

MORONTIA MOTA: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Research sheds new light on one of the Urantia Book's most popular sections.
Part One of a two-part essay.

BY MATTHEW BLOCK

WHEN I FIRST STARTED browsing through the Urantia Book at a bookstore in 1976, the twenty-eight statements in the “Morontia Mota” section were among the first passages to hold my attention. This series of aphorisms, spread across pages 556 and 557, was a welcome island of simplicity in a book full of dense paragraphs and intricate discussions. For several weeks I kept returning to the bookstore, debating with myself whether to buy the book, and this was one of the sections that sold me. The faith and idealism conveyed in these statements (as well as in the Rodan papers, Paper 100 and the selected excerpts on the dust jacket) reassured me that a moral soundness and an intelligent compassion lay at the heart of the book. Thus assured, I decided to take the plunge into the rest of the text, with its daunting but fascinating complexities.

The appeal of these twenty-eight statements, I've since come to see, is widely shared by Urantia Book readers and believers. These aphorisms have appeared more often in Urantia movement newsletters and periodicals than any other part of the Urantia Book, their convenient size making them ideal corner fillers. They have been a topic of study at numerous conference workshops and in Internet message forums. They've appeared in calendars and on cards, and have thus become, in some ways, the Urantia Book's equivalent of the Bible's Book of Proverbs.

For me they are also special in marking another milestone: They were the first major section of the Urantia Book whose source book I was able to identify. That is, I discovered a book, published before the UB, which contained material so closely parallel to the 28 statements in phraseology and sequence, as to strongly suggest that it was

used as the base text in the writing of the section. Finding this book—*The New Dictionary of Thoughts* (details of which to follow)—spurred me on to search for other sources. As a result, in the past eight years I have found about 100 other books and articles containing passages which, collectively, parallel portions of over 100 papers.

Discovering these books and analyzing how they were used has been a challenging and often delightful experience for me, equalling in emotional impact and educational value my first several years of Urantia Book study. As direct source material continues to be found, the formerly opaque pages of the corresponding Urantia text become more transparent and open to comparative analysis and objective appreciation. The purely original areas of the book are thrown into bolder relief. A new light is cast on the genius of its composition, with the Urantia Book coming into view as both a masterpiece of originality and the product of ingenious techniques of literary borrowing whose traces can be detected from the first page of the book to the last (though certainly not on every page in between).

The discoveries have also led to a healthy disillusionment, as I find my former literalist approach to every statement in the book giving way to a more informed attitude that accepts that creative license was probably taken in fashioning many, if not all, of the book's narratives.

Joy and puzzlement, confirmation and disillusionment, have gone hand in hand throughout the course of my research. Though my understanding of the Urantia Book's use of sources has broadened with each newly found source book, my early experience with the “Morontia Mota”/*The New Dictionary of Thoughts* parallels is fairly typical of the

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kinds of clarifications and perplexities that have resulted from my later findings.

In this two-part essay I would like to recount the evolution of my understanding of the “Morontia Mota” section—both before and after discovering its probable sources—in the hope that it will be helpful to the in-depth study of one of the Urantia Book’s best-known sections.

* * * * *

Resuming the story, then, in 1976 and 1977: After buying the book and beginning to read it sequentially, I gradually became familiar with its presentation of the afterlife—the mortal ascension career. Papers 47 and 48 (the one in which the “Morontia Mota” section appears) were particularly helpful in providing clues to the meaning of the peculiar, impenetrable words “morontia” and “mota,” which headed the section and stood in stark contrast to the relatively self-explanatory 28 statements that followed. Through these papers I learned that “morontia” is the level of reality intervening between the material and the spiritual realms, and that the seven “mansion worlds” are the spheres on which reawakened humans proceed gradually to lose their material limitations while approaching spiritual status in personality development and reality response.

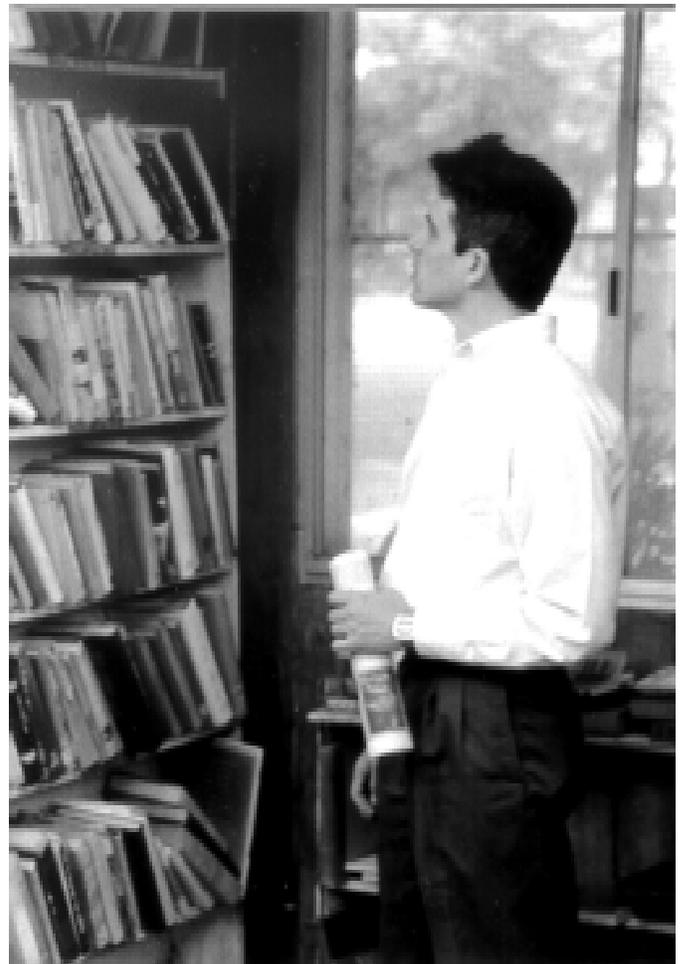
I learned that the morontia worlds are administered by numerous corps of angelic beings, one of whose major purposes is to guide the human survivors in their attempts to penetrate the facts and truths of Deity and the cosmos. From the day we are resurrected on the first mansion world to the time we leave the local system for the constellation worlds, angels of various descriptions attend to us, helping to prepare us for higher levels of service and God-consciousness.

Gradually, then, the scenario presented in the first two paragraphs of the “Morontia Mota” section began to make sense: A “morontia instructor” (a type of angel) was teaching a group of newly arrived mortal ascenders on the first mansion world a higher mode of reality comprehension called “mota.” Mota is described earlier in Paper 48 as “more than a superior philosophy; it is to philosophy as two eyes are to one; it has a stereoscopic effect on meanings and values.... Mansion world students achieve cosmic perspective—depth—by superimposing the perceptions of the morontia life upon the perceptions of the physical life. And they are enabled to bring these material and morontial viewpoints into true focus largely through the untiring ministry of their seraphic counselors, who so patiently teach the mansion world students and the morontia progressors” (554).

Mota is described elsewhere in the papers as “the superphilosophic sensitivity for truth discernment and unity perception” and “the technique of the morontia level. Mota is a supermaterial reality sensitivity which is beginning to

compensate incomplete growth, having for its substance knowledge-reason and for its essence faith-insight” (1136). It is further defined as “a method of reconciling the interplay between the widely separated domains of science and religion ...” (1136). Reference is made as well to “mota logic” (1139) and “mota insight” (508; 631). We also learn the intriguing fact that an individual’s voting power on Jerusem is decided on the basis of his or her “recognized and duly registered personal possession of mota—morontia wisdom,” with greater vote value being granted to those who have achieved higher mota status (518).

Because of these definitions of mota—as a “sensitivity,” an “insight,” a type of “wisdom”—I was quite puzzled by the apparent incongruity of one aspect of the “Morontia Mota” scenario. We are told that: “On the first mansion world it is the practice to teach the less advanced students by the parallel technique; that is, in one column are presented the more simple concepts of mota meanings, and in the opposite column citation is made of analogous statements of mortal philosophy”



The author at work.

(556). The incongruity—as I saw it then and still see it now—is that mota is here presented not as a sensitivity, a level of insight, a type of superphilosophical wisdom, but rather as something capable of being delimited into “concepts of mota meanings” which can be placed into a column next to “analogous statements of mortal philosophy.”

