URANTIA ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

JOURNAL

November 2024

Essays by students of *The Urantia Book*

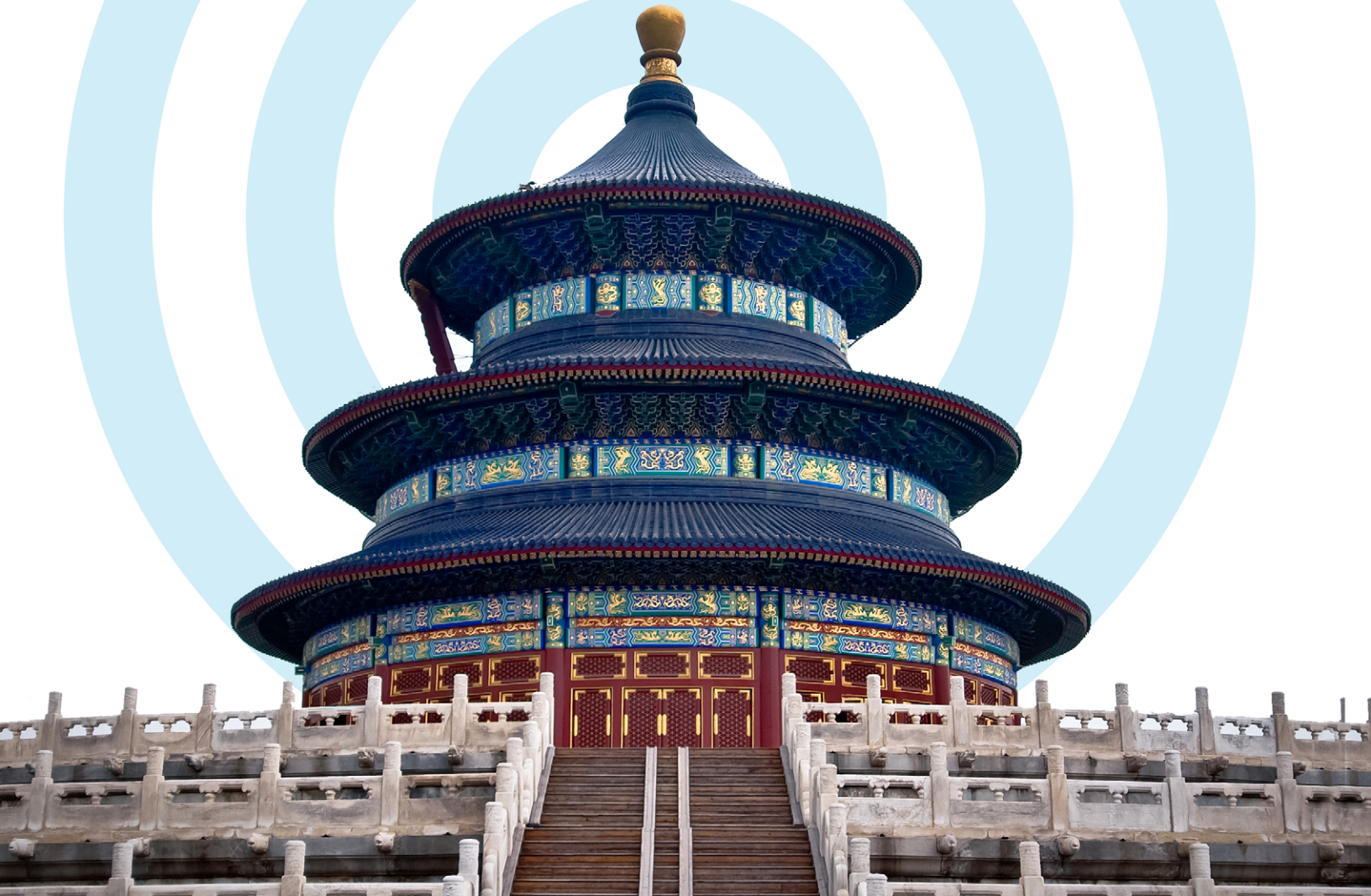
Chris Wood
Seraphic Guidance and Soul Growth

Mark Blackham
Verily, verily I say to you

Readers Critique Artificial Intelligence

The Urantia Book for a Chinese-reading world

an Interview with Richard Zhu



About the Journal

The Journal is produced twice yearly and contains essays, articles and study aids by readers and for readers of *The Urantia Book*. To read current and past issues see our website.

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The Journal editorial team welcomes all submissions for consideration for current or future issues. Personal spiritual experiences, fresh insights, and new perspectives are always of interest, as well as thematic studies and articles that compare, evaluate, or integrate academic research (scientific, social, religious, or otherwise) with the teachings of *The Urantia Book*. Send correspondence or article submissions for the Journal to the above Chicago address or email the Chief Editor, Richard Jernigan at richardjernigan@urantia-association.org.

See our website for submissions policy and formatting requirements.

Reader Comments (New!)

Beginning with the November 2024 Issue, the Journal editorial team will begin publishing reader comments. Comments must be under 250 words and may be edited for grammar and length. We look forward to hearing from you. Send your comments to:

richardjernigan@urantia-association.org

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From the Editor

Richard Jernigan

Translating a document as immense as *The Urantia Book* is a humbling notion. Transferring this English text into the word symbols of Chinese must be downright overwhelming. Richard Zhu discovered this text around 2009 and within five years, translating it into simplified Chinese became a mission that will probably be lifelong. Richard joined us on a Zoom call recently to tell his story of leading this translation effort. Georges Michelson-Dupont, who heads translations for Urantia Foundation, has often said it takes thirty years to do a truly strong translation of *The Urantia Book* into another language. Richard admits that



after ten years of work he believes his team is only halfway done with getting this translation to the level of perfection it deserves. But Richard is in it for the long haul, and we're grateful. 1.6 billion people read simplified Chinese and will now have access to this revelation in a familiar text. You'll see in the interview a few samples Richard sent us of how his team translated few terms, as well as a comparison of "simplified" and "traditional" Chinese. The latter, read by the 30 million people of Taiwan and other countries, is also underway.

Getting inside the mind of the individual revelator's thought process is part of the "art" of doing a translation. This notion appears in Chris Wood's article on "Soul Growth" in which he offers playful exegesis on a Solitary Messenger's effort to expand our understanding of that thing we call *life*. In pretty much every study group I've been in there's laughter at some of the wry phrasing the revelators throw our way, and Chris has an uncanny ear for these things. His presentation of this document at the Baltimore reader conference last March was downright entertaining, and hopefully his wit comes through in his article.

In two other articles we talk about a new, pervasive voice within our movement—a virtual one. Artificial intelligence intersects with many readers' study of *The Urantia Book*, and we're interested in its use and abuse. In the article "Artificial Intelligence and *The Urantia Book*" we obtained multiple reader critiques of Chat GPT's response to "What does *The Urantia Book* say about democracy?" Becoming a critical consumer of this tool is vital, and I appreciate the students who offered their opinions on how Chat GPT responded. Particularly intriguing is Gabriel Rymberg's thoughts since he has been using the technology on his project, AskJesus Chatbot. And Neal Waldrop has some wisdom about the very notion of "does *The Urantia Book* say anything?"

Michael Zehr follows this article with some insights gleaned from his years of working with AI, and ways we can profitably employ these tools in our study of the text.

A new item in this issue comes from Mark Blackham, previous Chief Editor of the Journal. His Urantia-themed crossword puzzle is fun and challenging (think NY Times Wednesday or Thursday crossword level of difficulty) and we hope to make this a regular feature. Mark also gives us a survey of the phrase "Verily, verily" and its 19 occurences in *The Urantia Book*, all from quotes by Jesus. We usually do not publish a series of quotes, but this is a particularly intriguing set that yields a comprehensive sampling of Jesus' teachings and interactions.

One last thing, you'll see another new feature, "Reader Comments." We love to hear from readers and to publish thoughts, both complimentary and critical, on the articles appearing in the Journal.

Enjoy this edition, and we look forward to hearing from you. ⌋

Reader Comments

Re: Thomas Aquinas and the origin of *The Urantia Book*
May 2024

I enjoyed David Kantor's article on Aquinas and the roots of the revelation. There was so much going on in that period, and Maimonides and Al Ghazzali were just two others from the religious traditions who were really helping to bring a candle to confusion, providing Guides for the Perplexed. The mystic traditions of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism were also bringing an appreciation of the importance of personal spiritual experience.

One of David's sources, Rick Tarnas, was my teacher and dissertation advisor. His book Passion of the Western Mind has almost as many underlines as my UB. One of my favorite classes to teach at the University of Nevada–Las Vegas has been The History of Philosophy with its twists and turns of personal revelation and confusion.

It would be good for our community to have a deeper appreciation of the historical development of the ideas and ideals that allowed for the revelation to proceed.

I have spent considerable time studying Personalism and its background. Like Edwin Hubble and the appreciation of the cosmos and its architecture, the revelation probably could not have left the harbor without the understanding and appreciation of personality that the Personalists provided.

Perhaps we could have a symposium on the History of Personal Revelation Leading to The Fifth Epochal Revelation.

Gard Jameson
USA

Re: "Government, Politics, and *The Urantia Book*" edition
September 2024

I opened the Urantia Association Journal today and found it refreshing and a welcome read.

