

Neal Waldrop

From: Neal Waldrop [nealwaldrop@earthlink.net]
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2019 9:27 PM
To: Neal Waldrop - gmail (nealwaldrop606@gmail.com)
Subject: Global Endeavor / Revelation Revealed / webinar on April 20
Attachments: 2016-07-17_RR-T08_P088-146_Q059-077.pdf

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

I am very pleased to announce that on Saturday, April 20, we will resume our webinar series 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.”

Theology: its value and limitations

Panelists will start at the top of page 103 of *Revelation Revealed* (which is where we left off on March 2). Therefore participants will discuss the value and limitations of theology as it may contribute to spiritual belief and practice, taking careful note of the six excerpts from *The Urantia Book* cited on that page. In part, the revelators declare:

Theology does not produce religion; it is religion that produces theologic philosophy. [A Melchizedek, 1130:3 / 103:1.4]

When theology masters religion, religion dies; it becomes a doctrine instead of a life. The mission of theology is merely to facilitate the self-consciousness of personal spiritual experience. [A Melchizedek, 1141:4 / 103:9.6]

In addition to the six excerpts highlighted in the text, I will ask the panelists to consider and comment on the following paragraph from section 9 of Paper 195:

Primitive man lived a life of superstitious bondage to religious fear. Modern, civilized men dread the thought of falling under the dominance of strong religious convictions. Thinking man has always feared to be *held* by a religion. When a strong and moving religion threatens to dominate him, he invariably tries to rationalize, traditionalize, and institutionalize it, thereby hoping to gain control of it. By such procedure, even a revealed religion becomes man-made and man-dominated. Modern men and women of intelligence evade the religion of Jesus because of their fears of what it will do *to* them — and *with* them. And all such fears are well founded. The religion of Jesus does, indeed, dominate and transform its believers, demanding that men dedicate their lives to seeking for a knowledge of the will of the Father in heaven and requiring that the energies of living be consecrated to the unselfish service of the brotherhood of man. [The Midwayer Commission, 2083:2 / 195:9.6]

Augustine versus Pelagius

Thereafter, participants will proceed to analyze and react to several pages of *Revelation Revealed* narrating an intense controversy that occurred in the early decades of the fifth century — contention that pitted Pelagius, a relatively obscure British monk who was then preaching in Rome, against Augustine, bishop of Hippo in north Africa, an ecclesiastical superstar whose extant works in Latin have made him the most prolific author who ever wrote in that language and, not incidentally, the most influential theologian who lived and taught in Western Europe during Christianity's first few centuries.

Nonetheless, the teachings of Pelagius emphasizing the essential goodness of human nature and the freedom of the human will are considerably closer to the revelators' views than the doctrines that Augustine proclaimed and promoted. For example, Pelagius denied the idea of original sin and the need for infants to be baptized, whereas Augustine asserted that human beings could not attain righteousness by their own efforts and were totally dependent upon the grace of God, while emphasizing the role that he associated with the organized, institutional church. Further, Augustine's extended struggle with Pelagius and Pelagianism eventually led him (Augustine) to repulsive teachings that amount to predestination — convictions that clearly influenced John Calvin and, through him, the entire spectrum of Evangelical thought among Protestant Christians.

PRACTICAL FACTORS

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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, April 20:

- 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
[April 17, 2019 at 9:27 pm]

Neal Waldrop

From: Neal Waldrop [nealwaldrop@earthlink.net]
Sent: Friday, April 26, 2019 7:45 PM
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, April 20, we conducted our eleventh 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.”

Theology: its value and limitations

During this webinar, we analyzed and discussed page 103 of *Revelation Revealed*, thereby enabling the participants to discuss the value and limitations of theology as it may contribute to spiritual belief and practice — predominantly based on the six excerpts from *The Urantia Book* that are cited on that page. In these six excerpts, the revelators declare:

[1] Religious experience, being essentially spiritual, can never be fully understood by the material mind; hence the function of theology, the psychology of religion. [A *Divine Counselor*, 69:1 / 5:5.6]

[2] Psychology may indeed attempt to study the phenomena of religious reactions to the social environment, but never can it hope to penetrate to the real and inner motives and workings of religion. Only theology, the province of faith and the technique of revelation, can afford any sort of intelligent account of the nature and content of religious experience. [A *Melchizedek*, 1107:7 / 101:2.17]

[3] Religion persists in spite of revolutionary changes in religious beliefs. Theology does not produce religion; it is religion that produces theologic philosophy. [A *Melchizedek*, 1130:3 / 103:1.4]

[4] When theology masters religion, religion dies; it becomes a doctrine instead of a life. The mission of theology is merely to facilitate the self-consciousness of personal spiritual experience. Theology constitutes the religious effort to define, clarify, expound, and justify the experiential claims of religion, which, in the last analysis, can be validated only by living faith. [A *Melchizedek*, 1141:4 / 103:9.6]

[5] While personal religion precedes the evolution of human morals, it is regretfully recorded that institutional religion has invariably lagged behind the slowly changing mores of the human races. Organized religion has proved to be conservatively tardy. **The prophets have usually led the people in religious development; the theologians have usually held them back.** [A *Melchizedek*, 1128:2 / 102:8.6 — *emphasis added: sentence in bold type*]

