

**BOOK REVIEW:**

Ernest Moyer's  
**THE BIRTH OF A DIVINE  
 REVELATION**

REVIEWED BY MATTHEW RAPAPORT

**W**HEN I LEARNED OF ERNEST'S publication I ordered it direct from the author and promised him a review. I've known Ernest, not personally, but through correspondence, for ten or more years. I know he is a good investigative reporter and an eloquent writer, who harbors certain pet theories about the future of our world and the processes that will lead it there.

Ernest subtitles his book "The Origin of the Urantia Papers," and indeed this is the core of his subject matter. He declares several purposes for his substantial effort. These include: 1. A refutation of Martin Gardner's *Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1995), and a refutation of the Wilfred Kellogg-as-sleeping-subject theory; 2. The identification of Dr. William S. Sadler as the real "contact personality" (though Ernest is quick to point out this does not mean Sadler was the "sleeping subject"); and 3. Exposing the corruptions to the text of the Urantia Papers made between 1939 and 1942.

Along the way, he reflects on the structural problems in the Urantia movement in general, and in the Urantia Foundation in particular, briefly tracing their consequences to recent and present-day conflicts within the Urantia movement. He pinpoints the origin of some of these problems to the human fallibilities of those who formed

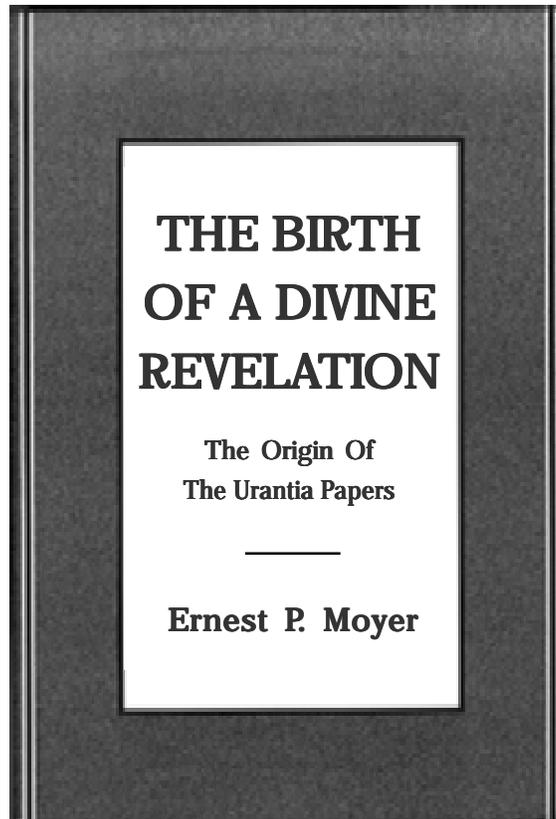
the close advisory circle around William S. Sadler, as well as W.S. himself who, after the death of his wife Lena in 1939, and the ending of the contact with the sleeping subject, may have lapsed in certain critical faculties.

Does Ernest prove his case?

I don't have any problem with his overall refutation of Martin Gardner. Ernest and I both believe in the divinity of the source of the revelation as a whole. Gardner certainly ignored or perverted a lot of evidence to arrive at his hatchet job. I don't think that any of us who believe in the UB are going to fault Ernest for his observations in this direction. His disproof of the Wilfred Kellogg-as-sleeping-subject theory is

part of his refutation of Gardner, and he is pretty convincing here as well. Ernest tells of his unsuccessful attempts to uncover the real identity of the sleeping subject; but in conducting his investigations, he turned up several items, including records of where the two men (W.K. and W.S.) lived during the period of sleeping subject activity, which should lay to rest the notion that W.K. was the sleeping subject.

