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**To:** Neal Waldrop - gmail (nealwaldrop606@gmail.com)  
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Dear fellow readers of *The Urantia Book* and friends of the Global Endeavor,

On Saturday, December 14, we conducted our twenty-seventh 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." As a practical matter, however, our entire discussion pertained to page 6 of my essay "Living the Real Religion of Jesus" (June 24, 2019), a text that I am sending to you as the second attachment to this message.

Our next webinar in this series will occur during the new year, probably on some Saturday in January that we have not yet chosen.

### **Christianity's close links with Western society and culture**

As the webinar on December 14 began, we referred once again to the two paragraphs at the top of my essay "Living the Real Religion of Jesus" consisting of excerpts from Paper 92 and Paper 98 in which a Melchizedek offers candid remarks about Christianity's close links with Western society and culture:

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As the original teachings of Jesus penetrated the Occident, they became Occidentalized, and as they became Occidentalized, they began to lose their potentially universal appeal to all races and kinds of men. Christianity, today, has become a religion well adapted to the social, economic, and political mores of the white races. It has long since ceased to be the religion of Jesus, although it still valiantly portrays a beautiful religion about Jesus to such individuals as sincerely seek to follow in the way of its teaching. It has glorified Jesus as the Christ, the Messianic anointed one from God, but has largely forgotten the Master's personal gospel: the Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of all men. [A Melchizedek, 1084:10 / 98:7.11]  
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The Christian religion is the religion about the life and teachings of Christ based upon the theology of Judaism, modified further through the assimilation of certain Zoroastrian teachings and Greek philosophy, and formulated primarily by three individuals: Philo, Peter, and Paul. It has passed through many phases of evolution since the time of Paul and has become so thoroughly Occidentalized that many non-European peoples very naturally look upon Christianity as a strange revelation of a strange God and for strangers. [A Melchizedek, 1011:16 / 92:6.18]  
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I had previously sent the participants a document containing four questions that relate to the two excerpts shown above. These four questions read as follows:

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1. Please analyze and comment on the Melchizedek's statements that: (a) the teachings of Jesus "became Occidentalized"; and (b) since the time of Paul, Christianity "has become so thoroughly Occidentalized that many non-European peoples very naturally look upon Christianity as a strange revelation of a strange God and for strangers."
  
  2. In your view, what are the factors that led the Melchizedek to declare that Christianity "has become a religion well adapted to the social, economic, and political mores of the white races"? Please interpret this statement by analyzing each of the three dimensions that the Melchizedek identifies (*i.e.*, social, economic, and political).
  
  3. The second excerpt begins with the Melchizedek's statement that "The Christian religion is the religion about the life and teachings of Christ ... ." How does this differ from a much more general remark that the Melchizedek most emphatically did not make, a statement whereby he would declare that the Christian religion IS the teachings of Christ? Do the key differences solely pertain to the word *about*, or do there appear to be other factors that are at least equally important?
  
  4. Please identify and analyze those aspects of Christianity that can be traced to:
    - a. The theology of Judaism.
    - b. Certain Zoroastrian teachings.
    - c. Greek philosophy.
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During the preceding webinars, participants answered the first three questions, as well as the first two parts of question 4, the sub-questions pertaining to the aspects of Christianity that descend from the theology of Judaism and from certain Zoroastrian teachings. In addition, we began discussing question 4c on aspects of Christianity that descend from Greek philosophy, but did not conclude that discussion. Therefore we returned to that sub-topic on December 14.

## The contributions of Greek philosophy

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4. Please identify and analyze those aspects of Christianity that can be traced to:
    - c. Greek philosophy.
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I launched the discussion by asking participants to analyze how the inheritance from Greek philosophy and its psychology of belief and understanding combined together with the Roman tradition of uniformity and authoritarian control that likewise was a very important element as Christianity developed.

One participant replied that these two strands were opposed, at least in some sense. Greek philosophy, he said, was a process of inquiry that was fluid and very creative — for example, the Socratic method of teaching by asking questions, while looking at actual human experience. This contrasted with the Roman need for conformity or authoritarianism.

I elaborated on my original inquiry by calling attention to an interplay of linguistic dimensions whereby, to my understanding, the Greek language is more complex in terms of its grammatical patterns and possibilities of explanation than the Latin language is. Christianity started in the eastern half of the Mediterranean, and Greek was the language of theology for centuries. The Council of Nicaea in the year 325 CE was conducted in Greek, not in Latin; and very few bishops from the western half of the Roman Empire attended.

