

SUGGESTIONS REGARDING

A GUIDING PHILOSOPHY OF MEMBERSHIP IN URANTIA BROTHERHOOD

Summary

Urantia Brotherhood was created to serve five broad purposes:

- To disseminate The Urantia Book;
- To foster the development of "thousands of study groups;"
- To pre-empt the formation of other "Urantia Brotherhoods;"
- To satisfy a hunger for identification and belonging among believers; and
- To do everything possible to achieve the goals set down in Article II of the Brotherhood constitution, which can be roughly summarized as the spiritual transformation of mankind.

Anyone desiring membership in the Brotherhood:

- Should have read The Urantia Book and believe in its teachings, and
- Should be committed to the overall purposes of the Brotherhood.

I have thought at length about, and finally rejected, the notion that our requirements for membership include a commitment "to attempt to live the Urantia teachings." Although this issue reflects the central problem facing Urantia Brotherhood today, such a commitment is between the individual and the Father in heaven alone, and has no place in a list of requirements.

All members of the Brotherhood, both new and old, should be asked every three years to designate their level of commitment for the next three years, either as:

- Active Status

Indicating a willingness to work actively to disseminate The Urantia Book, foster study group development, work to strengthen Urantia Societies, serve in administrative roles, accept special assignments, etc. -- or --

- Fellowship Status

A euphemism for inactive membership, indicating a need to be identified with the Brotherhood, stay on the mailing list, take part in study groups, receive invitations to conferences, etc., but generally to play a more passive role in Brotherhood affairs.

In time, the membership-at-large issue will have to shift from the Executive Committee to individual Urantia Societies, together with all associated contact, review, and acceptance activities. The result will be that all members of the Brotherhood will be members of individual Urantia Societies, either within the community or having "at large" status.

Discussion

Dave, I think there are a number of ways of analyzing where we came from, where we are, and where we are going, that may provide some clues from which a guiding philosophy of membership might be clarified, beginning with our origin as a Brotherhood.

Why Urantia Brotherhood Was Created

Urantia Brotherhood was created to serve five broad purposes, some of which have been explicitly stated, some of which are implicit in the nature of our mission:

- To disseminate The Urantia Book;
- To foster the development of "thousands of study groups;"
- To pre-empt the formation of other "Urantia Brotherhoods;"
- To satisfy a hunger for identification and belonging among believers; and
- To do everything possible to achieve the goals set down in Article II of the Brotherhood constitution, which can be roughly summarized as the spiritual transformation of mankind.

Each of these purposes can teach us something about a guiding philosophy of membership.

It is now clear to me that one of our major purposes is to disseminate The Urantia Book. It sounds simple to say, perhaps self-evident; yet, for years this simple purpose was somewhat confused in my mind. The origin of my confusion can be traced both to the atmosphere of secrecy that pervaded my early relationship with 533, and to the way our mission is articulated in the constitution as disseminating "the teachings of The Urantia Book." For many years I saw these as twin, but essentially parallel, goals. The way I rationalized this was that the Book is ahead of its time, and thus our mission right now should emphasize spreading the teachings. And while I still believe that attempts to disseminate the teachings of the Book are useful and ought to be encouraged, I no longer confuse this effort with what I believe is the first primary mission of Urantia Brotherhood, which is to disseminate the Book itself. For the clarity of this understanding I owe much to something that Meredith Sprunger wrote in a brief paper titled "Interface With the Church" on May 17, 1979. The paragraph which startled me, and began the re-shaping of my thinking was this:

"After much experimentation I have come to the conclusion that all second handed and human attempts to inculcate Urantia Book teachings into our society are relatively ineffective as a vehicle of spiritual awakening and social change in our contemporary culture. Most of the concepts of The Urantia Book are already in our culture in various places --

just as the ideas Jesus presented were not new to the world. It is the unique integration of these ideas in The Urantia Book which makes them effective -- just as it was the unique integration of the teachings of Jesus in his superb personality which laid the foundations for a new age. Our little candles cannot adequately substitute for the sun of a new revelation. Twenty years of experience have convinced me that any "bootleg" attempt to share the teachings of the fifth epochal revelation, apart from the book itself, is not very effective in our present-day, complex, pluralistic civilization. Even charismatic individuals cannot bring about a spiritual renaissance; only an epochal revelation can lay the foundations for a new age."

The task of disseminating The Urantia Book should be regarded as inherently active in character. We need members who are willing to work, to work in a steady, purposeful way to ensure that the Book is being planted in all manner of places in which it might be found by truth seekers. In this way we can actively aid the work of the superhuman personalities and agencies of the spirit that lead us ever forward.

