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AUG 22 1980

URANTIA

John
August 8, 1980

Mr. John Hales and Mr. Tom Kendall
Urantia Brotherhood and
Urantia Foundation
533 Diversey Parkway
Chicago, Illinois 60614

Dear John and Tom:

As usual, it was a great pleasure to see both of you on my recent trip to Chicago. I greatly appreciate the time that you took, and hope that it was of some mutual benefit.

This letter is to confirm some of the subject matter about which we talked. And so there is no misunderstanding, I would like to start off by clearly stating the objective. The number one objective of the suggestions enclosed is to insure proper distribution of the URANTIA BOOK. The objective is not to promote, advertise, or overgrow the book sales. The number two objective is to have a steady, increasing distribution and sales pattern over the next fifty years. And the word steady would probably refer to something between one and ten percent growth a year, numbers to be determined in the future. And another set of sidenotes to that: this growth number is obviously not aimed at over rapid growth, but is aimed at continued development with clear objectives so that we as an organization know what we are trying to get accomplished and how many books we are trying to sell. Obviously, the URANTIA BOOK's success is not totally judged by the number of books sold, but it is a benchmark on our missionary work to the world, and our conversion of new readers can easily be seen by the number of books sold. My suggestions are being made because of the following premises:

- (1) Book sales for the last five years have been quite stagnant
- (2) Sales during this fiscal year have dropped somewhere between 50 and 60 percent of last year's sales

Suggestion number one: begin an immediate opening of book distributors across the country. As we all know the majority of all books sold through bookstores are sold via distributors, and asking a bookstore to prepay and special order an esoteric, expensive book like the URANTIA BOOK is asking too much. I believe that it is greatly hampering our distribution, and we should take this unnecessary roadblock out of the way

of the sales of the URANTIA BOOK. When we put ourselves in the shoes of a small bookstore owner, it is easy to understand why they don't like to buy from eight vendors, but prefer to buy from two or three major distributors, who give them anywhere between 30 and 90 days credit. And we obviously cannot give bookstores credit, so why not open up distributors and let them do it? In order for a distributor to be interested in a book, it has to have had at least 3,000 copies sold per year across the United States, and our beloved URANTIA BOOK has had, in the past, 10,000 books sold a year. It is definitely material that book distributors would like to pick up. In relationship to this move of opening the URANTIA BOOK into book distributors, I would suggest that we send notices to all study groups and societies throughout the country that the URANTIA BOOK has now been given to distributors, and that they go into their local bookstores and inform them that they can get the URANTIA BOOK from their distributor. The study groups and societies are not book salesmen, but there is no reason that they cannot help bookstores order the book via their distributor.

Suggestion number two: we immediately send out a sales survey to our current bookstores and ask them what they think about the shrinkwrap. In my opinion, putting the case around each book is (1) financially a waste of money, and (2) hampers the display of the book on the shelf. On top of that, the shrinkwrap is absolutely unnecessary, and when you consider the way a lot of bookstores handle books, we are asking too much of them to open up the paper box, and then open up the shrinkwrap on the book before they stack it on the shelf. All they need is the book in the case, no box, no shrinkwrap. Our job is to make the book easy for people to get, not difficult. My observation has been that when the URANTIA BOOK sits on a shelf in a bookstore, with a shrinkwrap, no one is going to thumb through that book, trying to understand the URANTIA BOOK. People do not rip open shrinkwraps in bookstores to browse through a book. If we want new readers to bump into the book in bookstores, we don't do it by sealing the book shut.

Suggestion number three: we open up book sales to any person who would like to buy the book in quantities of five, with a minimum of a 25% discount. The reason that we do not put it at ten books per person is that it is too much to ask and we might as well not go the step of opening it up if we are not going to make it reasonably convenient and worth people's time. A twenty-five percent discount is less than bookstores get, but enough to make it worthwhile for a study group member or a group of people to get together and buy five books. I feel very strongly against a 20% discount, as it is really not that much money, and also feel even stronger about not limiting it to ten books. There is no use in going a quarter-of-a-mile on a one-mile run. Either you go the mile or you don't go at all.

