

Neal Waldrop

From: Neal Waldrop [nealwaldrop@earthlink.net]
Sent: Saturday, March 09, 2019 3:57 PM
To: Neal Waldrop - gmail (nealwaldrop606@gmail.com)
Subject: Global Endeavor / Revelation Revealed / webinar on March 2
Attachments: 2016-07-17_RR-T08_P088-146_Q059-077.pdf

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

On Saturday, March 2, we conducted our tenth 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 March 2 was the final program of the six webinars in phase 2 during which we continued our panel discussion of topic 8. We are now taking a break, but plan to return with another series of six webinars (i.e., phase 3). Although we have not yet chosen a specific date for that to start, we seem likely to resume on some Saturday in the second half of April.

The Great Schism dividing Western and Eastern Orthodox Christians

When we launched discussion on March 2, we returned to the passage on page 99 of *Revelation Revealed* that describes controversy over how the Holy Spirit relates to the other persons of the Trinity as Christians understand it. As in my preceding report (March 1), I believe it is useful to reproduce the explanatory footnote that appears on page 99 of *Revelation Revealed*:

Here it is important to bear in mind that in traditional Christian theology, the phrase “the Holy Spirit” refers to the third person of the Trinity as Christians conceive it. In contrast, however, the revelators tell us that the third person of the Paradise Trinity is the Infinite Spirit, and they use the phrase “the Holy Spirit” to refer to the spiritual ministry that the Creative Mother Spirit of Nebadon carries out on her own behalf.

As stated in *Revelation Revealed*, the bishops who attended the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE revised the sentence in the Nicene Creed that relates to the Holy Spirit. They added the phrases shown in italics below:

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

Long after the Council of Constantinople adjourned (at least 100 years thereafter), Western Christians decided to add the words “and the Son” to the phrase explaining how the Holy Spirit proceeds, so as to read as follows: “... **who proceeds from the Father and the Son ...**.” Since Eastern Orthodox

Christians had never agreed to this insertion, in April 1054 the Pope sent a representative to Constantinople to urge them to conform. They refused, and the Pope's representative (Cardinal Humbert) ended up thrusting upon the altar of the great basilica Hagia Sophia a document excommunicating the Patriarch of Constantinople (Michael Cerularius). Naturally he returned the favor by excommunicating the Roman Catholic envoys, and this exchange of mutual regards sufficed to launch the Great Schism, which persists to the present.

One participant commented on the word "proceeds" and the concept of the Holy Spirit, which accords with many passages in the Old and New Testaments. He emphasized that the idea of the Trinity was necessary in order to bring the Holy Spirit into the conceptual framework of Christianity.

Another participant interpreted these events by citing theological and ecclesiastical reasons why the leaders of Eastern Orthodox Christianity did not go along with Western views. In his opinion, Eastern Orthodox churches are much more averse to innovation, and the individuals involved at the time do not appear to have been convinced that the reasons that Cardinal Humbert was offering were strong enough to overcome tradition. Further, Eastern Orthodox Christians had intense views about the primacy of the Father, and there was an underlying conflict over ecclesiastical authority — the implication that the Pope wanted to assert primacy and control over all Christians, not just those in Western countries. Since the background also included controversies over other theological topics such as liturgical matters, he believed that the split would have occurred eventually, even if it had not arisen because of wording in the Nicene Creed pertaining to the Holy Spirit.

I agreed that the question of authority had been a key factor. In addition, I pointed out that in relation to the wording of the Nicene Creed, Eastern Orthodox Christians were being confronted with a fait accompli on which they had not been consulted — even though the Council of Constantinople had been held at the capital of the eastern half of the Roman Empire, had conducted its deliberations in Greek instead of in Latin, and had included very few bishops from areas in the West.

