

Neal Waldrop

From: Neal Waldrop [nealwaldrop@earthlink.net]
Sent: Friday, May 17, 2019 11:54 PM
To: Neal Waldrop - gmail (nealwaldrop606@gmail.com)
Subject: Global Endeavor / Revelation Revealed / webinar on May 11, plans for May 18
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; UB_1254-1256_P114-s06_A4.pdf

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

On Saturday, May 11, we conducted our fourteenth 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 third sub-element reads as follows:

(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.

As I previously stated, 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 discussed in previous webinars of this series. In relation to the need for balance between religion and society as a whole, I called attention to the following analytical remarks that the Midwayer Commission shares with us in section 8 of Paper 195:

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*]

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.

Near the end of the webinar on May 4, we began discussing a philosophy lecture that portrays the underlying situation in conceptual ways that I consider particularly interesting (i.e., the second attachment to this message). Therefore we resumed this discussion on May 11.

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.

At my request, one of the panelists read the first two paragraphs:

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.

I asked participants to focus on three words that are relatively unusual: “priestcraft,” “epistemological,” and “incorrigible.” One participant commented that “epistemological” clearly pertains to the nature or content of knowledge, so that “epistemological authority” amounts to claiming the authority to make statements on all matters whatsoever. This, he believed, is an accurate description of the all-encompassing claims of the organized, institutional church during the thousand years that I had identified (500 – 1500 CE).

Although the word “incorrigible” has various meanings, in this context he believed it reasonable to understand it as implying that the person or organization concerned could not be challenged or corrected.

COMMENT: Since no one explicitly discussed the word “priestcraft,” I will paraphrase it by stating that it seems to refer to the activities, assertions, and functional roles of priests and other professional clergy.

I then asked another panelist to appraise the following sentence: “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.”

In his view, the lecturer is distinguishing between two different realms of thought and experience: religion and spirit, as opposed to matter. He called attention to the tradition in Japan of attributing considerable importance to natural philosophy.

I responded that in my view, we are actually talking about the intersection of three fundamental domains: matter, mind, and spirit. In other words, we are also talking about mind. Although the lecturer’s focus on philosophy makes the realm of mind exceedingly clear by implication, here are two practical examples: (1) computers and information technology represent forms of knowledge that are mindal, not material and certainly not spiritual; (2) principles relating to the performance of stocks in the stock market are certainly not science, but can be understood as a practical application of mind. In effect, we are talking about a period in history when those who claimed to speak for spirit (i.e., the organized, institutional church) asserted domination over matter and mind also.

I proceeded to ask for comments about the following sentence: “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.”

One participant called attention to the primary distinction between matters of belief and matters of fact that are observable. In contrast, belief pertains to questions that are not observable. During the period we are examining, the Roman Catholic Church took a position of authority of all subjects whatsoever, thereby imposing certain beliefs on all of Western civilization. If the church had restricted its authority to religious and spiritual matters, instead of venturing into social issues and material matters, the net outcome would have been far different.

I agreed, commenting that in addition to science, there are a wide range of other intellectual and cultural topics that are certainly not religion. For example, the grammar of French, explaining the works of Shakespeare, and the dimensions of psychology that are involved in human relationships, including those between husband and wife. Nonetheless, the organized, institutional church proclaimed complete authority over marriage and family life.

Another participant remarked that during the Middle Ages, there were some imaginative individuals who took original positions on matters of theology and faith. As examples, he cited Thomas Aquinas (13th century) and Teresa of Avila (16th century).

In reply, I pointed out that when the writings of Thomas Aquinas were eventually approved, at least some of the ideas they contained became touchstones of belief that church authorities promoted as matters of ecclesiastical authority. Further, I commented that during the period we are examining, any theologian who had the courage to offer a new idea was keenly aware of the danger of being hauled before authority and condemned as a heretic (which indeed did happen from time to time).

The other participant agreed that there were certainly inconsistencies involved in all this. For example, Teresa of Avila had a book of hers confiscated by the Inquisition, but it was eventually returned.