The production values are excellent, including excellent graphics and a heavy bond paper for my hard copy. I think back of early periodicals, including the eleven editions of the Agondonter I edited in 1973–5. They were photocopied and filled with editing and kerning gimmicks. My how things have changed!

What struck me the most in the September 2024 Special Issue was the absence of two themes that have filled the vast majority of previous newsletters from Chicago and numerous regions. Those themes were "how to spread the teachings" and "how to be more religious, or spiritual." Your issue, admirably, avoids these topics and addresses critical social and political issues. More significantly, the articles are not only well written, but well researched and annotated with relevant sources and supporting comments. I did not see the "go send I you" or "live the teachings" messages. We have had sixty years of those platitudes, my own essays included.

I also liked the discretionary use of quotes from *The Urantia Book*. Too often in the past quotes have been used to avoid original thinking by the author. You are wrong, author, the Ubook does not say it better. We can read it on our own. I want to read what you have to say! Your writers have intriguing positions, and use the Ubook to support their ideas. Your author's quotes are supportive and flow freely in the content.

I am going to go back and read the issue in greater depth, which is rare for me. Your issue is a landmark event and will stay on my coffee table for regular reading and commentary. I congratulate you and your authors in jobs well done putting together an excellent issue.

Jim McNelly
USA

We're interested in your thoughts and feedback on Journal articles. Send your comments to:

richardjernigan@urantia-association.org

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Verily, verily I say unto you

Mark Blackham, Canada

Urantia > 玉苒厦

Jesus of Nazareth 拿撒勒的耶稣







Thought Adjuster > 思想调整者





Orvonton > 奥温顿

Paradise > 天堂

An Interview with Richard Zhu

Richard Jernigan, USA

Richard Zhu is the Head Translator for the simplified Chinese translation of The Urantia Book, *and we recently interviewed him for the Journal to learn about this ambitious undertaking. The effort has been in progress for nearly a decade, and an online version was made available earlier this year to allow public review of the translation—and to begin spreading these teachings to a Chinese-reading audience.*

RICHARD JERNIGAN: So first of all, tell us about your upbringing and your religious background. Were you raised in a religious household?

RICHARD ZHU: Actually, my parents have no religious background. They're just ordinary people. I think they have no beliefs in Christianity or Buddhism or any other religions, but they have a high level of education, and they regard education as a very important way to expand personal awareness and growth. I think that's why they gave me very strong support when I planned to study abroad. And without their support, I probably would not have found *The Urantia Book* and translated it into Chinese.

RJ: And we'll certainly get to that in a little bit. So, when and how did you discover *The Urantia Book*?

RZ: It's quite an interesting story. I mean, it's like something was planned for me. I didn't know it initially, but I think something happened in 2008. There was a financial crisis globally, and after that I just felt a strong pressure from the outside environment. Those pressures affected my life a lot. I started to think about the meaning of life, and to explore and seek truth. And during this process I felt I was guided. I think later I realized that this was my Thought Adjuster reminding me. So I began to conduct some in-depth exploration online, thinking about many life issues and searching a lot of content. What's incredible is that my exploration covered a range of topics like cosmology and religion, and other areas like science and philosophy.

But in my explorations were some signposts on the road to discover a treasure. I think *The Urantia Book* is a treasure. So every step was just leading me to the place where the treasure was hidden, and I found *The Urantia Book* as a last step. After reading it, I just firmly believed that this really is a book of truth that can answer all of my confusions about life. So I have a strong desire to share the content of this book with other Chinese people. I read many online materials, including different religion books and religious materials. Interestingly, they were just like steppingstones to build my foundation for *The Urantia Book* translation. And I think *The Urantia Book* is the final steppingstone appearing in front of me. It was a step-by-step exploration.

RJ: What were some of the specific things that you read? What philosophies or religions did you investigate?

RZ: I investigated Buddhism, Christianity and others, but these two are the main religions I explored. I also explored some other spiritual books such as A Course in Miracles and Conversations with God. Also, I had some background with Chinese traditional religions: Confucianism, Taoism, and also from India, some Hinduism, I read a little bit of that. As I mentioned, I had no religious background, but during my education I was very interested in Buddhism and Taoism. So from high school through university I just kept reading Buddhism books and some philosophy.

RJ: And when did you find *The Urantia Book*?

Richard Zhu during his interview via Zoom.
Background image: Adobe Stock

RZ: I think it was around 2009.

RJ: So what was it about *The Urantia Book* that really resonated with you? What indicated to you that this was a revealed text?

RZ: When I read the book, I felt it explained the truth in a very accurate and extensive way. I couldn't find some discrepancy or even any discrepancy within it. So from that point, I just realized that no human beings could produce this book.

RJ: So how have the teachings of *The Urantia Book* changed your life?

RZ: I think this book changed my life dramatically. Just like when I just read through this book, I found the teachings profound—just very profound truth. The teachings of this book inspired me quite a lot and inspired me to share this revelation with more of my fellow brothers and sisters. So I contacted the Foundation to ask if I could help with the Chinese translation work. And when I was commissioned to do the translation work, the teachings of the book supported me through many challenges in my life both when dealing with translation work and with daily life.

RJ: I think it's really interesting that you found this text and you went straight toward wanting to translate it. Were there any other Urantia Book-related projects before that?

RZ: Before I worked on the Chinese translation, I joined



Richard Zhu presents at Urantia Foundation, April, 2016. (from left): Judy Van Cleave, Georges Michelson-Dupont, Neal Waldrop, Richard Zhu, Vicki Yang, and Tori Lee.

a local association, Urantia Association of UK and Ireland, and attended many study groups and summer meetings. I felt the brotherhood between everyone, and helped organize meetings and gave presentations. But due to the busy translation work later, I gradually had less time to get involved with local study groups and summer meetings. But I have been very grateful for their support during all these years. The study groups gave me information and details about this book in more depth. And that gave me more foundation to do the translation work.

RJ: Can you talk about the study groups you've been involved with?

RZ: There is one study group in Reading near London. There are many people there, but the main organizers are Chris and Tina Mosely. They've hosted that study group for many years. I studied with them every weekend, and they had a very good atmosphere there. They treated us very kindly and provided tea and biscuits before the study group, then we would have a good chat and share all the teachings together. It was a very beautiful experience when I studied with them.

RJ: So you approached Urantia Foundation about translating the book. Did you lead this effort and how did they receive your offer?

RZ: It took around two years for me to go through this process with the Foundation. Initially I contacted George DuPont to ask whether they need some support for Chinese translation work. They said yes, that they were looking for someone to help with the translation and I was contacting them on time. They had a draft translation, but when they asked people to review that translation it seemed that the quality wasn't good enough to be published. They needed some people to correct those translation errors and mistakes, and then to improve the quality of the translation. I discussed with George the problems and the things I needed to do to help to improve the quality of that translation, and because I have a simplified Chinese background, they asked me to lead the effort to make this translation better.

RJ: The translation they already had, was it simplified or traditional Chinese?

RZ: Simplified, yeah.

RJ: I know that George has quite rigorous standards for translation teams. What were some of the standards that were required?

RZ: Yeah, they have very high standards. Before I did the work, they needed to review my background, check my English level, my education background, and if I had experience with translation from English to Chinese. Then they considered my ability to do this work.

RJ: In April 2016, you spoke at Urantia Foundation and described that there are many ways of speaking Chinese, but all Chinese readers read the same text. Can you talk a little bit about this? And what does that mean for the Chinese translation?

RZ: Yes. There are many dialects in China, and that means that there are many local oral languages in different areas, but only two written Chinese languages. One is simplified, the other is traditional. Simplified written Chinese is widely used in mainland China, and the traditional written Chinese is more used in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other areas. That means that there will be two versions of Chinese translation to satisfy the Chinese readers from different areas.

RJ: Did you organize a team, or did the Foundation already have a team for you to use?

RZ: Well, it was a long-term task. Initially my role was doing the translation by myself, because at that time the Foundation couldn't find other people to help me. This book is so in-depth and so profound, no other Chinese readers or other high-level translators could help me with this. So I initially just did this myself to produce a high quality, simplified Chinese version to help more Chinese people understand this revelation. But bit by bit the Foundation asked me to find more people to get involved, mainly just to initially help me with the simplified Chinese translation, but later to also find people from a traditional Chinese background to get a proper Chinese traditional version. So there were two sides to this. One side was just for me to focus on the simplified Chinese version, but later, bit by bit, they asked me to find other good team members to join and support me in both traditional and simplified translations.

RJ: Tell us about the team you had for the project.

RZ: I found a very good spiritual teacher from Taiwan, Vicki Yang, who had spent more than 30 years translating spiritual books from English to Chinese. She has a very

good reputation in China—in mainland and Taiwan. I invited her to support me in the translation work, and she accepted. She also brought in her students to help me with the translation work. She mainly helped me with the traditional Chinese because her background is with traditional Chinese. She helped me with traditional translation for several years, and now she's still helping me to edit that traditional Chinese version because traditional Chinese isn't my native language. I needed her support to do the corrections and edits, then I could closely match the traditional Chinese words with simplified Chinese.

RJ: Who else was on the team other than Vicki? You mentioned her students.

RZ: Angie, Liz, and Jane were background support. Mainly, they read through the text and provided some suggestions. And there were many more. They were just like a reader group—a reader group of more than 20 people. Some came from a simplified Chinese background, others from a traditional Chinese background. They provided some feedback, and I added to it based on their comments.