Mota, which is consistently defined elsewhere in the text as a mindal technique of reality discernment, a kind of *perception*, is here depicted as a *percept*, something that can be objectively set down and perceived. Questions immediately arise: How exactly were these “simpler concepts of mota meanings” presented? In what medium was “the mota content of the lesson”—which the author of the paper “may not undertake to present”—conveyed? In script? In a series of pictorial images? In some multimedia display? The use of columns suggests that the presentation was simple and visual, with the mota concepts being symmetrical with the statements of human philosophy. If so, mota concepts are then reduced to the level of linear, finite sentences which can be positioned alongside their human-philosophy counterparts, in the same way that simple phrases in French are set across from their Japanese translations in a tourist phrase book. The question then becomes, What makes the linear language in which the mota concepts are presented, more effective stimulators of mota consciousness than the original statements of human philosophy themselves?

These questions regarding the nature and form of the “mota content of the lesson” and how it was taught by “the parallel technique” baffled me for years. But apart from this frustrating aspect of the “Morontia Mota” section, the general context, with its beautiful and intriguing elements, became clearer.

As for the 28 statements themselves, I did not recognize a single one. To an American teenager in the mid ‘70s, whose only deliberate exposure to aphorisms had been a few casual flips through *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*, these statements seemed, on the whole, too high-flown and “cosmic conscious” to have come from Earth. The clean, clear style in which they were expressed, strongly resembled the phraseology of the rest of the Urantia Book. The general ideology running through the statements was completely congruent, as well, with the rest of the papers. So I supposed that these statements had been gleaned from more highly evolved planets in which revealed religion and higher philosophy had had a chance to flourish. (I looked at the “parable prayers,” many of which are said to have come from other planets (1621-1624), in a similar way.)

The characterization of these statements as illustrations of “the higher levels of human philosophy” (556) further removed them, I thought, from Earth. My conception of high human philosophy on our planet was epitomized by the writings of Aristotle, Plato, Kant, Hegel and certain Indian and

Chinese sages; and I saw little resemblance between these writings and the 28 statements. Many of these philosophers had engaged in metaphysics, which the writer of Paper 103 (resonating with Kant, here) deems a failure, prescribing “[p]hilosophy, clarified by revelation” as its only acceptable substitute “in the absence of mota” (1136). Perhaps, then, I was overvaluing these renowned philosophers whose attempts to formulate grand metaphysical systems were shot through with error. Perhaps, I thought, more evolved planets had realized the futility of these endeavors and saw higher truth-value in the enunciation of simpler statements in the realm of faith and morals.

My sense of the extraplanetary origin of these statements was reinforced by no. 23: “Death added nothing to the intellectual possession or to the spiritual endowment ...” The inclusion of this statement under the rubric of “mortal philosophy” seems paradoxical, since the statement refers to death in the past tense, indicating that whoever said it was, by definition, not mortal but morontial—*post*-mortal. A flesh-and-blood, human philosopher may *believe* that death adds nothing to our intellectual and spiritual status, but he or she can never assert that such is the case on the basis of actual experience.

Until just recently, I must have overlooked the few indicators in the statements that point to a more earthly, indeed a more English, origin or reference base; namely, the references to mountain tops (no. 13), hornet’s nests (no. 18), and especially pints and quarts (no. 3). Mountain tops are probably not universal features of inhabited planets, and hornets may be peculiar to certain regions of Earth. Pints and quarts, of course, are units of capacity that originated in Europe and have probably only been used as standard measurements in Britain and some of its former possessions.¹

Soon after becoming immersed in the rest of the Urantia Papers, the 28 statements receded in prominence, and months would go by between readings. During these years, when the introductory paragraphs of the “Morontia Mota” section were not fresh in my mind, I sometimes made the mistake of thinking that the 28 statements were *themselves* the morontia mota. This mistake—which is quite common among Urantia Book readers—led to a distorted sense of their authoritativeness as guides of conduct. Instead of taking them as instances of human philosophy, and therefore as debatable propositions, I saw them more as cosmic laws, unchallengeable commandments. At these times I tried to be careful not to give advice unless it was asked for (in accordance with the recommendation in no. 14), and felt a bit self-conscious when I “transgressed.” As a person who enjoys debating, I occasionally wondered whether the protracted arguments I was having with friends and acquaintances on religion and

politics were doing a disservice to my friends, myself, and the truth of our respective opinions (bearing in mind the ambiguous observation in no. 28).

Other times, when I did recall that these statements were of human origin, I felt free to criticize some of them, having since realized that many aphorisms can be matched by others with opposite messages. For instance, the observation “Like attracts like” can be countered by “Opposites attract.” Therefore, perhaps unasked-for advice *ought* to be given in certain circumstances, such as when dealing with children. Nevertheless, the idea that these statements had been used on the mansion world, and the fact that they were considered worthy of inclusion in the Urantia Book itself, gave them the stamp of superhuman endorsement and heightened their importance. Fortunately, very few of the statements are expressed as imperatives; the great majority are observational truisms which few people would find objectionable.

Despite all these musings I had through the years, the original impact of some of the statements never waned. Nos. 10, 11, 12, 13, and 16 continued to encourage me whenever I read or remembered them.

And so for several years (from the late 1970s to the mid ‘80s) my understanding and appreciation of these 28 statements plateaued. A small blip occurred in 1982 when I came upon a curiously familiar quote by Robert Browning while leafing through an acquaintance’s Amway training manual: “‘Tis not what man does which exalts him, but what man would do!” This, of

course, strongly resembled statement no. 22: “The evolving soul is not made divine by what it does, but rather by what it strives to do.” Aha, I thought, a saying from Earth *was* represented among the 28 after all. Either that, or Browning, in a moment of angelically stimulated inspiration, had voiced a truth well-known throughout the cosmos, but in phraseology remarkably similar to the Urantia Book’s rendition of it. At the very least, the Browning-UB parallel was a happy coincidence.

But real excitement was sparked in 1984 when Gard Jameson, a Urantia Book reader then living in the San Francisco Bay area, circulated a study sheet he’d prepared on “Morontia Mota” which contained fifteen quotations, several of which were exact correlates of some of the 28 statements. Included was a quote by Lavater: “All affectation is the vain and ridiculous attempt of poverty to appear rich.” This was, unarguably, either the prototype for or the echo of, statement no. 15: “Affectation is the ridiculous effort of the ignorant to appear wise, the attempt of the barren soul to appear rich.” Beecher’s “Greatness lies, not in being strong, but in the right using of strength”

was similarly connected with statement no. 25: “Greatness lies not so much in possessing strength as in making a wise and divine use of such strength.” Several others in Gard’s list bore equally strong resemblances to their corresponding statements.

I and my fellow study group members in Chicago, having got word of Gard’s findings, eagerly copied the quotes into the blank spaces of the “Morontia Mota” section of our Urantia Books. Some longtime readers in Chicago, including myself, had already been aware of the identification of a few other parallelisms between the book and pre-UB literature. But no one at that time knew or suspected that the authors of the Urantia Book had drawn copiously and systematically from a small number of previously published books to fashion whole series of papers. Having read the book’s two acknowledgments regarding the authors’ use of human concepts (17; 1343), we understood that thousands of concepts had been drawn from thousands of humans. No one human, and no one book (apart from the Bible), could be responsible for anything but a minuscule amount of material used by the Urantia Book authors.

Gard’s discoveries, impressive as they were, were consistent with these notions. The famous and obscure writers on his list to whom the quotes were attributed had each contributed his or her bit to the 28 statements; no one person monopolized or had a disproportionate share. Moreover, over half the 28 statements remained unaccounted for. We in Chicago heard that Gard had found his quotes in a huge book of quotations published at the turn of the century, so it wasn’t too surprising

that a book its size would yield a fair number of parallels. The unidentified statements could well have come from a variety of other sources, published or unpublished, spoken or simply conceived.

Thanks to Gard, I was able to supplement my Robert Browning finding with several new names—Beecher, Goethe, Longfellow, Beaconsfield (who I later learned was Benjamin Disraeli, a British prime minister who had been vested with the title Earl of Beaconsfield by Queen Victoria), and some lesser-known ones like Richter, Moore (Gard’s list only gave surnames, so I didn’t know which Moore it was), and Lavater. Finally, I could put a human face—or, more accurately, several human names—to a section of the Urantia Book.

Gard’s success in identifying human sources rekindled my long-held desire to do the same. For years I had been tantalized by the UB authors’ acknowledgments, and had wanted to find parallels between the book and previous literature for a number of reasons.

