

General Council, ACs, Society Presidents Meet to Plan Future

Representatives gather to discuss plans for the future at Franciscan Renewal Center in Phoenix, Arizona, January 27-28.



Phoenix is the bird of Egyptian mythology that rises renewed from its own ashes. It was fitting that the first meeting of the General Council of the organization formerly called URANTIA Brotherhood and now named Fifth Epochal Fellowship was held in Phoenix, Arizona, for at this meeting the Fellowship tested the wings that would allow it to rise from the ashes of contention with URANTIA Foundation. The wings were strong and vital.

Consistent with the General Council's intent to create an open and inclusive fellowship, all society presidents and Area Coordinators were invited to participate in this weekend planning session held January 27-28. The entire group, numbering approximately seventy people, engaged in a healthy dialogue to review the purpose and structure of the organization. In 1955 URANTIA Brotherhood, now provisionally renamed Fifth Epochal Fellowship, was constituted with a noble purpose:

The purposes of URANTIA BROTHERHOOD are the study and dissemination of the teachings of *The URANTIA Book*; the promotion, improvement, and expansion among the peoples of the world of the comprehension and understanding of Cosmology and the relation of the planet on which we live to the Universe, of the genesis and destiny of Man and his relation to God,

and of the teachings of Jesus Christ; and the inculcation and encouragement of the realization and appreciation of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man—in order to increase and enhance the comfort, happiness, and well-being of Man, as an individual and as a member of society, by fostering a religion, a philosophy, and a cosmology which are commensurate with Man's intellectual and cultural development, through the medium of fraternal association, ever obedient and subservient to the laws of this country and of all countries wherein URANTIA BROTHERHOOD may extend.

The weekend was devoted to reviewing these purposes as well as reviewing the structure of the organization as it functions today. The original statement of purpose will continue to focus the Fellowship's activities, as it has for the last 35 years, and ongoing dialogue among members will sharpen and refine the understanding of that purpose.

Past president of URANTIA Brotherhood, Paul Snider, initiated the weekend's workshop with a proposal to articulate a mission and structure consistent with our purpose. His five-level mission statement, consistent with the constitution's statement of purpose, was

well received and sparked several additional contributions. Paul also proposed a restructured organization to better accomplish each of the five mission levels. The assembled body broke into five smaller groups to review the proposed missions and structure.

On Sunday, the group reconvened as one body to register the reports of the subgroups. One of the most frequently discussed issues was that of representation. Concerns that emerged were about more effective society representation, a more direct involvement from societies and members in council decisions, and more frequent meetings among society and study group representatives.

The groups also reviewed a need for a clearer separation between the executive and policy-making functions. Currently the group responsible for executing policy decisions, the Executive Committee, consists entirely of elected members to the policy-making body, the General Council.

The main ideas and concerns identified will be reviewed by the General Council at its meeting in Snowmass, Colorado, in July after the international conference, "Walking with God," being held for all readers. □

*"Man can discover the Father in his heart, but he will have to search for the Supreme in the hearts of other men..." (*1290)*

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL ADDRESS

A Fifth Epochal Job for Fifth Epochal Fellowship

by Dave Elders, President

Propelled by the nature of the events of the last months which have affected the identity and relationships of our fellowship, we are motivated to ask who and what we are as an organization. We are engaged in the process of examination—our mission, our structure, our reason for being. But even though we, as an organization, have recently had the responsibility for the achievement of our own destiny placed firmly and fully into our own hands, this gift, without serious work, will not in itself magically reveal our true identity.

Supremacy, in my view, cannot be either experienced or expressed apart from a loving relationship with another personality.

Inasmuch as our very existence as an organization is a consequence of the gift to our planet of the fifth epochal revelation, perhaps the answer to the question of what we can become as an organization lies in a deeper understanding of *The Urantia Book* itself. What truth is it that the teachings reveal which is new to our understanding? What truth, then, is it that a fellowship of readers and believers can demonstrate to our fellows on the planet? Why have an organization at all? Just to take up space? Just to distribute the book? Just to help each other better understand the teachings intellectually? Just to "live the teachings," as we are inclined to put it? No doubt the answer to these latter questions is yes, but is there more? Or, rather, what is the broader meaning of all of these activities when taken together?

