

Mighty MESSENGER

"...A CLASS OF PERFECTED MORTALS WHO HAVE BEEN REBELLION TESTED
OR OTHERWISE EQUALLY PROVED AS TO THEIR PERSONAL LOYALTY."

NEWS & OPINIONS FOR READERS OF THE URANTIA BOOK ✧ Fall/Winter 1998

How Is the Unity Initiative Going?

by Janet Farrington-Graham, President

During the past year members of the Fellowship have explored the issues and opportunities related to the unity initiative introduced by the Foundation Trustees in February 1997. As a result of this exploration, our comprehension of spiritual unity and our relationships with other readers, regardless of organizational affiliation, have grown significantly.

We have come to understand that unity is directly related to personality contact; there are no words or actions, policies or legalities, negotiations or accusations that can affect spiritual unity as profoundly as the opportunity to meet face to face with another reader, to share dreams and visions and to spread the benign virus of love from one committed believer to another.

When readers meet, differences of opinion and culture seem to diminish as diverse perspectives inform and transform the other, the unfamiliar becomes less threatening, and the common becomes more encompassing. When readers meet, fear fades and love prevails.

This seemingly universal truth suggests that spiritual unity is strengthened by an embrace of diversity; the greater number of unique perspectives we encounter and encourage, the more opportunity there is for love to conquer fear—in our own hearts and in the hearts of all others. In this way, we can accomplish the goal of unity within the Urantia community; for this reason, personality contact has become the cornerstone of the unity initiative.

And what better way is there to serve the revelation? Providing opportunities for all readers to study and disseminate the revelation together regardless of organizational affiliation builds community, and a strong community will attract more interest in the revelation.

The Fellowship will continue to provide information and support for all reader activities without regard to political opinion or religious belief. Our philosophy as an organization depends on an unqualified embrace of

diversity, an uninhibited and progressive relationship with every brother and sister to whom we may be of service; our philosophy requires that we actively disseminate the revelation in partnership with all others who are committed to this work. Please send us information on events of interest to the greater readership for inclusion on the website events calendar. We will encourage the cross-fertilization of ideas and cultures every chance we get.

This spring, several Fellowship leaders are planning to attend the IUA National

conference in Nashville the weekend of April 30-May 3. A team of Fellowship and IUA leaders has planned a spiritual retreat at the beautiful Glen Ivy Community in Southern California for the May 28th-31st weekend. Several members of the IUA and Foundation are actively involved in planning the Fellowship's 1999 International conference in Vancouver B.C., to be held the week of August 7-12. How is the unity initiative going? With every personality contact between diverse members of our unique community, we take another small step.

UPCOMING WRIGHTWOOD SERIES IV

Cult and *The Urantia Book*

The current work in progress for the Education Committee includes the fourth Wrightwood Series, "Cult and *The Urantia Book*." The central goal of this Wrightwood panel's work is to at once demystify and redefine "cult." A successful secondary work in this area could do much to correct and presage misunderstandings of *The Urantia Book* by framing the discussion in the context of the revelation as a whole.

This project is moderated by long time reader Alison Gardner of Great Falls, Virginia. With the exception of Alison, all the panelists, also long-time students of *The Urantia Book*, are new to the Wrightwood Series, which was designed to assemble sets of readers to produce in-depth topical studies that potentially may be of great interest to the public, as well as existing readers. Previous Wrightwood Series addressed Gender, Spiritual Community, and Race.

The panelists are currently preparing for an intensive roundtable meeting, underwritten by the Fellowship, which will take place in Virginia in January. It is the panel's intention to publish papers generated through this work in 1999. At the very least, a preliminary draft or summary of "Cult and *The Urantia Book*" will be made available by June of 1999 in anticipation of a major panel presentation and workshop at Spirit Quest 2000, the Fellowship's International Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, scheduled for August.

The contributing panelists and their areas of expertise are Joan Wentworth of Crete, Greece, covering "The Historical and Anthropological Antecedents of Cultism"; Steve Hecht of Acton, Massachusetts, who in "The Religious Meaning and Value of Cultus," examines the philosophical and spiritual elements of cult

(Continued on back cover.)