A Reformation postscript

When we turned to the paragraphs in the middle of page 100 referring to events associated with the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, we discussed why the Protestant reformers had not called into question the core doctrines about the nature and identity of Jesus, and about the Trinity, that had emerged in the 4th and 5th centuries, even though no one could identify scriptural passages justifying all the philosophic concepts and subtle distinctions that the bishops assembled at Chalcedon wove into the celebrated definition that they adopted in the year 451 CE.

There seemed to be agreement that the reformers' slogan "*sola scriptura, sola fide, sola gratia*" ("scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone") was a tool they used to scrape away many of the doctrines and practices that had accumulated during the thousand years that had followed the Council of Chalcedon, on the grounds that they could not find a solid basis in Christian scriptures. In other words, they accepted and maintained the core doctrines that had been developed during the 4th and 5th centuries, perhaps because they believed that the process that led to them had been legitimate and appropriate.

We then discussed the unfortunate fate of the Spanish theologian and physician Michael Servetus, who was arrested in Geneva on August 13, 1553 and subsequently burned at the stake because he had disputed Christian doctrines pertaining to the Trinity, while also taking issue with traditional teachings about original sin and the practice of baptizing infants. I pointed out that his trial and conviction for heresy occurred in a civil court, thereby demonstrating the union of church and state in Calvinist Geneva.

One participant contrasted this with the fate of Joan of Arc, who had been convicted of heresy and burned at the stake approximately 100 years before. She had been tried in an ecclesiastical tribunal but then, by prearrangement, had been handed over to civil authorities for execution. This hand-and-glove cooperation did not amount to as explicit a union of church and state as subsequently occurred in Geneva, but the net results were equally deplorable.

Formal question 63

Participants next discussed and answered formal question 63 on page 101 of *Revelation Revealed*, which reads as follows:

63. In your view, why did institutional religion (*i.e.*, the Christian church) ignore Jesus' warnings against creeds and traditions that would serve to guide and control believers? Do you see any prospect that one or more Christian denominations will set aside such practices and will cease to operate along such lines?

Before I asked participants to reply, I pointed out that the ideas presented in this question are quite similar to those contained in an excerpt that was included in my essay "Romanità," a quotation that we had discussed during a previous webinar:

When a member of a social religious group has complied with the requirements of such a group, he should be encouraged to enjoy religious liberty in the full expression of his own personal interpretation of the truths of religious belief and the facts of religious experience. The security of a religious group depends on spiritual unity, not on theological uniformity. A religious group should be able to enjoy the liberty of freethinking without having to become "freethinkers." There is great hope for any church that worships the living God, validates the brotherhood of man, and dares to remove all creedal pressure from its members. [A Melchizedek, 1135:2 / 103:5.12]

One participant thought that there is some prospect of this change occurring in the future, given relatively recent weakening of the practices of control and guidance. He was inclined to believe that there will be some kind of hybrid that emerges, a new version of Christian practice in an organizational format. While stating this, he cited the following paragraph from Paper 101:

Belief is always limiting and binding; faith is expanding and releasing. Belief fixates, faith liberates. But living religious faith is more than the association of noble beliefs; it is more than an exalted system of philosophy; it is a living experience concerned with spiritual meanings, divine ideals, and supreme values; it is God-knowing and man-serving. Beliefs may become group possessions, but faith must be personal. Theologic beliefs can be suggested to a group, but faith can rise up only in the heart of the individual religionist. [A Melchizedek, 1114:6 / 101:8.2]

Another participant called attention to the following excerpt from Paper 155, section 5, Jesus' discourse on true religion:

Until the human race progresses to the level of a higher and more general recognition of the realities of spiritual experience, large numbers of men and women will continue to show a personal preference for those religions of authority which require only intellectual assent, in contrast to the religion of the spirit, which entails active participation of mind and soul in the faith adventure of grappling with the rigorous realities of progressive human experience.

The acceptance of the traditional religions of authority presents the easy way out for man's urge to seek satisfaction for the longings of his spiritual nature. The settled, crystallized, and established religions of authority afford a ready refuge to which the distracted and distraught soul of man may flee when harassed by fear and tormented by uncertainty. Such a religion requires of its devotees, as the price to be paid for its satisfactions and assurances, only a passive and purely intellectual assent.

