



DEVELOPMENTS

Number 32

Winter 1991

from: *Golden Gate Circle*

*of students of the Urantia Book**

THE YEAR (and 1/12) IN REVIEW, A Message from the President

1990. The beginning of the end decade of the end century of the end of a millennium...

A convoluted description of the present time, perhaps, but one that mirrors the distortions of the rapid onslaught of change that has shaken both our planet and our community of *URANTIA Book* readers these past 13 months.

For our Society it began with the numbing realization that, due to forces outside of our control, we found ourselves caught in a war between the Urantia Foundation Trustees and the Executive Committee of the former Urantia Brotherhood. One evening we retire to our comfy cabins, happy campers on a cruise ship exploring exotic ports of call, only to wake up shivering the next morning in a life boat being dragged behind a sinking ship with a crew fighting over who is better qualified to steer, meanwhile leaving the bilge pumps unattended.

And while both combatants would argue over their respective origins — whether they were truly independent entities, or whether one had begat the other — to those of us outside the 'beltway' of the Chicago power axis, who'd considered ourselves loyal supporters of both organizations, the resulting schism had seemed initially as improbable as, say, the Local Creator Son filing divorce papers on the Universe Mother Spirit. Only now, one of these parents, the Urantia Foundation, has told us, in no uncertain terms, that if we continue a relationship with the other parent we will be disenfranchised, and legally enjoined from using the family name.

On August 1st we received a letter from the Urantia Foundation demanding that we: (1) affiliate with the Urantia Foundation; (2) affiliate with their proposed Urantia Brotherhood Association (which takes on the trappings of a 'secret society' since they have never revealed the organizational structure of this mysterious entity); and (3) "...refrain from maintaining or establishing any relationship or affiliation with, or participating in any activities sponsored by Fifth Epochal Fellowship", such affiliation being deemed, in those now infamous words, "neither necessary nor permissible." In our last formal business meeting we voted unanimously, with one abstention, to decline the Foundation's ultimatum, and sent them a polite letter to that effect. In a certified letter to me dated 11/27/90, the Trustees indicated that we had not complied with the above requirements, and that our license would be formally terminated as of December 30, 1990.

Oh well; one can suppose that that is the price we must pay for our past complacency, naivete, acquiescence, et al. However, our Society did pass a resolution at our June meeting calling on the General Council to convene a constitutional convention within the next two years, toward the goal of opening up the decision-making process of Fifth Epochal Fellowship to a more representative body of the 16 or 17 surviving Societies of the former Urantia Brotherhood. I presented our resolution to representatives of these other Societies at a special conclave held, appropriately enough, on July 4th, during the International Conference at Snowmass, Colorado. Our resolution, simplified somewhat at the last minute due to insufficient time allowed to debate it fully, passed by a vote of 14-3, and was forwarded to the General Council meeting that followed a couple of days later. Apparently our voices were heard, as the next GC meeting in Tampa, Florida, in February is supposed to be open to all Societies; and a key agenda item will

*Formerly "San Francisco Bay Area Urantia Society"

The Year in Review, Continued...

be the discussion of the need for such a constitutional rewrite. This would allow for, among other things, direct Society representation (not only is there at present no such provision for direct representation on the General Council, there also exists a written directive stating that the minutes of each GC meeting must be kept classified — off-limits to even the Societies they are purported to represent!); shorter term periods; and a system of check and balances that would include a tripartite separation of power between distinct judicial, executive, and legislative bodies to reflect more clearly the models of universe administration given in the teaching of *The URANTIA Book*.

In other news, we welcomed two new members to our Society - Jim Schelstrate, from San Francisco, and Dent Snider, from Santa Cruz. We also elected new officers as follows: President: Phil Geiger; Vice-President: Sara Blackstock; and returning as Secretary and Treasurer respectively - Dennis Baker and Jay Peregrine. Sarah will co-ordinate the new and existing committee assignments.

On the activities front, in February our Society hosted a lively forum featuring three representatives from both the Urantia Foundation and Fifth Epochal Fellowship, who presented their respective views of recent history and their visions for the future of *The URANTIA Book*. With nearly 100 interested *URANTIA Book* readers in attendance, the questions from the floor and the answers from the stage were interesting, to say the least. (My personal favorite Q. & A. sequence started with Dolores Nice, I believe, when she asked why, given *The Urantia Book's* cosmological and cosmopolitan perspective, there didn't exist more diversity of viewpoint and background in the makeup of the current Trustees — as in the case of the three middle-aged middle-

America white male fraternity brothers addressing us that evening. To which the Urantia Foundation President responded: "Because they were rebellion tested.") Also revealed for the first time in any public forum that I know of (by one of the Fellowship representatives, Marilyn Kulieke), were the much-alluded-to "secret messages" that purportedly contained instructions governing the reservation and trademarking of the name "Urantia." But perhaps the most important result of the forum was the commitment by the Foundation Trustees actively to pursue a large number of secondary works projects that had previously been left in limbo. (Lucille Faw's comment to me afterwards was particularly instructive, saying something to the effect that, if nothing else, our forum and the one in LA had resulted in the first acknowledgment by the Foundation that projects such as the audio book even existed.)

