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Dear Reader of *The URANTIA Book*:

I have been asked by some of the readers in the United States and from abroad to give my reaction to **International URANTIA Association (IUA)**, described by the present Trustees as "**an arm of URANTIA Foundation.**"

After reviewing the Trustees' announcement brochure *International URANTIA Association-Charter and Bylaws*, and being unaware of any other commentary on this matter, I believe certain remarks and observations about IUA would be of help to readers. In so proceeding, it is with the understanding that a fuller, broader discussion of this subject will be beneficial to all concerned, consistent with the Trustees' invitation for public comment about their new membership organization.

As a long-time reader of *The URANTIA Book*, and as a member of the Board of Trustees of URANTIA Foundation for over two decades, its Executive Director for three years, and as a participant in, and member of, the governing bodies of the former URANTIA Brotherhood for more than fifteen years, I believe that I have a valuable perspective regarding the affairs of URANTIA organizations. Moreover, this experience was especially enriched by my having lived and worked on Foundation and Brotherhood matters at 533 Diversey Parkway with Miss E. L. Christensen, a founding Trustee and a President and distinguished leader of the former URANTIA Brotherhood, from my arrival in Chicago in 1968 until her death in 1982. Nevertheless, while I hope that this experience will provide added significance to this commentary, I write to you as a fellow reader with the idea that the following remarks will -- must -- stand on their own merit.

The Scope of this Commentary

The observations hereinbelow are not meant to be either a systematic or an exhaustive analysis, but they are meant to highlight certain fundamental, serious shortcomings of IUA. This paper comments on some basic considerations about *The URANTIA Book* and URANTIA organizations, certain relevant history, IUA's origins, its current questionable priorities, organization, and function, and its administration by the present Trustees. Further, even though I wish frankly to comment on the foregoing points, I also wish to propose solid suggestions for preserving, strengthening, and invigorating IUA.

Basic Considerations about The URANTIA Book and Organization

One must always remember the epochal purposes of *The URANTIA Book* whenever discussing organizational matters associated with its presentation and the dissemination of its teachings. In so doing we can recall William S. Sadler Jr.'s emphasis on the book being a **means** to an end where God is the only true end. The purpose of organization -- at least a URANTIA organization -- should be to bring God to man and man to God, and this should be -- must be -- the ultimate purpose of a URANTIA organization.

It is instructive to note the following:

Jesus in his time, and Gautama Buddha before him, taught a moral law which was addressed to those who would receive it. They were not many. Buddhism and Christianity became world religions centuries after the death of their founders, and only **when there had been added to the central message a great organized method of teaching it.** (Emphasis supplied.) Page 46, *A Preface to Morals* by Walter Lippman, 1930.

As we know, the purpose of URANTIA membership organizations is not to begin a new religion in the traditional, institutional, organized sense, nor are they to become some kind of a religious cult. But URANTIA organizations are indeed to function as **educational organizations --and something more.** First, they do this by encouraging the establishment of thousands of study groups wherein each individual may better come to know the teachings and to share their own unique and independent spiritual experience and growth. Then, second, when and as these study groups desire to associate with other similarly spiritually-purposed groups, they will be able to do so by affiliating with a licensed URANTIA society which will then function as a coordinator of their joint activities. It is partly through such mutually beneficial groups that multiple foci of truth-led men and women shall form the basis of the organismal, living brotherhood of mankind. In the meantime, a **learning mechanism will come into existence which can function down through the years as a transmitter of values and wisdom.** It will also be able to function as a potent force for progressive change by uniting committed students of the teachings of *The URANTIA Book* together in their common cause within a democratic framework.

During these still early years in the presentation of the teachings of *The URANTIA Book* to the planet, it is crucial that we not lose sight of the need to have learning and socialization functions within a spiritually-purposed *coordinative structure* free from manipulation and control, as guaranteed by proper constitutionalization and a fair and equitable administration.

Placing Matters in Perspective

In making an assessment of the formal proposal disseminated by the present Trustees in their pamphlet entitled *International URANTIA Association - Charter and Bylaws*, it is important that one not forget either the history of past epochal revelations or the short history of this latest one, *The URANTIA Book*, nor should one ignore the insights to the future provided by the book. Any assessment must be made in the context of past experience and current knowledge, not only evolutionary, but also revelatory; it cannot, and should not, be made in a vacuum.

