

BSL letterhead

24 September 1986

Dear Gordon, Bellamy

It was a pleasant surprise to see you last weekend and to see the condensed version of your production. I see no reason, unless you do, that we have to postpone your January presentation to the audience at The Boulder School. I want to make my comments in two categories, (1) as a member of URANTIA Brotherhood and one who is, in some measure, officially responsible for what happens at our school, and (2) as a fellow student, philosopher, and teacher.

Unfortunately, it is no easy matter at this stage in the development of your seminar for you to comply with Foundation guidelines for the use of material from The URANTIA Book. I would not lay this burden upon you except that I feel that it is important for a number of reasons, which can be simply summarized: (1) The Urantia Foundation is entrusted with the legal protection of the integrity of the text, so that all future generations shall be able to enjoy what we have in our hands through so little effort of our own. It is not necessary to sermonize here on the values implicit in this observation. (2) The Boulder School is an extension of the Rocky Mountain URANTIA Society of Denver—which has accepted the licensing agreement; for formal and substantive reasons, we are committed to teamwork with the Urantia Foundation.

Your presentation whets appetites for the eventual presentation of The URANTIA Book at the end of the third evening of your seminar. You whet appetites, in part, by handing out passages quoted from the book without any footnote except "T.U.B." I can understand why you would not want to mention the title of the book or risk involving yourself in a discussion of the book at an early stage in the seminar—which after all is all about character progression, not about The URANTIA Book.

One simple solution is to request that The Urantia Foundation give you special permission to present your seminar exactly as you have prepared it thus far, with perhaps such improvements in concept and expression as may evolve in your thinking. This solution is time consuming—it is not likely that you would get a decision by January (except perhaps for the January showing (?)); and I doubt that the Foundation would authorize the general, public use of material from the book for which you have prepared.

By the way, copyright matters need to be considered for any book you use. Your borrowing from Mortimer Adler, for example, was handled very unprofessionally.

Another second solution is to find alternate passages, from other literature, or to create statements of your own which convey the essential truths that you want to present to the seminar participants. Were you to write something on your own, it could not be a paraphrase (note university standards regarding plagiarism); it would have to be a genuine creation resulting from your functioning as a living prophet, processing the truth you find through the lens of your personal experience. This kind of solution sacrifices fidelity to the letter of the revealed text, but it

gains values of authenticity of another sort, and perhaps may reach the audience at this stage more successfully.

This second solution should be considered not only for the material you quote from the book, but also for the material you present on your slides, not in the form of quotations, but in the form of lists on your chart. The best example that comes to mind is your list of the functions of mind ("intuition, understanding, courage, knowledge, counsel, worship, and wisdom." If I were to redo this list, I would simplify it and ask what I could honestly say that I had comprehended for myself about the functioning of the human mind and what could I honestly present to others. The result is that I would not be so inclined to risk overloading, overteaching.

A third imaginable solution is to keep the quotations and the idea sequences that you take from the book in the presentation but to redesign the seminar so that the source of your ideas is explicit from the outset. One major disadvantage is that this method would sacrifice the artistic and dramatic strategy of your seminar, and perhaps make your purpose impossible of accomplishment.

A fourth solution would be to use the presentation for readers of The URANTIA Book. Permission would be easier to secure. The drama would be lost. The outreach function would be sacrificed. But much of the teaching value would still be there. If it were not so, the seminar would be inappropriate for The Boulder School. But in fact, students of the book do benefit from creatively designed presentations of truths they have been studying.

None of these solutions is altogether satisfactory, but neither is it satisfactory to leave the seminar as it stands. I'm glad I don't have to make the decision and accept the sacrifices involved. But there is no way to conserve all the relevant values with this one package.

My next series of comments pertains to ideas I got from the slides.

1. To start with the positive aspects of my response: I continue to get nourishment from your excellent contrasts between the fruits of the spirit and various inappropriate emotions. I like the handout about reason, logic, and faith. And except for the filter—"Man"—I like the truth, beauty, and goodness handout. My impression is that you would make an emotionally attractive and compassionate and dynamic presenter.

2. Next, a couple of points on which we have already touched. If you intend to reach atheists and agnostics with this, it may be difficult to succeed if you insert the concept of the indwelling spirit as a basic component of personality at such an early stage. As you pointed out, I have no idea from your condensed showing of how you would in fact present this concept in a seminar.

The velocity and density of material made it all extremely difficult to follow. I'm sure that a seminar presentation would have a different rhythm; but it is wise to try out the full-length seminar on a friendly critic to make sure on this point.

3. Next a couple of relatively minor criticisms.

(a) In the contrast you present between egoism and altruism, I was reminded of the fact that the Adjuster places a "slight preference" on the altruistic urge; the goal of religious living is not to extinguish the self-interested motivation (of course that's not what you were proposing...). Or do you see it differently?

(b) Your discussion of the guilt cycle did not ring true to me. Request for forgiveness can only be made authentically by an individual who has achieved insight into the "cause" or error of his misdeed; such request may be made to the Father in confidence; and the experience of forgiveness from God—not insight into a cause—delivers the erring person from the "cycle."

4. Now I come to more important criticisms.

(a) The slides made your thesis seem very complex and highly abstract. I'm not

prepared to assume that all these problems would totally disappear if more time and other short films were available.

(b) I thought that some people might be encouraged by your presentation into needlessly introspective paths of self-contemplation. Giving yourself a score every day on your spirit quotient, mind quotient, body quotient, soul quotient, emotion quotient, and character quotient—who's going to buy this? Who's going to DO this?

(c) I personally resisted your quantitative images of supermaterial qualities.

Character quotient. First of all, there is no need to deny the rough measurability of intelligence or the role of intelligence in human living. But I think you need a better way of conceptualizing character for your audience. Even though you are intending to introduce The URANTIA Book to people, this arithmetical tool is the culmination of your presentation. I'm afraid you'll lose people in droves with these vague "quantities." The definition of character that I have formulated for my university classes begins with the (Socratic) concept of soul; I then say that character is the humanly feelable quality of an individual's soul.

Well, that's an honest appraisal. I hope that you may find some of these comments useful. I salute your originality and independent initiative in taking new truth into the world.

When you come to The Boulder School, be sure not to cut out the films that you mentioned. One of the major themes among my goals for the school is that we should appreciate and make use of the arts. I do not find it easy to incorporate the arts in our program as fully as I would like. Your use of diverse sources will stimulate us all to do better in this area.

Gordon, our next meeting, I trust, will be at Stapleton Airport in Denver. It will be a pleasure to receive you in our home. I wish you the best as you prepare the January seminar. And I am delighted to interact further on any of these points or on any other matters. May the peace of God's spirit continue to carry you forward in the service of truth.

Sincerely,

Jeff Wattles