

FEB 21 1978

URANTIA

A BROTHERHOOD, NOT A CULT

The first article in the first issue of The URANTIAN, the Journal of URANTIA Brotherhood, begun a couple of years ago, had this heading: "A Brotherhood, Not a Church or a Sect." The article was by William S. Sadler, Jr., the first president of URANTIA Brotherhood -- an excerpt from his first report to the first Triennial Delegate Assembly. I can't think of a wiser subject with which to begin such a publication, nor a wiser decision with which to begin such an organization.

This title, these few words, seem to me to point to one of the most vital decisions facing us still, not just as study groups and societies, but as a movement, the URANTIA movement -- which consists not only of official Brotherhood activities but also of those many unknown study groups and students who may also contribute significantly to the spiritual regeneration of our world -- often without even being aware of their contribution, like many of the members of that mysterious group, the reserve corps of destiny. The priority of brotherhood over cultism is something which I think needs to be reaffirmed from time to time, so that we don't neglect our watchfulness over our ingrained human tendency to formalize methods of socializing truth.

In his article, Mr. Sadler submitted a philosophy of action for URANTIA Book students which revolved around these three ideals:

- "1. GOD IS THE ONLY TRUE END. Our primary spiritual loyalty and dedication is to the Universal Father, and to Him alone. When we encounter some spiritually hungry brother, our first objective is to bring him closer to his spiritual Father. This we may attempt with, or without, the book. All other things are secondary and subordinate to the acquisition of this one "pearl of great price" -- the realization of sonship with God.
2. THE URANTIA BOOK AS A MEANS TO THE END. The book itself is not a end -- it is a most important means to an end. It is designed to bring God closer to man and to bring man closer to God. We may minister to our spiritually hungry brothers with or without the aid of The URANTIA Book. But if the book ever becomes mandatory in our ministry, then have we truly become sectarian. Our primary objective, as Urantians, is the service of God, and the book is an important means to that great end. Here we should make a vital distinction between that which is value and that which has value.

3. THE URANTIA BROTHERHOOD AS A MEANS TO THE END.

Neither is the URANTIA Brotherhood, nor membership in it, a true end. The real function of the Brotherhood is also the function of a means to accomplish a desired end. The structure of the Brotherhood is to the spiritual experiences of its members as the river banks are to a river; it is true that no river can be had without its banks -- but neither should the banks be confused with the flowing river. The Brotherhood is designed to promote the book and the book is designed to bring God and man closer to each other."

I think it is vital to remember also, in this context, that no river banks, especially artificially constructed ones, can or should be expected to confine within themselves all other streams that flow toward the same goal. There are many who share our goal, of uniting God and man, who are not URANTIA Book readers and may never be during their material lives, but this should not lead us to conclude that their work is of little value to our own. And of course there are many URANTIA Book readers who may greatly assist the real work of the Brotherhood even though they choose not to have any part in official URANTIA activities. Organized activities have their place, but organic activities must not be eclipsed by them.

In the section entitled "The Nature of Cultism," though it is admitted that cults are inevitable and humanly necessary, it is also stated that "The cult...has always been the greatest obstacle to social reconstruction and spiritual progress." It's further explained how cults "cannot be manufactured"; they must grow. The more their rituals and symbols have been unconscious growths, the stronger have they gripped their devotees. Quoting, "In the past, truth has grown rapidly and expanded freely when the cult has been elastic, the symbolism expansile." "This enhanced symbol must arise out of religious living, spiritual experience." "The new [cult] must be the out-growth of applied love." "If the new cult could only be dynamic instead of static, it might really contribute something worth while." And finally, "A cult...will not function if it is too complex."¹

Despite these admonitions and warnings, many more of which could be quoted from the revelation itself, there are those in the URANTIA movement today who feel a need to actually create a cult around The URANTIA Book. Notwithstanding the statement in the book itself that such an endeavor is probably impossible, because effective cults must grow, organically and unconsciously, I see this impatient tendency toward organi-

zation to be very dangerous and self-deceiving, with the potential for a serious jeopardizing of our real mission on earth.