Suggestion number four: we seriously study and understand book sales trends in this country. It is too easy for us to account for our slow book sales by suggesting that it's the whole book industry, it's all

religious books, etc. We need to get businesslike in our approach to selling the URANTIA BOOK. We have been given a marvelous revelation, but just as the Garden of Eden was a material block of land that had to be managed and developed for the betterment of spiritual purposes, so the Urantia book is a material object and does not defy the law of physics or the law of natural materialism. Stated in simple phraseology, if book sales patterns on all other books are "X," we are kidding ourselves to think that we can go "Y," and expect good results. We must follow normal courses and can get leading key indicators from the results of other book sales. For instance, if 99% of all books sold in bookstores are bought via distributors, why would we feel that we could be the exception and sell to bookstores direct? Another example, by studying total book sales in the United States, then studying sub-categories of book sales, such as "how religious book sales are" and "how hardbound religious book sales are," we can to some extent, determine the success or failure of selling our beloved URANTIA BOOK. We should not rely on the fact that we have a revelation and that the angels are on our side, because they expect us to use sound reasoning and wisdom in approaching material problems here on earth. I suggest that we start getting industry studies. They do cost a little bit of money, but they will help us in our future financial forecasting, and book sales projections. And, before we make further pricing decisions, up or down, we need to have a clear understanding of what causes books to sell or not to sell, when it comes to price. We may have a great surprise that by reducing the book to \$29.00 does absolutely nothing, when in fact the hurdle barrier on book sales could be \$24.95 or \$19.95, which could mean that there would be no reason to reduce the price of the book unless it could be reduced dramatically. I do not know the answer to this but I feel that through proper analytical study of the current book industry, we will see at what point books sell, at what volume they sell, and for what price.

My fifth suggestion is that if everyone is too skeptical about doing anything about the current trend of book sales, and feel that my suggestions are not correct, then I would suggest you doing a sales survey with at least one hundred bookstores, and ask them questions about credit, buying books direct vs. distributor, asking them about their thoughts on shrinkwrap, and if you would like me to put together a sales survey, I would be more than happy to do it. It would be a simple questionnaire that could be filled out by bookstores to give their opinion about how to sell the URANTIA BOOK in their stores. This is a standard procedure that many companies use. Celestial Seasonings is doing a similar survey right now to a hundred stores and asking a hundred different questions. It is generally very useful to ask your customers how you can service them better and get a good grasp of their business.

My sixth and last suggestion may come as a surprise. Please consider it very carefully. I suggest that the Urantia Brotherhood add John Hay to its staff, and give him the primary responsibility for sales and distribution of the URANTIA BOOK. John Hay is willing to work for free, has said to me that he would be willing to move to Chicago, and I honestly

believe that through the good management of John he could help tremendously to improve distribution of the URANTIA BOOK. Again, at the beginning of this paper, I clearly said that our objective was not the promotion of the URANTIA BOOK. We are not trying to get it on the front page of the WALL STREET JOURNAL or the LOS ANGELES TIMES, but we are trying to get distribution. And I am sure everyone of us would feel terrible to end up on the mansion world and when they recount our actions on earth to say that we were not competent enough to even get the book into book-stores. That is hardly giving this revelation the help that it needs. We all understand that this revelation is going to take at least a thousand years to take hold, but step one is getting the book available. John Hay is a competent businessman, has had a lot of experience with financial forecasting, sales forecasting, he is very dedicated to serving the Urantia movement, he has money, friends, resources, good ideas, lots of energy, and a loving family that would stick by him in his efforts to serve this movement. He is willing to dedicate his time and resources to helping get the URANTIA BOOK distributed, and when you consider that John is financially sound enough not to have to take a job, but could work fulltime on the task of book distribution, why not use a man who has had the experience that he has had. John was an integral part in building Celestial Seasonings. He clearly understands problems at the retail shelf and through your direction and help, could be the best business manager this URANTIA BOOK has ever had or could have at this time in its existence.

Well, friends, I hope these suggestions are taken with the love and good intentions with which they are sent. We all want this movement to go forward. The world needs it.

In the Spirit, dedicated to the longtime
success of the Urantia Movement, your
friend,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mo Siegel', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Mo Siegel

hh

cc: Cristy Christiansen
Mr. Larry Posner
Mr. Dave Elders