

Editorial

The Sherman Diaries

by Larry Mullins

Who was Harold Sherman?

When *A History of the Urantia Papers* was written, I researched what I called “The Sherman Tempest.” I believed I presented a fair case, basing my writing on the story as Clyde told it to me, and as he later wrote about it in a paper: *A Response to a Thinly Disguised Attack on the Urantia Papers*. I balanced this information against Sherman’s book, *How to Know What to Believe*. This book, published in 1976 (as was Clyde’s paper), was an account of what Sherman said happened 34 years earlier. In 2003, Saskia Praamsma and Matthew Block published Volume One of *The Sherman Diaries*. Saskia urged me to read it, that it would cause me to alter my opinion of Harold and Martha Sherman. She was correct. Although I continued to believe the events took place as the History depicted them, the diaries undemonized Harold Sherman—and also a man named Harry Loose.

Harold was remarkably gifted, a good writer with a poetic and spiritual bent, and his wife Martha was supremely devoted to him. He tended toward the occult and had strong convictions about psychic phenomena. In 1921, at the age of 24, Harold spent an evening with Harry Loose, who was an enigmatic and charismatic individual. Sherman became convinced that Loose had unfathomable psychic powers. With the exception of a single letter from Loose, they lost contact, but Sherman never forgot that evening.

It was 1941 before Harold was able to locate Loose again. Loose told Harold about the Urantia Papers. Apparently Loose had been a patient of Dr. Sadler and had taken part in the Forum. Loose said that when the Papers were published in a book, they would impact the thinking of the entire world. Moreover, Loose was certain that Sherman would play an important role in propagating *The Urantia Book*. Loose claimed that Sherman was a unique individual, one of a special group he called *hybrids*. Loose believed both he and Sherman had reincarnated on our planet several times. (Of course this idea is contrary to the teachings of the Urantia Papers. At the time, Sherman did not know this). Loose had a remarkable ability to flatter and persuade Sherman that the writer was a child of destiny, and he would be a potent force as he became acquainted with the Urantia Papers.

The Diaries helped me to better understand the human side of Harold Sherman. He did go to Chicago, and was accepted by Dr. Sadler into the Forum. He and Martha sat down to read the Urantia Papers at 533 Diversey with honest hearts and a sincere desire to be of service to the Revelation. And this is where Volume One of the fascinating Diaries end. My thinking had indeed changed, as Saskia predicted. Then came Volume Two of the Diaries, with information that was even more startling and intriguing.

“The Sherman Diaries, Volume Two”

I should express, at this point, my appreciation as a Urantian to Saskia and Matthew for their work on this difficult project. When Meredith and I agreed to create the History, we also agreed to follow the truth wherever it led. This was a non-negotiable principle that we adhered to. I wrote in the Introduction to the History that we were attempting a beginning, that we knew this would not be the final word. Now, I must concede that in some important respects regarding the “Sherman Tempest” our history is in need of revision, and I will undertake this in the next edition.

I do also want to add a very important point. I am still convinced that all credible evidence, including *The Sherman Diaries*, points to a Revelation that was not corrupted by any human intrusion. Whatever may have been Dr. Sadler’s human foibles, I do not believe he made changes in the Urantia Revelation. Some will no doubt see this differently. Readers must weigh the available facts and judge for themselves. I highly recommend those interested read *The Sherman Diaries* for themselves. They are an utterly fascinating window into one of the most remarkable episodes in human history.

“How to Know What to Believe”