The first reason was my strong desire to understand more clearly what was meant in the first acknowledgment by “God-

“The short sayings of wise
and good men are of great
value, like the dust of gold, or
the sparks of diamonds.”
—*John Tillotson (1630-1694), Eng.
divine, Archbishop of Canterbury.*

knowing men and women” (17). I figured that if I or others were to find out who some of these people were, I could then study their lives and writings to see how they had arrived at their God-consciousness, and how they had manifested it. They could then serve (up to a point) as spiritual role models. Secondly, after my years-long immersion in the unique thought-world of the Urantia Book, I began to get hungry for *context*. What areas of the book, I wondered, were truly original or revelatory? Which areas were derived, and which periods, cultures, and religions had the greatest affinities with the book’s diverse teachings? Could the book’s obscure scientific references to “island universes,” “mesotrons,” and “the hypothetical ether,” and the unpleasant phraseology used in its controversial discussions of race and eugenics, be better understood by reading the literature current at the time the Urantia Book was being written? After all, weren’t the papers the result of questions asked by a group of average Americans in the early 20th century, and weren’t the answers given in the terminology and reference points these people could understand?

Interest in familiarizing myself with 19th and early 20th century literature intensified in the late 1980s as I began work in the reader services department of the Urantia Brotherhood (which was later renamed The Fellowship for Readers of the Urantia Book) and received letters from people requesting clarification on the above subjects and others. But my resolve to delve into the literature was positively galvanized in 1991 and 1992, when Kristen Maaherra, a reader then living in Arizona, astonished many in the Urantia community by her discoveries of numerous new parallels which she had found through computer searches. Using new computer technology, Kristen isolated all the non-biblical sentences and clauses in the Urantia Book that had quotation marks around them, and then proceeded systematically to try to identify their human origins by searching various databases. Through her efforts a variety of new names was added to the list of “God-knowing men and women” who had contributed thought gems to the Urantia text. This was all the boost I needed.

About this time, in the spring of 1992, a fellow UB reader who knew of my determination encouraged me to attend the Brandeis book fair, an annual event in a Chicago suburb where thousands of inexpensively priced used books are put on sale. The first thing I did was to phone Gard Jameson to get the name of his huge book of quotations. It was *Forty Thousand Sublime and Beautiful Thoughts*, compiled by Charles Noel Douglas, first published in 1890 and enlarged in 1904. Then I collected the names of the few other books in which parallels with the UB had been found. I arrived at the book fair hoping to find these titles, and intent on buying as many pre-1936² books as I could find which had any recognizable similarity or relevance to material in the UB.

After an unavailing search for *Forty Thousand Sublime*

and *Beautiful Thoughts*, I resignedly settled for another book of quotes called *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* which, with its copyright date of 1960 and its publication date of 1972, wasn’t exactly what I was looking for. But I thought it might be helpful for purposes of comparison. I added it to my collection and left the sale with two shopping bags full of old books on science, history, philosophy, religion, and sociology.

The quote book I’d bought was low on my to-read list, but I eventually started dipping through it. The blurb on the dust jacket described it as: “Being a Digest of striking thoughts from the master minds of the world begun over ninety years ago and covering a period of over four thousand years.” It continued: “A collection of twenty thousand thoughts from eighteen hundred authors, alphabetically arranged under one thousand topics ...” The book was a revised and enlarged version of the original *Dictionary of Thoughts*, which had been compiled by Tryon Edwards, a descendant of the Puritan preacher Jonathan Edwards, and first published in 1891. The copyright page listed a succession of copyright registrations from that year to 1960, with a curious slew of them occurring in a ten-year period: 1927, 1931, 1933, two in 1934 (one assigned to Orsamus Turner Harris, the other to The R. C. Barnum Company), and one in 1936. The next one was dated 1957.

I searched the authors’ reference index to see if any of the quotes in Gard’s list were included. I was quite pleased to find that many of them were; in fact, every single one of the stronger correlates was present. I was also intrigued when I noticed that the vast majority of the ones found were located in the first several pages of this nearly 800-page volume. Several were under the topic Action, one was under Accident, a couple were under Adversity, one was under Affectation, another under Affliction.... It was turning out to be a veritable “A-list” of quotes!

Since so many of the found quotes clustered near the beginning of the book, I decided to start on page one and try to track down the correlates of those of the 28 statements that were not as yet identified. Within minutes, I became astounded at what I was finding: The correlates of nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4—heretofore unidentified—appeared on the very first page!

This was beyond the possibility of coincidence.

My heart began to pound with awe, ecstasy and trepidation. It seemed as if I was entering previously unknown, and possibly even forbidden, territory. I was half-tempted to discontinue my search for fear of what else I might find, but a detective-like love of puzzle-solving won out, and I went on.

After one or two sessions of parallel tracing in which I managed to find several other new correlates, a disturbing pattern began to come clear. It seemed as if most of the 28 statements had been deliberately patterned, in sequence and in wording, after selected quotes in *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* which appear in the first 35 or so of its 794 pages. The correlates for statements 1 to 4 were under the topic

Ability, statement 5's seemed to fall under Adversity (although I couldn't find a close correlate for it among the 40 entries in that section), statements 8 to 11's were under Action, nos. 12 and 13's under Adversity, no. 14's under Advice (although here too I couldn't find a definite parallel with either of the clauses that make up the statement), no. 15's under Affectation.... And so on down the alphabetical line until the topics beginning with the letter "A" were exhausted. Statement no. 22's correlate, found under Aspiration, marked the end of the consecutive series of quotes listed under "A" topics. After that point, the alphabetical order that had more or less been followed broke down, with most of the remaining parallels being drawn from other sections of the text. For instance, the correlate for no. 25 was found under Greatness; no. 27's under Individuality.

In practically no time at all, my long-held ideas of the transplanetary origin of these statements collapsed in the face of cold, hard print—the first 35 pages of single book!

What was I to make of all this? The first thing I did, in the face of the acute cognitive dissonance that was assailing me, and the panicky suspicion that I had quite possibly unmasked a forgery, was to think of ways to reconcile what I had found with what the Urantia Book says (or doesn't say, but might allow for). Could it be that an earlier edition of *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* had been ferried up to the first mansion world and used as a teaching manual by the morontia instructor? Could the parallelism of sequence and phraseology between the *NDoT* and the 28 statements simply be an astronomical coincidence, or perhaps an angelically orchestrated convergence?

I didn't have long to dwell on these mystifying questions, for my attention became diverted by *another* book I'd found at the book fair which had similar sorts of parallels with another section of the Urantia Book: *The Sacred Writings of the World's Great Religions*, selected and edited by S. E. Frost, Jr., and published in 1943. I'd bought this book in the hope that it would help identify the origin of some of the scriptural passages described in Paper 131 ("The World's Religions") as "an abstract of Ganid's manuscript" which he made during his and Jesus' Mediterranean tour. Soon enough, I found parallels, many vague, but several others quite close. That is, I identified parallelisms not only in concept but in specific wording, as if the Urantia Book's renditions were based on a particular English translation of an originally Asian text.

The clearest and most complete instance of this was the parallelism between Paper 131's and Frost's extracts of Shinto, which Frost selected from W. G. Aston's Japanese-to-English translations found in the latter's *Shinto: The Way of the Gods*, published in 1905. I was able to find close phraseological correlates in Frost for every single one of the fourteen sentences in the UB's "Shinto" section (1451). The puzzling feature here was not the overlapping selections in Frost and the UB but

rather the fact that the specificities of Aston's translation were so evident in the UB's version.

On the other hand, Aston's and the UB's renditions were not identical. It appeared as though the UB author had refashioned Aston's sentences in the same artful and spiritually sensitive way as the selected quotes in *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* had been.

