

Paul Snider's Speech at
Council Meeting

June 23, 1976

STATEMENT TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

REGARDING THE BROTHERHOOD--FOUNDATION RELATIONSHIP

In recognition of the fact that the amount of argument needed to defend any proposition is inversely proportional to the truth it contains, I have whittled down a stack of notes more than two inches high to a fairly simple statement of the issues and alternatives before us in the discussion of the Brotherhood-Foundation relationship. (The fundamental nature of this relationship will be an appropriate item for discussion when we reach the "New Business" portion of this meeting.)

The May 19th letter from the Trustees of the Foundation to the General Council makes this task much easier than I expected it would be. When I saw that letter my reaction was one of great joy. I wanted to reach out and hug the Trustees (and may yet). For in announcing the Doctrine of Primacy the Trustees have finally brought the issues into the open where they can be openly discussed. This has long been needed.

After it all shakes down, I think there are three aspects of the situation which has been unfolding this Spring

which should be commented upon at this time, but only the last of these will require action by the General Council.

First: Can the General Council be trusted?

Can matters of fundamental importance to the Brotherhood be placed in the hands of Councilors for deliberation and decision? Or have we got a situation on our hands in which we must not let the Council know any more than it has to about anything really important? I think the Council can be trusted. I think we're in a crazy situation if we start to think of the General Council -- the governing body of URANTIA Brotherhood -- as a bunch of "Outsiders." These states of mind simply must be put behind us. If we can't trust each other at the level of the General Council, we might as well fold up the Brotherhood and leave the work to those who can get it done.

Second: How can we protect the concentric circles symbol and the trademark form of the word URANTIA unless everybody follows without question the mandates of URANTIA Foundation?

I want to raise an even larger question, which is this: How can we protect what these symbols stand for? What good are symbols if they are robbed of their true meaning? What will these symbols come to mean in human life if they are associated with dread and fear and repression?

How on earth can we ever expect the truth seekers in mankind to rally with us behind these symbols if the methods by which they are protected do not represent our highest comprehension of the teachings of The URANTIA Book?

Let us not accept for a moment the argument that law is different and does not allow for the expression of Jesusonian love. Law is law, but its application can be spiritualized. Jesus said there is a divine and perfect way to do everything. And we know for certain this is true. Our job is to find the divine and perfect way, at least to try. The human relationships through which the law is threaded form the basis for unlimited expressions of love, mercy, compassion, fairness, respect, and everything else the Master taught us. Spiritualizing the application of law does not necessarily change the law, but it offers the hope of changing the relationships of groups interacting through the processes of law from a basis of antagonism, hostility, suspicion, and fear, to more beautiful forms of relationships characterized by mutual trust, confidence, joyful cooperation, dignity, and strength. Unspiritualized law will undermine the revelation; spiritualized law can strengthen all of us in our work by protecting the integrity and the meaning of the symbols which serve to identify the URANTIA movement.

All of us share with the Foundation to the fullest extent the desire and commitment to protect this revelation from abuse. And we mean abuse from without or within. And that includes the abuse of what it stands for. Jesus was ever obedient to laws, but he was never unJesusonian. Over-riding all other tasks is our mutual purpose of achieving a spiritual victory for the Fifth Epochal Revelation. And spiritual victories can only be won with spiritual power.

Third: And this is the major issue, aside from elections, which is before the Council today: The Foundation has announced a Doctrine of Primacy. The Executive Committee has discussed this Doctrine to some extent and has accepted it without reservation or qualification. The issue is now before the Council. What will be the Council's response?

It seems clear that the Council has only three alternative choices available:

(1) The first alternative is to accept the Doctrine of Primacy without reservation or qualification. This can be done by a simple declaration, or by a re-affirmation of the 1973 declaration of support which the Council expressed for the Foundation.

If this alternative is chosen, there can be little question that the Council must ask the Executive Committee

to formulate an Amendment to the Brotherhood Constitution, stating in effect, that notwithstanding all other provisions of this Constitution to the contrary, URANTIA Brotherhood accepts a subordinate relationship to URANTIA Foundation with regard to all matters associated with URANTIA Foundation's responsibility to protect the copyright to the URANTIA Book and the URANTIA symbols, and this acceptance of a subordinate relationship grants to the Foundation the right to direct supervision of Brotherhood affairs at international, national, regional, and local levels, whenever and wherever necessary to discharge its responsibilities.

The Executive Committee has faced this question, and has determined that a Constitutional amendment is not required, that the Constitution as now written makes this perfectly clear. I don't believe it does. It seems more reasonable to believe that the problems which have arisen this Spring are bound to arise again and again until the Constitution is brought into line with the factual situation. The people will change, but the issues will remain until the facts are clarified.

(2) The second alternative before the Council is to reject the Doctrine of Primacy because it would have the effect of nullifying the Constitution of URANTIA Brotherhood. This course of action can also be accomplished by a simple

declaration rejecting the claims to unconstitutional authority over the Brotherhood enumerated in the May 19 letter from the Trustees to the General Council.

But even this alternative has immediate ramifications. Can the Council reject the Doctrine of Primacy which the Executive Committee has accepted without seriously re-evaluating whether the Executive Committee has acted in the true interests of the Brotherhood? Can the Council reject the Doctrine without asking whether it is wise for Trustees of URANTIA Foundation to serve on the Executive Committee? Isn't there a possibility of conflict of interest? Do not judges in human law remove themselves from cases in which they are parties of interest? Do we not measure ourselves by codes of conduct which are higher than human law?

(3) The third alternative before the Council is to find an appropriate middle ground which does not represent either outright acceptance or outright rejection of the Foundation's Doctrine of Primacy. This can be accomplished by a declaration that URANTIA Brotherhood and URANTIA Foundation are associate organizations joined in a common mission and pledged to mutual cooperation and support, and that the issues enumerated in the April 3rd and May 19th letters, and other associated issues, will form the basis for negotiations

between the Brotherhood and the Foundation to establish mutually acceptable delineations of responsibilities and modes of cooperation.

If the third alternative is chosen, the Council will then find it necessary to appoint a committee to meet with the Trustees over a period of time to carry out the negotiations required.

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And these represent the only statements about the issues which I wish to make at this time. . . . Over a period of time I came to see very clearly what had to be done, and did it without regard for personal consequences. The matters before us are now in your hands.

Paul Snider
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