

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

SOCIETY

DEVELOPMENTS

Number 31

Spring 1990

Announcing a special follow-up meeting to the debate between Fifth Epochal Fellowship and Urantia Foundation:

OUR SOCIETY'S FUTURE

All welcome! Society Members and Non-Members

Let's gather together to learn as much as we can — let's do our part and let God do the rest! Here is a basic outline of our current status and our future options. Think these over before the meeting. We will discuss every option fully.

CURRENT STATUS OF OUR SOCIETY:

By constitution: chartered by Fifth Epochal Fellowship

By licensing agreement: authorized by Urantia Foundation to use the marks and word Urantia

FUTURE OPTIONS:

- 1) Allegiance to Fifth Epochal Fellowship
- 2) Allegiance to Urantia Foundation
- 3) Remain a charter Society of FEF without a statement of allegiance to either organization.
- 4) Make a statement of allegiance to both organizations.
- 5) Withdraw from both organizations and become truly nonaligned — reorganize as a separate non-profit.

FORMAT OF MEETING:

We will have presentations from three speakers advocating the following three positions:

Fifth Epochal Fellowship

Urantia Foundation

Non-Alignment in its three possible configurations

Small group discussions and summation will follow

WHEN: Sunday, April 22

WHERE: Collins Hall,
St. Peter's Episcopal
420 29th Avenue
San Francisco

TIME: 12:30 to 6:00 with potluck at 6:00

POTLUCK: A-G: Main dish
H-N: Salad
O-S: Dessert/Bread
T-Z: Beverages

Everyone is welcome to stay for the study group at 7:30PM!

This entire issue is devoted to these issues - see inside for more!

President's Message

In the paper *After Pentecost*, the midwayer revelators bring us up to date with an historical account of the challenges facing Christianity. In this paper I would like to call particular attention to a re-reading of the sections *Christianity's Problem* and *The Future* in light of recent events within the Urantia movement. Further, I request that in reading these two sections; instead of thinking of Christianity as *them*, try substituting *us*—Urantia Book readers and believers. Just try this on, so to speak, and see if it fits.

Certainly most of us can agree with the statement on page 2082:

"Urantia is now quivering on the very brink of one of its most amazing and enthralling epochs of social readjustment, moral quickening, and spiritual enlightenment."

But who will lead the way?

"Religion does need new leaders, spiritual men and women who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings. If Christianity persists in neglecting its spiritual mission while it continues to busy itself with social and material problems, the spiritual renaissance must await the coming of these new teachers of Jesus' religion who will be exclusively devoted to the spiritual regeneration of men. And then will these spirit-born souls quickly supply the leadership and inspiration requisite for the social, moral, economic, and political reorganization of the world."*

* Read Urantia movement?

Just because we read and study this Fifth Epochal Revelation doesn't exclude us from the proverbial *slings and arrows of outrageous fortune* or make us immune to all that *flesh is heir to*. Shakespeare succinctly dramatized the human character. The midwayers also know us well:

"Primitive man lived a life of superstitious bondage to religious fear. Modern, civilized men dread the thought of falling under the dominance of strong religious convictions. Thinking man has always feared to be held by a religion. When a strong and moving religion threatens to dominate him, he invariably tries to rationalize, traditionalize, and institutionalize it, thereby hoping to gain control of it. By such procedure, even a revealed religion becomes man-made and man-dominated. Modern men and women of intelligence evade the religion of Jesus because of their fears of what it will do to them—and with them. And all such fears are well founded. The religion of Jesus does, indeed,

dominate and transform its believers, demanding that men dedicate their lives to seeking for a knowledge of the will of the Father in heaven and requiring that the energies of living be consecrated to the unselfish service of the brotherhood of man."

