



URANTIA® Brotherhood BULLETIN

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Paris readers meet with Brotherhood representatives in Jacques Dupont's office. Left to right: Marcel Cheruy, Alain Muraz, Louis Obernicke, John Hales, Mr. and Mrs. Jean Yves Vigneron, Alain Coulombe, Jacques Dupont, Nigel Hornby, daughter of the Vignerons.

PARIS READERS HOST BROTHERHOOD LEADERS

On April 24-26, URANTIA Brotherhood President John Hales and Executive Committee member Duane Faw visited Paris. They were sent by the Executive Committee in response to an invitation by a group of URANTIA Book readers in Paris. They were accompanied by Henry Begemann, Brotherhood field representative in the Netherlands. Their host in France was Jacques Dupont. The following is John and Duane's report for the Bulletin.

Report by John and Duane

The purpose of the visit was three-fold: (1) to listen to the concerns of the readers in Paris; (2) to learn how the Brotherhood might become more responsive to the needs of the readers in Europe and develop a closer relationship with them; (3) to convey our sincere interest in and support of our spiritual brothers and sisters in Europe.

We heard the concerns of more than the Parisian readers, as the meetings were also attended by French-speaking readers from Belgium, England, and Canada. In effect, we heard the concerns of French-language students that were multi-national.

Of primary concern was the unavailability of the French translation of *The URANTIA Book*. Most of the French-language

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CONCLAVE OF SOCIETIES HELD

A Conclave of URANTIA Societies, the first meeting of its kind, was held March 27-29, 1981, in Chicago at 533 Diversey Parkway. Hosted by First URANTIA Society, which is celebrating its 25th year of operation, the purpose of the gathering was to discuss common issues, problems, and priorities of URANTIA Societies. Representatives from 10 of the 13 URANTIA Societies were able to attend. Members of two other societies had to make late cancellations. Members of the Executive Committee of URANTIA Brotherhood were also invited to participate.

Representatives from the various societies were as follows: Lucile Faw, First URANTIA Society of Los Angeles; Mary Burton, URANTIA Society of Glenview; John Keith, Orvonton URANTIA Society of Chicago; Irene and Meredith Sprunger, Ft. Wayne URANTIA Society; Alice Clark and Evelyn Schoffen, First URANTIA Society of Wenatchee; Lillian Nicholas, First URANTIA Society of Western Springs; Vern Grimsley, San Francisco Bay Area URANTIA Society; Bill Hazen, URANTIA Society of Dallas; Jim McNelly, Rocky Mountain URANTIA Society of Denver; and David Kulieke from First URANTIA Society. In addition, approximately 30 other members of First URANTIA Society attended the Conclave.

The two days of meetings were open to any member of a
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Alice Clark of Wenatchee, Washington, moderates a session of the Society Conclave.

THE FUTURE OF URANTIA SOCIETIES

By David Renn

Charter Committee of URANTIA Brotherhood

In attempting to gain insight into the future of URANTIA Societies I think it's a good idea to go back to the origins of religious groups and examine some of their early functions.

We do not live in an isolated time in which our evolutionary path flies straight as an arrow to perfection. No, we are a product of the past and, though we give things new names and find our own new wrinkles, we are still, in many ways, doing the things that people have done for age upon age. Sometimes our motives are more enlightened and sometimes they aren't.

Let us then examine some of the information we have at our disposal and while doing so try to consider how some of these ways of thinking and reacting correlate with some of our actions and feelings within the realm of URANTIA Societies.

The URANTIA Book relates some of the reasons for the formation, by primitive man, of secret societies. They were established "to practice minority religious rites;" to preserve "valuable spirit or trade secrets;" as well as "for the enjoyment of some special charm or magic." "The very secrecy of these societies conferred on all members the power of mystery over the rest of the tribe. Secrecy also appeals to vanity; the initiates were the social aristocracy of their day." (790)

Vanity, associated with pride, ambition, and honor, has always been a powerful force in the formation of human associations in that "such emotions are futile without an audience to parade before." (765)

We learn that in the gradual progression of humanity's religious ideas, "Words eventually became fetishes, more especially those which were regarded as God's words; in this way the sacred books of many religions have become fetishistic prisons incarcerating the spiritual imagination of man." (969)

It is plain that we have yet to consolidate the hard won gains of our forebears and that the seeds of regression are ever present.

URANTIA Societies of the future must diligently promote study of *The URANTIA Book*. Continued exposure to genuine truth and lasting wisdom will help safeguard the idealistic purposes for which societies are founded.

We have a responsibility also to assure that each member achieves a thorough reading of the book. It is possible to elect to standing committees, to the executive committee, to the general council, and to positions as officers of the URANTIA Brotherhood, persons who have not read the book.