[6] Theology may fix, formulate, define, and dogmatize faith, but in the human life of Jesus faith was personal, living, original, spontaneous, and purely spiritual. This faith was not reverence for tradition nor a mere intellectual belief which he held as a sacred creed, but rather a sublime experience and a profound conviction which *securely held him*. His faith was so real and all-encompassing that it absolutely swept away any spiritual doubts and effectively destroyed every conflicting desire. Nothing was able to tear him away from the spiritual anchorage of this fervent, sublime, and undaunted faith. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2087:5 / 196:0.5*]

Highlights of the discussion

Reading through these excerpts led to the many stimulating and intriguing insights that the panelists exchanged. The summary that follows below cannot possibly do justice to all their remarks, but I have done my best to present highlights that may be useful to our readers and viewers.

As you read them, please bear in mind that these highlights represent a range of opinions voiced by individual panelists. Taken as a whole, these statements and comments attest to our practical theme of pluralism and diversity, not any effort to foster or adopt unified conclusions that might bespeak a single viewpoint.

— Living spiritual experiences are sometimes so sublime that they cannot be described in words. As implied in the second excerpt, the technique of revelation is theology, the province of faith.

— A key feature of positive and helpful theology is to avoid judging others and keep oneself from becoming a bully or exerting a kind of greed on the spiritual or religious level. In effect, helpful theology requires respect for facts, meanings, and values in proper balance, while seeking to represent a spiritual connection between the human and the divine.

— Theology is a group endeavor, individuals working together with other individuals, a sociological phenomenon. Theological ideas do not spring up from nothing in the mind of a given individual; they are the product or outcome of dialogue.

— Remarks about theology are social insofar as words are automatically social, but personal experience with God is not automatically a social matter. The quest for God occurs on a personal level.

— One question pertaining to theology has to do with the premise of authority. If conformity and uniformity are enforced on the basis of authority, that would be an adverse effect of certain types of theology.

— The religions of authority have done a great deal of good in the world, but this has come at a high cost, the cost of actual personal experience. The actual experience of finding God is always personal. Striving for God consciousness can be shared socially, but it is discovered in the personal realm of reality, producing a peace that passes understanding.

— There is no personal spiritual experience outside of the social context. Spiritual experience necessarily involves socialization as human beings; it is impossible to be self taught. Authority is not intrinsically a theological phenomenon; it is a human phenomenon that operates in any human context. All prophets have existed with the consciousness of their social environment; all theologians have been inspired by prophets.

— The authentic experience of hearing God’s voice, the Thought Adjuster, does not originate in any social context. The experience of hearing it is transcendent and personal. It is super-sociological, super-theological, and super-spiritual. Theology could make an expository record, but that record would not be the experience.

— Subsequent fusion with the Adjuster is new every time it happens; it cannot be explained sociologically. I believe that the Thought Adjuster concept will end up saving Urantia and will do that when people truly accept it.

— The source of personality in the universe is the Universal Father. Fusion with the Thought Adjuster is personal but not individual; it is personal because it comes from the community of divinity that we call the Trinity. The personal level is, by definition, social, because the Trinity is composed of three beings. Living faith is a personal faith and can be experienced only in the context of other personal beings.

Analyzing an additional excerpt

After the participants discussed the six passages from *The Urantia Book* that are reproduced on page 103 of *Revelation Revealed*, I read the following paragraph from section 9 of Paper 195 and then asked them to comment on it.

Primitive man lived a life of superstitious bondage to religious fear. Modern, civilized men dread the thought of falling under the dominance of strong religious convictions. Thinking man has always feared to be *held* by a religion. When a strong and moving religion threatens to dominate him, he invariably tries to rationalize, traditionalize, and institutionalize it, thereby hoping to gain control of it. By such procedure, even a revealed religion becomes man-made and man-dominated. Modern men and women of intelligence evade the religion of Jesus because of their fears of what it will do *to* them — and *with* them. And all such fears are well founded. The religion of Jesus does, indeed, dominate and transform its believers, demanding that men dedicate their lives to seeking for a knowledge of the will of the Father in heaven and requiring that the energies of living be consecrated to the unselfish service of the brotherhood of man. [The Midwayer Commission, 2083:2 / 195:9.6]

In part, I asked participants whether from some perspectives, theology has operated as a formula for gaining control of deep spiritual impulses, an effort to settle for “a deal” that is “good enough” and that does not “[demand] that men dedicate their lives to seeking for a knowledge of the will of the Father in heaven and [require] that the energies of living be consecrated to the unselfish service of the brotherhood of man.” After all, I remarked, adopting the real religion of Jesus forces a very

substantial change in one's value system. Will his approach eventually gain converts and be the fulcrum for much higher levels of spiritual experience on our planet Urantia?

One participant replied that he saw no way around this, although these changes will take much longer than we would like. This will not be a one-time choice, but the accumulated choices of persons that occur individually, one at a time, over thousands of years. This will happen but will depend on the willingness of people to forgo selfish inclinations and embrace others, regardless of how unpleasant and difficult this may seem.