While our first purpose is one of sharing and outreach, our second purpose -- fostering study group development -- is primarily organizational in nature. Study groups will form naturally, with or without our help. But again, I believe we should view our fostering role as an active mission. We can bring believers together to begin study groups, help them develop, evolve, mature and stabilize. We can help the best ones become Urantia Societies, which can then take an active role in further study group development and coordination. Our broad purpose in doing this, from an organizational point of view, is to establish a worldwide, coordinated organizational framework to be ready and in place when the Urantia revelation begins its worldwide mission.

Anyone who has ever tried to develop study groups knows that it is not a task for the faint-of-heart or for prima donnas. The task requires steady, determined, loving leadership, somehow blended with a generous supply of wisdom and patience. What this means to the consideration of a membership philosophy is that the Brotherhood needs to be populated as much as possible by mature, stable, spiritually progressive individuals who are willing to work to provide the time, the initiative, and the patient leadership required.

Our third and fourth purpose should be thought of together because they are inherently connected. By our existence we fill conceptual space; we "pre-empt" the formation of other "Urantia Brotherhoods." This goal is essentially passive and protective in nature, but it has an active element. Our pre-emptive purpose seems to be to ensure that the social framework surrounding the revelation does not demonstrate characteristics that are alien to the spirit of the revelation; or, viewed from the positive side, our purpose is to develop a social organization identified with the revelation that appears to be in keeping with the character of the revelation itself. This suggests that some screening of membership applicants is in order. We cannot simply say, as someone once suggested to me with intense passion, that "the only requirement for becoming a member of Urantia Brotherhood is the desire to know God."

But in the same breath I hasten to add: Whatever screening we do should be done by the technique of "trading our minds for the mind of Jesus." looking at every individual through the eyes of the Master himself. Any other technique will sooner or later begin to thwart rather than enhance our ability to accomplish our purposes. There is a thin line that separates the two kinds of Brotherhoods we can become. On one hand we can be open, warm, and loving, yet sensitive to the requirements of our mission and determined to carry it out. On the other hand, we could become essentially closed and inward looking, self-preoccupied, "chosen people-ish," sect-like, a cult centered around a book.

By pre-empting the formation of other Urantia Brotherhoods, we have thereby become responsible for providing a specific means to satisfy the natural hunger for identification and belonging among believers. If we do not do this, the believers who feel left out, or who feel the Brotherhood is essentially unfair in its membership requirements, will soon band together to develop a new and more vigorous brotherhood -- a Jesus Brotherhood -- which will surely meet their needs.

The implication is simple: We must be very, very careful about turning believers away who have otherwise satisfied our stated requirements for membership. We must proceed with love and fairness in our hearts, giving every individual the benefit of the doubt when we are not sure. We must recognize the legitimacy of the need for identification and belonging.

Our fifth purpose is both social and spiritual, and in effect sums up all of our other purposes -- the spiritual transformation of mankind. This is the permanent interest of Urantia Brotherhood, toward which all other activities should be focused. Although broadly stated in Article II of the constitution, and extremely long-range in nature, this overall purpose of our work has a specific bearing on our consideration of a philosophy of membership. What it suggests is that if we are going to work toward the spiritual transformation of mankind, we must begin by first becoming transformed ourselves. If we are going to become transformed on the basis of the Urantia revelation, we must first believe in its teachings. Thus, one of the essential minimum requirements for membership in Urantia Brotherhood ought to be that the applicant has read The Urantia Book and believes in its teachings.

We have to remember at all times that this is Jesus' Brotherhood. The religious origin of the Brotherhood really took place the day after Peter made his confession of Jesus' divinity, when Jesus spoke to the Apostles and said:

"Upon this rock of spiritual reality will I build the living temple of spiritual fellowship in the eternal realities of my Father's kingdom. And all of the forces of evil and the hosts of sin shall not prevail against this human fraternity of the divine spirit."

All who have committed themselves to the task of helping Jesus build the "living temple of spiritual fellowship" would do well to use the same test Jesus used in the evaluation of institutional methods and goals. I think Jesus would say that the ultimate test of our membership philosophy is this: Does it bring man to God? Does it bring God to man?

Pathways to Membership

The Brotherhood constitution provides two separate pathways to membership: (1) by means of membership in a Urantia Society, or (2) by special action of the Executive Committee in granting membership-at-large status.

