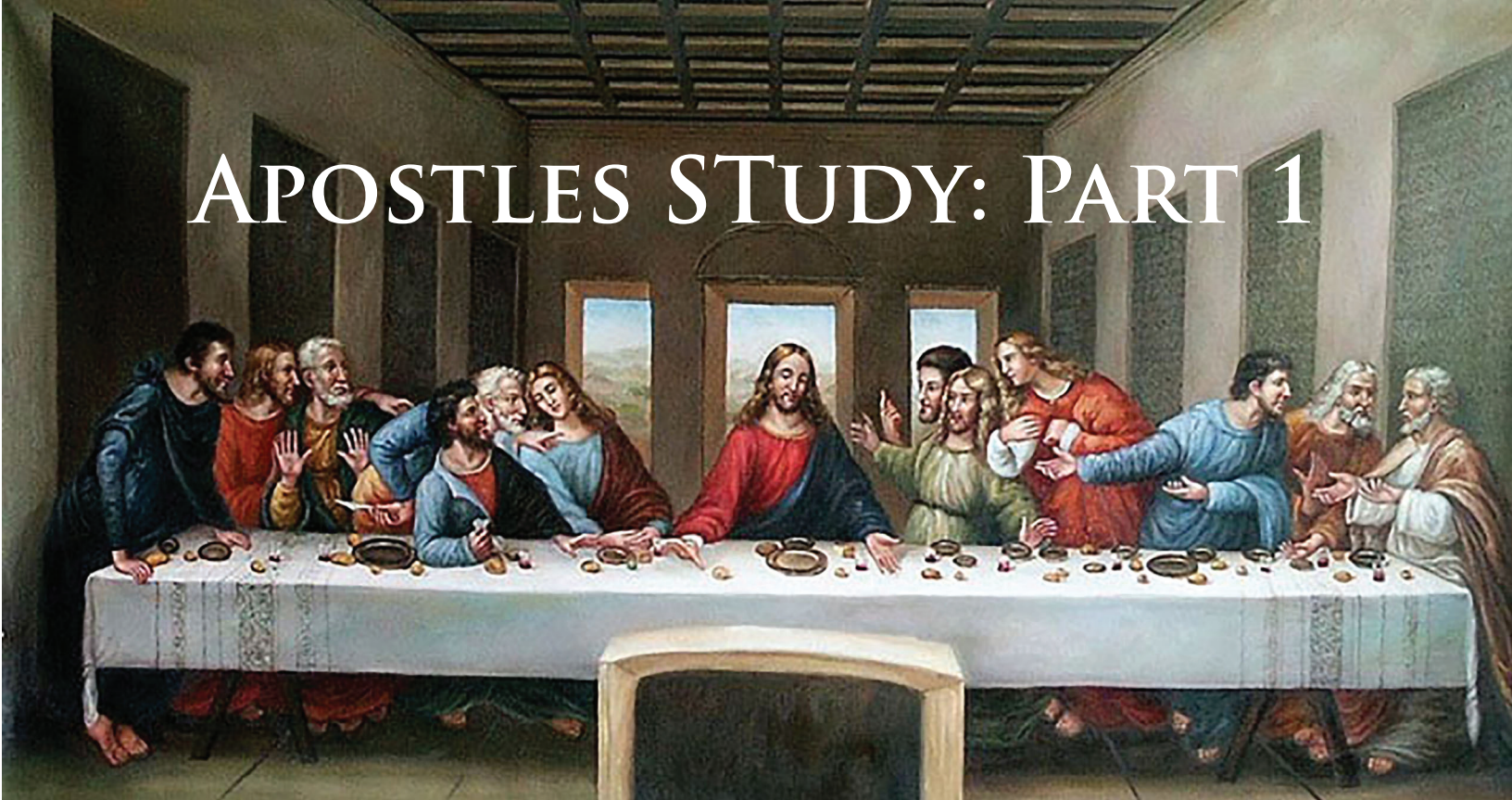


# APOSTLES STUDY: PART 1



## Tracing the Sources for Paper 139 - “The Twelve Apostles”

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**I**N HIS “Personal Account of Finding the Urantia Book” (circa 1960), Dr. Meredith J. Sprunger recounts his conversations with Dr. William S. Sadler, the Chicago author and psychiatrist who was mysteriously involved in the development of the manuscript that became the Urantia Book. Sprunger writes:

I asked Sadler when and why he finally accepted the papers for what they claim to be. He replied that his professional pride was at stake and so he maintained a critical professional attitude until most of the papers were received. His decision to throw in his intellectual towel came, he said, when they received the paper on the twelve apostles. “I’m a psychiatrist,” he said, “and I think I know my business. But this paper gave me an inferiority complex. Even if I had a staff of psychiatrists and years to work on it, I don’t think I could prepare a paper of this quality. You almost have to have access to the interior of the human mind to write such a paper. So I finally decided to admit that we were dealing with superior knowledge.

Why Sadler seemed to assume that only a *psychiatrist* would be equipped to write probing character studies is puzzling. Had he never read Shakespeare or Dostoyevsky, for instance? Also, what exactly did Sadler find so impressive about Paper 139? The UB’s portrayal of the apostles extends throughout most of Part IV, but Paper 139 itself is short on deep psychological probing.

Further, was Sadler not aware that scores of books about the apostles were within easy reach, in any large bookstore or library, and that at least a few of them were clearly sources for Paper 139?

If he had delved into this literature, he would have realized that nearly all the “portraits of the apostles” were largely the product of the writers’ imaginations, extrapolating from what little could be gleaned from New Testament accounts and early traditions. For instance, the apostle Andrew is

mentioned only three times in the gospels, very briefly, and yet a dozen pious Christian preachers managed to flesh out devotional portraits of him for the edification of their equally pious readers.

The standard Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias of the late 19th and early 20th centuries also profiled each apostle, drawing on gospel accounts and early church traditions. These articles relied much less on the authors' imaginations; however, the authors, being devout Christians, were more apt to credit the historicity of early traditions than other scholars would do. Two of these biblical reference books provided source material for Paper 139.

Coincidentally, I found my first apostles source in 1994 at a used book store in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, the hometown of Meredith Sprunger. In fact, I had just visited Meredith and his wife Irene before stopping in at the bookstore. The source was *These Twelve: A Study in Temperament* (1926), by Charles Reynolds Brown. I didn't find out about Meredith's abovementioned interview with Sadler until some time later.

At the time of this writing (December 2010) I've found five definite sources, which collectively parallel only about half the paper. Much of the paper may well be unique. A noncommitted reader of the Urantia Book could then reasonably ask, Is the original material "revelatory" (i.e. does it reveal factual information available until then only to superhumans, as claimed in the UB) or is it the result of the same type of (human) creative imagination employed in the "portraits of the apostles" genre?

The sharing of source research alone will not settle the question, but the increased knowledge base provided by the parallels will help the reader get a handle on how the paper was written. Since my work on this paper is not developed enough to provide a full-paper parallel chart, I thought it best to present my findings on a source-by-source basis, over the next several months.

The lead-off source, and the subject of this article, is *Studies of the Man Christ Jesus* (1896), by Presbyterian evangelist Robert E. Speer. I found it in July of 2008 via [books.google.com](http://books.google.com) while looking for parallels for Paper 141.

The book may be read in its entirety here: [archive.org/details/studiesmanchris00speegoog](http://archive.org/details/studiesmanchris00speegoog)

As the title indicates, Jesus is the central figure; the apostles themselves receive only peripheral attention. The book is a major source for Part IV—it was used in four papers, including Papers 141 and 139—and the apostle parallels were the least obvious and most surprising to me. Only after seeing the parallels with the other three UB papers did I notice them. They occur in Chapter III ("Some Active and Passive Traits of His [Jesus'] Character").

That chapter is divided into ten sections, each describing a trait or set of traits. (See page 12 of the Speer book to see the table of contents.)

