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Editor

The Spiritual Fellowship Journal

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Merlyn H. Cox
Associate Editor

April 28, 1997

Dear David and Steve:

It appears that the Fellowship is in a difficult situation regarding publications. Although David may be able to offer some help in this project, I am taking the initiative to carry on the Journal with a different mission in mind. I present this new approach in the paper enclosed "Our Major Responsibility: Disseminating the Fifth Epochal Revelation." I contemplate sending it to the Fellowship Urantia Societies and to the members of the Triennial Delegate Assembly and see what happens. Do you have any suggestions or words of wisdom?

Also enclosed is a copy of a letter we received from Bruce Jackson that speaks of the frustrating experience he has had trying to share *The Urantia Book* with members of the church and his family. Having been dismissed from the Southern Baptist Seminary when virtually all of his doctoral requirements were completed after they discovered he was a reader of *The Urantia Book*, he is one of the "martyrs" of the Urantia movement.

Cordially,



Meredith J. Sprunger

Dr. Bruce R. Jackson

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April 22, 1997

Dr. Meredith Sprunger
Christian Fellowship Board
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Dear Meredith and Board Members:

I received your letter of April 17 and I would like to speak briefly to you and the membership of the Christian Fellowship Board. Though I am saddened by the decision to terminate the publication of the *Christian Fellowship Journal*, I wholeheartedly support your new thinking for the development of a new journal specifically written for the readers of *The Urantia Book*.

I too have spent long years endeavoring to work with the church as a Jesusonian, and have found that most Christians with whom I have shared the book are simply not ready for the new revelation. No matter how hard I have tried to work with the most select group of open minded individuals who might respond positively to the book, their response has inevitably been modest. I have found very few who have been willing to discuss the book, much less read it. Most Christians with whom I have shared the Fifth Epochal Revelation have felt that they did not need to investigate the book because they are comfortable with the status quo.

My most recent example of this involved a Professor of Literature who is a member of the "thinkers Sunday School class" at a progressive United Methodist Church. The theological beliefs that he shared with the class appeared to me to be enlightened and indicated that he is an earnest seeker of a higher truth. His skepticism of many of the traditional Biblical perspectives was openly shared with the class, and his interpretation of theological issues are in line with the teachings of the book.

I prepared a sample of my writings for his review in the hope that I could introduce him to the concept of the existence of the new revelation. Though I admit that I am not a great writer and he may legitimately criticize my work as a critical scholar, I had hoped that he would hear the message and not reject it because of flaws with the messenger. However, his reaction has been very cool. He has been unwilling to discuss the materials with me at all, and has actively avoided contact with me. My only recourse has been to pretend that I did not give him the materials and go on as if nothing happened. I had exactly the same experience with the pastor of the church.

This experience has been a reoccurring one in the past several years. As I sent my most recent article discussing the need to develop a new relationship with scripture to Meredith for editing, I had the deep feeling that this would be the last article that I would be able to write for the Christian clergy. I have become increasingly unwilling to spend my feeble mortal efforts on what now appears to me to be a losing proposition.

The problem with my writing is seated in the reoccurring message that is the only theme of my articles addressed to the clergy of the Christian church; read *The Urantia Book*. When the single and consistent message is to read something else, it is very difficult to find the motivation to

write yet another article which contains the same message. More than just frustrating, this creates an artistic paralysis which can only have one inevitable outcome: the inability to continue. As I repeat myself over and over, I find that my message becomes radicalized to the point that they will be unable to hear what I have to say.

I believe that the problem with the modern church goes far beyond the fact that they need to revamp their theology. At the heart of the matter is courage: the willingness to face radical change. The new teachings of Jesus reminds us that there is a good deal of change and revision that will result from this new revelation. These are people who are comfortable with their perspective and deeply suspicious of the "new age." Until the Spirit leads them to a new perspective, I believe that they will continue to reject the book.

But of far greater concern to me is the real possibility that *The Urantia Book* could become lost in the shuffle of modern life. There is such a plethora of books, channeled materials, new age religions, old age superstitions, and thousands of new cults appearing on the modern stage, we need to consider the possibility that we may fail in our duty to effectively share the new revelation with the world. It would be a terrible indictment of our efforts if a new epochal revelation had to be composed because the Fifth Epochal Revelation was lost due to our negligence. This is why the so-called channeled efforts of our brothers and sisters in the movement is truly tragic and probably misguided. If *The Urantia Book* requires constant revision and upgrading, then what was the original purpose of the Fifth Epochal Revelation? Though the book rejects the notion of a single and complete scripture providing all the answers for all time, surely the information contained therein would be sufficient for the immediate generations.

