

7 October 1987

Dear John,

This is an evening's gathering of the thoughts of months. I have not addressed every issue, but I have put several things down that are part of an adequate reflection on long-range planning. Obviously, it all stands in need of group wisdom.

A LONG-RANGE PLAN FOR THE BOULDER SCHOOL

First, the super-long range. I take it that the top planetary priority (aside perhaps from avoiding world war) is a spiritual renaissance. The spiritual renaissance (centered increasingly on the gospel) will be the primary religious phenomenon in the ascendancy over the next century or so. After that time, when people begin to ask on a massive scale how to redesign human institutions in the light of a new-found loyalty to God, The URANTIA Book will become the primary phenomenon in the ascendancy. At that time, the Boulder School will be called upon to provide teachers at a currently incredible rate. Asoka will smile to observe how long it takes us to put out twenty-five thousand teachers. Obviously, the demand for teachers could accelerate dramatically much sooner than that. The current program of the school, with concentrations in gospel outreach, religious philosophy, and study group leadership, is designed to serve these two great and interrelated priorities.

Next, the ordinary long range. Our primary raison d'etre, I take it, comes from the oft-quoted mandate to prepare "teachers and leaders." Hence I am assuming that our primary, and for the present, sole market, is current readers of The URANTIA Book. I do not envision trying to market our program to the general public, for reasons pertaining to the classic "publicity issue," reasons that require a very different kind of paper to address.

There are numerous obstacles to the prospects for the Boulder School's ambition to address this need to prepare teachers and leaders.

1. Paucity of demand.
2. Institutional immaturity.
3. Increasing competition from other individuals and schools.

I propose the following to meet these concerns.

INCREASING THE DEMAND FOR THE SERVICES OF THE BOULDER SCHOOL

My formula is: globalize our notion of where we can serve;
generate products for remote readers;
strive unceasingly for excellence;
be patient and trusting regarding the fruits of our labors;
advertise

The Boulder School must envision itself as a ministry to the global readership. Through short seminars, traveling presentations, video, publications, and computer library sharing, we can reach this market. The selection of appropriate media would follow a commitment to a particular seminar or course and our understanding of what our potential market is and how best to reach it. The greatest challenge is to build excellence in offering after offering, so that our products are widely welcomed as being consistently mature and reliable and informative and stimulating.

Areas of present excellence, which could be developed into good packages include (roughly in order of the priority I would suggest):

- How to read The URANTIA Book
- Ethics
- Principles of Epochal Revelation Management (this one will be synthesized at the conclusion of this year)
- The gospel and how to share it
- Philosophy from the perspective of The URANTIA Book.
- Jesus as a model for human development (the proposal for the summer intensive)
- Public Speaking
- Lessons from The URANTIA Book on thinking, feeling, and doing

A series could also be developed on The URANTIA Book and the great issues of our age; the current class in contemporary theology is working in that direction. Another one on science and The URANTIA Book is in the works. This latter one, to do it ideally, would require the school to function in the role of synthesizer, bringing various speakers together on selected topics and offering the product.

By making our packages available world-wide, we gain access to a potentially very great demand.

By creating excellent packages—which we revise at least once a decade—we generate interest in actually coming to the school. Another reason we might generate interest in coming to the school is that I don't publish my outlines. I talk about the value of them; I demonstrate some of the results of doing this work, but if people want to engage in this level of study with me, they have to come here to do it. (I can't predict whether this will ever become much of an attraction or not.)

But also, by focusing on a larger market, we reduce the priority of the need—which is very important nonetheless—to provide scholarships and/or jobs for students here.

We market our program especially to college students, trying to communicate a pattern of taking two years (like the Mormons..) to study the book intensively before you enter your career.

We do not concern ourselves about immediate results from our graduates. Many will find, I believe, that they have been prepared for assignments that are larger than they suspect—like the women who listened to the evangelists train and who were later surprised by a call.

We do not expect a high proportion of potential "teachers and leaders" to be obviously present in the entering class.

Note however: the class this year is definitely stronger. The level of study is higher. The number doing outlines is much greater. The discussion is more intellectually sharp.

What do we expect of ourselves? To set a standard of excellence in study of The URANTIA Book and related material—a standard in our school and a standard for the larger readership—and to increase that standard as the years go on (esp. in the 75% of teaching which is drama—i.e., study aids, overhead displays, cartoons, and all the paraphernalia which make of each class a dynamic and memorable experience, not just another discussion around the table. To develop and market at least one package per year that can be shared with a larger readership.