I suggest that the fifth epochal revelation—and by extension, the planet's fifth epoch of evolutionary growth—is the awakening of the conscious experience of Supremacy. If this is true, therein may lie a vision of the Supreme purpose which can be served by what we now call Fifth Epochal Fellowship. Jesus revealed in a living way in the fourth epoch the love of the Father for the Son which can be experienced each moment

in one's inner life. Supremacy, in my view, cannot be either experienced or expressed apart from a loving relationship with another personality. It is, therefore, our job as a fellowship of persons aware of the evolving existence of the Supreme to consciously and wholeheartedly dedicate our collective energies to the actualization of the Supreme Being. It is true that any two people in relationship can undertake this process. (Could this be the significance of Jesus' statement "...for, where two or three believers are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them."? [*1763:1]) But as a worldwide fellowship we have a significant opportunity and a sacred duty to help our fellows become aware of this fifth epochal potential—not by words and symbols alone, but in and through our living invitation to them to enter into this experience with us.

The Urantia Book states that "Human life experience is the cosmic cocoon in which the universe endowments of the Supreme Being and the universe presence of the Universal Father (none of which are personalities) are evolving the morontia soul of time and the human-divine finaliter character of universe destiny and eternal service." (*1289:2) And further: "Man can discover the Father in his heart, but he will have to search for the Supreme in the hearts of other men..." (*1290:9). In the context of these statements, and many, many more in our book, it seems clear that our fellowship has the potential of truly demonstrating to those with whom we share this birth planet a living expression of the possibilities, responsibilities, and joys of the experience of Supremacy (no matter how partial our immature experience may be).

We have often heard it stated that we must form "thousands and thousands of study groups." Rather than simply accepting this charge as somehow required by higher authority, is it not possible that we are being pointed toward the ways of Supremacy? If one agrees with the notion

that the experience of Supremacy cannot be had alone, it would seem true that the study group broadens the two-person and family relationship experience to provide the opportunity to enter into the Supreme experience with others with whom we share a higher desire; to experience a sense of communion with the God in other persons, by the act of sharing with these same persons the God we have found in ourselves. Is it not just possible that the unified purpose of our organization's existence is neither more nor less than a singular expression of awakening to the experience of Supremacy, made realizable to us by the understanding *The Urantia Book* has offered?

Our fellowship has left the sheltered harbor of strict centralized control and an identity vested in a secular link to the symbols associated with this revelation. As the great evolutionary universe forces converging on our planet are beginning to forge a new planetary civilization, our Fellowship can serve to lead our fellows into the joys and wonders of the experiential actualization of the Supreme, the challenge presented in *The Urantia Book*. For us to be successful in this

...it will require the deepest commitment we have ever made to one another...

endeavor will require not a change in structure or enhanced communication or a contractual link to words and symbols but, rather, an inner and outer redirection of all our energies and creativity to the living work of creating a worldwide community of Supremacy. We cannot do that job alone; it will require the deepest commitment we have ever made to one another, a commitment to living relationships which will carve out the supporting structures needed like the river carves the riverbed.

(The president's annual address is a new feature of the Bulletin that will appear in the first issue of each calendar year.)

Name Survey

In January, 1990, a survey was sent to over 1800 readers to evaluate the membership's preferences for a permanent name.

Tables 1 and 2 show the results of questions which asked readers to rank and rate six possible name choices. Table 1 indicates that the names "Fellowship of *Urantia Book* Readers," "The *Urantia Book* Fellowship," and "Fifth Epochal Fellowship" were the most highly ranked names. Table 2 shows the rating for each of the six names on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being strong dislike for the name, 3 being neutral and 5 being strong like for the name. None of the names rated ranked higher than 3.6, indicating that there is not a strong preference for any of the names suggested. Hundreds of additional names were suggested by reader respondents for consideration.

The survey also asked readers to rate a series of titles to designate an organization. Each of fifteen titles in the survey was rated using the same five-point scale. Table 3 indicates that the preferred designation is "Fellowship."

Two questions were asked about the importance of using the title of *The Urantia Book* in the name of our organization knowing that it might result in legal action by URANTIA Foundation. The results of these questions are shown in Table 4. Only 22% are strongly in favor of using *The Urantia Book* in the title of our organization. Additionally, only 19% would be willing to financially support a legal defense over the issue of the name.

Preliminary findings from this survey were presented to the Executive Committee and General Council at their January, 1990, meeting in Phoenix, AZ. A subcommittee was appointed to develop a plan and timeline for choosing a permanent name. This group was asked to report back to the Executive Committee at its March, 1990, meeting.