Another participant commented that the authoritarian character of Roman rule was echoed in the evolution of the Roman Catholic Church. Very soon a hierarchy developed that was part of the ecclesiastical structure that was evolving in Catholicism. This took what had been a fairly democratic movement, or one that at least had leaders who were willing to honor all of the members on an almost equal basis, and instead started to develop hierarchy. There were those who had more to say on the subject of religion and theology than the laity, in what evolved as a concept of clergy and laity.

In reply, I commented on the other participant's view that the early years of the movement that eventually became Christianity were very tolerant and open. I said that if we look at the epistles ascribed to the apostle Paul, he did not seem to me to be very tolerant. There was room for a variety of opinions *provided that* you most explicitly agreed with him. So the theology of Christianity started off from Paul's interpretations, and then there was a great deal of theorizing that we can associate with the tradition of Greek philosophy; but the Romans landed on this and decided to enforce uniformity on all the details that their co-religionists speaking Greek had managed to come up with.

A different participant called attention to very interesting passages in *The Urantia Book* that seem to suggest that the relationship among the Romans, the Greeks, and the Hebrews who originally promulgated Christianity — namely Paul and his successors — eventually led to a tripartite arrangement involving all three groups:

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Oriental law was stern and arbitrary; Greek law was fluid and artistic; Roman law was dignified and respect-breeding. Roman education bred an unheard-of and stolid loyalty. The early Romans were politically devoted and sublimely consecrated individuals. They were honest, zealous, and dedicated to their ideals, but without a religion worthy of the name. Small wonder that their Greek teachers were able to persuade them to accept Paul's Christianity.

And these Romans were a great people. They could govern the Occident because they did govern themselves. Such unparalleled honesty, devotion, and stalwart self-control was ideal soil for the reception and growth of Christianity.

It was easy for these Greco-Romans to become just as spiritually devoted to an institutional church as they were politically devoted to the state. [The Midwayer Commission, 2072:7-9 / 195:2.3-5]

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After the consolidation of Roman political rule and after the dissemination of Christianity, the Christians found themselves with one God, a great religious concept, but without empire. The Greco-Romans found themselves with a great empire but without a God to serve as the suitable religious concept for empire worship and spiritual unification. The Christians accepted the empire; the empire adopted Christianity. The Roman provided a unity of political rule; the Greek, a unity of culture and learning; Christianity, a unity of religious thought and practice. [The Midwayer Commission, 2073:5 / 195:3.1]

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The other participant conceded that these attitudes were oppositional in some sense, but said that they seemed to come together to found a sort of tripartite culture. The Romans provided political rule; the Greeks provided philosophy and education; and Christianity provided the religion.

In turning to yet another participant, I added one more element that I hoped he would consider, the element of the chosen-people syndrome that we had previously discussed. The chosen-people syndrome descending from Judaism and inflicted upon Christianity had deep theological roots; but it also had a resemblance to earlier pagan beliefs whereby the Romans believed that they had to appease their gods, and that a particular god would protect Rome if and only if appropriate worship were directed toward that god. So now, I said, I was wondering whether this idea of appeasing God and “doing the right thing” was an underlying psychological imperative for the Romans, perhaps with the view that if they did not get the religion right and did not enforce conformity on the part of all Roman citizens, God might punish the Roman Empire and might not help its armies prevail in whatever wars they were undertaking at the time.

The other participant said he had seen my original question as involving a conflict, for Greek philosophical thought did not involve a uniformity of belief. He saw this as being in conflict with the uniformity of practice that the Romans required, as others had already remarked. He then cited the following passage from section 1 of Paper 121:

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When Michael incarnated on Urantia, the world presented the most favorable condition for the Creator Son’s bestowal that had ever previously prevailed or has since obtained. In the centuries just prior to these times Greek culture and the Greek language had spread over Occident and near Orient, and the Jews, being a Levantine race, in nature part Occidental and part Oriental, were eminently fitted to utilize such cultural and linguistic settings for the effective spread of a new religion to both East and West. These most favorable circumstances were further enhanced by the tolerant political rule of the Mediterranean world by the Romans.

This entire combination of world influences is well illustrated by the activities of Paul, who, being in religious culture a Hebrew of the Hebrews, proclaimed the gospel of a Jewish Messiah in the Greek tongue, while he himself was a Roman citizen. [The Midwayer Commission, 1332:2-3 / 121:1.1-2]

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This passage, he said, demonstrates the tripartite connection. In regard to my additional question about the chosen-people syndrome, he said he did not see much in Greek mythology that represented appeasing, nor the view among the Roman people that it was necessary to appease the pagan gods.

