

# A Record and Promise of Life: ERH and the World Religions

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## Prologue

In the fall of 1967 I picked up a book that would have a profound impact on my life. It had a curious title: *The Christian Future: Or the Modern Mind Outrun*. And it was written by a man with a curious name: Eugen (not Eugene) Rosenstock-Huessy. Little did I know that it would give me a whole new perspective on the Christian faith. It moved beyond those views that were then prevalent in the 1960s: the theology of hope, religion-less Christianity, Bultman's demythologizing, and liberation theology though there were some resonances with some of these diverse perspectives. It was neither ideology, nor a theology, but an orientation/faith alive to the secret of Christianity: that life was stronger than death. In Rosenstock-Huessy's words:

At the centre of the Christian creed is faith in death and resurrection. This and this alone is the power which enables us to die to our old habits and ideals, get out of our old ruts, leave our dead selves behind and take the first step into a genuine future. (CF 61-62)

And then later, he wrote that

The Christian Dogma is not an intellectual formula but a record and promise of life. It does not propose ideas for our minds to master; it tells actual events which can master and transform us as they did the first Christians. It is not a mere topic of thought but the presupposition of sanity... (CF98)

What? I wondered what he meant by this? I had just completed a three year degree in theology at Harvard Divinity School, and I had never heard the "Christian dogma" referred to as "a record and promise of life." But I continued to read. And on page after page I continued to be amazed, surprised, puzzled, and inwardly persuaded. When I finished the book I put it down knowing I had encountered something very important, something that would change me. But how? I didn't know.

In this recollection of my encounter with ERH, it is important to note that it began with the *Christian Future: Or the Modern Mind Outrun* then moved on, three years later, to *Out of Revolution: the Autobiography of Western Man, Speech and Reality, I am an Impure Thinker*, and everything available in English. In between the *Christian Future* and the other writings of ERH, I taught for two years at Waterloo Lutheran University in Canada, lost my position, went to Europe: Geneva, Rome, Prague and East Berlin, worked for the Lutheran World Federation and traveled throughout a Latin America awash in the rhetoric of revolution. I was being changed and what I was reading in ERH was *manna* to a searching heart. Here I want to highlight something of what I was learning from ERH and how it affected my life. I begin with the *Christian Future*, then move on to *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* and then move into aspects of my journey into the world religions. So here we go...

## ERH & the Creed

ERH claimed never to have doubted the Athanasian Creed. This was a Creed from the late 5<sup>th</sup> or early 6<sup>th</sup> century, mistakenly attributed to Athanasius (396-373) that is noteworthy for its focus on the Trinity and Christology. It is regarded as an early ecumenical creed and is accepted, along with the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed, by the Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and some Reformed Churches. It states that "...the Catholic faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity..." and Rosenstock-Huessy remarks that his "triune faith is none other than that formulated in the Athanasian Creed and therefore I believe the Creed simply true." (CF 98) It is worth noting that the Athanasian Creed was especially popular in Western Christianity in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, a period that is foundational in ERH's *Out of Revolution*.

I would later visit Iznik in Turkey where the first ecumenical Council was held and the Nicene Creed was hammered out. Here the views of Athanasius prevailed and the *homoousius* (of the same substance/essence) teaching affirmed. And this teaching is reaffirmed in the Athanasian Creed, but now both in relation to the divine and the human: "our Lord Jesus Christ...is Man, of the essence of his Mother, born in the world, Perfect God and Perfect Man." But our purpose here is not to revisit the metaphysics of the Creed but to underscore ERH's understanding of the Creed:

Its three articles guarantee our trust in the unity of creation from the beginning), God the Father made all things in heaven and on earth), our liberty to die to our old selves (given to us by God's Son, who implanted the Divine itself in human life by living as a man, and dying, yet rising again), and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit which enables us to commune with posterity and start fellowship here and now. (CF98)

And then later we read:

...the story of man since Christ has been the application of the Athanasian Creed to everyday life. This story makes it clear that the Creed is not a statement of bare facts but a command given at baptism. The Creed describes essentially three things: God's trust in man, God's liberty, God's creativity – and enjoins us to accept the conditions under which we may make Man by sharing these Divine attributes.

