

## Neal Waldrop

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**From:** Neal Waldrop [nealwaldrop@earthlink.net]  
**Sent:** Friday, May 10, 2019 11:33 PM  
**To:** Neal Waldrop - gmail (nealwaldrop606@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Global Endeavor / Revelation Revealed / webinar on May 4, plans for May 11  
**Attachments:** 2016-07-17\_RR-T08\_P088-146\_Q059-077.pdf; 2019-05-01\_Daniel-Robinson\_philosophy-lecture-11-segment-3-plus-glossary-bio.pdf; UB\_2081-2082\_P195s08.pdf

Dear fellow readers of *The Urantia Book* and friends of the Global Endeavor,

On Saturday, May 4, we conducted our thirteenth webinar based on topic 8 of *Revelation Revealed*, a topic that is entitled, “Comparing and contrasting the true teachings of Jesus with the traditional tenets and practices of organized, institutional Christianity.”

### Christianity: key features and practices

This major segment of topic 8 of *Revelation Revealed* begins on page 109. The first sub-element reads as follows: “(a) A religion *about* Jesus instead of the religion *of* Jesus.”

I asked whether this reality at least partly descends from the fact that human beings are strongly attracted to stories that enable them to sit back and listen. One panelist responded that overemphasis on the person of Jesus is indeed connected with a liking for stories that is characteristic of the human mind. After all, the personality of Jesus is far easier to discern than the reality of the divine spirit of the Father. He called attention to statements by a Divine Counselor that appear in section 4 of Paper 5:

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An exalted anthropomorphism is the highest attainment level of purely evolutionary religion. Christianity has elevated the concept of anthropomorphism from the ideal of the human to the transcendent and divine concept of the person of the glorified Christ. And this is the highest anthropomorphism that man can ever conceive. [A Divine Counselor, 67:7 / 5:4.9]  
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The panelist went on to point out that in the Christian scriptures, the glorified Christ is called “the Son of God,” a phrase that appears in the four gospels a total of 54 times. Although “the son of man” appears 84 times, this phrase is always used by Jesus in order to refer to himself — never as a reference to Jesus by one of his followers.

SUBSEQUENT COMMENT BY NEAL: The advanced concepts of deity contained in *The Urantia Book* were not limited to anthropomorphism or to any other feature of evolutionary religion. To the contrary, the revelators clearly honored the mandates that called on them to present higher truths associated with *revealed religion*. This reality is closely associated with a passage that the panelist cited as he was concluding his remarks: “In the contemplation of Deity, the concept of personality must be divested of the idea of corporeality. A material body is not indispensable to personality in either man or God.” [A Divine Counselor, 29:2 / 1:5:12].

Another participant commented that Jesus' emphasis on his teachings ran into the strong human tendency to emphasize the monument over the man. In part this stems from the absence of Adam and Eve on Urantia, for human beings continue to seek for a good parent. The real religion of Jesus requires a degree of spirituality, and the concept of loving others as God loves them is more challenging than the golden rule as traditionally conceived.

Yet another participant pointed out that much of Part IV of *The Urantia Book* consists of stories, including the story recounting Jesus' rather surprising conversation with the Samaritan woman Nalda at Jacob's well (Paper 143, section 5). He stipulated, however, that the revelators have focused quite intensively on Jesus' teachings, portraying and analyzing them in much greater depth than is available in the traditional Christian scriptures. Further, Parts I through III provide a complete cosmic picture, including the instructions that Immanuel gave Christ Michael just before he left Salvington.

In response, I invited him to speculate on the creative intentions of the revelators, who saw fit to devote one-third of the fifth epochal revelation to the life and teachings of Jesus. Were they trying to tell the stories better, or mainly seeing to enshrine so much more of the message?

He replied that Part IV succeeds a great deal of information about the history and origin of the cosmos, the net context that we should bear in mind when we read the narrative. In his view, hero worship and anthropomorphic tendencies do seem related to the net effect of the default of Adam and Eve, as another participant had remarked.

## The atonement

At my request, a panelist read the brief paragraph on the atonement that appears on page 109 of *Revelation Revealed*:

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**(b) The atonement.** Christianity's core contention, almost ranking as a trademark, is the assertion that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, thereby redeeming humanity and creating a spiritual pathway that enables a sincere believer to be saved (*i.e.*, "to go to heaven") — but only if he or she has also honored the commandments and the other moral precepts that Christianity propounds. The religion's most prominent symbol is the cross or crucifix, a constant reminder of its central theme.  
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To launch the discussion, I commented on the symbolism of the cross and the problem of its association with sacrifice. The fundamental idea of atonement makes God a vindictive judge instead of a loving father.

