

Chapter 10

Preparing for Printing *The Urantia Book*

The 1924 announcement of the Urantia Revelation led Forum members to speculate about book publication. At various points in the development of the papers, the contact commission received specific directions in this regard which they conveyed to the Forum.¹

Printing and Proofreading

The first action in the plans for publication was an inquiry about how long a copyright lasts, to the copyright office in Washington, D.C., in 1932, by Wilfred C. Kellogg, a contact commissioner and agent for the group.² The actual title of the planned book was not mentioned in correspondence until a few years into the process. The contact commissioners and the Forum were not allowed to let information get out to the public before the book was published and copyrighted.

Following is the sequence of events leading to the publication of *The Urantia Book*:

- February 5, 1937* – R.R. Donnelley and Sons Printing Company submitted a contract to W.C. Kellogg for 10,000 copies of a 7" x 10", 1,760 page "book on psychology."³
- February 12, 1937* – Donnelley questioned Kellogg about his preference for patent base electrotypes or nickel-faced stereotypes. (Nickel was chosen.)⁴
- 1937* – Dr. Lena K. Sadler initiated a typesetting fund with the target amount of \$20,000. Most was accumulated before her death on August 9, 1939, and was used to set type and prepare plates for printing the book.⁵
- June 28, 1941* – Donnelley made a proposal to W.C. Kellogg for "Composition and Plates" for a book of approximately 2,000 pages.⁶
- September 11, 1941* – Wilfred C. Kellogg signed a contract with Donnelley. Up to that time it was the only book Donnelley had ever printed that did not carry the printer's name.⁷ (Authority had been granted in June 1941 to begin arrangements for printing the Urantia Papers.)

*Enough money had been received through . . . donations to permit the letting of a contract (pursuant to authority granted last spring) for the making of plates which are to be used in the printing of the book.*⁸

- November 1, 1941 –* R.R. Donnelley and Sons Printing Company began setting type for the Foreword.⁹
- November 18, 1941 –* A letter was mailed to all Forum members by a finance committee, acting in behalf of the contact commission. This letter requested additional contributions in the amount of \$25,000. The finance committee was chaired by William M. Hales and included William Sadler, Jr., Wilfred C. Kellogg, and Emma Christensen.¹⁰
- May 31, 1942 -* The end of the “official” Forum was announced by the revelatory commission to the contact commission. This marked the point at which questions could no longer be accepted, and the answers included in *The Urantia Book*.
*The last meeting of the Forum as a genetic assembly was held on May 31st, 1942*¹¹ (This Sunday meeting on the last day of May was the end of the official existence of the Forum; the beginning of the official Forum was in September 1925.)
- January 28, 1943 –* W.C. Kellogg writes Donnelley that he is returning galleys of Part I, [including Foreword] so that the printer can begin the make-up creating the printing plates. The process involved creating a mold from the typeset pages.
- February 16, 1943 –* Donnelley invoiced W.C. Kellogg for the completion of the plates of Part I, “The Composition and Stereotypes for Book, *Mortals of Urantia*.”¹²
- May 31, 1944 –* Donnelley billed Mr. Kellogg for \$1,094.67 for completion of “Composition and plates for the book, *Mortals of Urantia*, Part II.”¹³
- October 26, 1946 –* Kellogg correspondence to Donnelley refers to “the Urantia book” by name for the first time. [Revelator messages in 1942 refer to “the Urantia Book.” See Appendix IX]¹⁴

- January 8, 1948* – The contact commission waited for the Forum to finish a full reading of the final revelator version of Part IV before authorizing typesetting and production of plates in case any corrections were needed. The Forum completed a full reading of the typewritten version of *The Life and Teachings of Jesus* on January 8, 1948.¹⁵
- August 27, 1948* – Donnelley billed W.C.K. \$2,216.63 for Part III, *History of Urantia* for composition, printing of plates.¹⁶
- November 12, 1948* – Galley proofs [of Part IV] were transmitted from Donnelley to Kellogg. The plated pages of Part IV ran from page 1323 to 2097.¹⁷
- June 1950* – It was announced at the annual picnic that Part IV was in plates.¹⁸

Working with the contact commissioners at the Diversey office, Mary Flanagan Penn, an employee of R.R. Donnelley, oversaw the checking and proofreading of the galley proofs that had begun in 1942.¹⁹ Donnelley provided the proofs to the contact commission for a proofreading process of monumental proportions that continued for nearly a decade.²⁰ The text had been typed up to five times before publication, reflecting the many opportunities members of the Forum had to detect errors or inconsistencies. Typing the book had been hard enough, but finding and eliminating errors in the production process was an even more onerous task.