RJ: But though the first version was simplified Chinese. It sounds like you were working on both at the same time. Is that correct?

RZ: Initially I was working on simplified Chinese. I was almost finished, but I found those people and then I got them involved. Only recently I asked them to support the traditional Chinese, so the traditional Chinese came a bit later, and couldn't be published at the same time with the simplified Chinese version. We still need some edits and more time to do corrections.

RJ: So I never really asked you what simplified Chinese is versus traditional Chinese. Can you give us a little understanding of what the two are?

RZ: Yes. My background is simplified Chinese. Simplified Chinese is mainly used in mainland China. The word simplify means some of the Chinese characters have been modified to be easier to read and understand. Before the 1950s, the Chinese characters were more complex and difficult to read and to teach. So from the 1950s till now, the Chinese government and the Chinese education institutions wanted to get more people to be literate. They made the Chinese characters more simplified and easier for students to read and to learn. So from the 1950's till now, the simplified Chinese has been widely used in mainland China. But Hong Kong and Taiwan and some other areas use traditional Chinese. I think they prefer to use that version because they want to keep some tradition from China, from Chinese culture. That's the reason why we need two versions for the Chinese translation. For the simplified Chinese, the readership probably will be around 1.4 billion people, but for traditional Chinese, the readership will be at most 30 or 40 million people. For the simplified Chinese translation, one in six people on earth can read it. So that's the main target. Simplified Chinese is quite important for most Chinese people.

RJ: Does the traditional Chinese allow more depth? Because *The Urantia Book* is so complex, does it allow for more of the nuance of the book?

RZ: Actually, it doesn't. From what I understand, the traditional Chinese and the simplified Chinese, they represent the same meanings, but only the structure of the characters are different. Simplified Chinese is just easier to read. Traditional Chinese is a bit difficult to read because the characters are so dense. Simplified Chinese is less dense. When you read a paragraph from the simplified Chinese version, it's easier to read. But for the Traditional Chinese version, it might take a bit more time reading the characters through one paragraph.

RJ: So just what were some of the challenges of doing a translation like this with the text already so complex?

RZ: The main challenge is the Chinese written language is based on characters, not letters. The Chinese characters are more abstract, and we can't just use letters to represent everything. So, for this translation, it's more difficult because some concepts in the book are not in an English dictionary. The revelators created some English terms by themselves. So that's more challenging because I have to consider their ideas and use a similar creative process. So "absonite," that is a concept that combines "absolute" and "finite." That's the kind of thinking I have to follow. The revelators had to use that kind of thinking. And other concepts such as "morontia" had to be created as a Chinese concept, very brand new. So that was challenging for me, just to spend so much time thinking about how to create some Chinese concepts to reflect English concepts.

Sometimes people, especially beginning readers, when they read through the book, they're just so confused. For

instance, there are so many concepts to represent the Thought Adjuster. Sometimes a new reader won't pick up that the other terms just refer to the same concept. So that's why during the translation process, I had to go back every time to double check whether they represent the same concept. And I referred to some previous religious documents. In Buddhism or religious texts, "justice" can be used to refer to different concepts. So that's quite extensive. I mean, this concept "justice" can be found in many religions, but using different terms.

RJ: What new insights did you get by going so deeply into this book and translating it into Chinese?

RZ: I think for me, I found that understanding of the concepts very clearly and accurately is very crucial to deeply understand the whole book. And especially from my translation work, I had to differentiate many tiny differences between synonyms. So once these challenges were conquered, I grasped the meanings of synonyms and the paragraphs.

RJ: I was just reading this morning about Trinity and Triunity, and Triodity. What do you do with something like that?

RZ: It's quite difficult for me. I mean, those concepts didn't appear before in Chinese. So I have to find the meaning and just to use proper Chinese concepts and characters to reflect those concepts. Very small, tiny differences, probably each concept or probably just one or two characters different, but similar to English, totally different. Even for the location names or names of celestial beings, these are quite new, so I have to create a new concept to represent those names and locations.

RJ: Like Nebadon. Orvonton.

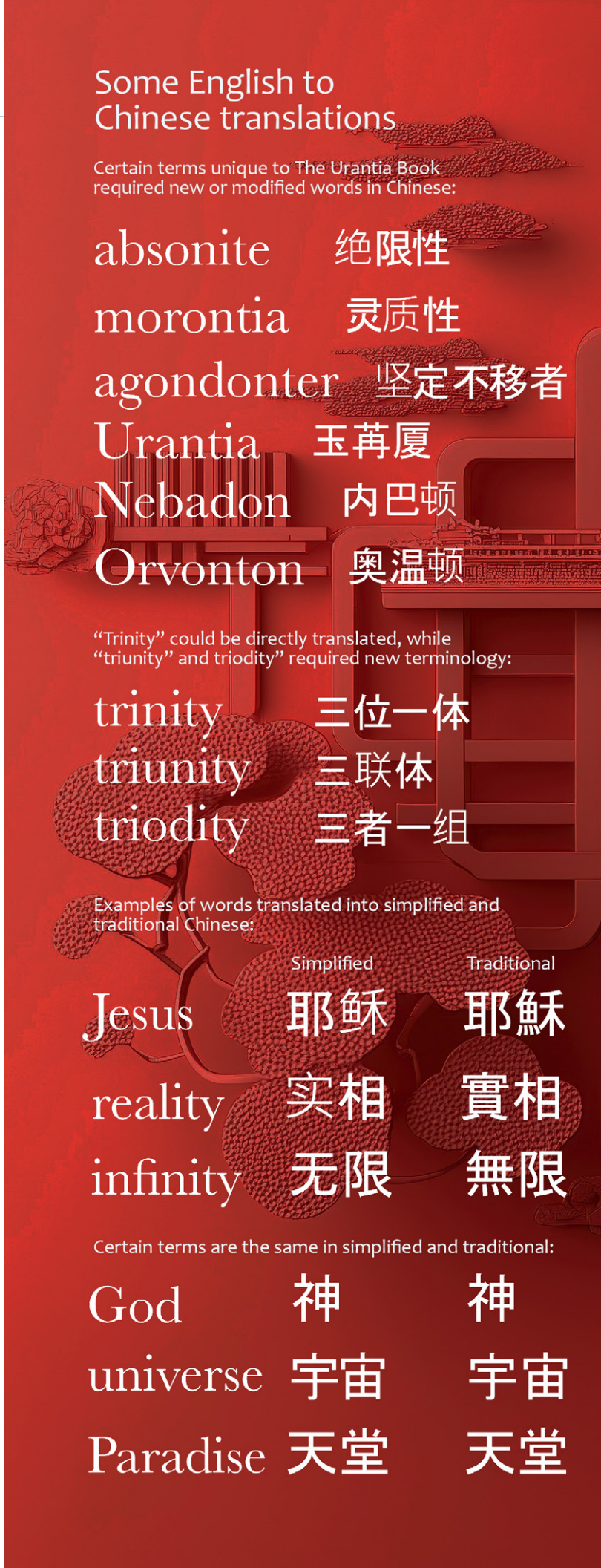
RZ: Yeah, so those are quite new.

RJ: But then there's a word like Paradise.

RZ: That's common in English, but it's common in Chinese.

RJ: So you've got the simplified Chinese published, is it coming out in hardback?

RZ: Currently, this version is just published online for readers to comment and to give some feedback. So this version will need further improvements. But I can say during this process, I'll take some time for readers to



Background image: Adobe Stock

go through and give some good feedback, and then I can compile the feedback and improve that version.

RJ: It sounds like you're still in an editorial process with it, even though it's finished and it can be shared widely.

RZ: Quite true. I mean, for the print version, it will need some more efforts. I think Urantia Foundation has a very complete plan. Normally they say for a very good translation, it takes around 30 years to produce a good version. So for me, I'm just halfway through (laughs) and halfway through to do a better version and to get it printed. So hopefully in the next few years time, I will receive more comments. I just keep on working, improving the current version.

RJ: Are you beginning to promote this translation?

RZ: Yes, I helped Urantia Foundation get the online version set up, and then I introduced it to more Chinese people from my friends and other groups. Some spiritual groups can do a search online to get some information about this book. Then they can read through and can benefit from that.

RJ: Will *The Urantia Book* be controversial in mainland China?

RZ: I don't recognize this as such. I understand this book mainly regards some cosmic truths and other things. It's a more spiritual book and covers different areas. So it's not like some previous religious groups that governments are so sensitive to. I think this book is just mainly for individual readers to read. It doesn't require organizations or groups. So that's why I don't think it will affect the government's understanding about this book—they'll just treat it as normal book for people to read. It won't be like some very religious books for people to gather together and have more physical activites. I think this book is for people to read online, they can digest it themselves rather than together in social activites. So I would say it's not that controversial.

RJ: And what about Taiwan and other Chinese-speaking nations? What reactions do you anticipate?

RZ: I think they are quite happy to receive this book. The people are quite spiritual. They already read a lot of spiritual books. For this book, they also understand its importance. This is the revelation. They like to share this book with friends or around communities. So I think in Taiwan, this book is more easy to spread out. But in mainland China still, it would take some time because they need to read through this book for some time. Then they can understand the importance of this book.