And for a long time there will live on earth those timid, fearful, and hesitant individuals who will prefer thus to secure their religious consolations, even though, in so casting their lot with the religions of authority, they compromise the sovereignty of personality, debase the dignity of self-respect, and utterly surrender the right to participate in that most thrilling and inspiring of all possible human experiences: the personal quest for truth, the exhilaration of facing the perils of intellectual discovery, the determination to explore the realities of personal religious experience, the supreme satisfaction of experiencing the personal triumph of the actual realization of the victory of spiritual faith over intellectual doubt as it is honestly won in the supreme adventure of all human existence—man seeking God, for himself and as himself, and finding him. [The Midwayer Commission, 1729:3-5 / 155:5.8-10]

In her view, traditions and creeds just get in the way of direct personal experience with God and spiritual values. She said that in her research, she had found considerable information about the Quakers, and she proceeded to share some of the descriptions. In her view, quite a few aspects of the Quakers' belief system are not far from what the revelators have told us in *The Urantia Book*.

In reply, I pointed out that question 63 pertains to what Christian denominations may do in the future, whereas fundamentalists and other Christians with traditional views have questioned whether the Quakers are Christian or not. During colonial times, they were persecuted in New England. She

understood that point, but commented that the Quakers had Christian roots. I agreed, then noted that similar questions of religious identity also apply to other groups such as the Unitarians and Mormons.

A third panelist remarked that Jesus had left no creeds, but he did leave the “Our Father” and a ritual patterned on the Last Supper. He believed that in the future, Christian denominations will have to entertain different adaptations, side by side, without being enemies. This, in his view, is part of the search for truth, the search for what is real, although the ideal is personal religion, drawing on the religion of the spirit. He hoped that the greater involvement of women in administering and managing various Christian denominations will lead to practices that are less dogmatic.

The fourth participant commented that there is a big difference between guiding and controlling believers; in his view, guidance is a very important part of spiritual life. Further, traditions can be helpful, or unhelpful. As to the idea of controlling believers, that is a different story. In his view, early believers had ignored Jesus’ warning because they needed some kind of organization that would be stable. In an ideal world, one nearing light and life, we will get to the point when personal (individual) religion will prevail; but we are not there now, and institutional religions need to have some framework for religious belief. He did not want to be anachronistic about what believers needed to do about 2,000 years ago, or about what they need to do now. He did not think that a Christian denomination could set aside all practices and beliefs that have defined it. At that point, it would no longer be a denomination and would no longer be Christian. Instead, like the Unitarians, it would be something else.

COMMENT. In part, formal question 63 inquires about the future of organized, institutional churches that are considered Christian. We should bear in mind that Jesus explicitly enjoined his apostles and other followers not to create legends and build up a cult having to do with beliefs and teachings *about* his beliefs and teachings [*the Midwayer Commission, 1543:1 / 138:6.3*]. In addition, Jesus emphasized spiritual unity, while repeatedly warning against creeds and traditions that would serve to guide and control believers [*the Midwayer Commission, 1592:2 / 141:5.4*]. If the underlying point of the preceding answer is that any Christian denomination that ceases to violate these two instructions would thereby cease to be Christian, then perhaps the question we should ask is whether any of them could become Jesusonian instead.

Formal questions 64 and 65

These questions appear on pages 101 and 102 of *Revelation Revealed*. Since the ideas they contain are closely linked, I requested that participants consider both of them at once. Taken together, these two questions read as follows:

64. The Christian doctrines of the Trinity are fundamentally mistaken in a factual and philosophic sense, for the Eternal Son of Paradise did not bestow himself on Urantia in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth, and the Creative Mother Spirit of Nebadon is not the Infinite Spirit. Do these mistakes in any way detract from or otherwise influence the mindal and spiritual ministry that assists, serves, and inspires every Urantian, regardless of an individual’s spiritual convictions or religious beliefs (*i.e.*, the

efforts of the adjutant mind-spirits, of the guardian seraphim, of the Thought Adjusters, of the Holy Spirit, and of the Spirit of Truth)?