The author of Paper 139 evidently drew from this chapter to fashion a subtheme that runs throughout the apostle portraits, which is: What trait of Jesus made a special appeal to each apostle? Each apostle, as described by Paper 139, was different in this regard; and, as the parallel chart shows, six of Jesus' ten special traits, as described by Speer, were respectively admired by six of the twelve apostles. Andrew, Simon Peter, Thomas Didymus, James and Judas Alpheus, and Simon the Zealot are the ones who match up with six of Speer's listed traits.

James Zebedee, John Zebedee, Philip the Curious, Honest Nathaniel, Matthew Levi, and Judas Iscariot find only debatable and vague parallels. For instance, Philip most appreciated Jesus' "unfailing generosity". This trait only partially corresponds to Speer's fifth listed trait, Jesus' "love and generosity to those who were alien or hostile to Him". In the interests of clarity, I have not included such partial parallelisms in the chart.

**Part 2 of this study will be posted in the near future**

WORK-IN-PROGRESS (DECEMBER 12, 2010) PARALLEL CHART FOR  
CERTAIN PASSAGES IN

**Paper 139 — The Twelve Apostles**

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**Key**

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallels.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallels occurring on different rows, or parallels which are separated by yellow-highlighted parallels.

**Source for these passages in Paper 139**

- (1) **Speer**, Robert E., *Studies of the Man Christ Jesus* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1896)

Matthew Block  
12 December 2010

III: SOME ACTIVE AND PASSIVE  
TRAITS OF HIS CHARACTER (Speer

75)

1. ANDREW, THE FIRST CHOSEN

139:1.11 Every one of the apostles loved Jesus, but it remains true that each of the twelve was drawn toward him because of some certain trait of personality which made a special appeal to the individual apostle.

I. *Sincerity*. (Speer 75)

Andrew admired Jesus because of his consistent sincerity,

“When I trace the unaffected majesty which runs through the life of Jesus,” declared Channing, “and see Him never falling below His divine claims amidst poverty and scorn in His last agony, I have a feeling of the reality of His character which I cannot express...” (S 76).

his unaffected dignity.

2. SIMON PETER

VI. *Tenderness*. (Speer 89)

139:2.5 The one trait which Peter most admired in Jesus was his supernal tenderness.

### 3. JAMES ZEBEDEE

139:3.6 That characteristic of Jesus which James most admired was the Master's sympathetic affection. Jesus' understanding interest in the small and the great, the rich and the poor, made a great appeal to him.

### 4. JOHN ZEBEDEE

139:4.6 Those characteristics of Jesus which John most appreciated were the Master's love and unselfishness; these traits made such an impression on him that his whole subsequent life became dominated by the sentiment of love and brotherly devotion.

### 5. PHILIP THE CURIOUS

139:5.6 The one quality about Jesus which Philip so continuously admired was the Master's unfailing generosity. Never could Philip find anything in Jesus which was small, niggardly, or stingy, and he worshiped this ever-present and unfailing liberality.

### 6. HONEST NATHANIEL

139:6.8 Nathaniel most revered Jesus for his tolerance. He never grew weary of contemplating the broadmindedness and generous sympathy of the Son of Man.

### 7. MATTHEW LEVI

139:7.4 It was the Master's forgiving disposition which Matthew most appreciated.

## 8. THOMAS DIDYMUS

X. *The perfect balance of His character.* (Speer 119)

139:8.7 The other apostles held Jesus in reverence because of some special and outstanding trait of his replete personality, but Thomas revered his Master because of his superbly balanced character.

1. He was lovingly merciful and inflexibly just. He combines these qualities in His instructions to His disciples (Matt. v. 48; Luke vi. 36) (S 119).

