

RECEIVED

DEC 18 1981

URANTIA

December 16, 1981

Mr. Jim Weber
18734 Cedar Creek
Houston, Texas 77042

Dear Mr. Weber:

The URANTIA Foundation has referred your letter to me. I hope I will be able to answer your questions in a manner which will be helpful. First, it would probably be enlightening for you to know how we got our Bible. Theological schools devote entire courses to this question and dozens of books are available on the subject. But you could get a short, synoptic knowledge of the Bible's origin by going to the Public Library reference shelf and get a copy of Hastings Dictionary of the Bible. Look up the term "canon," which means "officially accepted standards or books" and read about how we got our Bible.

You will find the Old Testament evolved in three main stages over thousands of years of history. It was edited by many scholars, many times. The entire canon of the Old Testament was not decided until around 90 A.D. at the famous Council of Jamia where Hebrew scholars finally decided which books should be included in the "official" scriptures of Judaism. The process and the conclusions are much more complex and extensive than this simplistic description might lead you to believe.

The New Testament began in the early Christian Church as a series of papers and letters written by many people which were circulated among believers. These papers were edited, combined, and added to by many early scholars and church leaders. The names of Apostles were often attached to the better papers so that they would have more authority for church members. From around 144 A.D. to 367 A.D. many scholars and bishops draw up their own lists of books which they thought should be canonical or officially recognized books. Finally Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, wrote an Easter letter to the churches of his diocese in the year 367 in which he discusses the books which he considered canonical. This is the first list which includes all of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as we now have it. His list, however, is in a different sequence than our current New Testament. At various Church councils in the years that followed, Athanasius' list was widely adopted and in this way we got our New Testament.

In Athanasius' pastoral letter he wrote with all of the authority of a bishop, "Let no one add to them (his list) or take away aught of them." Such authoritarian exhortations were considered necessary to protect the purity of revelatory teachings. In the same way the revelators of The URANTIA Book requested that the book be published under international copyright protection so that the purity of these

teachings could be safeguarded. These precautions are not meant to imply that God ceases to enlarge the revelation of himself and spiritual truth to succeeding generations. Early religious leaders used authoritarian warnings and admonitions frequently.

Once you understand how the content of the Bible was accumulated, adopted, and officially approved, you realize that revelation is validated by centuries of experience. Many people recognize revelation immediately because the indwelling spirit of God confirms what they hear or read but it takes many people over many years to establish a social tradition of revelation such as the Bible.

The URANTIA Book being very new must be evaluated by the indwelling spirit of God by each individual. My recommendation is that you accept nothing in The URANTIA Book or any other book unless it passes this inner test of truth. I am confident that a thousand years hence, we will have a solid social tradition witnessing to the revelatory quality of The URANTIA Book.

Revelation is always the product of the action of God in the life of man. God has an infinite number of ways to do this. In Jesus of Nazareth he used both genetic-physical and spiritual means to bring revelation to us in the form of a person. In the writing's of Paul he used spiritual inspiration of the mind of Paul to bring us revelation in the form of brief letters to churches. In John's book of Revelation he used a vision to the mind of John to bring us revelation. In The URANTIA Book he used the indwelling spirit (Thought Adjuster) of an individual and Midwayer help to bring revelation in the form of a book. God could use an infinite number of channels and manifestations to bring revelation to his mortal children. It is God's wisdom which determines the time, place, method, and form of revelation. We might speculate on why God uses certain channels and forms but this would only be an educated guess. The spirit of God is always active in the world and in this sense revelation is continuous - usually through inner guidance to individuals or prophets who share these insights with their society. Periodically epochal revelations occur - such as the coming of Jesus and the appearance of The URANTIA Book. Epochal revelations naturally have a much greater effect on our world than the continuous forms of evolutionary revelation. A study of these epochal revelations shows that each succeeding one enlarges and enhances the earlier epochal revelations.

