

URANTIA FOUNDATION

INTRA-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

FROM M. Kulieke

DATE May 22, 1974

TO The Trustees and Trustees Emeritus

SUBJECT Library of Congress Classification

The last letter received from the Library of Congress (specifically from Robert R. Holmes, Chief, Subject Cataloging Division) stated the following:

"The Urantia Book will classify in BP605.U74.....I again thank you for your informative letter of July 27, 1967 and for the assistance which you have given us in developing our classification system to accomodate The Urantia Book and works about it."

It sounded as though Mr. Holmes had proceeded to change the classification from BF 1999 to BP 605. Indeed, he had. Attached to this report is a photocopy of a page from The National Union Catalog, printed in 1971. Although this specific entry concerns Clyde Bedell's Concordex, it is obvious that The URANTIA Book is now classified in BP 605 and that the scheme shown in Mr. Holmes' last letter has been followed, at least for the most part. (Also attached is a photocopy of this classification scheme.)

Obviously, the next thing was to find out what BP 605 means. Classification tables do not ordinarily give terribly precise information. Item #3 attached is a photocopy of a page from the Library of Congress Classification tables outlining BP 605. The title is simply "Other Beliefs and Movements". In small letters underneath is "Akin to cults oriental in origin".

I tried to find out what books were actually classified here. The University of Chicago has one of the largest collections in the country, ranking somewhere in the top 10. I learned that they have only two books classified in BP 605: The URANTIA Book and a book on Scientology, neither of which are "akin to cults oriental in origin". In conversation with Mr. Bochanyin of the Regenstein Library at the University, he indicated that the Library of Congress has been ignoring the line about oriental cults and has been classifying items here that cannot be distinctly identified as occult or Christian. He said the University of Chicago was following suit in this.

When the Library of Congress is unable to classify a work more precisely, they have three options open to them:

- Other beliefs and movements occult in nature.
- Other beliefs and movements akin to Christianity.
- Other beliefs and movements (akin to cults oriental in origin).

You will note on the page from The National Union Catalog that the Dewey Decimal Number has not yet been changed to correspond to BP 605. The number classification still refers to the occult. Dewey schedules are more limited. If the Library of Congress does change the Dewey number, it will not necessarily mean the same thing as BP 605.

The fact is that The URANTIA Book cannot be properly classified. Again its unique nature serves to create difficulty for us and others. The question right now is whether you are satisfied (under the circumstances) with the BP 605 classification. If you are not, I have gathered a few other possibilities that also don't apply to the Book but might be more satisfactory to you. I can make a report of these in short order if you decide against BP 605. I am certain that we would encounter stiff resistance from the Library of Congress in changing to any one of them. It would certainly require a visit to the Library by one or more of the trustees with little likelihood of success.

Personal Thoughts and suggestions:

The first thing under consideration is whether you object to the title, "Other Beliefs and Movements." We often speak of the URANTIA Movement ourselves and I don't believe there is any implication here of denominations and sects. I think the title can be taken literally though clarification should be sought from the Library of Congress.

If this title is considered acceptable, the choice is between occult, Christian or nondescript movements. The first two are definitely out. If it is true that BP 605 is not reserved for oriental cults only, I think it is a satisfactory number. I don't think this number specifically suggests dissimilarity with Christianity but simply means there is not sufficient similarity for the BX 9998 classification (in other words, the Bible is not used as a base for the movement). It would also be a good idea to get clarification on these points from the Library of Congress.

My present understanding is that BP 605 is a genuinely nondescript classification. Mr. Bochanyin described it as a catch-all that his library avoids if at all possible because the classification doesn't really mean anything.

Therefore, I tentatively believe the BP 605 classification is acceptable. The primary concern is whether people get a wrong impression of the URANTIA teachings from the classification. I don't believe they do. The number simply doesn't mean enough to pick up much of an impression at all.

What will this number do to access of the book? First, people do not look up books in the card catalog by number. They are accessed by subject, author, and title. There is no subject heading assigned to The URANTIA Book. Individuals must specifically look under the word URANTIA to find the book. They find the book by the number but with 99% of the people, this number is only a locational device. So if they go to pick it out or are just browsing through the stacks, what will they find? They will find the BP 605 section just after books on Islam, Bahaiism, and Theosophy and just before books on Christianity. If there are other books besides The URANTIA Book in the BP 605 section, they will be on a wide variety of subjects. I don't see how an individual can draw any conclusion whatsoever. The title of the book is such that any normally curious person pulls it from the shelf and forms his first impression by looking at the front pages of the Book showing the titles of the four parts.

What effect will this number have regarding the placing of the Book in book stores? Book stores, unless highly specialized, simply have books categorized as either religious or occult. Any number between BL and BX will serve to have a book placed in the section marked Religious. In Kroch & Brentano's, The URANTIA Book is in the section Religion-Bibles. I found it in one store sitting next to Who's Who in the New Testament. The card in the book simply says under Subject: religious. This should be the trend in all book stores with the new classification.

If the Trustees decide they are satisfied with the BP 605 number, it is important that they press for a corresponding change in the Dewey Decimal Number. Dewey classification is far more widely used, particularly in foreign countries. The Library of Congress system is generally used only in very large libraries containing a million volumes or more.