While participants proceeded to discuss the net damage inflicted by the worldwide illusions that we call materialism and secularism, one person cited the following incisive statements by the Midwayer Commission, as presented in section 8 of Paper 195:

[S]ecularism is not the sole parent of all these recent gains in the enlargement of living. Behind the gains of the twentieth century are not only science and secularism but also the unrecognized and unacknowledged spiritual workings of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2082:1 / 195:8.9*]

Yet another participant called attention to remarks of Dr. Martin Luther King, to the effect that science has made the world a neighborhood, but that religion and ethics have failed to make it a brotherhood. He believed that the activities of study groups should be reconceived so as to embody a horizontal axis whereby the various study groups seek to cooperate with each other, AND ALSO a vertical axis whereby study groups endeavor to cooperate with the work of the master seraphim, while embracing their energy and aims.

In reply, I commended his insights and took the opportunity to point out that an analytical study guide on the work of the master seraphim is available on the website of the Committee for the Global Endeavor (www.globalendeavor.net). In addition, I noted that the work of the master seraphim is the spiritual model for our plan for the Global Endeavor, an extremely ambitious initiative that will enable readers of *The Urantia Book* to seek to promote the progressive growth and development of society and civilization as a whole — an effort that will encompass spiritual and religious aspects, but certainly not be limited to them.

Our agenda for April 27: Augustine versus Pelagius

During our webinar on April 27, panelists will analyze and react to several pages of *Revelation Revealed* narrating an intense controversy that occurred in the early decades of the fifth century — contention that pitted Pelagius, a relatively obscure British monk who was then preaching in Rome, against Augustine, bishop of Hippo in north Africa, an ecclesiastical superstar whose extant works in Latin have made him the most prolific author who ever wrote in that language and, not incidentally, the most influential theologian who lived and taught in Western Europe during Christianity's first few centuries.

Nonetheless, the teachings of Pelagius emphasizing the essential goodness of human nature and the freedom of the human will are considerably closer to the revelators' views than the doctrines that Augustine proclaimed and promoted. For example, Pelagius denied the idea of original sin and the need for infants to be baptized, whereas Augustine asserted that human beings could not attain righteousness by their own efforts and were totally dependent upon the grace of God, while emphasizing the role that he associated with the organized, institutional church. Further, Augustine's extended struggle with Pelagius and Pelagianism eventually led him (Augustine) to repulsive teachings that amount to predestination — convictions that clearly influenced John Calvin and, through him, the entire spectrum of Evangelical thought among Protestant Christians.

A personal introduction

During the final few minutes of the webinar on April 20, I provided the following personal introduction to our webinar on April 27.

My original hope when we started the webinar today was that we would reach the discussion of the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius. We did not; we will do that next week.

I would like to introduce it slightly by commenting on this person Augustine. Now in the Christian tradition, he is commonly identified as "Saint Augustine." I will not do that because to use the title "Saint" involves accepting the authority of the organization that conferred it upon him. But in any case, Augustine of Hippo, the bishop of that city, was a towering figure in the early history of Christianity, probably the paramount theologian in the western half of the Christian tradition; but I would ask you to bear in mind who this person was.

Augustine of Hippo was a noble Roman; he came from a wealthy family background. His family was not of the extremely wealthy category that would have made his family eligible for the Senate as conceived in imperial Rome, but they were wealthy persons. He, Augustine, his family background, was associated with the principle of authority, Roman authority, Roman hierarchy, Roman uniformity. And I would ask you to bear this in mind when we talk about the conflict with Pelagius.

Augustine did not come to these matters fully with an open slate. To the contrary, he was *Roman*. He identified with these traits that we discussed in my document "Romanità"; and that background needs to be part of our understanding of the conflict between Augustine and Pelagius.

Pelagius looked at the potential of human beings for direct relationship to God without necessarily being constrained by the efforts of authority of the group, specifically the authority of organized, institutional religion. He disagreed with the concept of original sin; he disagreed with the concept of the baptism of infants. And these teachings of his, Pelagius, made him a pariah in his generation; Augustine disputed them vehemently. And so now, in effect, we have an example of an extremely important controversy involving the rights of the individual, the individual's relationship to God, and, contrariwise, the authority proclaimed by the organized, institutional church then, and indeed now.

So I leave you with that as a preview of some of our discussion next week. I appreciate the comments about theology and many rich and intriguing comments that all of you have shared with us; and I greatly look forward to our webinar next week. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

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Regards, Neal Waldrop.
Chairman, the Committee for the Global Endeavor
[April 26, 2019 at 7:45 pm]

Neal Waldrop

From: Neal Waldrop [nealwaldrop@earthlink.net]
Sent: Friday, May 03, 2019 8:55 PM
To: Neal Waldrop - gmail (nealwaldrop606@gmail.com)
Subject: Global Endeavor / Revelation Revealed / webinar on April 27, plans for May 4
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, April 27, we conducted our twelfth 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.”