In the early days of the religion of Jesus -- when it still was, more or less, the religion of Jesus, before it had become Christianity, before it was set firmly into that great mistake which a part of our present task is to undo and make up for -- the followers of Jesus, to quote the book, "had no organization..[were] simply the Jesus brotherhood." Yet "this Jesus sect was growing rapidly." ²

Let us understand once and for all that deliberate organization does not need to be and should not be our primary concern. If we allow the Father's will to organize our lives, we will find that much of this organization is unconscious, and we may not even recognize its existence until long after its purpose has been fulfilled. Probably not until we reach the mansion worlds and look back on our material lives will we be able to see clearly how the Father's hand guided us through our own imperfect decisions towards our real destiny. There can be very effective order without artificial organization. Organization is often like the picture called to mind by Jesus' proverb about ten men all trying to shear a sheep at once, while just to one side two or three others are shearing another sheep much more quickly, casually, and efficiently. One of the most endearing qualities of Jesus seems to have been his casualness and lack of formality, doing things naturally, "as he passed by." It's difficult to imagine formal organizations acting with this natural, unhurried casualness, but it's not difficult to imagine a close-knit team of friends so acting. The certainty of our faith should give us the patience to be unhurried and complete in all that we undertake. Jesus was a great source of peace and spiritual rest to those who needed it, and so should he be again through us -- but a rigid, pre-meditated, formal structuring of group effort makes this service very difficult. When a close-knit family wants to get a job done, often the organization to do it arises spontaneously, on the spur of the moment, out of the pre-existent spirit of teamwork and confidence in one another which is already well-established within the organic relationships, affections, and mutual understandings that exist between the individuals involved -- not to mention their mutual enthusiasm for the task at hand -- and once the job is done, the organization for doing it dissolves back into the potentials latent in the groups fabric of friendships, without any residual titles, offices, and so forth. The organization of

the reserve corps of destiny is exquisitely organic, even unconscious, rarely needing "leaders" as such; and even when they are needed, they serve very briefly -- a matter of hours -- only in order to accomplish a specific task, after which they are again reincorporated into the texture of the group as a whole. We are not the reserve corps of destiny, but should we not seek to emulate its more perfect structure and functioning?

I think one of the highest goals of our group should be to act toward stimulating the teamwork of all mankind into such exquisite working harmony, through God-consciousness -- through our own example of finding God and showing him to men through service -- and when this world-wide spirit of cooperation has come about in the future by our own efforts as a brotherhood and as individuals, and by the efforts of other organizations and individuals, we can then dissolve any structure that we've specifically designed for such a purpose as we turn our attention to new goals, which will require new organizational patterns for their implementation. As a corollary of this attitude toward group effort, I think we should also always be ready, collectively and as individuals, to cooperate with and serve other groups and individuals who may differ with us intellectually but share the same goals; we should become artists at so serving -- and not be uncomfortable in secondary roles at any particular juncture. As One High in Authority states on page 278, "The higher a creature's education, the more respect he has for the knowledge, experience, and opinions of others." This should be true of us as a group as well. After all, the way to tell whether we are being real leaders or are merely engaged in a kind of political maneuvering is by the fact that real leaders always wish that their leadership were unnecessary. If we are in proper tune spiritually, we should also, as a group, always wish our leadership were unnecessary, hoping, even as we serve to the best of our ability, that the inner spirit of those we serve will reveal the truth to them in better ways than we can, and we should always be questioning whether or not it really is necessary for us to assume a leadership role -- whether there is not some outwardly more humble service that we should really be performing, necessitating that we be faithful in little things rather than in greater things, at any particular time. I submit that only when we have shown that we can do little things gladly, will we be guided to the doing of greater things. Remember that impatience has caused more misery on our planet than any other human failing, and that even our Material Son and Daughter became infected with it. I feel that the danger of trying to do too much too soon is much greater for us who carry

this revelation than is the danger of procrastination. There is so much that we need to understand, confer with one another about, and practice, before we can be really prepared for greater service, and for a greater public role in our world, as URANTIA Book students.

Let us further emphasize to ourselves that we and our movement are not synonymous with that "brotherhood of God-knowing believers" whom Jesus said we must "voluntarily assume a ..sacred obligation"³toward (together with our responsibility to the Father and to those of our human brothers who are unaware of their potential sonship). We are simply a brotherhood of URANTIA Book students, a small but vitally important movement within the brotherhood of God-knowing believers, which in its turn lives and grows within the larger brotherhood of man. We should remember that, though we are all loved equally, the seraphic government and our universe fathers -- as of course the Father himself -- are probably more concerned with those who are ignorant of these truths than they are with us, because their need is greater. Underneath are the everlasting arms, not overhead. The Father is always attempting to reach down to the lowest among us, to those who most need to be raised up, and any special importance we have is in our ability to assist him in this, to forget ourselves in our concern for those who need to recognize the Father and open themselves to him as we have.