Please feel free to send your comments on the results of this survey or other suggestions related to name choice to: Fifth Epochal Fellowship, 529 Wrightwood, Chicago, IL 60614, or FAX 1-312-327-6159.

Many thanks to those who took the time to respond to the name survey. Your response, as well as the many comments that you sent in with your surveys, were greatly appreciated. □

Results from Fifth Epochal Fellowship Name Survey February, 1990 Based on 536 Responses

TABLE 1

Ranking of Six Suggested Names for the Former URANTIA Brotherhood

	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Mean Rank
1. Fellowship for Spiritual Progress	17%	17%	16%	3.2
2. Fellowship of <i>Urantia Book</i> Readers	20%	25%	20%	2.4
3. Fifth Epochal Fellowship	22%	18%	15%	2.9
4. Friends of <i>The Urantia Book</i>	09%	11%	21%	3.6
5. Servers of the Circles	12%	16%	21%	3.5
6. <i>The Urantia Book</i> Fellowship	30%	20%	16%	2.6

TABLE 2

Rating of Six Suggested Names for the Former URANTIA Brotherhood

	Dislike Strongly	Dislike	Neutral	Like	Like Strongly	Mean Rating
1. Fellowship for Spiritual Progress	13%	16%	26%	21%	19%	3.2
2. Fellowship of <i>Urantia Book</i> Readers	12%	08%	25%	28%	22%	3.4
3. Fifth Epochal Fellowship	10%	09%	27%	28%	23%	3.5
4. Friends of <i>The Urantia Book</i>	21%	21%	27%	17%	10%	2.7
5. Servers of the Circles	47%	24%	16%	05%	03%	1.9
6. <i>The Urantia Book</i> Fellowship	12%	04%	21%	30%	30%	3.6

TABLE 3

Rating of Names to Designate an Organization

(Scale used: 1=strongly dislike, 2=dislike, 3=neutral, 4=like, 5=strongly like)

Name	Mean Rating	Name	Mean Rating
Assembly	2.0	Fellowship	4.3
Association	3.1	Friends	3.2
Brotherhood	3.6	Followers	2.4
Children of	2.0	Forum	2.6
Congregation	1.8	Foundation	2.7
Corps	2.0	Network	2.4
Disciples	2.2	Society	3.5
Family	3.0		

TABLE 4

Feelings about Using and Supporting the Inclusion of
The Urantia Book in the New Name of the Former URANTIA Brotherhood
(Percent of Respondents Choosing Each Rating)

Strength of feelings about using *The Urantia Book* in the title of our organization, knowing that it might result in a law suit from URANTIA Foundation

Very Strongly in favor of using <i>The Urantia Book</i>	Strongly	Neutral	Not Very Strongly	Not Strongly at all in favor of using <i>The Urantia Book</i>
11%	11%	14%	14%	48%

Willingness to financially support a legal involvement with URANTIA Foundation over the issue of name

Very Willing	Willing	Neutral	Not Very Willing	Not Willing at All
7%	12%	8%	17%	54%

GRADUATIONS

JULIA FENDERSON

Julia K. Fenderson, student of *The Urantia Book* for more than 50 years and lovingly encouraging friend to a veritable legion of readers around the planet, died of heart failure on December 26, 1989, at her home in Culver City, California. Born on January 27, 1905, Julia was within a month of her eighty-fifth birthday.



Julia had been quite ill for the last several years. However, despite being often bedridden, she continued to enthusiastically communicate with her multitude of friends by correspondence, telephone and, when possible, in personal visits at her home. While she displayed an inspiring persistence to gain the most out of life to almost her last moments, she looked forward with joy and impatience to "returning home," as she put it, to the Mansion Worlds.

Julia's professional life was spent in the field of education. She taught at every level from grade school to college. Besides serving in the classroom, she also worked in school administration, retiring as the Coordinator of Education for the Culver City School District, responsible for eight schools.

While living in Chicago, Julia was initially introduced to the *Urantia Papers* in 1939 by Dr. William S. Sadler, more than sixteen years prior to their publication in book form. She was always most proud of the fact that after joining the Forum, the group of people who read and discussed the papers at Dr. Sadler's home, Marian Rowley was assigned to be Julia's "friendly helper"—an experienced student who assisted new readers with their questions about the teachings. Julia and Marian became close friends and their collaboration continued through the years, with Julia often drawing on Marian's knowledge of the book.