As I attempt to peer into the future of the Brotherhood, and test what I see against the steady reference of the Urantia papers, it appears that the Society route to membership will become permanent. In time the formal organizational design of the Brotherhood, including the Societies, will be changed to reflect more closely what we have learned from the revelation and the realities of our organizational mission. But the essential function of the Societies will not change because it is consistent with what we have learned and what we have to do. Societies serve a very valuable role for orderly decentralization of activities.

Notwithstanding the stern language of the constitution, which empowers the Charter Committee to exert authoritarian control over Societies with regard to the qualification of members, in fact the Committee has always exercised this power in an essentially advisory capacity, and probably will continue to do so in the future. Because it is more "advisory" than "authoritative," the Committee thus should aim toward a policy of establishing an essential minimum number of qualifications for membership, otherwise its effectiveness will be weakened. The authoritative powers of the Committee should be exercised only in rare circumstances in which there is real danger to the progress of the Brotherhood in achieving its objectives.

Membership-at-large is a different matter. Projecting ahead, the sheer number of such applications will soon (perhaps within this decade) begin to outstrip the ability of the Executive Committee to deal with them. Apart from all considerations regarding the quality of review such applications should have, at the point at which the Executive Committee is reviewing some 30 to 50 applications a year, this activity will begin to exert an influence on the way the Committee spends its time that is disproportionate to its priorities.

When this decision has to be made, we will face at least three alternatives: (1) make membership-at-large virtually automatic upon application; (2) take constitutional action to abandon this form of membership; or (3) delegate the concept of membership-at-large to Urantia Societies, together with all associated contact, review, and acceptance activities.

The first choice would be an abdication of our responsibility. The second choice would eventually create a volcanic pressure leading to the creation of an alternative brotherhood. But the third choice is practical and do-able. (Please note that I have entirely omitted a fourth choice -- creating a headquarters staff so large that it could do all the background "processing" of applications so that the Executive Committee role would become perfunctory. I think we have to make a determined and unrelenting effort to keep the headquarters staff as small as possible; if we don't, we will in time find that we no longer have the ability to carry out our mission, only the ability to create the appearance of carrying out our mission.)

For these reasons I believe there will "soon" be only one pathway to membership -- as a member of a Urantia Society, either within the community or having "at large" status. This will further strengthen the role of Societies in carrying out the Brotherhood mission, and at the same time resolve an important subsidiary issue, by giving members-at-large a voice in the makeup of the leadership of the Brotherhood as participants in the group decisions of their Societies.

In anticipation of this evolutionary step in the maturation of the Brotherhood, there is a suggestion for a Charter Committee task that has not been specifically defined, and yet which is in fact the task you are now beginning to undertake -- to define, articulate, and communicate what membership in the Brotherhood means, and does not mean. The importance of this task originates in the confusions and misperceptions that tend to take hold in the minds of new students of the revelation, even those who have had some active contact with Chicago.

What Membership in Urantia Brotherhood Means (And Does Not Mean)

Over the years as I have observed the growth of the Brotherhood, it has occurred to me that individuals apply for membership for the following reasons:

- A generalized expression of identification with the fifth epochal revelation and a commitment to its purposes;
- An expression of willingness to work actively to carry out the objectives of the Urantia organizations;
- Fraternity with other believers; and, for some:
- A mystical or spiritual confusion which has led them to believe that membership in Urantia Brotherhood somehow is the same as "entrance into a new religion," "membership in the invisible spiritual brotherhood," and even "entrance into the kingdom of heaven."

For many people, all of these reasons are subtly blended, with greater or lesser emphasis, in their thinking as they reach the decision to apply. To complicate the situation even more, new believers are confronted with a bewildering array of formal and informal Urantia organizations of which the lines of demarcation are not always clear even to long-time students of the Urantia teachings:

- Urantia Foundation,
- Urantia Brotherhood,
- Urantia Brotherhood Corporation,
- First Urantia Society,
- Urantia Societies (in general), and Urantia Book Study Groups.

The Charter Committee might be able to help people sort through these confusions by preparing written materials that could be given to those who apply for membership. There is a danger, however, in that the very act of preparing such materials could be perceived as arrogant and/or insulting to those who do not suffer from these confusions; but I think this danger could be overcome by the way these materials are written.

The first thing I would recommend is that the Charter Committee reprint as a pamphlet Bill Sadler Jr.'s outstanding analysis that appeared in the inaugural issue of The Urantia under the title, "A Brotherhood -- Not a Church or a Sect." The second handout I would recommend is the pamphlet already in print, "Our Task," by Meredith Sprunger. There are other things already in print that should be considered, but what I have suggested will give you a sense of the thrust of my thinking.

