CHAPTER TWENTY ONE
The Baumgartner Letter

In order to round out the circumstances and feelings of those who were connected with the Sherman affair I include here a letter from Elsie Baumgartner, a member of the Forum, and concerned individual. She wrote Harry Loose the following February, expressing her thoughts and assessments at that time. This letter comes from the Sherman files via Martin Gardner. The Sherman files would naturally reflect feelings that were more sympathetic to his situation; the many Forum members who felt otherwise would not have contacted Loose or Sherman. This element should be considered; if contrary information were available I would show it here. Unfortunately, for our search, most Forum members left no record of events, or their heirs are unwilling to reveal that information.

An example is Carolyn Kendall. Carolyn was receptionist for Sadler in the early 1950's. She married Tom Kendall, who later was President of the Urantia Foundation. Her father, Clarence Bowman, was an early member of the Forum, and kept a diary of events. When he told Bill Sadler, Jr. that he was doing so, Bill told him that he should not do it. Thereupon he used ink eradicator to blank out appropriate sections of his personal diary. As the decades passed the eradicator faded, revealing the original entries. I asked permission to obtain names and record of pertinent events from Carolyn, but she refused. Such information would be of invaluable assistance in our attempt to understand the transactions of the Forum, and the interplay of personalities.

Following is the text of the Baumgartner letter with the response from Loose. Number in parentheses refer to Endnotes.

February 9, 1942[1]

Dear Friends:

Much time has elapsed since your last letter to me, yes, time filled with events of great import, but also with much confusion of mind for me. My long silence has not been due to lack of appreciation or thoughtlessness, nor indifference toward our mutual interest, for I have read and re-read your letter[2] many times that I might keep attuned to you both in mind and spirit.

I am of course, assuming that Harold Sherman has informed you of the events which transpired last September at 533. I had thought it best to give myself enough time to calmly examine and carefully analyze my own reactions and the attitude of other Forum members, and then attempt to correlate them into some definite conclusions upon which to base a definite decision as to not only my present status as a Forum member but also my plans for the future. The fact or our mutual interest makes me bold to presume upon your kind indulgence and to seek enlightenment and counsel from one who has been so richly endowed with spiritual insight and wisdom. As time goes on I find myself becoming more confused and disturbed about the situation

as it now exists. Each week I seem to hear new and hitherto unheard of statements made by various members until it all becomes quite a maze of contradictory hash.

My own part in the affair was small indeed, but I should like to tell you of it. After having heard the organization papers read[3] to the Forum at Sunday afternoon meetings, I found many things in them I did not quite understand. Therefore, when I was approached with the petition, being in accord with it's general purpose, I readily signed up. Up to that time I had not been present at any of the meetings taking place at the homes of the various members interested. I was asked by the group to act on the committee of three (myself and two men) which were to present the petition to the doctor. After some persuasion I consented and then met twice with different interested members to discuss plans, at which time Mr. Sherman's entire letter to the Doctor was read to me[4]. I'm sure you know of Dr. S's reactions and how he handled the entire matter (Presumably by authority and on instructions by higher intelligences). I finally removed my signature from the petition because I felt I could not defy the orders of these higher personalities. I seem to have difficulty in understanding just what statements are his own reactions and which are from our unseen friends[5]. In my presence, the Doctor made certain accusations against Mr. Sherman and stated that what had been done constituted rebellion[6]. Moreover, after comparing statements made to the different groups I find that many are contradictory[7]. I find it difficult to accept all that has been stated, and yet, how difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. I have a feeling that some others beside myself are not quite satisfied that the matter has not been equitably concluded, especially since there has been apparently no reconciliation reached between our friends[8]. I, like perhaps others, would be glad to do our best to effect such a conclusion, for surely it would strengthen the unity within the group, yet, is it our responsibility? Is there anything that can be done?

I believe the Book with my whole heart and soul — it has been as a fountain of spiritual strength and has beckoned me on to new goals of attainment and stimulated me to a greater desire to search for truth[9]. Nothing must happen to the Book nor to mar its presentation. We should indeed be guilty of the grossest betrayal of confidence and trust, and ingratitude for our rich blessing, were we to permit willfully the prostitution of the Book or its publication. I am well aware of the sacrifices made the S's and K's[10] — I recognize their faithfulness and loyalty over more than thirty years and I am deeply appreciative of their affection for us and their willingness to teach us the concepts of the Book. They have been most unselfish in the hospitality of their home[11]. All of this makes it doubly hard to understand the present situation. I have sufficient faith to know that the truth will finally prevail — my prayer is that I shall have the patience to await the time.

