

# INTRODUCTION

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This last volume of *The Urantia Diaries of Harold and Martha Sherman* spans four decades; it begins with the Shermans' receiving the just-published *The Urantia Book* in October 1955 and ends with Martha's death in 1998, Harold predeceasing her in 1987.

This volume follows not only the parallel tracks of the slowly growing Urantia readership and the later stages of Harold's career, but also the intersections—the Shermans' witting and unwitting encounters with Urantia Book readers and those otherwise connected with the book.

Among the unwitting encounters were those with Hornell Hart, Eldred Cocking, and W.W. Keeler. Hornell Hart, a professor of sociology who lectured with Harold on ESP, was given a copy of the book by the Urantia Brotherhood in 1956. Unbeknownst to him, he was a Urantia Book source author; his 1941 book, *New Gateways to Creative Living*, was used to write a section of Paper 111. His lack of interest in the Urantia Book prevented him from spotting the parallels; if he had recognized them and brought them to Sadler's or the public's attention, the public image of the book might have been significantly affected. Eldred Cocking served on the General Council of the Urantia Brotherhood from 1965 to 1972. He met Harold at a meeting in 1965 for UFO enthusiasts and wrote Harold a complimentary letter the following year on the latter's 1965 book, *How to Solve Mysteries of Your Mind and Soul*. Neither knew of the other's involvement with Urantia. W.W. Keeler, chairman of the board of Phillips Petroleum Company in Oklahoma, met Harold in 1969 and funded some of his ESP projects; he apparently wasn't aware of Harold's past association with Urantia, nor did Harold know that Keeler's son, Richard, was becoming a fervent Urantia believer and would go on to become (at

the time of this writing) the longest-serving trustee of the Urantia Foundation.

But most of the Shermans' contacts with Urantians were intentional. Though they never returned to 533 Diversey Parkway after leaving Chicago in 1947, they stayed in contact with a handful of Forumite friends—Elsie Baumgartner, Rachel Gusler, Julia Fender-son, Grace Palmer, her sisters Lulu Steinbeck and Caroline Brown, and Robert and Ruth Burton—who kept them abreast of developments in the post-Forum era of the organized Urantia readership. Harold also maintained correspondence with Sir Hubert Wilkins until the latter's death in November 1958.

In the late 1950s, Harold's career pursuits took him and Martha back to Hollywood, where they lived for four years and met some Urantia Book readers active in the study groups in Southern California. One of these was Melvin H. ("Bud") Kagan, a good friend of Bill Sadler. After hearing the Shermans tell of their mistreatment by Dr. Sadler in connection with the "Sherman rebellion" in 1942, Kagan went to Chicago in about 1959 and interviewed Bill to get his side of the story. Bill, then married to his second wife and estranged from his father, affirmed that Sadler had indeed been deceitful in his handling of the affair, having lied to Forumites about receiving a "communication" warning him about Harold. In early 1963, within a year before Bill Sadler's untimely death, Harold sent him a letter proposing they work together to repackage the Urantia teachings to appeal to a broader public, but the letter went unanswered.

In 1964, after struggling for years to sell his plays and musicals and to market his *TNT* film and self-help albums, Harold broke through with his *How to Make ESP Work for You*, a book he promoted on TV and radio shows. The proceeds from this book helped the Shermans pay off their longstanding debts, and from this point on Harold made a reputation for himself as a popular authority on ESP. He set up the ESP Research Associates Foundation (ESPRA) in his home state of Arkansas and spent the rest of his career writing and lecturing prolifically on telepathy, "psychic surgery," communication with the dead, and other aspects of psychic phenomena. ESPRA sponsored an annual Mind/Body/Healing Workshop from 1969 to 1978, held in various cities in the South and Midwest, which featured such ESP luminaries as Uri Geller, Arthur Ford and Jeane Dixon and attracted as many as one thousand attendees.

In his lectures and classes Harold occasionally mentioned the Urantia Book and his association with it, which brought inquiries from those interested in learning more. He had periodically considered writing about his Urantia experiences ever since Harry Loose instructed him and Martha to keep a diary to be used in an eventual book about Urantia which would be a companion to the Urantia Book itself. But it wasn't until he was reaching the end of his career that he decided to write a book about his lifelong search for truth and include a chapter on Urantia.

His decision was reinforced by learning of the increasing legalism of the Urantia Foundation and authoritarianism of the Urantia Brotherhood after the death of Sadler in 1969. As recounted in earlier volumes, Harold foresaw the dangers of the proposed organizations when he first read the charter of the Foundation in 1942, and he found his objections being confirmed by recent developments. He learned from veteran Urantia evangelist Robert Burton that he (Burton) had been expelled from the Brotherhood for speaking out against the Foundation's policies. Soon thereafter, Harold was contacted by Frenchman Jacques Weiss who told him that the Foundation had sued him for continuing to publish his French translation of the Urantia Book in violation of the contract he had signed in 1961.

Harold's chapter on Urantia, called "Pipeline to God," was included in his *How to Know What to Believe*, published as a Fawcett paperback in 1976. Just before the book was to go to press, Harold edited the chapter, putting in pseudonyms for the Urantia Book, the Sadler family and the Forumites, so as to avoid being sued by the Urantia Foundation. Nevertheless, readers recognized the thinly veiled references, and for the rest of his life—as documented in this volume—he received letters asking for more information, particularly who the "sleeping subject" was. Harold had been told in 1971 by Bert M. Salyer, Jr., a Urantia evangelist in Oklahoma, that Sadler had identified his brother-in-law, Wilfred C. Kellogg, as the subject. But in "Pipeline to God," Harold didn't mention Kellogg by name, describing him only as someone "very close to the doctor."

That the Urantia Book would be spotlighted in a popular book or magazine article was inevitable, but until *How to Know What to Believe*, mentions of it were few. This obscurity pleased the publicity-shy officers at 533, who had already succeeded in deleting mention of Urantia in a 1961 biography of Sir Hubert Wilkins, the first in-

ternationally known Urantia enthusiast. As recorded in this volume, author and television producer Lowell Thomas, who was writing the biography, wanted to include a chapter on his friend Sir Hubert's spiritual and psychic interests. Thomas' assistant asked Sadler about Sir Hubert's belief in the Urantia Book and whether Sadler would object if mention were made of the book and the Urantia Foundation. At first Sadler approved, but when the assistant presented him with a draft of the chapter, he and others at 533 quibbled at the content. The chapter—which also included mention of Sir Hubert's ESP experiments with Harold Sherman in 1937—was ultimately scrapped.

At about the same time, British aviator John Grierson, writing another biography of Wilkins, wished to contact the Urantia Foundation for more information, but was unable to do so because the 1955 edition of the Urantia Book gave no address for the Foundation other than "Chicago." Grierson's 1960 book, *Sir Hubert Wilkins: Enigma of Exploration*—the first to mention and quote from the Urantia Book—gave a flawed description of the book and an equally flawed account of Sir Hubert's association with it.

*How to Know What to Believe* was one of Harold's less successful books and went out of print a few years after publication. (We have included the entire "Pipeline to God" chapter in this volume.) But the book attracted the attention of American author Martin Gardner, who contacted Martha Sherman in 1992. Martha granted him access to the Sherman diaries (which Harold had barely used while writing "Pipeline to God") and much of Harold's correspondence. In his 1995 book, *Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery*—the first popular book about Urantia ever published—Gardner mentioned that the Sherman diaries, housed with other Sherman materials at the University of Central Arkansas, would be made available to the public in January 2000. It was this notice that led to our publication of *The Urantia Diaries of Harold and Martha Sherman*.

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