But there is yet another service the Committee could perform -- attempt to "define" (or at least discuss) the differences among the formal organizations of the Urantia movement, the informal organizations of the movement, and certain social and/or spiritual realities that should be understood within the framework of the Urantia revelation. What I have set forth below should be regarded only as a humble beginning of such "definitions."

The formal organizations of the Urantia movement are:

- Urantia Foundation -- Serves as the guardian of The Urantia Book and guides and aids the development of the Urantia mission. The Foundation has three major functions:
 - To publish The Urantia Book and maintain it in print in perpetuity;
 - To protect the copyright to The Urantia Book, the use of the concentric circles symbol, and the special trademark form of the word URANTIA; and
 - To develop and publish translations of The Urantia Book in languages other than the English language.

Urantia Foundation is managed by a five-member group of Trustees who are appointed by the Foundation to life terms.

- Urantia Brotherhood -- Serves as a fellowship of students of The Urantia Book, a social and fraternal organization with a religious objective -- the spiritual transformation of mankind. The Brotherhood has two major functions:
 - To disseminate The Urantia Book, and
 - To develop a world-wide network of Urantia Book Study Groups.

The organizational building blocks of Urantia Brotherhood are Urantia Societies. Urantia Societies together elect members of the Brotherhood to leadership positions within the Brotherhood.

- Urantia Brotherhood Corporation -- Serves as the fiscal agent of the Executive Committee and the Treasurer of the Brotherhood; holds and administers the funds and properties of Urantia Brotherhood. The Corporation has the same principal officers as the Brotherhood.
- First Urantia Society -- The first chartered Society of Urantia Brotherhood, established in 1955. The Society has been meeting since its charter in the same location that serves as headquarters for Urantia Foundation and Urantia Brotherhood. Officers of the Society are elected by Society members at an annual meeting.
- Urantia Societies (In General) -- Serve as the basic organizational building blocks of Urantia Brotherhood. Urantia Societies emerge from stable and mature study groups and function with great autonomy. These Societies, when formally chartered by the Brotherhood, elect delegates to the Triennial Delegate Assembly, who in turn elect the 36 members of the General Council, the governing body of Urantia Brotherhood. The General Council delegates much of the work of day-to-day administration of Brotherhood activities to a 14-member Executive Committee, which is elected from among Council members.

These formal organizations should be distinguished from:

- The Urantia Movement -- Which is a term used to describe all activities and organizations of all kinds, both formal and informal, that work toward the eventual achievement of the Urantia mission, within the framework of the Urantia revelation, whether or not actively identified with any of the formal Urantia organizations.
- Urantia Book Study Groups -- Which represent the basic organizational building blocks of the Urantia movement. Urantia Book Study Groups may be short-term or long-term in nature, and may or may not become actively identified with Urantia Brotherhood. Study groups provide both a framework for fellowship among believers, and a systematic method for enlarging one's understanding of the Urantia teachings by means of group study. A study group is usually a fluid and flexible, warm and open fellowship of believers who desire to share the experience of The Urantia Book with others and to discover new insights into ways they can better apply the teachings to their daily lives.

And all of these terms and organizations should be clearly distinguished from certain spiritual and social realities which become "visible" to individuals who are becoming spiritually transformed:

- The "Invisible Spiritual Brotherhood" -- A concept used to describe the class of mortals attempting to seek the Father's will, and do the Father's will, from the basis of any spiritual perspective that recognizes the primacy of the Father's will in the human heart. The term is a "passive" status identification that applies to all such individuals as a class. This should not be confused with (p.1863) "the supermortal brotherhood of invisible spiritual beings which prevails on earth and in heaven, the

superhuman kingdom of God." As the term has been used throughout the Urantia movement, "invisible spiritual brotherhood" refers to mortals throughout the world who have achieved advanced spiritual insight into the nature of reality, whether or not by means of the Urantia revelation. There is no social structure associated with the invisible brotherhood, nor any organization, either formal or informal. It is simply a status designation that recognizes "kindred spirits."

- The Brotherhood of Man -- Is the socialization of the "invisible spiritual brotherhood," the natural and inevitable consequence of recognition of the Fatherhood of God and the resulting sonship status of every mortal. The "brotherhood of man" represents the way in which believers relate to all other mortals, whatever their spiritual estate. The "brotherhood of man" does not exist, except in the hearts of such believers. It comes into existence only by actions dominated by love, mercy, and ministry. It is a measure of the extent to which the love of God has become rooted in the human heart.
- The Kingdom of Heaven -- It is probably utter presumption to attempt a brief definition of a concept that Jesus explained clearly and at length, with only moderate success. As Jesus described it --
 - "The kingdom is within you," it is an inward process of spiritual growth centered in living faith;
 - It "must begin with and be centered in the dual concept of the truth of the Fatherhood of God and the correlated fact of the brotherhood of man;"
 - The kingdom always embraces "man's personal experience in relation to his fellows on earth and to the Father in heaven."