For example:

- (1) Aston: All enjoy my divine power. (from ORACLE OF THE GOD OF KASHIMA)
The UB: *Says the Lord: ... You are all recipients of my divine power; all men enjoy my ministry of mercy.*
- (2) Aston: I derive strength from the multiplication of devout men in the land. (from ORACLE OF THE GOD OF KASHIMA)
The UB: *I derive great pleasure in the multiplication of righteous men throughout the land.*
- (3) Aston: When the sky is clear, and the wind hums in the fir-trees, 'tis the heart of a God who thus reveals himself. (from GOD OF A TAJIMA SHRINE)
The UB: *In both the beauties of nature and the virtues of men does the Prince of Heaven seek to reveal himself and to show forth his righteous nature.*
- (4) Aston: Of old the people of my country knew not my name. Therefore I was born into the visible world and endured a base existence. (from ORACLE OF ITSUKUSHIMA IN AKI)
The UB: *Since the olden people did not know my name, I manifested myself by being born into the world as a visible existence and endured such abasement even that man should not forget my name.*

In the first three of these examples, the UB author/editor uses Aston's renditions as a fulcrum on which to lever a truer portrait of the character of God. In the first case, the UB's revision recognizes God's mercifulness as well as his power. In the second, the UB affirms God's omnipotence by substituting "pleasure" for "strength." In the third, the intimation of nature worship captured in Aston's version is offset by an emphasis on human virtue and divine righteousness in the UB's counterpart. In all four—and, in fact, in all fourteen of its Shinto sentences—the UB appears to have used Aston as the basis for further development.³

My shock at the suspiciousness of these Morontia Mota and Shinto parallels was counterbalanced almost immediately by an admiration for the skill and sensitivity with which the original statements had been rephrased. This was not, I saw, the product of a lazy plagiarist or a workmanlike paraphraser; it was, rather, the work of an *artist of the spirit* engaged in a unique type of literary and conceptual endeavor.⁴ I was reminded of a statement in the second acknowledgment: "When ideas and concepts of Jesus' life and teachings have been acceptably expressed by a human mind, I invariably gave preference to such apparently human thought patterns.

Although I have sought to adjust the verbal expression the better to conform to our concept of the real meaning and the true import of the Master's life and teachings, as far as possible, I have adhered to the actual human concept and thought pattern in all my narratives" (1343, italics added). Could this technique of appropriation and refinement, applied to pre-existent literature on the life and teachings of Jesus, have been practiced in other sections of the Urantia Book as well? My initial findings seemed to bear out this possibility.

I shared my Morontia Mota and Shinto discoveries with some fellow Urantia Book readers, and even the longtime believers among them, whom Dr. Sadler and Christy⁵ had held in their confidences, were as dumbfounded as I was.

Excited by the realization that I was breaking new ground, I resolved to continue my search for sources, fortified by two maxims from the Urantia Book: "[T]he truth never suffers from honest examination" (1711), and "Only a brave person is willing honestly to admit, and fearlessly to face, what a sincere and logical mind discovers" (1773).

Further shocks and epiphanies were to follow over the next several months as more and more source books were found and studied. On the one hand, I was alternately dismayed and fascinated by the creative liberties which I perceived had been taken by the writers of the Urantia Book in adapting material from the Bible and more recent books on history, science, sociology, and other literature, for their own narratives. On the other hand, I was (and still am) extremely impressed by the conceptual-linguistic wizardry displayed in their enhancements of religious and philosophical texts. I have found many texts in religion, philosophy and theology which are retuned and reconceived in far more creative, complex and fascinating ways than the material in Frost and *The New Dictionary of Thoughts*.⁶

Meanwhile I continued research on the "Morontia Mota"/*The New Dictionary of Thoughts* parallels. In late 1992, I tracked down three editions of the *NDoT* published prior to my 1960 one, attempting to identify the particular one that was used (presumably) by the writer of the 28 statements. Two editions—the 1901 and the 1931—were missing the correlate for statement no. 27 and so had to be ruled out. However, the 1931 edition contained a quote not included in my 1960 edition, which was the unmistakable correlate for no. 10. Therefore, some edition published after 1931 and before 1960 could well contain the full array of correlates. I checked the copyright page of the 1960 edition and saw four possibilities: the 1933 edition, the two from 1934, and the 1936. I was tempted to rule out the last one since the signature page of

Part II indicates that the 25 papers contained in it, among them Paper 48 in which the 28 statements appear, were "indited" and "put ... in the English language, by a technique authorized by our superiors, in the year 1934 of Urantia time" (648).

But it turns out that the 1936 edition may well be the one with the most inclusive set of parallels. I have been unable to find copies of the 1933 and 1934 editions so it would be rash to conclude that this is the case. But the preface to the 1936 edition advertises a new feature of the *NDoT*: "... a supplement (p. 725ff.) which brings together representative quotations from modern writers for ready reference." The correlate for no. 27 appears in this supplement, under the topic Individuality, on p. 728. If this supplement of recent thought was indeed introduced in the 1936 edition, then the correlate most probably made its debut there as well. (In the 1960 edition the correlate is integrated into the main body of the text.)

The realization that a book published in 1936 could well be a source—after the Urantia Book itself assigns 1934 as the date of the composition of Parts I and II (354; 648) and 1935 as the date of Part III's (1319)—caused another wave of cognitive dissonance, but I took it in stride and continued on, divested of another layer of "Urantia Book fundamentalism."

The study of numerous source books enabled me to hone my parallel-detecting skills, to catch the subtler parallelisms I'd missed in earlier readings of a source text, to fine-tune my judgment as to what in fact constituted a "source" and a "parallel," and to become better acquainted with the variety of restating techniques practiced by the Urantia Book's authors.

From time to time I re-examined the parallels I'd drawn between the 28 statements and their perceived correlates in the *NDoT*. Such reviews led invariably to revisions—a deletion here, an addition there—and the sense that more work needed to be done.⁷ Five statements in particular—nos. 5, 6, 14, 26, 28—eluded close correlation; various quotes in the *NDoT* pertained to their subject matter but were more like distant cousins than twins of their respective statements. The posthumously phrased statement on the afterlife—no. 23—was so unearthly that I'd long since given up on finding a correlate for it in mainstream literature.

But I did begin to notice that close phraseological correlations for the above-listed statements could be found in the pages of the Urantia Book itself. For instance, part of statement no. 6—" ... to possess power and steadfastly refuse

**"The study of proverbs
may be more instructive
and comprehensive than
the most elaborate
scheme
of philosophy."**

—*William Motherwell*
(1797-1835), *Scot. poet.*

The NEW
DICTIONARY of THOUGHTS
 BEING
A CYCLOPEDIA OF QUOTATIONS

ABASEMENT.—Ambition can creep
 as well as soar.—*Shaks.*

ABILITY.—Ability involves respon-
 sibility; never, in its last particle, is
 duty.—*A. Mandeville.*

A dwarf is small, even if he stands
 on a mountain; a colossus keeps his
 height, even if he stands in a well.—*Seneca.*

A traveller at Sparta, standing long
 upon one leg, said to a Lacedaemonian,
 "I do not believe you can do as much."
 "True," said he, "but every goose can."
 —*Plutarch.*

There is something that is much more
 man, something dearer to, something
 rarer than ability. It is the ability to
 recognize ability.—*Elmer Hubbard.*

To know how to hide one's ability is
 great skill.—*Frederick Schlegel.*

The abilities of man must fall short
 on one side or the other, like too scanty
 a blanket when you are cold.—If you
 put it upon your shoulders, your feet
 are left bare; if you thrust it down to
 your feet, your shoulders are uncovered.
 —*De Witt De Witt.*

Every person is responsible for all the
 good within the scope of his abilities,
 and for no more, and none can tell
 whose sphere is the largest.—*Carl
 Newton.*

1 We should be on our guard against the
 temptation to argue directly from skill
 to capacity, and to assume when a man
 displays skill in some feat, his capacity
 is therefore considerable.—*Tom H. Pate.*

Without the assistance of natural in-
 spiration, rules and precepts are of no
 efficacy.—*Quintilian.*

The winds and waves are always on
 the side of the ablest navigators.—*Colton.*

What we do upon some great occasion
 will probably depend on what we al-
 ready are; and what we are will be the
 result of previous years of self-discipline.
 —*H. P. Liddell.*

The ablest men in all walks of modern
 life are men of faith. Most of them
 have much more faith than they them-
 selves realize.—*Henry Barton.*

Men are often capable of greater
 things than they perform.—They are
 sent into the world with bills of credit,
 and seldom draw to their full extent.—
Marquis Falstaff.

A genius can't be forced; nor can you
 make an ape an abbeysman.—*Thomas
 Morecroft.*

Ability deths hit the mark, where pre-
 sumption overshoots and diffidence
 falls short.—*Nicholas Owen.*

A pint can't hold a quart—if it holds
 a pint it is doing all that can be ex-
 pected of it.—*Margaret DeLand.*

Faith is the ability of a leader in of
 slight service system to be tested with
 faith in his justice.—*General George W.
 Doniphan.*

The question "Who ought to be born?"
 is like asking "Who ought to be the
 Pope in the papacy?" Obviously, the
 man who can sing better.—*Henry Ford.*

Ability is a poor man's wealth.—
M. Wren.

