

Extra

President's Report

TO THE TRIENNIAL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

ON THE STATUS OF URANTIA BROTHERHOOD --- JUNE 1976

Twenty-one years ago a small group of believers in the teachings of The URANTIA Book formed the beginnings of URANTIA Brotherhood. And from its very beginnings it was a religious and educational fraternal association with a global mission. Its purpose would be to disseminate The URANTIA Book and to encourage lifelong study and application of the URANTIA teachings. Its singular concern would be the spiritual regeneration of all mankind. Its saving message would be that we are all sons and daughters of God, a heavenly Father who loves each one of us personally with an infinite love, and through faith we can actually experience the Father's love as a fact in our daily lives. The Brotherhood was to prepare itself for the time when large numbers of men and women would begin a sincere search for truth; through a worldwide network of study groups, the Brotherhood could then position itself for maximum service in the task of helping these truth seekers discover the kingdom of heaven within themselves.

For the past three years I have had the privilege of serving as the chief executive officer of the Brotherhood, with the primary administrative responsibility for directing some of our efforts toward the eventual fulfillment of our mission. And in concluding this term of office, I leave you with a status report on the affairs and activities of the Brotherhood . . . Where we are . . . How effective we are in doing the job we have been given to do . . . And some of the challenges and the issues we will face in the years immediately ahead.

Perhaps the best way to begin is to present a brief demographic profile of the Brotherhood as it was three years ago and as it is today. These figures in some cases are precise and in other cases approximate.

	<u>Jan.</u> <u>1973</u>	<u>June</u> <u>1976</u>	<u>3½ year</u> <u>% Increase</u>
Number of URANTIA Societies . . .	8	10	25%
Number of Brotherhood members . .	454	588	30%
American members	(451)	(576)	28%
International members	(3)	(12)	300%
Society members	(389)	(462)	19%
Members-at-Large	(65)	(126)	94%
Number of Study Groups		150±	
Number of URANTIA Books shipped. 8047('73)		9785('75)	22%
Number of Bookstores	684	1200	75%

It is clear that we are growing swiftly, particularly in the areas of international members and members-at-large.

The question is: What are we growing toward? Where are we evolving? Is the direction of our evolution consonant with the mission that was established 21 years ago?

The last three years in the growth of the Brotherhood have definitely been years of transition -- a transition that has sometimes been joyful, sometimes painful, and filled with many surprises and challenges that none of us expected. But the transition is not complete; it is only beginning.

For half a century, more or less, the original leaders of the URANTIA movement worked tirelessly and with tremendous loyalty and inspiring steadiness of purpose to serve the initial needs of the revelation. They brought The URANTIA Book to publication, and then remained in leadership positions to ensure that it was well rooted in the soil of the human condition, and growing vigorously. All of us who have discovered the revelation in more recent years owe them our lasting gratitude. It was a job well done.

And now the time has come to look ahead, to form a general understanding of the next stage in the organizational development of URANTIA Brotherhood. And I think the fundamental characteristics of the next stage of growth are quite clear.

The next stage in our organizational mission is to transform the Brotherhood from an essentially white, middle class, Christianized American movement to the beginning of its larger destiny as a worldwide fellowship of believers. And this emerging fellowship must progressively embrace our brothers and sisters in every race, in every nation, and in every basic language -- always distinct and separate from identification with other religious movements, but acting as an increasingly powerful leavening influence in every religion.

Without any question, a transformation of this magnitude will require much hard work, intelligence, creativity, wisdom, administrative genius, and a great reservoir of love for our fellow believers in whatever mortal estate we may find them. The transformation will not simply happen of its own accord; it will only occur if we plan for it in an orderly and purposeful way, and then prepare ourselves for the service which will be required. And by preparing ourselves, I mean we must be prepared in terms of leadership, skills, training, organization structure, financial support, and most important of all -- Jesusonian attitudes.

I think all of you must know without me telling you or going into any detail that the Brotherhood is not prepared for this mission. It is far from prepared.

