The First Chinese Conference:
An Unprecedented International Endeavor

By Vicki Heng Fan Yang, Chinese Translation Team Member, California, United States

I am a longtime Urantia Book reader who was born in Taiwan in 1947. I moved to the United States in the 1970s, but I return to Taiwan and China often and maintain a good connection there. You could say that I have brought what I’ve learned in the west back to the east, and that includes the fifth epochal revelation.

For many years I have studied and been very active in a spiritual organization called A Course in Light (ACIL). At one point I published an article about The Urantia Book on our website. Richard Zhu saw that article and contacted me. The rest, you could say, is history. I began collaborating with Richard on his Chinese translation in early 2015.

For the past several years I have been sharing quotes from The Urantia Book with ACIL students online. Interest in the book is increasing, so I decided to hold a gathering to further inform them about The Urantia Book and its history. The conference was to be in Taichung, Taiwan. It is a city in the middle of the country. Not only do we have many students in Taichung, people from either the north or south can get there in two hours.

It was scheduled for late March, and we registered over 100 truthseekers, all students of ACIL, who have become interested in adding The Urantia Book to their spiritual repertoire. Sadly, the global pandemic thwarted our plans, causing us to postpone and reschedule as a Zoom gathering in early September.

The logistics of this online meeting were no easy feat. Time zones spanned the globe, from Taiwan in the east, to San Francisco and Chicago in the United States, and as far west as an article in the west, to San Francisco and Chicago in the United States, and as far west.
as Paris. But we rearranged the agenda to accommodate local times, and through the magic of electronics were able to greet each other face to face. We attracted 102 attendees from Taiwan and 26 more from China.

Our two days were filled with a mixture of Urantia Book–related presentations, interspersed with prayer and meditations. Presentations were given by: Richard Zhu, translator of The Urantia Book into Chinese; Georges Michelson-Dupont, Urantia Foundation Trustee and Manager of Translations; Tamara Strumfeld, executive director of Urantia Foundation; Susanne Kelly of Dallas, Texas, a longtime reader and very good friend; and Meifeng, one of my students from Taiwan, who presented on “Universal Gravity vs. Creating Reality by Belief.”

I now give you the pleasure of hearing directly from several of our esteemed co-presenters.

Richard Zhu

During the planning of this conference, I was invited by Vicki to present some of my translation experiences with the participants. I shared both the methods and the difficulties of accurately translating such unique concepts from the English language into Chinese.

Since I started the translation in partnership with Urantia Foundation, I have put priority on accuracy and loyalty to the original text for the Simplified Chinese version, as I grew up in a Simplified Chinese culture background. Recognizing that the Traditional Chinese version must be edited by people from that background, I began to look for someone to help with this. And that is when I contacted Vicki in 2015 to discuss collaboration on the editing work for the Traditional Chinese version. She quite willingly accepted my invitation. We both recognized that this book has great importance for the Chinese people, and Vicki joined me in our long-term commitment for the future dissemination of this revelation.

As an example of a unique concept from The Urantia Book, the ascension plan is little known in eastern culture. Most people still hold old beliefs from traditional religions. I presented an overview of the Paradise ascension journey for human beings, hoping that the details would enlighten the participants about their life purposes and beliefs. The highlights included the origin of Paradise, the perfect central universe, the purpose of the mortal ascension plan, the ascension route to Paradise, and the preparations for ascension in the daily life. The feedback was very positive! Some mentioned that this expanded their vision and gave them better explanations about life purposes. They shared that they would spend more time reading this book and living their lives in a more constructive way.

Tamara Strumfeld

I had the great honor of representing Urantia Foundation and sharing its mission, vision, and values with a group of Chinese students who have discovered The Urantia Book and its teachings. How I wish I could have been there in person! Hopefully we will have that opportunity in the future.

My presentation introduced the audience to historic 533 Diversey, the birthplace of the Urantia Book project. As most readers already know, the Foundation was founded in 1950 as a nonprofit charitable trust. The beautiful greystone building in Chicago was home to Doctors William and Lena Sadler, who were both instrumental in the early days. It was Dr. William who bequeathed the building to the Foundation in 1969. We have been here ever since.