And as much as the recent turmoil within the broader community of Urantia Book readers has affected our lives, we have continued to hold our on-going Society events, including the annual Jesus Birthday celebration, held again this year in August in Golden Gate Park; our large and supportive representation at the highly successful and spiritually rewarding International Conference "Walking With God" in Snowmass, CO; the spiritual retreat at St. Dorothy's; study group intensives ("Mota Now!") All of these continued to define our evolution as spirit-led children of the Supreme, both as individuals and as a family of dedicated *URANTIA Book* readers seeking to personify its teachings. And with the coming of the new year, it is my sincerest hope that all of us find that place within ourselves that is the unfailing reservoir of divine love and inspiration that will enable all of us to say: "Not my will, Father, but yours be done..."

In Michael's Light,
Phil Geiger

For local news and calendar of events, see page 6

The URANTIA Book*An Availability Update by Claire Thurston*

Rumors have been swirling around the Urantia Movement concerning access to the Book itself. This report on the status of bookstore and library placement includes interviews with Martin Myers, President of Urantia Foundation, and David Elders, President of Fifth Epochal Fellowship.

The Way It Was

Bookstore Policy: Urantia Foundation was and is the publisher of the book. The former Urantia Brotherhood was the sales agent. As of the late 1970's the Foundation through its sales agent (The Urantia Broth-

erhood) provided bookstore distributors with the Book at wholesale cost. Distributors then sold copies to retail bookstores.

Library Placement: Tom Allen of the former Urantia Brotherhood co-ordinated the program by sending books to individual readers around the country who had secured placement in a library. The Foundation completely subsidized the program.

The Way It Is Now

Bookstore Policy: The Foundation has severed its relationship with the former Urantia Brotherhood; therefore the former Urantia Brotherhood, now FEF, is no longer sales agent for the book. As of last summer Urantia Foundation severed its relationship with book

distributors. Distributors have now de-listed the book in their catalogs. The *URANTIA Book* is now listed as out-of-print or out-of-stock. Bookstores now must phone or call the Foundation to place orders.

Library Placement: Tom Allen, now with FEF, cannot continue to co-ordinate the program with no funds and no books. The Foundation has set aside 100 to 200 books for this year and is proposing that the Urantia Brotherhood Association co-ordinate the program along the same lines as Tom's program; i.e. individuals contact the acquisition librarian to guarantee that the book is accessible.

The Controversy

According to Martin Myers: The Foundation's new policy regarding the Book is a program balanced between individual readers and bookstores. Including the continuing consignment program whereby 50 books are set aside at no cost to any bookstore who will display the *URANTIA Book*, the 100-200 books set aside for library placement and the 40% discount on up to 5 books for individuals, the new policy is "the most generous and liberal program to date." A full description of the policy is now available in a brochure entitled *Urantia Foundation Discretionary Discount Sales of the URANTIA Book*. In the words of the brochure, the 40% discount offered to individuals for the purchase of one to five copies per calendar year includes the Board of Trustees discretionary authority "to sell or not sell to any individual." Mr. Myers notes that the price of the *URANTIA Book* has been maintained since 1979; and that most books would have doubled or tripled in cost within a ten year span.

According to David Elders: By cutting the ties to distributors the Foundation has undermined the legitimacy that bookstores gave the *URANTIA Book*. He fears the Book will become a cult phenomenon as a result of being under the exclusive control of the Foundation Trustees. Even though Martin Myers claims that the book will be just as available if not more so than before, David Elders assumes that most stores won't bother to write or call the Foundation since that involves an extra piece of business activity for them (as opposed to dealing with distributors allowing the UB to be just another simply coded entry on an order sheet). In addition, the new Foundation policy transgresses a basic rule of the booktrade by offering to sell to individuals at the wholesale price — the same price the retailers pay for the book (40% off the retail price). As such the Foundation, as publisher, is competing directly with bookstores. Elders believes that once word gets around in the publishing industry, bookstores will refuse to carry the book. In addition, Elders believes that the severed ties with distributors won't be easily restored because the Foundation will have caused both bookstores and distributors to look bad to their customers by making it difficult or impossible to fill back orders. It is ironic to note that the Foundation's new discounted policy to individuals is very similar to the em-

battled attempts of independent groups such as C.U.B.S. to offer discounted books. Finally, Elders says the Fellowship has a limited supply of books and will supply a book if a reader can't find the UB at a bookstore.