One participant remarked that the idea of "atonement" amounts to a rationalization that answers the question of how Jesus, the Son of God, could actually be crucified. He specified that it was God's will for Jesus to die in some manner (*i.e.*, to pass through the portal of death), for that is part of the normal experience of human beings. This, in turn, harmonized with Jesus' original decisions to live as a man among man, without drawing on superhuman power or assistance for his own benefit, and to

refrain from seeking self-preservation, not to defend himself (as explained in sections 5 and 6 of Paper 136).

On the other hand, the Father certainly did not require that Jesus die in this particularly cruel and painful way — in effect a state-sponsored assassination wherein the Sanhedrin took the lead role in sentencing Jesus to death, on the understanding that the execution would have to be approved by a Roman official (Pontius Pilate). The atonement doctrine implies that the Father willed all this, a great myth that should be corrected and the sooner the better.

Another participant commented that by implication, the atonement doctrine is associated with the previous tradition of sacrifice, as embodied in the ancient Hebrew tradition and other faiths. More importantly, however, he cited particularly emphatic statements by a Divine Counselor that appear in section 5 of Paper 4:

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The barbarous idea of appeasing an angry God, of propitiating an offended Lord, of winning the favor of Deity through sacrifices and penance and even by the shedding of blood, represents a religion wholly puerile and primitive, a philosophy unworthy of an enlightened age of science and truth. Such beliefs are utterly repulsive to the celestial beings and the divine rulers who serve and reign in the universes. It is an affront to God to believe, hold, or teach that innocent blood must be shed in order to win his favor or to divert the fictitious divine wrath. *[A Divine Counselor, 60:3 / 4:5.4]*  
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Yet another panelist called attention to the extended comments whereby the Midwayer Commission identifies the two great mistakes that were made in early Christianity:

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Aside from the incorporation of many teachings from the Persian mysteries and much of the Greek philosophy into early Christianity, two great mistakes were made:

1. The effort to connect the gospel teaching directly onto the Jewish theology, as illustrated by the Christian doctrines of the atonement — the teaching that Jesus was the sacrificed Son who would satisfy the Father's stern justice and appease the divine wrath. These teachings originated in a praiseworthy effort to make the gospel of the kingdom more acceptable to disbelieving Jews. **Though these efforts failed as far as winning the Jews was concerned, they did not fail to confuse and alienate many honest souls in all subsequent generations.**
2. The second great blunder of the Master's early followers, and one which all subsequent generations have persisted in perpetuating, was to organize the Christian teaching so completely about the person of Jesus. This overemphasis of the personality of Jesus in the theology of Christianity has worked to obscure his teachings, and all of this has made it increasingly difficult for Jews, Mohammedans, Hindus, and other Eastern religionists to accept the teachings of Jesus. We would not belittle the place of the person of Jesus in a religion which might bear his name, but we would not permit such consideration to eclipse his inspired life or to supplant his saving message: the

fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1670:3-5 / 149:2.2-4 — emphasis added: the sentence in bold type*]

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A different participant called attention to the fact that our planet Urantia has become known as “the world of the cross,” at least from a local perspective:

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The extraordinary and unusually cruel experience through which Jesus of Nazareth passed has caused Urantia to become locally known as “the world of the cross.” It is not necessary that such inhuman treatment be accorded a Son of God, and the vast majority of planets have afforded them a more considerate reception, allowing them to finish their mortal careers, terminate the age, adjudicate the sleeping survivors, and inaugurate a new dispensation, without imposing a violent death. A bestowal Son must encounter death, must pass through the whole of the actual experience of mortals of the realms, but it is not a requirement of the divine plan that this death be either violent or unusual. [*A Perfector of Wisdom, 229:5 / 20:6.6*]

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I asked whether it is possible for the cross or crucifix to be re-understood as a symbol of love instead of sacrifice, and whether Christianity could adopt this different and far more appealing idea.