In 1945 she moved to the Los Angeles area for family reasons. In hopeful anticipation of the publication of the book, Julia and nine other people, who had been members of the Forum, formed a study group to investigate the world's religions and a brief pamphlet entitled, "Evolution of the Soul," by Dr. Sadler, which discussed concepts found in the papers. This group was the nucleus of the First URANTIA Society of Los Angeles, which was chartered in 1956 and installed in 1957.

After the publication of *The Urantia Book* in 1955, Julia was

a tireless supporter, encourager and facilitator of the efforts of readers to study and share its teachings with others. She devoted an extraordinary amount of time to working and counseling with people on the telephone, entertaining in her home, speaking at group functions and conferences, as well as traveling within and without the United States. She was deeply committed to the study group experience, and earned the reputation among some readers of having visited more study groups than any other living person.

In addition to her work with individuals and study groups, Julia also gave unstintingly of her time and effort to some of the organizations associated with *The Urantia Book*. She was one of the first people to be appointed as a Field Representative of URANTIA Brotherhood and was made emeritus in that position when the Area Coordinator program was inaugurated. She also served for a number of years on the General Council as well as the International Fellowship Committee. Further, she served in virtually every elective office of First URANTIA Society of Los Angeles and was made President Emeritus of the group.

Despite her many professional and avocational activities over the years, Julia always made her family the primary focus of her life. She was the mother of two sons (Tom, who has passed away, and Marty) and was very proud of being the grandmother to two granddaughters and six grandsons, as well as having one great grandchild.

It would take much more space than is available here to even begin to do justice to the rich, full life of loving service which Julia led. To those of us who had the privilege of knowing and loving her, Julia seemed to live out the injunction found on page 1766: "In preaching the gospel of the kingdom, you are simply teaching friendship with God." She often jokingly said that her home was "the house beside the road" where people could stop and rest and refresh themselves. Indeed, people found refreshment with Julia, the refreshment of being in the presence of a person who lived out her faith in loving service and friendship as she passed by. While she loved all the Father's human children, she always focused her service on the needs of the person standing in front of her. Truly, our brief loss will be a gain for those she will befriend on the mansion worlds.

—Scott Forsythe

"The eternal purpose of the eternal God is a high spiritual ideal. The events of time and the struggles of material existence are but the transient scaffolding which bridges over to the other side, to the promised land of spiritual reality and supernal existence." (1364)

GRADUATIONS

HENRY BEGEMANN

Henry Begemann, former URANTIA Brotherhood Field Representative and General Councilor, died January 3, 1990 in Wassenaar, the Netherlands, of a heart condition after only one day's illness. He was 77, and was at peace and prepared to go, according to Baukje, his wife.

Henry and Baukje found *The Urantia Book* in a bookstore in Amsterdam in 1970. He had made a long, often disappointing search among the cults and alternative religions, and was well prepared to recognize truth when it appeared. The first reading was completed in nine months. From then on, until the end of his life, all of his energies were devoted to study and pursuits associated with the book.

Although Henry was appointed the first international Field Representative, Baukje was his companion on the many trips across the European continent. They promoted study groups in France, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Finland, England and, of course, their native Holland. A student near Marseilles once remarked, "Thank you for sending Henry Begemann to us; he taught us how to study."

Even though Henry recognized the wisdom of including the scientific and historical information in the book, in his own study groups he emphasized the spiritual teachings. "Just facts!" he termed the other dismissively. Henry contended that spirit brotherhood should be the goal of all mankind and that was where his study groups' priorities were placed. He was actively involved in seven study groups in Holland; one in English and six in Dutch.

Henry's efforts to mediate a reconciliation between URANTIA Foundation and Jacques Weiss, the translator of the revelation into the French language (formerly titled *La Cosmogonie d'URANTIA*, now *Le Livre d'URANTIA*) were not successful. Legal differences existed and suspicions could not be overcome. Henry did become the catalyst for several study groups in and near Paris among Mr. Weiss' former associates. He also organized a team of French readers to work on a revision of *Le Livre*.

Soon after completing a first reading, he began to translate the book as a personal effort. He was meticulous and unhurried. At the time of his death, the work was continuing with the assistance of his daughters and a few close associates. Baukje reports that Henry believed a translation into Dutch would be worthwhile, because there are estimated to be more than 25 million people conversant in that language.