I think Ernest achieves his second purpose as well. Here he asks the question: If you had to pick the kind of man in whom to trust with the launching of a new revelation, what kind of character would you want? Ernest amasses a considerable collection of testimony, documentary and anecdotal, showing the unusual combination of qualities that made up the character of Dr. William S. Sadler. Sadler was indeed an



unusual individual, Jesusonian in his devotion to God via service to mankind. He even shared some of Jesus' more personal characteristics such as a talent for public speaking and story-telling, the ability "to hold an audience with his words." He also had considerable energy, and an ability to function at all hours, under pressure, sometimes with little sleep.

It does seem that Sadler was an extraordinary person in his youth and middle age. Ernest points out that events surrounding W.S.'s involvement with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the personal decisions that followed from those experiences, uniquely prepared him for his role as first shepherd of the revelation. Ernest's case here is a good one. I could almost feel the angelic hands that guided W.S. to his first encounter with the sleeping subject.

Ernest contends that although W.S. is not the sleeping subject, he is the person we should be calling the primary "contact personality." The sleeping subject was merely a means of engaging W.S. in the revelatory process. W.S. was the real engine behind the process of give-and-take with the revelators which culminated in the appearance of the Papers in 1934 and 1935. Ernest leaves other basic mysteries unsolved, including the real purpose of all the preliminary documents received by the contact commission and the Forum, and exactly where and when the final papers appeared. He nicely distinguishes between human engagement in the preliminary first phase of contact, and human contribution to the final outcome in the finished revelation delivered in the mid-1930s; but he fails to discover the why of it all, which I find unfortunate, though one cannot fault him for this failure. Indeed one is tempted to ask, Why was the revelatory process so complicated? Surely some more direct means of engaging W.S. could have been found. One can only suggest, and Ernest leads us to speculate, that the revelators were enjoined to reduce or restrict the direct appearance of divine intervention in human affairs to the maximum possible degree.

The decades-long contact of human beings with superhuman material delivered through the mouth, pen, and possibly other means by a mechanically manipulated sleeping subject, established a long human involvement in a process that masked the direct points at which the divine was responsible for the appearance of revelatory text. Indeed it appears to be a technique that is characteristic of the Urantia revelation to present the revelation in such a way that one can at least try to make a case for a human origin of the Papers.

**ERNEST'S MAIN PURPOSE:** His third purpose is far more problematic. He presents a complex set of arguments which, if true, would have a profound impact on our understanding of the Urantia Book and the history of the Urantia

movement. Ernest's tenets along these lines can be summed up as follows:

1. Something happened after the last of the papers was delivered in 1935. Dr. Sadler mentions a "third series" of revelation, the first series referring to the preliminary work of the Forum with the revelators, the second being the delivery of the final papers themselves in 1934-35, and the third being some clarifications that appear to have been made to the text between 1939 and 1942.

2. Christy (Emma Christensen) received and transmitted these clarifications. In addition to serving in this capacity, Christy was largely responsible for charting the direction of the Urantia Foundation, and had a great influence on the early leaders of the Urantia movement.

3. Caligastia is the source of the various corruptions in the text, as well as the source of the apocryphal material found in the politically influential literature of the Urantia movement.

Ernest spends considerable time discussing the most serious of the corruptions, really contradictions of one kind or another, in the text. His analysis, he concludes, leads one to see an intelligent hand and a deliberate perversion in the nature of the contradictions. He is quite detailed about what he takes to be the content and implications of the particular contradictions he examines. Alas, I find in

much of this section a failure on Ernest's part to consider simpler explanations that, in many cases, eliminate the perceived contradiction altogether. In short, many of the worst of the textual corruptions that Ernest thinks he and others have discovered, are not contradictions at all, but skewed interpretations of the UB text itself. Perfectly plausible alternative explanations exist that are contradiction free. I'll discuss these in detail below.