I presented an overview of the board of five trustees, the expanded board of associate trustees, and introduced them to our office staff of three, and
several contract workers in the United States and other countries. I also acknowledged with gratitude and appreciation our many volunteers from around the world, all dedicated people working on this project.

Next, I briefly explained what Urantia Foundation does, and the various things we stay busy working on.

1. **Publishing** The Urantia Book and its translations, both physically and electronically. There are more than 750,000 books in print, 28,000 e-books sold, and 577,436 books downloaded from the Foundation’s website. We are currently working on an Android app that will have the book in eight languages, and we hope to publish that soon, with additional languages in the future.

2. **Distributing** the books—it’s a worldwide business! Urantia Foundation sells books in as many channels as possible. The English and all printed translations are available in book shops—physical and virtual. We also give books away in places where distribution is not yet available. We have a 24-language website where one can download the book for free, read it online, and use the excellent search engine for study.

3. **Translating** the book into as many languages as possible. There are currently 24 translations available. When I started working for the Foundation in 2004, there were only 10. Fourteen new languages have been added in 16 years, and there are several more in progress. Besides the one we are celebrating here, the Chinese translation, the others are Arabic, Farsi, and Filipino.

4. **Revising** the translations—because human efforts always have room for improvement. The Foundation has a detailed process for the revision of each translation. The goal is to have the most accurate translation that is humanly possible. It’s a 40-year (or longer) process from start to finish. The current translations under revision are Spanish and Portuguese.

5. **Protecting** the text so that it remains intact for future generations. One of the trusts of Urantia Foundation is to preserve the text so that future generations will have it as it was given. Not only do we store copies of the first printing, we have all the text files secured electronically and backed up in several places. All translations are copyrighted to protect and preserve the good work of the translators. This will make sure that no harm comes to Richard Zhu’s work. He has spent many dedicated years on this project. It is important to protect it.

6. **Educating** through the website, seminars, other educational avenues, and the Urantia Book Internet School (UBIS). UBIS has been facilitating deep study of the book for 20 years, with students from over 75 countries. The courses are free and are offered three times a year in four different languages—English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. There is a nine-year plan to expand the school into many more languages, and the goal is for Chinese to be one of them by 2026.

Our website has an entire section devoted to study with many resources you can peruse and investigate. Another approach to education is through seminars. There have been science symposiums, cultural seminars, workshops on concepts within the book, and spiritual retreats held at 533. Urantia Foundation also partners with other groups on collaborative projects and efforts.

I want to thank Richard Zhu for his service and years of devotion to the Chinese translation project. With more than one billion native speakers of the Chinese language—roughly 16% of the human population—imagine how many people will be reached with the translation!

I also want to acknowledge Vicki
Yang for her valuable contributions. Her loving support and professional input are truly making a difference. We will be seeking Vicki’s and Richard’s advice on how to best disseminate the translation throughout the Chinese-speaking world.

It is our hope that these teachings will help transform a troubled world, and that they will unite us so that we can all grow together towards light and life.

Suzanne Kelly

I have been good friends with Vicki since 1989 when we first met in California. A year later I visited her in Taipei for four months. Vicki was a professional translator, and she asked me to bring her a Bible so she could research Melchizedek. I brought her the Bible so she could research and in China to read The Urantia Book.

Noting its size, Vicki asked if I would read it aloud to her while she translated, and I enthusiastically agreed. As I read certain paragraphs, she would say, “This is great, but it doesn’t translate. Could you please explain it to me another way?” So I did, sometimes two or three times, until it finally made sense to translate. I learned more during those four months in Taipei then I had in three years of studying and reading the book! This foreshadowed what would later evolve into Vicki’s future involvement with the Chinese translation project.

Fast-forward 30 years, when Vicki was approached by Richard Zhu, who had been retained by the Foundation to translate The Urantia Book into Simplified Chinese. Vicki and Richard began working together in 2016 to edit his first draft up to publishing standards.

Things came full circle when Vicki called to invite me to speak at the conference in March of 2020 in Taiwan. Because of the pandemic, the gathering morphed into a Zoom meeting. She told me that many of her students were asking why they should read The Urantia Book. That became the theme of my presentation.