If we wish to do the Father's will, if we wish to serve the supermortal government of our planet, if we wish to make the work of the reserve corps of destiny more effective, then we must put out of our minds for good any notions of our supposedly superior status -- as personalities or as a cult. The work we have to do may truly be superior to the work of most other groups -- or at least vitally important and of immense significance to our world -- but the work doesn't care who does it, in the way of a group or of individuals -- and we should certainly not equate our own importance as a group with the importance of The URANTIA Book, or we will be taking on ourselves a responsibility greater than any single collection of Urantians can possibly fulfill. Just as the book is only one means to the end of God, so is the Brotherhood only one means to the means of The URANTIA Book, and it cannot be more, without becoming truly an exclusive cult. Our primary responsibility in this life is the same as all other men's -- to attain to God-consciousness so that that consciousness will shine forth from our lives to illuminate those in darkness and attract them to the light -- letting the Spirit of Truth do his own work -- but if our group consciousness or group organization -- or our personal ideas of social ministry -- begin to eclipse the primacy of this

most vital task, then we are growing barren of real spiritual fruit, and our organization will become just another cultist obstruction in the stream of living truth. In order for a group to enhance God-consciousness rather than obscure it, it must be truly open and expansive toward non-group individuals, even to the point of being more concerned with them than with the group itself. Such concern is -- paradoxically -- the greatest possible unifying force among those who share it. The less we concern ourselves with ourselves, the more will we respect ourselves and the more will we be able to do with our lives.

It is easy to be careful of what we do and careless of what we are. It is easy to love one's friends, forget one's enemies, and be suspicious of strangers -- yet in such a spiritual state, even one's love for one's friends soon grows shallow. Too much security is destructive of real happiness, and destructive of that element of wonder which is a characteristic of life lived in spiritual abundance. Without the fundamental mystery and uncertainty in personal relationships, love is an illusion. There is a stranger in every friend, whose true nature and longings are known only to God, and likewise is there a friend in nearly every stranger. Abundance can endure only if more and more people are brought to share in it, and such expansion of spiritual abundance is born of truly spontaneous friendliness, and a genuinely deep concern for the welfare of others during everyday life -- a concern which, if we are really Jesus' followers, is to those who receive it not just surprising but amazing.

Jesus left us with a criterion for judging our true growth. He said:

"Let me emphatically state this eternal truth: if you, by truth co-ordination, co-ordination, learn to exemplify in your lives this beautiful wholeness of-righteousness, your fellow men will then seek after you that they may gain what you have so acquired. The measure wherewith truth seekers are drawn to you represents the measure of your truth endowment, your righteousness. The extent to which you have to go with your message to the people is, in a way, the measure of your failure to live the whole or righteous life, the truth-co-ordinated life." 4

How much more should this be true for us than for the apostles, after twenty centuries of the ministry of the Spirit of Truth and the Mystery Monitors? Our ideal of service, after all, is not the apostles, but Jesus -- and we are not to make the mistake that many Christians have of elevating the figure of the Master to such a high station that his way of life seems impossible of realization by mere mortals such as us. Jesus lived his life, not to show us what is unattainable, but to show us what we could actually do spiritually with our own lives if we only fulfill our potentials faithfully. Such self-realization

requires, above all, faith and patience. Jesus was just a youngster when he received the command to be about the Father's will, but twenty years elapsed before he assumed any public role in fulfilling that responsibility, and when he did, he was ready to perform his role perfectly. Few of us have been into the book -- or perhaps even really conscious of sonship -- for twenty years (assuming that we would require only as much time to prepare ourselves as Jesus did); but even after twenty years of preparation, how many of us have or will have received a clear mandate from on high to be about the Father's business in any public way? -- whether as individuals or as groups? In the case of both John and Jesus, their public missions were the culmination of their lives, and the world, such as it was and to a large extent still is, did not let them live long as such super-earthly ministers. But they did not need to live long in such service, in the case of Jesus especially, striking the rough stone of the civilization of his time as a diamond cutter strikes his gem, after great concentration, with the unhesitating confidence, swiftness, and precision of perfect preparation. Ambition is good, but our first ambition should be for our own human spiritual maturity rather than for roles of social prominence, no matter how good the reason for our desire to have a greater social effect on our planet. The latter is so often really a desire for power and recognition, disguised, even to oneself, as righteousness. Rather seek the righteousness, and all else needed for the fulfillment of our true roles on earth will follow.

Let the organization of the URANTIA Brotherhood, of societies, and of any other structures within the greater URANTIA movement, be as simple, flexible, balanced, and organic as possible, based on the versatility and efficiency of a team of true friends who have developed the habit of confiding deeply in one another -- and of course in the Father -- and let any such particular form of organization not become a permanent necessity in the minds of those who comprise it, because the need for such permanence of formal structure in a religious group is really doubt in disguise, institutionalized suspicion -- a lack of faith in contemporaries, in those to come who will pursue the same goals, and probably also a lack of confidence in themselves -- and to perpetuate such rigidity of organization for supposedly spiritual purposes is an activity unworthy of the followers of Jesus in the present day. It may be objected that, as some have said, "Jesus organized the apostles." Well, let's look at that more closely. Jesus was of course not opposed to organization per se; but Jesus did not organize the apostles, any further than appointing Andrew their chief, and requesting that

he appoint three others to be his, Jesus' own, close attendants. All the rest of the organizing was the apostles' own doing -- and though it served their purposes well, it was not a rigid structure and was certainly not intended to be a model for all who followed after.