I am fond of the Shermans and I have unquestionable faith in their high standards of ethics, integrity and sincerity. It would be hard to find anyone sweeter than pretty Mrs. Sherman. Personally, I am sure that he is not guilty of the charges made against him. I am still much impressed with the Doctor's account of the circumstances preceding Mr. Sherman's membership in the Forum[12]; also his account of your visit to 533 when you remarked, "I came up here for a physician and I find a prophet[13]." Was that when you joined the Forum[14]? These things move me to profound mental stimulation and awaken a deep desire to know better our unseen friends. The papers of course, give us a great deal and in Bill's class we are studying them[15].

I hope I haven't intruded too much upon your good graces, but the temptation of getting some help in my present dilemma was too strong to be ignored and so I anticipate with eagerness your kind response. I shall humbly accept with deep gratitude any counsel you can give me. How I wish I might talk things over with you — naturally we are somewhat restrained when using the mail.

I have been working hard at the office, due to both a reduced staff and inexperienced personnel. We now have about 250 boys in the service, most of whom we are trying not to replace — their jobs must be available to them when they return[16]. In addition to this, so many of our girls are leaving for higher salaried jobs in war production industries. We old-timers just have to carry the extra burden. Both Steady and Eagle and Mulroy asked to be remembered to you[17].

We have had an unusually severe winter with more than the average snowfall, with plenty of ice, making walking a bit difficult and hazardous. Here at home, we are burning coal in our furnace, and thus far we have had no difficulty getting coal, so we have kept comfortably warm. From what I read in the papers, you folks on the West Coast, (also the East Coast) have really been very much inconvenienced by war-time regulations. I hope you have been able to stay well and comfortable. It is now four years since my visit to California[18] and many of its beauty spots (such as Yosemite Nat'l Park) are still very vivid in my mind. I often close my eyes and again see the panorama of beauty that is California. Some day I know I shall again have the pleasure of visiting the State of sunshine and flowers.

My dear friends, I have written at great length, but each moment spent in doing so has been of great pleasure to me. I feel almost as if I have been speaking with you. I hope you are both well, and so write me when you can. With kindest of greetings, I am,

Most sincerely Yours,
(signed) Elsie Baumgartner
4451 North Mozart Street
Chicago

Following is the text of Loose's reply to Elsie.

2-17-43
Dear Friend:

I am writing under some difficulty this being my first letter on arising from a sick bed of several weeks[19]. I appreciate your letter seeking guidance and assurance although I am wholly unable to advise you. There is great probability of error in interpretation of any written word in such an involved situation as presented[20]. In the discussed instance, the primary disturbing factor has been misinterpretation, plus an emotional flare, plus definite error in a house divided against itself. There is an old, old adage which has latterly graduated into a real present day complex and so recognized. The King can do no wrong. This is not correct. The King can do wrong. Even a very good King. There could be a strongly entrenched, select, inner circle — clever and commercialized — about the throne that could build up, or add to, or even completely create, much in protection of its own aims and desires[21]. Think of these things. You have much evidence before you according to which you must arrive at your own conclusions and make your unbiased decisions. You may have every confidence in the integrity of the Shermans and I would suggest that you not lose contact with them[22]. Make no mistake, both the S's and K's are very fine people. The very best. They are richly entitled to every consideration and affection. With best intent errors and accidents happen in the very best regulated lives. It was a great loss when Mrs. S was released. There is nothing now, that you, individually can do, or that a group collectively can do, to readjust the condition. However, there never has been and there never will be unity within the group. The presence of the inner circle and preferred entities preclude such unity ever[23].

They also serve who only stand and wait, but your small active part in this great drama is not yet concluded. There are yet some lines to be spoken. Something now not expected and perhaps quite startling may happen in re: this whole situation in the not far distant future[24]. This is a probability — not a surety. Please know that those who attend the Forum are not the only fleshed intelligences interested in the reception of the phenomena[25]. I must impress you that this a personal communication privately and must be strictly regarded as such with no mental reservation whatsoever[26].

Your letter remarks several inaccuracies. I will not quote them. You know what was in the petition submitted surely. What was therein contained that could possibly have caused fear to any Forum member — and how very inaccurate to suppose that emotion of fear could be engendered in the premises amongst higher intelligences[27]. How foolish. And, to continue, what was therein contained that could in any way be construed as rebellion[28]. How very foolish. Higher intelligences do not operate in the manner as stated in your letter — requiring a human enfleshed intelligence to assist and co-operate in the adjustment of such a matter and in the manner indicated. This is not correct[29].

The Forum is the very recent crux in the promotion and growth of a far more aged original plan[30]. I was in personal contact with S long before the reasons for the Forum came into existence[31].

I can impress you that this is a personal communication to you alone and for the observation of none other but yourself except, if there is any obscurity, or you wish to discuss the contents, you may submit to Sherman who will help you I am sure[32].

Thanking you again for your fine letter and the very best of thought — and write again when feel so moved, I am,

Sincerely,

(The signature is missing from my copy.)

[1] Elsie made a common error of assigning the wrong year for the February date.