All who have found living faith in the Father in heaven and who are willing to act out the consequences of that faith have entered the kingdom of heaven. While entrance into the kingdom is by faith alone, growth in the kingdom is a process of attainment of ever-deepening relationships of loving service to one's fellow man, and ever-expanding harmony with the will of God in every aspect of living. In short -- the kingdom of heaven = the kingdom of God = the will of God. And this concept can apply equally to the growth of an individual or the evolution of a planet.

And perhaps, if the Committee feels adventurous, it could attempt additional definitions that might help new believers navigate through the bewildering thickets of organizations, issues, concepts, and ideas that all have to be understood in a new light. "Cult," "sect," "church," and "religion" come to mind. The objective of these definitions would be to help newcomers develop a better understanding of what it is they are joining, and what it is they are not joining.

Please feel free to disagree with any of the beginning definitions I have presented. All of them can become more precisely focused as the result of challenging discussion.

What Are We Evolving Toward?

Because you asked this question in the context of the Committee's search for a guiding philosophy of membership, I would like to approach it from three perspectives that all can be focused on the membership issue --

- Major stages of growth in the evolution of the Brotherhood,
- Major problems we will face, and
- Major characteristics we will have to develop as an organization if we hope to succeed in the mission with which we have been entrusted.

Visualizing the evolution of the Brotherhood in stages does not make your task any easier, but it does help clarify the differences between the permanent interests of the Brotherhood and the more temporary subsidiary interests that may become important at one stage of growth, but less important at some other stage of growth.

Looking briefly backward, and then attempting to look far ahead, here is what I see:

- Stage I -- Implanting the Revelation

When the Revelatory Commission decided to implant the revelation in Chicago -- identified throughout the world as the gangster capital of the planet -- it demonstrated brilliant levels of creativity, courage, and faith in the ultimate victory of the mortal races over their own worst tendencies. I continue to salute the Commission for the added degree of authenticity this lends to the revelation.

Stage I is perhaps the easiest to define; it encompasses all of the activities that finally led up to the initial publication of the Urantia papers. During these years the Urantia "movement" required spiritually steadfast individuals who could keep secrets, ask a lot of questions about realms of the unknown, remain patient, and maintain a steady and reliable commitment to stay in the group over a prolonged period of time in which there were no measurable results of their activities.

While this stage of growth formally ended in 1955, the lines of demarcation have been fuzzy. We are still in the process of stepping into our new evolutionary role.

- Stage II -- Developing a Firm BASIS For Worldwide Growth

This is the stage of our growth in which the fundamental directions of the Urantia Brotherhood will be established for a long time to come. The basic task of this stage of our organizational mission is to transform the Brotherhood from an essentially white, middle class, Christianized movement to the beginning of its larger destiny as a worldwide fellowship of believers. The emphasis is on the word "basis," and all that it implies.

Because this is the stage of growth that most clearly affects the immediate direction of your task, I will outline specifically the types of things we have to do over and above our primary mission of disseminating the Book and developing study groups:

- First and foremost, we have to build a Brotherhood on the basis of Jesusonian attitudes, a Jesus way of thinking, acting, and doing, taking our direction from the inspiration of his life and teachings every step of the way; without this, we can do nothing. To the extent to which this notion becomes imbued in a membership philosophy, we will be looking for spiritually transforming individuals who are willing to follow the pathway of truth wherever it leads them, who are willing to make the brave attempt actually to live the teachings according to their ability.
- Second, we have to get our goals and priorities straight, and be able to express our goals in clear and simple terms.
- Third, we have to develop orderly and systematic plans based on these goals so that we are marshalling our energies effectively. There are three kinds of planning that we have to do, each one of which is based upon a different set of skills and techniques:
 - Strategic planning:
 - Long range planning as such, and
 - Short term strategic planning that has long range impact;
 - Short term planning (annual planning and budgeting), and
 - Contingency planning (situation-based, rather than time-based reaction plans, developed ahead of time, that will enable us to react in a wise, orderly, swift, and coordinated way in the event of any kind of action or event that could seriously jeopardize our ability to continue forth on our mission).
- Fourth, we have to modify, or redefine, our constitution and organization structure to whatever extent necessary to ensure that our organization structure will enhance, rather than inhibit, our ability to carry out our mission. Some criticism has already been raised that I believe the General Council has dismissed too swiftly, that asks in effect whether the organization of Urantia Brotherhood is consistent with the revelation it supports and with our mission.
- Fifth, we have to develop a decision making process that focuses on what we have learned from the Urantia teachings, rather than on what we do in our day to day living. To give you an example of what I mean, there are three basic ways in which groups make decisions:

- The political approach, which is based on power relationships, persuasion, manipulation, surprise, leverage, coalition formation, and other evolutionary methods designed to achieve the will of individuals within a group;
- The consensus approach, which is designed to achieve the will of the group as a whole, but must be used with caution; and
- The spiritual approach, the technique of spiritual progress in which, like Jesus, all individuals within the group honestly seek to know and do the Father's will in reaching group decisions.

The way we make decisions will both influence the kinds of members we attract, and in turn be influenced by them as they participate in the selection of leaders.

- Sixth, we have to begin the process of leadership development throughout the Brotherhood, and do it in an orderly way. There are at least three kinds of leaders we need:
 - Teachers and communicators,
 - Study group organizers, and
 - Managers and administrators.
- Seventh, we have to develop sustaining strength in as many Urantia Societies as possible so that, in the event of a "worst case" scenario, any given Urantia Society could, if necessary, regenerate the Urantia movement. (You might think of this as a "crabgrass" approach.)
- Eighth, we have to develop a strong and healthy financial base to support worldwide growth, together with strong financial controls;
- Ninth, we have to develop a method of communication and coordination that enables the Brotherhood to function as a unified organization, and yet does not develop a heavy hierarchical structure. The traditional "pyramid" structure of management organization cannot be adapted to our mission without pointing the Brotherhood dangerously in the direction of a bureaucracy, even a "church." Our organization has to remain essentially flat, fluid, flexible to succeed. What ordinary organizations accomplish efficiently by "chain of command," we have to learn to do by means of a superb system of communication and coordination of activities throughout the world.
- Tenth, but among our highest priorities, we have to develop a global outlook and character throughout the Brotherhood. This simply cannot be done without a continuing base of translations of The Urantia Book in language after language, and a well-founded belief by our brothers and sisters in all lands that we want to help them achieve this in every way possible. But our development of a global outlook and an international character does not stop there. There is much, very much, that we can do to take the steps required.

This is not intended as a complete list; rather, it suggests some of the things the Brotherhood ought to be working toward at this stage of development. Applied to a membership philosophy, the continuing focus of these comments is on individuals who have not only read the Book and believe in its teachings, but also understand the nature and special mission of the Brotherhood and are willing to work actively to achieve it.

As we attempt to build a strong foundation for the growth of the Brotherhood, it would be wise for us to remain keenly aware of our religious history, so that we do not blunder into a repetition of the mistakes.

This stage of evolution may come to an end when there are about a million members in the Brotherhood. Some of the things that have to be done can be done right away; others are more likely to take "decades," even "lifetimes." The litmus test of the Brotherhood's accomplishment will be whether it has become correctly poised for tremendous growth.

- Stage III -- Beginning of the Worldwide Mission

After all of the long decades of preparation, we have been taught that the "worldwide mission" of the Urantia revelation will begin. There will be a "ripening," in that large numbers of people will begin the search for truth, beauty, and goodness as the primary values of living. The Urantia Book must be accessible; study groups must be in place and accessible; teachers and leaders must be functioning throughout the world. Compared with all of the earlier years, this will be a time of tremendous growth for the Brotherhood. It is not difficult to imagine tens of millions of members in the Brotherhood during this period.

- Stage IV -- Shakeout

The Urantia papers have convinced me that there is always a shakeout period. There seems to be some evolutionary necessity for it. In the future of the Brotherhood, it will probably be the shuddering response to some kind of calamitous event that sends everyone scurrying toward shelter except the spiritually stalwart. Membership will drop dramatically. It may even appear that the revelation has "failed" in its mission. The movement will be reduced to a strong central nucleus, a "hard core."

- Stage V - Rebuilding and Sustained Growth

Those who have remained steadfast and unshakeable will now begin the long process of rebuilding, but this time what is built will be steady and lasting. The pace of growth will be sure and the Urantia movement will then eventually include many hundreds of millions of people throughout the world. This will be the time when the revelation at last begins to flower with spiritual brilliance on the planet.

I'm not sure what happens next. Before Stage V is finished we will be many hundreds of years into the future, ready for the sixth epochal revelation. And far beyond that, entry into the initial stages of light and life.

