

URANTIA.

URANTIA FOUNDATION

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May 31, 1994

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Dear Friends,

It was good to visit with you recently in Austin. We thank you for your hospitality and for your frank sharing of views about things having to do with the dissemination of *The Urantia Book* and its teachings.

Richard Keeler and I recognize that your efforts are directed toward actively furthering the mission of *The Urantia Book*. Since we share this same goal, what is it, if anything, that specifically constitutes our differences?

Rodan of Alexandria taught that the first step in solving a problem is to isolate exactly what it is. So allow us to lay out clearly the views of the Urantia Foundation with the hope of furthering understanding and, eventually, energetic and mutual cooperation between us.

The Urantia Foundation is a *trust*. We are entrusted with certain tasks which we have vowed to accomplish on behalf of those who originally established the trust and on behalf of those who actually delivered what Urantia Foundation publishes: *The Urantia Book*. Please consider the obvious: we are the publisher of the book to which you and the entire group in Austin have devoted yourselves. If Urantia Foundation has not, at least to some degree, succeeded in its given tasks of publishing and making *The Urantia Book* available, you would have no book to which you could be so devoted. In the "Declaration of Trust Creating Urantia Foundation," we are explicitly charged: "It shall be the duty of the Trustees to retain absolute and unconditional control of all plates and other media for the printing and reproduction of *The Urantia Book* and any translation thereof" (Art. 3.3). Additionally, we are charged: "It shall be the duty of the Trustees to disseminate the teachings and doctrines of *The Urantia Book* and to devise, to develop, and to effectuate means and methods for such

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dissemination" (Art. 3.4). Neither of these two duties is optional. We cannot shirk them; nor can we allow others, regardless of how well-motivated, how intelligent, or how efficient they are, to "devise, develop, and effectuate means and methods" for printing or distributing *The Urantia Book* which *they* might prefer or think are superior to the choices of the Trustees of Urantia Foundation. Our trust, the trust which created Urantia Foundation some five years before the book was published, is quite clear about these matters. The trust document, with its attendant duties, is unalterable, unamendable, and perpetual.

While one individual (or group of individuals) may want to go faster or slower, or try some other "means and methods" than those chosen by Urantia Foundation, thousands of people are expressly grateful to Urantia Foundation for the work which it has accomplished and continues to accomplish. Our mailing list includes about 12,000 households and is constantly growing because more and more people are discovering the book which we publish and distribute to bookstores and libraries.

In other words, our work is succeeding. Over 275,000 books have been printed; the book has been translated into French, Spanish, and Finnish. The first draft of the Russian translation is over halfway done; the Dutch translation is nearing completion; the Korean translation has begun; the Swedish translation has begun; preliminary efforts are underway in Chinese, Japanese, German, Italian, and Hungarian. An English Concordance and a Finnish Index are available. The Audio Version, which has been painstakingly produced by a professional recording company and supervised by a longtime reader of the book with professional recording experience, should be available in July of this year.

But in all that we have done, we ask you to consider the reasoning behind our "means and methods." We have quite deliberately kept ourselves out of the picture so that there is nothing between *The Urantia Book* and the individual. We do not require that anybody interested in *The Urantia Book* meet us, like us, or agree with this or that interpretation. Along these same lines, we also discourage other individuals and groups from taking up positions between the individual and the book. Our intention is to make the book potentially attractive to people of as many segments, races, and religions of civilization as is possible. We feel that some marketing techniques, which might make the book attractive to one segment of society, might make it unattractive to others. We are aware that many people

working in the different institutions of our civilization are already using the teachings of *The Urantia Book* anonymously and without fanfare. In fact, fanfare would quickly disrupt their uplifting efforts. On the other hand, for those who do want to band together in conscious cooperation, we have established the International Urantia Association (IUA) to foster in-depth study of *The Urantia Book* and the orderly dissemination of its teachings. All this is to indicate something of the way by which we are currently fulfilling our trust.

