Urantia Book Etymology:

Simulation Over Inspiration

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Like its cosmology, the Urantia Book's etymology of proper names and terminologies is not inspired, and early accommodation of this truth may help forestall disillusionment from a linguistic inquiry of its pages. Names, and all language are metaphors -- symbolic designations of realities, couched in greater or lesser efficiencies at making the realities at which they aim more accessible. Names and languages are not the designated realities themselves, but are images thereof, mere representations, scaffolding. It's not inappropriately that names are often called handles. They are handles, not the reality they handle.

And so does the Urantia Book freely use such biblically-familiar terms as "Lucifer", "Satan", "Melchizedek", "Michael", and so on as personal names; thus obvious Latinisms and Hebraisms are used matter of course to apply to beings at universe levels far beyond the purview of such lingual provincialities. "Lucifer" as a proper name was coined in the early centuries after Christ by the Roman church fathers in connection with the Jewish legend of the expulsion from heaven of evil angels and their leader. From a reference in Isaiah 14:12, "lucifer" is so rendered in the Vulgate and in virtually all subsequent translations of the Bible. But the term is nowhere in the actual Hebrew text of the Old Testament at all, nor could it have been, being purely Latin in etymology.

The actual Hebrew reading in question is "helel", approximately "to shine", or possibly "to lament". The church fathers in Italy, taking the term as a proper name and reading into it their own tradition-perspective, rather than transliterate, inserted their own personified form for "Shine(r)", Lucifer. The doing might be tantamount to rendering "Adonai" as "Bossy", but the liberty taking has stuck through the centuries. And so no being of high constellatory station is actually named Lucifer, in the terminology of his peerage. But the archrebel that word designates has no less existed and done his indignities.

Names are no more than convenient metaphors, and "Lucifer" being a ready and common metaphor among mortals for the iniquitor with which our world is concerned, the term found easy and thoroughly proper use in the Urantia Book. Lucifer is his name, for our purposes. If I'm known by one moniker to a friend, by another completely different family nickname to my spouse and children, and by another tag entirely to my boss, all these nonetheless refer, and very adequately for communication purposes, to me.

Names are not the thing named, but pointers to it, with varying degrees of malleability and situational applicability. There is no such thing in the universe as a reality being one and the same with its nominal metaphor, of a name being an immutable and absolute designator.

Many of the Urantia Book's designations such as "Satan", "Melchizedek", "Jerusem", "Adam", et alia, are Hebrew terms or derivatives, in many cases elevated to proper noun status already within their Hebrew matrix from repeated application to specific person, things or places now with intentional adaptation and transmutation for name purposes. "Satan", or more rightly in the actual text, "the satan", is a genericism which literally translates as "the adversary" in its Hebrew origin and definition. Being applied to one particular adversary figure repeatedly as scripture evolved, the larger generic definition fell away and the term constricted to apply to that single adversary concept, personified as Satan in full, upper-case typification.

"Melchizedek" is a composite name drawn from the Hebrew "malek", for king or chief, and "zedek", meaning rectitude or righteousness. The high being who purposely adopted this dithemic badge on coming to Abraham's generation necessarily had to appear in physical and lingual equipage his earthly contemporaries could relate to; and so he appeared as a human with the corresponding human name of "righteous-chief". (Here, this melchizedek's first name poses a linguistic quaintness of its own, Machiventa being clearly other than Hebrew in linguistic construct. Machiventa, it would seem, may be derived etymologically from either Pahlavic or related Sanskrit; if so, in itself a sociologic commentary on the universality of Melchizedek's mission in appearing in Palestine within the larger cultural context of the Orient and the Levant.)

Our "Michael" itself means literally and interrogatively, "who is like god" in the Hebrew . We may be certain that with whatever name he is more directly known in his universe home circle, that term too covers precisely the same meaning it its vastly expanded definitive spectrum.

One might reflect that "God" is an obvious Anglicism, and certainly English is not the language of currency in Paradise, no more than is Latin or Hebrew. Nevertheless, God is a very proper and accurate name for the First Center and Source, to our purposes.

Why would the Urantia Book not reveal the full verities of the names it uses? Why would it not disclose, for instance, the Orvontonian governor's name for Orvonton? (or) what midsoniters call themselves? Doubtless in part because the superfinite ideations innate within these terminologies' meanings are irreducible to any mortal conveyance. And surely also because the very words themselves are impossible of either translating or transliterating into human tongues; the very structure of higher universe and superuniverse languages as a whole would make no verbal-consonantal sense if cycled into any of this reality level's language patterns with anything attempting a syncretic equivalence.