—Carolyn Kendall



HELEN HUTCHINSON

A shining light has ascended from the highlands of East Tennessee, and in her sparkling trail Helen Hutchinson has left behind a legacy of warm hearts and enlightened minds to continue the spiritual ministry she began in her "neck of the woods."

Last September, Helen underwent emergency abdominal surgery and died a few weeks later. Until the onset of her illness last fall, Helen ceaselessly pursued the courageous expression of spiritual truths, philosophic concepts, and political views.

Born March 28, 1912 in Fairview, Tennessee, Helen grew up to become a grade school teacher after attending Wesleyan College in Athens, Tennessee. Mother of three daughters and two sons, Helen raised her children on her own while teaching school.

She was quite active in a local church and was well versed in Biblical scripture. Some fifteen years ago, fellow churchgoer Bruce McCoy introduced *The Urantia Book* to Helen. "At first Helen got worried," says McCoy. "She quickly saw that the central question had to do with the book's authenticity and, if it was authentic, it was going to mean a huge change. She immediately threw her all into deciding it. She later said she lost twenty pounds in the next three or four weeks as she studied the book and cross referenced it with her already considerable knowledge of the Bible and religion. She emerged having decided that the book was indeed what it said it was, and from that point she never wavered in her all-out enthusiasm for sharing the light of the new revelation with the rest of us."

Helen hosted the Knoxville study group for more than twelve years and was an enthusiastic participant in Tennessee conferences. Perhaps Helen is most renowned for her quarterly newsletter, the Fort Sanders Faith Sons, which she started publishing in 1985. The newsletter presented an array of her religious and political views.

Her standard response to those who implied that she was opinionated was, "If I didn't have strong opinions at my age, I'd be a real wimp!"

Helen encouraged differing views from truth seekers in her midst. "She loved to see people thinking for themselves," says long-time friend Helen Smith. "She was a natural, talented, and experienced teacher. She never felt that she had learned all she needed to know and remained enthusiastic about learning new things to the very end."

When it comes to saying goodbye to a dear friend and dedicated fellow of the fifth epochal revelation, the words of study group member Alvin Smith ring clearly, "I have never known a person as excited about getting started on her cosmic adventure. Adios, Helen!"

—Melissa Wells

"There is in the mind of God a plan which embraces every creature of all his vast domains, and this plan is an eternal purpose of boundless opportunity, unlimited progress, and endless life. And the infinite treasures of such a matchless career are yours for the striving!" (1365)

Religions of Our World

This article is presented by the Fraternal Relations Committee as part of a continuing effort to bring to students of The Urantia Book a flavor of the religious diversity and spiritual unity that currently exists among the peoples of the world. This presentation is devoted to Islam. All of the material quoted below is used by permission and is taken from a pamphlet entitled:

Islam Explained

by Abdul Jalil in consultation with Dr. David Kerr

ALLAH—for Muslims the greatest and most inclusive of the Names of God, an Arabic word of rich and varied meaning, denoting the one who is adored in worship, who creates all that exists, who has priority over all creation, who is lofty and hidden, who confounds all human understanding. It is exactly the same word as, in Hebrew, the Jews use for God (*eloh*), the word which Jesus Christ used in Aramaic when he prayed to God. God has an identical name in Judaism, Christianity and Islam; Allah is the same God worshiped by Muslims, Christians and Jews.

"He is God, the One God,
Independent and Sought by all;
He begets not, nor is He begotten,
and there is none like unto Him."

(The Holy Qur'an, Chapter of Sincerity of Faith)

Islam teaches that all faiths have, in essence, one common message: "the existence of a Supreme Being, the one and only God, whose sovereignty is to be acknowledged in worship and in the pledge to obey His teaching and commandments, conveyed through His messengers and prophets who were sent at various times and in many places throughout history."

Islam, an Arabic word, is rich in meaning. One important dimension is the "commitment to submit and surrender to God so that one could live in peace"; peace (*salam*) is achieved through active obedience to the revealed Commandments of God, for God is the Source of all Peace. Commitment to **Islam** entails striving for peace through a struggle for justice, equality of opportunity, mutual caring and consideration for others' rights, and continuous research and acquisition of knowledge for the better protection and utilization of the resources of the universe.

Islam teaches that the objective of the Commandments of God is that peace should be established in the human societies of this world, in preparation for a further dimension of human existence in the world to come, the Afterlife. Islam's vision of peace is therefore truly universal; it transcends time and belongs to the order of God's eternity.