We must provide some mechanism to insure that each person accepting higher functional responsibility has read

the book to the end that we maintain leadership based on the teachings of *The URANTIA Book*.

We can find in *The URANTIA Book* numerous clues and guidelines for the wise development of URANTIA Societies. On page 966, we find that "regardless of the drawbacks and handicaps, every new revelation of truth has given rise to a new cult." And that "it is regrettable that many modern believers... have no... cult of mutual support—nothing to belong to." (966) This is not a trivial point. A successful cult makes a great contribution to society. The author states that when the cult has been elastic and adjustable, then truth and social progression have grown rapidly. (965)

URANTIA Societies have the opportunity to provide the nucleus of the most inspiring, most progressive, most idealistic cult in the long history of this weary planet. Or, if we don't watch ourselves, our efforts can become a massive "obstacle to social reconstruction and spiritual progress," (965) like so many cults of old.

We must be constantly aware of unconscious and unplanned trends in our collective attitudes and activities. The things we never really stop to examine because they seem harmless or because they've always been that way are the things which will take form by themselves, become crystallized and lead us to stagnation. "Formal religion restrains men in their personal spiritual activities instead of releasing them for heightened service as kingdom builders." (1092)

The planning we do must take counsel with wisdom. We must be careful and at the same time avoid enervating stalemate disguised as caution.

Further guidance from the book tells us that "the old cults were too egocentric." (966) They focused too much on themselves and neglected the real needs of their participants and of the world around them. We too can bury our faces between blue covers and neglect the suffering soul in our midst and the timid ones outside our doors. Yes, we must study *The URANTIA Book* but we must use this study as a springboard to higher collective achievements and avoid the pitfalls of cramping intellectualism. We can prepare ourselves 'til kingdom come and never see that amorphous day when URANTIA Societies are ready to turn their efforts to the world around them. URANTIA Societies will have to begin turning some of their group effort from egocentric activity to the "applied love" (1092) from which we're told the new cult must emerge.

There is more here from which we can learn. "No cult can endure and contribute to the progress of social civilization and individual spiritual attainment unless it is based on the biologic, sociologic, and religious significance of the home." (966) That's strong language. The call for that commitment is crystal clear. No cult can endure and contribute unless it is based on the home.

Webster tells us that a base is "the fundamental part of something, the groundwork, the point from which a start is

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made in an action or undertaking, the bottom of something considered as its main support." *The URANTIA Book* devotes so much attention to the importance of the home that it can't be emphasized enough.

In the future URANTIA Societies must maintain vigilance in their recognition of this reality. When it becomes difficult for the family to feel a part of any society then that society will stagnate. When the home becomes separated from the activities of the society then will the society fail in its ultimate task.

If we are to move forward, if we are to evolve in meaningful ways, then we must heed these warnings as though they are guiding lights on a darkened shore. "Family life," we're told, "next to personal religious experience, suffers most" from 20th century decadence. (1089)

On page 1092 we find further clues guiding our steps into the future. Here we are told "it is the purpose of group religious activities" and there follows a list of eight functions. The last of these, almost emphasized by its concluding placement, is "to encourage group worship." (1092) One of the purposes of group religious activities is to encourage group worship.

Let's refresh our understanding of the importance of prayer and worship to the individual. I add prayer because in human experience prayer and worship are like bread and butter, or boys and girls. They always find a way to get together.

We know that "the truest prayer is in reality a communion between man and his Maker." (966) It is the surest and quickest way of approaching superconscious levels. (1000) We know that prayer is answered by a greater revelation of truth (1002) and that "the great challenge to modern man is to achieve better communication with the divine Monitor." (2097)

The crucial role of worship, in concert with the highest forms of prayer, is undeniable in man's quest for higher levels of reality. With such potency assured how can group participation make any difference? Is it merely for social suggestibility, the reinforcement of good intentions? I think not. There is a more compelling imperative. Witness the following.

"Living associations," from human families to "the Paradise Trinity, are not augmented by mere arithmetical summation. The group potential is always far in excess of the simple sum of the attributes of the component individuals." (113)

Not only is communion a vital force for real growth but a group increases its effective power substantially. Spiritual ascent without the benefit of group worship is like harvesting grain with a sickle and leaving the combine parked in the barn. "The new cult," we are told, "must facilitate spiritual progress." (966)

The future of URANTIA societies is related to what we do today just as the things we do today are related to the

actions of our ancestors. We can learn from the past, take thoughtful action, follow the guidance of *The URANTIA Book* and continue to evolve. There are decisions waiting to be made, decisions that require courage and strength.

We can take satisfaction with the status quo or we can take action with the tools at hand to build toward the future. We can become entrenched in expecting one another to toe the line or we can encourage one another in the leap of faith required to become spirit motivated leaders in a world gasping for direction. We can take the road of orthodoxy and convention or we can pioneer in the realm of collective religious attainment.