The book in another context tells us already that the very process of trying to boil down many universe concept frames into finite mental analogs results in almost impossible distortions. Our revelators often mourn that the very (to us, especially) abstractions they are trying to communicate come out often little short of completely misrepresented in the sheer process of conversion to our mindal level; that much content is lost to the inevitable gross inefficiencies of the transition itself, like heat up an open fireplace flue. In gearing the concepts downward to human grasping, the concepts themselves must be greatly compromised in content.

Mind itself operates very differently up and down the scale of cognition, and this makes frequently for insurmountable barriers. The matter of names is one such barrier, and one which the Urantia Book negotiates well by its technique of resorting to at-hand terms and names where possible. When the Urantia Book deals with categories and nomenclatures with which we have no prior lingual familiarity whatever to phrase them in, its authors resort handily to artificial constructions, to well-thought but spontaneous lingual mintage. Words like "Caligastia" and "Urantia", as their linguistic and orthographic elements show, are syllabic manufactures of English-Greco-Roman tincture -- in a word, an Indo-European newspeak of especial hybrid excellence is here born. "Nebadon", "Orvonton", "morontia", and so on, show the same phonemic stamp, one and all. From considering a cardinal precept of translating from originals: that all fixed proper names are transliterated as they are, without regard to lingual vicissitudes, we may know that the Urantia Book's architects intend that these proper terminologies will remain intact within the book, henceforth. And it is this realization that then lets us know what precise form our planet's eventual language will have, once settled in light and life; this same Urantia Book syncretic hybrid, meant for duration.

Although obviously systematic in the phonemic construction of its made-words, the book with which we deal readily resorts to creative improvising in making these constructs transmit meaning itself. The way this is carried off is refreshingly witty in its unceremony; when a specific denotation is wanted in connection with a systematically used root or phoneme, the requisite word or sufficient part thereof is simply stuck into the phoneme: "Divinington", "Ascendington", "abandonters", "supernaphim", "Chronoldeks", "agondonters" -- how pleasant to savor a subtle humor, excellently inserted into the flow of sober consideration.*

In the majority of its tailor-made place names, the book's morphologic comedy is all the more superb because [it is] lingually engineered so well. "Seraphington" exemplifies nicely: A Hebrew angelologic morpheme combined with the, not merely English, but old Gadhelic-Teutonic place suffix, -ington, meaning literally "people-town", etymonically. Thus Seraphington is very neatly translated, "town of seraphim people".

This light and untrammeled adaptation of language rules is again refreshingly reflected in the angel designations. Hebraisms like "seraphim" and "cherubim" rub lingual shoulders with Latin manufacts such as "omniaphim", "tertiaphim", et alia. Function, not form - but in the implementing, a singular formal beauty emerges, too. Similarly, Salvington is "town of people who save". "Nebadon" precisely means "hill of fog", or more contextually exact, "hill of nebulae", from the obvious Latin word-base, a most appropriate piece of wordmaking excellence. "Splandon" means "hill of the viscera". "Caligastia" means immediately "the stockinged one" or "he of the show", or foot, a caliga being originally a Roman legionnaire's military sandal and later, a bishop's legging. But again these are in any translative case good and right names for our particular understanding and use. Always accentuating the practical, the Urantia Book shows forth its well-integrated advices on functionality in its lingual treatments as well as in its spiritual philosophical approaches. The finesse of its practical word smithing can serve doubly as an anticilatory disarming of those first-impression disillusionments that can come when the book's linguistic improvisation is discovered. Names and language itself, it can't be oversaid, are concept frames, not the reality conceived therewith, and are then necessarily relative. Names get their legitimacy from merest use at the lowest nominating level, and always do depict the reality they describe with greater or lesser fineness of description. Names are but names, and when artfully attuned to function, vehicles of a blissful aesthetic, too.

And we may know that however colloquial or provincial their time space referencing, the dubbings of this experiential plane do have a universe reality, when they apply to things of cosmic status. Take the example of the rash but beloved dervish of Tarsus, Saul/Paul. Whatever his actual universe name as of post-fusion status, the celestial annals will also forever record the former style of his name during the mortal career (as we know, persons who fail of fusion and therefore survival have no universe name at all.) And thus does a homogenized Hebrew-Greco-Latinism, Saul-cum-Paul, rise to universe status (Saul is Hebraic, of course, and Paul, the Greek form of the Latin Paulus). Indeed, all names and descriptions, no matter how local when dealing with realities of cosmic or survival status, are automatically legitimized with the universal powers as to their respective reference frames.