Extended controversy pitting Augustine against Pelagius

During the webinar, panelists analyzed and reacted to several pages of *Revelation Revealed* narrating an intense controversy that occurred in the early decades of the fifth century — contention that pitted Pelagius, a relatively obscure British monk who was then preaching in Rome, against Augustine, bishop of Hippo in north Africa, an ecclesiastical superstar whose extant works in Latin have made him the most prolific author who ever wrote in that language and, not incidentally, the most influential theologian who lived and taught in Western Europe during Christianity’s first few centuries.

Nonetheless, the teachings of Pelagius emphasizing the essential goodness of human nature and the freedom of the human will are considerably closer to the revelators’ views than the doctrines that Augustine proclaimed and promoted. For example, Pelagius denied the idea of original sin and the need for infants to be baptized, whereas Augustine asserted that human beings could not attain righteousness by their own efforts and were totally dependent upon the grace of God, while emphasizing the role that he associated with the organized, institutional church.

Further, Augustine’s extended struggle with Pelagius and Pelagianism eventually led him (Augustine) to repulsive teachings that amount to predestination — convictions that clearly influenced John Calvin and, through him, the entire spectrum of Evangelical thought among Protestant Christians.

Before I seek to summarize the discussion, please permit me to comment on this person Augustine. Now in the Christian tradition, he is commonly identified as “Saint Augustine.” I will not do that because to use the title “Saint” involves accepting the authority of the organization that conferred it upon him. But in any case, Augustine of Hippo, the bishop of that city, was a towering figure in the early history of Christianity, probably the paramount theologian in the western half of the Christian tradition; but I would ask you to bear in mind who this person was.

Well, Augustine of Hippo was a noble Roman; he came from a wealthy family background. His family was not of the extremely wealthy category that would have made his father eligible for the Senate as conceived in imperial Rome, but they were definitely in the upper tier of wealthy persons.

He, Augustine, his family background, was associated with the principle of authority, Roman authority, Roman hierarchy, Roman uniformity. Therefore Augustine did not come to this controversy with Pelagius with an open slate. To the contrary, he was *Roman*. He identified with these traits that we discussed in my document “Romanità,” and I hope that you will remain aware of all this when you reflect on the summary that follows below.

The question for active consideration

In the most fundamental sense, the explanation and analysis that appear on pages 104 through 109 of *Revelation Revealed* are aimed at becoming aware of a potentially vicious attack on the teachings of *The Urantia Book* that would amount to name-calling and guilt by association. In other words, we need to understand and be prepared to deal with a possible assertion that the teachings of *The Urantia Book* are “Pelagian” and therefore do not deserve to be considered seriously — on the grounds that Pelagius was condemned in the early decades of the 5th century by various popes of the day and during certain church councils. Therefore the following formal question appears at the top of page 109:

66. How would you respond if a theologian or some other aficionado of Christian doctrine and history were to assert that *The Urantia Book* is “Pelagian,” on the understanding that he or she intended that epithet as a badge of opprobrium, ignominy, and shame, and was wielding it as an all too convenient excuse that dispensed him or her from making the effort to analyze the teachings in substance and discuss them in detail?

Participants agreed that the techniques of sloganeering and name-calling have definitely not disappeared from the circumstances of human life in our era. To the contrary, it is quite plausible to argue that techniques and capabilities associated with social media in the Internet age have made these highly unpleasant phenomena even more prominent than they were in earlier generations. After all, attaching a disparaging meaning to a person’s name (in this case, Pelagius) is an effective tool for crushing an opponent or someone’s contending views, at least in the short run.

From similar perspectives, two participants recounted incidents during which certain other persons expressed hostile attitudes toward *The Urantia Book* and the teachings of the revelators:

— One participant, while being treated in a hospital, was visited by a clergyman who was making his regular rounds for counseling and consolation. The clergyman saw a copy of *The Urantia Book* on a table in the hospital room and asked the participant to explain it. Our panelist devoted about one minute to answering the question, after which the clergyman backed out of the room and out the door, never turning around. Our panelist now interprets this action in terms of the traditional superstition, “Never turn your back on the devil.”

— Another participant stated that while she was sitting in an airport in Brazil, waiting for her plane, a fellow passenger asked to examine her copy of *The Urantia Book*. (He told her he was a missionary who had been seeking to evangelize indigenous people in the interior.) After he had read passages in

The Urantia Book for about ten minutes, he suddenly stood up, threw her copy in the air, and exclaimed: “This is the work of the devil!”

Analyzing the contention involving Pelagius and Augustine

Here are key excerpts from encyclopedia information about Pelagius that appears on pages 105 through 107 of *Revelation Revealed*:

- [Pelagius] “emphasized the primacy of human effort in spiritual salvation.” [page 105]
- [Augustine] “published several denunciatory letters ... particularly [in relation to] Pelagius’ insistence on man’s basically good moral nature and on man’s own responsibility” [page 105]
- [Pelagianism:] “A 5th-century Christian heresy taught by Pelagius (*q.v.*) and his followers that stressed the essential goodness of human nature and the freedom of the human will.” [page 106]
- “Pelagianism was opposed by Augustine, bishop of Hippo, who asserted that human beings could not attain righteousness by their own efforts and were totally dependent upon the grace of God.” [page 106]
- “In the controversies of the Reformation, as well as within Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, those who have defended human cooperation have been called Pelagians by their adversaries.” [page 107]

I would also like to pass along interesting comments that I received by E-mail from a panelist who participated in our preceding webinar (April 20), but who knew that he would not be available on April 27. He wished to send insights about Pelagius that he had acquired by reading the book *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* by Robert F. Evans. In part, this colleague wrote to me as follows:

According to Pelagius, grace (of creation) is nothing more or less than the gift of our rational free will — that we are able to make genuinely free will choices, not that we produce grace by our choice. Pelagius states that we can conform to and reinforce God’s grace through our free will choice by refusing to sin in all/any of our actions. The grace of free will choice confers the possibility of the perfectibility of human nature in the light of God’s love. Augustine hated that idea!

