

If his Urantia Book-inspired works can be considered the forerunners of El libro de Urantia, can we call him . . .



. . . “ J.J. THE BAPTIST ” ?

THE URANTIA REVELATION is meant for all the world, so how can its teachings be introduced into other cultures without imposing a system of North American values and traditions on people who regard them as foreign? The case of J.J. Benitez and the large following he has drawn in the Spanish-speaking world through his fictional works based on Urantia Book concepts may be something we can learn from. The Latino world has been brilliantly seeded with the Urantia revelation in a way that could never have been done by Anglo-Americans. Many who have found the amazing teachings through his books had no idea that the revelation originated in the United States of America, in the city of Chicago. They were introduced to it clothed in science fiction in their native tongue, and their curiosity led them to the source of the author’s inspiration—*El libro de Urantia*. For those happy readers the revelation is not an American book but belongs to *them*, and this could be precisely how the revelators intended the teachings to take root throughout the world.

Although the work of J.J. Benitez is regarded by some English-speaking readers as plagiarism, the fact that Benitez’s work has done so much good and brought light to so many who would otherwise still be in the dark, can be seen as part of the outworking of a larger plan for our planet. If each culture or nation could have its own J.J. Benitez to translate the ideas and concepts of the Urantia Book into works that appeal to the masses, we would soon be living on a planet headed toward light and life instead of a world steeped in ignorance and confusion.

Juan José Benitez was born in Pamplona, Spain, on September 7, 1946. He studied journalism at the

University of Navarre, then worked as an editor for several Spanish newspapers, mainly *La Gaceta del Norte* in Bilbao, where he was assigned to stories related to UFO phenomena. In 1974 an EFE teletype came across his desk reporting a group of Peruvians claiming to be in contact with extraterrestrial beings. Benitez traveled to Peru to cover the story, and from that time on his energies have been channeled into UFO investigation. The trip inspired his two first books: *Existio Otra Humanidad* and *Ovnis: SOS a la Humanidad*.

In 1979 Benitez published *El Enviado (The Envoy)*, in which he spoke for the first time of Jesus of Nazareth. *Caballo de Troya (The Trojan Horse)* appeared in 1984, admittedly inspired by the Urantia Book, which Benitez had known about since the early '80s. From that time Urantia Book concepts have been the basis for many of his other books, including *El Testamento de San Juan (Saint John's Last Will)*, *La Rebelion de Lucifer (The Lucifer Rebellion)*, and most recently *Al Fin Libre (Now Free)*, where he talks about his father's death and the "conversations" they have had together since. Benitez's works have been consistent bestsellers throughout the Spanish-speaking world, and many who found truth in his words have gone on to the obvious next step, *El Libro de Urantia*.

Recently on Amazon.com *El libro d'Urantia* placed #9 in the top ten bestsellers in Latin America, and it continues to enjoy steady sales. Says Rosey Lieske, organizer of Project Palomita that works to bring more books to Spanish-speaking readers: "If Benitez did indeed do his work in the spirit of so-called 'plagiarism,' then I thank God he did. He has done more for

the Urantia Book than anybody who would thoughtlessly condemn him without knowing the abundance of good that has come from his writings. As a Urantia worker in Latin America, I can tell you that we simply cannot keep up with the outpouring of interest that has come about as a result of J.J. Benitez's work."

She continues: "Personally, I don't hold with the definition of 'plagiarism' that some might attach to the wholesale use of the text. Under U.S. law, it is only the creative work of another human being that can be plagiarized. The material in the Urantia Book was given to us by celestial beings, therefore it cannot be legally copyrighted (though it certainly was *illegally* copyrighted). Benitez's widespread incorporation of the text of the Urantia Book does not constitute plagiarism.

"Although his work is often cited by North American readers as an outrage, the fact is that J.J. has been absolutely key in bringing the revelation to thousands of Latins. I personally look on his work as no less than a miracle, as the introduction of revelation to orthodox cultures is particularly difficult."

Perhaps we could call Benitez "J.J. the Baptist," for his work certainly is the prelude to a greater work to come. His work has

brilliantly seeded the revelation where it couldn't have gone otherwise, and continues to do so today.