Islam does not regard itself to be a new teaching, different or separate from that of other world religions. It is the reaffirmation of the ancient yet living truth of all religions which can be expressed in the following beliefs:

- the Uniqueness of the one and only God who is Sovereign of the Universe;
- the Revelation of the teaching and commandments of God through Angels in heaven to Prophets on earth, and written in sacred writings which all have the same transcendent source; these contain the will of God which marks the way of peace for the whole universe and all of humankind;

- the Day of Judgment which inaugurates the Afterlife in which God rewards and punishes with respect to human obedience to His will.

Islam affirms these simple beliefs as the basis of the decent, civilized society for which it strives. Its vision of society is, in essence, no different from that upheld by all monotheistic religions. This is particularly true of Judaism and Christianity which share with Islam the direct spiritual lineage of the Prophet Abraham. Islam affirms the divinely-ordained missions of the Prophet Moses, through whom God revealed the sacred scripture called the Torah, and of the Prophet Jesus, through whom God revealed the scripture known as the Gospel. The message of Islam is in essence the same as that which God revealed to all his prophets and messengers. The Prophet Muhammad (the peace and blessing of God be upon him) was commanded to recite in the Holy Qur'an:

"Say: we believe in God,
and that which was revealed unto us,
and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael
and Isaac and Jacob, and the tribes,
and that which was vouchsafed unto Moses and Jesus
and the prophets from their Lord;
We make no distinction between any of them,
and unto Him we have surrendered."

—The Holy Qur'an 3:84

The success of civilizations and cultures is directly related to the extent of their practice of the righteous way of life revealed in the teaching and commandments of God, and set forth in the monotheistic religions which are confirmed by Islam. God's revelation enshrines the highest values of humankind, and the divine commandments are essentially no different from the values which human beings have cherished and striven to maintain throughout history, irrespective of cultural, racial, linguistic and socio-economic differences. Success in this life is directly related to the practice of these values.

Islam teaches that human diversity is a sign of the richness of God's mercy, and **that God wills human beings to compete with each other in goodness in order to test who is the finest in action; this is, according to Islam, the reason for the creation of the universe.** To strive for peace in the societies of this world is to compete in the fulfillment of human destiny in preparation for the ultimate Abode of Peace in a further, renewed dimension of human existence in the Afterlife. The irreducible minimum of faith is to believe in God as the sole sovereign Lord of this world and of the next, and to believe in the reality of the Afterlife for which human beings are to prepare by living righteously in this world. God alone is the Judge of human righteousness, and it is God alone who rewards and punishes in this life and in the life hereafter.

Righteousness does not mean for you to turn your faces towards the East and West, but righteousness means one should believe in God (Alone), the Last Day, angels, the Book and prophets; and no matter how he loves it, to give his wealth away to near relatives, orphans, the needy, the wayfarer and beggars, and towards freeing captives; and to keep up prayer and pay the welfare tax; and those who keep their word whenever they promise anything; and are patient under suffering and hardship and in time of peril (stress). Those are the ones who act loyal and perform their duty.

—The Holy Qur'an 2:177

A **Muslim** is one who is committed to peace by continuously striving to follow the way of righteousness and justice revealed by God; the Arabic word **muslim** refers to a man, **muslima** to a woman. In either case the literal meaning is "one who submits to God's teachings and commandments which leads to peace."

Muslims have three distinct advantages to help them in the practice of Islam as their way of life:

- The Sacred Scripture, called the **Qur'an**, which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the 7th century of the common era, and which, after 1,400 years, remains authentic in its original Arabic text, in the language which is still used and understood by millions of people in the world today; it contains God's guidance in teachings and commandments which are valid for all times and places, and which encompass all spheres of human life;
- The Prophet Muhammad, whom the Qur'an names as "the Seal (last) of the Prophets," and of whose life and mission there is a complete and authentic record in the **Sira** and the **Hadith (Sunna)**; these show how he exemplified the teachings and commandments of God in practice, and elaborated the principles laid down in the Qur'an in order to provide a sure guidance for their interpretation and application for all later times and societies;
- The Sacred Law, called the **Shari'ah**, which sets out the way of worship prescribed in the Qur'an and the Prophet's practice; it goes beyond the common understanding of worship as the performance of religious rituals, and encompasses the whole of human life, individual and social; thus all so-called secular activities become acts of worship, provided they are performed with pure and righteous intention, seeking God's pleasure.

