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for Students of the Urantia Book
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10/23/95

Executive Committee
FEF

Re: Index; Harry's letter

Dear Friends:

Inasmuch as you are meeting this weekend and will consider Harry's letter re the Index, I believe an immediate, though necessarily brief, reply is in order.

On his points:

I fully agree with points 1 and 2. The substance of point 2 is the type of suggestion I was soliciting in my letter of July 5, but have received from no one until now.

Regarding point 3: **Locating familiar passages is an exercise which long-time readers engage in. New readers look for topics of interest and are generally unaware of specific passages except those that the Urantia Book might share with the Bible.** I have modified the Topical Format to include a number of familiar quotes and phrases of this type and would be happy to include more at anyone's suggestion.

I do not agree that the Index should be geared primarily toward existing readers. We already know about the Concordex and Folio, and can easily find a passage using one of these tools. The Index in our edition is likely to be the only tool at the new reader's disposal and therefore must meet his or her needs rather than our own.

The Index I have prepared was not designed for the type of intensive study that Harry suggests, it was simply designed to allow a reader to find major discussions of various topics--still a large work, but much less extensive than an Exhaustive Index. In my opinion, it would not be appropriate to publish it as a separate volume because we already have plenty of separate secondary works. The need is for a reasonably comprehensive Index within the Urantia Book.

Point 4. The internal reference system **must** be used for the Index. It doesn't matter whether the page number is there, although more numbers would clutter the presentation, as Harry says. People may be "accustomed to seeing page numbers in an index," but many works use a different internal system, most notably and importantly, the Bible. Bibles are never referenced by page number. And I submit that it will be far easier to find "72:3.8" in our edition than to find Zechariah 3:2 in the Bible. (Other important examples: the Koran, the Tao Te Ching, the Upanishads, the Vedas, the Talmud, the works of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas, etc.) Indeed, many modern works, notably software manuals, use chapter and section listings in their indices rather than page numbers.

If the Index is done by the internal reference system, it will need only to be translated for use in any other language and needs no change for a different format in English (should we decide to publish a compact edition for instance). If page numbers are used, the whole thing will have to be re-done for any change in language or format.

The internal reference system is also much more accurate than page numbers. All of us know how hard it can be to locate something on a page of the UB, and our edition will have more words per page than the current edition. This is why Clyde Bedell developed his system and why the various page/paragraph and page/line systems were invented.

We must have the courage of our convictions. The internal reference system is a valuable tool. We have invented it and included it in our work. We should use it in the Index.

Point 5. Some of my headings, notably Jesus, are indeed lengthy. I was open, and remain open, to suggestions for improvements. This is a good reason for further editing, not for rejection of the total work.

Point 6. While I am sure that my software is not as sophisticated as CINDEK, I did use it in precisely the same way. No software is magic; the major work is still the manual, subjective choice and cataloging of entries. My slow progress was not due to software problems but to the essentially manual nature of the process and the immensity of the Urantia Book.

Point 7. Alas, I am no more of a professional Indexer than I am a professional typesetter, but creating anything other than an exhaustive index would be an impossible task for the "professional" who does not know the Urantia Book. I believe that the existing Topical Index (with some editing) will well meet the needs of most readers (especially new readers) and, at 100 pages in length, is also reasonably compact given the size and complexity of the Urantia Book.

Any index, created in any manner, can be formatted any way we like, but I do get the feeling that Harry is referring to the unformatted listings rather than to the formatted sample page (titled "Topical Index") when he suggests that the current format is unprofessional.

Point 8. I hope you are right. I fear the estimate is exceedingly optimistic. Without saying "I told you so," I might remind you that "it was accurately predicted" based on a certain amount of experience, that reformatting the text would significantly delay the publishing date. Based on similar experience, it might be predicted that a new indexing effort would take at least 4-5 months rather than 2-3.

Point 9. Why not see what Harry can do? At least it's free. But what exactly is a locator index?

Are there any alternatives to Harry's suggestions? The only alternative I'm aware of is to complete the Topical Index already begun. My revision work could be finished in about 6 weeks. As you know, however, I am not independently wealthy and can no longer devote myself to this task without compensation so that I can feed my family. I know that FEF is loathe to appropriate any additional funds, but there was at least one reader who in the past indicated a willingness to underwrite the effort if FEF was planning to use the Index. That reader never received assurances from FEF that the work would be used, so he has not made the planned contribution and may no longer be willing to do so.

If outside contributions are unavailable, I guess the only no-cost options would be to accept Harry's work or to use my Index without further editing.

This is, of course, your decision, and I really, personally, don't care what you do, as long as you keep the new reader and the future in mind.

Sincerely,

Merritt