There may be luck in getting a good
 job—but there's no luck in keeping it.
 —*J. Hyden Aronson.*

ABORDER.—A middle letter all in has a
 house—the dullest one when lacking
 company.—*James Sheridan Knowles.*

ABSENCE.—Absence from those we
 love is not from self—a deadly banish-
 ment.—*Shakespeare.*

Wives in their husbands' absence
 grow colder, and daughters sometimes
 fall off with the ladies.—*Spren.*

parallel chart gained a new level of
 self-evidencing clarity.

Recently, in an attempt to cover
 all the bases, I obtained a copy of *Forty
 Thousand Sublime and Beautiful
 Thoughts* to examine its contents and
 analyze its relationship with the
NDoT. I found that the two books
 share a number of similarities: They
 are both American-made
 compilations of aphorisms, adages,
 proverbs, and maxims arranged
 alphabetically by topic and drawn
 primarily from Western literature,
 beginning with the ancient Greeks
 and spanning the centuries to modern
 times (i.e. the early 20th century).
 Both were assembled to serve as a
 resource to "stir the human heart and
 engage the human mind"
 (paraphrasing the description given
 in the preface to *Forty Thousand*) and
 as a reference book for teachers,
 speakers, writers, preachers and other
 professionals and laypeople. Though
 there is a great deal of overlap in
 entries, it appears that the two
 compilations were made
 independently of each other. It is also
 clear that *The New Dictionary of
 Thoughts* is the volume with by far
 the larger number of close correlates,
 thus making it the primary, if not the
 exclusive, source of those of the 28
 statements not linked to passages
 appearing elsewhere in the Urantia
 Papers.

The chart below represents my
 determination of the
 parallels as of August 2000.

Taking my cue from the morontia
 instructor referred to in the introduction of the "Morontia
 Mota" section, I have employed "the parallel technique,"
 displaying the source-correlate in the left-hand column and
 the respective statement in the right. This is done to facilitate
 comparative analysis and appreciation.

A few remarks are necessary to explain the citation system
 used in the left-hand column: The bold heading found at the
 beginning of most of the entries indicates the topic under which
 the quote was found in the *NDoT*. The information about each

to use it for self-aggrandizement—these are the marks of high
 civilization"—found a very close parallel in a passage on p. 1521:
 "Jesus was now passing through the great test of civilized man,
 to have power and steadfastly refuse to use it for purely selfish
 or personal purposes."

After poring through the Urantia Book and doing searches
 on various words and phrases in the Folio index, I managed to
 find most of the missing correlates—including no. 23! Finally,
 the remaining pieces of the puzzle were fitting together, and the

author's birthdate, year of death and occupation, was drawn from the authors' reference index of the 1960 edition, or of the 1936 edition when necessary. (The source authors of statements 1 and 2 were still alive in 1960 but have presumably "graduated" by now.) The number in parentheses at the end of each entry indicates the page in which the quote appears in the 1936 edition. Several entries are followed by a tick mark (T); this means that the entry is also included in the 1904 edition of *Forty Thousand Sublime and Beautiful Thoughts*. An entry followed by "(*Forty Thousand*)" means the quote was found *only* in that volume, not in the *NDoT*. Entries preceded by a bracketed question mark indicate dubious parallels, those varying too widely from their respective statements to qualify as indisputable correlates but sufficiently similar to warrant consideration. Passages from the Urantia Book and the Bible appearing in the left-hand column are printed in reduced type to offset them visually from the *NDoT* and *Forty Thousand* entries.

Please peruse the parallels slowly and carefully, as though reading poetry. Try to discern the similarities and differences, both stylistic and conceptual, in each parallel pair. See whether a pattern can be detected in the sequencing of topic and page number of the entries from the *NDoT*. Scan the biographical data of each source author and see whether a composite profile

emerges from this aggregation of thinkers. Study the Urantia Book-derived passages in the left-hand column and observe how closely they parallel their counterparts in the right.

After becoming familiarized with the parallelisms, reflect on the following questions: How can we account for the *apparent* fact that the 28 statements, reported by an Archangel of Nebadon to have been used "not long since" (556) on the first mansion world of Satania, were drawn primarily from a 1936 American book of quotations and supplemented by lightly revised passages from the Urantia Papers themselves? Can we reconcile this scenario with what we are told about the educational system of the mansion worlds? about the ways thought is stimulated, translated and circulated throughout the cosmos? Is a literalistic interpretation of the scenario still tenable? Can passages be adduced from the book to support it? If not, how are we to readjust our understanding of the "Morontia Mota" section?

Part Two of this essay, in which I deal with the issues laid out in the two preceding paragraphs, will appear in the next issue of *The Circular*. As associate editor of this magazine, I invite readers to submit their own attempts to address these questions, for possible inclusion in the next *Circular* or a subsequent edition.

<p>ABILITY. We should be on our guard against the temptation to argue directly from skill to capacity, and to assume when a man displays skill in some feat, his capacity is therefore considerable.—<i>Tom H. Pear (1886-), Eng. psychol. (1)</i></p>	<p>1. A display of specialized skill does not signify possession of spiritual capacity.</p> <p>Cleverness is not a substitute for true character.</p>
<p>ABILITY. The ablest men in all walks of modern life are men of faith. Most of them have much more faith than they themselves realize.—<i>Bruce Barton (1886-), Am. auth. and adv. exec. (1)</i></p>	<p>2. Few persons live up to the faith which they really have.</p> <p>Unreasoned fear is a master intellectual fraud practiced upon the evolving mortal soul.</p>
<p>ABILITY. A pint can't hold a quart—if it holds a pint it is doing all that can be expected of it.—<i>Margaretta W. Deland (1857-1945), Am. auth. (1)</i></p>	<p>3. Inherent capacities cannot be exceeded; a pint can never hold a quart.</p> <p>The spirit concept cannot be mechanically forced into the material memory mold.</p>

<p>ABILITY. Men are often capable of greater things than they perform.—They are sent into the world with bills of credit, and seldom draw to their full extent.—<i>Horace Walpole (1661-1724), Eng. auth. (1)</i></p>	<p>4. Few mortals ever dare to draw anything like the sum of personality credits established by the combined ministries of nature and grace.</p> <p>The majority of impoverished souls are truly rich, but they refuse to believe it.</p>
<p>The true believer does not grow weary in well-doing just because he is thwarted. Difficulty whets the ardor of the truth lover, while obstacles only challenge the exertions of the undaunted kingdom builder (1740).</p> <p>ADVERSITY. [?] Adversity exasperates fools, dejects cowards, draws out the faculties of the wise and industrious, puts the modest to the necessity of trying their skill, awes the opulent, and makes the idle industrious.—<i>Anon. (7-8, reduction added)</i></p> <p>I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are <i>children of the most High</i> (Pss. 82:6, italics added).</p>	<p>5. Difficulties may challenge mediocrity and defeat the fearful, but they only stimulate the true children of the Most Highs.</p>
<p>Someday man should learn how to enjoy liberty without license, nourishment without gluttony, and pleasure without debauchery (977).</p> <p>Jesus was now passing through the great test of civilized man, to have power and steadfastly refuse to use it for purely selfish or personal purposes (1521).</p>	<p>6. To enjoy privilege without abuse, to have liberty without license,</p> <p>to possess power and steadfastly refuse to use it for self-aggrandizement—these are the marks of high civilization.</p>
<p>ACCIDENT. Nothing is or can be accidental with God.—<i>Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882), Am. poet. (3) ✓</i></p> <p>ACTION. Heaven never helps the man who will not act.—<i>Sophocles (495-406 B.C.), Gr. tragic poet. (3) ✓</i></p>	<p>7. Blind and unforeseen accidents do not occur in the cosmos.</p> <p>Neither do the celestial beings assist the lower being who refuses to act upon his light of truth.</p>
<p>ACTION. Action may not always bring happiness; but there is no happiness without action.—<i>Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield (1804-1881), Eng. states and auth. (3) ✓</i></p>	<p>8. Effort does not always produce joy, but there is no happiness without intelligent effort.</p>
<p>ACTION. Only actions give to life its strength, as only moderation gives it its charm.—<i>Jean Paul Richter (1763-1826), Ger. humorist. (3) ✓</i></p>	<p>9. Action achieves strength; moderation eventuates in charm.</p>