During the webinar, I remarked that Pelagius appears to have been arguing about the individual’s responsibility, whereas Augustine maintained that the underlying question involved not only whether God’s grace had been sufficient, but also whether God had chosen to grant it in various circumstances — or, by implication, whether God had declined to provide sufficient grace. If Augustine’s views were accepted, I asked, would this implicitly make God a puppet master pulling the strings, so as to undermine or at least weaken the reality of human free will?

One participant replied that these ideas of Augustine’s certainly seem to abrogate personal responsibility. Another participant commented that the question of arbitrary and capricious grace enabled persons at the top of the social, political, and theological pyramid to invent all sorts of requirements that the individual would have to fulfill if he or she wanted to obtain sufficient grace to lead a good life. Since levels of literacy were quite low and since the organized, institutional church had a monopoly on education at the time (as well as a lock-hold on culture and knowledge), those at the top of the pyramid had full authority over society and could disseminate whatever principles and doctrines they wished.

Another panelist commented that Augustine saw the human race as being corrupted by sin (i.e., the “original sin” of Adam and Eve). This, in her view, is difficult to harmonize with the conviction that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God. She called attention to comforting and inspiring assurances that Jesus provided in an evening gathering during the third preaching tour (Paper 150):

“You cannot buy salvation; you cannot earn righteousness. Salvation is the gift of God, and righteousness is the natural fruit of the spirit-born life of sonship in the kingdom. You are not to be saved because you live a righteous life; rather is it that you live a righteous life because you have already been saved, have recognized sonship as the gift of God and service in the kingdom as the supreme delight of life on earth. When men believe this gospel, which is a revelation of the goodness of God, they will be led to voluntary repentance of all known sin. Realization of sonship is incompatible with the desire to sin. Kingdom believers hunger for righteousness and thirst for divine perfection.” *[The Midwayer Commission, 1683:2 / 150:5.5]*

Another participant cited the assurance that Jesus provided during one of his morontia appearances after the resurrection, while highlighting his remarks about the fruits of the spirit:

“Salvation is the free gift of God, but those who are born of the spirit will immediately begin to show forth the fruits of the spirit in loving service to their fellow creatures. **And the fruits of the divine spirit which are yielded in the lives of spirit-born and God-knowing mortals are: loving service, unselfish devotion, courageous loyalty, sincere fairness, enlightened honesty, undying hope, confiding trust, merciful ministry, unfailing goodness, forgiving tolerance, and enduring peace.**” *[The Midwayer Commission, 2054:3 / 193:2.2 — emphasis added: the sentence in bold type]*

In contrast, the same panelist declared that the idea of original sin is unjust, unfair, and dark. It implies that human beings are born, live, and die with a spiritual cloud hanging over us. To which I responded that one of our participants (a person whose professional duties pertain to computers and information technology) does seem to be living with a perpetual cloud over him, although it may just be the Google Cloud, the IBM Cloud, or even the Dream Weaver Cloud. To my knowledge, however, there have not been any adverse effects from a spiritual perspective!

In relation to meeting a possible challenge whereby the word “Pelagian” had been used as a dismissive epithet, one participant counseled a calm approach that would center on asking questions aimed at drawing out the person concerned and creating some basis for reasoned and reasonable discussion. He realized that this will not work in all instances, but commented that it would be highly unwise to launch into a heated and contentious argument with such a person.

To summarize the net conclusions that panelists appeared to have reached during the webinar, I read the following two paragraphs from page 108 of *Revelation Revealed*:

— Pelagius appears to have been an austere figure who may also have been Puritanical, but we agree with him that human nature is fundamentally good, that human beings are free to choose between good and evil, and that sin occurs only by deliberate choice, not as a consequence of another person’s actions at some previous moment.

— In other words, we agree with Celestius and other followers of Pelagius that the doctrine of original sin is a myth, that infants are not born with some imaginary stain, and that initiating a sound and favorable relationship with God does not require baptism or any other ceremony carried out by some representative of institutional religion.

Predestination: Augustine and his influence on John Calvin

The text on page 108 of *Revelation Revealed* proceeds to point out that during Augustine’s extended struggle with Pelagius and Pelagianism, his views on how God bestows grace became increasingly restrictive. He ended up proclaiming that God has made arbitrary decisions that some persons will be saved and that others will not. According to Augustine, God made such decisions before time began, and therefore before any individual was born. These repulsive teachings most assuredly amount to predestination. They clearly influenced John Calvin and, through him, the entire spectrum of Evangelical thought among Protestant Christians.