**T**O MAKE HIS CASE, Ernest amasses considerable evidence to show that changes to the text took place in the 1939-1942 period, that Christy was the human source of the new material, and that the misguided efforts of Harold Sherman who desired to incorporate his own changes, probably shocked W.S. into stopping any further changes in 1942. Why, if Sadler realized that making changes was wrong, could he not simply undo them all? After all, the book hadn't been printed yet. Ernest offers three corroborating testimonies that messages continued to be revealed (by Christy) after 1942, certainly through the 1960s, and likely well beyond that time, almost to Christy's death in 1982. He also provides something of a psychological background for the emergence of this phenomenon: Sadler's beloved wife Lena passed away in 1939 leaving him extremely lonely. By this time, the activity of



Ernest Moyer

the sleeping subject had ceased, leaving him without his connection to the divine advisors he had had for several decades. W.S. had, at this point, wholeheartedly accepted the reality of divine contact, and thus was the stage set for his acceptance (and lack of critical examination) of Christy's claim to be in contact with spiritual beings who wished to deliver further clarifications to the revelation.

**C**HRISTY AND THE CHANGES are inextricably connected. According to Ernest, Christy began to channel in the traditional sense. Ernest claims repeatedly that it was Caligastia she was channeling, but he also notes that she was a bad channeler; that her own mind got in the way of the message and distorted its final expression (406). It seems plausible to me that all of what Christy said or wrote in these years emanated from her own mind. It is easy to see a combination of Midwestern conservatism mingled with a sense of recent history (World War II began in September 1939) in the documents adduced by Ernest to be the distorted sayings of Caligastia.

Still, there are mysteries afoot, of that no one should doubt. A 1996 document written by Carolyn Kendall ("The Plan For *The Urantia Book* Revelation") and reproduced by Ernest (chapter 26), refers to "verbal" instructions received during and after 1939. Ernest claims on page 372 that W.S. (and possibly others alluded to in Carolyn's document) heard "voices" coming out of thin air, but I cannot find this claim anywhere in Carolyn's document; it states only that the witnesses (the contact commissioners) heard a voice, which may or may not have emanated from Christy. Ernest insists that "The creation of visible images and audible speech is prevalent in the spiritualist community." Ernest directs the reader to his own paper on the subject, "Spirit Entry Into Human Mind," which I have not read; but I do, for now, reject his characterization of spiritualism. Such things require the cooperation of physical controllers who would not have been cooperating with Caligastia in the 20th century.

The material he offers as evidence does not compel us (in my opinion) to believe that rebel spirits were the only possible source. Some of what Ernest claims to be "pure Devil talk," including the well-known "word made book" phrase (374), seems patently human to me. Truly, as Ernest has surmised, such sloganism does not strike one as being from the "true source"; but Carolyn never says that she was quoting the revelators (the channeling Christy), only relaying the substance of the messages. For all we know Clyde Bedell suggested this particular phrase. Whatever its origin, her channeling is what lent Christy her authority in the movement. That authority set the stage for Christy's two other big influences—the selection of Martin Myers for the Foundation, and the discovery and promotion of Vern Grimsley.

While Ernest doesn't prove his case that "the Devil made

'em do it" to my satisfaction, his considerable effort in this part of the book (chapters 24-27) does build a strong case that the shaping of the Urantia movement's organizations, and the problems engendered by them, including the unraveling of whatever unity the movement had going into the mid-1980s following Christy's death, can be very much traced to these critical years (1939-1954). If nothing else, Ernest's collection, in a single book, of the various apocryphal documents of the Urantia movement is a contribution to the movement's understanding of itself. Though his viewpoint on movement politics differs from my own, no one would doubt that there have been some serious miscalculations and a lack of wisdom exhibited in the actions of the leadership of both the Urantia movement and the Foundation in the 45 years since the book's first printing. Who can deny that this "third series" of revelatory changes, and the messages that followed them prior to the Book's first printing, has had an important if not crucial influence on who we are today?

**THE CORRUPTIONS THEMSELVES:** Ernest claims that three broad kinds of corruptions exist: (1) typographical errors, (2) errors in scientific fact and known history, and (3) internal contradictions in the text. These last have to do with dates and other contradictions in content.