In his advice to Andrew at the Last Supper, Jesus revealed some important principles of his universe administration:

Ever since the ordination of you and your brethren as messengers of the kingdom, you have been self-governing in all group administrative affairs except that I designated you as the acting head of these chosen ones. In no other temporal matter have I acted to direct or to influence your decisions. And this I did in order to provide for leadership in the direction of all your subsequent group deliberations. In my universe and in my Father's universe of universes, our brethren-sons are dealt with as individuals in all their spiritual relations, but in all group relationships we unfailingly provide for definite leadership. Our kingdom is a realm of order, and where two or more will creatures act in co-operation, there is always provided the authority of leadership (1958-59).

We do not ask that you agree with the "means and methods" which we have devised and continue to adjust, develop, and evolve. Nonetheless, a clear understanding of what we are doing and why we are doing it should be helpful, even if only in the sense of Rodan's suggestion to isolate the problem. Most importantly, we do ask you not to undertake public "means and methods" which directly counter the means and methods which we have chosen. This request does not mean that you should not inform us of useful information, advise us, or even constructively criticize us with the hope of furthering our mutual purpose.

So what, if anything, separates us in terms of policy at the moment?

First, your desire to subsidize the book. We have reason to believe that this practice, whether carried out locally, nationally, or internationally, impedes, rather than furthers, the goal of making *The Urantia Book* accessible to as many different people through as many convenient channels as possible. That is why our distribution policy emphasizes placing the books in full-service bookstores. Since *The Urantia Book* does not limit its teachings to any

particular political, cultural, or religious group, we have taken efforts to keep the book free of association with any such group. When such a group sets itself up as a "source" for the book by distributing it free or on a subsidized basis, the false impression is created (whether intended or not) that *The Urantia Book* has some special association with that group. Subsidization by a particular group thus interferes with the free market for sale of the book to a broad variety of people, through convenient and "neutral" channels, i.e., commercial bookstores and libraries.

Furthermore, subsidization may indicate a lack of confidence in the book to stand on its own in the bookstore arena. Does epochal revelation need to be subsidized in the wealthiest nation on the earth?

In addition, given the greatly increased flow of information in recent years, due to fax, phone, E-mail, and increased travel opportunities, what someone is doing in one market is not unnoticed in others. Persons who may not agree with the particular political, cultural, or religious group will be less likely to obtain the book if they perceive, rightly or wrongly, that they must obtain it through that group, or, if they perceive that purchasing *The Urantia Book* implies some agreement or affinity with that group. Conversely, a broader and more varied spectrum of people is likely to obtain the book if it is readily available through full-service bookstores without sociological attachments.

While the work associated with the dissemination of *The Urantia Book* and its teachings clearly needs the personal and financial contributions of devoted students of *The Urantia Book*, we do not believe that subsidization of the English *Urantia Book* is necessary or desirable. Our experience with bookstores in many countries, but particularly in the U.S., indicates that *The Urantia Book* is a great deal at the suggested retail price of \$48. In fact, we have been repeatedly advised by book industry consultants that \$48 for the English book is too low.

Second, your advertising the book in the newspaper and on TV presents several problems. We ourselves do in-house advertising within the book industry. Twice a year we send mailings to over 18,000 bookstores announcing the availability and easy terms for ordering *The Urantia Book*. (By the way, about 4000 bookstores regularly order *The Urantia Book* from us, that is, more than one out of five bookstores.) Every year, we attend

the American Booksellers Convention where we display the book, answer questions, and take orders from bookstores. We do that as part of our effort to fulfill our charge in the Declaration of Trust. However, we do not advertise in the mass media. Isn't it a bit strange that a group, which is neither the publisher of a given book, nor its representative, takes that public responsibility upon itself? (Or that several groups not associated with the publisher do so?) While we can understand your point of view--quite simply, you would like to further the spread of *The Urantia Book*--can you see someone else's advertising of the book which we publish from our point of view?