With respect to the previous epochal revelations, we have seen the disastrous results of conscious or willful disregard of, and unconscious or well-meant but unwise deviation from, the established plan. License and impatience have caused the world untold confusion and suffering.

In order to forestall the effects of such problems with respect to *The URANTIA Book*, the early leaders decided upon a two-fold strategy. First, they were to create URANTIA Foundation, a trust whose administrators were to be subject to stringent requirements of duty and loyalty to the purposes of the trust. The Foundation was to protect the book's integrity and to hold the trademarks and service marks to be associated with the unique activities of the organizations officially connected with the book, that is, those organizations which the Foundation would recognize as operating consistent with the Foundation's instructions and mandates, and goals and purposes. The Foundation would defend the book and speak for it authoritatively where necessary. Subsequent to the formation of the Foundation, a URANTIA membership organization was to be **constituted** which would serve as a coordinator of readers' activities, and which would protect the majority from the manipulation and control of a minority. All would be able to study the book having their own beliefs and be free from undue intrusion into their own life, especially their personal relation with the heavenly Father. As was discussed at length in *Unity, not Uniformity*,¹ I can again say that great thought and care was given to establishing two separate URANTIA organizations, URANTIA Foundation and URANTIA Brotherhood, independent of, but related to and licensed by URANTIA Foundation. A major reason for doing this was to mitigate the tension inherent in a purposefully autocratic, closed membership organization creating and administering an inherently democratic, open membership organization.

The Control Mentality

Proving the predictions of the early leaders, we have, especially in the last ten years, seen the attempts of groups and individuals to gain undisciplined control over the book, in direct opposition to the mandates and instructions given to the Trustees, and in derogation of the requirements of the *Declaration of Trust Creating URANTIA Foundation*.

About a decade ago, Vern Grimsley, then headquartered in Clayton, California, attempted to consolidate his leadership over the book and its formal organizations by exercising undue influence over the Trustees of URANTIA Foundation and the leadership of the former URANTIA Brotherhood, even working to install his supporters in positions of trust in the governing bodies of the former Brotherhood. Any number of artifices were employed to exploit readers, many of whom were sincere. The most pervasive control method used was **the conscious manipulation of information**. Further, Mr. Grimsley claimed to be getting divine instruction, hearing voices. Many innocent and trusting readers of *The URANTIA Book* believed him and were thus misled, some suffering psychological and financial misfortune as a result. Many in the leadership of the former Brotherhood succumbed, as did one Trustee. But the four other Trustees held firm and took strong action to protect the Foundation's reputation and to limit as best possible the confusion and damage resulting from Mr. Grimsley's and his Family of God's reach for power.

¹ *Unity, not Uniformity* was first presented as a talk in 1973, and since has been published in written form. It discusses a number of matters related to *The URANTIA Book*, including URANTIA organizations.

As you may be aware, the story of this bizarre but very real happening is recounted in the *Vern Grimsley Message Evaluation* prepared by Hoite C. Caston, edited with the help of K. Richard Keeler, and published June 17, 1984.

Despite half-hearted efforts of the leadership of the former Brotherhood, the mentality associated with cult-like behavior was never rooted out, and by 1989 it appeared again with the leadership of the former Brotherhood attempting to neutralize the Foundation and to usurp the Foundation's prerogatives regarding *The URANTIA Book*. The battle cry of this group was, like that of Vern Grimsley, **self-assertion**. Once again, the then Trustees, only Hoite C. Caston and myself, acted resolutely, replacing three resigned Trustees with new ones, K. Richard Keeler, Neal A. Waldrop, and Patricia Sadler Mundelius. As with the Grimsley episode, this one concerning the degradation of the former Brotherhood is reported and discussed in its own document, this one dated April 1990 and entitled *Special Report to the Readers of The URANTIA Book*.²

One would have hoped that the Grimsley and Brotherhood phenomena -- not to mention the very teachings of the book itself -- would have provided substantial and reliable instruction to the current Trustees of URANTIA Foundation, assuring that the book and all surrounding it would properly be administered, that the confusion of liberty with license, and duty with personal desire had been forever dispelled, and that one could reasonably expect that a new membership organization sponsored by the Trustees of URANTIA Foundation would be consistent with the mandates and instructions governing the Trustees, and with the fiduciary responsibilities imposed upon the Trustees by the *Declaration of Trust Creating URANTIA Foundation*. But such is not the case.