I believe that this statement epitomizes where we are with the Urantia movement. I say that if we can own up to who we are as human beings, we can then also acknowledge the possibility for transformation. And in so doing we can no longer keep up the attempt of trying to fit this revelation into the paradigm of our old ways of thinking and being. The future lies before us, waiting to be created:

"The call to the adventure of building a new and transformed human society by means of the spiritual rebirth of Jesus' brotherhood of the kingdom should thrill all who believe in him as men have not been stirred since the days when they walked about on earth as his companions in the flesh." page 2084

But we have to get through the encumbrances of the past, the stories about the past that continue to run us. Read *Urantia movement*, if you will, into this:

"Christianity is seriously confronted with the doom embodied in one of its own slogans: 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' The non-Christian world will hardly capitulate to a sect-divided Christendom. The living Jesus is the only hope of a possible unification of Christianity. The true church—the Jesus brotherhood—is invisible, spiritual, and is characterized by unity, not necessarily by uniformity. Uniformity is the earmark of the physical world of mechanistic nature. Spiritual unity is the fruit of faith union with the living Jesus. The visible church should refuse longer to handicap the progress of the invisible and spiritual brotherhood of the kingdom of God. And this brotherhood is destined to become a living organism in contrast to an institutionalized social organization. It may well utilize such social organizations, but it must not be supplanted by them."

The divorce of the former brotherhood (FEF) and Urantia Foundation is symptomatic of the dysfunctional civilization into which we are all born and live; with both organizations attempting to control even a revealed religion through human dominance and man-made structures. If this brotherhood is truly destined to become that living organism, which is invisible, spiritual, and characterized by unity, what will it take for us to start creating it now?

Lee Smith

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SFBAUS Semi-Annual Business Meeting

When: Sunday, June 3, 2 - 5:00PM

Where: Half-Moon Bay Library

Agenda: Election of New Officers
Vote on Statement or Resolution on
Future Status of Society
Payment of Society Dues
Welcoming ceremony for new members

Fall Retreat

Where: St. Dorothy's Rest
Lydia House and Lincoln House

When: September 7 - 9

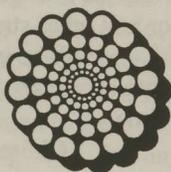
Everyone who attended last year's spring retreat at St. Dorothy's returned home spiritually renewed. There has been general agreement that we should plan another retreat this year. Since the larger movement is having a conference at Snowmass this summer, SFBAUS decided that we should have our local retreat this fall. Dolores Nice is willing to co-chair the Retreat Committee — please call her if you're interested in helping out: (415) 369-6803.

Space is limited to 25 people on a first come, first serve basis. We will do our own cooking. Please call Dolores Nice if you wish to attend. When you reserve a spot she will send you a deposit form.

Worship Group

Jay Peregrine is interested in developing a simple group worship session. He has secured a space.

Call for further information: 415-621-4105.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

On January 27, 1990, by invitation to Society presidents and Area Coordinators I attended the special meeting of the General Council of Fifth Epochal Fellowship in Phoenix. During the session held for us the discussion centered around three main topics: 1. the current status regarding use of the marks and name, 2. the general consensus of the position of societies which had not yet drafted a resolution concerning affiliation, and 3. the Area Coordinators' concern about new reader referrals received by Urantia Foundation.

Aside from these three topics, the issue of the politicization of area coordinators arose. It was (and is) my opinion as well as that of several other area coordinators present that since we were mandated to be a *servant* rather than a representative or *political* group, we could not agree with the request by the Domestic Extension Committee of Fifth Epochal Fellowship to pass a resolution in support of FEF, thereby *sending a message* to the General Council. Any statement of support would be interpreted as a political action.

After more discussion, each attendee was asked whether they would agree to sending any such statement. I firmly refused the request. Since I am the SFBAUS representative to The Area Coordinator program and since we have as yet not aligned with either FEF or Urantia Foundation, I felt it inappropriate for me to agree to their request. Given my commitment to the welfare of new readers, I would have taken the same stand regardless of our Society's affiliation. To do so would compromise my idea of what a *server* is.

Respectfully,
Chrissy P. Smith
Area Coordinator, Central California

To the Editor:

This question is directed to Martin Myers, president of URANTIA FOUNDATION:

How is it that you came to believe that the group wisdom of five (actually four in this case) trustees of the FOUNDATION is greater than the collective group wisdom of 20 international societies of the BROTHERHOOD representing approximately 1,200 dedicated individuals? How can 4 or 5 Urantians know better what to do than can

Letters to the editor, Cont.

more than a thousand other fellow agondonters?