I explained that the additional question I had given to him did not amount to denying anything that other participants had talked about, but another layer of meaning, in the sense that the pagan tradition of individual gods and goddesses had always included the idea that a particular god was on your side. For example, Athena was considered to be the patron of Athens. So if we then move into the era of early Christianity, the persecutions that happened from time to time during the first few centuries of Christianity (not consistently and not continuously) were motivated by an apparent concern of the Romans that these people called Christians were not giving proper reverence to the Roman gods, and that the Roman gods might get angry and punish some part of Rome because they were not being honored appropriately. What I was suggesting, I said, is that this psychology of doing appropriate honor to one's god or gods probably contributed to the authoritarianism that the Romans were inclined to practice anyway: They felt that if they refrained from getting it right or if they did not force all their subjects to get it right, then God might not favor them. In addition, I explained that I was simply adding that as a possible overlay on the tendency toward authority and uniformity that the Romans embodied in the first place.

Yet another participant agreed that the chosen-people syndrome was an additional layer of a larger overarching question that separates authoritarianism and free, interpretive experiences of religion and philosophy. His views on these questions, he said, were influenced by his background in the social sciences, primarily therapy, but also by subsequent graduate studies that had taken him a fair distance toward a doctorate in the history and sociology of religion. He then commented that if you look at a religious group of any size, you will see the two tendencies playing out (authoritarianism and free, interpretive experiences), and that this pattern is certainly not unique to Christianity. The tendency of the chosen-people factor is to be in alignment with authoritarianism, usually in a political or polity sense. You see religious leaders in power and authority exercising this chosen-people construct or executing it. You saw the scribes and pharisees doing it big time with Jesus, to the point where they killed him.

This is the dynamic of determining who is in the pale and who is outside. Often in its fundamentalist expressions, those who are not the chosen, who are outside the pale, are consigned to hell — to perdition or one variation or another of that. He saw this as a broad sociologic phenomenon, one that is expressed theologically: We are chosen because we believe this. But if you get underneath the surface of the phenomenon, it is we who are chosen and you who are not because we are in control and we control the power and resources — often political and financial resources — to the exclusion of you. So we are defining you as outside the pale theologically as well, and we declare that you are consigned to hell.

I thanked him for this analysis and then said I wanted to reach back to an extended discussion that we held in this series of webinars quite some time ago, one having to do with the formulation of the Christian theology of the Trinity and of the spiritual identity of Jesus — wherein there was extended controversy lasting for over one hundred years, largely starting at the time of the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) but extending at least to the year 451 CE, the Council of Chalcedon.

What emerged from this was a doctrinaire approach to the idea of Jesus' identity that included a minority who were not going along. What happened? The Romans, with their principle of uniformity, insisted on the formulation adopted at the Council of Chalcedon. This antagonized Christian believers in Syria, in Palestine, and to some lesser degree in Egypt; and these Christian believers continued to have their own view, which distinguished itself from the view of the Eastern Roman Empire.

So by the time that the Arabs emerged in the middle of the 600s, these believers in the eastern part of the Roman Empire were not in sympathy with imperial authority; and they did not fight very hard to push back the armies of the Prophet. Consequently, Islam rolled into Palestine and Egypt, across northern Africa, and into Spain. From this perspective, the presumption of the Roman system of uniformity bit very hard because it antagonized major groups of people who did not support the politics of Rome, or at least of the Eastern Roman Empire. Further, it cost the early Christian era a major share of the terrain on which Christianity had been initiated and had flourished. All this, in my view, was a consequence of the intersection of Greek philosophy in terms of theological detail with the Roman insistence on uniformity of belief and observance, and it proved to be politically damaging in very substantial ways.

A different participant called attention to the fact that I had mentioned the idea of the Trinity. In regard to that very important topic, he cited another paragraph in Paper 121:

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*Many, but not all, of Philo's inconsistencies resulting from an effort to combine Greek mystical philosophy and Roman Stoic doctrines with the legalistic theology of the Hebrews, Paul recognized and wisely eliminated from his pre-Christian basic theology. Philo led the way for Paul more fully to restore the concept of the Paradise Trinity, which had long been dormant in Jewish theology. [The Midwayer Commission, 1339:1 / 121:6.5]*  
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In his view, bringing the concept of the Trinity out of its relative submergence in Judaism was a very significant benefit. Even though the details of the Christian concept of the Trinity are not fully accurate, the essential truth of the Trinity was preserved for two thousand years.

I explained that in recounting the history I had summarized, I was not really describing the consequences of the diversity after the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451 CE in relation to the Trinity itself. The great controversies that caused the division pertained to the nature and identity of Jesus — his existence as a being of one nature or two, as a being with one will or two, and so on. The fact that Jesus was considered to be the second person of the Trinity as it was then conceived was not really a controversy. It was the insistence on the explicit doctrines adopted at the Council of

Chalcedon regarding the identity, nature, prerogatives, and will of Jesus that was the dividing point in substantial segments of the eastern half of the Roman Empire as it then existed.