The Fellowship is planning to do a survey of approximately 500 bookstores nationwide in January to ascertain and document the current situation. In San Francisco recently a representative at B. Dalton said the Book is out-of-stock. Field's Bookstore, which has historically had one of the largest U.B. stocks in the Bay Area, still has copies available. A local UB reader recently found a brand-new 10th edition *URANTIA Book* at a marked-down price in a used-book store in the City that specializes in "remaindered" books.



What Do We Say To New Readers? *An Editorial Opinion*

If human organizations are to evolve and remain useful, they must be capable of responding to survival pressures and enduring the confusion associated with difficult transitions. Our small movement, with its precious teachings and unfathomable future, is struggling to give birth to organizational concepts that will serve, not just for now, but for the inevitable metamorphic process to come.

Any attempt to explain to a new reader what has been going on with Urantia organizations is almost bound to become either hopelessly complicated or misleadingly oversimplified. Worse yet, it is difficult not to be embarrassed and put off by some of what has been happening, although I think it's important to keep in mind the unprecedented nature of what we're trying to do.

Harmony and mutual support among the various interests and entities connected with the UB would obviously be the desired state of affairs, but this will not come easily.

It must have seemed fairly straightforward in the early days. The Forum was a locally concentrated not-too-large group of individuals with a clear focus on immediate tasks at hand. The transcending importance of these tasks must have brought about powerful feelings of unity of purpose and selfless devotion. As the early organizations came into existence, it was only natural that they originated from the same group of minds and were instituted from the same pool of individuals. Whatever disagreements of philosophy there may have been concerning the formulation of the original Foundation and Brotherhood must have been submerged in a shared but untested vision of mutual trust and goodwill. After all, these people all *knew* each other and must have trusted each other to a large extent. They did not need

What do we say to new readers?, Continued...

licensing agreements to provide recourse for the policing of each others' actions.

Unfortunately, however, the *relationship* between the two organizations was never carefully planned, undoubtedly because they both contained many of the same key individuals. So confident were these early founders that they entangled the Brotherhood with two of the Foundation's most essential and public business activities: sales agency and fundraising. How a growing Brotherhood was to remain "simple and social" (Martin Myer's words) while carrying the legal and fiscal weight of these responsibilities is a mystery I can't begin to fathom. As new readers who were strangers to the founding vision began to assume positions in the Brotherhood, the Foundation apparently felt compelled to resort to the impersonal mechanics of legal means to insure the continuity of its own identity and purposes.

As this legal mobilization of the Foundation grew during the 70's, the number of readers was *also* growing. The ever-widening variety of individuals, with their many attitudes and ideas about how the UB should be brought to the world, created increasing pressure on the Brotherhood to respond and adapt to its changing constituency. The leadership of the former Urantia Brotherhood, however, found itself caught in the middle between its growing membership and Foundation restraints. To at least some extent, the proliferation of independent groups during the 70's and 80's reflected frustration with the Brotherhood's inability to act freely in the interests of the readership. The fact that the Brotherhood was unwittingly set up to serve two masters became the seed of its own transformation, and inevitably the severing of its ties to the Foundation.

The question seems to come down to whether:

(1) an otherwise workable institutional arrangement was brought down by unworthy political infighting, exacerbated by unfortunate personality conflicts; or

(2) the organizational design was fatally flawed from the beginning.

In spite of hints at "mandates" and "instructions" I believe the latter to be closer to the truth.

Some argue that the Brotherhood was intended from the beginning to be wholly independent of the Foundation. If this is true, it was never given a chance. The Brotherhood's early involvement with book sales and fundraising effectively bonded its identity to the UF even before the retroactive licensing agreements were put in place in the 70's. From the viewpoint of history, the early organizational arrangements, with their blurred and confused boundaries, may come to be seen as something of a cocoon, enveloping the efforts of a small group of people working closely together.

As we emerge from this cocoon, we must be sure to assign clear functions to the organizational entities that we choose to support. Crippling cross-purposes add nothing

to our collective stature or effectiveness. There is little question that the Urantia Foundation (as publisher of the UB) requires the assistance of a stable and cooperative staff of volunteer helpers to handle such things as fundraising, book sales, translations and other related projects appropriate to their responsibilities as copyright holder. (Perhaps the new UBA will emerge as such an entity.) But to suppose, as in the case of the former Brotherhood, that such a group can at the same time be the primary international association of readers and believers seems like an extreme exercise in vanity and wishful thinking.