"Jesus invested legislative and judicial authority in the group, not in the individual... There is always danger that the verdict of an individual may be warped by prejudice or distorted by passion. Group judgement is more likely to remove the dangers and eliminate the unfairness of personal bias." p.1764

In that same paragraph we read this admonition:

"...in all these matters the wisdom of the brotherhood should prevail."

Jay Newbern
Santa Rosa

To the Editor

Preserving the integrity of the text for future generations is possibly the main task to be tackled in our time. Our participation in this task is to support those who have been appointed by the original recipients of the text to preserve it. If they claim to know some truth others do not know, we have to, at least, give them the benefit of the doubt.

Another task of our time involves avoiding the creation of a Urantia Church with its inevitable clergy. Our participation here would be to resist the temptation to support any group of individuals bent on establishing an organization whose reason to exist is an end in itself. Whenever such an organization solicits funds, there is a Church in the making and a Clergy that finds justifications in spending that money.

Our third task is to create a solid base of dedicated readers capable of penetrating all the religions of the world. To reach the world, we need to carefully translate the book into its major languages.

These three tasks are not as un-related as they may appear. By translating the book now, we will be taking steps against others doing it later at their discretion. By collecting funds earmarked for translations we may avoid seeing these funds dispersed away in futile pursuits. Most importantly, we may enlarge our readership so our revelation may reach maturity.

Jacques Lecouturier

THE LATEST FROM THE FELLOWSHIP
A phone conversation with Scott Forsyth**AFFILIATION STATUS**

Here is a list, as of March 8, 1990, regarding affiliation of societies:

Foundation Affiliation:

San Fernando Valley and Finland

Fellowship Affiliation:

Fort Wayne, Glenview, Orvonton, First Society of Chicago, Kansas City-Heart of America, Oklahoma, Denver, Alaska, Seattle, Phoenix (just forming) and Canada.

Still Debating:

Evergreen-Washington State, SFBAUS, Greater New York, Urantia Society of Central Connecticut, Dallas, Houston, Western Springs, FUSLA-Los Angeles.

ON NEW READERS

Scott feels that the Foundation will probably not refer new readers to Fellowship aligned societies, especially if there is a Foundation aligned option. In Los Angeles, for example, the Foundation would likely refer readers to San Fernando Valley. But he felt that this issue is somewhat inflated because, in his experience, relatively few individuals requesting referrals become regular study group attendees. He believes that more efforts should be made at the local level through ads and listings in the phone book.

ON THE CONFERENCE

Contrary to rumors, the Conference is not "in trouble." Six hundred people have signed up, with more coming. If you don't have accommodations yet, you can call Snowmass directly.

FINANCIAL CONDITION OF FELLOWSHIP

An upcoming executive committee meeting will deal with the subject. Staff is willing to face the prospect of salary rollbacks; they will continue on regardless. The Fellowship has nine full and part-time positions in all.

THE FUTURE OF FELLOWSHIP

They want to increase their profile as an umbrella organization while enhancing their communication with societies. The issue of constitutional change to insure representation of all societies, or any other structural changes, have not yet been dealt with, but will be in the future. The Fellowship wants to help with secondary works. Feel free to call Scott or others any time.

Claire Thurston

A CASE FOR NON-ALIGNMENT

As the camel's nose of glasnost (openness) continues to rise from underneath the tent of the Soviet Bloc, letting in light and the winds of change, so too has the Urantia Movement (defined here as the organized students of the Urantia Book) experienced a wave of openness in the wake of the recent disenfranchisement of the former Urantia Brotherhood by the Foundation.

We of the general readership, not privy to the inner workings and decision-making processes of either the former Brotherhood or the Foundation are now being inundated with a plethora of "confidential memos", "secret directives", official correspondence and personal letters (some of which are characterized by decidedly un-Christlike tones). Based on this information we are supposed to choose to align with either the Foundation and its ill-defined Urantia Brotherhood Association or with the nominally reconstituted Fifth Epochal Fellowship.

Some believe that the split between the Foundation and the Fellowship is the result of a single intransigent personality; others believe it is a "conspiracy of rich boys" trying to take over the movement; still others believe it has come about as a result of the movement hitting a critical mass, creating sudden change. Regardless of what one believes, the presence of an independent judicial body could have gone a long way towards defusing some or all of the issues that, allowed to fester unresolved, created a situation that proved devastating to the movement as we have known it. I believe the Urantia movement needs a non-aligned body. This need originates in the vacuum created by the missing judicial leg of the universe approved triad system of checks and balances.