I eagerly set out to gather opinions from students around the world as to why they thought it was important for new students in Taipei and in China to read The Urantia Book. My talk incorporated many of their comments, including:

“You should read The Urantia Book because the soul cries out for its truths. The Chinese peoples have long cherished, uplifted, and upheld the search for truth. The authors of The Urantia Book declare that Lao-tse and Confucius are two of greatest truth teachers in the history of humankind.”

“It simplifies so much that would otherwise be mystifying. And it enlarges and clearly presents the Gospel message that Jesus died sharing...verifying there is a God; moreover, that this Deity is actually YOUR, and my, Parent.”

“If you are looking at the why and wherefore, the higher purpose and destiny of life, then read The Urantia Book. Understand the purpose, origin, history, and destiny of all human or mortal existence. If you want to know your spiritual destiny, read it.”

This is the message of The Urantia Book for the next age—the ideals that will inspire the next human advance. It is expected of us to be the pioneers of this advance—for us to cross the gap that The Urantia Book bridges into the future, thus establishing the kingdom in our hearts and becoming the seeds for a better society, a society which will be one step nearer the perfection of light and life.

Perhaps one day I will visit Taipei once again—with a copy of the Chinese translation, made possible by the tireless and incredibly dedicated translators who have undertaken this immense and difficult task!

The amazing stability and persistence of Chinese culture is a consequence of the paramount position accorded the family, for civilization is directly dependent on the effective functioning of the family; and in China the family attained a social importance, even a religious significance, approached by few other peoples. 79:8:9 (888.2)

Georges Michelson-Dupont

This presentation of the Urantia Revelation to Chinese language students was a milestone event. After nearly 10 years of effort, the results are yielding a bountiful harvest from the fruitful relationship between Richard Zhu, the translator, and Urantia Foundation. The potential of this endeavor should be measured by the fact that more than one billion human beings will soon have access to the Urantia revelation in their native language. By the year 2100, 10 countries will host more than half of the world’s entire population, and one of those speaks Mandarin Chinese.

Vicki had asked me to prepare specific topics to present at the conference. The first was an
overview of The Urantia Book, focusing on God's relationship with man. This allowed me to expound on the inescapable divine commandment "be you perfect as God is perfect," which imparts a purpose to every human being. I revealed to these eager students the divine perfection plan, the dwelling of the divine fragment and his contribution, the gift of personality and free will, the mind, the foundation of faith, and the pursuit of higher ideals.

My second talk was about the story of Machiventa Melchizedek and the purpose of his incarnation on Urantia. I presented his teachings, his missionaries, and their influence on Asian countries, especially China. This topic was of particular interest to the Chinese audience because of their familiarity with his influence through Lao-tse and Confucius.

After a 15-minute meditation, I shared how the revelation had changed my life, the personal story of my encounter with it. Each of my segments was followed by 30 minutes of questions and answers. We hope to give more of these presentations in the near future, to encourage and cultivate our budding relationship with Chinese truthseekers. There are still some years to go before the translation will be ready for publication. You can imagine the difficulties, since Richard speaks Simplified Chinese and Vicki speaks Traditional Chinese. But together they are collaborating on a version that will be readable by both communities.

There are now 17 languages. This book allows a user to select an available translation and compare it side by side with any other translation in the book. Click here to see the book: urantia.org/MultiLanguageBook.

4. The Foundation received a sizable estate gift that will be placed into the Revelation Bridge Fund designated for future generations. If you are interested in planned giving that supports the long-term viability and work of Urantia Foundation, please visit urantia.plannedgiving.org, or call Tamara Strumfeld at 773-525-3319 ext. 217.

5. With the final development stage of the Spanish revision completed, it now enters the quality assurance phase. We expect the completed book in April 2021. A warm-hearted thanks to the team for their decade-long labor of love. Victor García-Bory and Gaétan Charland continue to plan for the release of the new revision, which has received high marks from our external evaluators.

6. New tenants moved into the third floor and coach house apartments. The income from these leases covers the building expenses, providing Urantia Foundation with more funds for book distribution, translations, and education.