A *true* readership service organization will have plenty of its own work to do. Organizing conferences, maintaining availability of secondary works and presenting news and commentary on a movement-wide basis are obvious examples. While a mutually supportive relationship with the UB publisher would certainly be desirable, a growing and dynamic body of believers, made up of far-flung and religiously motivated individuals, cannot allow itself to be commercially or legally entwined with *any* other organization. We will have enough problems of our own without other entities adding to them!

It is ironic to observe that one of the biggest political footballs in our organizational evolution has been the role of religion and its place in our institutional identity and purposes. We seem to encounter the dangers of churchification and secularization at every turn. But no one can deny the spontaneous desire for worship and religious expression that occurs almost whenever readers gather, whether it be in a small study group in someone's living room or a large conference of hundreds of readers from around the world. Add to this the fact that anyone who seriously studies the UB for any length of time achieves a greater understanding and love for God. Is this religion? Of course it is. And it's the best kind, born of inner discovery and personal experience - not external dictates.

Organization for *purely* religious purposes (prayer/support groups, family worship groups, etc.) is really practical only if done locally and according to the tastes and desires of the individuals involved. Our larger service organizations can and should *allow for* and *support* religion without having to dictate the forms or manner of its expression. In the same way that our readership support organizations should avoid entanglement with the UF, we should also dare to keep them free of self-conscious apostolic ambitions. There are a thousand and one ways to teach and share the religion of Jesus without it competing with the necessary work of serving the worldwide body of Urantia Book readers.

Chuck Thurston



Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor

In numerous deliberations over the Urantia Foundation/Brotherhood split I have heard reference to lack of an organized judicial body which could, if it were present, try and adjudicate such disputes as this. It occurs to me that we are all, in a *de facto* sense, judging this dispute. Yet I see little attempt to formulate a fair, impersonal, and rational philosophic framework that, if present, would allow such an adjudication to really proceed. The following is my contribution to the development of such a philosophic framework.

1) Such an adjudication needs to be done independently of both Urantia Foundation and the former Urantia Brotherhood. It must be impersonal in nature, and can occur on three levels: individual, associative, and collective.

2) In order for humans to adjudicate the controversy, we must assume *a priori* that the controversy is human; that is: a) no principal in the controversy is being directed, influenced, or misled by Caligastia or any other evil being; b) no principal in the controversy is insane; 3) no principal in the controversy has received or is receiving special instructions from the Planetary Government, or, if they claim to so have, such communication or revelation must be viewed as personal and as having arisen in the mind of the individual.

3) Evidence needs to be admitted in a rational and fair way; such procedures of admissibility are well known in the courts of this country and to most individuals, but we are strangely ready to admit all types of faulty evidence when making personal judgment in a controversy such as this. Basic rules of evidence need to be strictly adhered to: a) hearsay¹ evidence is inadmissible; b) documents signed and agreed to are accepted "*prima facie*"²; c) occult doctrines³, written or not, must be substantiated by admissible evidence or testimony to be accepted as true; a tradition cannot be accepted as a fact, but its impact as a tradition can be considered.

By beginning with these few, simple philosophical rules, those of us so inclined can begin to sort through the mass of information that is available on this subject, with the aim of defining the evidence that is really considerable in a fair attempt at adjudication.

¹ "hearsay: *Secondhand evidence; evidence derived from something a witness had heard others say; evidence depending on the veracity of some person other than the witness.*" You and the Law, *Reader's Digest*, 1971.

² "prima facie ...*Something that is assumed to be true or factual in the absence of evidence to the contrary.*" *Ibid.*

³ "occult...*available only to the initiate; not revealed; secret.*" American Heritage Dictionary, Houghton Mifflin, 1969. *Doctrine: teaching. I am referring to*

teachings about the URANTIA Book, The Forum, The Local Planetary Government, Midwayers, etc, which are not available to the general public, but are circulated in a secret fashion to and by Urantia Book initiates: these teachings in compendium are indeed an occult doctrine.

Jay Peregrine



Dear Editor

I am writing this letter to state my personal conclusions regarding the article in this issue on book availability. In the course of my research, I interviewed Martin Myers, Dave Elders, John Hales and Tom Allen.

It is comforting to know that this planet will reach light and life and that the religion of Jesus will emerge in full glory despite our evolutionary setbacks. But it saddens me greatly to see individuals like John Hales, who diligently worked for years on bookstore placement, or Tom Allen, who was the backbone of library placement, thwarted in their service work.