Domains of Action

Short of a formal reconciliation between the Foundation and the Fellowship there is little likelihood of a non-aligned group serving in a purely judicial role. However there still remains a related function, that of a mediator or go-between to the two groups. Ideally, I'm sure we'd all like to see direct contacts initiated and nurtured between the Fellowship and the Foundation. But human personalities being what they are, old wounds have a way or reopening. For the good of the movement as a whole, shouldn't there be a ready reserve of goodwill diplomats available for service when the formal lines of communication become strained?

In addition, there is the problem of new readers. An overwhelming consensus of opinion says that new readers should not be politicized. What better way of dealing with this issue than to refer them to a non-politicized group dedicated to their needs first and foremost?

In keeping with the universe tradition of "re-

serves", a non-aligned group could provide valuable service to the movement by either assuming some activities outright or by acting as a trust for others that are suffering from disagreements between the Fellowship and the Foundation pending formal resolution.

The non-aligned could also handle assignments that the Fellowship and the Foundation both agree should be handled outside formal channels.

Structural Affiliation

Since the existence of the non-aligned is predicated upon the mutual agreement of the Fellowship and the Foundation, let them co-determine our affiliate status in a way agreeable to all concerned. For convenience sake, we should request an arrangement that maintains our status as a non-profit religious organization, thus minimizing hassles with the State.

In conclusion, it is obvious that many challenges await us all. For the Foundation, it must recruit individuals willing to play a passive but supportive role in helping it to manifest its many worthwhile projects. For the Fellowship, it must begin a wholesale restructuring of its Constitution so that it reflects the universe approved model of checks and balances. It must become a truly democratic body with each of the Societies represented in the deliberative body.

And for those individuals and Societies that feel that they could be more useful serving the Movement in a non-aligned capacity, the challenge is to cultivate an attitude of indifference towards the various political maneuverings of the Fellowship and the Foundation. The non-aligned must be supportive of all productive book-related activities; and must be ready to explore all new opportunities for service.

Phil Geiger

INVENTING A NEW CONSTITUTION FOR THE URANTIA MOVEMENT

I'm often surprised when people complain that the Urantia movement has become "political"; that we are polarized around interpretations; that we are constantly buffeted by crises and breakdowns. To this my reply has always been the same: those who are attracted to the Book during the dawn of its influence can expect nothing less — or at least not until we have learned to govern ourselves.

In my view, internecine warfare must be our fate until we have separated the executive, judicial, and legislative domains of our group functioning. To save our movement from more fragmentation, we should plan now to institutionalize these functions in a new constitution, a

CONSTITUTION, Cont.

constitution that encompasses the governance of the Urantia movement as a whole and reconstructs the relationship between the Urantia Foundation and the movement.

The key question everyone needs to answer is: why have we been lacking in the sacred tripartite division of powers in this movement, the very technique according to which the universe itself is administered? When I addressed this question to Foundation and ex-Brotherhood representatives at a roundtable discussion held in San Francisco on January 20th, neither side had a cogent answer.

Remember how the separation of powers is extolled on page 806? "The only sacred feature of any human government is the division of statehood into the three domains..." And a few passages later this technique is called the "...divine concept of effective social regulation..." What can be more explicit?

In a prescient essay he wrote in 1978, movement observer Charles Lamar compared the universe method of government to our own:

"How does this compare with heavenly government? The Foundation appears to exercise all three powers concerning crucial material facets of the movement as a whole." (From "Concerning the Organization of the Present and Future Urantia Movement")

Lamar went on to argue that in exchange for agreeing to assist the Foundation in policing the copyright and trademarks (i.e., the confirmatory agreement), "...the societies should gain some control over the Foundation and the policies which they will be defending." He predicted that if this were not done, the movement "...would eventually become polarized along institutional lines." Sound familiar?

Now that much of the damage is done, we need to move pro-actively. At a constitutional convention of the whole movement, elected delegates could get about the work of defining a new organization that will institutionalize the separation of powers. Most likely, the Trustees of the Urantia Foundation will sit on the "highest court" of the judicial branch. But this time, checks and balances from the other branches will prevent them from exercising the blatant tyranny they now enjoy. Nothing else can. Meanwhile, the same mechanism could be used by the Foundation to keep in check dangerous individuals or trends within the Brotherhood organizations.