The greatest problem with the movement is its isolation of its scholars. Already I have had long experience with writing for the movement without ever having an effective dialogue resulting from my efforts. A particular example of this is an article that I wrote for the Jesusonian prize in theological scholarship which won a \$4000 award. Though that money was truly a blessing and helped me through a time of great crises, the theological challenges that were presented to the movement have, to my knowledge, never been examined, discussed or debated in a written forum. Though I would no longer ascribe to the perspective that I took in that article, the subject of missionary endeavor is of the most serious concern to this movement.

My involvement with *Christian Fellowship Journal* has been equally unrewarding. With the exception of my correspondence with Meredith, I have not received one solitary letter willing to dialogue about the issues that I have presented in my writings. Consider the subjects that I have endeavored to examine: music and culture, missionary outreach, the pageantry of Christmas, the essence of the Jesusonian faith, Armageddon, sexism in religion, ministry as an outsider, etc. Though I recognize that I am not the most talented writer, and though most of my articles have appeared at the very back of the journal, this has created a great deal of frustration for me over the years. All this has occurred against the background of a severely dyslexic individual who was told during his masters degree that he did not possess suitable skills for academic work. Well, that may be true, but you cannot fault my attempt to address major issues concerning our movement and our effort to interface with the modern church.

My friends, I feel that we must have the courage to turn our efforts back to the movement itself. Indeed, though the church will be able to muddle along without our contributions, this fledgling movement may be in more danger than we suspect. It is not just that people have never heard of the book, but that so many readers have left the book for other religious faiths and venues. The current popularity of the *Course of Miracles* is a contemporary example of this.

The wholesale turning away from the teachings of the Fifth Epochal Revelation by its readership should be of serious concern to our scholars. Recently I met a middle aged deeply disturbed alcoholic woman whose father had once been an avid reader of the book as a young man. He had been so dedicated to the book that upon his death the woman found boxes filled of copies of

The Urantia Book that he had attempted to give away. However, as his life had progressed, his isolation was so severe that he had turned from the teachings of Jesus, married a woman who was involved in a Satanic cult, practiced blood sacrifice, raped his son and his daughter, raped both his granddaughters, and finally committed suicide. Needless to say, when I suggested to this woman that many answers to her questions could be found in *The Urantia Book*, she disappeared from my life.

Though this case was truly extreme, other experiences in my life have been equally unfruitful. The beautiful lady who initially introduced me to the book publicly rejected the Fifth Epochal Revelation at the funeral of her 15 year daughter and is no longer a believer. The young man who read the entire copy of the book that I gave him in less than three weeks, prompting his mother to report me to the Dean of Academic Studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary some five years later, has returned to his fundamentalist religion. And finally, after giving copies of the book to every member of my immediate family, not one member of my liberal, deeply intellectual and progressive religious family has any involvement with the book. My own mother, who actually read the book, now practices a rather odd brand of the Native American religion.

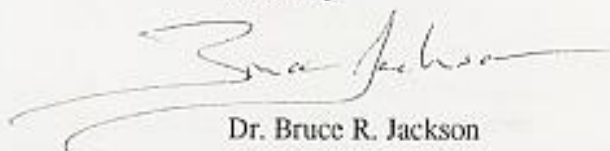
All of these examples lead me to believe that it is time that we turn our attention to the spiritual, theological and philosophical evolution and health of the movement itself. I may be able to accept my own failures as a missionary for the movement, but I suspect that others have had similar experiences.

I strongly feel that the time is at hand for the development of a rigorous theological and philosophical examination of *The Urantia Book* for the readership of the revelation. Though it is increasingly clear that the book was not intended to form a separate "Jesusonian" faith and religious institution, we are truly in need of a better system of communications between the scholars and readership of the book. The isolation of the readers of the book is truly unhealthy, and the need for dialogue, mutual support, and sharing of ideas is important and long over due.

I truly hope that you will continue to work towards the goal of establishing a new Journal that would service our cause.

Best wishes in your efforts,

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bruce R. Jackson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the left.

Dr. Bruce R. Jackson