I then endeavored to sum up the preceding discussion of the two elements I asked about in the first place, Greek philosophy and Roman authoritarianism. To me, I said, the discussion had confirmed that these two factors were in tension and that this combination influenced the development of Christianity for the entire 2,000 years that we have been discussing. The premise of authority has not gone away, nor the premise of conformity to established views, nor the claim of leaders that they have a right to impose their views on believers. I conceded that this pattern may be weaker than it was in previous centuries when people could literally be burned at the stake for having a divergent view, but commented that the principle of uniformity is still very deep in many strands of Christianity, although not in every strand.

## **God's love for everyone living on Urantia**

At my request, one of the participants read the narrative paragraph that appear in the middle of page 6 of my essay "Living the Real Religion of Jesus":

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These social and cultural associations of Christianity are highly problematic, for it would be ludicrous to assert that the insight and inspiration that we have inherited from the revelators are benefits exclusively aimed at persons who happen to live in the Western world. After all, the fifth epochal revelation enshrines God's love and the active ministry of our spiritual superiors for the entirety of Urantia and for everyone who shares our troubled planet with us! Further, the spiritual future of all humanity is intensely interlinked with the religion of personal spiritual experience that Jesus taught and proclaimed.  
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I asked about the relative emphasis that we apply to these conclusions: emphasis, on the one hand, on preaching to the choir, people in our own Western culture and civilization, or, to the contrary, emphasis on trying to broaden the message so that we step away from Western cultural associations in seeking to adopt and promote the true teachings of Jesus.

One panelist cited the following passage from Paper 149:

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Jesus understood the minds of men. He knew what was in the heart of man, and had his teachings been left as he presented them, the only commentary being the inspired interpretation afforded by his earth life, all nations and all religions of the world would speedily have embraced the gospel of the kingdom. The well-meant efforts of Jesus' early followers to restate his teachings so as to make them the more acceptable to certain nations, races, and religions, only resulted in making such teachings the less acceptable to all other nations, races, and religions.  
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The Apostle Paul, in his efforts to bring the teachings of Jesus to the favorable notice of certain groups in his day, wrote many letters of instruction and admonition. Other teachers of Jesus' gospel did

likewise, but none of them realized that some of these writings would subsequently be brought together by those who would set them forth as the embodiment of the teachings of Jesus. And so, while so-called Christianity does contain more of the Master's gospel than any other religion, it does also contain much that Jesus did not teach. *[The Midwayer Commission, 1670:2-3 / 149:2.1-2]*

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The implication of the first paragraph, he said, is that Jesus' early followers, by adding ideas to his teachings and modifying them, diminished their apparent spiritual appeal that was universal. For him this raised the question of whether, in this day and age, all nations would speedily embrace the gospel as it was originally taught by Jesus.

A different participant cited the following statement in section 1 of Paper 195:

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Paul and his successors were willing but shrewd and sagacious compromisers; they were keen theologic traders. *[The Midwayer Commission, 2071:4 / 195:1.4]*

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In examining the shrewd theological trades that Paul made, he believed that they were highly beneficial in the short term for the spread of Christianity, but in the long term had placed a ceiling on the universal acceptance of Jesus' true teachings. He thought of two or three key compromises that fall in this category, stating that one of them occurred at the time of the resurrection, well before Paul even came on the scene. In the context of Jesus having been crucified, a tremendous public tragedy, the fact that three days later he began to appear (the resurrection appearances) engendered a flood of joy and relief. The apostles, he said, and Peter in particular, were enveloped in this very powerful mix of emotions. They found, as the revelators described it, that the story focused on Jesus' person and his resurrection "had great power with the people" *[the Midwayer Commission, 2060:2 / 194:1.2]*. So they ran with it, and that was the first of the major errors.

This led to an emphasis on the person of Jesus as salvational, even though this is not what Jesus taught. Jesus did not say, "If you believe in me, you will be saved." What he said is, "If you believe in the Father and your relationship with God as I do, as I show you this way, you will be saved." So it was belief in the sacred nature of the Christ that was thought to gain salvation. Further, salvation played an undue emphasis in the gospel as it was reconfigured. Believing in Jesus became the central truth of the gospel rather than a living family relationship with God and with each other, the gospel that Jesus taught.