[2] Apparently Loose wrote to Elsie some time previously, but after the September events.

[3] This statement clearly shows that Sadler was keeping the Forum informed of his activities in the creation of formal organizations for care of the Revelation. However, we do not know how far he went in his confidence to them. He may have kept more private judgments to an inner circle of confidants.

[4] Sherman obviously was taking certain members into his confidence, in order to create a rebel group. Unfortunately, we do not have a copy of that letter.

[5] Without question, Sadler, and every other human mortal, would have been tempted to presume upon celestial confidence. After all, what more powerful association could exist? But one of the reasons for the choice of Sadler was his personal integrity. If Elsie or others had difficulty distinguishing between divine guidance, and human judgment, it is easily attributable to the fact that Sadler was the human agent, and that he could not, as a matter of practical conduct, always publicly describe the difference between the two. He was human.

[6] Sadler's reaction to the situation shows how much everyone had become accustomed to the living relationships among Sadler, the Contact Commission, and the Forum. There was a common assumption that the Forum members *had a right* to be consulted in decisions. They had become an integral part of the activity, without whom the process of the Revelation could not proceed. Therefore, the accepted condition as guests in Sadler's home, and the manner of the public meeting rooms, were in psychological contradiction. His residence was no longer simply a private home. It had become a quasi public location, with contribution from a large group of people, certainly more than strictly private meeting, although he maintained the list of Forum members as guests. Sherman may have entered this scene without the same sense of being a guest. When Sadler characterized Shermans effort as rebellion he inherently, but not consciously, admitted this public aspect of their common activities.

[7] Elsie should have recognized that different people will present different impressions of events and interpersonal relationships. She appears confused by these human elements.

[8] Again, Elsie failed to recognize that Sadler had a standard of trust which he could not violate. He had to preserve the text of *The Urantia Papers* inviolate. If Sherman wanted to readjust the Revelation to his personal desires, Sadler had to take an unequivocal stand. Given the will of the two men, there could be no reconciliation.

[9] Elsie shows the great devotion and inspiration the Revelation brought to so many Forumites. This testimony is universal among mature members of the Forum.

[10] Sadler's and Kellogg's

[11] This again shows the dilemma of the private and public aspects of the Forum activities.

[12] The nature of these events is not described. They may have been warnings Sadler received of dangers he would face, and of attacks upon the integrity of the text of *The Urantia Papers*, although the identity of Sherman, and the exact nature of the circumstances would have been unknown to Sadler. If the warnings came much earlier, in somewhat indefinite form, they may, indeed, have slipped his mind.

[13] Sadler may have been attempting to narrow the influence of Loose as the one who introduced Sherman to the Forum.

[14] This is explicit confirmation that Loose was a member of the Forum.

[15] Bill Sadler, Jr.

[16] A general policy throughout the United States in World War II.

[17] The identity of these persons is unknown.

[18] If Elsie visited California four years before, it would have been 1937 or 1938. Loose was then living in California, and had obviously dropped out of the Forum by that date.

[19] Loose had serious health problems. He died later in the year of heart failure.

[20] The circumlocution of Loose at this point in his life, and especially in these circumstances, is an indication of his desire to not be placed in the middle of the controversy. His attitude of superior knowledge is also evident in his letters of this time.

[21] Loose has reference to a small group of business men Sadler has chosen as his inner circle of confidants. These included G. Willard Hales and his son William. Their views were highly influential in the formation of an autocratic Foundation for the care of the Revelation, as I shall discuss in a following chapter. Note that the concerns expressed by Loose revolve around the same causes as those expressed by Bedell.

[22] This strongly suggests that the Shermans are no longer attending Forum sessions, in agreement with Bedell's memory.

[23] Loose had keen insight. This element has had repercussions to the present day.

[24] Did Loose have in mind a law suit from Sherman?

[25] Loose had a habit of throwing remarks to create puzzles. Who did he mean? We can only speculate.

[26] What event or influence Loose expected is unknown. It is evident here that he is attempting to convey superior insights or perhaps 'private revelations' but he does not specify.

[27] Loose's reference is again not identified. It appears he is confused about Elsie's remarks, inferring views she did not intend. He also offers a strong contradiction to Sherman's 1976 portraiture.

[28] Loose takes the same stand as Bedell. The petition centered strictly around the formal structures then being considered for the future custody and care of the Revelation.

[29] The possibility exists that Loose had in mind by human enfleshed the appearance of Melchizedek or angels to assist and advise the course of events but he denies this.

[30] Loose exhibits a far reaching insight into ultimate purposes behind the Forum. He knew they had an important role to play in the preservation of the Revelation.

[31] Loose verifies his early contact with Sadler, predating the formation of the Forum.

[32] The remark implies that Sherman is still present in Chicago; otherwise Elsie could not consult with him. It does not necessarily mean that he attends Forum meetings.