No one is worried about the typographical errors, most of which were corrected between the first and second printings. Some "scientific errors" do indeed exist. Some of the more interesting of those have not even been mentioned. (For example, the second clause "... if for no other reason ..." of the sentence beginning "Ever will the scientist ..." in the first paragraph of Paper 65, section 6 is not true for modern biological sciences, yet the sentence suggests it will always be true.) Other supposed examples of error have proven on further analysis to be nothing of the sort, like the "gravitational friction" statement in 57:6.2, which cleverly leaves room for the fact that Mercury would be discovered (in the 1960s, I believe) to be still rotating, even relative to its revolutionary period.

Ernest here poses a legitimate question. If the book was delivered paper by complete paper in 1934 and 1935, why would there be any obviously erroneous scientific statements as seen from the viewpoint of but a few decades later? Why would there be any error in the book that couldn't be attributed to imperfect transcription to type, or from type to plate, or that didn't become, at second glance, a clever device by the revelators to anticipate future science? His answer is that any error, small or large, casts doubt upon the veracity of the work as a whole, and this indeed is what Caligastia found himself limited to doing in his effort to corrupt the revelation. In correspondence with me, Ernest was quick to point out that he did not here intend to refer to believers, but to those who find reason to reject the book's revelatory claims based

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on what amount to errors too simple for genuine revelators to make. That these errors have, on occasion, had this effect, one cannot deny.

Yet even if errors did creep in thanks to Dr. Sadler's uncritical acceptance of Christy's channeled material, the ultimate source may lie elsewhere than in the personal doings of Caligastia, namely in Christy's fertile subconscious. To prove Ernest wrong about the timing of the changes, that is, to demonstrate that the errors were present in the original text, one would have to have access to the original papers of the second series as they appeared in the possession of W.S., and were made available to the Forum. Of course, these have been destroyed, and one finds oneself wishing, again, that that were not the case so that we might now clear up some of these mysteries. Ernest claims that some of what Sadler changed (corrected) between the first and second printings suggests some, but by no means all, of what was changed in the "third series" of presentations. While we cannot be sure of any of this, no one has suggested any alternative to Ernest's contentions in this regard, other than to say that Caligastia was not responsible for them!

One notes, however, that until Ernest's last couple of chapters, the corruptions he discusses are all pretty trivial: A word here, a phrase there, a syllogism on page 3 involving three levels of perfection that appeared in a book six years after 1935. (Why people can't believe the author was influenced by something said by someone who knew someone who knew a member of the then-300+ person Forum is beyond me.) When, however, he attempts to analyze what he claims to be more serious contradictions he fares not so well in the opinion of this reviewer.

**THE MORE SERIOUS CORRUPTIONS:** First up is the 40-day problem. Ernest devotes parts of two chapters to this one. It comes down to this: At the opening of Paper 194, the apostles are in prayer with 120 believers when at about 1:00 p.m. the Spirit of Truth comes into their midst. This is on May 18th. Jesus made his final appearance to the apostles earlier that day at 7:00 a.m. and ascended to his Father. If you start with the date of the crucifixion which was on the day of Passover (Passover beginning at sundown of that day), 42 days had passed, counting the crucifixion day as one. Now, section 1 of Paper 194 begins as follows: "The apostles had been in hiding for 40 days. This happened to be the Jewish festival of Pentecost, ..." (194:1.1).

The trouble arises because the word "This," which begins the second sentence, is assumed to refer not only to "this day," the day of Pentecost, but also to "this day of the arrival of the Spirit of Truth," and "40 days" is taken to mean 40 continuous days. The two events (the day of the ascension and Pentecost) are easily conjoined in the mind of the reader, and the midwayer's literary transition from the introductory section to section 1 of Paper 194 certainly contributes to the

confusion, but this is not actually what the first two sentences of section 1 say. The Spirit of Truth arrived on day 42 following the crucifixion, Pentecost began on day 50 (a week of weeks if you begin counting the day after the crucifixion), and the apostles had been hiding for 40 (of the last 50) days! This great problem (which apparently bothered W.S. himself) is resolved if you do not assume that the word "This" refers to the same day of the arrival of the Spirit of Truth, and if you realize that the "in hiding for 40 days" means no more than what it says, that is, that they were not in hiding for eight (42 + 8 = 50) of the last 50 days as indeed they were not (they were in Galilee with Jesus, on Mount Olivet, etc.).