In order to pursue the ever-advancing goal of excellence, we need the

following:

1. Over time, to add outstanding staff who can cooperate in course development and in the production of these diverse packages.
2. I (or the persons in my capacity) need to have time to continue to be a trail-blazer in research and writing. (a) Any university knows the importance of research and publication, going to professional meetings and presenting papers, etc. Without individuals working on the frontier of current knowledge and insight, the academic climate stagnates, and the better students want to go somewhere else. (b) Furthermore, the students need a model in their instructor. No one comes to a school to learn something that is not being done well there. If part of what we teach people how to do is to introduce the teachings of The URANTIA Book and the book itself into our culture, we must model that activity in order to attract others who may want to do it also.

I believe that an ideal way to pursue these goals is to conceive of the school program as a three year program. The third year is a developmental year for the faculty, creating packages for sharing in different markets and doing travel to conferences, recruiting, fund-raising, etc. Salaries could be prorated. During this time, students wishing to pursue particular projects could do so with supervision, but the regular program of classes would not occur.

This would have the advantage of creating a sense of specialness and drama about the times when the school was in regular session.

Unless the cave sells and Cell Tech takes off like a rocket, this ideal will probably have to await a stronger financial situation for the school.

Another component in a program to increase the demand for the school is advertising. We can use perfectly clear code in mass media advertising without in fact advertising The URANTIA Book as such. We can, for example, talk about a program to study "The Universal Father, cosmology and planetary evolution, and the life and teachings of Jesus." Every book reader will know exactly where we are coming from, and yet suitable discretion will have been maintained. We will reach the target market, and we can be happy to introduce the book to non-readers who inquire for our literature.

GAINING INSTITUTIONAL MATURITY

At Armstrong College I saw a regressive situation for seven years, and I went through two accreditation reviews there. There were two chronic problems which the faculty, many of the students, and the accreditation team observed repeatedly: (1) the finances of the school were so centered in the owner-president that anyone who might have thought of donating money to the school gave somewhere else: to give to Armstrong College was like putting money in a rich man's pocket. (2) The administration of the school was so dominated by the owner-president, an impulsive man, given to outbursts of anger, with no background as an educator, that the administrative staff could not function normally. His case was extreme, a genuine tyrant, partly buffered by a series of deans (I served under seven of them in my years there).

The Boulder School needs to establish an endowment and an administration independent of the control of any one benefactor. Only thus will significant fund-raising be possible (and I do not expect the initial move to endowment-status to be a one-man contribution). And only thus will administration be normalized. I do not foresee such a move as possible for a couple of years at least. But a long-term, serious commitment to the Boulder School entails, I believe, a commitment to a normal financial and administrative condition for the school.

Accreditation would help us meet the international demand for our services.

That interest is actual, not potential, and growing. Students could come on the G.I. Bill. We could open up collegial relations with other institutions of higher learning. And we would be periodically buried in red tape.

Meeting the standards of accreditation, without going through the formal procedure, would I believe, in many cases, help us considerably. I have yet, however, to discover precisely what those standards are.

FROM COMPETITION TO COOPERATION

The School of Meanings and Values is already underway. Another school will probably be started by Mike Schofner-Ross in Pennsylvania on large rural acreage and aggressive business backing within a few years. Good ideas spread, as they should. The Education Committee is (surprise!) taking the position that the Brotherhood itself should not provide a school so much as offer coordinating assistance to others individuals and groups who may desire it as they pursue the training of teachers and leaders in their localities. There is a very high proportion of teachers among URANTIA Brotherhood members, and there is a noticeable move on the part of several of them to pursue advanced degrees. Students of the book with new Ph.D.'s are becoming common. The prominence of the Boulder School is bound to diminish. There is not enough activity locally to make the school worthwhile.

We should rejoice in the imminent progress that such data augur. Can we still contribute substantially in this evolving climate? Undoubtedly. I am confident that we can—if we use our people resources wisely. Is it worth your continued and possibly increased financial support? That question is between you and God. Is it worth my continued allegiance? I believe that it is.

I do not want you to feel responsible for my long-term welfare. I take my risks with my eyes open.

I sometimes wonder whether such an idealistic institution as a school for students of The URANTIA Book can really be built in Boulder—we at times seem to lack an appropriate base of education and culture in those with an interest in the school. Can a school capable of serving our long-range goals begin in this soil? There does not seem to be a strong commitment to high standards of education.

Nonetheless, I believe in our prospects. Yes, I will pursue other jobs; but the task does seem well-nigh hopeless (how do you explain to a philosophy department what you've been doing at the Boulder school?) The main reason, however, that it seems hopeless, is that I do not feel an opening from God in another direction at the present time. It is prudent to do some looking, even under present circumstances, and I truly thank you for the encouragement to consider alternatives.

May God guide each of us, and all others concerned with the future of what you have thus far begun.

Sincerely,



Jeff Wattles