For nineteen centuries, the outstanding contributors to the life we live here have believed and enacted the commands of the Creed....Thus our whole civilized inheritance has been made by men in the image of the Trinity, and we may see that image in such things as pilots, whom we trust with our lives, doctors who employ the latest creations of medical science, and teachers, who enjoy liberty to influence children in ways that would never happen if we merely let nature take its course." (CF 111)

This is a view of the Creed unlike anything I had ever encountered before. ERH saw the Creed not as a series of propositions to be believed but a "record and promise of life." It was the story of the Living God's encounter not only with the Church but with humanity. It was something that we knew from our own lives on what ERH called the cross of reality, the cruciform life that we live.

What is happening here? What is Rosenstock-Huessy up to? How do we make this transition from the Living God, the One we encounter in the midst of our daily life on "the cross

of reality,” to a Trinitarian Creed that is an anachronism to a modern reader, to our collective human future in a planetary society? This is what puzzled and confused me, it still does.

But over time, I came to realize that ERH provided a clue in the unfamiliar word he used in the *Christian Future: anthropurgy*. What’s that?

We begin to glimpse his meaning if we ask about our era and what is going on in history? What are those inner dynamics that shape the life of humanity?

### Anthropurgy: Let Us Make Man

While the first article of the Creed affirmed the “unity of creation” and the second article bestowed on humanity “our liberty to die to our old selves,” it was, ERH asserts, the third article that is “the specifically Christian one.” What did he mean? What was the Living God up to? ERH’s answer was: *the making of humanity*. In his words,

...from now on the Holy Spirit makes man a partner in his own creation. In the beginning God had said, “Let us make man in our image” (Gen.1:26). In this light, the Church Fathers interpreted human history as a process of making Man like God. They called it “anthropurgy:” as metallurgy refines metal from its ore, anthropurgy wins the true stuff of Man out of his coarse physical substance. Christ, in the centre of history, enables us to participate consciously in this man-making process and to study its laws. (CF108)<sup>1</sup>

For ERH this third article “enables us to commune with posterity and start fellowship here and now” (CF 98) or here: “a partner in his own creation.” Really? For modern men and women, schooled in Hegel’s dialectics of the spirit or Marx’s dialectics of the mode of production or the myth of progress, this was, at best, an anachronistic if not a ridiculous view of the historical process. Certainly we had outgrown such wishful thinking, hadn’t we? For me it echoed some things I had learned in a HDS seminar on St. Augustine and that I had read in Irenaeus and Gregory of Nyssa. But weren’t we all now seduced by Darwin and committed to evolutionary views? I pondered these things long and hard.

Later when I read *Out of Revolution: The Autobiography of Western Man* I began to see what ERH was saying about the “making of man.” I began to grasp ERH’s view that “*Christian anthropurgy, then, has gone on and continues to go on before our very eyes...*” (110) It is there in a world in which “*the heart of man either falls in love with someone or something or it falls ill.*”(OOR 4) It is there in a world where “*...Love and hatred remain the powers which govern the sun and all other stars, nations, individuals in so far as their desire for a full and true future is capable of lifting them out of their rutted tracks and orbits.*” (OR 722) Isn’t this fundamental to life on the cross of reality?

My grasp of ERH was deepened and extended when I later read *Out of Revolution*. It was the shape of eras and epochs and the encounter with the Living God of “western man.”<sup>2</sup> It was the story of the divine/human encounter that has become truly planetary/global in our time.

And then he went on to share his view of Christ’s divinity. It too was a novel approach...but I will not pursue it here.<sup>3</sup>

## A Listening Church: Fresh Penetration of the Cross

To encounter what Rosenstock-Huessy wrote about the Church, its history, and its present condition was to encounter a fresh perspective on its life and mission. While Harold Stahmer had edited the 1966 version of the *Christian Faith*, it is worth noting that it had been first published in 1946 and much of it written earlier than that. Yet even as I re-read it today, it still strikes me as very contemporary.