Both John Hales and Tom Allen suggested that Urantia Book readers can still help keep the book in circulation by establishing a personal relationship with a bookstore, ie: guarantee the bookstore a minimal number of sales per year if they continue to stock and show the book. As a personal note I still have six books for libraries from last year — anyone who can place a book in a library just contact me (415 564-1826).

As a point of information: the Foundation's non-profit status as an educational institution is based on their making the book as available as possible. The fact that *any* individual is prevented from getting access to the book runs contrary to the basis for the non-profit.

It is my personal belief that since the large majority of societies have aligned with the Fellowship, the Foundation may be seeking its grassroots membership from new readers. Controlling book sales, knowing the names and addresses of all people who purchase the book, is clearly a strategy for direct access to all new readers.

One can only hope that new readers will trust the beauty of the revelation to outshine all such political machinations.

Claire Thurston



RECENT NEWS

SFBAUS Changes Its Name

At the February 10th semi-annual meeting of San Francisco Bay Area URANTIA Society a resolution was passed by the members present changing the name of the society to "Golden Gate Circle". The resolution also stated "...that a descriptive tag "of students of *The URANTIA Book*" be added after the name of the organization, when appropriate, provided that the proper name *The URANTIA Book* be set-off in such a way as to make it clear that it is not a part of the name of this organization."

This name change was necessitated by the recent cancellation of the licensing agreement between the society and URANTIA Foundation. The society has yet to amend its constitution to reflect this and other recent changes in its and its parent organization's status. Members can expect a mailing with proposed constitutional changes and a date for a meeting to vote on them in the near future.

Other business...

In other business, Dolores Nice was elected the society's delegate to the 1991 Triennial Delegate Assembly. Larry Geis was elected alternate. Members also spent some quality time discussing issues to be debated at the February meeting of General Councilors and Society Representatives in Florida. Larry Geis and Phil Geiger are representing the society at that assembly.

Dues...

For all of you who are members: 1991 dues are now due and payable! Dues are still \$25.00. If you haven't paid yet, please forward your remittance to the treasurer, Jay Peregrine, 48 Henry Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. Make your checks out to SFBAUS for the time being — the name change hasn't been finalized on the bank account yet.

Women's Corps News

Several women from the Bay Area attended the Boulder Women's Corps presentation at the Snowmass Urantia Conference this summer. This women's corps is a vital part of the Boulder Urantia scene. Their service this year included community work, such as helping a women's shelter, as well as holding potlucks for local Urantia women.

Now they have a video available on loan about forming a corps as well as a newsletter. Anyone who wants more information should write:

Shelly Anderson
The Boulder Women's Corps
2120 Edgewood Drive
Boulder, CO 80304

Thanks!

Special thanks to Stephen Zendt for an inspiring New Year's worship. Everyone present decided it should be repeated as a Bay Area tradition.

Sorry!

The arrival of Chuck and Claire Thurston's new baby (Haley Miranda - 1/31/91 - 7 lbs. 3 oz.) delayed publication of this issue of *Developments* a bit. Consequently, however, this issue is a bit fatter than usual!

Meredith Landrum Sharma Gives Series of Talks

Meredith Landrum Sharma, a longtime San Francisco reader, did a series of talks over the summer and fall on topics from the *URANTIA Book*. These Sunday morning talks were held at the Cultural Integration Fellowship in San Francisco - a "non-profit and non-sectarian religious and educational corporation devoted to the concepts of universal religion, cultural harmony, and creative self-unfoldment."

Meredith's three talks were entitled: "The Identity of the Soul and the Spirit", "What is Personality?", and "Individual Personality Survival."

Meredith was asked to speak even though she was the only speaker without a PhD! She tells us her lectures went splendidly, and she sends us her love.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS
for 1991

Sunday, February 10th
Semi-Annual Society Meeting

March 15th - 17th
Spring Retreat, St. Dorothy's

Sunday, August 18th
Jesus' Birthday Picnic

September 6th - 8th
Fall Retreat, St. Dorothy's

Sunday, October 13th
Semi-Annual Society Meeting

Saturday, November 16th
Study Intensive

Sunday, January 5th, 1992
New Year Worship Service

RECENT EVENTS

Retreat Weekend

What a wonderful and uplifting experience we all had at our retreat weekend at St. Dorothy's Rest. Our spiritual needs were well taken care of with prayer, meditation, and worship. Our minds were stimulated by study sessions, discussions, and Bob Slagle's "Flight of the Fandors."