(Editor's Note: The foregoing article was presented to the Conclave of URANTIA Societies on March 29, 1981 by David Renn, member of the URANTIA Society of Glenview.)

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CONCLAVE OF SOCIETIES HELD

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URANTIA Society. The format included brief descriptions of the history and operation of each Society, which underscored the considerable diversity to be found in the family of Societies. Topical presentations were made by the representatives, including "Spreading the Teachings," "Fostering New Study Groups," and "Support from and to the Brotherhood". Presentations were also made by URANTIA Brotherhood President John Hales, who made a welcome address, and David Renn representing the Charter Committee of URANTIA Brotherhood. David's presentation, "The Future of URANTIA Societies," is reprinted in this same issue. Discussion was held on each topic.

David Kulieke, President of First URANTIA Society, envisioned the Conclave not only as a highlight in First Society's celebration year activities, but also as an opportunity for his Society, as well as all others participating to gain new ideas and new direction for future growth and development. David stated:

"We certainly felt that it was successful. What particularly impressed me was the spirit of cooperation and fellowship. I can't remember any meeting of readers from around the country that had so much effective harmony. Letters we've received from some of the representatives have reinforced this impression. That's a tribute to the individuals involved and also to the purpose of the meeting to exchange ideas and learn from each other. It was a good activity for our society and many of our members were extremely hard-working and helpful. I hope we will see many more gatherings like it."

Having more gatherings like it was the unanimous desire of the representatives. All felt the Conclave was a fruitful exchange and suggested additional meetings be held in the future, possibly just prior to Triennial Delegate Assemblies. First URANTIA Society is preparing a written report of the meeting which will be distributed to societies and other groups.

OUR HOUR HAS NOT YET COME

PERSONAL VIEWS

The restlessness of delay is gnawing at many of us. It seems we have not yet learned the meaning of patience.

The *URANTIA Book*, we believe, is for a future age. To be too hasty in forcing its dissemination could lead to much adverse publicity, which, of course, we do not want.

Patience isn't easy, especially when it regards the thrilling teachings of *The URANTIA Book*, but "the hour has not yet come!" When it does, I am sure we will all be aware of it. If we go about training teachers and leaders, which is one of our most important purposes, sooner or later, without any specific or noticeable effort on our part, the time will become ripe and we will suddenly all recognize its stupendous significance.

As Jesus said, "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near." Let us, therefore, wait patiently for time to ripen the hunger and thirst for truth of this world's peoples. Let us not be anxious in prematurely bringing these advanced teachings into the worldwide public eye. Let us "purge the urge," as a dear one used to say whenever anyone was being carried away with over-enthusiasm. The *URANTIA Book* teachings will surely blossom forth when the present world turmoil has subsided.

Many of us have wondered why this fifth epochal revelation, after twenty-five years, has not received public notice. Even after spreading to many parts of the world and gaining a strong foothold in many countries, the book has never appeared in the headlines of our daily papers. It isn't that we have not tried to get *The URANTIA Book* acclaimed universally, for we have. Our unseen friends must be working hard to preserve this revelation for exactly the right time in history. Let us not make it difficult for them.

Grace Stephens

Editor's Note: Grace Stephens submitted this article to *URANTIA Brotherhood Bulletin* in 1980. She was a member of the Forum and a charter member of First URANTIA Society who passed on recently at the age of 75.



Grace Stephens



David Renn

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readers had discovered the book (and the movement) via *La Cosmogonie d'URANTIA*. While many French readers feel there is need for corrections to the translation, even with its faults it was adequate to lead many of its readers to see the same eternal values in *The URANTIA Book* which its English readers see. The absence of any French translation is seen as a major hindrance to the spread of the teachings among French-language peoples.

Perhaps the most important immediate result of the trip was to convey the difference in organization and function of URANTIA Brotherhood and URANTIA Foundation. It was pointed out that the copyright and translation problems are under the jurisdiction of URANTIA Foundation, and that the Foundation must concern itself with matters of international copyright law which are not easily resolved. It was reaffirmed that the Foundation is aware of the concerns of French-language readers and is actively seeking a solution to the problem.

We appreciate this opportunity to convey to French-language readers the sincere and whole-hearted concern and desire of the Brotherhood to work together for meaningful responses to their problems. Those concerns under the aegis of the Brotherhood will be considered by the appropriate Brotherhood officers and committees. It is hoped that the trip will continue to strengthen the bonds of fellowship across distance and differences. As spiritual brothers and sisters it can be done.



A workshop discussion proceeds at the Second Pacific Religious Conference on the island of Hawaii. The Conference was held from December 28, 1980, to January 1, 1981, at the Hawaii Preparatory Academy in Kaneohe.

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