He called for a new penetration of the cross of reality into the life of man. He thought it would emerge from a listening community. It would attend to and hear the suffering of humanity. It would be a Christianity of hope but come in new forms and language. He called it “Christianity incognito.” (CF125)

This was no return to the past, nor was it a new crusade. For, as ERH remarks,

“though I believe that the Church is a divine creation and that the Athanasian Creed is true, I also believe that in the future, Church and Creed can be give a new lease on life only by services that are nameless or incognito. The inspirations of the Holy Spirit will not remain inside the walls of the visible Church...” (127) Indeed, he continued “seeds of Christianity are now germinating in secular forms of life as much as in church pews...” (126)

According to ERH, the task of the third millennium is “to wrestle with the task of revealing God in society. The double concern of this epoch will be the revivification of all dead branches of the single human race, and the reinspiration of all mechanized portions of the single human life.” (CF 116) But we may not do that with a we (Christian)/they (pagan) mentality. Instead, ERH offered this surprising perspective:

Finding Christian and pagan, believer and unbeliever, no longer separate from each other as at first, but side by side within every soul, we are challenged to achieve a further innovation in the evolution of Christianity. No one can claim to be one hundred percent Christian or one hundred percent pagan. Convert and converter will have to live on united in one and the same person, like the two movements of our respiration, like a constant dying and coming to life again of our faith.” (CF 125)

This is no new call for a new crusade into the non-Christian world, but rather a call for a “listening Church.” This is the way that ERH characterized it:

a third Christianity, the Christianity of Hope, is beginning with what has rightly been called the Good Friday of Christianity. Good Friday is the very center of our faith, but modern churches drunk with “civilization” and feeling safe and smug, failed to evolve their own Good Friday voluntarily; their conventional preaching against selfishness spoke less eloquently than their selfish actions as vested interests. So we are surrounded by the horrors of an actual Good Friday in Europe and Russia, where Christianity is denied or cynically manipulated....<sup>4</sup>

The inspirations of the Holy Spirit will not remain inside the walls of the visible or preaching church. A third form, the listening Church, will have to unburden the older modes of worship by assembling the faithful to live out their hopes through working and suffering together in unlabeled, undenominational groups, thereby to wait and listen for the inbreak of a new consolation... (CF 127)

I found myself resonating with his call for a “listening Church.” The words from the Church seemed tired and worn, lacking in consolation. The “Holy Spirit” seemed to be more present in secular movements like the struggle for civil right, opposition to the war in Vietnam, and student protest in the universities. Though there were courageous Christians there too, indeed, they were leading figures in these movements.

When ERH looked to the future he called for “meeting with this non-Christian reality” in Asia and the Far East. He continued “by including non-Christian elements in the future of our era at this very moment, our true direction may be regained. By excluding the non-Christian world, we would miss our future.” (CF136)

ERH went on to explain:

a new penetration of the Cross is required which shall draw together the hearts of men in East and West by showing that each has some essential ingredient of life which the other needs. From the purity of Eastern eyes and ears we may learn to cure the destructiveness of our sciences and the feverish expressionism of our arts, while the religious and political stagnation of China and India may be overcome if they are shot through with the Christian power of death and resurrection. (CF 174)<sup>5</sup>

Little did I know that my own future would lead in this very direction, but more on that later.

When I put this book down I wondered what to do with it. I tried to share it with some of my students, but felt dissatisfied with my efforts. I continued with my work little knowing how deeply my encounter with ERH had entered my life. ... It just slumbered there within me working its way into the course of my life.

### Out of Revolution: An Unfinished Era?

If I was perplexed following my reading of the *Christian Future*, it was only deepened and extended when I read *Out of Revolution: The Autobiography of Western Man*. From Lenin to Luther? I couldn't believe it, he can't even get his history right? Clerical revolutions of the Church? What? What could be revolutionary about this hide-bound institution? But when I read that “our passions give life to the world, our collective passions constitute the history of mankind” (OR3) and that “the heart of man either falls in love with somebody or something, or it falls ill...” (OR, p.4) I knew that I was again engaged with something important. I think I read the whole book with my mouth hanging open. Page after page left me astonished as he wove the many threads of history into a magnificent tapestry that disclosed the making of humankind on its way towards the “destiny of the human race...the sons & daughters of the ONE MAN.” (PS xvii.)