One panelist proclaimed that the bestowal life of Jesus is an inspiring message of love and service. She hoped that the revised understanding of the cross or crucifix will eventually take hold, even if the thought has to be repeated over and over again for 50 years. The underlying concept closely resembles certain ideas that the Midwayer Commission presents in [Paper 188](#), “The Time of the Tomb”:

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The cross is that high symbol of sacred service, the devotion of one’s life to the welfare and salvation of one’s fellows. The cross is not the symbol of the sacrifice of the innocent Son of God in the place of guilty sinners and in order to appease the wrath of an offended God, but it does stand forever, on earth and throughout a vast universe, as a sacred symbol of the good bestowing themselves upon the evil and thereby saving them by this very devotion of love. The cross does stand as the token of the highest form of unselfish service, the supreme devotion of the full bestowal of a righteous life in the service of wholehearted ministry, even in death, the death of the cross. And the very sight of this great symbol of the bestowal life of Jesus truly inspires all of us to want to go and do likewise. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2019:2 / 188:5.9*]

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In addition, she noted that certain seraphim (those Planetary Helpers who are called “the Souls of Peace”) seek to supplant the idea of atonement by the concept of divine attunement:

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In the more advanced epochs of planetary evolution these seraphim are instrumental in supplanting the atonement idea by the concept of divine attunement as a philosophy of mortal survival. [A Melchizedek, 437:5 / 39:5.6]

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## Doctrines and creeds

The succeeding paragraph on page 109 of *Revelation Revealed* reads as follows:

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**(c) Doctrines and creeds.** Although the atonement can correctly be considered Christianity's most prominent doctrine, the religion also advances a range of other standard teachings amounting to methods intended to guide and control believers, while simultaneously promoting uniformity and discouraging original, imaginative, or creative thinking.

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I pointed out that in our discussion during the preceding webinar (April 27), we examined a doctrinal dispute that had major implications for the spiritual lives of believers and their eligibility for the ascendant life: the controversy during the early years of the 5th century that pitted Augustine, bishop of Hippo, against a monk called Pelagius who was then teaching in Rome. In effect, Augustine's teachings about grace seemed to abridge human free will and implicitly cast God as a puppet master pulling the strings that control his children on earth. Further, Augustine eventually ended up proclaiming an understanding of human destiny that deserves to be described as predestination.

In general, I said, doctrines and creeds seem to represent group authority aimed at uniformity of belief, practices that reflect an overall devotion to authority and hierarchy and that descend from the spirit of *Romanità* that we previously discussed. Therefore I asked panelists whether the quest for uniformity still prevails in Christianity, the explicit or at least implicit obligation to follow the lead of those who are in charge?

One participant responded that this is indeed the case, for the individual believer is not at liberty to discard the doctrines that have been proclaimed by the organized, institutional church. This, he thought, is a natural tendency when the religion has a priesthood, clergy who must conform to explicit criteria. On the other hand, such attitudes are not as intense in the Protestant world, where the courtesy title "Reverend" seems to suffice.

Although I agreed that pressure for doctrinal conformity is more emphatic in contexts involving Roman Catholics, I mentioned a disciplinary matter that created considerable controversy in the U.S. branch of the Methodist Church, controversy that occurred in the past few years. In the end, the Methodist Church decided to disbar and expel a minister because he, the minister, had conducted a marriage ceremony between two men, one of them his son. Why, I asked, is this particular doctrine so emblematic?

One panelist replied that these events illustrate the point that religion should never get involved in the social mores. Pauline Christianity, he said, had been a new order of society that came upon the

Roman world, one involving the whole social order. He believed that gay marriage and abortion are examples of issues that pertain to the social order, questions that religion should not become involved with. All this, he said, has nothing to do with the kingdom of heaven; religion should be about spiritual matters, not social issues.

Another participant agreed, commenting that religion should be a dynamic process centered on the personal religious experience of each individual. The social order needs flexibility, and that becomes problematic if religion operates by means of doctrines and creeds pertaining to social matters.

### **The relationship between religion and society**

I then turned to a far more general topic, the need for a balance that respects the distinct and divergent roles of religion and society as a whole. In introducing this discussion, I called attention to the following analytical remarks that the Midwayer Commission shares with us in section 8 of Paper 195:

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The mother of modern secularism was the totalitarian medieval Christian church. Secularism had its inception as a rising protest against the almost complete domination of Western civilization by the institutionalized Christian church. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2081:2 / 195:8.2*]  
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As the revelators imply, the organized, institutional Christian church dominated Western civilization for approximately one thousand years (500 – 1500 CE). During that millennium, Christian clerics held a monopoly on education, learning, and thought. In effect, they insisted that all aspects of human life had to be understood and pursued from the intellectual and theological perspectives of accumulated Christian doctrine.