We have too much at stake to ignore the teachings of the Book about governing ourselves. (See also page 1763 about government within congregations of believers.) Indeed, the struggle for the control of the Book can only

escalate from here on. One of the most perspicacious statements Martin Myers has ever made concerns this very point:

"Those entrusted with the URANTIA Papers early realized that there had not in 1990 years been anything about which there could be so much competition for control as The URANTIA Book." (From "Unity, Not Uniformity", 1973)

Recall the history-making struggles that followed the last revelation. These events pre-figure the dimensions of the struggle we can expect to witness in the fifth epoch.

Of course, there is no guarantee that religious evolution always ends in victory. The Christian era has ended in relative failure; after two world wars and a devastating Cold War, Christianity hibernates in a cocoon, waiting to be awakened by a new revelation.

Similarly, we can expect that The URANTIA Book will come into world prominence, though its true mission may not succeed. Self-appointed interpreters, a new priesthood, or what General Council member Jim McNelly calls "status persons", mis-leaders whose power depends on "positioning" or personal charisma, could easily come to dominate the channels of organizational access to the Book.

McNelly has convincingly argued that:

"...neither the Foundation or the Brotherhood has seriously called into question the psychological framework which so closely led both organizations to being nearly completely taken over by a cult personality claiming to be hearing 'voices from God'. Until it reforms itself, Urantia Brotherhood will remain fertile ground for the emergence of another status person." (From "The URANTIA Brotherhood and the Evolution of Evangelism", 11/3/89)

The Book exists in an informational matrix that is highly subject to manipulation. Its deformation by ideological or cultural influences, or even its ultimate default, are not unthinkable outcomes if we do not find a "concept of effective social regulation." We have already witnessed - in the case of Vern Grimsley and, in the view of many, Martin Myers - two terrifying episodes in which individuals were able to position themselves as virtual dictators to the movement.

We must face the facts fast. We must remember our mission. If we are to sponsor the unity of the world's religions, we must be a supreme example of unity. If we are to present the Urmia lectures to the world, we must be a paragon of effective self-governance. Because we're so

embarrassingly far from this, a new and workable constitution for the movement is needed now.

This new constitution should be adapted to conditions of the 21st century. The missionaries of the fifth epoch will use different tools than in the Christian past. Rather than the sword of empire - Emperor Constantine's Christianized Roman empire - we will wield personal computers in an empire of electronic information; instead of charismatic individuals like St. Paul, who sailed the Mediterranean spreading the gospel, thousands of service-minded individuals and study groups like us will - when the time comes - spread the gospel and the Book itself, supporting each other's efforts by self-styled computer networks, fax machine links, and television crews.

Whose legitimate business is the content of these diverse missionary activities? At the individual level, it is the Father Himself; at the group level, this is the business of an organization that is legitimate only if it reflects the divine patterns of group functioning ordained by the Father, and clearly published with the sanction of the Ancients of Days. The point here is not the content of the struggles to come, but their form. As to whether Martin Myers's minimalist vision or David Elders evangelistic visions are correct is not my concern. These are matters for legitimate debate that may go on for decades, even centuries.

The sensationalistic issue of whether Martin Myers should resign, or the Foundation be sued for breach of trust, is secondary to the key question: what structure do those calling for Meyers's removal have to offer to replace the unworkable present? One thing is certain: nothing short of the divine concept of the separation of powers will do as a starting point.

Byron Belitsos
3/02/90

ON RELIGIOUS LEGITIMACY

The recent institutional split within the organized readership of the Urantia Book has perplexed, vexed, and dismayed many if not all of us. It has forced us to examine who we are and what we are about as a group and as individuals. Many of us have felt inspired to share our insights and viewpoints both publicly and privately. What have we learned? What do we need to learn?

I must ask myself "Do I need to be trying to persuade anyone in the Movement of anything? Won't people want to decide for themselves the meaning of the events they have witnessed or heard or read about? What are the legitimate purposes of communication under these

circumstances?" Here are some thoughts on that subject.