The second error, one that Paul came along and appended to the first one, was the sacrificial atonement doctrine. He called it a grievous error and cited the following paragraph from 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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By making this trade, he said, Paul appealed to the sacrificial nature of the Jewish culture and to the fact that many of the mystery cults of that time contained a theology of sacrifice. This was a huge error. This combination of elements is embedded at the core of Christian belief, and it impedes the more universal acceptance of Jesus' actual teachings. So the issue we have to deal with is that the fifth epochal revelation makes such an overt statement about how serious the error is, depicting it an attack on the nature of God. The question for us is what we do with this: In our relationship with Christianity and in our evolutionary efforts, do we highlight this fundamental mistake? When he considered that, he reflected on how Jesus proceeded without attacking the errors in peoples' religious beliefs. He emphasized the true realities, the higher realities, and ran with them. In his view, we should move strongly and assertively with the truth of God's loving nature, maintaining that sacrifice is not necessary but not attacking this doctrine as being highly objectionable. He believed it would be a mistake for us to do that.

Another participant commented that he liked the idea of going back to the principle that the topic is not salvation, it is simply about the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. We have to become comfortable with the idea that the gospel has to be restated in such a way, and maybe in each generation, that it really does focus on the nature of God and the nature of our relationship with God, even though its appeal may bring along only small numbers of people at any one time. On the other hand, he believed that these efforts may eventually reach a critical mass whereby community has developed around those persons who start to believe this way. This could have such an effect on the remainder of humanity that it becomes an appealing living philosophy to those who would be actual or potential adherents.

I congratulated him for emphasizing the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man without succumbing to the temptation to create the acronym "FOGBOM" or declare that FOGBOM is the answer. I said I would certainly refrain from suggesting that, but did believe that there was substantial merit in the idea of simplification. On the other hand, there is also the disadvantage of lesser levels of profundity, lesser levels of sophistication. I was not sure that making things so simple that they might appeal to someone in grammar school is the answer to our current problem.

In turning to a different participant, I asked whether the effort to return to the true teachings of Jesus, the teachings as he intended them, might antagonize the leaders of the authoritarian tendencies in organized, institutional Christianity, and whether that might create an antagonism that would undermine our own efforts.

The other participant said he agreed with a previous recommendation that we refrain from attacking anything. He emphasized Jesus' approach when visiting Rome and meeting with 36 leaders of the Mithraics, Cynics, and Stoics:

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Never once did he attack their errors or even mention the flaws in their teachings. In each case he would select the truth in what they taught and then proceed so to embellish and illuminate this truth in their minds that in a very short time this enhancement of the truth effectively crowded out the associated error ... [The Midwayer Commission, 1455:5 / 132:0.4]  
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In his view, the cosmology contained in Parts I, II, and III of *The Urantia Book* is needed to put Jesus' teachings in perspective and help us understand what the revelators are really trying to tell us. Further, he commented that the Spirit of Truth operates in current circumstances, helping us understand truth in the vernacular and according to concepts that we have today. So we have these efforts operating on our behalf.

I commented that the underlying problem that all of us face is that the answers to these questions are far from intuitive. They have to do with wisdom; they have to do with experience; they have to do with receptivity and personal interest as well as cultural interest. I then turned back to the panelist who had raised the question of whether in our current circumstances, all nations would speedily embrace the gospel as it was originally taught by Jesus. This conundrum led me to wonder what we should do and what approach we should undertake — whether this would be in distinction to the organized Christian approach that has existed so far, perhaps in harmony with it, or perhaps involve yet another set of methods.

The participant commented on the extraordinary implication of the paragraph from Paper 149 that he had cited before: the statement by the Midwayers that the whole world would have accepted the gospel of Jesus if his apostles had just presented it as he intended. This implies that we could be living in a world now where everyone was following the gospel of Jesus, at least to a larger extent than is currently the case, if only the apostles had not tried to *improve* what Jesus taught, had not adapted it, had not modified it, had not adulterated it — if they had just trusted that Jesus knew what he was doing, that he understood the minds and hearts of men; if they had just taken his gospel and spread it without adding their own baggage.

I commended his analysis of what happened and what could have happened, but stated that from my perspective, this does not amount to predicting what could happen now, under our current circumstances. We really do not know.