Beach walks in Bodega Bay, hikes in the redwoods, and a musical evening in the chapel rounded off our activities. Some people even came close to "fusion" after

playing *Transformation* for three hours! Even cooking crews and clean-ups were fun in the fellowship of such spirit-minded mortals.

We have reserved St. Dorothy's for two retreats next year. Our Spring retreat will be March 15th to 17th. We can accommodate 40 participants. Meals will be provided and this retreat will be open to children. The second retreat, September 6th to 8th, will be a smaller one, limited to 25 adults. We will again provide our own meals and be housed at Lydia House and Lincoln Lodge. A twenty dollar deposit will be required for each retreat.

Dolores Nice

*Not So Intensive Intensive*

A study intensive on "Living the Morontia Life Now" was held last November 10th at the home of Dolores Nice in Redwood City. Dolores has hosted several UB gatherings now, and as always was a gracious and accommodating hostess.

The outline of study for the day was planned by Larry Geis, who did the announcement mailout as well. Unfortunately Larry was unable to attend the intensive due to a serious illness in his family. Stephen Zendt and I "pinch-hit" for Larry, following from memory the general outline of topical study on the Morontia Life originally done at the Snowmass Conference last summer. The result was an "ad-lib" but inspiring reading of several of the best parts of the Book - just what we all

were looking for that fine fall day.

After a brown-bag lunch with good conversation we decided to enjoy the day and each other's company by taking a long, leisurely walk together in a near-by park. The crisp fall air and exceptionally fine color on the trees in the area inspired us at an impromptu worship session in a secluded arroyo within the park.

By the time we returned to Dolores' house the day was nearly gone, and some made their departure, while others of us stayed on for a spell to tell UB stories to each other, while Dolores' son and his friend tramped in and out of the house, giving us strange looks from time to time as they picked up bits and pieces of talk about "The Forum", "Midwayers", and "Local Universe Government."

Jay Peregrine

THE BOOK AND THE CHURCH

Amazing Grace and The Book

by Patricia Fearey, December 1990

There had to be plenty of overhead room. For the angels, of course. To a fervent medieval congregation, a soaring cathedral truly was the house of God.

During the Middle Ages, to enter a "state of grace" at a site considered sacred, people were willing to endure long journeys. And in this time of pilgrimage, a sudden religious building boom transformed all Western Christendom. New knowledge from afar contributed. So did gratitude - that the world hadn't ended with the millennium. About 1135 A.D., the radical architecture of the Gothic cathedrals began its dramatic florescence. Surprisingly perfected from the outset, this style became, in our terms, an instant fad across the land.

In earlier Romanesque churches, massive walls had borne the weight of covered vaults above. For all its limitations, this tradition persisted. But medieval Europe's highest religious aspirations found their true expression in a Gothic architecture indebted to Arabic geometry. Great thrusts could balance in midair. Gothic arches pointed toward the sky. Support from flying buttresses enabled heights within to rise, jeweled in light from window-walls.

Despite its later art-for-art's-sake copies, Gothic church architecture was no mere style. The original cathedrals may well have been revelations written in stone. Even now, the Cathedral of Chartres, still luminous and resonant, is magical in its effect. Perhaps it really was a cosmic musical instrument given form on earth, as some believe. Its geometric alignments are

exquisitely precise, even harmonic. Both occult thinkers and art historians say the guilds of master masons guarded certain esoteric secrets.¹ With this knowledge, medieval builders could construct an experience for people, an entrance into that longed-for state of grace where worshipers can glimpse a high potential for humanity.

Today, *The URANTIA Book* revelation, compressed into print, offers entrance into worlds more vast and more divinely perfect than any earthly arts could represent.

Tremendous, transformative, even symphonic - that is how serious readers understand this book. Like the greatest of Gothic cathedrals, this is a vehicle, a gateway, an expression of the laws of harmony. *The URANTIA Book's* values and descriptions guide us through, and far beyond, our ground-level human state, with assurance of our infinite potentials as ascendant beings. Its far-from-"airy fairy" angels are quite mathematically savvy. Its heaven promises not rest-in-peace but dynamic experiences of incremental progression. We are introduced to a very human Jesus, at first unaware of his Christhood, who was more holistic than holy. "As above, so below", from the book's perspective on the kingdom of God and the glories of the universe, makes complete - and exciting - sense.

