

Neal Waldrop

From: Neal Waldrop [nealwaldrop@earthlink.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 21, 2019 10:48 AM
To: Neal Waldrop - gmail (nealwaldrop606@gmail.com)
Subject: Global Endeavor / Revelation Revealed / webinar on February 16, plans for February 23
Attachments: 2016-07-17_RR-T08_P088-146_Q059-077.pdf; 2019-01-17_Romanità.pdf

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

On Saturday, February 16, we conducted our eighth 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.”

My essay “Romanità”

During this webinar, we focused on pages 3 through 6 of my essay “Romanità” (the second attachment). As previously stated, this document explains that the social, cultural, and political systems of the Roman Empire ended up inflicting certain birthmarks on the organized, institutional church — birthmarks that still exert substantial influence on Christianity as it is currently practiced in the Western world. In effect, these organizational and structural changes became so closely associated with the Christian tradition as to be almost indistinguishable from it. Further, the resulting entanglement of church and state exerted very substantial influence for well over one thousand years.

After a participant read the first paragraph on page 3, I stated that when I subsequently prepare the final version of “Romanità,” in order to insert it in an updated version of *Revelation Revealed*, I plan to revise the first sentence to read as follows: “A regional subdivision of the Roman Empire was called a *diocese*, and a senior administrator exercised authority over church affairs within each one, perhaps ranking as an archbishop or metropolitan bishop, or even as a Patriarch.”

The changes pertain to the second half of the sentence, making the ideas more precise and more in keeping with the principle of hierarchy. I explained that in the Roman Empire, a *diocese* was a fairly large area, whereas the authority of the great majority of ordinary bishops was confined to believers living in a town or small city. In any case, the main point of the paragraph is that the church continued to use Roman vocabulary and methods long after the Goths overran the western half of the Roman Empire.

From a much broader perspective, two participants commented that the overlap between the ecclesiastical realm and the political realm is entirely natural, for both of them wield power over individuals. One of these participants went on to declare that the resulting entanglement of church and state is predictable and normal, whether in the context of Christianity or in other circumstances. Both panelists agreed that this entanglement involves a contest for moral territory, what is right and what is wrong, as exemplified by the sentence in “Romanità” that mentions current political agitation in the United States with regard to abortion.

Another participant called attention to the passage in Paper 68 in which a Melchizedek tells us that “the mores were man’s first social institution” [*a Melchizedek, 767:2 / 68:4.2*]. This led him to conclude that there could be no human society without some mores. Therefore, in his view, an overlap between religious concerns and social and political factors is inevitable and unavoidable.

One panelist reminded us that Jesus endeavored to steer away from political matters, in part by giving the following answer to a person who questioned him: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and render to God the things that are God’s” [*the Midwayer Commission, 1899:2 / 174:2.2 — also quoted in the gospel according to Matthew, 22:21*]. Another panelist, however, agreed that this formula is important, but commented that the distinction is sometimes difficult or even problematic because of the interlinkages that exist on moral levels.

I explained that my essay “Romanità” specifically pertains to the entanglement of church and state that occurred in the Christian tradition, largely because the successors of the Emperor Constantine eventually made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire, but also because in the year 800, the pope saw fit to crown the Emperor Charlemagne — a step that created an implicit contest for authority and power that endured through most of the Middle Ages.

Part of this struggle could be interpreted as attempts by various rulers to seize authority over certain ecclesiastical matters, especially the appointment of bishops. On the other hand, there was also an encroachment on civil power on the part of the church, for until 1860 the pope exerted civil authority over a swath of central Italy (approximately one-third of the Italian peninsula), asserting that he had the right to do so because of the so-called “Donation of Constantine” — a supposed imperial edict that contemporary scholars appraise as a forgery.

I agreed that similar struggles for power and authority have occurred in the context of a number of other cultures, but not in all. For example, the various rulers of China have never been confronted with a religious leader who had sufficient personal stature and popular support to pose a real challenge, neither in imperial times nor in any subsequent era. In part, this is because China’s three long-standing traditions associated with religion (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism) never created the intense loyalties that we identify with the Christian tradition in the Western world.

Another participant called attention to the situation on the advanced continent of a neighboring planet: “Religion is so entirely a family matter among these people that there are no public places devoted exclusively to religious assembly. Politically, church and state, as Urantians are wont to say, are entirely separate, but there is a strange overlapping of religion and philosophy” [*a Melchizedek, 811.5 / 72:3.5*].

From his perspective, the revelators provided us this information as a tool for reflection, not as a pattern that people on Urantia are obliged to emulate. Yet another participant, however, said that she was not comfortable with the accompanying information about “the spiritual teachers (comparable to Urantia pastors), who visit each family periodically to examine the children to ascertain if they have been properly instructed by their parents” [*a Melchizedek, 811.6 / 72:3.6*]. She doubted that any similar procedure would ever be acceptable on Urantia.