Another participant said he would like to share a paragraph from Paper 178 that implicitly takes account of the fact that errors were made, but then casts light on what we can do to remedy the situation now:

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This gospel of the kingdom is a living truth. I have told you it is like the leaven in the dough, like the grain of mustard seed; and now I declare that it is like the seed of the living being, which, from generation to generation, while it remains the same living seed, unfailingly unfolds itself in new manifestations and grows acceptably in channels of new adaptation to the peculiar needs and  
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conditions of each successive generation. The revelation I have made to you is a *living revelation*, and I desire that it shall bear appropriate fruits in each individual and in each generation in accordance with the laws of spiritual growth, increase, and adaptative development. From generation to generation this gospel must show increasing vitality and exhibit greater depth of spiritual power. It must not be permitted to become merely a sacred memory, a mere tradition about me and the times in which we now live. [*The Midwayer Commission, 1931:6 / 178:1.15*]

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He noted that we cannot go back and unmake the mistakes of the early Christian leaders, but must deal with the situation that we face now. He believed, however, that we are wandering on the cusp of an error resembling what occurred in the early Christian era. The revelators describe that initial error as transforming the religion of Jesus into the religion about Jesus. Now in his view, what is easy and natural for us, and what we have been doing for the last 70 years, is to focus on a religion about *The Urantia Book* versus the religion of *The Urantia Book*. This meant making it our primary mission to spread a text and to turn people on to it, saying that there is this amazing fifth epochal revelation, and you have to read it. This parallels the error that the early Christian leaders made, which was very easy and very natural for them: focusing on the person of Jesus, the revelatory individual, as the big news.

He believed that the real challenge, as it was then and as it is now, is encapsulated in the paragraph that he had just read, which is to take the heart of the gospel and reconfigure it, restate it in a way that reaches the culture of our day and age powerfully and evocatively, so as to respond to the needs of our generation spiritually. That is far more difficult than turning people on to a book and far more challenging.

In his view, spreading *The Urantia Book* is a good and proper thing to do, but only stage one of a much larger endeavor, which requires us, as devoted students of the revelation, to understand the core elements of the gospel, to be creative evolutionarily and culturally in evolving new models for reaching out to all of humanity in a way that will speak to the needs of our generation and our emerging global culture. He believed that the world is struggling for a new vision of what the gospel was and is, and that this is our challenge.

In contrast, however, he did not think we should be busy refuting Christianity. Instead we should be busy developing the alternative that is current for our generation — and promote it aggressively, assertively, and let the error fall away. He conceded that we will encounter opposition if we run with that true and original gospel, but believed that we should bring it on, calling this inevitable from an historical perspective.

In turning to another participant, I offered him the fairly colloquial, traditional statement that one cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs. So what is the goal here: Is it to break the eggs or to create the omelet, and what is the price of creating the omelet? Should we be aggressively breaking the eggs, or should we hope that someone else will break the eggs and mix the omelet for us?

The other participant replied that he was not sure how apt the metaphor is, but commented that we are in a big conundrum in terms of how we see the problem, how we spread the message of Jesus and

how we spread the revelation. He believed that if we study the revelation, there are many competing narratives that help to instruct us about problems to avoid and solutions to pursue. He then called attention to the rebellion that occurred during the first epochal revelation, trying to do something in ways that were not evolutionary and involved seeking to upstep the cultural stream too quickly. In comparison, he said, there are plenty of examples today where cultures are at different levels intellectually and spiritually. Although we may not be as competent in being able to determine that, we can certainly, on a one-to-one basis, determine when someone is at least open to a message, if not necessarily ready for it.

The revelators also tell us about Adam and Eve wanting to speed up the process in ways that amounted to a short circuit. The net conclusion, he said, is that they were not willing to wait for a critical mass of their progeny to be available and thereby become a self-sustaining phenomenon over an extended period of time, one that could have pursued the biologic uplift that was part of the plan and also the cultural uplift that went along with it.

He cited one ray of hope, the fact that among readers of *The Urantia Book*, there are numerous micromovements that are starting to see that we need to help create competent teachers and leaders who can teach the Urantia teachings but equally, and more important, teach the gospel, all with an excellent sense of the current stage where we find ourselves. In closing, he commented that he had been impressed just a few weeks ago in the Philippines by how active interest in *The Urantia Book* is being propagated in families because of the strong family structure and an organic kind of effort to teach the teachings. Over the course of about twenty years, interest has developed so that there are 60 to 100 people who are solid readers, and this dedication crosses generations.

## Formal question B

At my request, participants began considering formal question B, as presented at the bottom of page 6 of my essay “Living the Real Religion of Jesus”:

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**B.** In section 2 of Paper 99, a Melchizedek declares: “Only the real religion of personal spiritual experience can function helpfully and creatively in the present crisis of civilization” [*a Melchizedek, 1087:4 / 99:2.1*]. As we endeavor to embody, encourage, and advocate the religion of personal spiritual experience and simultaneously seek to stimulate active interest in the teachings of *The Urantia Book*, how should we avoid or at least diminish the possible impression that our efforts are actually intended to promote the traditional tenets and practices of organized, institutional Christianity? Would it be wise for committed readers of *The Urantia Book* to make emphatic statements disavowing these motives, and then repeat such assurances every so often? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of doing that?