RJ: This is how the English version got spread, word of mouth. Or for some people they found it in a bookstore or library, but it was very low key. And it sounds like right now that's pretty much where you are with it.

RZ: I think we have many ways to share it. One way is just produce electronic versions, it's much easier to spread. As you mentioned, it's just mainly by word of mouth. So if people say, well, have you read this book, they can say, well, can you give me the PDF? Or can you send me a link to read? Or can you send me some information? Where can I find the app to read this book? So it will be easier for people to get some app or get some PDF version or some other version they can share. It's very quick. Nowadays it's much easier for people to share.

RJ: No question the online world is such a game changer. About how many people do you think have been given this Chinese text? What's your estimate of the numbers right now?

RZ: I think currently there are more than 1000 Chinese readers who have read this book and who have downloaded this book. So it's mainly by word of mouth and people sharing. Because I had a reader group with more than 20 people, when they read this book, they benefited quite a lot and they shared with other people and then those people shared a bit more. So yeah, it



Mo Siegel, Vicki Yang, and Richard Zhu, Taiwan, 2024.

expanded very quickly.

RJ: So you think about a thousand so far.

RZ: More than 1000. Yeah.

RJ: So Richard, what has this project meant to you personally?

RZ: I would say this project is probably a lifelong mission. I understand when I did the translation work from my heart, I say, I would do this for the long term. For me, it's quite meaningful and just quite an important mission. So it's just like doing Father's will and I want to share this book and share the teaching of this revelation with more Chinese brothers and sisters. So yeah, I will spend more time doing this and just help more people to benefit from this book.

RJ: One thing that's certainly unusual about *The Urantia Book*, is it's similar to Christianity in that we have the figure of Jesus in it. And so for a person like me who grew up with Christianity, it was just remarkable to read this. And it was very, very inspiring to have this bigger picture of Jesus. But I think for some people who didn't grow up with that, what's the response to the person of Jesus, of Michael?

RZ: Yeah, I'll say even for me, I didn't have a Christian background before, and I think from this book, the stories of Jesus are more profound and just quite in-depth. I think that stories from the Bible cover very small details of Jesus' life. But with this book it is just quite profound to show Jesus' life in very detailed experiences. That's why that, even when I asked Chinese readers when they read through the Jesus experience and Jesus' life, sometimes they just fell into tears. They were so moved by the words or the experiences of Jesus, and they benefited quite a lot from Jesus' teachings. So that's why I find this book is quite unique, to show different pictures of Jesus, quite different from the Bible or from other Christianity books.

RJ: Yeah, that's one thing that *The Urantia Book* alludes to, that by the time the Christian missionaries got to China, the Chinese just thought this was a strange religion for strangers. Do you think *The Urantia Book* is helping circumvent that perception?

RZ: Yeah, definitely. I think definitely because the readers I have contacted, they're university professors or some students from different backgrounds, so they have no Christianity background. When they read this part of the book, they resonate with the stories and the teachings of Jesus. So that's why I think it's quite profound because before, some people in China, they didn't regard Jesus as important. A religious leader, but not a leader that can affect many people.

RJ: The book speaks highly of Chinese civilization. What's your take on how people respond to what it says about China, because it's highly admired in *The Urantia Book*?

RZ: I went to Taiwan this March to promote my translation, and I used quotes from the book showing the Chinese culture from the beginning until now, summarizing all the highlights from the Chinese culture to show the audience. They were touched very deeply, because I think they feel quite proud of Chinese culture. And they recognize that this book shows that. And when they listened and I gave some explanations, they were so impressed. I think the main things that this book points out in the Chinese sections is something quite good, something excellent. And some things still need to improve and some things are not quite right. So when I showed these teachings to those audiences, to those readers, they could receive wisdom from this book and say, "Wow, that's quite powerful." Our Chinese culture still needs some improvements—not to just stay in the past, to follow past teachings. We have to get some new teachings to feed into our culture and to try to be innovative and creative, rather than just try to keep the old. I think that's how they received this message.

RJ: That's wonderful. It seems with the book's description of European civilization, there are things that we can be proud of, and things we know we got wrong. Well, I really appreciate your time, Richard. This is personally fascinating for me, and I'm really glad you offered to let me interview you.

RZ: Yeah, thank you very much. Thank you and also thanks to Urantia Association International. I have received a study group guide from Urantia Association which I translated into Chinese and spread to the Chinese readers. So that will guide readers to form some study groups locally. I want to show my gratitude to the Assoc iation. And thank you so much for your interview.



The Spirit of Truth and Seraphic Guidance Stimulate Soul Growth

Chris Wood, USA

In our Urantia circles, the universe is often compared to a university, a never-ending career of learning and achievement where eventually students progress to the point where they become the professors. In this analogy, we mere mortals are like kindergarteners just trying to pick up the basics. And no matter how much the adults try to explain it and how much we say we understand, in reality we can never truly understand the great path we have before us—any better than five-year-olds can understand the realities of a doctoral study track.

I like to think about the way *The Urantia Book* fits into this analogy. It's like a class of kindergartners have been given a detailed textbook on skyscraper architecture, and while many (or even most) kids dismiss it and focus on more age-appropriate reading materials, some small group of us have really gotten into it. We travel across the world to meet with other children to compare and contrast the advantages of single shaft elevator supports to a multi-track system. And some smaller subset of us kids will huddle together and discuss the best chemical composition for anti-corrosion footing pillars in swampy subsoils. All the while our adults just watch us from afar, and laugh occasionally, and encourage us on in our "anachronistic" pursuits.

In this analogy I think the adults are the seraphim.

The seraphim, of course, are our angelic cousins who are poised to guide us on our ascension paths. They will be with us at all of the key steps along the way. We are told that after our material deaths, the morontia soul is entrusted to a seraphic destiny guardian (47.3.3). Transport seraphim take us from sphere to sphere in our ascension (48:2.17). An archangel of Nebadon tells us that seraphic evangels will help us choose our ascension routes through Edentia, Salvington, Uversa, and Havona (48.6.5).

And all of this is a long way down the road, I presume, but the seraphim are performing many of the same functions here on earth. On the intellectual level, they are the interpreters between the mind and morontial. On the spiritual level they are the coordinators between the personal, impersonal and pre-personal ministries (113.3.5).

The Chief of Seraphim tells us:

> Seraphim are mind stimulators; they continually seek to promote circle-making decisions in human mind. They do this, not as does the Adjuster, operating from within and through the soul, but rather from the outside inward, working through the social, ethical, and moral environment of human beings. (113:4.1, 1245.1)
>
> Seraphim function as teachers of men by guiding the footsteps of the human personality into paths of new and progressive experiences. To accept the guidance of a seraphim rarely means attaining a life of ease. In following this leading you are sure to encounter, and if you have the courage, to traverse, the rugged hills of moral choosing and spiritual progress. (113:4.3, 1245.3)
>
> For seraphim, the surest way of achieving the Paradise Deities is by successfully guiding a soul of evolutionary origin to the portals of Paradise.

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> Therefore, is the assignment of guardian of destiny the most highly prized seraphic duty. (113:7.7, 1249.1)

In other words, don't mess this up! Your ascension career is not just about you and your soul. There are seraphim depending upon you so that they can hitch a ride to Havona. So get your act together.

And what are these decisions that the seraphim are setting up for us? What does it all lead to? The best I can explain it: I need to stop thinking about myself as "I" and instead "I" need to start thinking about my soul as I.

So, here's the thing. The analogy I used earlier about kindergarteners: it doesn't quite line up with *The Urantia Book*, because the authors don't often compare us to young children. They don't even call us babies. At several points in the book, the authors call us embryos, this life is an embryonic state for the soul.

In Paper 66 a Melchizedek tells us that "During the mortal life in the flesh the soul is of embryonic estate; it is born in the morontia life and experiences growth through the successive morontia worlds" (66:4.9).

Just as an embryo has the ultimate desired destiny to develop into a healthy and independent infant, so too do we have the ultimate desired destiny to develop into a fully formed soul and then to transfer our seat of identity into this soul. As children our identity is our body, but as adults we often transfer this identity into our minds. Descartes's "I think therefore I am" represents this step, but this is not enough. The human mind will cease to exist. It is the soul that continues. We must create and nurture this soul but then also transfer our seat of identity away from our bodies and our minds and into this soul.

A Solitary Messenger says:

> The material self, the ego-entity of human identity, is dependent during the physical life on the continuing function of the material life vehicle, on the continued existence of the unbalanced equilibrium of energies and intellect which, on Urantia, has been given the name *life*. But selfhood of survival value, selfhood that can transcend the experience of death, is only evolved by establishing a potential transfer of the seat of the identity of the evolving personality from the transient life vehicle—the material body—to the more enduring and immortal nature of the morontia soul and on beyond to those levels whereon the soul becomes infused with, and eventually attains the status of, spirit reality. This actual transfer from material association to morontia identification is effected by the sincerity, persistence, and steadfastness of the God-seeking decisions of the human creature. 112:2.20 (1229.7)

Ok, we've got a lot to unpack here, because normally in a study group I would read this paragraph, nod appreciatively and then move along to the next section, but no more, because—heads up—I think this is my new favorite paragraph from *The Urantia Book*.

So long to my obsession with the idea that there is a hidden paper on "Happiness" spread throughout the book that you need a search engine to find. Be gone!