<p>ACTION. A right act strikes a chord that extends through the whole universe, touches all moral intelligence, visits every world, vibrates along its whole extent, and conveys its vibrations to the very bosom of God!—<i>Thomas Binney (1798-1874), Eng. divine. (4)</i></p>	<p>10. Righteousness strikes the harmony chords of truth, and the melody vibrates throughout the cosmos, even to the recognition of the Infinite.</p>
<p>ACTION. I have never heard anything about the resolutions of the apostles, but a great deal about their acts.—<i>Horace Mann (1796-1859), Am. educator. (4)</i></p> <p>ACTION. Life though a short, is a working day.—Activity may lead to evil; but inactivity cannot be led to good.—<i>Hannah More (1745-1833), Eng. auth. (4) ✓</i></p> <p>ACTION. Actions are ours; their consequences belong to heaven.—<i>Sir Philip Francis (1740-1818), Eng. states (5) ✓</i></p>	<p>11. The weak indulge in resolutions, but the strong act.</p> <p>Life is but a day's work—do it well.</p> <p>The act is ours; the consequences God's.</p>
<p>ADVERSITY. No man is more unhappy than the one who is never in adversity; the greatest affliction of life is never to be afflicted.—<i>Anon. (6)</i></p> <p>[?] Wisdom is seldom gained without suffering.—<i>Sir Arthur Helps (1813-1875), Eng. auth. (Forty Thousand)</i></p>	<p>12. The greatest affliction of the cosmos is never to have been afflicted.</p> <p>Mortals only learn wisdom by experiencing tribulation.</p>
<p>ADVERSITY. Stars may be seen from the bottom of a deep well, when they cannot be discerned from the top of a mountain. So are many things learned in adversity which the prosperous man dreams not of.—<i>Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), Eng. clergy. (6)</i></p>	<p>13. Stars are best discerned from the lonely isolation of experiential depths, not from the illuminated and ecstatic mountain tops.</p>
<p>ADVICE. [?] Before giving advice we must have secured its acceptance, or rather, have made it desired.—<i>Henri Frédéric Amiel (1821-1881), Swiss philosopher. (Forty Thousand)</i></p> <p>The Faithfuls of Days, like the Union of Days, never proffer advice or offer assistance to the constellation rulers unless it is asked for (371).</p> <p>Perhaps his [Jesus'] great secret in getting along with them [young people] consisted in the twofold fact that he was always interested in what they were doing, while he seldom offered them advice unless they asked for it (1420).</p>	<p>14. Whet the appetites of your associates for truth; give advice only when it is asked for.⁸</p>

<p>AFFECTATION. All affectation is the vain and ridiculous attempt of poverty to appear rich.—<i>John Caspar Lavater (1741-1801), Swiss theol.</i> (9) ✓</p>	<p>15. Affectation is the ridiculous effort of the ignorant to appear wise, the attempt of the barren soul to appear rich.</p>
<p>AFFLICTION. That which thou dost not understand when thou readest, thou shalt understand in the day of thy visitation; for many secrets of religion are not perceived till they be felt, and are not felt but in the day of calamity.—<i>Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), Eng. bishop</i> (11) ✓</p>	<p>16. You cannot perceive spiritual truth until you feelingly experience it, and many truths are not really felt except in adversity.</p>
<p>But every human being should remember: Many ambitions to excel which tantalize mortals in the flesh will not persist with these same mortals in the morontia and spirit careers. <i>The ascending morontians learn to socialize their former purely selfish longings and egoistic ambitions.</i> Nevertheless, those things which you so earnestly longed to do on earth and which circumstances so persistently denied you, if, after acquiring true mota insight in the morontia career, you still desire to do, then will you most certainly be granted every opportunity fully to satisfy your long-cherished desires (508, italics added).</p> <p>ACTION. We should not be so taken up in the search for truth, as to neglect the needful duties of active life; for it is only action that gives a true value and commendation to virtue.—<i>Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.), Rom. orator.</i> (4)</p>	<p>17. Ambition is dangerous until it is fully socialized.</p> <p>You have not truly acquired any virtue until your acts make you worthy of it.</p>
<p>ANGER. Anger is as a stone cast into a wasp's nest.—<i>Malabar Proverb.</i> (24)</p>	<p>18. Impatience is a spirit poison; anger is like a stone hurled into a hornet's nest.</p>
<p>ANXIETY. [?] Anxiety is a word of unbelief or unreasoning dread.—We have no right to allow it. Full faith in God puts it to rest.—<i>Horace Bushnell (1802-1876), Am. clergy.</i> (25)</p> <p>ANXIETY. Let us be of good cheer, remembering that the misfortunes hardest to bear are those which never come.—<i>James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), Am. poet and essayist.</i> (26)</p>	<p>19. Anxiety must be abandoned.</p> <p>The disappointments hardest to bear are those which never come.</p>
<p>APPRECIATION. You will find poetry nowhere unless you bring some with you.—<i>Joseph Joubert (1754-1824), Fr. moralist.</i> (28)</p>	<p>20. Only a poet can discern poetry in the commonplace prose of routine existence.</p>

<p>ART. The highest problem of any art is to cause by appearance the illusion of a higher reality.—<i>Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Ger. poet, dramatist and philosopher.</i> (30) ✓</p> <p>ART. The object of art is to crystallize emotion into thought, and then fix it in form.—<i>François Delsarte (1811-1871), Fr. singer.</i> (31) ✓</p>	<p>21. The high mission of any art is, by its illusions, to foreshadow a higher universe reality,</p> <p>to crystallize the emotions of time into the thought of eternity.</p>
<p>ASPIRATION. ‘Tis not what man does which exalts him, but what man would do!—<i>Robert Browning (1812-1889), Eng. poet.</i> (32)</p>	<p>22. The evolving soul is not made divine by what it does, but by what it strives to do.</p>
<p>On mansion world number one (or another in case of advanced status) you will resume your intellectual training and spiritual development at the exact level whereon they were interrupted by death. Between the time of planetary death or translation and resurrection on the mansion world, mortal man gains absolutely nothing aside from experiencing the fact of survival (533).</p>	<p>23. Death added nothing to the intellectual possession or to the spiritual endowment, but it did add to the experiential status the consciousness of <i>survival</i>.</p>
<p>ACTION. Act well at the moment, and you have performed a good action for all eternity.—<i>John Caspar Lavater (1741-1801), Swiss theol.</i> (4) ✓</p> <p>ACTION. The acts of this life are the destiny of the next.—<i>Eastern Proverb.</i> (5)</p>	<p>24. The destiny of eternity is determined moment by moment by the achievements of the day by day living.</p> <p>The acts of today are the destiny of tomorrow.</p>
<p>GREATNESS. Greatness lies not in being strong, but in the right using of strength.—<i>Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887), Am. clergy.</i> (236) ✓</p>	<p>25. Greatness lies not so much in possessing strength as in making a wise and divine use of such strength.</p>
<p>As you journey toward your Paradise goal, constantly acquiring added knowledge and enhanced skill, you are continuously afforded the opportunity to give out to others the wisdom and experience you have already accumulated; all the way in to Havona you enact the role of a pupil-teacher. You will work your way through the ascending levels of this vast experiential university by imparting to those just below you the new-found knowledge of your advancing career. <i>In the universal regime you are not reckoned as having possessed yourself of knowledge and truth until you have demonstrated your ability and your willingness to impart this knowledge and truth to others</i> (279-80, italics added).</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE. [?] If you would thoroughly know anything, teach it to others.—<i>Tryon Edwards (1809-1894), Am. theol.</i> (333)</p>	<p>26. Knowledge is possessed only by sharing;</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Continued on following page</p>

<p>[?] Knowledge exists to be imparted.— <i>George B. Emerson (1797-1881), Am. educ. (Forty Thousand)</i></p> <p>KNOWLEDGE.</p> <p>[?] Knowledge is but folly unless it is guided by grace.— <i>George Herbert (1593-1633), Eng. divine and poet. (316)</i></p>	<p>it is safeguarded by wisdom and socialized by love.</p>
<p>INDIVIDUALITY.</p> <p>Individuality is either the mark of genius or the reverse. Mediocrity finds safety in standardization.— <i>Frederick E. Crane (1869-1947), Am. judge. (728, Recent Thought supplement)</i></p>	<p>27. Progress demands development of individuality; mediocrity seeks perpetuation in standardization.</p>
<p>ARGUMENT.</p> <p>[?]He who establishes his argument by noise and command, shows that his reason is weak.— <i>Michel E. de Montaigne (1533-1592), Fr. essayist. (29)</i></p> <p>[?]Nothing is more certain than that much of the force as well as grace of arguments, as well as of instructions, depends on their conciseness.— <i>Alexander Pope (1688-1744), Eng. poet. (29)</i></p> <p>[?]Passionate expression and vehement assertion are no arguments, unless it be of the weakness of the cause that is defended by them, or of the man that defends it.— <i>William Chillingworth (1602-1644), Eng. divine. (Forty Thousand)</i></p> <p>[?] In excessive altercation truth is lost.— <i>Publius Syrus (1st century B.C.), Rom. slave and poet. (Forty Thousand)</i></p>	<p>28. The argumentative defense of any proposition is inversely proportional to the truth contained.⁹</p>

ENDNOTES

¹The Dutch translation of the Urantia Book, published in 1997, misleadingly translates “quart” and “pint” as “liter” and “half-liter,” concealing the British/American specificity of the original.