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One participant focused on the inquiries contained in the final two sentences. He thought it would be a mistake even to broach these matters at this point, returning to the idea of providing as much truth as possible but never attacking the beliefs of others. He believed it is important to listen to the truths that others already possess, taking into account the ideas that committed readers should be aware of

and understand. This is a really challenging and difficult effort, given the cacophony of religious thought and theology that we have on Urantia today. He then called attention once again to the techniques that Jesus employed during his sojourn in Rome while conversing with the 36 leaders of the Stoics, Cynics, and Mithraic believers. Jesus focused on and embellished the truths that they already understood, and these truths eventually crowded out the errors.

I then addressed another participant, noting the previous remark that the cosmological and philosophic dimensions of the teachings of *The Urantia Book* may be an attraction point that could appeal to some groups. Therefore I asked whether we have a situation of differentiating the content that we use as our message, depending on the characteristics of the listener. In differentiating the message, do we have to declare that this is not Christianity, or should we simply leave that implicit?

He replied that he would not even address these factors, for the very good reasons that various other participants had already mentioned. He then called attention to Jesus' discussion with the apostle Simon, who had tried to convert a Persian to the gospel. Basically, he told Simon not to try to take something out of someone else's belief, but to try to put something in:

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"Simply go forth proclaiming: This is the kingdom of heaven — God is your Father and you are his sons, and this good news, if you wholeheartedly believe it, is your eternal salvation." *[The Midwayer Commission, 1592:6 / 141:6.4 — a part of what Jesus said when speaking to the apostles]*  
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To me, the panelist said, this sounds like a simple spiritual appeal.

A different participant commented that he believed that there is a way to move forward that is elegant, by looking at the heart of the gospel, the vision of the gospel, and how it responds to the peculiar needs of our generation. He declared that more and more people are interacting as if we participate in a unified global culture; and indeed we are at the peculiar stage where we are moving from nationalisms to a global culture. This transition, in his view, is fraught with difficulties and challenges and antagonisms.

So, he asked, what does the gospel have to respond with to that set of challenges? He believed that it has exactly what is needed. In the overall symbolism of Jesus' original gospel, which is that we are part of a universal spiritual family beyond this world, there is the core, the kernel, of the vision that needs to be communicated to our emerging global culture. Therefore the message to Christianity, as it is to every other religion, is that what Jesus is actually speaking to us about is a phenomenon that is much larger than Christianity, much larger than Hinduism or Buddhism or Islam, or the unchurched or the nones, or those who are struggling spiritual but not religious. It encompasses every human being who is searching for relevance and for relation to the larger realities that are divine realities.

He believed that it flows from this revelation and from the original gospel of Jesus that there is a larger spiritual family that we are part of, a larger reality that we are part of, and that these smaller loyalties and affiliations fit within it. So if we move forward aggressively and we train teachers and

leaders in these spiritual perspectives, so as to express these ideas diplomatically to Christians and practitioners of every other religious stripe, we will succeed in becoming the gracious person that Jesus was, while showing them a higher vision, a larger set of possibilities that does not negate their particular tradition but includes it and warmly welcomes it into the interfaith family of all religious believers.

I then turned to a different participant, saying that I wished to give a slightly different twist to our discussion by actually dipping back into the earlier moments when we talked about the tension between Greek philosophy and Roman authoritarianism or the premise of uniformity. Now the strand that I wished to offer to him had to do with the relationship between ideas, or theories if he preferred, and insisting upon acceptance.

In other words, I said, the Christian tradition has been predicated, at least in part, on evangelization on behalf of certain doctrines or creeds or practices. Is this a tradition that we need to set aside? In other words, should we emphasize that we are not promoting uniformity; we are not promoting acceptance of particular theories or doctrines; instead we are promoting acceptance psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually of a personal relationship with God and a personal relationship with our brothers and sisters who may have different views entirely.

The other participant replied that the gospel that Jesus is trying to convey is not a doctrine requiring that we consider that God is our Father and that all men and women are our brothers and sisters. Instead, he believed, it is a way of life and an attitude that he thought can only be acquired by internalizing the message and adapting it to one's own life.

He believed that we cannot measure success in terms of numbers of souls converted, in the same way that people might have looked at that in an evangelistic way at some time in the past. He thought we have to look at to what extent the world is transforming, one person at a time. Are people conducting themselves differently, at least in our small circles? Certainly the world is going through enormous upheavals right now, on the one hand, but what gets missed is the quiet kind of evolution in the background that may be occurring as a result of person-to-person contact.