Unfortunately, it has become increasingly apparent to me over the past several years that the present Trustees have acted more and more as did the leadership of the former Brotherhood: dubious plans and the desire for quick results have supplanted the guidance of *The URANTIA Book* and the Foundation's mandates and instructions relating to the Foundation's purposes and operation.

Moreover, it is disturbing to note that Philip Rolnick was substantially involved with Mr. Grimsley and/or the Family of God (FOG) over an extended period of time. It is especially disconcerting to record that Mr. Keeler told me when I was in his office at URANTIA Foundation in August 1992, that, yes, he was in touch with Mr. Grimsley, that he still listened to Mr. Grimsley's tapes, and that I was wrong for not having stayed in touch with Mr. Grimsley -- a stunning comment since Mr. Grimsley and FOG had been repudiated by URANTIA Foundation.

² The *Vern Grimsley Message Evaluation* and the April 1990 *Special Report to the Readers of The URANTIA Book* are available -- or at least they have been available in the past -- from URANTIA Foundation, 533 Diversey Parkway, Chicago, Illinois 60614. These two documents give an indispensable perspective as to the true nature of the current Trustees' activities concerning *International URANTIA Association*.

IUA Because of this, as I watch the unveiling of a new international URANTIA membership organization, I see not the azure blue Concentric-Circles-Symbol, but the shadow of Clayton hanging over URANTIA Foundation and International URANTIA Association.

An Initial Assessment of International URANTIA Association

While the IUA proposal has a number of interesting ideas, we are not given any background information to enable us to evaluate the workability or effectiveness -- indeed the fairness -- of the concept. So far as we know, this is a *de novo* effort, and consequently all participants are taking part in an experiment without any apparent evolutionary guide -- that is, a like or similar organization -- as to how it will work. The Trustees explicitly recognize this in Article VII of the so-called Charter.

Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with participating in this sort of an experiment so long as members join with their eyes open, knowing not only the positives, but also the negatives, especially since the Trustees recognize in Article VII that IUA is an evolving organization. Thus, the questions: How was the concept achieved? Who or what provided major input and/or insights into the form and content of the *International URANTIA Association - Charter and Bylaws*? What other organizational structures were considered? **Why is IUA better than the former Brotherhood? How does IUA solve the problems which led to the downfall of the former Brotherhood? Does IUA present new dangers?**

In appraising IUA, it is important to realize that the current Trustees have made a **basic shift** in proposing their kind of membership organization. The former Brotherhood was an independent organization, cooperative with and in support of URANTIA Foundation. Its governing documents provided a democratic base and it had a definite **reader-service** orientation. Unfortunately, the former Brotherhood fell victim to the control of a small group. But IUA's design directly provides for exploitation and control since IUA is to serve a small group, the Trustees, and not the readership. This becomes all the more evident when one examines just what IUA is.

The Lack of Associations' Constitutional Safeguards

While the pamphlet entitled *International URANTIA Association - Charter and Bylaws* discusses the general requirements of the constitutional documents governing Associations, it does not provide enough specifics to ensure that Associations will be properly constitutionalized. This is a **missing critical element** that must be addressed and should have been addressed from the beginning.

Where are the assurances in IUA as to the safeguards and guarantees which are inherent in *bona fide* constitutionalized democratic government?

IUA to Serve the Trustees First and the Reader Second

The current Trustees' true attitude regarding the purposes of IUA is found at the top of page 12 of the announcement brochure:

The common welfare of IUA should be the first priority of its members, with the individual rights of members held as a close second priority.

But isn't this what Caiaphas repeatedly said about Jesus?

"It is better that one man die, than that the community perish." Page 1847

The page 12 statement confirms the real intent of the current Trustees in creating IUA as they have. They want an organization the first purpose of which is to serve the Trustees, not the legitimate interests of the readers. And this explains why they have only given partial and incomplete consideration to constitutional matters including the stated removal procedures. Fairness and due process are the basic guarantees of the integrity of any organization. Without them, any organization is defenseless against misuse and abuse. No organization pretending to serve its members -- especially a URANTIA organization -- has the luxury, let alone the right, to countenance even the possibility of those kinds of harmful actions.