²I have since widened the parameters of my search and have discovered several source books written and published after 1935.

³It should be noted that Aston’s translations may well be more faithful to the original Shinto manuscripts than the UB’s. The latter’s versions seem to be the result of a deliberate effort to rid historical Shinto of its polytheistic and nature-worshipping aspects. Further, Aston indicates (on p. 367 of *Shinto: The Way of the Gods*) that the passages used by Frost and by the Urantia Book were culled from a Shinto text entitled *Wa Rongo*, first published in 1669. Quoting Aston: “The preface states that the original work belongs to the reign of Gotoba no In (1184-1198), and gives a list of successive editors or compilers from 1219 to 1628.” This calls into question the historicity of the UB’s account, since over 1,000 years separate the original *Wa Rongø* from the times of Jesus.

⁴I use the word “meta-phrasing” to characterize the Urantia Book’s technique of taking a sentence, passage, or other portion of a source text and, by subtly rephrasing it, infusing it with new spiritual, philosophical or theological meaning.

⁵Dr. William S. Sadler and Emma L. (“Christy”) Christensen, two of the original “contact commissioners” (now all deceased) who are said to have been in immediate contact with the man who, in an unconscious state, transmitted the Urantia Papers and many communiqués preceding and following them.

⁶My soon-to-be-published first book, *Sources of The Urantia Book: Papers 99-103*, examines how ten source books were used in the writing of these five papers. It is replete with examples of the Urantia Book’s ingenious technique of meta-phrasing.

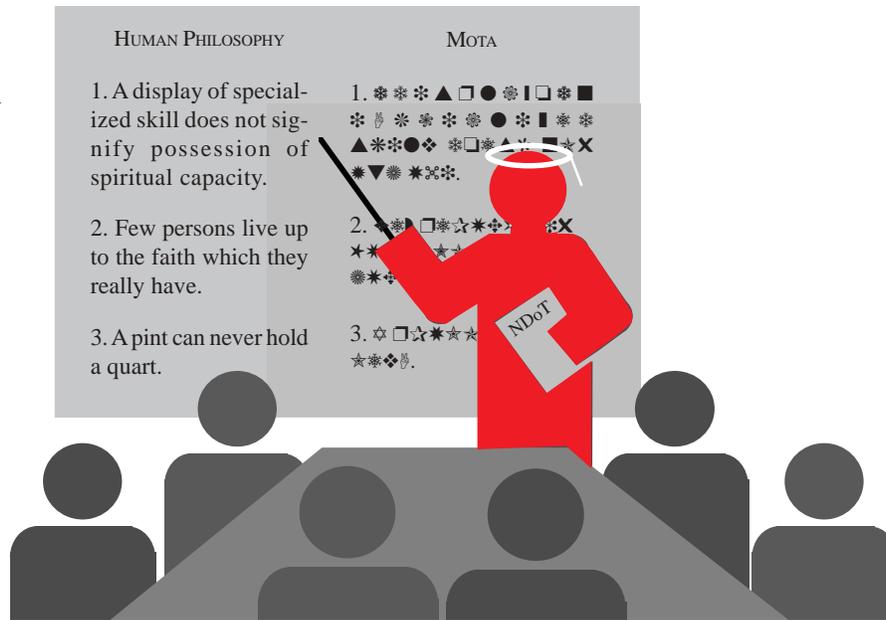
⁷In the early and mid-90s, with some misgivings, I distributed early drafts of my parallel chart to various people. These novice attempts have been analyzed and commented on by Martin Gardner and Ernest P. Moyer in their respective books about the Urantia Book.

⁸Found in *The Penguin Dictionary of Proverbs* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1983): “Give neither counsel nor salt till you are asked for it—English Proverb.”

⁹In 1961, liberal Protestant minister Harry Emerson Fosdick described the aim of his Christian apologetics: “... to achieve a concept of God which will require a minimum of argument, because its intelligibility, reasonableness and relevance to human need carry a self-authenticating authority” (*In Search of God and Immortality: The Garvin Lectures* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1961]). ■

Mota: The Coda

by Matthew Block



Teaching mota by the parallel technique on the first mansion world. (UB 556)

This is the concluding portion of my essay, “Morontia Mota: A New Perspective,” Part One of which appeared in the last issue of *The Circular*.¹ In Part One I shared evidence that a 734-page book of quotations called *The New Dictionary of Thoughts (NDoT)* was the primary source of the twenty-eight statements of human philosophy listed in the “Morontia Mota” section of Paper 48 (“The Morontia Life”). The parallel chart I drew up showed that most of the statements correlated closely with sayings found in *NDoT*’s first 32 pages. In no case were the parallelisms word-for-word, but in most instances the resemblances were undeniable.

Perhaps a few readers who haven’t read Part One and haven’t reread the “Morontia Mota” section lately, are thinking: “So far, so good. The revelators say they used the highest human concepts wherever possible. And if they used source *books*, then it’s only natural that they’d use a book such as *NDoT*, which gathers the highest human thoughts into one volume. The findings are easy to swallow.”

But if studied in more depth, the findings become chewier.

First, we saw that most of the twenty-eight statements are laid out according to the *NDoT*’s alphabetically arranged topical entries. For instance, the first four statements correlate with sayings under the topic “Ability,” found on *NDoT*’s first page. Later statements successively match entries found in the topics “Accident,” “Action,” “Adversity,” “Advice,” etc. The alphabetic nature of the parallelisms points to the conclusion that, out of the untold millions of thought-

gem compilations in the universe that could have been used, only an English-language one—one from Urantia, therefore—could match the general sequence of the first twenty-two statements. Further investigation showed that, out of all the English-language quote books that could have been used, only certain editions of *NDoT*, published in the 1930s, contained the fullest array of correlates. In particular, the correlate for statement no. 27 was a recent addition to the *NDoT*, first appearing possibly as late as 1936.

Second, we’re told by the archangel in the preamble to the “Morontia Mota” section that *these very statements* were being used “not long since” (as of 1934, presumably) by a morontia instructor on the first mansion world of Satania for teaching purposes. (“Not long since,” by archangel standards, could conceivably be as long as

500 years ago or as short a time as it takes for an archangel to get from the first mansion world to where he was when writing his narrative.)

Interpolating the information derived from the *NDoT* discovery into the bare-bones description given in the archangel's introduction, we arrive at the following implied scenario:

Not long since, a morontia instructor on the first mansion world of Satania taught a mota class using twenty-eight statements of human philosophy to parallel mota concepts. Most of these statements had been selected and adapted in consecutive order from the first 32 pages of a 1930s edition of a Urantian quote book called *The New Dictionary of Thoughts*, published in English but containing words of wisdom from a variety of cultures and periods, though mainly from the English-speaking world of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The first twenty-two statements were presented by theme, following the sequence of the English alphabet, as follows:

- Nos. 1 - 4: Ability.
- No. 5. Adversity (out of order).
- No. 6. Abstinence.
- No. 7a. Accident.
- Nos. 7b - 11: Action.
- Nos. 12 - 13: Adversity.
- No. 14. Advice.
- No. 15. Affectation.
- No. 16. Affliction.
- No. 17. Ambition.
- No. 18. Anger.
- No. 19. Anxiety.
- No. 20. Appreciation.
- No. 21. Art.
- No. 22. Aspiration.

From no. 23 on, the statements were presented in random order:

- No. 23: Death and the Afterlife (or Attainment, in which case the order above was followed).
- No. 24. Action.
- No. 25. Greatness.
- No. 26. Knowledge.
- No. 27. Individuality.
- No. 28. Argument.

At the end of Part One, pondering the questions sparked by this implied scenario, I invited readers to submit their own attempts to square it what we are told about the educational system of the mansion worlds, and about the ways thoughts and information are transmitted in the cosmos. No one did, but several people wrote in asking for the follow-up issue of *The Circular* in which, I'd promised, I would grapple with these problems.