The problems we have faced up to now in the development of the Brotherhood should be regarded as basic training for the larger and more difficult problems still to come. Some of the difficulties we are already experiencing, or are bound to experience in the future, are:

- Membership Philosophy. The very question your committee is now grappling with, but still has to resolve and then implement. Whatever guidelines are established and approved will have to be at once (a) fair to every individual, (b) based on, or at least consistent with, the Urantia papers, and (c) aimed at helping the Brotherhood achieve its short term and long term goals and objectives. This is a tall order. To illustrate by just one example, consider the following. There appear to be two major schools of thought among Brotherhood members right now with regard to a philosophy of membership. On one hand, there are many who believe that we should accept almost anybody who applies, in the belief that "he who is not against us is with us," and that Urantia Brotherhood in fact is basically a spiritual brotherhood. On the other hand, there are many who believe that these are very dangerous years in the evolution of the Brotherhood, and that we should focus on "quality" of membership; if we are not careful about whom we let in, sooner or later some individuals or groups are going to do something that seriously affects our ability to achieve our goals. My guess is that the majority of the present leaders of the Brotherhood support the second opinion. But for reasons that I have outlined earlier, I think our correct pathway is somewhere between these two ideas, and will probably rest upon an "essential minimum" number of requirements.
- "Church" vs. "Leavening" Orientation. It is not that Brotherhood members think of the Brotherhood as a "church" -- although I have met some who do -- it is more that there are subtle, but profound, pressures within the Brotherhood which, if not re-channeled, could bend our evolutionary path toward "churchiness." And the constitution does not help. It still calls for "Certified Leaders" and "Ordained Teachers." And our basic statement of purpose in Article II (as beautiful as it is) could still be read as suggesting that Urantia Brotherhood perceives of itself as the social nucleus of a new religion (not a church, but a religion). We call ourselves "a social group with a religious objective." But when carried to its logical conclusion, the "religious objective" ultimately is a spiritually transformed world that has been transformed on the basis of the Urantia teachings (the ultimate ramification of the process of "leavening"). To complicate this situation, I have met with at least one group of Urantians that is actively raising funds to build its own building ("church") and in time pay someone ("minister") to prepare for & lead study group meetings. Such pressures will be with us for a long time, but we can help re-channel these energies into a powerful leavening force if we encourage individual members to find a religion they are comfortable with and become active in it, while they are at the same time working actively within the Urantia movement. Further, the concept of leavening ought to be extended to every human occupation, every human institution. There is always a "next step forward." Any philosophy other than a clear philosophy of leavening at this stage of our growth is bound to lead to open confrontations with all other religions, and will be debilitating to the Urantia movement.

- A Constantly Embattled Organization. One might hope that an organization like Urantia Brotherhood would be all sweetness and light. But we know this is not to be our destiny. In the very beginning we were told that "not in 2000 years" has an organization appeared on the planet that will so much become the object of control by competing groups and individuals. As I look ahead as realistically as possible, I see power struggles from within the organization continuing to afflict us for a long time to come. The danger signs that I have learned to recognize are:

- Ego,
- Impatience, and
- Self will.

Together, these things are like a three-headed monster. To the extent to which a guiding philosophy of membership can recognize three-headed monsters before they are inside the gates, I would recommend that we shut the gate as tightly as possible. I would not be concerned about any competitive organization launched by such individuals.

In the meantime, Urantia Brotherhood will face a continually escalating series of attacks from without as various religious groups begin to feel threatened by our growth and dynamism. Right now we are the subject of such attacks by certain fundamentalist groups. But in terms of what is to come, I think we will later regard these attacks as mild skirmishes.

In time we will come under political attack as well.

- Nationalism. The greatest obstacle we face in our evolution toward a worldwide fellowship of believers is the virus of nationalism. People in other lands and cultures are extremely sensitive about anything that smacks of American "dominance." And the fact that the revelation was planted in Chicago somehow becomes associated in their minds with old concepts of "yankee imperialism." Even while we remain completely apolitical, these sensitivities persist. The slightest word out of place, the slightest thought that might be construed as a hint that the Americans feel they are in control of this revelation, is likely to set off strong counter-reactions. This is likely to be a long-lasting problem.
- Maintaining Social Harmony. By definition, as we have been taught, we already have spiritual unity. Our problem is to maintain social harmony within the framework of our larger unity. This will become especially difficult because of internal political conflicts and anti-American feelings of nationalism among many of our brothers and sisters in other lands.
- Difficulty in Attracting Blacks. The discussion of race in the Urantia papers is a tinderbox that we will have to be prepared to face. Very few blacks can yet be found in the Urantia movement. In some way we will have to be Jesusonian enough so that blacks who are in doubt will know that we know that we are all spiritual equals in the eyes of the Father in heaven, and all brothers and sisters in the worldwide family of God.