Welcome to this everblooming arrangement of words given to us by a Solitary Messenger. So lately when I've been reading *The Urantia Book* I've begun to think more and more about the authors and what their experiences were like trying to write this book. And some of the authors are really good, they are really flowery with the language, indulging in the rhythms and eccentricities of human expression. And some of them are, well, a little dry. A little far removed. Their words are just missing something.

And so, at first glance I think this author might not be the best.

First off, this entire paragraph is just three sentences, each chock-full of clauses, which just sounds clunky to our ears. Make this paragraph perhaps seven sentences, and we might understand the concepts a little better.

Next, the word "life" is used four times in one paragraph, three times in the first sentence alone. I was taught at a pretty young age to break out a thesaurus if I need to use the same word twice. And look at how she's using "life":

"The material self, the ego-entity of human identity, is dependent during the physical life on the continuing function of the material life vehicle" …material life

...heads up—
I think this is my new favorite paragraph from
The Urantia Book.

The material self, the ego-entity of human identity, is dependent during the physical life on the continuing function of the material life vehicle, on the continued existence of the unbalanced equilibrium of energies and intellect which, on Urantia, has been given the name *life*. But selfhood of survival value, selfhood that can transcend the experience of death, is only evolved by establishing a potential transfer of the seat of the identity of the evolving personality from the transient life vehicle—the material body—to the more enduring and immortal nature of the morontia soul and on beyond to those levels whereon the soul becomes infused with, and eventually attains the status of, spirit reality. This actual transfer from material association to morontia identification is effected by the sincerity, persistence, and steadfastness of the God-seeking decisions of the human creature. 112:2.20 (1229.7)

vehicle... doesn't she know the word body?

But that's fine, because it's the second sentence that contains the meat of the message. "But selfhood of survival value, selfhood that can transcend the experience of death, is only evolved by establishing a potential transfer of the seat of the identity of the evolving personality from the transient life vehicle—the material body—to the more...." Ok, wait, so she does know the word "body."

She knows the word body, but she's still using the term

material life vehicle? This is a choice. Is it possible that this Solitary Messenger isn't someone who is bad at human languages, but is in fact a master of them, and that she might even be a little bored, and so is showing off a little? What do we make then of this third use of life in this sentence? The third life is italicized.

"…the material life vehicle, on the continued existence of the unbalanced equilibrium of energies and intellect which, on Urantia, has been given the name ***life***." (bold emphasis added)

I think she's making fun of us. I think she's saying "Can you believe these humans? They take the unbalanced equilibrium of energies and intellect and they call it life! Can you believe this?" and then she looks around for another Solitary Messenger to share a laugh with but doesn't find one, because, you know, solitary. But still, I think she's making fun of us. This is sarcasm, this italicized life. Sarcasm, in *The Urantia Book*. 25 years ago when James Woodward told me I should be less sarcastic and more sincere, I should have told him to hang out with more Solitary Messengers.

So sentence one, she's making fun of us. Excellent!

Sentence two: "But selfhood of survival value, selfhood that can transcend the experience of death, is only evolved by establishing a potential transfer of the seat of the identity of the evolving personality from the transient life vehicle—the material body—to the more enduring and immortal nature of the morontia soul and on beyond to those levels whereon the soul becomes infused with, and eventually attains the status of, spirit reality." Sentence two is about how we need to transfer the seat of identity from the body to the soul and then maybe be prepared for further transfers of identity down the line. How do we do this?

Welcome to the third sentence: "This actual transfer from material association to morontia identification is effected by the sincerity, persistence, and steadfastness of the God-seeking decisions of the human creature."

Sincerity.

This author is using sarcasm to highlight the importance of sincerity in our God seeking decisions. She wins. Give her all of the awards. Because of course sarcasm and cleverness are not fruits of the spirit, but they are fun tools we get to use to highlight those things which are.

In Paper 5 we're told the proofs are forthcoming and abundant in the manifestation of the fruits of the spirit in our lives.

So how do we know if we are truly in line with sincerity, persistence, and steadfastness? Well, this is where the Spirit of Truth comes in.

In Paper 143 we are told that the Spirit of Truth is "the constant spiritual renewing of your mind" (143:2.4).

As you align your mind with the Spirit of Truth you begin to producemore of the fruits of the spirit which is proof that you are identifying more with that growing soul and less with the temporal body. We stop seeing religion as a club we belong to and instead see it as it is described in Paper 100, religion as a spiritual reaction to the universe. Religion is the spirit-tinted glasses through which we see the world. Where "God is not a doctrine" in our minds, but "has become a living presence" in our souls, which is how the midwayers describe the mindset of the followers of Jesus. (194:4.2)

Your seraphim place you in positions where you get to make soul-growing decisions. Your actions begin to produce the fruits which show your greater identity with the soul. And whenever we are in doubt, we are told that in every dark hour, at every crossroad in the forward struggle, the Spirit of Truth will always speak, saying, "This is the way" (34:7.8).

That's it. Now go forth and ponder and discuss the best chemical composition for anti-corrosion footing pillars in swampy subsoils.

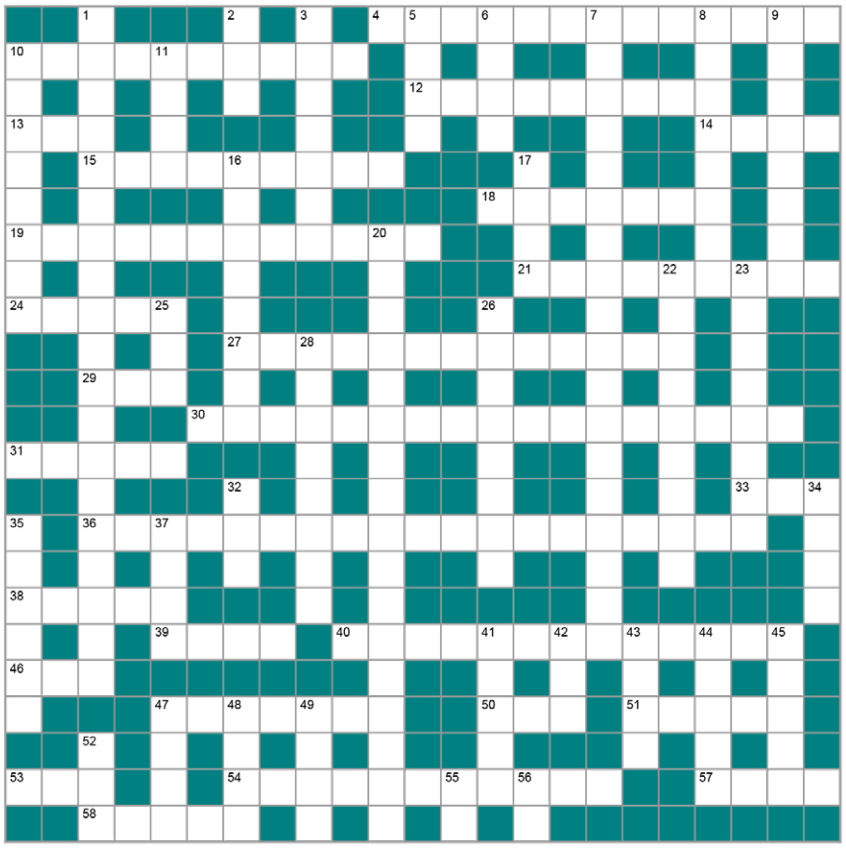
Please and thank you.



This article was adapted from a presentation Chris Wood presented March, 2024 in Baltimore, Maryland. Chris has been actively involved with the Urantia community since 1998 and served as president of Urantia Association International from 2013 until 2021. He and his wife Alice live in Green Bay, Wisconsin and their two children have four grandparents who read and study The Urantia Book.

Urantia Puzzle #1

Instructions: Multiple word solutions are indicated in parentheses. For example, if the solution is Thought Adjuster, the clue will end with (7,8). Hyphenated words count as two words.