How, I asked, can we reconcile the conviction that God has chosen some persons to be punished for eternity with the idea the God is a loving father? One panelist appeared to answer for the group by responding that these two disparate ideas cannot be reconciled; they are an obvious contradiction.

Preview of our webinar on May 4

Now that we have reached the middle of page 109 of *Revelation Revealed*, we will begin discussing the rather long section of topic 8 that is entitled, “Christianity: key features and practices. I intend to stimulate substantial discussion about each sub-element. As a practical matter, I believe that discussion during our webinar on May 4 will be limited to the first four sub-elements, all of them appearing on page 109:

- (a) A religion *about* Jesus instead of the religion *of* Jesus.

- (b) The atonement.
- (c) Doctrines and creeds.
- (d) Special status for the clergy.

In connection with sub-elements (c) and (d), I will lead participants on a substantial detour that will enable us to discuss the realities, overtones, and implications that are closely associated with the following two sentences 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 Midwayer Commission implies, 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.

The second attachment to this message is a two-page segment from a philosophy lecture that portrays this situation in conceptual ways that I consider particularly interesting. During the webinar on May 4, we will read and discuss these two pages just as if they were an integral part of *Revelation Revealed*.

DETAILS

As explained at the bottom of the first page of this 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.” I originally transcribed this material in June 2014, then reviewed and verified my transcription on April 19. To assist you further, on page 3 of the attachment I have provided a glossary of a few unusual words and also biographic information about Professor Robinson.

After we finish discussing this text, we will read and discuss section 8 of Paper 195, which mainly discusses the corresponding 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).

Along the way, 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 them 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

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 4:

- 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 3, 2019 at 8:55 pm]

Neal Waldrop

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:

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]

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*:

(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.

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:

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]*

Yet another panelist called attention to the extended comments whereby the Midwayer Commission identifies the two great mistakes that were made in early Christianity:

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*]

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:

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*]

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”](#):

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*]

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:

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]

Doctrines and creeds

The succeeding paragraph on page 109 of *Revelation Revealed* 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.

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:

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.

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).

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.

Here are the two paragraphs that I read:

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.

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

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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.
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- 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]

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]

Neal Waldrop

From: Neal Waldrop [nealwaldrop@earthlink.net]
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2019 11:53 PM
To: Neal Waldrop - gmail (nealwaldrop606@gmail.com)
Subject: Global Endeavor / Revelation Revealed / webinar on May 18
Attachments: 2016-07-17_RR-T08_P088-146_Q059-077.pdf; UB_1254-1256_P114-s06.pdf; UB_2081-2082_P195s08.pdf

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

On Saturday, May 18, we conducted our fifteenth 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.”

NOTE: Our webinar on May 18 was the final program of the five webinars in phase 3 during which we continued our panel discussion of topic 8. We originally intended to conduct a program on May 25, but conflicts on the part of several potential participants made it impossible to assemble a panel that would have honored our guiding principle of seeking to demonstrate pluralism and diversity. Therefore we are now taking a break. We plan to return with another series of webinars (i.e., phase 4) that is likely to start on a Saturday in late June or early July.

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 had previously 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.

During our webinars on May 4 and May 11, we discussed a philosophy lecture that portrays the underlying situation in conceptual ways that I considered particularly interesting. I was planning for participants to devote most of the webinar on May 18 to intensive discussion of section 8 of Paper 195 by the Midwayer Commission, a section entitled, “Secular Totalitarianism” (the second attachment). On the other hand, I decided that my first step should be to promote discussion of two topics that would serve as a conceptual transition between ecclesiastical totalitarianism and secular totalitarianism. As a practical matter, we ended up devoting almost all of our webinar on May 18 to these two topics, as explained below.

Question 1. 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?

BACKGROUND. John T. Scopes, a substitute high school teacher, was put on trial in Dayton, Tennessee in July 1925. He was convicted of teaching evolution in a public school, thereby violating a state law enacted in March 1925. Scopes was fined \$100, a sum equating to about \$1,400 in 2018 (according to the Wikipedia article on the subject). In the end, however, the verdict was overturned on a technicality.

— One participant commented that the fixation on the literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis became possible because the printing press had enabled many people to read the text of the Bible. By the late 19th or early 20th century, a sizable number of Christians had rejected the theories of Charles Darwin, at least partly because they believed his ideas about evolution undermined the Bible.

I responded that that the printing press had ended the church’s former monopoly on interpreting the scriptures. On the part of those Protestant Christians of the United States who mounted a political campaign based on their literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis, this involved the theological conviction that the Bible is inerrant and the cultural attitude that the right to interpret Christian scriptures trumps all other elements in society, including education. In this context, I asked what was the premise that these campaigners believed entitled them to dictate to all of society, including many people who had other religious beliefs, or perhaps none.