The contact commissioners were constantly looking for errors in the proofs and comparing them with the latest typewritten transcripts. They knew that the papers must be published exactly as the revelators had presented them. The final proofreading and plating was completed by mid-1950, although a few of the pages would need to be re-plated before *The Urantia Book* was published, due to mechanical defects, or “gremlins.”²¹

Bill Sadler explained to the Forum that the first “edition” would consist of multiple printings, each printing reflecting additional punctuation, capitalization and spelling corrections. He was confident that all major errors would be found by the third printing, or before the deaths of all of the contact commissioners. Urantia Foundation corrected the relatively few minor

technical errors found in subsequent printings with approval of the revelators and before the death of the last contact commissioner.²²

Each paper read by Forum members bore a red stamp, “Proofed by Oppy,” who was a senior employee at R.R. Donnelley and Sons Company. As the papers were plated and proofed, each page was pasted onto buff colored card stock for Forum members to read at 533 Diversey. Phillip Copenhaver, Jr., recalled reading the papers in galley form when he joined the Forum after he returned from military service in 1946.²³ These readers were prohibited from taking notes, making handwritten copies, or removing them from the building. By the time of the first printing in 1955, the text was as good as the humans could make it.²⁴

When permission to publish the first edition was finally received, the book was printed on fine Bible-type paper with thicker paper used for the earlier and later pages of the book. The middle portion was printed on lighter weight paper because those pages normally receive the least amount of handling.²⁵

The development of the revelation was an evolutionary partnership that included mortals, angels, and Sons of God. While the revelatory commission did provide some specific guidance, they required many decisions and a great deal of work in the publication phase by their human partners. These human partners studied the technical aspects of publishing, printing, and copyright law. They exercised their own thinking and creativity in making plans and decisions, ever guided by the many celestial beings. They submitted these plans to the revelators for critique and approval.²⁶

The Urantia Book To Be “Free of Encumbrances”

With the permission of the revelators, the contact commissioners, predominantly Bill Sadler, compiled the list of papers and “authors” for the front of *The Urantia Book*, as well as an expanded table of contents. The more detailed table included all of the titles of sections in each paper as well as highlights of a few of the sections.²⁷ When a new celestial overseer of the revelation arrived in 1951, he approved the creation of an index to be published in a separate volume.²⁸

Two of the contact commissioners offered to write a book-length introduction for *The Urantia Book*, but it was denied by the revelators, who asked, “How could a candle light the way for a powerful beacon of light?”²⁹ The revelatory commission made it clear at this time that *The Urantia Book* was to be published “free of human encumbrances of any kind.”³⁰

*[T]he celestial revelators do not want any human being—any human name—ever to be associated with The Urantia Book. They want this revelation to stand on its own declarations and teachings.*³¹

One of the contact commissioners wrote “*An Alpheus Twins’ Version of the Foreword and First Five Papers*,” and presented it to the Forum on successive Sundays in January 1955. They listened with rapt attention, encouraging him to continue writing. He was notified after the second paper not to continue the project, or as Marian Rowley bluntly described it, “The midwayers told Bill to knock it off.” The celestial overseers did not want an interpretive or simplified version competing with the book itself.³²

The contact personality was always very interested in the development of the revelation and in the progress made toward publication of the papers, but he had no role in publication or the organizations.³³

A Possible Threat to the Unity of the Believers?

Before the structure of either organization was finalized members of the Forum began to question what kind of organizations would meet the high standards of the fifth epochal revelation. It was certain that the ancient format of the organized Christian churches would not meet the qualifications of open study, or for leaders who would remain lifelong students, not pedagogues. Although institutional religion reached its highest point between the 1930s and the 1950s, it was beginning to fray along its edges by 1942. Was this model appropriate for the new revelation? Did it allow for freedom of interpretation and for true group participation?

It was then that fresh thought was being given to the plan and structure of a new kind of religion; *how* it was being taught, not *where* it was being presented. The over-emphasis upon sexual morality, marriage rules, entertainment, evil and sin by traditional religions would give

way to brotherhood, social fairness, goodness, love, and spiritual experience. The humans were eager to design a religion fit for a war-weary world; one in which all mankind would feel at ease.