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Across

4 Deep consideration or reflection

10 Nonbreather worlds are often subjected to these kinds of disastrous storms

12 Another name for the Spirit of Truth

13 Healthy

14 According to the Hebrew Bible, he is the progenitor of the Edomites

15 Relating to the here and now

18 Most high

19 An element contributing to a result

21 Harmony in opinion

24 Dull or muted in color

27 Articles of equipment designed for a particular use

29 Church bench

30 Jesus attended this elementary school (8,9)

31 North Dakota's largest city

33 Make a mistake

36 One of three great classes of cherubim and sanobim with regard to evolutionary potential (9,10)

38 Melchizedek invited both Abraham and this man to Salem

39 Six of the Supreme Trinity Personalities are of this order

40 One of the writers of this New Testament book understood the mission of Melchizedek (4,2,7)

46 In Celtic mythology this tree was associated with the Underworld

47 Peter instructed the seventy to trust the Father for food and _____

50 Water faucet

51 Original in conception

53 It kills by constriction

54 Solitary Messengers act as _____ and Emissaries of Special Assignment

57 On the way to Charax, Jesus visited the ruins of this ancient Sumerian city

58 The belief in a single god who created the world but does not act to influence events

Down

1 These high angels are Harmony Supervisors (8,11)

2 The number of groups of unrevealed angels

3 His original gospel was based on four noble truths

5 The number of times a Michael Son goes on a bestowal mission to an inhabited world

6 The absolute of _____ is eternity

7 The Master Spirits maintain their force-focal headquarters here (10,8)

8 A port city in eastern Italy from where Jesus set sail for Athens

9 A solemn offering, sacrifice, or presentation to God

10 Imposed

11 A number of people associated in work

16 Orwellian future

17 City with a leaning tower

20 These secondary supernaphim accompany us on the transition journey to Paradise. (11,2,4)

22 Involved

23 Carries out

25 Churchyard tree in "Romeo and Juliet"

26 Capital of Queensland, Australia

28 Motel locale

32 He presided over the council on food and material welfare

34 Be dependent

35 Travel around with no destination

37 A unit of wood cut for fuel

41 Chose

42 Caligastia 100 - head of the college of revealed religion

43 Scrawny

44 Mischievous fairies

45 These fabrics originated in China about 8,500 years ago

47 One who follows the teachings of Sufism

48 The followers of Nod migrated to this highland region

49 A channel

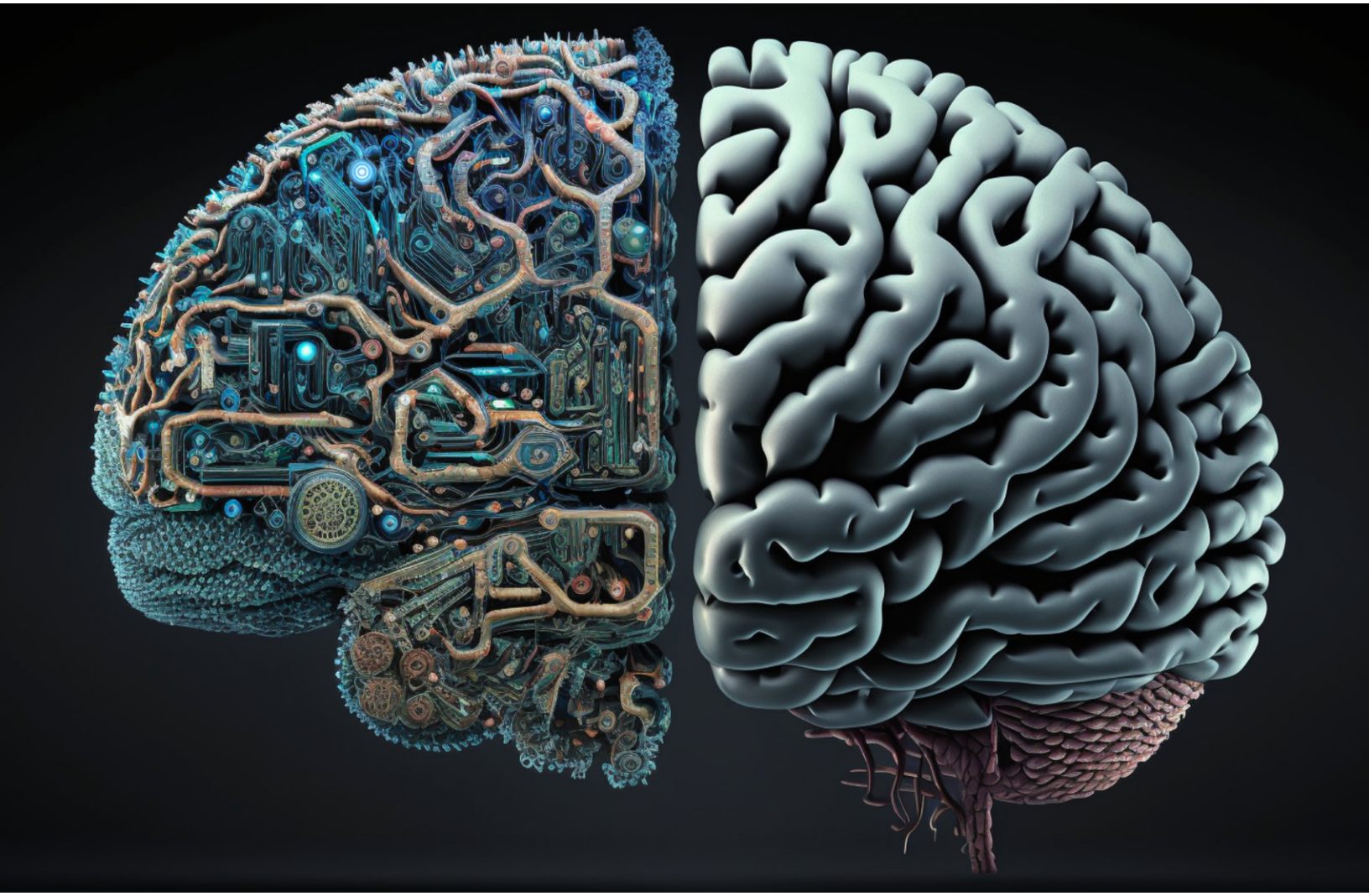
52 Young 'un

55 Halberd

56 A bovine

By Mark Blackham

Answers on page 28



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Artificial Intelligence and *The Urantia Book*

Readers respond to a question posed

Artificial intelligence took a major turn with the launch of OpenAI's ChatGPT in 2022. The chatbot's informed, well-written responses to nuanced questions generated both excitement and concern across multiple disciplines. The tool is particularly intriguing for students of *The Urantia Book*, since the book contains specific information and unique concepts not always found outside its 2097 pages.

While putting together the recent Journal edition on "Government, Politics, and *The Urantia Book*," we "tested" ChatGPT's capability by posing the question, "What does *The Urantia Book* say about democracy?" Below is ChatGPT's answer followed by commentary from several students of *The Urantia Book*.

Richard Jernigan

"What does The Urantia Book *say about democracy?"*

ChatGPT: *The Urantia Book* presents a critical but nuanced perspective on democracy. Here are some key points it makes:

1. Inherent Value of Democracy: *The Urantia Book* acknowledges the value of democracy as a system that recognizes the dignity and worth of individuals. It appreciates the principle of government "of the people, by the people, for the people" as a significant step in the social and political evolution of humanity.

2. Limitations and Challenges: Despite recognizing its value, *The Urantia Book* highlights several limitations and challenges inherent in democratic systems:

Popularity over Competence: It criticizes the tendency in democracies to prioritize popularity over competence, where leaders are elected based on their ability to appeal to the masses rather than their qualifications or abilities.

Short-term Focus: Democracies often focus on short-term goals and immediate benefits to gain votes, sometimes at the expense of long-term planning and stability.

Potential for Mediocrity: There is a concern that democracy can lead to mediocrity, where the lowest common denominator sets the standard, potentially stifling exceptional leadership and innovation.

3. Education and Enlightenment: The book emphasizes the importance of education and enlightenment for a successful democracy. An informed and educated electorate is seen as crucial for making wise decisions and selecting competent leaders.

4. Evolutionary Nature: Democracy is viewed as an evolving system that reflects the growing political maturity and social consciousness of humanity. It suggests that over time, as societies evolve and individuals become more spiritually and intellectually advanced, democratic systems will improve and become more effective.

5. Spiritual Leadership: *The Urantia Book* underscores the need for spiritual leadership and moral guidance in democracies. It argues that without a foundation of ethical and spiritual values, democratic systems are prone to corruption and inefficiency.

In summary, *The Urantia Book* appreciates the democratic ideal but stresses the need for continuous improvement, education, and moral leadership to address its inherent flaws and realize its full potential.

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT (May 30 version) [Large language model]. https://chat.openai.com/chat

Urantia Book Students Respond

I find the ChatGPT response thematically accurate, hitting the broad points on democracy quite well. The nuances are areas of opportunity, such as the heading "Evolutionary Nature" when *The Urantia Book* clarifies that democracy is "a product of civilization, not of evolution" (71:2.1). However, the narrative following this heading follows the spirit of the teachings, saying essentially that as societies evolve, democratic systems will improve.

Another nuance is in the summary, which discusses democracy and its "inherent flaws." This is not a characterization I find in *The Urantia Book*, although it does inform us of the dangers of democracy, dependencies for its survival, and our propensity to make a fetish of it (88:3.4). Its ideal state is more optimistic, with the opportunity to realize and enjoy the personal liberties of genuine democracy (134:6.11). Ultimately, these nuances are important but do not significantly diminish the value and quality of the content.

Mike Robinson
California, USA

The AI response did an excellent job of summarizing *The Urantia Book* perspective on democracy, but it did not emphasize enough the idea that democracy is the preferred form of government compared to others.

> "Popular elections may not always decide things rightly, but they represent the right way even to do a wrong thing. Evolution does not at once produce superlative perfection but rather comparative and advancing practical adjustment." (71:2.3)

Also that some forms of democratic government are characterized by a divine pattern:

> "The only sacred feature of any human government is the division of statehood into the three domains of executive, legislative, and judicial functions." (71:8.1)

Claire Thurston
Reston, VA, USA

Overall, the ChatGPT summary of democracy as discussed in *The Urantia Book* covers some important points in plain language. But when compared to the bold and candid wording of the revelation, it is a somewhat euphemistic rendering conditioned by the Western social mores of the 21st century.

For example, I see no mention of the "short-term focus" of democracies in the book. And the "potential for mediocrity" and "popularity over competence" are actually stated as the "glorification of mediocrity" and the "choice of base and ignorant rulers," respectively. We are also warned that the survival of democracy is at stake when the majority is "uneducated and indolent."