Increasingly Thomas admired and honored one who was so lovingly merciful yet so inflexibly just and fair;

3. He was firm, but not obstinate (John xiii. 1-11). [Etc.] (S 119)

so firm but never obstinate;

4. He was calm and self-contained, but not indifferent (Mark iv. 37-41). [Etc.] (S 120)

so calm but never indifferent;

6. He was helpful, but not officious (S 121).

so helpful and so sympathetic but never meddlesome or dictatorial;

7. He was strong, but not rough; vigorous, but always gentle (S 121).

so strong but at the same time so gentle; so positive but never rough or rude;

8. He was feminine, but not effeminate. We see His unsurpassed delicacy and tact in the story of the woman with the issue of blood... His womanly tenderness was scarcely less apparent when, a few hours later, He addressed the little maid, Jairus's daughter, in her own tongue, and with motherly solicitude provided at once for the child's needs (S 121-22).

so tender but never vacillating;

9. He was innocent and yet forceful (S 122).

so pure and innocent but at the same time so virile, aggressive, and forceful;

10. He was courageous, but never rash or foolhardy (S 123).

so truly courageous but never rash or foolhardy;

VIII. *His broad human knowledge and interest in nature.* (Speer 99)

Now it is not surprising that a good man should love and study nature, for the **love of nature** and nature's society is a sign and fruit of unselfishness.... But even Jesus' love of the open air and the country life and the warmth of the sun on sea and mountain gave way to the stern work and stress of life and suffering (S 104).

such a **lover of nature**

but so free from all tendency to revere nature;

IX. *The universality of His character.* (Speer 105)

Jesus "is never said to have laughed, and yet He never produces the impression of austerity, moroseness, excessive sadness, or being ever unhappy. We could not long endure a being whose face was never moved by laughter or relaxed by **humorous play**; yet we have sympathy with Christ, for there is somewhere in Him an ocean of deep joy ..." (S 117).

so **humorous** and so **playful**,

but so free from levity and frivolity.

It was this matchless symmetry of personality that so charmed Thomas. He probably enjoyed the highest intellectual understanding and personality appreciation of Jesus of any of the twelve.

9 and 10. JAMES AND JUDAS ALPHEUS

II. *Simplicity.* (Speer 77)

139:9.6 James Alpheus especially loved Jesus because of the Master's **simplicity**.

[contd] One who knew Thomas Chalmers well wrote of him, “In simplicity he was a child. By simplicity we do not mean the simplicity of the **head**; of that he had none; but we refer to a certain quality of **heart** and of life which gives a directness of all actions, and a certain beautiful unconsciousness of self—an outgoing of the whole nature that we see in children...” (S 77).

III. *Humility*. (Speer 79)

IV. *His unselfishness and personal dignity*. (Speer 82)

It is not easy for one to combine the **humility** of self-effacement with larger personal power and great **personal dignity** (S 85).

III. *Humility*. (Speer 79)

Again and again He **enjoined silence** on those who were subjects of His miraculous cures (Matt. ix. 30; xii. 15,16; Mark i. 43,44) (S 81).

VII. *The perfect calm and evenness of His life*. (Speer 94)

[contd] “The impression made on us by the appearance of Christ is that of perfect repose, **calm** self-possession, serene self-reliance.... Everything which He began was accomplished with **assurance**, and inevitably attained its object...” (S 94-95).

4. In the last bitter experiences of His life He bore Himself with even **composure** (S 96).

These twins could not comprehend the **mind** of Jesus, but they did grasp the sympathetic bond between themselves and the **heart** of their Master.

139:9.7 Judas Alpheus was drawn toward Jesus because of the Master’s unostentatious **humility**.

Such **humility** linked with such **personal dignity** made a great appeal to Judas.

The fact that Jesus would always **enjoin silence** regarding his unusual acts made a great impression on this simple child of nature.

## 11. SIMON THE ZEALOT

139:11.5 The one thing about Jesus which Simon so much admired was the Master’s **calmness**, his **assurance**,

poise, and inexplicable **composure**.



## 12. JUDAS ISCARIOT

139:12.4 There was no special trait about Jesus which Judas admired above the generally attractive and exquisitely charming personality of the Master.