Facts, meanings, and values

I asked whether facts, meanings, and values can be broadly associated with matter, mind, and spirit, realities that are implicitly subject to different rules.

One participant answered yes to that question, commenting on the parallel to ancient Greek philosophy, which had often examined quality, quantity, and meaning. Plato had been essentially an idealist, whereas Aristotle was mainly a realist.

In his view, the lecturer on philosophy is considering the problem of knowledge only with respect to material facts; he does not consider knowledge on religious and spiritual levels. He agreed with the lecturer, however, that faith cannot be used to distinguish between facts of the material world. In the final paragraphs, the lecturer focuses on empirical approaches, a well respected and valid technique.

I responded that the lecturer in philosophy is partly making a statement on behalf of his own discipline. In effect, I said, philosophy is a formula for reasoning that is situated between religion and science. I believed that there are passages in *The Urantia Book* in which the revelators call attention to this role of philosophy as an intermediary, but could not identify any of them at that particular moment. (NOTE: Please see the additional excerpts pertaining to philosophy that I have appended near the end of this message.)

Another participant commented that matter, mind, and spirit interpenetrate, and that this understanding is innate in human beings. For her, the beauty of *The Urantia Book* is that it allows you to understand that God permits all three dimensions. She wondered how church authorities came to their ridiculous views, such as the teaching that illness was a punishment for sin. In effect, they were charlatans.

I replied by reiterating that the organized, institutional church had a monopoly on education, which was in Latin and not in a language of the people, most of whom were illiterate. Further, we should bear in mind a principle that we called attention to very early in our study of topic 8: the principle that Christianity is an extemporized religion or, in more colloquial terms, “They made it up as they went along” — for whatever reasons seemed advantageous to the ecclesiastical power structure at the time.

Yet another participant called attention to the following statement by the Protestant reformer Martin Luther: “Every man is his own priest” (i.e., during the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century). The church hierarchy and power structure clearly thought that this was threatening. He thought that there is something in human nature that lends itself to authoritarian or tyrannical behavior. The Christian church, in his view, had been a unifying factor in the medieval world, but it failed. In comparison, he said, atheism and secularism are failing now.

Interpreting a text or holy maxim

The third paragraph of the philosophy lecture by Daniel Robinson the reads as follows:

Once one confers on a select and denominated group ultimate epistemological authority on core questions arising from the problem of knowledge, the nearly inevitable result is philosophical paralysis. And what is more likely to happen is positions will become quite hardened, and the only thing left for scholarship is to interpret the words of the wise. So the entire debate now is not a debate about the nature of truth, but about how a text or holy maxim is to be understood. What the leaders of thought in the ancient Greek world might be inclined to say is that this may be the best way to get to heaven, but surely not to the moon.

I asked whether this paragraph may conceal an implicit danger for committed readers of *The Urantia Book*, the potential problem of becoming so intent on “**how a text or holy maxim is to be understood**” that we neglect other sources of knowledge and wisdom.

One participant replied that this question takes us back to the problem of knowledge, how do you achieve certainty about what you believe. The phrase “**to interpret the words of the wise**” implies that matters are settled and no longer subject to discussion. He perceived *The Urantia Book* as having a certain quality of truth in it; it continues to attract him, and he continues to use it as a filter, as a standard of truth. He said he was not concerned about being labeled as a “fundamentalist.”

I recommended a kind of triage of our own in relation to the ideas that the revelators have expressed in *The Urantia Book*: (1) spiritual truths; (2) cosmology, on the understanding that the revelators have told us that “[t]he cosmology of these revelations is *not inspired*,” but “*limited by our permission for the co-ordination and sorting of present-day knowledge*” [*a Melchizedek, 1109:3 / 101:4.2*]; and (3) comments on society and civilization, which seem to me a snapshot at a particular moment in time.