— Another panelist remarked that these particular Christians felt very much on the defensive, believing correctly that their orientation was threatened by secular society. They overreacted, but

certain conservative elements of Christianity did not know how to respond; they saw themselves in a cosmic battle to the death. He cited the following passage from section 8 of Paper 195 by the Midwayer Commission:

Materialism denies God, secularism simply ignores him; at least that was the earlier attitude. More recently, secularism has assumed a more militant attitude, assuming to take the place of the religion whose totalitarian bondage it onetime resisted. Twentieth-century secularism tends to affirm that man does not need God. But beware! this godless philosophy of human society will lead only to unrest, animosity, unhappiness, war, and world-wide disaster. [The Midwayer Commission, 2081:5 / 198:8.5]

— Another participant agreed that the traditional Christians concerned did feel paranoid. Another reason for passing laws against the scientific theory of Darwinism related to the fact that if this theory is true, then the Bible is not infallible. He commented that this is important because in historical terms, infallibility has always been a characteristic of the spiritual world. He then cited the following analytical comments by a Melchizedek:

Evolutionary religion makes no provision for change or revision; unlike science, it does not provide for its own progressive correction. Evolved religion commands respect because its followers believe it is *The Truth*; “the faith once delivered to the saints” must, in theory, be both final and infallible. The cult resists development because real progress is certain to modify or destroy the cult itself; therefore must revision always be forced upon it. [A Melchizedek, 1006:1 / 92:3.4]

Comment no. 1. This paragraph makes a statement about *evolutionary* religion, whereas Christian leaders and theologians have always proclaimed that the Christian faith is a *revealed* religion. Since Christianity includes a great deal that Jesus did not teach, it seems considerably more accurate to echo the evaluation that the Midwayer Commission provides in section 10 of Paper 195: “Christianity is an extemporized religion” [the Midwayer Commission, 2086:4 / 195:10.18]. In effect, this means that they made it up as they went along, on the understanding that the word “they” refers to Christian leaders and theologians.

Comment no. 2. I agree that over the centuries, many Christians have considered the Bible to be inerrant and infallible. On the other hand, describing that conviction of theirs as problematic would be a grave understatement, for the revelators do not hesitate to identify many ideas contained in the Bible as mistaken or highly misleading. For example, a Melchizedek states that while the Hebrew priests conducted their systematic editing of previous writings during their exile in Babylon, they propounded many distortions and misrepresentations that ultimately produced “a fiction of sacred history” that has been “disastrously exploited by both Jewish and Christian writers” [a Melchizedek, 1071:3-4 / 97:8.5-6].

During the webinar, I agreed that the underlying issue in 1925 was closely associated with diverse convictions about the Bible. The established Roman Catholic view had always been that the Book of Genesis is symbolic, an allegory. This conviction prevailed until the Protestant Reformation, at which time a variety of other interpretations were advanced. One such view was the literal interpretation, but not all Protestants accepted it. In effect, this was a particularly rigorous view that could perhaps be described as fundamentalist. Therefore those who lobbied militantly for the law adopted in Tennessee were not only seeking to impose their own view of the teachings contained in the Book of Genesis, they were doing so in a situation in which other Christians disagreed with them. Further, they were seeking to impose these views so as to cause their own religious convictions to dominate civil institutions — in this case, public schools.

— Yet another panelist pointed out that the two extremes that we are considering — ecclesiastical totalitarianism and secular totalitarianism — obviously center on a common element: totalitarianism. Both extremes embody the conviction that one particular viewpoint should dominate everything else, whereas there must be a balance. In the case of ecclesiastical totalitarianism, those who practice it claim to speak for spirit and to dominate matter. In the case of secular totalitarianism, those who practice it claim to speak for matter and to dominate spirit. On the other hand, both sides have implicitly neglected the third reality of human life called mind. Neither extreme accepts that mind itself is a major reality that needs to be considered carefully and thoroughly.

We then went on to the second question, which from my perspective is likewise an intermediate factor that falls between ecclesiastical totalitarianism and secular totalitarianism.

Question 2. Please evaluate the pattern of assigned responsibilities among the twelve corps of master seraphim (*Paper 114, section 6 — the second attachment to this message*). 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.

At my request, one of the panelists read the names of the twelve corps of master seraphim:

1. The epochal angels.
2. The progress angels.
3. The religious guardians.
4. The angels of nation life.
5. The angels of the races.
6. The angels of the future.
7. The angels of enlightenment.
8. The angels of health.
9. The home seraphim.
10. The angels of industry.
11. The angels of diversion.
12. The angels of superhuman ministry.

Participants agreed that the work of seraphic corps 3, “The religious guardians,” is clearly devoted to religion, as their name implies. In addition, there seemed to be agreement that the work of seraphic corps 7, “The angels of enlightenment,” can be partly associated with religion in the broad conceptual sense, for the revelators make it clear that education should include appropriate attention to moral and ethical principles. In addition, one participant discerned religious implications in the work of seraphic corps 9, “The home seraphim,” while pointing out that in the advanced continent on the neighboring planet (Paper 72), religion is not a matter of priestcraft at all, instead being entirely a feature of family life.

In general, however, panelists expressed diverse opinions about the degree to which spirituality and/or religion should be associated with the work of the other nine corps of master seraphim. One panelist described the seraphic planetary government as “a cosmic theocracy,” while declaring that the master seraphim are all working as religious agents in various fields on earth. He later commented that if we think of religion as the motivation of all our activities, then they are all religious in intent. Another panelist emphasized his view that the work of all twelve corps of master seraphim is interconnected and therefore related to religion by implication.