Volume Two of the Diaries leaves some confusion in my mind. In important respects, it contrasts dramatically with Harold’s 1976 book, *How to Know What to Believe (HTKWTB)*. For example, Sherman praises the Urantia Papers extravagantly throughout Volume Two of the Diaries: “... *this is as true and authentic and scientifically probable revelation of all the universe mysteries which have baffled man since the evolution of human creatures on this planet ... Each line of the immense amount of material is absolutely breathtaking.*” (p.23) This, in spite of the fact that Loose’s hybrid material is supposedly “missing.” Loose wrote: “*It’s too bad that which you should have read has been deleted, both from the text and from the minds.*” But Loose’s complaints by mail do not affect Sherman’s love of the Papers, and he continues to rhapsodize about them. Yet, in his 1976 book, Harold

unfortunately compresses the events in such a way that he distorts them—at least according to the Diaries' account. For example, he gives the impression in *HTKWTB* that he and Martha had immediate misgivings about the Papers for several reasons, among them that they “could not accept” the concept of the Thought Adjuster. (p. 71) He states the Papers make no mention of Jesus and that the Jesus Papers were added after the Book was declared “finished” in 1934. (p. 72) It should be noted that Clyde Bedell and all the Forum members agree that the Revelation continued throughout the thirties, and the Papers were not declared finished by the Revelators until May of 1942, when the copy was frozen. Also, Jesus is referred to countless times throughout the text, as early as page 30, and 19 more times in the first hundred pages. Harold wrote in *HTKWTB* that there were 92 Papers in all (p.61) — there were 196. Obviously Harold's recollections had grown fuzzy by 1976 (he was 78). The Sherman *Diaries* are a much more reliable record of what took place in the Forum sixty years ago.

In the Diaries, after reading the Papers, Harold wrote: “*I accept wholeheartedly and without any reservation whatsoever the Book of Urantia and the Revelation it contains.*” (p. 73) Of Jesus he writes: “*... for the first time we understand completely the appearance of Jesus on earth—why he came and what his coming means to us in relation to our destiny which leads beyond what we call death to glories indescribable.*” (p. 23) After the confrontation with the Sadlers in the Forum (Sept. 1942), Harold maintained faith in the Papers, although he was disillusioned with Dr. Sadler. He wrote of this clash to Wilkins in October, noting that: “*nothing at all has happened to discredit the wonderful revelation.*”

The Sherman Tempest Revisited

To backtrack a bit, events leading up to the crisis as told in the Diaries were much as we described them in the History. Very shortly after the Shermans arrived, the Forum was told the Revelation phase was ended, and no more questions from the Forum members would be entertained. The text was frozen, and the Contact Commission was told to prepare it for publication. The Forum became a kind of glorified study group. The members were also excluded from any participation in forming the organizations that would protect and propagate the Revelation. In a very discrete and carefully worded petition to Dr. Sadler (written by Clyde Bedell) an appeal was made to allow the Forum to participate in the structuring of these organizations. It should be noted here that the Forum members contributed the money that made the preparations for printing the book possible (the setting

of the text in type and the making of the printing plates). 48 members of the Forum signed this petition.

Dr. Sadler was warned of the impending “revolt” by a repentant couple early the next morning. He was well prepared when the petition was formally presented to him a few hours later. The Shermans then report that Dr. Sadler called the Forum members in, couple by couple, and told them the Midwayers had warned him of the meeting and had previously cautioned him about the Shermans. Sadler said the Midwayers had provided him a “television” image of the meeting. For the first time the name of Caligastia was brought up and inferred to be the instigator who was working through the Shermans. Each petitioner was told to remove their signature or be branded as rebels. All the petitioners were forbidden to contact the Shermans. A careful reading of Clyde's paper seems to concede that Dr. Sadler may have said some of these things, but Clyde claims they were only said in jest. Whether they were or not, all 48 of the members immediately removed their names, with the exception of the Shermans and Sir Hubert Wilkins who were not asked to.

There followed an explosive Forum meeting in which Sherman openly challenged the statements of Dr. Sadler. Clyde's account ends here; he wrote that he did not recall the Sherman's attending meetings after this confrontation. However, the Diaries are meticulously detailed, and are very persuasive that the Shermans did continue to attend meetings. Also, it seems clear that other members slowly began to contact the Shermans. The dissatisfaction about the organizational structures continued, and many members of the original Forum were never satisfied with the structure of the Foundation and the Brotherhood. Clyde Bedell was certainly one of them. However, in my judgment, the greatest damage that was done was to the Urantia movement. An *inner circle* was born, and it remains to this day at the heart of both the Foundation and the Fellowship. The stage was set for future “secret messages” and a parade of “special people” who would be invited into an autocratic inner circle that presumed total authority over the Urantia Revelation. This was the disastrous result of the “the shadow of a hair's turning” by Dr. Sadler so long ago.