Jesus said:

Justice makes a nation great, and the greater a nation the more solicitous will it be to see that injustice shall not befall even its most humble citizen. Woe upon any nation when only those who possess money and influence can secure ready justice before its courts! It is the sacred duty of a magistrate to acquit the innocent as well as to punish the guilty. Upon the impartiality, fairness, and integrity of its courts the endurance of a nation depends. Civil government is founded on justice, even as true religion is founded on mercy." Page 1462

And so it is with *any* URANTIA organization, its government must be founded on justice for its endurance depends upon impartiality, fairness, and integrity.

One reader commented to me, It seems that when the present Trustees describe IUA as an **arm** of the Foundation, they really mean an **arm-y** of the Trustees.

— The current Trustees have set about to accomplish the very thing the Foundation was formed to prevent: the abuse of power to further a group's personal and political agendas in the name of spiritual service. Such a perversion of purpose is a betrayal of trust.

The Coordinating Committee

One's concerns about the purposes of IUA are confirmed when considering the need and function of a group within IUA which the current Trustees have designated the Coordinating Committee. They describe it in this way:

"The interface between IUA and the [sic] URANTIA Foundation is the work of a group called the Coordinating Committee."

Obviously, it is something more than just a temporary help group; it has an institutionalized, continuing function. Apart from the Trustees, the Coordinating Committee comprises the sum and substance of IUA. The Coordinating Committee, however, has no real power since **it must always refer and defer to the Trustees -- even when purportedly functioning as a judicial body.**³

Further, one of the major problems with the former Brotherhood as an independent organization was that there was no formal, built-in structural means of communication between the Trustees and the leadership of the former Brotherhood. Over the years, the readers have clearly shown that they want contact, direct and meaningful contact, with the Trustees. That the present Trustees now act to defeat just that through the otherwise needless mechanism of the Coordinating Committee renders the present organization and priorities of IUA all the more objectionable. The imposition of a buffer group between the autocratic Foundation and the democratic readership groups is a barrier to, rather than a facilitator of, efficient and meaningful communication between the current Trustees and the readers.

Moreover, similar to the Area Coordinators of the former Brotherhood, we learn that the Coordinating Committee is not elected by the readership but is appointed by, and is responsible to, the Trustees, who use unexplained criteria in making appointments to the committee. We are also told "One of the Coordinating Committee's primary tasks is facilitating the formation and chartering of Associations," and that as Associations are formed the Coordinating Committee is to fade from the liaison work in those local areas. But as we read further we see that the Coordinating Committee continues to function as a liaison between Associations, including hearing requests from Associations to have international meetings, to split into smaller Associations, or to serve as a judicial body to resolve "unresolved issues affecting Associations" -- whatever that

³ Since the Coordinating Committee is not an independent group as its members serve at the pleasure of the Trustees, it has no real decision making power. Nevertheless, **it is the members of the Coordinating Committee**, not the Trustees, who, in enforcing the *Trustees' decisions*, will absorb the brunt of the criticism and disapproval generally associated with controversial matters, such as deciding who may or may not be a member of a new Association, or more important, deciding "unresolved issues affecting Associations."

means. We do not know what policies or rules or regulations guide and/or bind its deliberations, especially what procedures are to guide it when it purports to function as a judicial body. Also, not only do we not know how its composition might change -- it could be three or three hundred members, but also, we do not know what further functions it may have.

To dismiss such important considerations possibly characterizing them as "...distracting concerns about the mechanical structure of the organization itself...." (see Article VII) is merely to avoid responsible attention to a **critical element** of the proposed IUA.

Summary

There are serious, fundamental deficiencies in the proposed so-called International URANTIA Association. IUA is the same old control mentality so evident this last decade, but now appearing in more respectable clothes. There is significant reason to doubt that IUA will serve the reader, and to believe that it will do just the opposite. The Trustees state that the common welfare of IUA (read "Trustees") should be the first priority of its members. In trying to give their control the gloss of legitimacy while insulating themselves from open communication and accountability, the present Trustees would act through a group called the Coordinating (read "buffer") Committee which, even with presumed good motives, questionably functions in the context of a democratic organization. In assessing the meaning of this, one must conclude that IUA truly is more "an arm of URANTIA Foundation" than it is a mechanism for the coordination of readers' activities. In that respect, the present Trustees of URANTIA Foundation are in direct violation of their mandates and instructions.

Transformation: Strengthening and Invigorating IUA

The implementation of the following improvements will materially assist in strengthening and invigorating IUA.