Among the very many titles and names of Nebadon's sovereign, and duly so verbalized on its records, are such diminutives as "Jesus", "Uncle Joshua", "Peloni" (or "that man", a common derisive moniker for him among the Pharisees), "The King of the Jews", and all other rustic symbolizations for him, no matter how primitive or relatively accurate and as reflecting the attempts of a small planet's will creatures to depict their immediate Creator. And this without any regard to what our Creator's multifarious name-titles are actually within his home perimeter and beyond, or what his many designations are in other local world's language frames.

Names and descriptions are subjective usages, not objective. When an emissaryship makes overture to a native population, it is their subjective terms which are honored, insofar as communication and enlightenment's purposes allow. If the local usage for the primal Cause is "tohu-bohu", this is the term the emissaries too use, to the extent that the concepts it embodies are adequate for conveying those comprehensions they seek to pass on. "Yahweh" and its conceptual evolution illustrate this well. We may conclude that just as Saul/Paul's temporal name is set down just so in the universe accountings of his mortal career, this planet's local-reference name is verily cataloged as "Urantia" (and certainly as well, "Earth"), however else it may be known on the several levels of universe reality. Caligastia's local-reference name is likewise "Caligastia" to universe scribes, no matter what else.

The rule is that of the higher embracing the lower, but not the reverse. Nebadon's language adequately encompasses the verbalization "Urantia", but Urantia's is inherently incapable of wholly expressing the full metaphoric force of "Nebadon's" name for itself. "Urantia" is a local word couched in local language elements. We must not have that linguistic tunnel vision that would assure that the respective local names of entities all across a huge creation were bestowed in accord with our own special lingual perspective. But in those instances wherein provincial designations are recorded realities on high, could, for instance, an invented term of plainly Indo-European homogenesis have had a recognized formality on universe levels from long before this planet came about, and certainly prior to any such limited reality as Indo-European verbalization? By anticipation, surely. The time-space transcendent precognitions of the Gods acknowledge such lingual denotations long before their use by incarnate will creatures. A classic example is the "mesotron", a sub-atomic nuclear entity designated and described in the Urantia Papers in 1934 as a part of a larger exposition on the nature of matter. When later discovered by physicists in 1937, this tiny nuclear proton-neutron mediator was duly dubbed by the same descriptive terminology -- a mesotron. The term has since become universally abbreviated in particle-physics circles to "meson", and not all of its outlined properties have yet been discovered (see related essay on the state of contemporary physics). But its case is illustrative. The matter of universe nomenclature would differ, however, in cases such as those of prior and purely local-tradition status. "Melchizedek", as example, being unmodifiedly Hebrew in every linguistic respect, composed of distinct meaning elements ("king" and "righteous") in that tongue explicitly; it is unthinkable that an entire order of universe sons would come under that old Semitic nomenclature as their formal verbalized name on their native universe and reality level.

We know that the Salem teacher did assume for himself that purely local nomen for the purpose of incarnative consistency with that particular era and culture in which he appeared. And in order to explicate about the higher order from which he originated, the Urantia Book would in all convenience naturally refer to that order by the same classification, Melchizedek. But it would be a highly inverted arrangement for an entire order of interuniverse principalities to be vested from their beginnings thousands of millennia ago with a Hebrew name classification so that when one of their number appeared among men in the far future, he could with consistency have a Hebrew name. No, the Melchizedeks are so called as a pure function that we may understand the identity of their order with the Salem missionary who wore that name. "Melchizedek" is a purely local name. Here touches again the Urantia Book's wise use of available roots and morphemes where possible to get across meaning in synthesis with its linguistic whole-cloth creations. The "vorondadek" and "Lanondadek" sonship orders in point: here are synthetic prefixing phonemes combined with an available morpheme, "dek". The intention here is to imply that this order is akin to the Melchizedek order, and the "dek" stem acts as the signatory device. There is no such independent root, or stem, as "dek" in the Hebrew from which this morpheme is drawn, however. "Zedek" is an intact nondivisible root itself (again, meaning justness or rectitude). But no matter. The very "dek" itself nevertheless acts very well as a metaphoric tool to transmit the desired associative connotation, to it is used, and very aptly. A word need not be a word to convey meaning. Just as a mere piece of a hologram can convey the whole picture with sufficiency, so a piece or makeshift of a phoneme or word can get its message through when embedded in the proper mnemonic setting. And so without further information we can intuit that the terms "Melchizedek", "Lanonandek", "Vorondadek", "and "Norlatiadek" are interrelated in some fundamental way. Without knowing anything these terms denote, we instantly know much of what their structures connote. What about "chronoldek"? But in language as in all else, its rules are handy tools, not meant to be situationally bound. Rules of language arise to govern situations, not vice-versa. It is the misunderstanding of this nature and purpose of all rules, period, that leads to much grief and misapplication of rules in life. Transgression is not the violation of the rules of a situation; transgression is the violation of the situation. Rules are not themselves ruled by anything. They are expediencies, which situations suggest. Rules are not bound. They too, like language, are relative.