7. Work is continuing on the new Android app of The Urantia Book. While it is taking longer than anticipated, we are now debugging it in hopes of a winter launch. The difficulty of making the Android app highlights the excellent work and endless hours spent creating the Urantia Book Apple app. If you have an iPhone or iPad and want to read the book from either device, here's the URL for the free app: apple.co/33SR5cg.

8. The enhanced English e-book is in the final phases of quality control testing which will further your study of The Urantia Book. At our board meeting Ashley Parratore gave a presentation on the e-book's features including The Urantia Book, an interactive index, a pronunciation guide, a term...
more. We are in the process of expanding and modernizing the site. You should be seeing many improvements over the next 18 months.

11. JeanMarie Chaise translated *The Urantia Book* into Esperanto and generously donated his work to Urantia Foundation. A team will be revising it, and it will be published on the website when ready.

12. Creating translations and revisions is a challenging, lengthy, and expensive process. It can take up to 40 years for full completion. In translating and revising, standards and guidelines are vital. The board approved the Translation Committee’s guidelines so current and future translators have a road map to follow. Those guidelines are:

- Preserve the voice of the authors of the English text by eliminating elements of personal style and interpretation from a translation.

- Maintain the accuracy of the meaning and intention of the English text while using the grammar, syntax, and semantics of the target language.

- Retain a translation’s faithfulness to the inviolate English text by prioritizing it over the beauty of the target language; even while continually enhancing the text’s beauty and readability.

- Integrate feedback from target language readers, professional evaluators, and the Manager of Translations to improve the quality of a translation according to the guidelines listed above.

### Urantia Book Business

With Audible and some European sales unreported, Urantia Book sales are up 21% for the quarter and 7% for the year. When fully accounted, the quarter should finish up 29% and up 11% year to date. English book sales are up 7%, German up 167%, Polish up 5%, and e-books up 9%. Spanish, Portuguese, and French books are down year to date Year-to-date (YTD).

Downloads of *The Urantia Book* and its translations for Q2 were 31,116 books, up 41%. YTD downloads were 55,819, up 23%.

- Spanish was the most downloaded with 23,106 YTD.

- Portuguese was next with 8,778 YTD.

- English followed with 8,212 YTD.

Due to the unexpected increase in English paperback sales, and the need to print high volumes to receive reasonable pricing, the following English books are being printed: 7,000 paperbacks, 1,000 hardcovers, and 2,000 LeatherSoft Cambridge books.

*The Untold Story of Jesus—A Modern Biography from The Urantia Book*, published by Urantia Press, sold 735 copies.

In September, the Spanish translation of *The Urantia Book* ranked #1 on Amazon’s Mexico best seller list in Christian Philosophy. An exciting milestone for our Spanish translation!

### Financial Information

Responding to the economic challenges of the coronavirus crisis, the board and staff felt it wise to reduce spending in the 2020 budget without compromising valuable programs. Committee chairs and the office team are cautiously spending money. Thanks go to Marie White for keeping accurate records and reporting in a timely way. Here are the financial details:

**Budget**: The objective was to stay at or below the revised 2020 budget of $735,307 in operating expenses. YTD expenses were down 14% from 2019 and below the revised budget by 8%.

**Donations**: The fundraising objective is $630,000 in unrestricted donations, $25,000 in restricted donations, and $250,000 in estate contributions earmarked for the Revelation Bridge Fund. So far, unrestricted donations are $205,010, up 13% from 2019. Estate donations were $1,561,115 compared to $212,297 in 2019.

**El libro de Urantia** ranked #1 on Amazon’s Mexico best seller list in Christian Philosophy.
THE SATISFACTIONS OF (READER) SERVICE

By Bob Solone, Urantia Foundation, Illinois, United State.

Imagine, for a moment, that you have two great passions in your life: first, music, “the universal language of men, angels, and spirits” and then The Urantia Book, the fifth epochal revelation to our world. 44:1.15 (500.6) Then imagine that, for the first half of your adult life, you were able to pursue your first passion as a career and profession, sharing the love and gift of music. Finally, imagine adding the joy of joining the staff of Urantia Foundation, the original publisher and custodian of The Urantia Book.