Muslims are enjoined to organize their lives on the basis of a series of ritual acts of worship which are ordained in the Qur'an as ways which discipline human beings to remember God constantly, accepting His Sovereignty and pledging to obey His commandments:

- **Declaration of belief (Shahada)**. This is the initial act of faith, expressed in a simple creedal statement which testifies one's commitment to following the straight path of God's guidance upon which Muslims seek to live their lives: "I bear witness that there is no god but God; I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His prophet."
- **Prayer (salat)**, offered five times a day, has the effect of reminding the faithful that "remembrance of God is indeed the greatest virtue," and helps them adhere to the path of

righteousness, and to restrain themselves from indecency and evil.

- **Fasting (sawm)**, observed through the daylight hours of the 29/30 days of the Islamic month of Ramadan, involves abstinence from eating, drinking, smoking and marital intercourse; this reminds the believers of their dependence upon God, as well as their kinship with, and responsibility for the millions of human beings in the world who experience involuntary fasting because of the lack of provisions, or their unjust distribution.
- **Purification of wealth (Zakat)**. This requires the annual giving of a fixed amount of excess personal assets for the benefit of the poor, the incapacitated, the deprived, and the welfare of the community; it serves to remind Muslims that all beneficence comes from the bounty of God, and is enjoyed only by His mercy; sharing becomes an act of purification both of the wealth itself, and of the giver whose soul is disciplined against greed by the virtue of selflessness.
- **Pilgrimage (hajj)**, which all Muslims should perform at least once in a lifetime if personal circumstances permit, gathers the believers as members of the diverse human family into a single community; they perform prescribed acts of worship at the Holy House of the **Ka'ba** in Mecca which, according to the Qur'an, was originally built by the Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael; and at Mount Arafat where they remember the pure and original way of life of Adam, the progenitor of all human beings, reaffirmed by the Patriarch of the entire human family, the Prophet Abraham, and finally perfected and completed by God for all humanity through the mission of the Prophet Muhammad—the way of life known as **Islam** which has at its heart the doctrine of the unity and uniqueness of the One God.

Each of these prescribed acts of worship bring Muslims daily and repeatedly before God Almighty as the Creator, Sustainer and Judge of all humanity.

Through these acts of worship God helps Muslims to fulfill the obligation of striving which He has ordained for this life: the striving actively and freely to surrender one's own will in obedience to the Will of God, inwardly in intention and outwardly in word and deed, individually in personal conduct and collectively in the improvement of society; the striving for peace in the world through the announcement of true faith, and its defense against all that threatens it.

Islam presents human beings with a simple twofold invitation: 1) to witness that there is no god but God Almighty; 2) to witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

This declaration is the door to a life of service, and to participation in a community of believers whose highest duty is to call humanity to embrace what is righteous and good, and to reject what is evil and degrading. Muslims are sisters and brothers of all people of true faith, and wish to strive with them for peace in this world.

Copies of the entire pamphlet and additional information about Islam may be obtained from its author: Mr. Abdul Jalil; Chairman of Al-Huda Islamic Center; P.O. Box 962; Elberton, GA 30635

"The truth and maturity of any religion is directly proportional to its concept of the infinite personality of God and to its grasp of the absolute unity of Deity." (128)

"And when the feelings of service for your fellow men arise within your soul, do not stifle them; when the emotions of love for your neighbor well up within your heart, give expression to such urges of affection in intelligent ministry to the real needs of your fellows." (1745)

AC REPORTS

The first Area Coordinator (AC) reports have been compiled and have produced an assortment of surprising and not-so-surprising news. The following tidbits are taken from the AC reports and may be incomplete, but are fun and interesting nonetheless.

A common practice among study groups is prayer. Prayer starts and/or ends most gatherings of readers of *The Urantia Book*. Meditation and music are sometimes used as an adjunct to prayer.

Sequential reading is the most popular method of study, followed by topical then random readings. A few groups study other works in addition to *The Urantia Book* in an effort to enhance understanding, coordinate knowledge and broaden the appreciation of truth.

The longest distance traveled, as reported by one AC, is "over 100 miles round trip." Another AC reports the longest time traveled as "over an hour" one way.

Food is common to study group gatherings. Some groups have a potluck or covered dish meal for their get-togethers. A few of the groups meet for breakfast or dinner and then study afterwards. One study group meets in the back room of Jim's Hickory Pit BBQ. By the way, Jim is a member of the group.