The discussion was complex and detailed. In the course of it, I pointed out that the work of several corps of master seraphim clearly bespeaks practical concerns that are not predominantly religious. For example, it is obvious that seraphic corps 4, “The angels of nation life,” must be seeking to promote the peaceful, orderly, and progressive development of the world’s nations. Further, seraphic corps 8, “The angels of health,” must devote a very substantial share of its efforts to physical health, although the reality of health certainly includes mindal and spiritual dimensions. In addition, another participant noted that the primary task of seraphic corps 10, “The angels of industry,” must be to promote industry.

I called attention to the fact that the work of the master seraphim is the spiritual model for the Global Endeavor, while pointing out that a detailed study guide on their work can be downloaded from the committee’s website (www.globalendeavor.net). I found it logical and convincing to associate the work of the twelve corps of master seraphim with overall efforts to promote the progressive growth and development of human society in the general spirit of Paper 52, “Planetary Mortal Epochs.”

Further, I called attention to the fact that in section II of the Foreword, the Divine Counselor has stated that **“GOD is a word symbol designating all personalizations of Deity”** [*Divine Counselor, 3:19 / 0:2.6*]. This includes God the Supreme (the Supreme Being) and our Paradise Creator Son Michael of Nebadon — and, by implication, the work of his immediate partner the Creative Mother Spirit. (As the Divine Counselor states in section VIII of the Foreword, the Paradise Creator Sons are the first level of God the Sevenfold.) For all these reasons, it is clear that God’s purposes on our planet Urantia are not limited to the plans and purposes of God the Universal Father.

Although there was no discussion of the implications associated with the broad understanding of the word “God” that I sought to summarize, participants agreed with the following statement of mine: The ideals and goals of God in regard to our planet are not limited to fostering religion as such.

In this vein, one participant commented that the revelators do not expect us to become 100 percent religious all the time. To the contrary, we must also pay appropriate attention to other aspects of life, those associated with matter and with mind.

Section 8 of Paper 195

Although the time remaining did not permit us to go very far in seeking to examine section 8 of Paper 195, one of the participants read the first three paragraphs at my request:

8. Secular Totalitarianism

But even after materialism and mechanism have been more or less vanquished, the devastating influence of twentieth-century secularism will still blight the spiritual experience of millions of unsuspecting souls.

Modern secularism has been fostered by two world-wide influences. The father of secularism was the narrow-minded and godless attitude of nineteenth- and twentieth-century so-called science — atheistic science. 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.

At the time of this revelation, the prevailing intellectual and philosophical climate of both European and American life is decidedly secular — humanistic. For three hundred years Western thinking has been progressively secularized. Religion has become more and more a nominal influence, largely a ritualistic exercise. The majority of professed Christians of Western civilization are unwittingly actual secularists. [*The Midwayer Commission, 2081:1-3 / 195:8.1-3*]

Since we had largely addressed the first two paragraphs during previous webinars, I asked the panelists to analyze and comment on the final sentence of the third paragraph: “The majority of professed Christians of Western civilization are unwittingly actual secularists.”

One panelist mainly traced this to the atheistic science of the 19th and 20th centuries, saying that the philosophy of materialism has corrupted so much of the thinking of contemporary life. In addition, he called attention to the word “majority,” which implies that other Christians, the minority, are not secularists. I accepted the dichotomy he presented, but identified yet another possibility, turning on the question whether some professed Christians may be well aware that they actually are secularists (i.e., “wittingly” instead of “unwittingly”).

Another panelist remarked that the sentence is correct in the sense that everyone in Western society is a secularist, whether they want to be or not. This, in his view, includes readers of *The Urantia Book*.

Excursions into mass entertainment

As a somewhat surprising change of pace at the very end of the webinar, I noted that during our first webinar in our series on topic 8 — one that we conducted in late November — I commented that we were going forward on the Saturday that was immediately after Black Friday. I then asked whether Black Friday amounted to a pagan holiday, whereas Good Friday is clearly a Christian event.

On May 18, I said, we were concluding our webinar on the Saturday immediately preceding another event of considerable significance for contemporary culture: the final episode of the immensely popular television series “The Game of Thrones.” I then compared it with another fantasy adventure that had been approximately as popular in previous years, “The Lord of the Rings.” I then asked whether these exercises in mass entertainment advance certain ideals that are important in human life, or are solely secular.

The panelists who replied agreed that “The Lord of the Rings” had included certain idealistic elements linked to previous traditions that we can associate with Western civilization. On the other hand, one participant declared that “The Game of Thrones” represents the complete triumph of secular materialism. Another panelist called it “secular fundamentalism.”

PRACTICAL FACTORS

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_6QHPLuABZojhdiE8XJRQg

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.

In conclusion and as noted at the beginning of this message, we are now taking a break, but we plan to return with another series of webinars that will probably begin in late June or early July.

Regards, Neal Waldrop.

Chairman, the Committee for the Global Endeavor

[May 24, 2019 at 11:53 pm]