65. On the other hand, we must also consider these factual and philosophic mistakes concerning the nature and significance of the Paradise Trinity from broader perspectives, viewpoints related to cosmic consciousness and more accurate concepts of God. In Paper 4, a Divine Counselor states:

“One of the greatest sources of confusion on Urantia concerning the nature of God grows out of the failure of your sacred books clearly to distinguish between the personalities of the Paradise Trinity and between Paradise Deity and the local universe creators and administrators. During the past dispensations of partial understanding, your priests and prophets failed clearly to differentiate between Planetary Princes, System Sovereigns, Constellation Fathers, Creator Sons, Superuniverse Rulers, the Supreme Being, and the Universal Father. Many of the messages of subordinate personalities, such as Life Carriers and various orders of angels, have been, in your records, presented as coming from God himself. Urantian religious thought still con-fuses the associate personalities of Deity with the Universal Father himself, so that all are included under one appellation.” [A Divine Counselor, 60:1 / 4:5.2]

There also seem to be good reasons to wonder whether Christian mistakes about the Trinity implicitly exaggerate how our planet Urantia relates to the grand universe, thereby contributing to a kind of spiritual egotism whereby God’s love for us could be misinterpreted so as to imply that Urantia and its inhabitants are the sole beneficiaries of God’s active concern for human beings.

Please comment on any or all of the factors mentioned above, while seeking to concentrate on aspects that you consider particularly significant.

One participant stated that the intellectual mistakes do not detract from spiritual growth in a relative, evolutionary sense, nor from the progress of Christianity itself. Truth is not relative, but human perceptions of truth are relative. Spiritual egotism may be a factor, for most human beings tend to be provincial and localistic; few of them study ideas or seek to expand their minds generally. He thought, however, that this may be changing, wondering whether science fiction may be the approximate equivalent of “universe romance” — an apparent reference to certain remarks by a Solitary Messenger that appear near the end of the Paper on personality survival [a Solitary Messenger, 1239:7 / 112:7.18].

Another participant commented that she grew up without any preconceived ideas or teachings, but that her search for answers and spiritual guidance from God led her to personal resources associated with cosmic reality on internal and external levels. If you ask for help and desire to open up a door to know God better, the help and assistance are there. When I commented that her answer seemed to be a paraphrase closely associated with the active ministry and resources identified in the final lines of question 64, she agreed with this interpretation of mine.

Yet another participant began his reply by citing the following paragraph from Paper 104:

Not since the times of Jesus has the factual identity of the Paradise Trinity been known on Urantia (except by a few individuals to whom it was especially revealed) until its presentation in these revelatory disclosures. But though the Christian concept of the Trinity erred in fact, it was practically true with respect to spiritual relationships. Only in its philosophic implications and cosmological consequences did this concept suffer embarrassment ... [A Melchizedek, 1145:1 / 104:1.13]

In his view, these remarks by a Melchizedek suffice to demonstrate that spiritual relationships and ministry were not and are not in any way impaired by the factual and philosophic mistakes involved in Christian doctrines concerning the Trinity. He thought, however, that these mistakes may have detracted from cosmological understanding, especially when compared with the much more profound explanations that the revelators have provided.

The fourth panelist commented on the difference between facts and the truth. One can be entirely wrong in regard to the facts, but understand the truth. He did not believe that Christian mistakes in interpreting the Trinity would have affected cosmic consciousness before we reached the fifth epochal revelation. On the other hand, he believed that humanity will now be able to operate in a higher gear, given a proper understanding of what the Trinity really is.

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 plan to return with another series of webinars that will probably begin in the second half of April.

Regards, Neal Waldrop.
Chairman, the Committee for the Global Endeavor
[March 9, 2019 at 3:57 pm]