1. Immediately provide for a proper Association constitution which recognizes the importance of the individual and which secures to all members the full measure of protections associated with *bona fide* constitutional government so that they may indeed rest secure in the knowledge that **their** URANTIA organization gives them the fullest opportunity for self-realization -- even planetary service -- free from manipulation and control and with a full opportunity for discussion and sharing for personal growth.

2. Immediately modify IUA to provide that its principal purpose is to serve the coordinative requirements of the readers -- not the other way around. In this way IUA will more closely approach becoming, in fact, a true service organization, and even something more. But most important, IUA will then be focused in accord with the original mandates and instructions to the Trustees. It will then, as Bill Sadler encouraged, become a means to a worthy end and largely escape becoming a mere support organization of the Trustees -- an end in itself, a cult.

3. Restructure IUA to provide for a **permanent council** consisting of the presidents and vice-presidents of the local or national Associations and the Trustees **functioning as individual council members**. This council would enable the flow of information among all concerned and would facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation. Provide the Trustees, **acting as Trustees**, with veto power in select circumstances within certain defined areas, but otherwise provide for a full and free democratic function.

4. Eliminate the Conference Committee, elevating the membership and education committees to their proper respective priority. Place emphasis on educational and social purposes designed to enhance the best in human experience through study and fellowship -- the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

5. Associations should confirm their support for the Foundation's general programs and broad purposes, including preservation of the text, copyright and mark protection, and obtaining competent translations.

6. Eliminate the Coordinating Committee.⁴ Let the Trustees formally recognize and assume their obligations to IUA through the explicit recognition of the need for their ongoing frank and open communication with the readership and their sincere and unreserved proactive cooperation with that readership.

7. Encourage members and participants to recognize their planetary responsibilities and opportunities for larger planetary service in helping properly to establish and to further the purposes of the teachings of *The URANTIA Book*, as well as personally to thrill to and profit from those teachings. We are, after all, cosmic citizens, the sons and daughters of the heavenly Father in an ever-expanding, ever-growing, well-nigh limitless universe with boundless possibilities but **with a certain, inexorable purpose**.

I would hope that all who are concerned with International URANTIA Association would join together not only to preserve, but also to strengthen and invigorate IUA, realizing what it portends for this benighted and confused planet, the mortal natal sphere of Michael of Nebadon, and how IUA may significantly assist in the realignment of this world and the fulfillment of its purposes in accord with **the destiny-plans for Urantia**, plans which, when actualized, will reverberate far beyond this confused planet, beyond the borders of Nebadon, of Orvonton -- even to the Ultimate.

⁴ In making this recommendation, I intend no discourtesy to the present members of the Coordinating Committee, three of whom I know personally. Individuals of this caliber -- as do all readers -- deserve an opportunity for URANTIA organizational service at least consistent with the Foundation's mandates and instructions.

Conclusion - Beginning

The URANTIA Book and its teachings, including the teachings of Jesus, are meant for men and women from all nations and races who would become so thrilled and moved by its call to destiny service that they would effect great personal changes within themselves, and as a result, go on to effect startling, progressive change the world over. IUA fails to capture this call to destiny. **IUA does not inspire one to work for planetary progress; it requires unquestioning allegiance to the Trustees.** As presently proposed, IUA is sterile, dull, and dead.

But the book is not for glassy-eyed automatons, dutiful, unquestioning followers. The teachings of *The URANTIA Book* are meant for vigorous and imaginative men and women creative in their expression of new but sound ways of living in the quest for a better life, a better world, and even a greater destiny as they follow the demanding but satisfying lead of the Master. These people, these **progress pioneers** deserve a democratic, coordinative mechanism which will not only permit them to unite and to cooperate in doing just that, but also which will empower them to do so, **and they must not accept anything less** -- nor should the Trustees of URANTIA Foundation, whoever they are.

If there is to be any "control mentality" operative among the members of IUA, it must be that of the mind of the Master -- with all that that implies for one's spiritual freedom and personal progress.

Sincerely,

Martin W. Myers
A Reader of *The URANTIA Book*

cc: Trustees of URANTIA Foundation
Mr. John Ploetz, Chairman, Coordinating Committee
Mrs. Tonia Baney, Member, Coordinating Committee
Mrs. Cathy Jones, Member, Coordinating Committee
Mr. Eddie King, Member, Coordinating Committee