What follows are some remarkable stories of lives forever changed by the works of J.J. Benitez. Similar stories are being repeated in the experience of thousands of hungry souls in Spain and Latin America today.

—Saskia Praamsma, Rosey Lieske, Olga Lopez.

RICARDO FRANCO: The first lessons from the book came to me when I was 16 years old while reading the first volume of *Caballo de Troya (The Trojan Horse)*, a novel written by J.J. Benitez, based on teachings from the Urantia Book. This series of five books describes the life of Jesus, and it came to me when I needed it most. I felt that the conventional way of seeing God offered by the church was leaving out something essential. I had always been rebellious about it and had problems finding support for my point of view. The refreshing new life of Jesus of Nazareth told in these books was like an answer to my prayers.

The Trojan Horse came into my hands by chance, and after devouring it, I eagerly awaited the next volume of the series. The same author later wrote *La Rebelion de Lucifer (The Lucifer Rebellion)*, which recounts the story of the creation of our galaxy, the organization of the universe, the planting of life on our planet, the birth of Andon and Fonta, and the evolution of man, climaxing with the story of the Lucifer rebellion.

This particular book made me feel new things, because my soul knew the instant I was reading it that it was more than a fantasy. I decided to look for the source of these books. When at last I found the Urantia Book I could finally begin to read from the beginning.

The Urantia Book has given me an enormous, wonderful vision bigger than that taught by any other religion. This revelation has shown me a new dimension of God's love; it has changed and continues to change my life from its foundations. Imagine the incomparable sense of joy that comes from knowing that God wants us to love him voluntarily and not because of fear! Thanks to the teachings of the Urantia Book, I've become a freer human being and therefore able to be more worthy of his love.

JOSEFINA DE MARTINEZ: One day, while looking for some postcards and magazines in a bookstore in Cancun where I live, I found *El Testamento de San Juan (Saint John's Last Will)* by J. J. Benitez. It appeared to be the last copy in the store and I wanted to buy it because I had already read his *Virgin de Guadalupe* and had seen him interviewed on TV. While I was paying for it, I asked the clerk if the store carried any other works ►

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by the same author. He called the manager, who informed me that he had never heard of Benitez. I showed him the book I'd just bought, and he told me, bewildered, that the book I had in my hands was not for sale at his bookstore. "It doesn't have our special marks," he said. "Maybe somebody forgot it and left it here." He told the clerk to return my money in case the owner came back asking for the book. I finally convinced him to let me keep it and gave him my phone number in case that someone returned. No problem, since nobody has called me yet.

Later, I went to the dentist and told him the story, and he asked me if I had read *The Trojan Horse*. Since I hadn't, he offered to lend me his own copy. I read *Last Will* first, finished it quickly, then began *The Trojan Horse*. It all was so interesting that I read day and night, till later that week, when a friend and I left for Cozumel to attend a series of lectures on "Superior Consciousness."

In Cozumel we stayed for three days at the hotel where the lectures took place. On the second day, I noticed a table full of books on one side of the room. During the next intermission I went over to that table and was informed that those books had been brought over for the hotel tourists by a woman named June. In that heap of all sizes and subjects I found the Urantia Book—the same book J.J. Benitez had talked about in *Last Will*. I located my friend, and together we went looking for June. When we found her and asked her about the Urantia Book, she told us to keep it, saying, "I haven't really read it. Somebody left it at my home."

So came the Urantia Book, in English, into our hands. For me it is a wonderful book and I believe in it completely. The account of the life of Jesus answers most of the questions I had asked my parents and the Catholic priests in my youth. I wish to thank J.J. Benitez from the bottom of my heart for bringing the UB to my attention. It is important that this major revelation from the Most Highs be disseminated around the world, and that we all learn what we can from it.

