

## FSFS

PURSUIT OF WISDOM

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All quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from The URANTIA Book c. 1955 and are used by permission. Interpretations and opinions herein are those of the authors.

This is the first edition of a science newsletter to be published by the Knoxville, Tennessee, Fort Sanders Faith Sons students of The URANTIA Book. We feel there is a need to provide a forum for reporting scientific discoveries, interpretations of information revealed in The URANTIA Book, and relationships between the two. The purpose of the newsletter is to promote study of science and The URANTIA Book, to stimulate thought, to help liberate society, to contribute to the refinement and ennoblement of evolutionary religion, to yield knowledge and promote understanding of universal truths, and to examine facts and coordinate reality. Our philosophy is the same as the name we have chosen, the pursuit of wisdom: pp. 806, 909, 1006, 1106, 1135, and 1138.

## IS THE MILKY WAY GALAXY THE SEVENTH SUPERUNIVERSE OF ORVONTON?

This is a question I have been trying to resolve for a long time. I have heard many people interpret the diverse and complex information given about this subject in The URANTIA Book by simply stating that the Milky Way is Orvonton! After many months of study, I still am not convinced of this. Let me explain why.

To set the stage for this investigation, we need to begin by looking at two factors that diminish our ability to conclusively answer the question: the distortion of language, and the limitations of revelation. First, on p. 1 the revelators explain their anticipation of problems that will arise because of their instructions to introduce no new terms when English terms were available, even if there might be distortion of meaning. Second, on p. 1109 we are informed that they are forbidden to preclude the discoveries of humans by revelation and that many of their physical science statements may need revision in light of scientific progress and discovery. We are admonished not to discard the genuine historical and religious truths when this happens.

We must also understand the times and background of this question to properly search for its answer. It was not until the mid-twenties that scientists began to understand that there was more to the universe than our own galaxy. We knew our galaxy was very large and was made up of individual stars, clusters of stars, illuminated and dark gases, and dust particles; however, we also observed a few fuzzy patches of light that didn't look like stars. The Andromeda spiral was one of these. We called it a nebula and until Edwin Hubbel proved otherwise in 1923, we thought it was a small component of our galaxy. Now we know Andromeda is an immense galaxy of its own. It is larger than the Milky Way and a great distance from it. Scientists started referring to systems such as these as island universes. Later, the definition of the term galaxy was changed to include other large star systems outside the Milky Way.

New discoveries are not always readily accepted however, and even at the time of the revelations of The URANTIA Book on this subject, old ideas about the galaxy persisted. A 1936 definition of galaxy is, "An irregular luminous band encircling the heavens appearing as a succession of cloudlike masses of light, cleft at one point into two great branches, but really consisting of numberless stars too small to be seen separately with the naked eye." In the 1980's we understand a galaxy to be: "Any of numerous large-scale aggregates of stars, gas, and dust, containing an average of 100 billion solar masses and ranging in diameter from 1,500 to 300,000 light-years." Current estimates of the number of galaxies is upwards of 100 billion. So it should be understood that science has progressed some since the time of these revelations in 1934-35.

The cosmological terminology used in The URANTIA Book can be misleading. For example, on p. 170 it speaks of Andromeda as a nebula external to the inhabited superuniverse. The Andronover nebula, an antecedent of our local universe of Nabadon and mother to over one million suns, is explained on pp. 651-655. On p. 464 a sun is described as a small circular nebula. Then the Crab Nebula, remnants of a supernova of the year 1054, is mentioned. This last usage of nebula is analogous to the modern understanding of this word: "A diffuse mass of interstellar gas and dust." Scientists of today would not think of a star or a galaxy as a nebula. The terms galaxy, universe, and island universe also add to this confusion. On pp. 130-131 we are told that only two or three nebula outside Orvonton can be seen with the naked eye, but that our telescopes reveal millions of these physical universes being formed. We are instructed that in the future our more powerful telescopes will discover millions of new galaxies, but that many island universes previously thought to be in outer space are really a part of the GALACTIC SYSTEM of Orvonton, (emphasis mine). Finally, on p. 167 it calls Orvonton the seventh galaxy and the Milky Way a starry system, while on p. 170 it uses the term Milky Way galaxy. It should be noted that the inconsistency and evolution of our own language as well as the progress of science has contributed greatly to the lack of clarity of the revelations of cosmology.