What does all of this have to do with the business at hand?

Our primary purpose today and tomorrow is to elect approximately one-third of the membership of the General Council, the governing body of URANTIA Brotherhood. And I believe it is imperative to our effectiveness that those whom we place in these positions have the understanding and the vision necessary to direct the growth of the Brotherhood toward its worldwide goals. The Councilors you elect tomorrow will serve for nine years -- until 1985 -- and between now and then I am certain that many important issues and challenges will arise which will test their spiritual vision, their love, their courage, and their steadfastness of purpose.

Let me give you five examples of what some of these issues and challenges might be. These examples are not meant to serve as a catalog, but simply as illustrations of the magnitude of some of the philosophical and organizational questions which may require policy guidance by the Council.

First: Should the Brotherhood become an institution which functions in society somewhat like a church, or should it be aimed toward the clear goal of becoming a leavening influence, building upon the true and beautiful and good in every religion and institution, with the hope of uplifting them all? Both of these philosophies of growth exist within the Brotherhood today and are in strong contention. At the moment the contending forces are more or less balanced, but this will not continue. It doesn't take much imagination to see that two very different kinds of Brotherhoods would evolve, depending upon which philosophy of growth becomes dominant. And the General Council will have to play the primary role in developing the necessary policy guidance.

Second: I'm sure that every one here has heard the statement which accompanied the revelation, and which said in effect in discussing the Brotherhood: Not in 2000 years has any organization been created which will so much become the object of control for personal gain by groups or individuals. Because the Brotherhood is made up of people whose level of intelligence is quite high, we can expect that the nature of such attempts would be to avoid any appearance of direct assault, and rely on subtlety and careful planning instead. The decision you face as Delegates is to elect Councilors who have the requisite clarity of spirit to recognize when the Brotherhood is being had, and the courage to protect the Brotherhood against any assault upon the integrity of its purpose.

Third: Within the term of the Councilors elected tomorrow, long range goals and priorities will have to be developed and communicated clearly. A wise man once said if you don't know where you're going, you might end up someplace else. If we are all going to move in approximately the same direction, we must have common reference points and common goals to guide the myriad decisions made from day to day throughout the Brotherhood. The goal-setting process is fundamental to all other management and administrative processes within the Brotherhood organization. It is the difference between the hope of orderly progress and the certainty of confusion and ineffectiveness. (The Executive Committee has already embarked upon the goal setting process in its preliminary discussions about the nature of the relationship between URANTIA Foundation and URANTIA Brotherhood.)

The Council will have to ensure that we are all headed in the right direction as an organization, that we have adequate plans and resources for getting the job done, contingency plans for emergency situations, and also that the goals and priorities are translated into efficient and effective administrative procedures. The Brotherhood must be kept on a steady course. The Councilors will have to be ever watchful that the Brotherhood does not divert its main energies to secondary purposes, or lose the simplicity of its mission.

Fourth: There is a very poignant issue, still unresolved, in the question of membership in the Brotherhood. Of all of the problems I have faced during the last three years, none has been more difficult or affected me more personally than this one. A number of times over these years individuals have applied for

membership at large in the Brotherhood and the Executive Committee, in its wisdom, has turned them down. Each time these decisions were made, as the spokesman for the Committee it was my responsibility to write the letters of rejection. It tore my heart out every time. We never heard from virtually any of them again.

On either side of this issue there are strong philosophical views. On one side is the view that these are the dangerous years in the growth of the Brotherhood, and that we should be careful to build our early membership only from "quality" people. (I'm not sure the word "quality" is easy to define -- I think it means someone who looks and talks like us.) Those who believe in the "quality of membership" approach remain consistent with this point of view in drawing a line between those who are and those who are not eligible for membership.