Curiously, the term "representative government" does not appear in this summary. This is the "divine ideal" (45:7.3) and the crux of all democracies. If there is a key point, this is it—elected officials need to truly represent the wishes of their constituents, right or wrong.

But the most fatal shortcoming in this summary is its advocacy for spiritual leadership in democracies. Indeed it is clearly stated that we must avoid the "union of church and state" (70:12:17), a position that even Jesus upheld (178:1.9).

Mark Blackham
British Columbia, Canada

I was impressed by the concise but thorough and balanced treatment ChatGPT gave on the subject. I liked how it emphasized that an educated and informed electorate combined with moral and spiritually led leadership was necessary to get the most out of a democratic government. I think the article may have been even better if it discussed the democracy described in 'Government on a Neighboring Planet' where the electorate has varying numbers of votes per person depending on the service rendered to society or particular competence in government service.

Rick Bates
New York, USA

ChatGPT's response about *The Urantia Book's* perspective on democracy can be evaluated using four criteria: accuracy, clarity, thought-provoking nature, and inspiration. While the answer rates 4/5 for accuracy, it lacks completeness, particularly regarding Paper 71, section 2 on "The Evolution of Representative Government." The response could be more thought-provoking and inspiring by incorporating information from Papers 71 and 72, which offer insights into modifying current democracies. ChatGPT's default "helpful assistant" mode limits its ability to lead users in deeper exploration. To address this, The Urantia Book Tutor (UBT) project is developing an AI-powered chatbot designed to serve as an advanced Urantia Book student. This tool aims to offer interactive dialogues and insights directly from the text, making the teachings more accessible and encouraging further exploration. Importantly, UBT will emulate Jesus' teaching style by asking questions, serving as a tutor for both newcomers to *The Urantia Book* and advanced students alike. This approach highlights AI's potential to provide more comprehensive and engaging responses about *The Urantia Book's* teachings through improved prompting and specialized tools.

Gabriel Rymberg
Israel

I am disappointed and surprised that you have succumbed to the temptation of asking about what *The Urantia Book* "says." The plain fact of the matter is that *The Urantia Book* does not say anything about anything, for *The Urantia Book* is an inanimate object and cannot speak!

Personifying an inanimate object is not the only fundamental flaw of the inquiry posed to ChatGPT. In effect, this wording inescapably implies that *The Urantia Book* is an essentially uniform document written from one viewpoint and reflecting a single, undifferentiated perspective. That is not true either, for the authors of *The Urantia Book* and the topics they write about are pluralistic and diverse. If a perceptive reader wishes to interpret any specific statement in depth and detail, he or she would have to evaluate its spiritual and mindal context, while also considering the personal characteristics of the author or authors who embedded it in the fifth epochal revelation.

I offer alternate wording that might yield more interesting results (or perhaps not):

Please analyze and evaluate what the various authors of *The Urantia Book* say about democracy and elections,

(a) While comparing and contrasting the views of the Midwayer Commission with those advanced by other authors, and

(b) While also commenting on the philosophy and implications of the systems for elections and voting that are currently in use on the advanced continent of a neighboring planet, as a Melchizedek describes them in sections 2 and 9 of Paper 72.

Neal Waldrop
USA

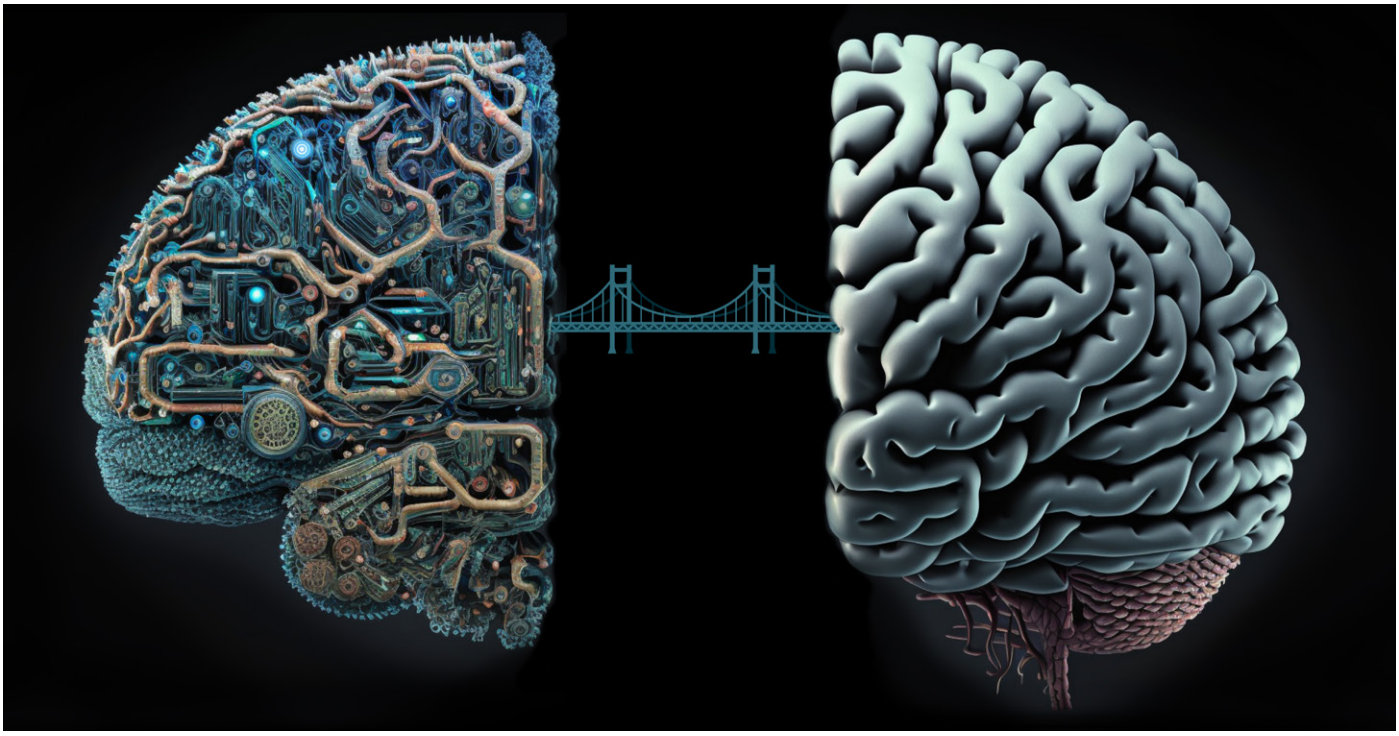
Chat GPT recently generated a summary of *The Urantia Book's* perspective on democracy—its inherent value, challenges and risks, and guidance for what is necessary for democracy to achieve its full potential.

The piece shares key observations with notable theorists and academics (Dahl, Schumpeter, Olson, and Tocqueville, among others). These include certain benefits of democracy such as giving individuals a voice in governance and facilitating contestation, as well as more problematic patterns like popularity over competence, short-term focus, and a potential for mediocrity.

To me what stands out about *The Urantia Book*-AI perspective is its emphasis on the importance of strong spiritual and ethical underpinnings. In my opinion, the crucial statement in this AI's summary of *The Urantia Book's* point of view is: "...without a foundation of ethical and spiritual values, democratic systems are prone to corruption and inefficiency."

It's a timely point to consider. More than ever before, we must prioritize ethical behavior and ethical decision-making among our criteria for electing leaders. If our democracy is to survive, this ethics-first mindset must be increasingly more present in our public dialog and debate as we go about the business of electing the leaders of our United States of America.

Sia Ahmadzadeh
USA



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The Urantia Book and ChatGPT

Michael Zehr, USA

There has been a lot of excitement over recent AI tools with speculation about how they might change the world (for better or worse) including how they might help us learn and understand concepts. I've seen examples and reports of people giving it prompts such as "What does The Urantia Book say about ....?" Or "According to The Urantia Book, what is ....?" While this can be useful, care should be taken so that it leads to helpful results.

Before I get into the details, I'll give some of my relevant background. I have a computer science degree and have designed or developed AI-based systems over many years, including using natural language processing to generate quiz questions from training materials (which will be relevant below). I've been studying *The Urantia Book* for nearly 50 years, so I've tried using different tools in my studies for evaluating if the result is helpful or perhaps misleading.

It's important to understand what these new tools are, and what they aren't. They're described technically as "generative" systems. They accept a prompt and generate a response that is in proper syntax and grammar and looks like a reasonable response to that prompt – but without understanding the question and without any guarantee that the answer is correct. The systems are trained using a great deal of text, most of which is correct and true, and thus they do a good job of appearing to give correct responses. But they can

miss the point badly. For example, one lawyer used AI tools to create a brief that was submitted to the court. Unfortunately, the case references in the brief were made up. The syntax was good, they looked reasonable, but the cases didn't exist, and thus certainly didn't support the stated conclusions. In another example an AI chat system trained on The Urantia Book incorrectly responded when asked if Jesus came from a virgin birth.

The systems respond with confidence and in formal style which can mislead a reader as to whether it "understands" the question and is giving a correct or helpful response. However, there are ways to use these tools that can be beneficial. Below are some suggested uses, though to be clear there is no substitute for careful reading, followed by prayer, worship, and living and practicing the concepts studied. These systems can help with facts, but the mortal mind must still process these into values and meanings, and then live them experientially.