Well, that’s what has happened to me, making me the luckiest person I know. Working with the Foundation, first as a volunteer in the mid-1980s, then officially joining the staff in 1989, and having worn several hats over the intervening years at 533 Diversey—which my friends and I used to lovingly refer to as “the manger”—has been, along with music, the greatest joy in my life.

My ongoing role in Reader Services at the Foundation has been a blessing, a challenge, and an education. Responding to inquiries from readers across the globe has not only inspired me to increase my own understanding of the text, but also has been somewhat of a lesson in human behavior. I learned very early on that there are no official interpretations of the text of The Urantia Book. Experience in a study group taught me that each person interprets the text in his or her own way. For me, this truly makes it even more interesting than studying alone.

When responding to questions about the book, I always remind myself that I am representing Urantia Foundation, the publisher. Therefore I never attempt to interpret the text, but remain neutral and try to refer the inquisitive reader to parts of the book that may address their question. This can be a challenge. Sometimes I must admit that, as merely a fellow student of the book, I do not have the answer. But I can always say something like, “hey, that’s a good question, I’ll bring it up to my fellow students at my study group.”

And lastly, in my small role as a cog in the wheel of Urantia Foundation, I am always reminded of the importance of fostering study groups around the world. As our early leaders were told, “thousands of study groups must be brought into existence.” And we are fortunate to have many tools to assist readers in their search for other readers and study groups, such as urantiastudygroup.org. So, I am thankful every day that I can contribute in some small way to this revelation.

THE URANTIA BOOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAS A NEW ARCHIVE

By Jacob Dix, President of Urantia Book Historical Society (UBHS), Stockholm, Sweden

Ever since I joined the Board of Directors of the UBHS, I have experienced nothing but an increasing sense of the importance of the history of our movement.

A reader of The Urantia Book since 1998, I have served on the Board of Directors of UBHS since 2008, and as president since 2009. Some of my best moments serving the Society have been working with our amazing team of historians, collectors, archivists, and software experts. Nowhere else in my life have I worked with such a great team, who love the good work they do.

Reading the Jesus Papers and in particular about the early days of Christianity, I am always reminded just how fortunate we are to no longer have such a glaring gap in our knowledge of Jesus’ life and times. In just a short hundred years or so, the same kind of knowledge gap about the early days of this latest revelation could exist, with posterity left to search for an understanding of how they arrived at the place they are in. I want to ensure that they have that clear view of the past, to better steer the ship.

The Urantia Book Historical Society is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to perpetually preserving Urantia Book history, making it readily accessible to readers, scholars, and the
public. UBHS is a neutral organization whose purpose is to make available the many voices and perspectives of our Urantia community history and heritage, in perpetuity.

Recently, we launched our new online archive, and are now transitioning records from our old database to the new. The combined repository of records, periodicals, books, photographs, audio/video, and objects has over twelve thousand items, most recently including Urantia-related records from the Clyde Bedell estate, generously donated by Barrie Bedell.

Working with historical records is a very important but time-consuming process. It is both complex and rewarding. We are constantly receiving donations in the form of records and digital files, and so there is always more work than there are workers or resources. At this time, we are reaching out to the Urantia community for your support. If you would like to volunteer time to help us provide our services to the community, while learning about that history yourself as you work with it, please inquire with us about opportunities to serve.

The old and new archives, as well as information about donating and volunteering, may be found online at https://ubhistory.org.

By Michael Hill, Oregon, United States

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published in the May 30, 2020 “Interfaith Voices” column of the Corvallis (OR) Gazette-Times, under the title “A Slice of My Faith Pie.”

I was taught that belief attains to a level of faith “when it motivates life and shapes the mode of living.” 101:8.1 (1114.5) My faith in a loving God, the source of all creation, all truth, beauty, and goodness, inspires me to love him in return through service.

A credo a friend shared with me goes like this: I am a divinely created, infinitely loved, spiritually indwelt, evolutionary, free will child of God. And I believe—have faith—that every part of that is true.