The latest radio astronomy measurements indicate the distance from our solar system to the center of the Milky Way at about 23 thousand light-years. The entire galaxy is about 100 thousand light-years across. It is seen to be shaped like a flattened circular disk with a bulge at the center. Surrounded with a spherical halo of older stars and globular clusters, the bulk of matter is contained in at least two gigantic spiral arms extending from the nucleus along a plane a few thousand light-years thick. The URANTIA Book states on pp. 359-360 that from Jerusem, headquarters of the system of Satania, of which Urantia is a member planet, it is over 200 thousand light-years to the physical center of Orvonton in the dense diameter of the Milky Way. From the outermost system of INHABITED worlds to the center of the superuniverse is a little less than 250 thousand light-years, (emphasis mine). That would make the diameter at least 500 thousand light-years, five times what we currently measure the Milky Way to be. On p. 167 it describes Orvonton as being made up of planets, suns, dark islands, double stars, globular clusters, star clouds, spiral and other nebulae, forming a watchlike elongated-circular grouping of about one seventh of the inhabited universes. We can observe the spheres of Orvonton to be traveling in a vast elongated plane whose breadth is far greater than the thickness and the length far greater than the breadth. It goes on to say that observation of the SO-CALLED Milky Way shows the increase in density in one direction, (emphasis mine).

Current estimates for the total number of stars in the Milky Way do not exceed 200 billion. On p. 172 however, it is stated that Orvonton is warmed and illuminated by over 10 trillion stars, 8 trillion of which are observable to us

from Earth. There is a discrepancy not only in the size of Orvonton and the Milky Way, but also in the number of stars therein. Evidence in both dimension and stellar number implies that Orvonton may be over 40 times larger than what we prevalently know as the Milky Way.

Today we believe the center of our Milky Way lies in the direction of the constellation Sagittarius. While we discern our sun to lie near the inner edge of the Orion spur, the next spiral closer to the center of the galaxy is the Sagittarius arm. When we look toward what we believe is the center of the Milky Way, we are looking toward Sagittarius and the flank of this Sagittarius arm. Our solar system is thought to orbit about the galactic hub once every 250 million years. However, on p. 168 The URANTIA Book states that the rotational center of our minor sector is located in the vast star cloud of Sagittarius, about which its local universes, including Nabadon, revolve. Further, it says from opposite sides of this enormous Sagittarius subgalactic system two great stellar coils emerge. Perhaps what we call the Milky Way is actually much smaller than the entire superuniverse of Orvonton.

If the Milky Way is not Orvonton, then what is? There are clues within the revelation even though they are not conclusive at this time. On p. 167 it states: "The vast Milky Way starry system represents the CENTRAL NUCLEUS of Orvonton, being largely beyond the borders of your local universe." On p. 475 in explaining the short space rays it states: "They emanate in the largest quantities from the DENSEST PLANE of the superuniverse, the Milky Way, which is also the densest plane of the outer universes," (emphasis again mine). On p. 170 it says the Milky Way galaxy is made up of former spiral and other nebulae, some of which maintain their original shapes and some that now resemble gigantic luminous masses of stars, like the Magellanic Cloud. We now understand this Magellanic Cloud to be made up of two satellite galaxies of the Milky Way. They are visible from the southern sky and are believed to be over 150 thousand light-years distant. Together they contain about 20 billion stars. This information could be interpreted to suggest that Orvonton encompasses area and matter from the center of our galaxy beyond the Magellanic Cloud, a diametric distance close to 500 thousand light-Years.