If the fundamental sanctity of the individual personality's decision making process is to be respected, then the art of persuasion must be practiced, if at all, in a spirit of delicate sensitivity to that decision process. To me it appears that the only legitimate function for communication to individuals during such a process is to inform, to clarify, and if such an individual is prepared, to assist in the truth revealing process, to the end that, in the fullness of time, and with a multiplicity of such communication, the greater truth will be plain for all concerned to see.

When communication becomes persuasion then is the stage set, "with the shadow of a hair's turning", for truth to be subverted to an individual's ambition or conceit during such an attempt at communication, and the resultant effect has thus become relatively evil. If the recipient accepts such a persuasive argument, he has become subservient (in the subject mind-arena) to the other individual's ego, rather than to his own and personal divine guidance - rather than to the Truth - simply because the argument is not True, but arises in the mind of the persuader.

I have been perusing the history of Judaism and Christianity the last year or so, and I hope to present a paper on the parallels and differences between our movement and that of Christianity in its early stages. The subject has proven to be both worthy and complex, and I am not yet prepared to present my findings for the simple reason that I need to learn more first.

Some of the issues which I see as underlying our present dilemma in the Urantia Movement are of perhaps of more immediate origin. In his recently published book *The Democratization of American Christianity* (Yale University Press, 1989) Nathan O. Hatch traces the history of the populist movement in the young American republic as it expressed itself in popular religious movements, whose proliferation was without precedent in Western Christian culture up to that time. The populist movement, taking its cues from the American Revolution, was intrinsically anti-autocratic in nature. The common denominator for these popular religious movements was the right and ability of the individual to discern for himself the truth about God, His creation, and the individual's place in it, and conversely, the illegitimacy of any attempt to place a priestly, scholarly, or ruling class between an individual and God. These people believed fervently in the legitimacy of individual inspiration and initiative, and pursued that "inalienable right" with a vengeance. Religious experience in America today is profoundly and deeply rooted in this legacy, and clearly it is an important factor in the thoughts and feelings of the majority of Urantia Book readers (in this country) today.

In every age an elemental perception of legiti-

LEGITIMACY, Cont.

macy has motivated thoughts and actions in all religious associations. This perception of legitimacy is surprisingly personal and subjective, and, like belief itself, just as surprisingly persuasive and unavoidable. The entire political history of religion (including Christianity and the Urantia Movement) might be outlined and understood relative to the quest for legitimacy. Consider for a moment what elements within a religious movement (any religious movement) you consider legitimate or illegitimate. What basis do you have for these feelings?

This question of legitimacy seems to me to be fundamental to our present crisis. I perceive a wide range of activities within our movement for whose legitimacy there is no general consensus. Who is legitimately doing what? On the popular and democratic extreme are study groups. No one in our movement questions the legitimacy or primacy of study groups. On the autocratic extreme is the Urantia Foundation, which is primarily charged with the preservation and publishing of the Urantia Book. No one is arguing with the legitimacy or primacy of publishing and preserving the Book. These two extremes (if that is the word) are, I think, perceived as wholly legitimate by everyone in the Movement. We should take heart that we all do agree on these focal points.

There seems, however, to be no general consensus on the legitimacy of any activity in between. So we are thrown back onto some fundamental principals which, in this country, revolve around individual rights and responsibilities. Our crisis is not new - it has, in one way or another, been experienced by mankind throughout his history. Our solution must be new. Its ramifications surely will touch upon the Supreme.

Jay Peregrine
3/05/90

TWENTY YEARS IN SAN FRANCISCO

A Divine Counselor reminds us, "one thing is certain: The Universe is nonstatic; only God is changeless." (p. 222) As we contemplate the manifold changes in our world, politically and spiritually, lately it appears that whatever brink we may have quivered upon has begun to crumble and has sent us sliding on to a new destiny. Change has become the watchword, and adaptation is a constant challenge. San Francisco is used to upheavals and adaptation has been our practice for decades!

I was introduced to the Book and to a Study Group almost simultaneously, back in 1971. I was surprised to

find that there were quite a few people at that first group experience. The hostess was Corlinn Renn, whose mother had written the "Study Guide to Part IV". She lived on Nob Hill and invited Bruce Thurston and Richard Kronenberg to lead the Study Group. I was hooked on Study Groups from that first encounter!