In the main, but with major exception in human namesaking after the gods (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar, "Nabu protect my boundary stone"), the etymonics of proper names move from the generic to the particular, from the more literal to the more symbolic. When an old Anglo-Saxon warrior names his son, within his cultural context, "the strength of the army", he phrased it in the dithemic made-word "here-weald", literally, "army's power". Over the transmuting centuries, however, "harold" came exclusively to be used as a personal name. No more would one think of using the term "harold", long extinct as anything other than a proper name, to apply actually to an army's might.

So generally, people are named after things and not the other way around. The movement is from generic to specific (though we see another exemption as trade names pass into vernacular). The Hebrew generic for "man", and of course the specific for their legendary first man and racial father, is "adam", meaning literally "red" or "earthy". Was the Hebrew "adam, mankind making, a patronymic drawn from ancestral memory of Urantia's Material Son from so long before there was anything like a Hebrew language or its protoform Phoenician? Was Hebraic mankind named after Adam, or was Adam named after that mankind, the Hebraic "adam"? The latter, surely. Though the old Hebrew traditionists may not have known it as a clear truth, mankind preceded our Material Son on the planet, and consequently already had a name. And though that name may not have found its way directly into the lingual tree which finally bore Phoenician and Hebrew, we can be sure that the far ancestors of the Hebrews had!

In accordance, then with its practice of using native terms already in place, where possible, in revealing universe truth, the Urantia Papers' writers named Adam after the existing Hebrew rendering, just as the codifiers of the book of Genesis had readily named their first man after that same generic when they set down the record long after Moses. (In this reference, UB, pp. 836-38). Also see the postscript below). Once a city's planner dub a certain throughway Peach Street it is thereafter just that until that name-reality relationship no longer applies. Whether any peaches are to be found there, although a possible additional identifier, alters in no way the propriety or functionalism of the name once established. "Peach Street is Peach Street, and if my son knows it instead as "the street where Jerry lives", it's that too. Names are relative metaphors, not absolute realities! They may be revealed, but not necessarily inspired, and the deliverers of the Urantia Book used this verity with their typical rare grace.

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Postscript:

We know that the post-Abrahamic Hebrew of the scriptures was in fact a later Andonic idiom itself, and that Adam himself spoke a dialect of Andonite as used by Amadon (Urantia Book page 896, eighth paragraph, and page 829, fifth paragraph).

The question then is to what extent the generic "Adam" of Hebrew verbalization was a phonetically intact form of the original Andonite term for mankind; this in view of the inevitable processes of phonetic decay and transmutation of syllabic constructions over prolonged periods.

Perhaps one clue lies in the fact that late Sumerian legend's telling of the one mortal created "the model of men" to rule among them gives his name as "Adapa", clearly similar phonically to "Adam", but also a term itself previously subject to phonetic decay if in fact a remnant of the Material Son tradition from at least 30,000 years before the name was fixed in Andite-Sumerian cuneiform records.