As we approached the end of the discussion, I read the first two paragraphs from a philosophy lecture that portrays the underlying situation in conceptual ways that I consider particularly interesting (i.e., the second attachment to this message).

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**BACKGROUND NOTE**

As explained at the bottom of the first page of the attachment, the material consists of segment 3 of lecture 11 (“Hippocrates and the Science of Life”), which is part of a 60-lecture course by Professor Daniel N. Robinson entitled, “The Great Ideas of Philosophy, 2nd Edition” (2004). This course is available on CDs or on DVDs; it is sponsored by a commercial enterprise with two names, “The Great Courses” and “The Teaching Company.” On page 3 of the attachment I have provided a glossary of a few unusual words and also biographic information about Professor Robinson.  
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Here are the two paragraphs that I read:  
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NOW THIS PERSPECTIVE becomes a perspective available only to those who have not accepted priestcraft as having epistemological authority. Whatever problems are to be addressed by oracles and priests, the problem of knowledge is not one of them, at least as this problem arises from the facts of the natural world. And I do want to underscore this, it is a point worth repeating: Something momentous takes place when a culture takes the position that the problem of knowledge is essentially a religious problem and invests its credulity in a denominated group of official interpreters whose judgments on matters of this kind are taken to be incorrigible.

Here I do not presume to weigh the claims of religion and the claims of the secular world. My own guess is that for every secularly produced fact, there may be some profound religious truth on which it depends. But here the complexity of the case and the shortness of life incline me, at any rate, to silence. What I am testing instead are the implications that follow, depending upon which of the positions is taken as a person or culture sets out to solve problems arising from life in the real world.

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After reading these paragraphs, I asked the panelists to comment on the final sentence in the first paragraph (i.e., “**Something momentous ...**”). Under the circumstances, discussion was quite brief.

— One participant said he agreed with previous remarks emphasizing that religious groups should not be dictating how all aspects of society should operate.

— Another participant commented that the net lesson is, “You’ve got to stay in your own lane.”

I offered a less colloquial way to express the second idea: It is necessary to distinguish different realms of thought and experience.

### **Preview of our webinar on May 11**

After we finish reading through and commenting on the two-page excerpt from the philosophy lecture by Daniel Robinson, we will examine section 8 of Paper 195, which mainly discusses similar issues from the opposite perspective (problems and dilemmas associated with secularism). For your convenience, I am also sending you the corresponding pages from the single-column edition of *The Urantia Book* (i.e., the third attachment).

In the course of our discussion on May 11, I plan to ask the panelists why the fixation of certain Protestant Christians on a literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis led them to undertake heavily politicized campaigns whereby they advocated prohibiting science teachers from teaching the theory of evolution in U.S. public schools — a prohibition that was actually enacted into law in some states of the United States.

In addition, I will find some convenient opportunity to ask participants to reflect on the assignment of responsibilities among the twelve corps of master seraphim (Paper 114, section 6). In other words, I will ask them to comment on the apparent balance of the interests of the seraphic planetary government and, by implication, the relative share of emphasis and attention that topics related to



religion receive. To say this even more simply, I will ask the panelists to talk about the relationship between religion and all other aspects of human life on our planet Urantia.

## **PRACTICAL FACTORS**

1. Since the recordings of our previous webinars remain available on YouTube, you could watch any or all of them whenever you wish. Here is the link that would take you to the specific location on the Internet:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_6QHPLuABZojhdjE8XJRQg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_6QHPLuABZojhdjE8XJRQg)

As a workaround that would help you if you do not have this link immediately to hand, you could log onto the main site for YouTube and then search for “Global Endeavor.” The results would include a reference to our programs, although it may not appear at the top of the list.

2. Here is the standard time line that applies to all our discussions, including the next webinar on Saturday, May 11:

- Pacific Time Zone: from 12:00 to 2:00 pm.
- Mountain Time Zone: from 1:00 to 3:00 pm.
- Central Time Zone: from 2:00 to 4:00 pm.
- Eastern Time Zone: from 3:00 to 5:00 pm.

Please be aware that the starting time is only approximate, for it usually takes us a few minutes to make the adjustments to the rather complicated software that cause all the participants to be viewed and heard correctly. In relation to our preceding webinars associated with topic 8, live streaming in YouTube began at about ten minutes past the hour indicated above.

Regards, Neal Waldrop.  
Chairman, the Committee for the Global Endeavor  
[May 10, 2019 at 11:33 pm]