Soon the Study Group leaders moved to Mount Davidson and established the group of 10 to 15 in their home on Cresta Vista Street. Errol Strider focalized the group's study; one of the highlights was his program on *Thought Adjuster Attunement*, I still possess the lengthy compendium of quotes. Most of the membership went through personal changes during this period so any study session was a parade of old and new faces. Nonetheless my lasting impression is of the dedication of the longstanding readers to the Study Group process.

Simultaneously, a series of Bay Area-wide meetings occurred at a Christian coffee house called The Mustard Seed. Many talented and motivated people came to these meetings and began to network about the Book and ways to get the message out. At this time, alliances and friendships determined such diverse ventures as New Dimensions Radio, Music From the Hearts of Space, Multi-Image Showcase and The Brosnan Tortoise. Though these meetings were not Study Groups per se, they were fellowship and information opportunities of a startling new sort based on common loyalty to the Book.

Meanwhile the Mt. Davidson group found a new location in Potrero Hill whose hosts, William Jonke and Jay Newbern created memorable meetings in the warm dining room complete with gas-lit chandelier. Larry Geis emerged as the next leader when the group moved to an old Victorian on Gough Street.

At this time, Meredith Landrum-Sharma was teaching an introduction to the Urantia Book at the Metaphysical Center on Sutter Street. Several members of the future core group of readers in San Francisco came from this class and from the subsequent study group at her home.

Across the Bay, Vern and Nancy Grimsley and their Family of God Foundation sponsored a large study group, numbering thirty or forty persons on the campus of the Pacific School of Religion. The meetings had the quality of intellectual stimulation resembling a graduate seminar. It was also a great lesson in social interaction and provided many of us with an initial awareness of URANTIA BROTHERHOOD and URANTIA FOUNDATION in Chicago. Out of this group the Bay Area URANTIA SOCIETY formed its charter membership

The same year, The bicentennial 1976, that SFBAUS was chartered, The URANTIA BROTHERHOOD held its first general conference outside Chicago. Berkeley Elliot, the organizer of the conference offered a challenge to the San Francisco Study Group to produce a half-hour pro-

gram. Though we were not an "Official Brotherhood Group", she believed in our creative abilities and defended her hunch before a highly skeptical bureaucracy. Forged by group effort and wisdom, *Our Heritage of the Spirit*, a multi-image show, blended a script tracing the previous four Revelations, with color slides of fine art works and a soundtrack mix of contemporary and classical music. It went to Oklahoma and was an instant success. Working together brought us closer and inspired the next incarnation of the San Francisco group, the Brosnan Tortoise.

The Tortoise merged core members from the Gough Street group, Meredith's group and some from the Berkeley group. With stops along the way at Patricia Roane's flat on Alamo Square, as well as others, the group finally landed at Brosnan Street, adjacent to the original Levi-Strauss factory on Valencia Street in the Mission District. The meeting rooms had been part of the nursing school maintained by Mary's Help Hospital nuns and were perfect for our purposes. Even the blackboards were green! In those heady early days, we were able to occupy the entire ground floor of the building for \$50.00 per month in rent. It helped that the manager of the building was a member of the Study Group. Soon, thanks to used furniture left behind by tenants vacating their apartments, the meeting rooms were made cosy and functional. Tea and even dinners were served on a regular basis. The group fluctuated from eight to twenty people.

As with any group that produces one successful endeavor, the Brosnan Tortoise searched and found another outlet, the magazine known as the "Tortoise Speaks." For an amateur publication it still featured a professional sense of responsibility, a sophisticated esthetic and even a sense of humor!

In one sense, the history of the City is tied to inflation and the Brosnan Street rent soon became more of a financial burden than the members were willing to bear, so we held a gigantic garage sale and moved to the Sunset District.

Matthew and Cheryl Rapaport housed the group for the next several years. Their spacious home on 14th Avenue was the site for the wedding of Chuck and Claire Thurston, who became the next hosts for the group when the Rapaports headed north to Sonoma County. The Thurstons moved into a Victorian at the foot of Mount Sutro. Not long after, the newly formed group called Spiritual Union made the Thurston's home their meeting place.