URANTIA BOOK PLACEMENT ON THE HIGH SEAS

by Jerry Pando

When the Golden Gate Society got involved with distributing remnants of the Uversa Press edition of *The Urantia Book*, I volunteered to serve as book steward. My role is to coordinate placement of these books for the society. My approach has been to encourage placements with "systems" such as city and county libraries. The Navy ship idea came from extending our placement aboard 10 merchant ships to include nuclear aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines due to their extended deployments. Having served as an officer in the U.S. Coast Guard, I am aware the services have standard distribution lists. I have a standard letter to the Commanding Officer, which I include with each book.

I understand that many societies order a case of 10 books and then set about to place them. What I have done was to find 10 sites to place the books, order them, deliver them and order more. Michelle Klimesh, who

oversees the Fellowship's Uversa Book Distribution Project, was helpful in approving my latest order of 80 books. Also, I have had the support of the Golden Gate Society, which pays the postage (about \$1.50 per book placed). Recently, the Lear Foundation gave \$500 for general assistance and \$250 of this fund was budgeted for future Uversa Press postage. To date, 260 books have been placed. We are now looking at U.S. Army base libraries as possible placement sites.

Even though placement of the books has been rewarding for all involved, I found it most rewarding to work with my wife, Beth. Together, we formed a "Urantia Team," hosting a Urantia study group in our home every Sunday. She also helps fold the inserts, stick the Golden Gate Society label inside the front cover, wrap the books, and stick on the address labels. Also, since these go to APO addresses, we need a special Customs Declaration, which must be filled out on each. Four

weeks ago I had the 80 books picked up in Boulder by my cousin, a non-Urantia Book reader. He transferred the 80 books to his brother's car, as he was leaving the next day for Utah (where I was raised Catholic in a Latter Day Saints environment). He told me later that he had opened a case and kept one of the books, as he was curious! While in Utah for my father's 75th birthday, I had the opportunity to wrap and mail 80 books! Since my wife was visiting her daughter in Colorado Springs, I recruited my dad and 72-year-old mother to help! Wrapping 80 books takes about 8 hours, and both my parents were wonderful in helping. I told my parents if they had any trouble getting into heaven, to tell St. Peter they had wrapped *Urantia Books*. Also, my brother came over and, while watching, asked if the submarines would mind getting a used book. From his comment, I knew he wanted to borrow a book, so I lent him my copy.

Upcoming Events

February 5-7—Fellowship General Council Meeting, Carlsbad, CA. General Council meetings are open to Fellowship members. For more information, contact *The Urantia Book Fellowship* at (773) 327-0424; e-mail: fellowship@urantia-book.org.

March 27-28—Society of Greater New York Retreat, Warwick Center, Warwick, NY. A weekend of study, worship and reversion in a bucolic setting. For more information, contact Gary Deinstadt (914) 276-1026; e-mail: deinstadt@cyburban.com.

April 29-May 2—United States Urantia Association Study Conference, Nashville, TN. For more information, call Urantia Foundation (773) 525-3319.

For more detail on events listed above or to find out about other events not listed here, check the Fellowship's website calendar. Go to: <http://www.ubfellowship.org/news/calendar>.

SOCIETIES—A BRIEF HISTORY AND CURRENT THOUGHTS

By Carolyn Kendall

Societies are not quite as old as the Fellowship (formerly known as Urantia Brotherhood). The Brotherhood was founded January 2, 1955, whereas the first society was not chartered until June of 1956. The concept behind the formation of societies was that they were to be where the real action takes place. Although the Constitution is purposely vague, it was understood that societies were primarily to foster formation of new study groups in their immediate areas. The society was to be the Brotherhood to new readers in a geographic area and steer them to groups where they would be happy. Society study groups would be where readers would share their interpretations of the teachings and offer opportunities for students to hone their teaching skills in a friendly environment. Over the years societies have undertaken these and additional functions: library book placement, regional conferences, newsletters, worship services, and community ministry to those in need. Societies are autonomous; the Fellowship may not prescribe or interfere with internal activities.

Earliest societies specified that ten persons who had read the book could organize a Urantia Society. Later the number was increased to 20 in hopes of achieving more stability. That priced societies out of the market. Getting 20 people to commit to writing a

constitution and maintaining interest in the tedium of setting up a formal organization brought new society formation virtually to a halt. The Charter Committee has recently begun to ease up on the requirements for a group to become a society. There are currently 19 societies and an estimated 100 to 400 study groups.