Most significant as an indicator of the primordial meaning of "adam" itself as well as of the relatively pure phonetic antiquity of the term at least back to three millennia or so before Christ, and regardless of any alternate phonic forms, is the fact that the Sumerian Andites' word for blood or gore was "adama") the later appearance of "red" and "earthy" as consequent meanings among the Hebrews and related Semites is plainly enfolded here). The later Chaldaic Babylonian language which supplanted the Sumerian tongue retained the same word base in its "adamatu" for gore or blood. At any rate, Adam's name, whatever its vocalization, was Andonic, and he, importing as an emissary, would have deferentially adopted for himself the local genericism for the people he came to attend. Again under linguistic realities, because the original "Adam" means generic "man" as well as variantly and specifically "blood", or "earthy", we know it was already in full-blown use in whatever phonetic form before the Material Son's arrival. It is this denotation "of the Earth" that also reveals the primitive common knowledge that mankind had in physical essence literally sprung from the ground through upward evolution (see UB, page 837, paragraph five): thus the earliest Andonites, with or without any semblance of religious tradition, did intuit their evolutionary origins at least as to material makeup. Illustratively, the Jordan valley town of Adam near the Jabbok River fork means literally "ground", while that not uncommon place-name element of "Adam" throughout the Levant signified the reddish clay often found in the region. Although Adam was racially nor evolutionarily neither red nor earthy (red is opposite the color scale to violet), it may have indeed been that he had red hair as common the Adamites, and that his local-reference name tied to this designatory sense. Also very pertinent may be the fact that the Hebraic "Adam" variant "Admoni", for "ruddy", is often used of that hair or skin shade in the Old Testament. In an case, as with that of the Melchizedeks, Adam's name however verbalized was solely a local-reference piece of language, not extending to the entire universe order of Material Sons. The Adams and Eves of Jerusem do not have Andonic names, but those fitting their universe language level.

Next question -- did the original Andonites of pre-Material Son days use "adam" to denote generic man generally, or apply it generically only to Andonites? It must be remembered that the Andonites certainly did not call themselves that, and that the first Andonite's Andonic name wasn't even Andon, but Sonta-an, "loved by mother". That his wife was named Sonta-en, "loved by father" and their first child was called Sontad, "loved by us", is already the start of the later universal tradition of family names (and family names move from generic to specific to familial generic: i.e., a metalsmith properly takes the name "Smith", which is then passed on to his children generally).

The Andonic "en" as denoting father has an apparent idiomatic survival even down to Sumerian times, when used in a larger transmuted patriarchal definition. The Sumerian "en" specifically had the patriarchal meaning of prelate or priest, though to what extent the term was Andonically derived is beyond available knowing.

So we can know that there was a distinct Sonta family-name tradition among the early Andonites. But again, because of the ultimacy of surname exhaustion and of phonetic decay, how long the name stayed intact or how widely it spread within the larger race grouping are unknowables. But the Andonites as a whole hadn't become entirely lost as a separately identifiable people wither idiomatically or racially as late as the advent of Adam (see UB, page 869, first paragraph). And although his name's verbal form was late Andonic, the Material Son surely would've taken a name deferentially applying to humankind in whole. Thus "adam" in its original phonetic form must have been an Andonite term for everyman generally, not just Andonites or a particular surname subgrouping of the race. This has a special relevance to the matter that "adam" in its red-earthy context could carry the connotation "swarthy", which is surely descriptive of the Andonites. An interesting illustration of the differential contexts of names is with Adam's first sons, as compared with the later children's names. "Adamson" and Eveson" clearly were not the actual verbalization for these firstborns, "son" being Old Anglish immediately, and by way of the Sanskrit "sunu".

The Urantia Book implicitly points to this in variantly listing Adamson as Adam ben Adam (and "ben" itself is a Semitic sonship designator, certainly not Jerusemic). But Cain, Abel, Seth, etc., are the actual local-reference names for the later children, except insofar as phonetic day had injected itself into the Edenic traditions before the Hebrew scribes of 600 B. C. and later had masoretically frozen the names along with their traditions in the Pentateuch.

The etymology of Eve's name is intriguingly complicated for yet another reason beyond that of Adam's. This is because "Eve" is a mistransliteration in the first place. The actual Hebrew name for the female adam is "Chavvah", alternately "Hawwah", meaning literally "life" or "living", although virtually all scripture renderings have followed roughshod the translative abuse of the Latinized "Eve".

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Definitions:

Dithemic- Having or characterized by two themes.

Etymology- The history of a linguistic form (as a word) shown by tracing its development since its earliest recorded occurrence in the language where it is found, by tracing its transmission from one language to another, by analyzing it into its component parts, by identifying its cognates in other languages, or by tracing it and its cognates to a common ancestral form in an ancestral language.

Masosra- A body of notes on the textual traditions of the Hebrew old Testament compiled by scribes during the 1st millennium of the Christian era.

Metaphor- A figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them.

Phoneme- A member of the set of the smallest units of speech that serve to distinguish one utterance from another in a language or dialect.

Syncretic- The combination of two or more orig. different inflectional form

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