

John

WHO IS URANTIA BROTHERHOOD?
A Response

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The "Balance" section of The Circles provides an opportunity to discuss issues of importance to students of The URANTIA Book and in doing so I believe it is furnishing a much needed platform to verbalize frustrations, clarify confusion, and contribute significant insights to the URANTIA movement.

Phil Eversoul's article, "Who is the URANTIA Brotherhood?" which appeared in the Spring, 1978 issue of The Circles is a thought provoking presentation. It is helpful in that it is representative of confusion of facts and debatable issues which are somewhat general in URANTIA Brotherhood. I welcome the opportunity to respond to his article.

Confusion of Facts

1. URANTIA Brotherhood is not chartered by URANTIA Foundation.

The Foundation and the Brotherhood are separate and independent organizations. The Brotherhood issues charters to societies. The Foundation does license the Brotherhood to use the name "URANTIA" and to use the concentric circles symbol. Neither organization controls the other. They have clearly defined areas of responsibility and service. They strive to work in mutual co-operation and support.

2. URANTIA Brotherhood is not mostly a Foundation service organization.

The Brotherhood formulates its own policies, practices, and program. To some degree the trustees of the Foundation, as persons, do influence Brotherhood decisions because four of them also serve on the Executive Committee of the Brotherhood. But I should like to point out that any time the majority of the General Council believes there is a conflict of interest in this double service, the trustees can be voted out of the Executive Committee. How much influence the Foundation trustees, as persons, have in the Brotherhood is a function of the democratic processes of the Brotherhood. And I can assure you

the General Council will be governed by constitutional democratic procedures. URANTIA Brotherhood is organized and acts independently on the basis of the highest spiritual guidance available to members of the Executive Committee and the General Council.

3. URANTIA Brotherhood should not be confused with the spiritual brotherhood of all mankind. This confusion is widespread. When the social-religious organization of URANTIA Brotherhood is identified with the spiritual brotherhood of man, all kinds of misconceptions take place. And all of them are bad! URANTIA Brotherhood is merely a social organization dedicated to the spread of the teachings of The URANTIA Book. In time, no doubt, many such organizations will come into being. The Brotherhood, furthermore, makes no claims to any official interpretations, methodologies, or exclusive "roads to heaven." We do not even urge people to join URANTIA Brotherhood. Please, let us never confuse URANTIA Brotherhood with the spiritual brotherhood of all mankind!

Debatable Issues

1. Should the term "URANTIA" be under the supervision and control of URANTIA Foundation?

Early leaders of the URANTIA movement were instructed by the revelators to protect the name "URANTIA," to register it, and to guard it by civil law. There are two basic reasons for this action. First, the registered marks, after the copyright runs out, are a means of identifying the untampered version of The URANTIA Book. Second, these registered marks are a reliable means of identifying those groups who are governed by the basic philosophy and constitution of URANTIA Brotherhood. This will help to distinguish URANTIA Brotherhood from extremist groups who could bring much confusion and disruption in the growth of the Father's kingdom on earth.

I believe early leaders were wise in placing the registration and supervision

of the registered marks with the Foundation, thus separating these legal responsibilities from the teaching and fellowship responsibilities of the Brotherhood. As much as possible, it is good to have the Brotherhood primarily concerned with spiritual ministry and fellowship.

2. Should all URANTIA Brotherhood organizations be unofficial in the legal sense?

Any nonprofit organization in our culture which receives tax deductible contributions must have a constitution and be properly recognized by the state. To this extent it is a practical necessity to be legally registered by the state.

But there are more important reasons why URANTIA Brotherhood should be legally governed by a constitution and be recognized by the state. Not since the coming of Jesus to our planet has there been a dynamic spiritual nucleus, which is contained in The URANTIA Book, around which so many competing and divisive groups would arise. URANTIA Brotherhood is necessary as a formal (legally valid) organization to discourage the formation of numerous other organizations, to protect against egocentric and predatory minorities, to prevent confusion and disruption, and to guard individual freedoms.

Contrary to what many spiritual idealists assume, a philosophic or religious movement without legal organization or regulation does not bring greater freedom to the individual. Evolutionary experience has taught us that the individual has the greatest freedom in an ordered society. It is regulation and law which insures liberty and freedom for the individual. Material, legal, and spiritual functions must be a part of every sound and lasting religious social organization. Obviously, organizations can also be sources of evil!

Even though URANTIA Brotherhood hopefully may discourage the formation of some competing organizations each claiming to be the "true" guardians of

The URANTIA Book, it is probably wise and prophetic to recognize that, human nature being what it is, groups will be organized ^{which} with either disagree with or do not wish to be directly associated with URANTIA Brotherhood. Such groups will no doubt pick auspicious names like "World Fellowship of The Urantia Book" and will promote their own programs. If and when this happens, we should not be disturbed. In a pluralistic society we must learn to live with different and differing organizations. This potential probability underlines the importance of having URANTIA Brotherhood's name protected by law.

We should also recognize that some people and some groups function more comfortably in the URANTIA movement in an unofficial capacity. For these people and groups such a nonofficial relationship can actually foster better interpersonal relationships and augment the spiritual quality of the Brotherhood. We would encourage such people to maintain their nonofficial status.

3. Should the material and legal be disassociated or eliminated from URANTIA Brotherhood?

This is the hope and illusion of the spiritual idealist - and we are all such idealists at times. We can intellectually distinguish among these areas but in the concrete process of living they are all fundamental necessities. I, for one, am frequently irritated with what appears to me to be a preoccupation with material or legal aspects of individual or group functions. In reality, the material and the legal cannot be eliminated from life on this planet or URANTIA Brotherhood. The best we can do is have proper priorities. Even on Paradise the material and the spiritual are harmonized. It is much more difficult on Urantia. But I would hope that URANTIA Brotherhood will always strive to give priority to the spiritual and allow the spiritual to dominate and control the material and legal necessities.