

May 27, 1980

Tom Kendall, President  
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Dear Tom:

I was glad to learn that you and Douglas Fraser finally got a chance to meet each other when you were in Berkeley a few days ago. I look forward to our being able to come back to Chicago together to meet with the board so that we can discuss in depth the issues related to the Bogota study group and the spanish translation. I suspect that it will be impossible to schedule a mutually convenient time until after the Lake Forest meeting in August, but it will happen soon enough.

It will probably not surprise you to learn that the issues of translation and international development of the Urantia movement have occupied a good deal of my thinking. Since my sister, Carol Kostic, received her book in 1975 she has been active in the Paris group. Her letters to me over the past five years always contain information regarding developments in France. You are also aware that I have had ongoing correspondence with others in France. Translation became an even bigger issue in my life after my trip to Bogota last summer.

Recently I have had some insight into the entire phenomenon of translation and international development which has been helpful to me. Since I know that you and the other members of the board are struggling with this issue right now, I decided to share my thinking with you. I do this with some trepidation, knowing that unsolicited advice is usually worth just what you pay for it. Nonetheless, I hope that this will be looked upon more as observation, rather than specific recommendation.

Let me begin by making two points. First, I believe that the evolution of the Urantia movement on the planet will be influenced by natural law, and in fact, that this is already occurring. I believe that human attempts to circumvent the outworking of natural processes are doomed to failure, because natural law is of God, is inherent in reality, and will ultimately resist any human attempts to stand in its way. Second, I believe that we have been given a very practical and concrete example by the revelators themselves as to how we should go about translating the URANTIA Book, and if we do not follow their example, we will in all probability fail to achieve the high levels of literary

quality and spiritual unity which exists in english and which we would all like to see in other languages.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Several years ago I began asking myself what the revelators did to insure that the revelation would evolve as they wished. Specifically, what did they do to insure that it would be disseminated outside the United States? The answer to that question is now increasingly clear to me. They relied on a natural law, the law of the vacuum. This law, as we all know, simply states that nature abhors a vacuum, and will fill it in one way or another. This is true with respect to the molecules of the universe, and I believe we would all agree that it is equally true in the affairs of men. When a vacuum is created, be it social, political, economic, or intellectual, forces arise to fill it.

In the case of the URANTIA Book, when the book was published in english in 1955, a vacuum was created on the literary, philosophical and spiritual levels of the entire non-english speaking world. As long as bilingual readers were involved, the pressure to fill that vacuum was only potential, but the moment that a bilingual reader convinced his non-english speaking friends that the book is what it claims to be, the pressure to fill the vacuum began to grow.

The pressure is still growing. It cannot be stopped. Attempts to stop it have proved unsuccessful. When 6,000 or more French readers became aware of the book and believed it to be a revelation that was enough to activate this natural law, to create an awareness of the vacuum, to make it actual and no longer potential. For a decade or more, the board has attempted by legal means to prevent the reproduction and spread of the Weiss translation, but has not yet provided a substitute. The result could be predicted. Man's laws, including copyright laws, being transient and artificial are powerless to halt the inexorable pressure created by spiritually hungry minds and souls. And so, despite ten years of hard work on your behalf, and victory in every court contest, my sister informs me that today, if anyone in France wishes to buy the Weiss translation, photocopies are for sale and readily available through other readers. Until a superior translation comes along, the Weiss translation, despite its illegality and linguistic inferiority, fills the vacuum. It is in conformity with natural law, not standing against it, and as a result I don't believe it can be stopped in any way other than with a better translation, i.e., something which more effectively fills the vacuum.

What of the other languages, spanish, german, dutch, finnish, portuguese and italian so far? Can the translation of the book be stopped or controlled in these or other languages? I really doubt it, because too many non-english speaking truth-seekers have learned

of the book from bilingual friends. The vacuum becomes more real each day as the number of non-english speakers grows, and something will fill that vacuum one day. The question for the board is, will we participate in its filling or not?

At this point I wish to emphasize, Tom, that what I am talking about in terms of translation is results, not intentions. I believe that you and the other board members have been sincere in trying to do what seemed right at the time. I am not criticizing anything which has been done. I am simply pointing out that, for whatever reasons and however justified, nothing exists in any language which non-english speakers can read which has the support of the Foundation. I am not blaming anyone. I am simply pointing out that today the vacuum exists, and it is being filled by what is available.

