

## **Reply Brief Challenging the Request for Opinion Regarding Section 15.2**

### **To the Members of the Judicial Committee:**

This brief responds to the document titled "Amendments Affecting Local Autonomy-1.pdf," submitted by Tom Allen, which seeks an opinion from the Judicial Committee concerning the applicability of Section 15.2 of the current Urantia Book Fellowship (UBF) Constitution in the context of a proposed new constitution. The analysis that follows addresses key concerns about the framing of the inquiry, potential biases, the implications for local autonomy, and the critical conflict arising from the management of membership under the proposed new constitution.

### **Framing of the Inquiry**

The request for an opinion is centered around whether the proposed new constitution, if ratified, would need to adhere to the existing requirements of the current constitution, particularly those related to local autonomy as outlined in Section 15.2. The manner in which these questions are framed appears to aim at obtaining a specific interpretation that might allow the new constitution to circumvent the rigorous protections that Section 15.2 affords to Local Societies. For instance, by questioning whether a newly ratified constitution must comply with the former constitution's stipulations, the inquiry indirectly challenges the relevance and enforceability of Section 15.2 during a comprehensive constitutional overhaul.

This approach risks undermining the safeguards designed to protect Local Societies' autonomy, particularly as it seems to sidestep the existing constitutional protections. The framing of this inquiry raises serious concerns about the potential for a biased interpretation by the Judicial Committee, one that might not fully respect the established rights of Local Societies.

### **Potential Biases**

It is imperative to address the potential conflict of interest inherent in this request. Tom Allen, who serves as both the chair of the Judicial Committee and the chair of the SCICR (Select Committee to Investigate Constitutional Revision), holds dual roles that could unduly influence the framing of the questions and the interpretation of the proposed constitutional changes. His prior statements at the Triennial Delegate Assembly (TDA), where he expressed an intent to challenge aspects of the proposed amendments, suggest a pre-existing position that could compromise the neutrality required for this inquiry.

Furthermore, the timing of this request—coming shortly before a critical General Council meeting—raises concerns about whether the Judicial Committee is being leveraged to advance the SCICR's agenda rather than to provide an impartial and thorough assessment of the constitutional issues at hand. This potential bias is exacerbated by the limited timeframe available for meaningful consideration and debate.

### **Considerations for Local Autonomy**

The core issue at stake is the potential infringement on the autonomy of Local Societies, particularly concerning their role in managing membership and the associated representation in the TDA. Under the current UBF Constitution, membership within the Fellowship is closely tied to participation in Local Societies. Only individuals who are members of a Local Society have representation or voting rights in the TDA, which plays a critical role in the governance of the Fellowship. This structure ensures that Local Societies serve as the primary authority for membership and, by extension, the representation of the Fellowship's broader constituency.

The proposed new constitution introduces changes that could fundamentally alter this dynamic. By potentially centralizing the responsibility for managing membership and changing the status of Members at Large, the new constitution could diminish the rights and responsibilities of Local Societies. This shift not only threatens the autonomy of these Societies but also risks undermining the democratic structure of the TDA, where representation is based on the assumption that members are part of a Local Society.

If the proposed constitution is treated as a comprehensive revision, there is a risk that the safeguards in Section 15.2 could be bypassed, effectively eroding the autonomy of Local Societies. Section 15.2 requires that any amendments affecting local autonomy be ratified by a three-fourths majority of the TDA, ensuring that significant changes to the structure and governance of the Fellowship cannot be made without the consent of those most directly impacted. Ignoring this provision under the guise of a constitutional overhaul would disenfranchise Local Societies, stripping them of their role in shaping the Fellowship's future.

### **Analytical Perspective**

The document submitted for review highlights significant concerns regarding the potential impact of the proposed constitution on Local Societies' autonomy. However, the framing of the inquiry and the potential biases of those involved complicate the situation. It is essential for the Judicial Committee to approach this matter with impartiality, fully considering the broader implications of bypassing the protections enshrined in Section 15.2.

The core issue is whether the proposed new constitution should be subject to the same rigorous requirements as amendments that directly affect local autonomy. The inquiry's framing appears to challenge the necessity of applying these rigorous protections, potentially leading to a scenario where Local Societies could lose their rights without adequate oversight or input. Such an outcome would contradict the principles of representative governance that the Urantia Book and the UBF's foundational documents emphasize.

### **Closing Statement**

While the request for an opinion is a standard procedural step, the context, framing, and potential biases involved in this particular inquiry suggest that it may not be as impartial as it should be. The implications for local autonomy are significant, and it is crucial that the Judicial Committee carefully consider whether the protections of Section 15.2 should apply in the case of a complete constitutional revision. Any decision that undermines these protections without

following the proper process could result in long-term harm to the integrity of the UBF's governance and the autonomy of its Local Societies.

This brief underscores the need for transparency, impartiality, and adherence to the established constitutional safeguards as the UBF navigates this complex and potentially transformative process. It is essential that the Judicial Committee approach this inquiry with the highest level of scrutiny to ensure that the rights and autonomy of Local Societies are fully protected.

Respectfully submitted,

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