However, conflict occurred in the Forum just after the official Forum ended May 31, 1942. In the late summer of 1942, a newcomer to the group began to raise questions about the proposed organizations associated with the soon-to-be-published *Urantia Book* and about some of the content of the *Urantia Papers*.³⁴ As time went on some of the Forum members realized that they were not being invited to participate in the development of a new religious organization for *Urantia Book* believers. It was being created *for* them. Finally, a few Forum members took it upon themselves to compose a plea, in the form of a petition, to the doctor, the leader of the contact commission, requesting, gently but firmly, for the right to review, and perhaps revise the plan for the new religious organization. Forty-eight Forum members signed the petition. The doctor, the main recipient of the petition, immediately called in 45 of the 48, one by one, and explained to them why the organizations were being created without their advice and consent. He convinced them all to remove their names. The celestial beings wanted the Forum to continue their in-depth study of the revelation after the book was published, but without the pre-occupation of organization-building—at least for the first few years. Study would better prepare them to assume their leader-teacher roles after the book was published. In fact, many years later, Christy, the secretary, who became president of *Urantia Brotherhood*, breathed a fervent regret: “I think we went into *Urantia Societies* too soon. We should have just gone on longer as study groups instead of *Urantia Societies*; there’s too much jockeying for position.”³⁵

Two of the three individuals who were not called in for a talk with the doctor, Harold and Martha Sherman, visited the office and requested a few minutes with Sadler. They were not told exactly why he reacted so strongly against the petition. Sherman, who had had a hand in developing the petition, later wrote to a confidant his version of why the petition was rejected, and why the doctor reacted so strongly. According to him the doctor ascribed the affair to the rebellious Planetary Prince who tried to break the unity of the group.³⁶ The third petition signer not called in, Sir Hubert Wilkins, was not approached most likely due to his illustrious reputation.

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- ¹ *The Golden Years, 100 years of Revelation A Historic Perspective*, compiled by Barbara Newsom, Carolyn Kendall, and Urantia Foundation staff. (Publ. by Urantia Foundation, Chicago, IL., 2000).
- ² Kellogg, Wilfred C., correspondence, Urantia Foundation files.
- ³ Urantia Foundation files. The number of pages was an estimate based upon the number of typed pages, and before expansion and additions to the text which occurred between 1935 and 1942.
- ⁴ Urantia Foundation files.
- ⁵ [Ibid]
- ⁶ {Ibid.]
- ⁷ Sadler, W.S., M.D., oral comment to author.
- ⁸ Correspondence, Urantia Foundation files.
- ⁹ Sadler, W.S., M.D., correspondence to H.M.S, *The Sherman Diaries*, Volume I, by Praamsma and Block, (Square Circles Publishing Co., 2002) p.359.
- ¹⁰ Urantia Foundation files.
- ¹¹ Deadline was announced to Forum members at a picnic, Saturday, June 6, 1942, six days after notice of the deadline for submitting new questions was received on Sunday, May 31, 1942. *Sherman Diaries*, Volume Two, by Praamsma and Block. (Square Circles Publishing, 2003). pp.38–39.
- ¹² Urantia Foundation files.
- ¹³ [Ibid.]
- ¹⁴ [Ibid.]
- ¹⁵ Bowman, Clarence N., personal diary. (1923 – 1956)
- ¹⁶ Urantia Foundation files.
- ¹⁷ [Ibid.]
- ¹⁸ *The Sherman Diaries*, Volume 5, by Praamsma and Block, (Square Circles Publ. Co., 2008 (p. 272).
- ¹⁹ Sadler, William S., Jr., oral comments to Forum.
- ¹⁹ Rowley, Marian T., oral rendition.
- ²⁰ Urantia Brotherhood Publications Committee., slide tape history, 1980.
- ²¹ Sadler, William S., Jr., oral comments to Forum, 1955.
- ²² *The Golden Years, 100 Years of Revelation, A Historic Perspective*, (Urantia Foundation. 2000)
- ²³ Copenhagen, Philip, Jr., Forum member, oral interview.
- ²⁴ Personal memory of author.
- ²⁵ Sadler, William S., Jr., Vice-president of Urantia Foundation, oral rendition to Forum, 1955.
- ²⁶ *The Golden Years, 100 Years of Revelation A Historic Perspective..*
- ²⁷ One of the highlights included the “benediction,” the last paragraph of Paper 3.
- ²⁸ The new regent of the Acting Planetary Prince. See Appendix X.
- ²⁹ Sadler, W. S., M.D, oral comment to author, 1955.
- ³⁰ Contact commissioners’ 1960 *History of the Urantia Movement*. See Appendix II.
- ³¹ [Ibid.]
- ³² Rowley, Marian T., oral rendition to author., 01/55.
- ³³ Christensen, E.L., to Barbara Newsom, 1976.
- ³⁴ *A Response To A Thinly Disguised Attack On The Urantia Book*, by Clyde Bedell, 1976, an answer to the original issues raised by the newcomer 34 years before.
- ³⁵ E.L. Christensen, oral remark to author, after the 1967 Triennial Delegate Assembly.
- ³⁶ *The Sherman Diaries*, Volume Two, by Praamsma and Block, (Square Circles Publ. Co., 2003) (p.186-7).