There is a further consideration here which also merits deep concern: the quality of The URANTIA Book is unsurpassed and must be maintained at all cost. Therefore, when we do something in the name of The URANTIA Book -- as an activity bearing the official stamp: URANTIA -- let us ask ourselves very seriously if what we are doing is of like quality to the revelation itself -- because when we give it the name URANTIA we are identifying it publicly with the revelation, and inevitably inviting the public to compare the quality of the revelation to the quality of what we're doing in its name -- and if we decide that our activity is not of the quality of The URANTIA Book, then let us not hang such burdens upon the revelation, but find another name for our endeavors.

Certainly more is expected of us today than of those who lived in apostolic times -- much more -- yet we should not underestimate our ability as human beings to unconsciously repeat the mistakes of the past by clothing them in new and supposedly righteous forms while the spiritual content retains the same old errors. History is a panoply of rapidly changing forms enclosing a laboriously evolving spirit. The only adequate safeguard of the quality of the URANTIA movement is the development of our own spiritual maturity as a prerequisite to any public role as URANTIANS.

We are essentially a part of a great human family of very fallible people who need one another's counsel, help, and love, very much. Jesus instructed us to love not just the souls of men, but to love men. This family of God whom we must live to serve consists not only of URANTIA Book students or of God-knowing individuals, but of people of all sorts -- even some who are our enemies -- and our greatest concern within it should be not for organization but for love and service, which, when mature, can form appropriate organizations and structures whenever needed, and dissolve them when their usefulness is over, so that they do not become an interference, a temptation, or a superstition for those who follow after.

I think one of the greatest clues to effective service presented in the revelation is the statement that people had so much faith in Jesus because they saw that he had so much faith in them; let us bring that same wise and loving faith to birth again in our daily lives, and

others will then see of their own accord that we have found the real, living Jesus, and know that they can find him also if they will. We should realize that most even of those who revile us are indwelt by the Father's spirit, whose ability to adjust human thinking no man can set a limit to. Let us not forget that our own natural human instinct is to underestimate the power of that spirit, both in ourselves and in others. Especially in our time, in the death-throes of materialism, it is difficult to understand how faith in man is even possible on a large scale, not to mention wise. But if we only accept Jesus' challenge -- forgiving our brothers seventy times seven times, as he told Peter -- and realize that we can and should have faith in our fellow men as individuals, then our fellow men will see, that though we are not blind to human errors, there is some potential within them which we can recognize even if they do not, and through attraction to that mystery they will eventually be reborn, into the same faith that is transforming us; and so we will pass through life, as individuals and as a group, leaving behind us the broadest and brightest possible trail of actualized reality, because we have made our Father's will our own.

To quote the revelation once more, in conclusion, if I may substitute for the words "The visible church" the words "Visible URANTIA groups":

"[Visible URANTIA groups] should refuse...to handicap the progress of the invisible and spiritual brotherhood of the kingdom of God. And this brotherhood is destined to become a living organism in contrast to an institutionalized social organization."⁵

1. P. 965-6
2. P. 2067
3. P. 1930
4. P. 1726
5. P. 2085

*John
Will you
take care of
this - Christy*

*cc Meredith
Carolyn/ans.*

RECEIVED
FEB 21 1978
URANTIA

Stan Hartman
3011 Broadway
Boulder, CO 80302
Feb. 17, 1978

Miss E. L. Christensen
URANTIA Foundation
533 Diversey Parkway
Chicago, Ill. 60614

Dear Christy,

Enclosed is a twenty-minute paper which I wrote with the idea of presenting it at the Geneva conference, to the group as a whole if possible. It may be too late for that now, I don't know -- though I could not have written it any sooner.

The problem of organization within the URANTIA movement has troubled me deeply for years, without my being able to really express the difficulty as I saw it clearly in words, but with this paper I feel that I have finally been able to set down the ideas in the spirit in which I felt them. Perhaps they are elementary and self-evident to many URANTIANS, but I feel a need to emphasize them -- not only to others, of course, but also to myself.

I wasn't really sure to whom I should send this, so I'm sending it to you as the person there in Chicago whom I've had the most communication with in the past. I would appreciate any comments you might have on it, and would be grateful if you would pass it on to whomever is doing the organizing for the conference.

I hope this finds you well, and I look forward to seeing you this summer.

Sincerely,

Stan Hartman