- Over-Organization. I have already mentioned this in another context, but it bears repeating. There seems to be a natural tendency to over-organize. We must search our experience and wisdom to find ways to get our work done without creating a big bureaucracy that paralyzes the creative energies of the organization.
- Major External Discontinuity. Nuclear war (see p. 1490), political upheavals, economic chaos, world famine -- pick your favorite scenario. Without resorting to the method of thinking of the "survivalists," I think we could probably agree that some form of major discontinuity will beset us that will temporarily cause us to re-focus our primary energies simply on continuing to exist. This is why we need to develop contingency plans with cool heads, so that we can deal with whatever it is in an orderly way when things get hot.
- Decision on Where To Build a Permanent World HQ. The Brotherhood is likely to have several temporary headquarters after the decision is made to leave 533 Diversey Parkway. In time we will have to face the decision regarding where to build a permanent headquarters. I think this topic is much more complex than it seems, and these complexities will not become apparent until the decision process really gets underway. I have some ideas of my own about this, but will save them for another forum.
- Failure To Live the Teachings. Lack of living faith. Half-heartedness. Lack of spiritual courage. "Intellectualism" instead of spiritual dynamism. Etc. If we can overcome this problem, we can lick every other problem we face, no matter how disorganized we are, no matter how formidable the problem. My thoughts keep coming back to this issue again and again as the central problem we face as a Brotherhood, now and in the future.

Notwithstanding the magnitude of the problems we face, I have a steady faith that Urantia Brotherhood has the inherent strength and wisdom to overcome all difficulties and eventually succeed in its worldwide mission. I have already seen the hand of God at work within the Brotherhood and have already witnessed the Brotherhood transcending its apparent limitations in the way in which it has risen to formidable challenges. We have within us the power of God, to see clearly, to act with wisdom and decisiveness, with love and mercy and ministry, and with abiding strength. The Urantia revelation has enlarged our capabilities to deal with events beyond anything we may have ever thought possible. We can actualize our potentials.

In time, Urantia Brotherhood will develop characteristics that begin to identify the organization as one that is unique among human institutions. I am not attempting to personify the Brotherhood, only to suggest that as we evolve, we will take on a certain tone and coloration in what we do and the way we do things that will identify the organization in general terms.

In what I have written to you so far, some of these characteristics have been noted, such as our attempt to "live the teachings," and our development of a "global outlook" and our "leavening approach" instead of confrontation and competition. I will not dwell on these further here, but simply add a few thoughts to the list.

The time is the 21st century. We have journeyed forward to listen to a conversation. Someone who has been studying Urantia Brotherhood, but who has not yet made the decision to look into the big blue book its members spend so much time with, is trying to help a companion understand something about the nature of the Brotherhood. Here are some excerpts.

"Everything they do appears to be designed to foster individual growth -- That seems to be their sole purpose for existence."

"It is inspiring to see them with each other -- They love each other with a new and startling affection."

"There is a strong and powerful sense of spiritual centering everywhere in the movement -- It seems to be the result of individual and group prayer and worship and their dedication to the service of others, even their enemies -- They have what I can only describe as an amazing devotion to the service of mankind."

"Yet, they are simple and unadorned in style -- You might say "uncomplicated."

"There appear to be no links anywhere in the organization to politics, governments, or national cultures as such -- Yet they live within the laws of each land."

"They manage themselves well -- Their focus is on opportunities, not problems. They think ahead."

"There is kind of a fierceness about them -- not a grimness, but a fierce determination to seek the will of God and to do the will of God -- And let no man stand in the way."

"There is no other organization in the world that looks so much like a human rainbow -- They are spreading to every corner of the planet."

"They are truly the followers of Jesus. Their faith in God seems to have no human boundaries."

This is the kind of Brotherhood we will in time become.

In concluding these comments and suggestions, I will go back to something Bill Sadler Jr. said a quarter of a century ago. The focus he placed on our priorities as an organization can serve as a most valuable and continuing point of reference for the Charter Committee as it weighs the many issues involved in the development of a guiding philosophy of membership in Urantia Brotherhood. Bill reminded us:

- God is the only true end.
- The Urantia Book is a means to the end.
- Urantia Brotherhood is a means to the end.

I salute the God within you, and send you and the Committee my warmest regards.



Paul Snider (4/11/82)