Help was provided when a reader, who wishes to remain anonymous, located a 1934 edition of *NDoT* and showed that the correlate of statement no. 27 was included there. This proved that 1936 was *not* the first edition in which the statement appeared,

thereby removing the chronological block that stymied a literal reading of the archangel's introduction. The statement may have appeared in *NDoT* as early as the 1933 edition, but this edition has yet to surface. (No edition was published in 1932, and we have already seen that the 1931 does not contain no. 27.)

These little details about which edition was used are, of course, important to the question of how to reconcile the *NDoT* finding with a literal or near-literal interpretation of the archangel's account of the mota class. In confronting this problem, I base my speculations on a careful reading of Papers 47 ("The Seven Mansion Worlds"), 48, and certain sections in other papers in which pertinent information is discussed. Doing so avoids two extreme approaches which are equally unproductive. The first—an unwillingness to read or take the Urantia Book seriously at all—is epitomized by Martin Gardner in his 1995 book *Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery*. In commenting on the question before us, he writes:

Why, in the names of the Most Highs, would instructors on the first mansion world consult an undistinguished [*sic*] Urantian anthology of quotations, then rephrase 28 [*sic*] of the book's dullest [*sic*] aphorisms, all [*sic*] in the anthology's first 33 pages, to use in teaching ethics [*sic*] to newly arrived Urantian [*sic*] personalities? Which is more plausible? That an archangel of Nebadon faithfully reported what high beings on another planet are teaching former Urantians, or that Sadler or someone else owned an edition of *The [New] Dictionary of Thoughts* and rephrased 28 quotations which he or she particularly liked but got tired of copying after going through the anthology's first 33 pages? (339)

Gardner's preoccupation with what is "more plausible" precludes an openness to what is possible. And the fact that he himself failed to faithfully report the facts of the case, betrays his lack of seriousness.

The second approach proposes fantastic scenarios which, while theoretically possible, run counter to the UB's overall picture of reality. For instance, it is possible that exact replicas of our libraries exist on the mansion worlds and on other spheres. (If this were the case, though, there would be no need for the Thought Preservers, described on p. 503 as "the artisans dedicated to the preservation of the higher thought of the realms."²) Or, that English is *not* unique to Urantia but is actually a common universe language, and therefore the twenty-eight statements weren't necessarily derived from *NDoT*. Or, that the statements ostensibly derived from *NDoT* were actually drawn by the morontia instructor from a near-infinite stock of wise sayings, created by the Seven Master Spirits or the Universe Mother Spirit at or near the beginning of time, in every conceivable language, and transmitted via verbal inspiration by seraphim to such people as the authors of the *NDoT* entries. With scenarios like these, *anything*—from clairvoyance to cloned thoughts—is possible, and therefore no problem exists.

I believe that one scenario which (a) does justice to the findings, and (b) is in keeping with the teachings of the Urantia Book about angels and the mansion worlds, is this:

The mota class was made up exclusively of newly arrived English-speaking Urantians who were learning mota in English, their native or acquired tongue. Being first-mansion-worlders, they were not yet fluent enough in the language of Satania to receive instruction in that language.³ The morontia instructor⁴ let the class know that she was using entries from the most recent edition of *NDoT* ►

(the 1933 or 1934 edition), earlier editions of which some of the students may have owned before they “graduated.” Some may have even been acquainted with one or more of the authors, and—it’s not impossible—a few may have been quote-authors themselves. (Perhaps there’s a quota of quotes in every mota class!) This being the students’ first class in mota, the instructor drew from the first several pages of *NDoT*. As the lesson continued, she dipped into entries occurring later in the book. These entries were probably presented in the exact form in which they appear in *NDoT* (in which case the archangel revised the sayings to emphasize their moral and spiritual points so as to make them more suitable as stand-alone entries in the Urantia Book), or the morontia instructor revised them. The students’ familiarity with the quotes and their authors facilitated, in some significant way, their grasp of the corresponding mota concepts. At the same time this early-mota class was in session, hundreds of similar ones were taking place in hundreds of other native-world languages.

The remaining question is: How did a book (or its contents) published on Urantia in 1933 or 1934, make its way to the first mansion world by the end of 1934, the date in which Part II of the Urantia Book is said to have been written? Certainly not by visiting seraphim or Mansion World Teachers or others whose maximum velocity is only three times the speed of light. Perhaps a Solitary Messenger or a self-acting Adjuster or some other being who can travel instantaneously or nearly so, brought a copy (or its contents) along with him, though it’s hard to imagine such august personalities volunteering or being requisitioned to perform such a trivial task.

One possibility is via the archangels’ circuit. We’re told on p. 2024: “The circuit of the archangels then [soon after the resurrection of Jesus] operated for the first time from Urantia. Gabriel and the archangel hosts moved to the place of the spiritual polarity of the planet; and

when Gabriel gave the signal, there flashed to *the first of the system mansion worlds* the voice of Gabriel, saying: ‘By the mandate of Michael, let the dead of a Urantia dispensation rise!’” (Emphasis added.)

The circuit is mentioned on p. 1254 in connection with the planetary government of Urantia: “This rather loosely organized and somewhat

personally administered planetary government is more than expectedly effective because of the timesaving assistance of the archangels and their ever-ready circuit, which is so frequently utilized in planetary emergencies and administrative difficulties. Technically, the planet is still spiritually isolated in the Norlatiadek circuits, but in an emergency this handicap can now be circumvented through utilization of the archangels’ circuit.” And on p. 1191 we’re told: “In recent years the archangels’ circuit has functioned on Urantia, but that means of communication is largely limited to the transactions of the archangel corps itself.”

Again, it hardly seems fitting to utilize such an important circuit to convey a quote book or its contents, but the fact that an archangel played a role in the “Morontia Mota” narrative may be significant.

As this essay closes, I feel as if I’ve salvaged for myself the sense of the

possibility, if not the probability, of the scenario implied by my *NDoT* discovery. My sense of its plausibility would have been strengthened considerably if the archangel had intimated either that the human statements were derived from Urantian thinkers or that the students in the class were recent arrivals from Urantia. The absence of such statements, combined with the copious culling of an unacknowledged source text, serves only to undermine—at least for me—an unquestioning acceptance of this and similar narratives in the Urantia Book.

Only a brave person is willing honestly to admit, and fearlessly to face, what a sincere and logical mind discovers (1773). ■

“A great thought is a great boon, for which God is to be first thanked, then he who is the first to utter it, and then, in a lesser, but still in a considerable degree, the man [or angel?] who is the first to quote it to us.”

—*Christian Nestell Bovee (1820-1904), American author and editor.*

ENDNOTES

1. Part One is available on the Square Circles website (www.squarecircles.com).
2. The full paragraph about the thought preservers reads: “1. *Thought preservers*. These are the artisans dedicated to the preservation of the higher thought of the realms. On the morontia worlds they truly treasure the gems of mentation. Before first coming to Urantia, I saw records and heard broadcasts of the ideation of some of the great minds of this planet. Thought recorders preserve such noble ideas in the tongue of Uversa.” One scenario not quite as fantastic as the others, but certainly amusing, is that each *NDoT* correlate was transmitted, at the time of its occurrence and in the language in which it was first expressed, to the thought preservers, who translated it into the language of Uversa. Later, these Uversa-ized *NDoT* entries were translated (in most cases, translated *back*) into English, which accounts for the rewording of the original (English) expressions. This would mean, for instance, that statement no. 3, expressed originally by American author Margaretta W. Deland (1857-1945) as “A pint can’t hold a quart—if it holds a pint it is doing all that can be expected of it,” was translated into Uversa-ese and then back into English as “Inherent capacities cannot be exceeded; a pint can never hold a quart.” (At least, under this scenario, the words ‘pint’ and ‘quart’ didn’t get lost in the translation and retranslation, unlike in the translations of the Urantia Book which translate ‘pint’ and ‘quart’ as ‘half-liter’ and ‘liter’!)
3. From p. 546: “You will not acquire new languages automatically; you will learn a language over there much as you do down here, and these brilliant beings [the Morontia Companions] will be your language teachers. The first study on the mansion worlds will be the tongue of Satania and then the language of Nabadon. And while you are mastering these new tongues, the Morontia Companions will be your efficient interpreters and patient translators.”
4. Otherwise known as a morontia counselor, a member of an order of seraphim known as transition ministers. (See p. 554.)