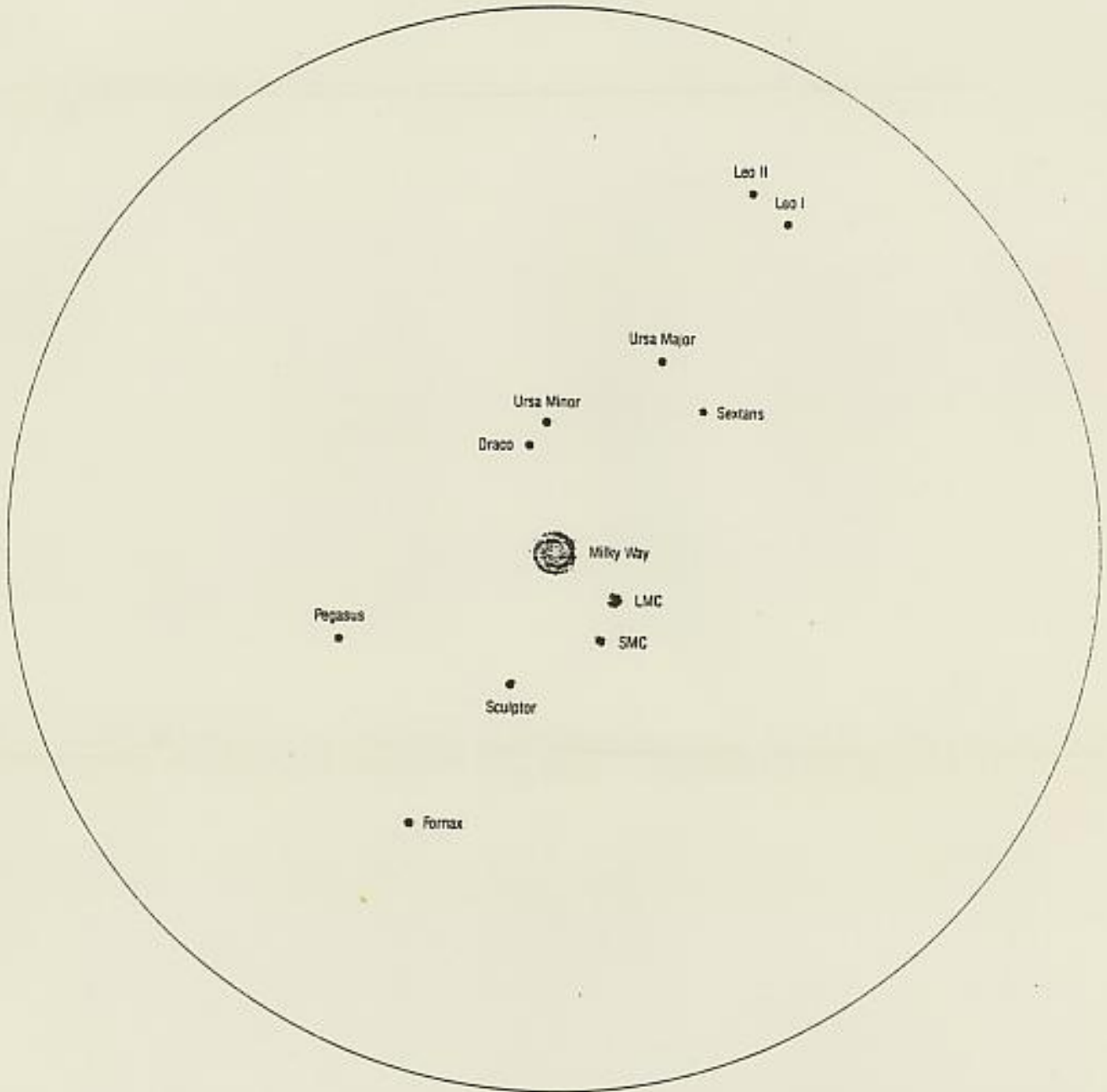
Our galaxy is surrounded by a number of other galaxies collectively known as the Local Group. The central core of this Local Group contains about 12 galaxies in gravitational proximity. These seem to orbit about the dominant Milky Way. Moving out from the Milky Way at the center, there is the Large Magellanic Cloud, the Small Magellanic Cloud, Draco, Ursa Minor, Sculptor, Sextans, Ursa Major, Pegasus, Fornax, Leo 1, and Leo 2. Due to their pronounced binary nature, some of the member galaxies, such as The Large Magellanic Cloud and Small Magellanic Cloud, Ursa Minor and Draco, and Leo 1 and 2, could be construed as double galaxies (The URANTIA Book refers to the Magellanic Cloud as a single system, for example). This would leave about eight galactic systems surrounding the Milky Way. These eight associated galactic systems could be the eight divisions of Orvonton identified by our astronomers as mentioned on p. 167. The two remaining divisions which we have a hard time separating because of our viewpoint inside them, could be the spiral arms that emanate outward from the central core of our own galaxy.

This study has taken more than a year and the actual drafting of this paper nearly 3 months. Yet the final resolution of the question remains at large. I believe Orvonton is comprised of the core star systems of the Local Group - the galaxies relatively close to our own Milky Way that are apparently locked into a gigantic single unit by mutual gravitation. Eventhough the furthest members, like the Leo group, might be located outside the present INHABITED superuniverse (emphasis mine), many of the physical attributes of such a galactic cluster seem

to fit the evidence revealed. a system resembling Leo is described on p. 163 as "A sun-forming nebula just north of the borders of Orvonton, but within the superuniverse space level." A drawing of this interpretation, plotted approximately to scale, is shown below. Speculation on this subject is far from complete. Nevertheless, the study of Orvonton will continue.

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ORVONTON?



The circle marks approximately one million light-years from the Milky Way center

- p. 167:
- Superuniverse ----- 10 major sectors
  - Major sector ----- 100 minor sectors
  - Minor sector --- 100 local universes
  - Local universe -- 100 constellations
  - Constellation ----- 100 systems
  - System ----- approx. 1000 worlds

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