As a reader of *The URANTIA Book*, with a longtime spiritual home in our local study group, I have also made a large inner-city cathedral my church home. I feel com-

fortable with, nurtured by, and inspired through my membership in this Gothic-style church, so ritually traditional in many ways and so magnificent in outward form. To some UB readers, this grand scale could seem in perfect harmony with the book's soaring dimensions. To others, choosing to join any ornate cathedral-church could seem incongruous - and they have good reason to prefer an unembellished approach to worship. Our all-



too-human institutional behavior surrounding any spiritual core — including *The URANTIA Book* — can raise well-justified questions in need of our honest answers. *The URANTIA Book* calls us to practice the religion of Jesus, in all its direct simplicity. We are not to mistake a religion *about* Jesus (or about this book itself) for that profound clarity. As a UB reader, I believe there is another factuality than certain literal — and cornerstone — creeds in the Christian theological tradition proclaim. In my search for essence, I left my early Episcopalian background many years ago to explore Eastern religions, American Indian beliefs, Unitarianism — ultimately finding *The URANTIA Book*. Why then, of all choices now, a cathedral — especially symbolic, especially theatrical, and perhaps a vulnerable anachronism in these secular, threatening, and financially inequitable times?

The cathedral in question is that peculiarly San Franciscan entity, affectionately called “Amazing Grace.” Episcopal by birth, she is widely known today to be a “House of Prayer for All People.”

Grace Cathedral does remain staunchly Episcopalian. Time-honored traditions of an Anglican cathedral are ceremonially observed. As a bishop’s diocesan seat, as well as a functioning church, ritual services (often elaborate) occur with regularity. Visiting dignitaries speak. Tourists come, to worship or simply “not to miss” a monument already rich in history and the formal arts. The cathedral is relatively young, and still incomplete, with an ambitious building plan. She may not be to all modern burghers the central focus of their town, as cathedrals were in the Middle Ages. But some send their children to Grace every day; like any medieval cathedral-church, this is a center of learning, with a school attached. Grace Cathedral holds her head high, in a city where she is respected, responsible, and a

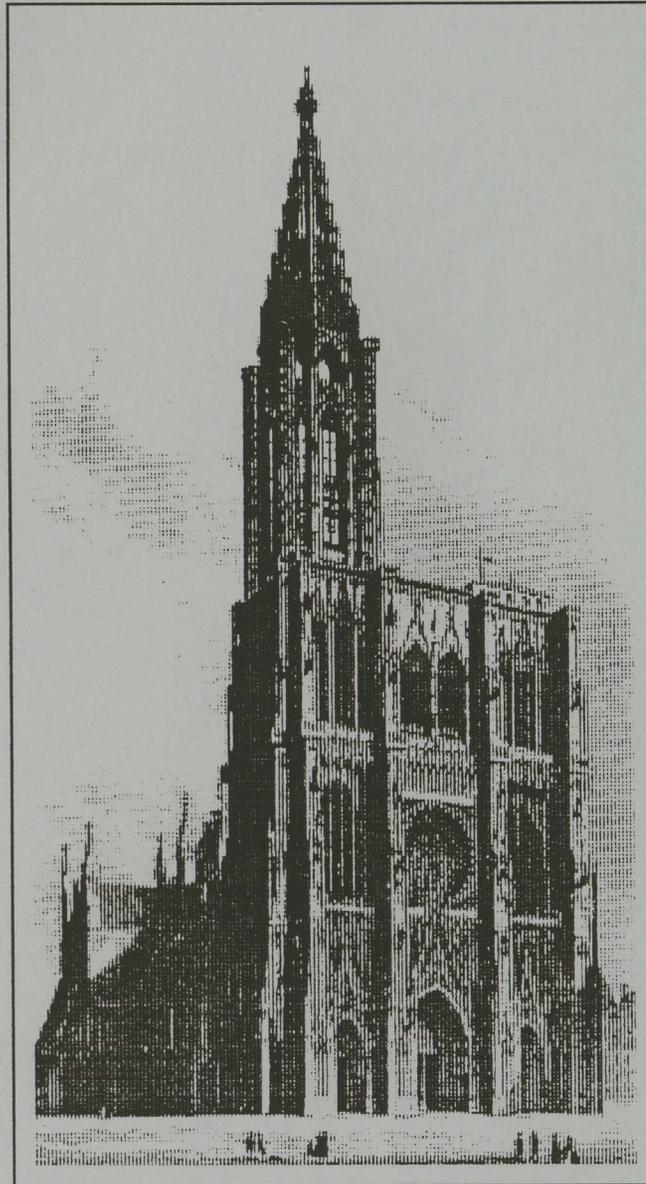
source of even civic pride, as the “Big House on the Hill.”