I also believe that God wants me to be like him—to be perfect as he is. So I strive to live my life to reflect my best understanding of him as can be lived as a person in this world. I endeavor to show forth the fruits of the spirit in my life—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

I was also taught that true faith is “predicated on profound reflection, sincere self-criticism, and uncompromising moral consciousness.” 132:3.5 (1459.5) I take this to mean that reflection on life—on my interactions with family, friends, and strangers, followed by an honest evaluation of what I see—allows me to decide if my actions are consonant with my beliefs, my faith—am I “walking my talk.” I endeavor to be moral, ethical, to always be truthful, and to always take the high road.

I believe there is a fragment of God within me that forever “shows me the way.” And my experience has shown me this is true. So, in moments of reflection or worshipful problem solving I “listen with the ear of the spirit” for that voice of that spirit.

Sometimes situations in my life arise—usually a conflict with another—that may take me months to come to know how to best deal with the individual in a way that I feel God would approve.

My faith has taught me the value of self-control, to be master of my own tongue and my own emotions. I have learned that while as a mammal I have feelings of anger, my faith gives me the strength to keep them from finding expression, and after years of knowing when to keep my mouth shut, the need to remind myself of that has greatly lessened, as has the need for reminding.

My faith has taught me to learn to strive to be gracious in my interactions with others—to simply be nice, kind, respectful, thoughtful, and caring—to be generous in expressing my appreciation of the efforts and strivings of others.

I was raised in a Christian family, one more of words than deeds, and when of an age of some self-determination, I began to look elsewhere for answers to the big questions of life—why am I here, why is anything here, what happens to me when my body dies, is there a God? Questions we are all familiar with.

I spent my late teens reading arcane books, throwing the I Ching (“perseverance furthers”), reading the Tarot, the Ouija Board, going to meetings with mediums and such. And then, when I was visiting my neighbor who was getting ready to go to a spiritual meeting, he had a big blue book under one arm; he let me look at it. About a month later I bought one. It was The Urantia Book. That was over 50 years ago. Its teachings and truths, as I’ve shared them in this article, continue to form the foundation for my life.

WHAT THE URANTIA BOOK MEANS TO ME

By Michael Hill, Oregon, United States

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Planned Giving

LEAVE A LEGACY

Give a Gift to Transform the World.
HELP SEED THE URANTIA BOOK AND ITS TEACHINGS GLOBALLY.

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Many people are surprised to learn that they can help seed the message of *The Urantia Book* with a much larger gift than they ever thought was within their reach. The transformative message of *The Urantia Book* is making its way to the farthest corners of the globe. This is happening because of generous support from people like you!

Planned gifts make it possible.
- Give a gift that costs you nothing during your lifetime.
- Make a gift that pays you income for life.
- Donate your house, take a tax deduction, and continue to live in it rent-free.
- Give life insurance you no longer need.
- Donate appreciated stocks, bonds, or mutual fund shares and realize larger tax savings than when you donate cash.
- Preserve your estate for your heirs and leave a legacy to Urantia Foundation at the same time.

Interested?
Click here to visit our new Planned Giving website.
www.urantia.plannedgiving.org
Thoughts to Ponder in French

*Daily Thoughts to Ponder* is now available in French. You can sign up here: [https://www.urantia.org/fr/inset/sinscrire-dans-le-fichier](https://www.urantia.org/fr/inset/sinscrire-dans-le-fichier)

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Search Engine in Indonesian

The new search engine for *The Urantia Book* is now available in Indonesian. You can customize your search results based on the order of appearance in the book, or by relevance. You may also select “any search words” or “exact match”—no need for Boolean instructions anymore. For more helpful hints just click the icon on the right of the search box. We hope this new engine helps you with your study of the book!

Please spend time using the search engine and tell us what you think. If you find any errors, please let us know so that we can fix them. You can email Ashley at [ashleyt@urantia.org](mailto:ashleyt@urantia.org).

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This Little Light of Mine Videos

Video now available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Danish, Estonian, Italian, Russian, French, German, and Indonesian. Coming soon in Dutch, Finnish, and Hungarian.

Produced by Gary Deinstadt, associate trustee, Urantia Foundation