The Fellowship's governing body, the 36 member General Council, does not elect its own successors. Councilors are elected by representatives from all Fellowship Societies at a Triennial Delegate Assembly. The Constitution does not require that societies be consulted before the Fellowship leadership decides a major issue. However, in recent years, the Fellowship has made efforts to enhance communication with local societies and to provide for greater opportunities for society input.

The many websites that feature information about *The Urantia Book* and related activities will undoubtedly entice new people to join our groups. Nevertheless, in the excitement over the Internet, it should be recognized that many readers, especially those outside the US, do not own computers. The Fellowship needs to look for ways to reestablish connection with societies and individual readers, other than our annual fund appeal letters.

NEW YORK OUTREACH

by Gary Deinstadt

When I became president of the Society of Greater New York for Readers of *The Urantia Book* about a year and half ago, some people came to me sharing their ideas and interests for outreach. As a result, the ad-hoc Outreach Committee was formed. This committee has provided the venue for various interests in outreach with group participation and Society support. We meet once a month. Our chair, Dale Szejnberg, has collected all our ideas and has submitted them to the Society for moral and financial support. With Society support, individuals and the group have been empowered to break new ground in outreach. Our Outreach Committee members are: Nick Curto, Dale Szejnberg, Robin Jorgensen, Phil Shiffman, Al Lockett, Doreen Heyne, Les Jamieson and myself.

Nick Curto, with Society and Fellowship support, brought *The Urantia Book* to the Gay Games in Amsterdam. The games attracted 200,000 spectators. Nick has already printed four issues of the GLAD Newsletter (Gay & Lesbian Agondonters Newsletter.) Thanks to Les Jamieson's efforts, we are now members of the Interfaith Council of New York. Phil Shiffman and John Lambo have organized an annual event called "Readers Day," designed to cross over organizational lines so all readers can participate in study and communion. We also participate in the Whole Life and the New Life Expos where we've collected mailing lists and used them to do follow-up programs that have been hosted by Robin and Helene Jorgensen. On two different occasions, we've participated in a local cable TV program in panel discussions on *The Urantia Book*. We will be having a book booth at the conference of The World Future Society in Washington, DC this summer, July 29-August 1. Dan Massey has graciously submitted a proposal to do a lecture there. (The World Future

Society is a nonprofit educational and scientific organization for people interested in how social and technological developments are shaping the future. With 30,000 members, the Society serves as a nonpartisan clearinghouse for ideas about the future, including forecasts, recommendations, scenarios, alternatives, and more.) Once a month we do a presentation on *The Urantia Book* at the Gay and Lesbian center of New York. We've proposed doing a guest lecture in the Barnes and Noble lecture series. The local universities in Monmouth County, New Jersey are the focus of Al and Phil's efforts to attract readers. Al is also working on an introduction to *The Urantia Book* through music. Outreach members have donated books and organized an introductory slide presentation of *The Urantia Book* that Norm Ingram is now carrying on his trip in Africa. Other Society activities include Russian and Korean translations that have been an ongoing effort for the past five years. Because of their outreach efforts, Barry and Kay Clark now host two different Korean study groups each week. We have our own web-site and two voice mail services, one in New York and the other in New Jersey.

We don't always see immediate results from our efforts. We haven't had a major onslaught of new readers join our society or participate in our study groups, but this process generates reciprocal benefits. We've grown as a group, and we've become more adept at introducing *The Urantia Book* to the people within these crossroads of our planet. The experience and joy in sharing this revelation in service with our fellow man has been the greatest reward of all. Nothing equals the pleasure of seeing a new face enter a study group with the same passion that we all experience of wanting to know God and wanting to be more like him.

VANCOUVER GROUP GETTING CLOSER TO BECOMING A SOCIETY

The Vancouver Island People Society (VIPS) held their organizational meeting on November 21, 1998 in Victoria, British Columbia. With 15 members in attendance, the VIPS managed to elect officers, adopt and ratify their constitution, approve their by-laws, sign their Society Book and pass a number of resolutions. They even signed up three new members, thus raising their total membership to 21. Elected as officers were: Richard Mitchell, President; M. Jean Ramsey, Vice President; Craig Carmichael, Secretary; and Heather Dorris, Treasurer. Debbie Barton was elected as chairperson of the Membership Committee.