If you will carefully study the life of Jesus in The URANTIA Book, you will discover there is no contradiction of spiritual teachings or facts found in the Biblical story. Certain physical or material facts or assumptions are corrected and Jesus' entire life and teachings are enlarged and enhanced more fully revealing his historic life and teachings.

For instance the Biblical scholars of mainline Christianity have long recognized that the story of the immaculate conception and virgin birth were added by the early church to make his divine nature more believable for the church member of those times. Theologians have observed that

at best these claims are of minor importance since they are not even mentioned in two of the Biblical gospels. The revelators of The URANTIA Book do not even mention these doctrines. It is assumed that the Father could incarnate his son as a mortal of our world through the natural process of conception and birth. The URANTIA Book fully affirms Jesus' divine nature. If you will examine the few seeming contradictions between the Biblical record and The URANTIA Book, you will find some correction of material factors or assumptions but never is there a contradiction of spiritual truths.

Revelation must always be given in the language, knowledge frames of reference, and philosophical concepts which are meaningful to the people given this revelation in the time in which it is given. As human knowledge expands revelation uses these more advanced concepts to convey its spiritual message. This is a never ending process.

Your reference to Satan as the possible source of The URANTIA Book is both natural for one trained in Fundamentalistic Christianity and interesting. You will remember this was the same possibility raised in connection with the message of Jesus. Jesus' response to this accusation I think is as good as can be made. He said he should be judged by the fruits of his life - "How can Satan cast out Satan?" The URANTIA Book should be judged in the same way. You will find it supports the mission and message of Jesus and refutes the intentions and message of Satan! Epocal revelation will probably always meet the same reception given the message of Jesus. The fundamentalists (Pharisees) will label it a work of the devil; the liberals and power structure (Sadducees) will largely ignore it as irrelevant until it interferes with their power or pocket book; but the common people will receive it gladly.

The statement you make inferring that one must either choose the Bible or The URANTIA Book strongly suggests you have not read The URANTIA Book thoroughly or are lacking in Biblical knowledge. A knowledge of The URANTIA Book will give you a greater appreciation of the Bible. Many URANTIA Book readers have not become seriously interested in the Bible until they have read The URANTIA Book. The best analogy of the relationship between the Bible and The URANTIA Book is the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament. The New Testament fulfills and upsteps the best in the Old Testament. You will find The URANTIA Book does the same to the Bible.

Early in the Christian Church a wealthy ship-owner by the name of Marcion headed a movement to irradicate Jewish influences in Christianity. He condemned the Old Testament and attempted to throw it out of Christian scripture. He was declared a heretic and excommunicated. Any reader of The URANTIA Book who took this same attitude toward the Bible, in my judgment, would be making this same error. The Bible is more meaningful to me now than it was before I read The URANTIA Book - and I valued the Bible highly before I read The Urantia Book.

Your statement that The URANTIA Book does not lay out a "glorious path to follow Jesus Christ" and "cannot take the Christian's hand and lead him through his troubled life" could not be more in error. You apparently have not read the book except to brose here and there. The URANTIA Book does lay out a glorious path to follow Jesus Christ and takes the Christian's hand and leads him through life in a wonderful manner. If you are inspired by the New Testament, you will be thrilled by The URANTIA Book.

Although you believe that God does not wish to reveal "the secrets of heaven," you must realize there is the possibility that God might not agree with you. Every prophet in the history of the Old and New Testaments has met this same unbelief. Festus even called Paul "mad" to assume the mission and message of Jesus was the wave of the future. It is good to be cautious and critical; but we need to be open enough to allow the spirit to lead us to larger truth. Jesus told his apostles in the gospel of John that he would send the Spirit of Truth or the Comforter and he would lead them into greater truths in the future. We must be sensitive to this Spirit of Truth.

I would suggest that you start reading the life and teachings of Jesus in The URANTIA Book. Read it carefully, critically, and prayerfully. When you have finished reading the entire life of Christ you will know what its real message is. Then would you write me and tell me what you think of it. We send you our warm best wishes for a Christ-centered Christmas and a promising New Year.

Cordially,



Meredith J. Sprunger