Summarize text

The tools do a good job of summarizing passages of text. They do a better job of summarizing text you provide than summarizing by referring to something. For example, if you want a summary of Paper 71 (I use this as an example because it came up in discussion recently), you can enter a prompt of "Summarize paper 71 of The Urantia Book." But you will get better and more accurate results if you copy and paste the text of paper 71, for example "Summarize the following passage: <insert Paper 71 text here>."

Generate discussion questions

I've found these tools helpful for generating discussion question ideas for a paper, for example for a study group. As above, it's advisable to copy and paste the passage or paper and submit it as part of the prompt to get the best results. In my experience about 50% of the sample discussion questions are ones I'd consider sufficient for a study group, so it's still necessary for someone to curate the generated responses and pick the best of them.

Strengths and weaknesses

Because the tools have been trained on a large set of text, it's more likely to give a high-quality response on concepts unique to The Urantia Book. For example, if you prompt a tool with a question about Thought Adjusters it will probably give a helpful response. This is because almost all the text it on which it was trained regarding Thought Adjusters would have been based on The Urantia Book. If you ask it a question about a topic commonly taught by organized Christian churches though, it's more likely to get it wrong. For example with the question about virgin birth, the training text would have included a lot of examples of writing based on the Bible, and that affects the response.

In conclusion, these new tools can be helpful in studying and learning, but they will be more helpful if you copy and paste the text you would like it to summarize or analyze. The tools give more accurate responses regarding facts than regarding values and meanings. Finally, there is no substitute for the individual truth seeker to spend time in prayer, worship, and in living the truths and values they have discovered.]



Michael Zehr has been studying The Urantia Book *for most of his life and currently resides in Florida, USA with his daughter and their cat. He works and volunteers with the Urantia Book International School and has been an active member in the Association. He had a career as a software architect spanning decades that include computer learning and analysis tools.*

“*Verily, verily*
I say to you...”

Mark Blackham
Canada

Jesus often began a sentence with the phrase, "Verily, verily, I say to you..." At the time, this had unique meaning, and Jesus used it often to underscore the importance of his words.

Verily means in truth, truly, or truthfully. The word is derived from the Middle English (14th century) verray, meaning true or real and is used in the Bible as a translation of the word amen which, in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Ecclesiastical Greek, means so be it or in truth.

Today, and in the time of Jesus, the word amen is often added to the end of a prayer or a statement as confirmation or agreement. Indeed, this was its traditional use in Hebrew before Jesus' time. But Jesus used the word before he made a statement. The website Got Questions explains it this way.

Jesus was fond of saying, "Amen," before making a statement or giving a message. When used in this way, the word amen has slightly different implications. Leading off with amen not only implies that what follows is true but also that the person making the statement has firsthand knowledge and authority about it. Saying, "Verily, verily," before making a statement is a strong claim to truth presented from an almost audacious attitude. Speaking on worldly or secular matters, saying, "Verily, verily," would imply that what follows is that person's own original idea.

So, when Jesus leads off with the words verily, verily he is not merely saying, "Believe me, this is true." He is actually saying, "I know this is true firsthand." Since many of these comments are on heavenly, spiritual, or godly issues, Jesus' use of verily, verily is part of his consistent claim of divinity. Jesus is not merely aware of these truths: He is the One who originated them!

"Verily, verily, I say to you, not everyone who says, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but rather he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." 140:1.4

"Verily, verily, I say to you, when the Father's will is your law, you are hardly in the kingdom. But when the Father's will becomes truly your will, then are you in very truth in the kingdom because the kingdom has thereby become an established experience in you." 141:2.2

"Verily, verily, I say to you, Nicodemus, except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 142:6.4

"Verily, verily, I say to you, he who rules his own self is greater than he who captures a city. Self-mastery is the measure of man's moral nature and the indicator of his spiritual development." 143:2.3

"Verily, verily, I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is but small in the kingdom of heaven is greater because he has been born of the spirit and knows that he has become a son of God." 144:8.4

[Speaking of the Roman soldier] "I marvel at the belief of the gentile. Verily, verily, I say to you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." 147:1.3

"Verily, verily, I say to you: He who hears the gospel of the kingdom and believes in this teaching of sonship with God, has eternal life; already are such believers passing from judgment and death to light and life." 147:3.3

"Verily, verily, I say to many who sit before me this day, you are confronted with the necessity of choosing which way you will go; and I say to you, as Joshua said to your forefathers, 'choose you this day whom you will serve.' Today, many of you stand at the parting of the ways." 153:2.5

"Let me utter a solemn warning to you who would presume, with your eyes open and with premeditated malice, knowingly to ascribe the works of God to the doings of devils! Verily, verily, I say to you, all your sins shall be forgiven, even all of your blasphemies, but whosoever shall blaspheme against God with deliberation and wicked intention shall never obtain forgiveness." 153:4.3

"Verily, verily, I tell you that the Father's kingdom shall be taken by the gentiles if the children of Abraham are not minded to show faith enough to enter therein." 156:1.8

"Verily, verily, I say to you, except you turn about and become more like this child, you will make little progress in the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever shall humble himself and become as this little one, the same shall become greatest in the kingdom of heaven." 158:8.1

"Verily, verily, I say to you, whosoever receives not the kingdom of God as a little child shall hardly enter therein to grow up to the full stature of spiritual manhood." 167:6.1

"Verily, verily, I say to you who believe the gospel that, if a man will keep this word of truth alive in his heart, he shall never taste death." 162:7.5

"Verily, verily, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." 162:7.6

"Verily, verily, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the bond servant of sin." 162:7.2

"Verily, verily, I say to you, there is no man who has left wealth, home, wife, brethren, parents, or children for my sake and for the sake of the kingdom of heaven who shall not receive manifold more in this world, perhaps with some persecutions and, in the world to come, eternal life. But many who are first shall be last, while the last shall often be first." 163:3.4

"Verily, verily, I say to you, friends and enemies, I am the true shepherd; I know my own and my own know me. I will not flee in the face of danger. I will finish this service of the completion of my Father's will, and I will not forsake the flock which the Father has entrusted to my keeping." 165:2.8

"You see these stones and this massive temple; verily, verily, I say to you: In the days soon to come there shall not be left one stone upon another. They shall all be thrown down." 176:0.1 [The Romans destroyed Jerusalem 40 years later, in AD 70]

"Verily, verily, I say to you: A servant is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than he who sends him. You have seen the way of service in my life among you, and blessed are you who will have the gracious courage so to serve. But why are you so slow to learn that the secret of greatness in the spiritual kingdom is not like the methods of power in the material world?" 179:3.8

"Peter, verily, verily, I say to you, this night the cock will not crow until you have denied me three or four times. And thus, what you have failed to learn from peaceful association with me, you will learn through much trouble and many sorrows." 181:2.29

[The thief on the cross said to Jesus] "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And then Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say to you today, you shall sometime be with me in Paradise." 187:4.1 J



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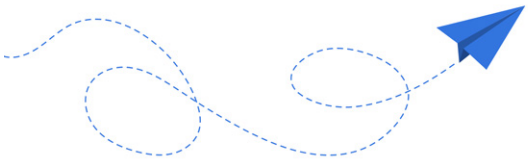
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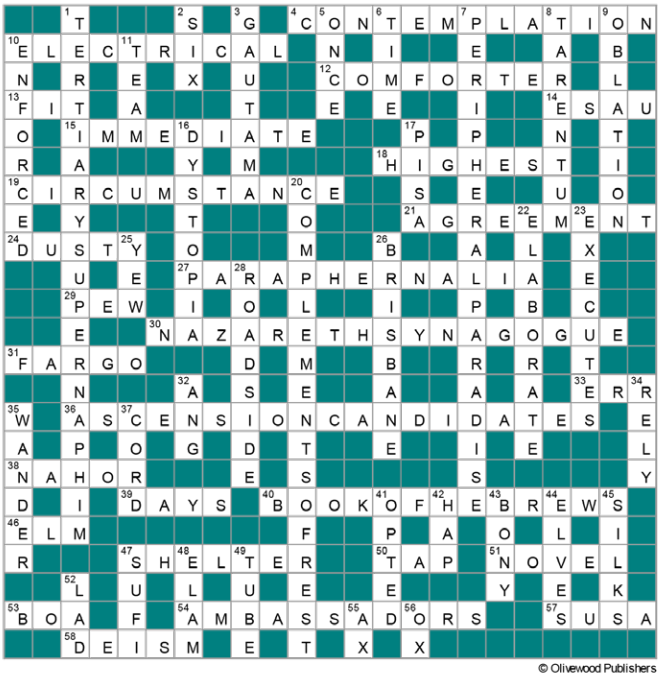


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Urantia Book citation numbers, where applicable.

Across: 10. 49.3.3, **12.** 16.4.14, **30.** 123.5.2, **36.** 38.8.2, **38.** 93.5.5, **39.** 18.0.1, **40.** 93.9.11, **47.** 163.4.12, **54.** 23.2.2, **57.** 130.0.3.

Down: 1. 26.3.4, **2.** 38.3.1, **3.** 98.8.3, **5.** 20.5.4, **6.** 12.5.2, **7.** 29.1.3, **8.** 130.0.3, **20.** 26.11.7, **42.** 66.5.13, **48.** 73.1.5.

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