One participant objected to the triage that I proposed, saying that the statement about cosmology is always brought up and is deceptive in the ways that it tends to be interpreted. After all, historical facts will stand the test of time, and the fact that the universe of universes revolves around Paradise, an absolute center, will always be accurate. In his view, the basic scientific view of the universe will not need to be updated.

Another participant commented that the Urantia Papers provide a modicum of facts and truth — facts, knowledge, and wisdom. The teachings of the revelators provide leverage; they are a kind of

scaffolding that gives us leverage, the ability to ferret out additional facts and build upon them. He called attention to a sentence in Paper 194 that portrays a key role of the Spirit of Truth: “Thus it appears that the Spirit of Truth comes really to lead all believers into all truth, into the expanding knowledge of the experience of the living and growing spiritual consciousness of the reality of eternal and ascending sonship with God” [*the Midwayer Commission, 2061:5 / 194:2.7*].

At this point I called attention to the fact that we had spent approximately one hour and three-quarters discussing the first three paragraphs of the professor’s lecture, although admittedly the most important three paragraphs. Therefore I read the remaining material rapidly, requesting that panelists discuss the idea “empirical” and the implied distinction between inductive and deductive methods.

One participant responded that empiricism is a relatively safe approach if you are interested in discerning what is real, but it is not a comprehensive solution. For example, the peace that passes understanding cannot be explained in empirical terms, even though it fits into the category of a certain type of knowledge. For his part, he had great respect for any book whose authors are willing to state, “I do not know,” and the revelators do make this statement from time to time. The teachings of *The Urantia Book* encourage original thought, while drawing on factors reflecting human thought patterns.

Another participant said he agreed with the implicit contention of the lecturer in philosophy that the certainties of faith cannot be used to distinguish between certain and doubtful knowledge of the material world. He believed that this is consistent with what the authors of *The Urantia Book* tell us. On the other hand, we have not addressed the question of the epistemological problem of religious knowledge. He called attention to a complex but balanced statement that a Melchizedek makes in section 6 of Paper 103:

The highest attainable philosophy of mortal man must be logically based on the reason of science, the faith of religion, and the truth insight afforded by revelation. By this union man can compensate somewhat for his failure to develop an adequate metaphysics and for his inability to comprehend the mota of the morontia. [*A Melchizedek, 1137:5 / 103:6.15*]

In a sense, he said, both science and the religion of Jesus arise from experience, although the underlying realities are fundamentally different:

In religion, Jesus advocated and followed the method of experience, even as modern science pursues the technique of experiment. We find God through the leadings of spiritual insight, but we approach this insight of the soul through the love of the beautiful, the pursuit of truth, loyalty to duty, and the worship of divine goodness. But of all these values, love is the true guide to real insight. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2076:5 / 195:5.14*]

I thanked this panelist for paraphrasing the true religion of Jesus, which centers on personal spiritual experience. I then closed the discussion on May 11, stating that our main topic on May 18 will be to analyze and discuss section 8 of Paper 195.

Preview of our webinar on May 18

As indicated immediately above, our main topic on May 18 will be section 8 of Paper 195 by the Midwayer Commission, which is entitled, “Secular Totalitarianism” (the third attachment). Before we delve into this provocative material, however, I will ask panelists to consider the following two questions:

— Why did the fixation of certain Protestant Christians on a literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis lead 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?

— Please evaluate the pattern of assigned responsibilities among the twelve corps of master seraphim (Paper 114, section 6 — the fourth attachment). In other words, please 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, please analyze the relationship between religion and all other aspects of human life on our planet Urantia.

We will then proceed to examine section 8 of Paper 195, as stated above. If time permits, I will ask participants:

(a) Do the following excerpts have important implications for the two abuses that we have just considered, ecclesiastical totalitarianism AND secular totalitarianism?

(b) Do both variants on a totalitarian mindset inherently involve neglecting and/or tyrannizing over the independent and crucial functions of mind that necessarily intervene between matter and spirit?