When I read *Out of Revolution* I had just come from a year immersed in Latin America awash with the voices of revolution and liberation theology, as well as those voices in the USA calling for civil rights and the worldwide protests against the war in Vietnam. Since those voices had resonated in me, I was eager to know more of our revolutionary story. But as I read *Out of Revolution* I came to see that our collective story does not unfold in a lockstep way, nor in one that wipes out the past. Rather, each revolution is an event within the body of humankind, but comes to re-fix the boundaries of public life in a particular nation. ERH summarizes this process in the following way:

...Revolutions carry on the process of creation. Thus political history ceases to be outside nature: man and other forms of creation are closely akin, with the great difference that man was not created a hundred thousand years ago, but is being made before our eyes.

Men are reproduced, regenerated, and physically influenced by great revolutions... The European nations did not exist in 1000. Most of them were shaped in 1500. Today they are well known to all of us, some of them already in decay, or reorganization, but certainly all of them transient...

...it was the revolutionary setting of the nation which enabled it to make its contribution to the world at large. Civil government, parliamentarism, democracy, planning are developed in one country as an ultimate end, whereas all the others can use it as a thing of relative importance...

The Great Revolutions are eccentric, they exaggerate, they are brutal and cruel. But the life of the rest of the world is regenerated by their outbreak...Life is regenerated in the rest of the world whenever a new form joins the older one...

Perhaps the addition of a new form even relieves and eases the older forms of a part of their burden. They recover.

The biological secret of eternal life can, perhaps be formulated thus: Lest the old forms die or stagnate, a new kind branches off from the tree of life. By reason of this flowing forth of life into new forms, the forms already existing are able to survive. The revolutionary creation of one new kind permits the evolution of the older kinds. (OOR 480-481)

ERH calls this the "bionomics of Western man." The particular gift of the Christian era to this history of revolution: "it made them co-exist." (OOR 455) This is the meaning of "love the neighbor in politics." As Rosenstock-Huessy notes "*the coexistence of different countries obviates the crude rotation of antiquity. The peoples co-operate and co-exist, not merely geographically or mechanically, but morally, as one collective system of interplay and mutual dependence.*" (OOR 455) But if we look at the world today, it seems not to be a lesson that world leaders have grasped as they continue to not only assume that "our country is the best in the world," but also "that our form of governance is the only legitimate game in town."

In OOR, ERH insisted that:

...the French and Russian revolutions are results of the Christian era. They depend upon it, they complete it. Christianity is not a mutual admiration society. It may allot to a certain form of life the necessary area in which to establish its own realm. The chief duty of any member of the Corpus Christi is to strengthen the other forces of humanity and to assure the later co-ordination of the Russian antitheistic form with the rest of the Christian community... The un-Christian forces play their part in the reimplantation of every branch of mankind into the one tree which is the perpetual effort of our era. (OR 716-717)

I agree but suspect that many in the Christian West would look askance at such a position.

While I found OOR an astonishing account of Western man, I am not surprised that it remains so little known. It challenges the modern outlook and its assumptions as it moves

beyond shibboleths of modernity. Moreover, while the autobiography of western man came to a crisis of epochal proportions in “the Great Wars” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the revolutionary dynamic continues on in our own time. The autobiography of western man has become the autobiography of planetary man. And we need to update the Rosenstockian vision to include the end of colonialism and the emergence of the Pacific era, the rise of the People’s Republic of China, the resurgence of Islam, the rise of Asia and the transformation of Africa and Latin America...

For as ERH remarks

Faith, hope and love are universal. They are the only real motive forces of history and of political life and language, for the simple reason that they alone connect the words men speak and use as means of communication with a real power working in time and space. (OOR 652).

The trinity of faith, hope, and love drives the life of man more than the any other trilogy as it connects us with the living God. Was I learning this lesson?

### My Transition & ERH’s new Cross of Reality

In the mid-1970s I found myself engaged in the defense of the “new religious movements”: Hari Krishna, Unification, 3HO, etc.<sup>6</sup> It led to a further encounter with the Eastern traditions since Hari Krishna and 3HO had origins in India and Unification in Korea. But really decisive was a sabbatical year in India in 1986-87. That sabbatical was informed by what ERH had said about sabbaticals in the CF, namely, a time to immerse oneself in a new community or fellowship that would inspire one for the next six years. It is still a source of inspiration for me.