Some of the other places where groups meet include a new-age bookstore, libraries, a Unity Church and a small retreat.

A Puerto Rico study group reads *The Urantia Book* in English and discusses it in Spanish. (A Spanish translation will be much appreciated there.)

The Oklahoma City In-Depth Group meets once a month to listen to tapes of William S. Sadler, Jr. These were made during the 1950s and '60s when he visited Oklahoma City.

Some of the unusual names of study groups include: Lake Forest Ordinary People, Cosmic Cocoon, Angels of the Desert, Oregonians, and South Florida's group called American Agongators Association.

And, finally, there's the devout reader who sneaks to meetings because his spouse disapproves.

Study groups are spread about both thick and thin. The island of Hawaii has two groups with about 40 members. South Dakota and Utah each have one group of record. And the island of Tasmania has no Tasmanian study group to counter all those Tasmanian devils.

The ACs will be reporting again in May and surely more interesting anecdotes and tidbits are to come. Keep in touch with your AC. Let him/her know of your activities. They are here to assist you in all matters related to your study of *The Urantia Book*. □

Clarification of Society Affiliation

In the last issue of the *Bulletin* nine societies were listed as having chosen to affiliate with Fifth Epochal Fellowship. There is some ambiguity as to what constitutes affiliation.

Several questions pertain to the issue of affiliation: Is a decision by a society required to continue their affiliation with Fifth Epochal Fellowship? Does "no decision" mean affiliation? Is a decision from a governing board of a society really a decision to affiliate without ratification by the full assembly or does it only become a decision when an action is taken by the entire assembly?

The timing of a decision also affects the issue of affiliation: Can resolutions of support for the former URANTIA Brotherhood prior to the November 3rd letter be considered decisions for affiliation?

Is it a violation of the licensing agreements for societies to both continue to use the marks and affiliate with Fifth Epochal Fellowship, the provisional name of the ongoing organization formerly called URANTIA Brotherhood?

Due to the complexity of the issues, Avi Dogim, chair of the Charter Committee, will be contacting each society to gain a fuller understanding of their views. The results of this contact will be reported in a future issue of the *Bulletin* and will serve to clarify the Fall, 1989, article which listed societies affiliated with the Fellowship. □

What was that word?

UNITY—The state of being united into a whole; unchanging singleness of purpose or action.

"Your spirit unity implies two things, which always will be found to harmonize in the lives of individual believers: First, you are possessed with a common motive for life service; you all desire above everything to do the will of the Father in heaven. Second, you all have a common goal of existence; you all purpose to find the Father in heaven, thereby proving to the universe that you have become like him." (*1592)

Fifth Epochal Fellowship is dedicated to the study and dissemination of the teachings of *The Urantia Book* and to the growing fellowship among readers.

Your continuing moral and financial support is greatly appreciated. Contributions to Fifth Epochal Fellowship are tax deductible.

CONFERENCES

April 29, Chicago area, Illinois. Mini-conference. Theme: "Cultural Impact of *The Urantia Book* in the Next 50 years." Contact First Society, c/o Carolyn Kendall, (708) 537-1078.

May 4-6, St. Mary College, Leavenworth, Kansas. Spiritual Retreat. Theme: "Adventures in Spiritual Living." Contact Heart of America URANTIA Society of Kansas City, P.O. Box 12758, Kansas City, MO 64116, (816) 436-1324.

May 26-28, Life Enrichment Center, Leesburg, FL. Theme: "From Fear to Faith." Contact Pat Amyx, 4517 Hale Ave., Tampa, FL 33611, (813) 839-4517.

June 8-10, Geneva Park YMCA Conference Center, Lake Couchiching, Orillia, Ontario, Canada. Theme: "Planetary Paradigm: Understanding Anew God's Love in the World." Contact Couchiching URANTIA Society of Ontario, Cindy Hopfer, (416) 225-7861.

June 8-10, NE Regional Conference for Readers of *The Urantia Book*, Simon's Rock of Bard College, Great Barrington, MA. Theme: "Personality—The Gift and the Challenge." Contact Steve Bartley, 2389 Algonquin Rd., Schenectady, NY 12309, (518) 370-5016.

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Fifth Epochal Fellowship BULLETIN

Published by:

Publications Committee
Fifth Epochal Fellowship
529 Wrightwood Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60614

or

P.O. Box 148068
Chicago, Illinois 60614-8068

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