2084.1] emphasis added

This is indeed 'plain speak'! These words are addressed to us, not to the apostles and disciples of the first century. But, as in the first century, they can be easily overlooked by those who claim to be Jesus's followers today. What is now most needed in the world is *Jesus!*...not a book! How is that possible? Not through the second coming of Jesus but by spirit-born mortals living the Master's gospel message in a way that reveals him to all men. These men and women will live lives that exemplify the new revelation and understanding of Jesus's gospel of salvation. Their lives will serve as an inspiration to others such that Jesus will be "lifted up", and will draw all peoples to himself, just as moths are attracted to the light of a lamp.

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. What this means for the Urantia movement

Does the foregoing discussion have any implications for the Urantia movement in this 21st century? I believe it does, profoundly so. Organisations such as Urantia Association International (UAI) and the Urantia Book Fellowship claim to have a mandate to disseminate the teachings of the Urantia revelation. Such a claim is based on events which directly followed the completion of the transcription of the papers. Of course, the dissemination of the book's teachings is indeed a noble and praiseworthy mission. But in the light of the abundant and unequivocal exhortations regarding the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom contained within the Jesus Papers, is such an objective appropriate for the current status of the world?

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

THE TIMING OF THE URANTIA BOOK
(Generally designated as “The Publication Mandate”)

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

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

Modern secularism has been fostered by two world-wide influences. The father of secularism was the narrow-minded and godless attitude of nineteenth- and twentieth-century so-called science — atheistic science. The mother of modern secularism was the totalitarian medieval Christian church. Secularism had its inception as a rising protest against the almost complete domination of Western civilization by the institutionalized Christian church. [Paper 195:8.2, page 2081.2] emphasis added

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

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

Until then, the Book has been published only for “those who are ready for it”, for the training of teachers and leaders, and to attract benefactors.

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

If the fourth epochal revelation achieved its purpose in the first century, then why are 76 papers of the Book devoted to the life and teachings of Jesus? (This is 39% of the total number of papers) It is precisely because the divine business of the 4th epochal revelation was not completed that these papers were included, giving us such extraordinary details about Jesus’s life and teachings. We have been given such priceless information so that we can revive these teachings and bring about a worldwide spiritual renaissance.

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

The church was an inevitable and useful social result of Jesus’ life and teachings. [Paper 170:5.10, page 1864.10] emphasis added

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

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

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

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

Dr Meredith Sprunger, who died in April 2012, had a remarkable career as a college president, professor, and executive administrator, a licensed psychologist and therapist, and an ordained minister. He was a devoted student of the Book, and served in numerous capacities within the Urantia movement, including President of Urantia Brotherhood. Although Dr Sprunger did not advocate the establishment of a “Urantia religion”, he believed there was “a great need for new religious institutions to serve the growing edge of spiritual development in this world – authentic religious institutions that will appeal to the highest spiritual aspirations of humankind”. He believed the Urantia Papers would “provide the inspiration for that coming spiritual renaissance”. He further asserted “that such religious institutions are a necessary step in fulfilling the mission of the Urantia Movement”.

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

As the Brotherhood developed, a view surfaced in Urantia Brotherhood that was very different from that of Dr Sadler and Dr Sprunger. A developing majority of the members of the early Brotherhood shared both a strong fear of what they derisively termed “Churchification” and a biased attitude against institutionalized religion. There was even a

marked uneasiness in the original group toward the use of an opening prayer for meetings....The Brotherhood now defined itself, not as a religious organization, but as “an educational-social organization with a religious purpose”.

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

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

Regardless of the drawbacks and handicaps, every new revelation of truth has given rise to a new cult, and even the restatement of the religion of Jesus must develop a new and appropriate symbolism. Modern man must find some adequate symbolism for his new and expanding ideas, ideals, and loyalties. This enhanced symbol must arise out of religious living, spiritual experience. And this higher symbolism of a higher civilization must be predicated on the concept of the Fatherhood of God and be pregnant with the mighty ideal of the brotherhood of man. [Paper 87:7.3,6, pages 965.7 & 966.1] emphasis added

The old cults were too egocentric; the new must be the outgrowth of applied love. The new cult must, like the old, foster sentiment, satisfy emotion, and promote loyalty; but it must do more: It must facilitate spiritual progress, enhance cosmic meanings, augment moral values, encourage social development, and stimulate a high type of personal religious living. The new cult must provide supreme goals of living which are both temporal and eternal — social and spiritual. [Paper 87:7.7, page 966.2] emphasis added

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

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

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

For similar reasons, Jesus emphasized many times the importance of not attempting to teach advanced spiritual concepts to those who had only been born of the flesh:

He said in part: “When you enter the kingdom, you are reborn. You cannot teach the deep things of the spirit to those who have been born only of the flesh; first see that men are born of the spirit before you seek to instruct them in the advanced ways of the spirit.” [Paper 141:6.4, page 1592.6]

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

The world desperately needs the religion of Jesus. The Urantia community has been blessed with the most comprehensive and accurate account of Jesus’s life and teachings that the planet has ever seen. Unfortunately, the

major Urantia organisations seem unwilling to publicly declare their allegiance to “the teachings of Jesus, religion at its best.” [Paper 160:5.10, page 1782.1]. Moreover, they are totally focused on promoting the entire book rather than the saving message of the gospel of Jesus. This is history repeating itself. The world is not ready for *The Urantia Book* but is ripe for receiving the gospel of Jesus.

The world needs more firsthand religion. Even Christianity — the best of the religions of the twentieth century — is not only a religion about Jesus, but it is so largely one which men experience secondhand. They take their religion wholly as handed down by their accepted religious teachers. What an awakening the world would experience if it could only see Jesus as he really lived on earth and know, firsthand, his life-giving teachings! [Paper 195:9.8, page 2083.4]
emphasis added

The Urantia Book makes this extraordinary prediction:

Sooner or later another and greater John the Baptist is due to arise proclaiming “the kingdom of God is at hand” — meaning a return to the high spiritual concept of Jesus, who proclaimed that the kingdom is the will of his heavenly Father dominant and transcendent in the heart of the believer — and doing all this without in any way referring either to the visible church on earth or to the anticipated second coming of Christ. There must come a revival of the actual teachings of Jesus, such a restatement as will undo the work of his early followers who went about to create a sociophilosophical system of belief regarding the fact of Michael’s sojourn on earth. [Paper 170:5.19, page 1866.2]

Who is this modern-day John the Baptist who will proclaim to the world “the kingdom of God is at hand” and bring about “a revival of the actual teachings of Jesus”? The momentous opportunity to respond to the call is before us. The Urantia community has a golden opportunity to be in the forefront of the global movement to complete the unfinished business of the fourth epochal revelation, the gospel of Jesus! The final Papers of the book are addressed to us, living in these times of global upheaval. Let us pay close attention to what they have to say:

The modern age will refuse to accept a religion which is inconsistent with facts and out of harmony with its highest conceptions of truth, beauty, and goodness. The hour is striking for a rediscovery of the true and original foundations of present-day distorted and compromised Christianity — the real life and teachings of Jesus. [Paper 195:9.5, page 2083.1]

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

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

If not us, then who?