One participant called attention to the following sentence appearing on page 4 of “Romanità”:

“In short, the Reformation had little lasting effect on Christianity’s underlying psychology of group authority aimed at uniformity of belief.”

He called this statement “very cogent.” In comparison, other participants emphasized that the Protestant Reformation broke the monopoly of a tyrannical institutional church that had previously dominated Western society and culture, pointing out that this decisive step created a situation that eventually led to tolerance and mutual respect. This, however, was not the immediate result, as I endeavored to note in the following passage on page 4 of “Romanità”:

“The Puritans and Pilgrims who founded the colony of Massachusetts did not traverse the Atlantic in search of tolerance and true religious freedom. No, they sought virgin soil in which they could impose their own brand of Christianity and resolutely cast out dissenters (*e.g.*, Roger Williams).”

Two panelists expressed very favorable views of Roger Williams, partly because he believed that civil authorities did not have power over individual conscience. In order to illustrate the pervasive entanglement of religion with social and cultural matters, I told a story that dates from my short vacation in London in August 1972, while en route back to the United States after having finished an assignment at a small naval base in Morocco that provided communications services to U.S. Navy ships operating in the western half of the Mediterranean.

I was twenty-five at the time, and in the evening my roommate in London and I had the habit of cycling from one pub to another. On one of those days, I was standing at the bar, waiting for the two mugs of beer that I had ordered on behalf of both of us. Based on the accent of the customer standing next to me, I concluded that he was from Northern Ireland. This fellow customer was willing to agree that I could ask him a question, but he did not guarantee that he would answer. So I took a chance, asking him why Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland were still killing each other, whereas in the rest of Western Europe, the wars of religion ended 400 years ago. To which he replied: “Yank, y’don’t understand a’tall, ’tis nothing to do with religion, ’tis a matter of society and culture and tradition! Meself, I’m an atheist, but I’m a *Protestant* atheist!” (in all the years since then, I have never found a Protestant minister who was willing to agree that atheism is a tenet of the Protestant faith.)

During the webinar’s final few minutes, participants took careful note of comments in section 12 of Paper 70 whereby a Melchizedek warns that if human beings wish to maintain our freedom, we must avoid “[Union of church and state](#)” [*a Melchizedek, 798:16 / 70:12.17*]. In effect, the Melchizedek has warned us that personal liberty is intensely threatened whenever the government embraces and sponsors an organized, institutional religion!

This, of course, is exactly what the Emperor Constantine and his successors did. For over one thousand years, the perils remained vivid and obvious. Although the vestiges of the union of church and state are now considerably weaker in countries whose social and cultural background is

predominantly Christian, they still afflict humanity, in some locations more acutely than elsewhere. From this perspective, several participants commented on the great importance of the separation of church and state that is embodied in the Constitution and laws of the United States. One panelist called that step a critical advance in human culture.

Another participant called attention to the extended analysis of secularism and its disparate effects that the Midwayer Commission has shared with us in section 8 of Paper 195. Originally, he noted, “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*]. Further, “It required a great power, a mighty influence, to free the thinking and living of the Western peoples from the withering grasp of a totalitarian ecclesiastical domination” [*the Midwayer Commission, 2081:4 / 195:8.4*].

He pointed out, however, that in recent generations, secularism has gone much too far: “secularism has assumed a more militant attitude, assuming to take the place of the religion whose totalitarian bondage it onetime resisted” [*the Midwayer Commission, 2081:5 / 195:8.5*]. “In revolting against the almost total control of life by religious authority, and after attaining the liberation from such ecclesiastical tyranny, the secularists went on to institute a revolt against God himself, sometimes tacitly and sometimes openly” [*the Midwayer Commission, 2081:6 / 195:8.6*].

This leaves us with a crucial balance that we must redress, for the separation of church and state must not entail the separation of human beings from God. After all, the revelators tell us most emphatically: “Secularism can never bring peace to mankind. Nothing can take the place of God in human society” [*the Midwayer Commission, 2081:6 / 195:8.6*].

Our agenda on February 23

During our webinar on February 23, we will return to page 96 of *Revelation Revealed*. We will then do our best to grapple with and comment on the tumultuous theological debates that convulsed Roman society for more than a century: From 325 to 451 CE, Christian believers advanced numerous contending theories and doctrines about the nature and identity of Jesus of Nazareth, his relationship to the Father, and key aspects of the Trinity — as embodied in successive creeds that these early Christians adopted in the course of crucial church councils, all of them subject to the approval and consent of various Roman emperors.

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

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, February 23:

- 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 the webinars on topic 8 that we have conducted up to now, live streaming in YouTube has usually begun at about ten minutes past the hour indicated above.

Regards, Neal Waldrop.

Chairman, the Committee for the Global Endeavor

[February 21, 2019 at 10:48 am]