Traditional roles and worthy ministries are nothing new for the Anglican church. But heritage alone did not stave off predictions, earlier in the 20th century, of dinosauric church decline. Grace Cathedral, in acting as a “house of prayer for all people” today, has had a reputation not of her own making to overcome. In the days of my East Coast childhood, Episcopalian robes and rituals seemed to cloak, not a heart of mystery, but a bland unquestioned institutionalism, lacking in passion and short on compassion. The stereotypical Episcopalian congregation was seen to exist in smug isolation, reserving its pews for an upper class. Routine prevailed. Never could I see a woman serving as a priest. Only after completing confirmation classes was I allowed to share the sacramental bread and wine. The ragged and diseased, though loving people of the church did care for them, were somewhere far away. Laughter, too, was held at bay, “irreverent in church”.

But this West Coast Cathedral, this center of Grace, at the 20th-century’s end, is quite another story! Like a person grown to openhearted maturity — or, even more to the point, like *The URANTIA Book* — Grace Cathedral exemplifies a multifaceted symmetry and balance. Unafraid to experiment, the cathedral today offers many “New Age” programs and events. (And these would mean far less to me, I realize, were that foundation of honored tradition removed — just as the *URANTIA Book* might seem to be another metaphysical work of science fiction without its historical sweep.) Unafraid to wrestle with all the moral

and political implications of problems as huge as the now-global village surrounding her, Grace Cathedral points the way toward our survival in a humane 21st century.

Cathedrals, once great hubs of activity in medieval times, could easily occupy an irrelevant niche in terms of



Amazing Grace and the Book, Continued...
 planetary issues today. But not "Amazing Grace." She networks with the world. Her founders provided for that in 1910. With an over-arching vision, its Articles of Incorporation anticipated that Grace Cathedral would have an outreach and a function "far beyond its immediate ecclesiastical connections." This New Year's Eve of 1990 at the cathedral proved that. I was there, helping to welcome Asian families, black families, Sikhs in turbans, people in wheelchairs, mothers with toddlers, East Indians, tourists, elderly couples, downtown businessmen, spike-haired teenagers. All day long they came, to meditate, to signify their longing for peace on earth, and to join Bobby McFerrin's choral group in a 24-hour nonstop chant for healing. Network TV came as well — CNN taped part of the proceedings and an interview with this event's director, Canon Pastor Lauren Artress, head of Quest, the new Grace Cathedral Center for Spiritual Wholeness. At the end, marvelously ringing throughout the cathedral, our hundreds of voices chanted together for an entire hour the ancient sacred Sanskrit "A..U..M.."

Every time I go to Grace Cathedral, I see the clear, direct "religion of Jesus" practiced within all the pageantry — and the Supreme outworking there through all the human family's rich variety, unabashed sense of humor, and dignity in sharing the contemporary common sorrows of our world. We are here on earth for "the mending of our own hearts" and for "the mending of the world", says Dean Alan Jones. He extends the cathedral's welcome to all — faithful, "half-faithful", or no. I have seen the Jewish yarmulke and saffron Eastern robes, not just at special events, but in a Sunday congregation. I have seen the face of AIDS there — and witnessed the faith which illness has inspired. In this time of epidemics, hunger, homelessness, the renewed threat of world war, and the loss of values on our

national scene, Dean Jones' Advent sermons — on the mystery of our birth and that birth of Jesus in the Middle East — reminded us that we are "all one flesh, one blood." Just as the *URANTIA Book* indicates, he tells us we are here to look at the worst without losing heart. In fact, he has a copy of the *URANTIA Book* on his office library shelf. I have often wondered whether some passage in the book might have inspired a particular reflection. His sermons, with their radical, contemplative, and often austere "desert spirituality" never fail to have, for me, a helpful synchronicity which speaks to my deep concerns about certain group issues and personal tests of faith.

It is impossible here to do justice either to Grace Cathedral's wide range of activities or my many impressions of cathedral experiences. Going all the way back to a shocked reaction to Martin Luther King's assassination, which spilled out onto the streets in a great march, I have found the cathedral pulling me into a spiritual relationship with the world. My friend teaching English in Nicaragua, who is becoming an authority on tropical agriculture, is there through the cathedral's sponsorship and hunger outreach. Banners from the AIDS Quilt have hung high overhead in the cathedral, bearing names of some well-known to me and to many local UB readers. My own blue-stars' concentric-circles drawing, in memory of a study-group friend, has been on display at times. I took part in creating the giant hangings of folded peace cranes for the annual remembrance of AIDS victims, which stayed up long afterward as a reminder of unexpected earthquake damage. Unfortunately, I had to miss the recent observance of St. Francis' blessing of the animals, its procession attended by a pooper-scooper squad of volunteers. In the midst of death, we are in life — sometimes uproariously so. "Amazing Grace" knows how to give the supposed polarities a new significance, not only through worship, but

