

John



MEREDITH J. SPRUNGER
Executive Director

THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
OF
STUDENTS OF THE URANTIA BOOK
4109 Plaza Drive
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46806
219-745-4363

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Mr. Michael A. Painter
URANTIA Foundation
533 Diversey Parkway
Chicago, IL 60614

Dear Mike:

Thank you for sending copies of Cap's letter and your answer. I think your response is excellent. I wrote a number of similar letters to Cap last year. My view of this issue is summarized in the last paragraph of the talk, "Preparing for Scholarly Evaluation of The URANTIA Book," which I gave at Green Lake:

It is important that we prepare ourselves psychologically and intellectually for scholarly evaluations of The URANTIA Book. Rather than having the theological and literary scholars of our culture pointing out errors and discrepancies in The URANTIA Book, we should be documenting them ourselves. We should make available to scholars the list of small changes in the text which the Foundation has made from time to time. We should contemplate hypotheses as to how or why these errors and discrepancies occur. Above all, we should be clear in our minds that the value of The URANTIA Book is not dependent on some literalistic inerrancy doctrine. Its true worth is in its expanded and enhanced insights into spiritual Reality. No analysis of Biblical, scientific, historical, and logical errors or discrepancies has much relevance to the central purpose and message of the book: man's spiritual enhancement and salvation. Fortunately, this difficult lesson has already been experientially learned by mainline Christianity and, hopefully, it will not have to be relearned by students of the fifth epochal revelation. On the finite level there are always ambiguities in all revelation which require judgment and faith. This is the special challenge and glory of the inhabitants of Urantia!

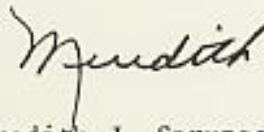
I agree with Cap in the judgment that it is better for "insiders" to first do this research. I can understand that there are reasons why the Foundation might not like to list changes which have been made in the text. But this is no problem, anyone interested in listing and discussing these changes can get copies of the first edition and the latest edition and carefully compare them to discover these changes and then discuss his view of the wisdom or reasonableness of these changes. I tend to identify with the scholarly approach to the book rather than the institutional approach.

Although I am not personally interested in such research, I would encourage those so motivated, ideally a group of people with expertise in different areas, to carefully go through the book listing those passages which, from the standpoint of our present knowledge, appear to be errors or discrepancies of Biblical, historical, scientific, or logical references. When this task is finished, I would suggest that they prepare four types of responses: First, an apologetic in which they list different ways of viewing the passage where such comment is appropriate. Second, recognize those areas which are obviously in error and present various hypotheses as to why they occur. Third, point out the great body of concurrence between URANTIA Book material and present day knowledge and list those references where it appears that the book presents knowledge before its planetary discovery. Fourth, place all of this research in perspective. Not only should it be pointed out that the cosmology of the book is not inspired but that these "material" errors are not very important in determining the real worth of the book: man's spiritual enlightenment and salvation. It should be pointed out that Christianity worked through this same problem and that the real worth of the Bible did not flower in our contemporary culture until we got beyond this literal infallibility hang-up.

If Cap is motivated to do this kind of research, I would encourage him to head a group of like-minded people with ability to do this task which the rest of us do not have the time, ability, or interest in doing.

Thank you, again, for sharing. I will look forward to receiving your responses to the specific references which Cap made. Let me know whenever I can be of help. Greetings and best wishes to all at 533 Diversey.

Cordially,



Meredith J. Sprunger