We began our time in India with two months in a Muslim university with the family of S. A. Ali, Director of the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies. Those months involved daily meals with the Ali family and immersion in the Muslim community in India. It also included encounters with the Sikh tradition with Mohinder Singh and his family; I remember my first visit to a Gurdwara as if it were yesterday. We spent luminous days in Vrindaban celebrating the Hindu tradition of Krishna & Radha with the guidance of Shrivatsa Goswami. His family had come to Vrindaban in the 1500s when Chaitanya (1486-1534) was reviving Krishna devotion. The Venerable Daboom Tulku at Tibet House became our guide into the world of Tibetan Buddhism and we visited Dharamsala, where HH the Dalai Lama resides. We then also encountered the traditions of South India in Madras, the Thomas Christians, both Syrian Orthodox & Catholic of Kerala, along with the Jains and Verashivites of Karnataka and the hospitality of the Parsees in Pune along with the Indian Jesuits at De Nobli College. Everywhere we were welcomed and invited to participate in their life and culture. And I listened, listened, and listened. I learned much as my book learning was transformed through a direct encounter with these living ways of the spirit. I sought to hear these traditions in their own terms rather than too quickly translating them into mine.<sup>7</sup>

This time would have a great impact on how I came to relate to these traditions. As well as on how I was appropriating ERH.

Much earlier, in the *Christian Future*, ERH had offered a new probe that sought to incorporate Eastern traditions into the redemptive eschatology of the Cross. He wrote:

I wish to show how Orient and Occident both have given us a pair of re-founders or re-directors of human nature – Buddha and Laotse, Abraham and Jesus – who together have created man’s full freedom on all fronts of the Cross of Reality. (CF 174)

ERH then went on to briefly identify the significance of Buddha and Laotse/Laozi on the outer and inner fronts of space, Abraham and Jesus on the past and future fronts of time. It is fascinating and suggestive and it points in a direction that moves beyond the criticism often directed at the OOR: “what about my (non-Western) world.

But when ERH turns to these founders he does not find a “religion” but instead discerns a new take on “human nature.” These pathways of the spirit open rather into/onto the multi-formity of human nature: here the way of our “buddha nature” and the tao/way of “wu-wei. In ERH’s words:

...man by his gift of speech is able to enlarge his grasp of reality in all four directions – his loyalty to past creation, his solidarity with other men, his power over nature, his love and faith in the future – yet as we have seen he is prone to get stuck on one front to the prejudice of the other three. The great re-directors have overcome this tendency to fixation by living each direction of the Cross to a paradoxical extreme which emancipates us from the characteristic obsessions of that front. By emptying each direction of its accidental content, they enable us to re-enter the other fronts and thereby assure the perpetual flexibility and movement of life... They freed us from the tyranny of perfection.” (CF 175)

Such a view discloses the interdependence of the great traditions of spirituality. Could we not say of these traditions of spirituality what ERH said earlier of peoples: *...the peoples cooperate and co-exist, not merely geographically or mechanically, but morally, as one collective system of interplay and mutual dependence?* I have come to think so.<sup>8</sup>

ERH’s formulation of the Cross of Reality would require a much fuller presentation than is possible here. I just let it stand as a probe towards the future, for it resonates with my own encounter with other traditions of spirituality in India and, more recently, in Turkey and China.

## Listening in India

I have already mentioned my experience in India, beginning with a sabbatical in 1986-87. It has continued and I have been back to India more than 20 times, sometimes with students for a semester of study. I have always called these study terms: Encountering the Living Religions of India. In my initial encounter with India I went to Muslim mosques, Sufi shrines, Hindu mandirs, Sikh gurdwaras, Jain temples, and Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and temples. And what I experienced there was not mediated through speech (since I did not know the languages spoken) but through sound/music, gestures, actions, smell/incense, and feel. I was deeply moved by what I encountered. Then, of course, I had opportunities to speak with people from all these traditions and to discuss my experience, to ask questions, to enter into dialogue with adherents of these various traditions. And of course I continually read a lot too. I mention this because I had developed habit, beginning in my teenage years, of always carrying on an internal debate with what I was hearing in church. Did I agree or disagree? Did I believe this or that or at all? Etc.

Here I could experience things in a different way. I could hear music as music rather than as words. I could see actions as actions and devotion as devotion... And I saw worship as worship

of the ineffable divine. And I came away from these experiences with a deepened appreciation of these traditions as living pathways of the spirit. Now when I encountered the word Hindu I recalled the Goswamis and my time in Vrindaban and with Dr. Shivamurthy Shivacharya in Sirigere, and .... When asked about Muslims my mind went immediately to the Sufi Shrine at Nizammudin and the Ali family...all these traditions gained a human face, they were no longer abstractions but living ways. Etc. etc....