By now I hope I have made my first point. The celestial government made it inevitable that there would be translations, and interestingly, the pressure seems to be building just as the first generation of the Book's existence has ended. Well, certainly you and the other members of the board are not opposed to translations of the URANTIA Book. I realize that. The issue has always been how to go about it. Here again I believe we have been given adequate instruction. It is my belief that the forum was assembled and used in the translation of the book into english not because it was convenient, but because it was an essential part of the linguistic process. Surely a Divine Counselor didn't need a human's help in writing about God. Or did he? It is my understanding, gleaned from conversation with several members of the forum, that in fact human help was essential, and resulted in large-scale revisions of early portions of the book. Even for the exalted minds participating in the revelatory commission it was essential for the minds of readers of the language into which the book was being translated, i.e., english, to participate in the process. And how could it be otherwise when we attempt, on a human level, to translate the book from english to another language? How many times have all of us been in a study group and had a new meaning or interpretation given by a reader, one which is consistent with the text and yet which adds new insight?

A single translator, be he professional or volunteer, could not possibly encompass all the mentality necessary to come to grips with this problem. Regardless of who does the initial rendering from english into another language, there must be a group, a forum of students who are conversant with the concepts of the book and who can participate in the same way as did the original forum in the clarification of the text. Again, one need only look to the french translation to see what happens when this is not done. Bible references aside, the text is filled with both linguistic

and conceptual errors. I do not read french, but I do read english, and the letters my sister writes me, in which she references both classes of errors in the Weiss text, are appalling. Historical events are garbled, epochal revelations are misdated by tens of thousands of years, in addition to the many shades of misinterpreted meanings which occur throughout the text.

It matters little who the board finally picks to do the original transcription from english into another language. That is only the beginning. If there does not exist, within the part of the world in which the language is being spoken, a group of students who can read, review and revise the original transcription, the result will be a contaminated text, filled with the seeds of confusion and divisiveness which the english text so clearly lacks.

In Bogota such a potential forum already exists, and I am delighted to know that you are considering a visit to them. You will be impressed, as I was, that these are among the finest Urantians on the planet; knowledgeable of the teachings, sincere, articulate and intelligent, and a credit to the brotherhood of believers of which they are a part. Other groups in other linguistic environments will arise, and they should be encouraged, for they are in my opinion, the only hope of obtaining a pure text in any other language.

To summarize, I believe that the Urantia revelation was released upon this world with a guiding hand- one which influenced the way in which it would spread around the world. It was done in such a way that, as the number of non-english speakers who believe in the book grew, the force inherent in such a situation would result in a translation being done, regardless of the degree of support or opposition by any human institution. I further believe that a very clear example was given to us as to how to accomplish the result they desire, a quality rendering of the book into other tongues. That example was the forum, and if it is used we can justifiably anticipate success. When it is not used, as was done quite innocently in France, the results are predictable.

Has the board acted perfectly in it's decisions, has it followed flawlessly the will of God in all it's deliberations? Of course not! If you were capable of perfection, you would all go up in a cloud of smoke and a blinding flash and would wake up on the mansion worlds. Anyone who expects perfect, errorless decisions from you or any other human group is destined to be disappointed. We are human, and all of us will continue to err. The tragedy is not to err, but to fail to learn from our mistakes. Lots of mistakes were made with the french translation, and I have no doubt that mistakes will be made with the spanish, finnish, german dutch, italian.... But let us not make the same mistakes. Let us not think that human laws can impede the outworking of natural law. Let us not ignore a linguistic device so good it was used by paradise personalities yet so simple it is still available to us. Let us move forward with translations, using the forum concept, so that there can at least be Foundation participation. To fail to do so would be to relegate the board to the sidelines while inferior translations appear around the world, brought on by forces more powerful than those which have alien ourselves with natural forces with man's

innate hunger for truth and nature's unstoppable desire to fill a vacuum. Let us live the faith we really have.

I look forward to working with you on this tremendous challenge. Douglas and I are eager to help in any way possible. It is our hope that, by means of the spanish translation, we can rectify many of the errors made previously, and show sceptics that the Foundation is capable of participating in the production of quality translations of the URANTIA Book for all the world.

I hope we can find some time to be together at Lake Forest to talk about these ideas. I look forward to seeing you then.  
Until then

Much love,



Richard F. Prince