Ernest's investigation of this problem leads him to discover one of the more significant date issues. In 191:3.3, the statement is made that Jesus entered the "embrace of the Most Highs of Edentia" on May 14th, yet he ascended (by way of Edentia and the Most Highs) on May 18th (193:5.4).

Ernest thinks he has discovered a date error here, a corruption, but there are two other and much simpler possibilities. One is that the statement on 193:5.4 refers to a different event. Might it not have been possible for Jesus to have visited with the Most Highs more than once during his morontia transit? Another possibility is simply another typographical error, that the date given in 191:3.3 should have been May 18th, not the 14th!

Other purported cases of corruption can be explained equally easily. For example, another of Ernest's contradictions has to do with the following two sentences: "Gabriel and the Father Melchizedek are never away from Salvington at the same time, for in Gabriel's absence, the Father Melchizedek functions as the chief executive of Nebadon" (35:1:2). "These three conversed in a strange language but from certain things said, Peter erroneously conjectured that the beings with Jesus were Moses and Elijah; in reality, they were Gabriel and the Father Melchizedek" (158:1.8).

Indeed, how could Gabriel and the Father Melchizedek both visit with Jesus on earth if one or the other must always be present on Salvington? The answer is simple. The "never" in the first sentence is not a categorical imperative, but a declaration of convention and normal behavior. The terminal bestowal of a Creator Son happens but once in every local universe, enough of a rarity that Gabriel and the Father Melchizedek might make an exception to normal practice and both be briefly away from Salvington.

Ernest cites other examples, but in every case, they can be easily enough explained away (as above), or attributed to misinterpretation. For example, the UB discusses many instances of contact between celestial beings and humans that did not appear to require midwayer mediation, and are

therefore in conflict with the following: "*Contact personalities*. In the contacts made with the mortal beings of the material worlds, such as with the subject through whom these communications were transmitted, the midway creatures are always employed. They are an essential factor in such liaisons of the spiritual and the material levels" (77:8.8).

It is clear from the context of the quote that the Urantia Book is speaking of a certain limited class and kind of contacts, and not of contacts in general, many of which may be directly engaged in by higher celestial beings.

**THE GOVERNMENT PROBLEM:** In his examination of what he believes to be among the most serious corruptions, the UB's discussion of the evolution of government and society, Ernest exhibits the least understanding of what the book is trying to say.

The UB extols the virtues of representative government (45:7.3; 52:4; 70:12.1; 71:2; 74:5.7; 134:5-6). For example: "The entire universe is organized and administered on the representative plan. Representative government is the divine ideal of self-government among non-perfect beings" (45:7.3). The second sentence sets the context for the word "universe" in the first sentence. The revelators are referring to the seven superuniverses (the outer space levels not being populated yet) in the present era, prior to the completion of the Supreme. What constitutes "ideal" government in the central universe and/or Paradise we are not directly told.

Ernest derives two problems from the UB's favoring of representative government in the universes of time. The first stems from this seemingly contradictory statement: "While there is a divine and ideal form of government, such can not be revealed, but must be slowly and laboriously discovered by the men and women of each planet throughout the universes of time and space" (70:12.9). What is it that cannot be revealed, especially to the laboring men and women for whom the revelation is intended, that the revelators have not already told us with their exaltation of representative government? As far as governments go, the UB tells us that on a developed world nearing light and life, and especially in light and life, the social structure can, in some phases, reflect not the administrative needs of a vast set of universes, but the perfection of Havona. This is possible, because the people of these worlds, like ourselves, are all indwelt by the Father directly. The lowest level becomes a reflection of the highest!

This is a pattern in the theology of the UB, and Ernest completely misses this implication.