According to Christel Garrick, one of the group's organizers who spoke to the Mighty Messenger, nothing stands between the VIPS and society status, save for a charter document and an installation ceremony. She is hoping that an installation date will be set in the near future.

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FLORIDA STUDENTS OF THE URANTIA BOOK

by Tom French

Florida Students of *The Urantia Book* (FSUB) is a group comprising readers from various parts of Florida and was organized over ten years ago for the purpose of promoting and publicizing *The Urantia Book* and related study groups.

As part of our outreach efforts, we routinely sponsor and staff booths at book fairs and other venues where interested people can become aware of *The Urantia Book*, as well as about study groups in their areas.

Our recent efforts have included the Miami Book Fair, where Spanish interest is very high, and a book fair in the Clearwater area. We also publish a newsletter, the Sunshine Messenger, usually three times a year, to keep members and others apprised of our efforts and upcoming events.

Once a year, on Memorial Day weekend, we have our annual conference. The past few years, it has been held in Leesburg, FL (near Orlando) at the United Methodist

Center. This facility provides a serene and rustic setting at nominal prices for lodging, food and meeting rooms. The conference has a theme—last year's was "Living in the Here and Now"—with structured as well as open sessions for interaction, study and fellowship. The event is open to other than FSUB members. For further information, I can be contacted in Miami, Florida at 305-255-5680.

WRIGHTWOOD SERIES (cont.)

expression; Neal Waldrop, currently residing in Geneva, Switzerland, who in "Cultivating," takes a look at the potentials and pitfalls of organized religion and cults; Rebecca Kantor, of Lafayette, California, whose presentation "Who Do They Say We Are?" surveys the current literature on cults and new religious movements; Phil Geiger of Boulder, Colorado, highlights the unique experiences of Boulder readers seeking to establish a specific religious identity in "Urantian Cults: Present and Future"; Alison Gardner of Great Falls, Virginia, as well as serving as the panel's moderator, offers the individual's point of view in "Free Will and Consciousness of Being"; and Dan Massey, also of Great Falls, covers the benefits of group functioning in "The New Cult — Decoding the Revelation." In addition, the panelists will collaborate in the writing of a signature chapter, "Cultism Through The Previous Epochs With A Look To The Future," as well as a substantial Introduction to the work, the Appendices, and the Bibliography.

Alison Gardner welcomes input and interest from other readers as this work proceeds. You can contact her via the Fellowship office.

WHY BECOME A SOCIETY?

An opinion by Avi Dogim

It appears that many of us in the Fellowship are having a difficult time articulating an answer to the question of "why become a society?" Indeed, the answer to that question is anything but self-evident. After all, many *Urantia Book* readers seem to shun activities that are suggestive of organized religion and tend to be suspicious of trends that smack of "organization," "institutionalization," "formalization," or "politicization." How do you answer a perfectly reasonable question such as, "If we meet as a group, study the book, hold social functions, and perhaps even engage in some service activities in our communities, then why do we need to become a formal part of the Fellowship? What does it give us?"

It provides for an opportunity to have influence beyond the local area through participation in a democratically run organization dedicated to the dissemination of *The Urantia Book* and its teachings. *The Urantia Book* does not say that we need an organization such as the Fellowship, or that we need a great proliferation of local societies all over the world. But the

book does tell us a great deal about organizational patterns from planetary, to system, to local universe, to superuniverse and even to grand universe levels. It tells us about the value in our perceiving ourselves as cosmic citizens and in our recognizing our place in the grand organizational scheme. It tells us about the incredible potential that each of us—without a single exception in all of humanity—has for making a contribution to the growth of the Supreme, the evolving deity. It also tells us that, while the Universal Father relates to each of us as an individual, the Supreme relates to all of us as a group. Conversely, only as a group can we relate effectively to the Supreme, and there is no effective group activity of any kind without organization.

I believe that an unstated purpose of the Fellowship is the ultimate achievement of resonance with perfected universe organizational patterns. We have a long way to go. And we need all the input we can get from local groups all over who are willing to participate in the process. Do you need a better reason to become a society?

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