JAIMÉ ANDRES CUELLO: In 1996 I was reading J. J. Benitez's *The Trojan Horse*, a book based on the Urantia Book. A friend, also a Benitez reader, told me, "I know of a little book that J.J. uses as a source for his books. Are you interested?" A few days later I was asking for the Papers in a bookstore, but when I saw the UB for the first time, for US\$80, I said, "Naaaa! Too long, too expensive, and maybe full of lies!" I left the bookstore.

Five minutes later the salesman in the bookstore was handing me the book in a bag, and that was all. Since that day I feel I am a different guy—a better guy!

DIEGO GONZALES MUNOS: Having studied at an Anglican school in Chile, a predominantly Roman Catholic country, I had the opportunity of learning and experiencing tolerance. I was very curious about UFO phenomena and paranormal activity, and an insatiable thirst for truth led me

on a search through several religions. One day, a friend told me about *The Trojan Horse* by J.J. Benitez. I soon read all of the books in the series, devouring them one after the other. I began to read other books by Benitez, including *The Lucifer Rebellion*, *Visitors (The UFOs)*, and *St. John's Last Will*. The latter book talks about the Urantia Book; the author says he has drunk from its waters. But it was not yet the hour.

I was studying at the university in the city of Santiago, three thousand kilometers from home, when one day I saw the Urantia Book in a bookstore, inside its box. Its look was powerful, mysterious. Unfortunately, it was very expensive and I didn't dare buy it. It was not yet the hour. Two months later I made up my mind to purchase it, but I couldn't find the book anywhere. Was somebody playing me the fool?

I was out for a walk with a friend, near a commercial center, when I saw it again. I called my father and very subtly told him about the book I wanted, mentioning that I had not received any Christmas gifts or birthday gifts from him. Mission accomplished!

With money in hand, I took a bus across town to buy my book. After two minutes,

I felt an irresistible pull to jump out of the bus, which I did. Feeling embarrassed and foolish for jumping out without a real motive, I began walking a few steps to a bookstore, and there it was in the middle of the table—the Urantia Book, Spanish version. I talked with the bookseller and began to understand that "the hour had come."

TIMOTHY W. MORRIS: I was raised in a devout Mormon family in Virginia, my parents having converted to that faith while in their twenties. I was the tenth of fourteen children, and although our family life was hectic, my parents had a wonderful, loving relationship which aided greatly in keeping the family close-knit. From a very young age I was devoted to the Mormon faith; I read the entire Bible, *The Book of Mormon*, and other religious works.

At 19, like many young men in the Mormon religion, I did two years of missionary service. During my mission in southern Spain, I came face to face with a lot of questions concerning the absolute truthfulness of *any* religion. Although I served an honorable mission and assisted many people in joining the Mormon faith, I was beginning to distance myself from my religion. Towards the end of my mission I lost my belief in Mormonism.

While at a family's home in Seville, I came upon a copy of the fictional Spanish-language work *The Trojan Horse* (first volume), by J.J. Benitez. I read only a small excerpt but found its description of Christ tremendously appealing. I did not buy the book while in Spain, thinking there would be editions in the United States; but upon my return in 1988 I could not find a copy anywhere.

During the next six years I attended Brigham Young University and got married. I let no one know of my loss of belief except my father, whom I told immediately upon my return

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—Ricardo Franco

from Spain. I went through the motions of being a Mormon throughout those six years, becoming more spiritually removed with each passing year.

In 1994, after finishing my schooling, I was hired by a banking software firm and given the responsibility of overseeing their sales in Latin America. I began heavy travel throughout South America, and while in Bogotá, Colombia, I came upon the *Trojan Horse* books again (then numbering four volumes). I bought all four and began reading them on my flights to and from South America. The content of the books was too realistic to be fiction and I was continually fascinated.

At the end of 1996, I found another book by J.J. Benitez, *The Testament of John*, at the same bookstore in the airport in Bogotá. This book portrayed the apostle John giving a final declaration to the body of Christian believers in which he admits to errors that he and Peter had made in organizing the church. It then went on to provide an in-depth portrayal of the afterlife, describing the mansion worlds, the superuniverses, Havona and Paradise. At the end of the book was a disclaimer from the author admitting that much of his material had been derived from a book which was in the custody of the Urantia Foundation. My first thought was that this foundation must be a group of dedicated monks hidden somewhere in the Italian Alps guarding the holy writ. I searched for the foundation and repeatedly came up short.