While mind is energy associated in purely material beings and spirit associated in purely spiritual personalities, **innumerable orders of personality, including the human, possess minds that are associated with both energy and spirit.** The spiritual aspects of creature mind unfailingly respond to the spirit-gravity pull of the Eternal Son; the material features respond to the gravity urge of the material universe. ...

The greater the spirit-energy divergence, the greater the observable function of mind; the lesser the diversity of energy and spirit, the lesser the observable function of mind. **Apparently, the maximum function of the cosmic mind is in the time universes of space. Here mind seems to function in a mid-zone between energy and spirit,** but this is not true of the higher levels of mind; on Paradise, energy and spirit are essentially one. [*A Divine Counselor, 104:3,5 / 9:6.5,7— emphasis added: the sentences in bold type*]

Always must man's inner spirit depend for its expression and self-realization upon the mechanism and technique of the mind. Likewise must man's outer experience of material reality be predicated on the mind consciousness of the experiencing personality. Therefore are the spiritual and the material, the inner and the outer, human experiences always correlated with the mind function and conditioned, as to their conscious realization, by the mind activity. **Man experiences matter in his mind; he experiences spiritual reality in the soul but becomes conscious of this experience in his mind.** The intellect is the harmonizer and the ever-present conditioner and qualifier of the sum total of mortal experience. Both energy-things and spirit values are colored by their interpretation through the mind media of consciousness. [A Melchizedek, 1136:1 / 103:6.6 — emphasis added: the sentence in bold type]

ADDITIONAL EXCERPTS PERTAINING TO PHILOSOPHY

Here are several excerpts from *The Urantia Book* that serve to explain the role and significance of philosophy as it contributes to human thought and awareness. (Please note that I have modified the original passages by using bold type to highlight the word *philosophy* each time it occurs.)

Scientists may some day measure the energy, or force manifestations, of gravitation, light, and electricity, but these same scientists can never (scientifically) tell you what these universe phenomena *are*. Science deals with physical-energy activities; religion deals with eternal values. True **philosophy** grows out of the wisdom which does its best to correlate these quantitative and qualitative observations. There always exists the danger that the purely physical scientist may become afflicted with mathematical pride and statistical egotism, not to mention spiritual blindness.
...

Quantity may be identified as a *fact*, thus becoming a scientific uniformity. Quality, being a matter of mind interpretation, represents an estimate of *values*, and must, therefore, remain an experience of the individual. When both science and religion become less dogmatic and more tolerant of criticism, **philosophy** will then begin to achieve *unity* in the intelligent comprehension of the universe. [The Midwayer Commission, 1476:6, 1477:2 / 133:5.4,7 — excerpts from Jesus' comments to Gonod and Ganid while they were in Athens and just after they had listened to a long discourse by a Greek philosopher]

There are just three elements in universal reality: fact, idea, and relation. The religious consciousness identifies these realities as science, **philosophy**, and truth. **Philosophy** would be inclined to view these activities as reason, wisdom, and faith—physical reality, intellectual reality, and spiritual reality. We are in the habit of designating these realities as thing, meaning, and value. ...

Physical certainty consists in the logic of science; moral certainty, in the wisdom of **philosophy**; spiritual certainty, in the truth of genuine religious experience. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2094:1,4 / 196:3.2,5*]

Religion stands above science, art, **philosophy**, ethics, and morals, but not independent of them. They are all indissolubly interrelated in human experience, personal and social. Religion is man's supreme experience in the mortal nature, but finite language makes it forever impossible for theology ever adequately to depict real religious experience. ...

Art results from man's attempt to escape from the lack of beauty in his material environment; it is a gesture toward the morontia level. Science is man's effort to solve the apparent riddles of the material universe. **Philosophy** is man's attempt at the unification of human experience. Religion is man's supreme gesture, his magnificent reach for final reality, his determination to find God and to be like him. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2096:4,6 / 196:3.28,30*]

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, May 18:

- 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 17, 2019 at 11:54 pm]