Any group of strongly motivated believers is bound to differences of opinion and technique, and the Spiritual Union religious group was no exception. From that group has sprung two study groups, both with members of the Brosnan Tortoise and even earlier groups. Charlie Lamar and Steve Finlan have hosted a Sunday evening

Study Group on Cole Street in the Haight Ashbury since their departure from the Rivoli Street (Thurston home) group. They have provided a vital alternative to the group now meeting at St. Peter's (see below).

During this period, the Bay Area Urantia Society decided that they could not authorize the San Francisco Study Group as one of their sponsored groups, and began to host monthly meetings at the Cathedral Hill Hotel (formerly the Jack Tar). Subsequent revisions to the Society's constitution cleared away these obstacles.

At the arrival of their first child, the Thurstons requested that a new location be found for the Study Group. The search committee went looking for a "neutral space" as opposed to someone's home. They found the perfect solution in the Parish Hall adjacent to St. Peter's Episcopal church in the outer Richmond District on 29th Avenue. The priest is a genuinely open and encouraging person who has supported our presence weekly in his building. We feel so fortunate to have found this special place and we've also rented their fellowship room, Collins Hall, for meetings and potluck dinners.

About three years ago, after membership requirements were amended, several of the former members of Spiritual Union decided to apply for membership in the local Urantia Society. Accompanied by applicants from several other regions, the largest single group of new members was added to the Society since the original charter in 1976, nineteen in all.

Over the past few years, the St. Peter's Group has matured into a regular assembly of rugged individuals who often travel many miles to attend our Sunday meetings. We represent a diverse group of ages and personalities whose input keeps the meetings from being stale or boring. Best of all, solid friendships are forming, leading to growth in spiritual mastery as well as comprehension of higher meanings and a deepened appreciation of values.

Stephen Zendt

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The URANTIA BOOK

BAY AREA STUDY GROUPS

CARMEL STUDY GROUP

Contact: Jackson and Linda Smith
(408) ~~625-1261~~ or *625-0997*
Todd Bliss (408) 375-5089
Time: Alternate Wednesdays (call first)

CONCORD STUDY GROUP

Contact: Sara Blackstock
(415) 672-3340
Time: Monthly, 4th Sunday, 7:00 PM
Format: Topical, rotate leaders,
rotate meeting places

MARIN STUDY GROUP, Terra Linda

Contact: Jacques Lecouturier
(415) 479-8269
Time: Monthly, 1st Thursday,
7:00-9:00 PM
Format: Theme studies and individual papers

MARTINEZ STUDY GROUP

Contact: Andrea Laspinas
(415) 372-9178
Call if interested

MILL VALLEY STUDY GROUP

Contact: Carol English
(415) 383-4157
Call if interested

PETALUMA STUDY GROUP

Contact: Matthew or Cheryl Rapaport
(707) 762-0329, Call if interested

*COLE ST. STUDY GROUP
SAN FRANCISCO
Contact: Charles Lamar
(415) 386-6072*

PENINSULA STUDY GROUP

Contact: Dolores Nice, (415) 369-6803
Time: Alternate Thursdays, 7:30 PM
Call before, rotate meeting at members' homes
Format: Sequential by section

SAN FRANCISCO STUDY GROUP

Contact: Claire or Chuck Thurston
(415) 564-1826 or
Stephen Zandt (415) 821-9363
Time: Every Sunday, 7:30-9:30 PM
Format: Topical, Sequential

SAN JOSE STUDY GROUP

Contact: Mike Hagan, (408) 272-8458
Time: Every ~~Wednesday~~, 7:30-9:30 PM *TUES*
Format: Sequential, topical

SANTA CRUZ STUDY GROUP

Contact: Larry and Elizabeth Jones
(408) 425-1882 or
Lee and Chrissy Smith (408) 462-4823
Time: Every Wednesday, 8:00 PM
(First Wed. of month at Jones's,
other Wed. at Smith's)
Format: Theme studies and individual papers

SANTA CRUZ NEW READERS

Contact: Angel Shore
(408) 462-5553
Time: Fridays, 7:30 PM, as needed
Call if interested

SEBASTOPOL STUDY GROUP

Contact: Bob Slagle
(707) 823-0876
Time: Saturdays, 10-12:00 AM (Call first)