I knew that I had come upon something very important and wanted to share it with one of my brothers, who I knew was questioning the Mormon faith as well. So I began translating *The Testament of John* from Spanish to English for my brother's benefit. In early 1997, after finishing the translation of the first three chapters, I contacted the Miami office of the editors of the Planeta publishing group and asked whether the Benitez works were available in English. They told me that they were not. I then asked if they had ever heard of the Urantia Foundation. They said yes, that it was located in Chicago and that it published a book over 2,000 pages long that I could buy at any bookstore.

I immediately went out and bought it and read close to 400 pages in the first night. I was amazed by the content and detail and could not stop reading, continuing until around four in the morning. When I finally put it down to go to bed I felt incredibly calm and serene.

I have since read the Urantia Book twice and have shared it with my brother and two close friends, all of whom have devoured it in amazement.

FERNANDO MULDONADO: Around 1990 I was in a transpersonal psychology group which focused on Gurdjieff's teachings and the *Enneagram*. I had been in that group for about three years when I first heard of the book *The Trojan Horse*, by J.J. Benitez, which was said to provide a superior description of the life of Jesus. I was so interested that I bought the

book within a few weeks and began reading it with intense concentration and emotion. The book's portrayal was so much more beautiful than anything I had ever heard during my Catholic upbringing.

After finishing that first book, I spent the next several years reading all the other books of the series, through *The Trojan Horse IV*. I knew inside me that the information in these novels was based on another source. I wanted to find that source but had no idea where to begin looking for it. In 1997 I found *St. John's Last Will*, by the same author, and after reading it with passion, I learned that the source was the Urantia Book. After that, I read another Benitez book called *The Lucifer Rebellion* and understood everything in it.

While my work as an electronic engineer had taken me to the Internet since 1988, it had never occurred to me to search for the Urantia Book via an electronic library until ten years later. First I found a website, and some days later, the English-language discussion group. That led me to the Spanish website and subsequently to the discussion group to which I now belong. . . .

OLGA LOPEZ: Since the day I began to reason, I have been interested in all that is beyond the reality that we can experience with our five senses. I've always been passionate about knowledge, and it wasn't long before I realized that scientific explanations on one side and those from the Catholic Church on the other didn't fully answer my questions.

I thought it was impossible for life to have emerged from nothingness as a result of haphazard and highly improbable chemical reactions—not intelligent life! I knew that something was lacking in that theory, namely the hand of a Supreme Intelligence who was able to give sense and coherence to the whole known creation. I was also not convinced by the image of the God of the Catholic Church. The idea of sin and the atonement doctrine were, for me, a barbarism. A vengeful God did not sit well with me.

I learned about the Urantia Book through the

books of J.J. Benitez. The first of his books reflecting the teachings that came into my hands was *The Lucifer Rebellion*. I read it in 1993 and was so impressed that I traveled to the little Spanish town of Sotillo del Rincon near Soria. For those who have not read the novel, this is the town where the story begins—a beautiful town in which peace and calmness reign.

Three years later, in the summer of 1996, I bought *The Trojan Horse I* by the same author. I was so moved that I read it straight through and didn't stop until I had completed the entire *Trojan Horse* series, to number IV, which was the last one published at that time. You cannot imagine how badly I felt when I finished the fourth book. It ended so abruptly. I needed to know more.

I then read *St. John's Last Will*, which contains many concepts from the Urantia Book. I couldn't read too many pages at ➤

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—Fernando Riskey

once because I was dizzy with all those new ideas. It was like attempting to hold the entire ocean in one's arms. I was trying to understand the nature of God and the immense infinity of the whole creation, but it was impossible. Our poor human mind isn't able to comprehend all that greatness.

However, I had received my share of good vibrations; I had begun to see my existence and that of others with new eyes. By "chance," thanks to my work as a computer analyst, I got on the Internet in 1996 and began surfing. One day I searched the word "Urantia," and what a surprise! I discovered an electronic edition of the book and the URL of a group of UB readers from around the world. I joined the list, made regular contact with other readers and finally got my Spanish translation in 1997.