However, I must add that Harold's 1976 book is misleading. His passion and devotion to the Urantia Papers in the early years are papered over. At this point I remain convinced that, in spite of his errors in handling the petition of the Forum, Dr. Sadler protected the original text of the Revelation. Nearly all agree that authentic (though limited) Revelator contacts continued until the publication of *The Urantia Book* in 1955, after which the

Revelators signed off with a curt: “You are now on your own.”

When the plates were being prepared in 1942, the Midwayers apparently allowed human events to take their course, however, it is not plausible that they would permit human contamination of the Urantia Papers while they continued to direct the steps to their eventual publication in late 1955. To date, no one who believes Dr. Sadler corrupted the Revelation has satisfactorily explained why the Revelators did not simply pull the plug on the project. Throughout 1942, until his death in the fall of 1943, Harry Loose kept his relentless fueling of Sherman’s growing doubts, continually lamenting the supposed “removal” of his strange “hybrid” concept, and telling Sherman what a great man he was destined to become. Yet, in his later letters about the Urantia Papers, Sherman’s greatest gripe seemed to be against the Jesus Papers. Although he has nothing but praise for them in the Diaries, by 1976 it seemed he gradually came to believe they were added by Sadler to tie the Revelation to the Christian religion. Nearly all students of *The Urantia Book* see it as a great cosmic framework for a restatement of the Life and Teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. In *HTKWTB*, Sherman lamented the litigations of Urantia Foundation against readers of *The Urantia Book* and stated the whole project was a failure. He became enthralled with *Oahspe*, a book he considered vastly superior to the Urantia Papers.

In my judgment, we are left to muse *not* over the supposed “corruption” of the Papers, but rather about the human folly that followed their publication. The Urantia organizations were formed much as Dr. Sadler, Bill, and several attorneys had designed them. Soon Bill and his father would have a falling out, splitting the Chicago group into two societies. Bill’s dream of a democratic Brotherhood would never happen, and eventually there came a split between the Brotherhood and the Foundation that has never healed. I cannot help but wonder what would have happened if Harold Sherman and Clyde Bedell had gotten their way, back in those early golden days when Sherman referred to Dr. Sadler as having “as sweet a personality as we have ever met.” Clyde and Harold wanted the Papers promoted and mass-distributed at little or no cost. They both believed the people could decide the truth for themselves, and that it was not necessary to have a formal organization between the people and their revelation.

For more information on *The Sherman Diaries*:
www.squarecircles.com

Creative Outreach

by Meredith Sprunger

Adjusting Our Perspective

When *The Urantia Book* was published in 1955 many of the people in the Forum expected that it would bring dramatic events in our society. After nearly a half century of experience, we realize that the Fifth Epochal Revelation will follow the slow dynamics of evolutionary change very similar to the influence of the Life and Teachings of Jesus. Rodney Stark in *The Rise of Christianity* observes that there was a very small Christian population in the first two centuries. Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* documents this same slow development of scientific change.

There are many signs of preparation for religious change. Lonnie D. Kliever in *The Shattered Spectrum* observes that there is no unity in contemporary theology and suggests there will be radical changes in the future. Bishop John Shelby Spong declares that “Christianity must change or die.” Diana Eck describes *A New Religious America* and numerous theologians are observing that Christianity in the future will be radically different than it is today.

The Spiritual Fellowship appears to be the first of what will no doubt be many religious organizations stemming out of the Fifth Epochal Revelation. But these new religious organizations will be decades in developing and probably a century before they become a major influence in our society. For the foreseeable future our activity will be a minor influence at the grass roots of society. We do have the opportunity to contribute to the form and direction of the religious institutions of the future.

The Mission of The Spiritual Fellowship

The major responsibility in the Urantia movement, in my judgment, is disseminating the