

February 25, 1958

Rev. Henry G. Kroehler  
833 Halstead Boulevard,  
Jackson, Michigan

Dear President Kroehler and members of the Synodical Council:

Two weeks ago you brought to our attention a letter which had been written by one of our Elders to the President of our Denomination complaining of our study, with Dr. Sprunger, of the Urantia Book, and intimating that some measure of censure by the higher echelon of our Church should be applied to us.

At a special meeting of the Consistory on February 19th, the matter was presented and discussed fully. The identity of the Elder was not disclosed so that there would be as little cause for personal emotion as possible. From the discussion which followed, may I summarize the feelings of our Consistory: The action of the Elder, although sincere, was ill advised and certainly in direct contradiction of the Constitution of the Evangelical and Reformed Church; furthermore, it was an undemocratic request calling for an authoritarian action not only unwarranted but also inimical to the principles of our democratic processes, both state and church.

As a result of the discussion, the following actions were taken:

1. Motion made and seconded: "It is understood that every member of Grace Church shall recognize the lawful authority and procedures of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Any complaint shall be brought first to our local Consistory. If the decision of the local Consistory does not satisfy the person or persons carrying the complaint they may appeal to the Synodical Council. If the decision of the Synodical Council is not satisfactory an appeal may be made to the President of the Denomination.

"If any member desires to bring a charge against the minister, this charge shall be made in writing to the Synodical Council of the Michigan-Indiana Synod. Any member not following this lawful procedure shall be liable to the judicatory action of the Spiritual Council of Grace Church."

Supported 13 to 1 (Ballot vote.)

2. Resolution offered and supported: "It is understood that Dr. Sprunger will refrain from mentioning or teaching from the Urantia Book in any of his pastoral duties. As a private citizen of this community, however, we have no objection to his conducting a study group on the Urantia Book in his home, the parsonage, at 215 N. Slate Street, Culver, Indiana."

Supported 11 to 1 with two abstaining. (Ballot vote.)

Dr. Sprunger announced that since he considered this a controversial matter and not necessary to the welfare of the Church, he would not conduct a study group in the parsonage even though there was only one vote against it.

Following these motions, the Consistory members expressed their individual confidence in the efforts which Dr. Sprunger has made to bring us a larger and more meaningful vision of the truths in our Bible and a way in which to apply these truths to our daily lives. We reject any suggestion or pressure which would limit a minister or layman in respect to what he may or may not read or study in an honest search for truth, feeling that though a strong progressive approach to Christian thinking may step on some toes, such an approach is more desirable than that of preserving the "status quo" in which one progresses rapidly backwards.

Assuring you that we are not headed in that direction under our present leadership, and hoping that this satisfactorily explains our disposition of the problem, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Donald B. Hand  
President of the Consistory of Grace Church