On the other side of the issue is the view that if we are really trying to form a spiritual Brotherhood, a new and enduring Brotherhood of man, then we must follow the Master's advice and say, "Let all who will, come," and "All who are not against us, are for us." This view does not say that URANTIA Brotherhood is synonymous with the larger spiritual brotherhood which exists anyway, nor is URANTIA Brotherhood synonymous even in the remotest sense with being in the kingdom of heaven. But it does say that URANTIA Brotherhood must more and more come to resemble a real spiritual brotherhood, and that we ought to begin to make the decisions which point in this direction right now.

If we are in fact representing ourselves as a spiritual Brotherhood, the question is, do we have the right to deny entrance to any human being who desires to study The URANTIA Book, supports our Constitution, and who is seeking to know God? The Councilors you elect will have to face this question squarely during their term of office.

Fifth: A final example, and a very compelling challenge we face is how to maintain harmony within the Brotherhood. At this point I would like to make a brief digression because the concepts of unity and harmony are being confused in discussions that are now going on throughout the Brotherhood. Jesus taught (1592:2) that there are two qualities which are the basis for all of the spiritual unity we can experience as a fellowship of believers within the human race. First, he said, we are possessed with a common motive for life service; we desire above all else to do the will of the Father in heaven. Second, we all have a common goal of existence: Our purpose is to find the Father in heaven, thereby proving to the universe that we have become like Him.

It ought to be clear that we already have spiritual unity. What we have to do is translate this unity into harmony among the very diverse personalities who become attracted to the URANTIA teachings. We must become a Brotherhood in fact as well as in name. And I think there is no better place to begin this process than at the top of the organization. Some of us have begun to fall into the error of abhorring not only the unGodlike action, but also the person who seems to be acting in an unJesusonian way. God does not do this. Jesus would never do this.

We have to remember at all times that each one of us is indwelt with a fragment of the eternal Father, and that every personality therefore commands our respect and deserves our love. Because the indwelling spirit represents the certainty of

our progressive growth to ever-higher estates of grace and glory, let us remember even now that we are all brothers of destiny and will serve together side by side in ages to come. Let us put aside the error of anger at persons and remember that each one of us is struggling in his own yet imperfect way to live the will of the Father in heaven.

It ought to make sense to all of us to attempt to elect people to the General Council who embody this kind of Jesusonian approach to Brotherhood affairs.

Only people who have found a real harmony with God can possibly be effective in promoting and fostering a state of harmony within the Brotherhood. And this harmony applies not only to relationships between individuals, but also to relationships between study groups, Societies, between American Urantians and European Urantians, and in the aggregate relationship between the Brotherhood and the Foundation. One of the major questions the Council will face in this respect is the necessity to develop or to support policies of action and conduct which do not discriminate in favor of, or against, any special group or individuals.

There are many other profound issues and challenges which will confront us in the immediate years ahead, but I have chosen these examples only to illustrate that there is real work ahead for all of us.

If I had to summarize in one thought the fundamental lesson I have learned over the last three years, it is this: If we are going to help transform the world through the dissemination of the URANTIA teachings, we must first transform ourselves.

Most of us are playing with this revelation, carefully eluding its transforming grasp. The number one challenge we face as individuals today, and as a Brotherhood preparing itself for the work ahead, is the challenge of living these teachings according to our highest comprehension. I think we should put aside virtually every project we contemplate until we get this straight in our hearts.

Jesus told us to reveal the divine love not merely with words, but in our daily living, by letting the thrill of God energize our lives every day, actually living as though in the presence of God. And he means just what he said.

This is Jesus' brotherhood. He started it. And he will finish it in the ages of light and life to come. Our job is to live right now as though he were here beside us, which he is. His spirit of truth is available to us at every moment of our lives.

When you meet at two o'clock, you will begin the deliberations which will conclude in the decisions to elect fourteen members to the General Council. And I pray openly -- in a prayer which I am sure each one of you shares -- that in your deliberations and decisions, you move the Council progressively closer to its eventual destiny as the wisest and most spiritually advanced governing body among the mortals of this planet.

Paul Snider, President
URANTIA Brotherhood
June 21, 1976