FERNANDO RISQUEZ: In December 1991 a close friend who does Zen meditation and other spiritual practices received as a gift the book *St. John's Last Will* by J.J. Benitez, which draws from the well of the Urantia Book. This friend in turn gave the book to me, in order to get rid of something he didn't like and still do well by me that Christmas. I began to read it in February of 1992. In that book I found important revelations and deeper teachings than those presented in the New Testament Gospels. I was impressed with the explanations and visions that, in a brilliant and holistic way, integrate science, philosophy and religion. It was there that I first heard about the Urantia Book.

I reread *Last Will* many times, as well as books by Fritjof Capra, Teilhard de Chardin, C. G. Jung, and many others. Three years after reading *Last Will*, I saw the Urantia Book for the first time here in Caracas, but it was not until 1997 that I could afford to buy it. Since then it has become a rich and important source of knowledge and revelations for me. It helps me tremendously with the lectures I give at the Central University of Venezuela, where I present the different models of the universe, including the artistic vision of the master universe according to the Urantia Book. . . .

BETSY BERNA: Recently I have become aware that we in the Spanish-language world must thank J.J. Benitez for having sparked interest in the Urantia Book. I, as have others, learned about the Urantia Book through the works of this author.

I didn't really like reading until a friend told me about *The Trojan Horse*. I began with the five-book *Trojan Horse* series, then read *The Lucifer Rebellion*, *St. John's Last Will*, and finally *Talking with God at 33,000 Feet*. Thus I began my adventure in the world of books. I liked the Benitez style of science fiction mixed with religion, and I wondered where he could have gotten all that information about the life of Jesus and the structure of the cosmos. My friend also told my father, who is addicted to books, about the Benitez books and he subsequently bought the series.

One day, in the spring of 1997, I was searching through

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—George Benavides

my father's books when I discovered that he already owned the Urantia Book. I was stunned. He told me he'd bought it in 1996. He had noticed it on the shelves of a bookstore and took it down, not knowing what it was about. As he was looking through it, the bookseller came over and advised him to buy it, and he did. He then put it in his bookcase, unread, where it stayed until I found it. I began to read it from the very beginning, finding answers to questions I had long asked myself about God and other mysteries, such as: Who was Jesus? Do angels really exist? What is the soul and the spirit?

My ideas were clarified. I now see life with a new perspective, another meaning; now life is not merely growing up, studying, eating, working, having children and dying. I now know that I have an inner guide who tells me that I must learn to forgive; to be patient with those around me; that I must try to understand why some people are so hostile; that I must try to awaken in others an interest in enriching their own spiritual lives; that there must be an equilibrium between the material and the spiritual life.

GEORGE BENAVIDES: In 1998 I read a book by J.J. Benitez called *The Trojan Horse*. It was essentially about an astronaut who went back in time to meet Jesus Christ. It was a very interesting story that put the character of Jesus in a whole new light. I began searching more after that.

One day I walked into the Barnes & Noble bookstore and happened to see the Urantia Book on a shelf. It was a big, white book with many questions on the outside cover, such as, Who are we? Where are we going? Where do we come from?—all questions I was curious about. When I opened the book I immediately zeroed in on the part about Jesus' early childhood. I was instantly excited. I knew what I had in front of me, so I bought it. I kept reading *The Trojan Horse* books for quite a while, then began to compare Benitez's books with the Spanish edition of the Urantia Book I had recently purchased. I realized at once that *The Trojan Horse* books must have been inspired by the Urantia Book.

When I first started reading about Jesus in the *Trojan Horse* books, I felt him come alive for the first time. I saw him for what he truly was here on earth. After reading the Urantia Book, I saw him for what he truly is in heaven. I bought all five of the *Trojan Horse* books, but I only got halfway through number three. I lost interest in reading them when the Urantia Book became a superior book to me. However, I still appreciate J.J. Benitez for opening the doors that so many people wish to enter. . . . ■

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