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Ironically, the very paragraphs in the UB that make this case for perfection are Ernest's next candidates of corruption. In 52:7.5, the book talks about a planet well along the path to political settledness, even to a spiritual manifestation of the brotherhood of man. The book goes on to say: "Representative government is vanishing, and the world is passing under the rule of individual self-control." In 55:5.4 we find the following: "Government is gradually disappearing. Self-control is slowly rendering laws of human enactment obsolete."

Ernest says, "The only condition under which representative government would vanish is that of the existence of perfect beings. Will our world eventually achieve perfect mortals?" (461) He first fails to note that government is "vanishing"—it hasn't vanished. Even if it did vanish in light and life eras, that would not contradict the UB's statement concerning the rest of the universe, because the answer to Ernest's question is, yes! Provisionally and for the limited sphere of life we call politics on an evolutionary planet, human culture and individuals will eventually become perfect enough to rise above the need for formal government. Ernest misses a key clue to this reality in 70:8.1: "The mental and physical inequality of human beings insures that social classes will appear. The only worlds without social strata are the most primitive and the most advanced. A dawning civilization has not yet begun the differentiation of social levels, while a world settled in light and life has largely effaced these divisions of mankind, which are so characteristic of all intermediate stages."

Having missed this simpler interpretation of this material, and in so doing also missing one of the most important revelations concerning our social future, Ernest declares: "This is the theme of the Caligastia betrayal: 'individual liberty consequent upon enhanced self-control'" (460). He does not perceive the reality of the vast gulf between the Caligastia declaration of self-determination in primitive peoples, and the perfection of self-control gained over countless centuries of following the Father's will. He forgets that "Most of the liberties which Lucifer sought he already had; others he was to receive in the future. All these precious endowments were lost by giving way to impatience and yielding to a desire to possess what one craves now and to possess it in defiance of all obligation to respect the rights and liberties of all other beings composing the universe of universes" (54:4.4).

Ernest can't fail to see that the paragraphs describing the rebel teachings (see 53:36; 53:4.2; 53:7.2) use the words 'self-assertion,' 'self-determination,' and 'unbridled liberty.' He actually makes the claim that the substitution of 'self-control' in sections 52:7.5 and 55:5.4 for 'self-assertion' in 53:4.2 is nothing more than a Caligastic sleight of hand to delude us into believing that such political achievement is possible. Why, given the contextual emphasis on the far future, this should be a problem anyway is beyond me, but the

bottom line is that Ernest ignores or forgets the UB principle that time matters. Immature self-assertion is transformed into advanced self-control over time, and there is a vast difference between them.

In addition, we see that the very sentence Ernest offers as evidence of corruption ("... such can not be revealed ...") is in fact another hint of the end point of the planetary political process, a state that is beyond representative government; beyond, because the individuals (and their Father fragments) living on such worlds have, within their planetary frame, collectively superseded it.

Ernest says that "Caligastia's method in perverting the revelation was to alter words, phrases, or sentences and insert them into paragraphs where they could easily slip by without notice" (462). Although I have not here examined every example that Ernest suggests to us, I have, in reading through them, discovered that most can be attributed to the application of a singular viewpoint causing various paragraphs to be interpreted together in a way that makes them appear contradictory. Alternative interpretations and viewpoints lead to different conclusions. That there are passages in the UB which may appear to be unexplainable contradictions I do not doubt, but none of those that Ernest classifies as the most serious, those pertaining to the social evolution of the planet and the timing of events in Jesus' life are, in my opinion, contradictions at all.

**T**O SUM UP, Ernest has set himself a number of tasks in his book, some of which he handles successfully, some of which he doesn't. Along the way, he leaves us with an interesting collection of Urantia documentation, and a well-told tale of investigative endeavor. His refutation of Gardner carries through the work well, as do his theories concerning the real role of Dr. William S. Sadler. While I think Ernest's contentions concerning a Caligastic hand in UB affairs are a bit of a stretch, in trying to make his case, he does at least show us that our own history has been fraught with human error and self-assertion. ■



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