Third, your association of *The Urantia Book* with one particular cultural expression, namely, the New Age. As mentioned above, our studied effort has been to present *The Urantia Book* to civilization in such a way that people from *all* cultural, racial, and religious viewpoints can be led to *The Urantia Book* without being predisposed to reject it. We deliberately avoid left-wing or right-wing politics, formal association with churches, synagogues, ashrams, or mosques, or association with those either for or against the constellation of thoughts and beliefs variously associated with New Age. While we are happy to sell the book to New Age bookstores, advertising and subsidizing *The Urantia Book* in association with a particular New Age bookstore runs strongly counter to our policy.

Our policy stresses the dissemination of *The Urantia Book* and its teachings through non-invasive methods. One method of such non-invasive dissemination is by placing the book in libraries. We are aware of many readers who have discovered the book because it was in their local library. There is much more work that can be done in this area, but the Foundation's International Library Placement Program has already had much success. For example, over half of the readers recently attending a conference in Australia reported that they originally discovered *The Urantia Book* in a library. As well as numerous library placements of the book in the U.S., the French, Spanish, and Finnish versions translations are also being placed. We are happy to report that twelve books have been placed in Cuban libraries.

Another non-invasive method is sharing the book personally, one-on-one with someone who has begun to ask questions which naturally lead to an in-depth discussion of *The Urantia Book*. This approach requires great personal effort, commitment, and skill, but

studies on evangelism have shown that the person-to-person approach is the most effective means of evangelism.

Allow me to quote from the Charter of IUA, where this same issue is addressed: Mass-media advertising and promotional gimmicks are inconsistent with the dignity of *The Urantia Book*. Furthermore, they are ultimately counterproductive. Experience has shown that *The Urantia Book* requires time: time to read, time to think about, time to incorporate into one's life. Premature mass-media exposure short-circuits the necessary time component of evolution. By removing the gentle ingredient of time, advertising and mass-media promotion are actually unfair to those they would try to enlighten (Charter, p. 4).

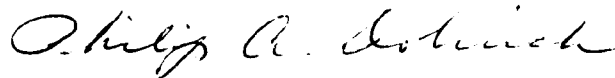
Finally, giving the book away (or subsidizing it) takes away the opportunity for a seeker to invest something of himself in his search. Based on personal experience and numerous reports from readers, we believe that the overwhelming majority of books which are given away are not read. The psychology of giving away the book or of subsidizing it runs counter to the powerful force of self-motivation. It may actually make it more difficult for the recipient to become a dedicated reader.

What we would like to invite you to do is to redirect your personal and financial efforts to work with the Urantia Foundation. Help us get the book into Austin bookstores, but let us do so under the assigned trust of Urantia Foundation. Help us disseminate *The Urantia Book* and its teachings, not by subsidizing the English book in a country and city that hardly need subsidization, but by contributing to the establishment of overseas agencies from which we can more easily distribute the book to people overseas. Furthermore, you can help us by contributing to the fund for translations. Each translation is currently costing about \$350,000 from start to finish and taking around ten years to complete. Help us get started or get further along in some key languages. Or, if you prefer, help us with our cost of maintaining the central network through which all students of *The Urantia Book* benefit by being able to contact the publisher or receive the names of readers in their area. In this last regard, why not get involved with the Lone Star IUA? Working in the network of IUA, much could be accomplished for both old and new readers.

With the hope that some or all of your group might be so inclined, I have arranged for copies of the IUA Charter and Bylaws to be sent to you. In any case, the Charter of IUA will elaborate upon some of what is contained in this letter.

Finally, please forgive the length of this letter and the delay in getting back to you. In order to answer the substantive questions raised in our meeting in Austin, it seemed necessary to respond at some length. Be assured that our desire is to work with you all as friends and as laborers in our Father's family business.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Philip A. Rolnick". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Philip A. Rolnick, Trustee
on behalf of the Urantia Foundation