I sought, in a word, to weave my experience of these “ways of the Spirit” into that orientation that I had learned from ERH.<sup>9</sup> Let me give you one example of what I mean...<sup>10</sup>

### A Note on Confucianism: Jen & Human heartedness

During my time at Renison, I taught a course on East Asian traditions, including the great traditions of China: Confucian, Daoist, & Buddhist. But it wasn't until 2011 and again in 2012 that I was able to go to China. And my experience was surprisingly other than what I had anticipated. I had imagined it would be something like my first trips to Eastern Europe in the late 60s. It wasn't. I was shocked by the modernity of Beijing and other cities and towns I visited and the absence of military presence. I made a point of going to mosques in Beijing, Xian, and Datong for Friday prayers and found them full. As were the Buddhist Temples, I visited on weekends and full moon days. The Daoist temples were not as busy, but they were functioning. And the Christian Churches were filled to over-flowing. When I went to Mass in Matteo Ricci's Cathedral, they sang the liturgy like angels. When I gave some lectures at Shandong University, I was impressed by the vitality of its Confucian scholars and the revival taking place.

After returning to Canada, one of my ERH friends asked me if I found Confucianism/China “boring,” the term ERH used in the *Christian Future*. Then when I read Wayne Cristado's remarkable volume *Religion, Redemption, and Revolution: The New Speech Thinking of Franz Rosenzweig and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy*, I was surprised to find the Confucian tradition characterized “...as boring and a rationale for modern western life...” I had never taken ERH on Confucianism in this way.

It is certainly the case that 19<sup>th</sup> century Confucianism had become overly formalized and rigid. But the revolution that unfolded in China after the collapse of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911/12) was due to external (the Opium Wars and Western imperialism) as well as internal factors. A prolonged Civil War finally ended when the Red Army marched into Beijing in 1949 and proclaimed the People's Republic of China. While Mao initiated a new era in the history of China, the price was enormous. The great Cultural Revolution (1966-76) against the “four olds” saw the destruction of much of the Confucian Way.<sup>11</sup> It was only in 1981 that 5 religious traditions were allowed: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestant Christianity & Catholic Christianity. Confucianism was regarded as an ideology, not a religion even though there wasn't a county in pre-Mao China without a Confucian shrine.

Yet by the early 1990s Confucian terminology began to creep back into public discourse in China. And today it is cautiously rehabilitated. I saw this in the restoration of Confucian sites in Beijing, Xian, and Shandong. It is also present in the “New Confucianism” of Chinese scholars like Tu Wei Ming, formerly of Harvard who has now returned to Beijing.

Classical Confucianism is a social philosophy built around the five great relationships: Husband/Wife, Parent/Child, Elder sibling/Younger sibling, Elder friend/Younger Friend and

Ruler/Subject. It is a dynamic Way of Goodness in Society. It is a social teaching that is centered around *jen* or human-heartedness. Our nature is unfinished at birth and is nurtured and cultivated in the five great relationships. Yes, it atrophied and formalized and failed in ways that all “religions/cultures” do. But Confucianism is being reinvigorated in the New Confucianism of contemporary China. As Tu Wei Ming: “...Confucians recognize that human beings are social beings, [and]...all forms of social interaction are laden with moral implications and that self-cultivation is required to harmonize each one of them...self-cultivation is the end.” Jen (pronounced Ren) or human heartedness is the goal of self-cultivation... and it is a dynamic and on-going process. I would think that ERH would find much in this this-worldly tradition that finds the sacred in the secular.

## Unity of Humankind & the Kingdom of God

As I read ERH the destiny of humanity is the realization of the unity of humankind... And in the last sections of *Out of Revolution* and *Planetary Service* he pointed to the time ahead:

In the future, many buried instincts will have to be revived in the white man if he is really to survive in this age of “childhood regained.” ...Today clannishness and primitivism may be recalled to life to restore the balance of a senile world... The longing to dance, behave, forget, dream like a child is felt increasingly... (OR717)

And

“The early stages of human development will be the goal of efforts which will no longer pretend to be deliberate or logical revolutions.” (OR718)

What exceeds us also beckons, as it calls us to a future that still awaits our actions in the here and now. This is an unfinished probe, and, by way of conclusion it is imperative to heed these words of ERH.