In addressing another participant, I commented on the current situation, in effect, of discontinuity in relation to the history of humanity up to now. I said it was clear to me that if the revelators had been content with the progression of the world as it stood, if they had been content with the reality of Christianity as it stood, they did not need to bother to write *The Urantia Book*. So the fact that they provided the fifth epochal revelation, I believed, is at least a convincing argument that there were concerns of theirs, there were concerns in the spiritual hierarchy, that something had to change. So, I asked, is the conviction that something has to change an essential aspect of the message? In other words, can we achieve any results among people who are not convinced that there is anything that needs to change, and is the effort to bring them to the understanding that something needs to change intrinsically a part of our communication with them?

In regard to the question of whether humanity needs to change, the other participant declared that he agreed with this. He said that it was his conclusion after studying *The Urantia Book* for a few years

that this was an emergency action, on a par with what Melchizedek had to do. We are faced with the possible extinction of the spiritual light on this planet. In his mind, that is why it is imperative that we do something different. What we have to do differently is what another participant mentioned, which is actually to start living with the spirit within us — instead of running around and trying to convince everyone to read *The Urantia Book* or to persuade people to join our religious group or this or that. We cannot do anything until we start acting from the spirit, and we cannot act from the spirit until we live with the spirit. We cannot live with the spirit until we pray to the Father. Prayer and worship are critical to spiritual development. This is where the greatest deficit lies, which in his opinion is within us. The Midwayers comment that compared with Jesus’ declaration that God is spirit, the next most important thing that he said is that the kingdom of heaven is within you.

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“The kingdom of God is within you” was probably the greatest pronouncement Jesus ever made, next to the declaration that his Father is a living and loving spirit. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2084:4 / 195:10.4*]  
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He said that until we start taking that seriously, really seriously, we will not make substantial progress. His answer is that what really needs to change is that we really need to start living with the spirit.

I commended that reply but called attention to another aspect of my question, one that the person who had just spoken did not address. Are we confined to reaching out to people who want to change, or is there something in the message that may persuade them that they need to change? In other words, is this process that we are engaged in inherently restricted to people who want to change, or is there some way we can increase the population of those who accept that something has to change and that they need to be part of that transformation of humanity that indeed is at the core of the fifth epochal revelation?

Yet another participant responded by highlighting the fruits of the spirit, saying that we live in a personal-value universe where the fruits of the spirit are those things that have to be lived. A different participant concluded the discussion by declaring that we cannot underscore enough how important it is for us to follow the message of Jesus.

## **Preview of our first webinar during the new year**

As previously stated, our next webinar in this series will occur during the new year, probably on some Saturday in January. When we resume, we will turn to page 7 of my essay “Living the Real Religion of Jesus,” the first page of a new section that is headed “The presence of God.” As a convenience for readers of this message, and perhaps as a sample that may be appealing, here are the first two paragraphs:

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**The presence of God.** In the final analysis, God is in, around, over, under, and through us. Although this includes the fact that a Thought Adjuster lives in the mind of each human being who is conscious of right and wrong, that definitely does not exhaust the reality of God’s presence. After all,

a Divine Counselor tells us in Paper 1: “In Him we all live and move and have our being” [*a Divine Counselor, 29:6 / 1:5.16*]. On the other hand, in Paper 5 he concedes: “It is well-nigh impossible for human logic and finite reason to harmonize the concept of divine immanence, God within and a part of every individual, with the idea of God’s transcendence, the divine domination of the universe of universes” [*a Divine Counselor, 69:1 / 5:5.6*]. This may be as far as we should go, for this second statement suggests that attempting to probe the philosophic implications is not likely to be productive.

Nonetheless, we can acquire a modest grasp of these profound insights by reflecting that God is the ultimate source of matter, mind, and spirit. This, in turn, implies that the entire realm of finite reality constitutes eloquent evidence of the active presence of God. To enhance our understanding, we could note that it is the immanence of God the Mother, God the Supreme, that sums up, synthesizes, and cumulates the entire spectrum of finite experience — most assuredly including all the decisions and choices we make while living on our planet Urantia.

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## **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 occurring during the new year (probably on some Saturday in January, although we have not yet chosen a specific date):

- Pacific Time Zone: from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm.
- Mountain Time Zone: from 12:30 to 2:30 pm.
- Central Time Zone: from 1:30 to 3:30 pm.
- Eastern Time Zone: from 2:30 to 4:30 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 time stated.



Regards, Neal Waldrop.  
Chairman, the Committee for the Global Endeavor  
[December 23, 2019 at 12:03 am]