We need to be mindful that

God-man-world are the three components of spiritual life. Any process of thought, speech or inspiration must restore the tripartite order between divine question, human answer and subject matter... No attempt at replacing them by calling everything divine, or everything worldly, or every power social or human, stands the logical test, where there is no question, no standard, no command, no conscience, God and man disappear and only brute nature remains. (OR 723)

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<sup>1</sup> This reminded me of the teaching of Irenaeus that “the glory of God is man fully alive” and the teaching of Athanasius that “he was made man that we might be made God.” See my *Out of Galilee: Christian Thought as a Great Conversation* (Waterloo, Ontario: Centre for Dialogue & Spirituality in the World Religions, 2012.)i

<sup>2</sup> I am aware that similar things could be said about ERH on “the Divinity of Christ.” Here he says that “the Crucifixion Is the fountainhead of all my values, the great divide whence flow the processes most real in my inner life and my primary response to our tradition is one of gratitude to the sources of my own frame of reference in everyday life. Hence our chronology of B.C. and A.C. makes sense to me. Something new came into being then, not a man as part of the world but The Man who gives meaning to the world, to heaven and hell, bodies and spirits.” (CF 102-103) “We do not evolve upward; we fall less downward, after Jesus. That Jesus was *the* son of God means that he was the definite eventuation of man’s divinity. Christianity transmits the Divine Life to all men who come after him; we are all God’s sons; but ours is a plural emanating from his singular, an “a” deriving from his creative “the.”...Life had to be focused completely in one man before it could spread out from him to all... He united the Divine and the human once for all...” CF 106-107.

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<sup>3</sup> See the note above in footnote #2.

<sup>4</sup> This was initially written at the end of WW II and the “Good Friday” of Europe was obvious to all as it was in Russia that had lost millions in the battle with Nazi Germany.

<sup>5</sup> It is crucial that we understand ERH’s meaning here. He says: “the Cross is not an exclusive symbol of the egoism of one group; it is the inclusive symbol of the reunification of man, and every spark of life is welcome unless it refuses to die in time. Even the primitive cultures must be included eventually. Today Orient and Occident are shaken by a cataclysm which shows the insufficiency of both in isolation. (CF 174)

<sup>6</sup> In 1973 I came to Renison as a professor of religion and culture. In the mid-70s during the “great cult scare,” I founded with my colleague Rodney Sawatsky and others, Canadians for the Protection of Religious Liberty.

<sup>7</sup> One of my teachers at HDS was Raimundo Panikkar (1918-2010), a Spanish Priest and author of the *Unknown Christ of Hinduism* and many other remarkable books. His mother was Spanish, his father Indian. After completing doctorates in science, philosophy, and theology he went to India to explore his Indian heritage. When he returned to the West he remarked that “I left Europe as a Christian, discovered I was a Hindu and returned Buddhist without ever having ceased to be a Christian.” I now, after India, understood what he was saying.

<sup>8</sup> I have come to share the view of another of my teachers, Wilfrid Cantwell Smith, the great scholar of Islam, who in his *Towards a World Theology* argued for “the unity or coherence of humankind’s religious history.”

<sup>9</sup> See M. Darrol Bryant, *Woven on the Loom of Time* (New Delhi: Decent/Suryodaya, 1999). It is my attempt to speak towards that future that awaits us.

<sup>10</sup> If I had more time, I would have inserted a section on ERH and Islam. At the Dartmouth Conference in 2007, I learned something of ERH’s critique of Islam. I found myself distressed by what was reported. And some of that is repeated in Cristado’s *Religion, Redemption, & Revolution*. While Cristado’s volume may be right that this is a view shared by ERH & Rosenzweig; I remain unpersuaded. There are other views of Islam beyond the so-called Liberal stance that Cristado attacks. I think especially of the Traditionalist understanding of Islam.

<sup>11</sup> The Imam in the masjid in Xian informed us that when the Red Guards stormed the Muslim quarter in Xian they were surprised to discover that there were no images in the masjid/mosque and consequently left without destroying it.