

A Re-reading of Rosenstock-Huessy's Christian Philosophy of History in the Era of God's Return

Mike McDuffee, Ph. D.
Professor of History & Historical Theology,
Moody Bible Institute

And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.

Luke 16:26 (ESV)

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
(John Lennon, *Imagine*)¹

In the world today a very basic and visceral boundary divides those whose values of judgment are rooted in a “culture of disbelief,”² resting on a modern, secular and historicist-conceived humanism and a second religiously animated culture, revitalized since the end of World War II. The first culture understands man as alone in an empty universe.³ This culture assumes we live by ourselves in a single modern field of time, which is secular and closed. Applied to political life and social problems this view promises scientific study provides the best outcome. An excellent example of this way of ordering social life on an international level is The Report of The Commission on Global Governance titled, *Our GLOBAL Neighbourhood*.⁴ After completing this exhaustive

¹ http://lyrics.wikia.com/Gracenote:John_Lennon:Imagine

² Title of Stephen L. Carter's study on the efforts at censoring religious life being practiced in public and curbing its impact upon formulating state policy (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1993).

³ Modernity's single reality as an impersonal framework is not without meaning. People continue to live purposeful lives and celebrate the stories of history. Yet its big picture leaves us alone in our project of eking out any sense of ultimate meaning. See “Unquiet Frontiers of Modernity” in *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 711-727.

⁴ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). There were 21 expert papers written to facilitate discussions in the working groups of the Commission. Not one of them addressed the religious life or the life of the Spirit.

proposal about how benefactors might best manage global affairs, a future cultural anthropologist would have no idea that religion plays a powerful political role today⁵, or for that matter, that billions of people live within and usher their children into a wide variety of religious realities as the locus of their daily lives.⁶ He or she would conclude religion had no major role in formulating basic human values or in tackling the tasks facing the generation pioneering entry into the third millennium.

The other culture of living spirits does not view man alone, but “takes gods and spirits to be existentially coeval with the human, and [thinks] from the assumption that the question of being human involves the question of being with gods and spirits.”⁷ Reality is a cohabited condition, in which people recognize, give regard for, revere and enter relations with unseen beings. This is not “merely” a non-western social phenomenon. Philosopher Gianni Vattimo comments in his work, *After Christianity*,⁸ “Nowadays, it is more and more frequent for philosophers to speak of angels and redemption without providing an explicit justification for the use of these terms, or to refer to classical or preclassical mythologies extracted from the commentary of poetic, theological, or mythological texts.”⁹ As a further example of this metaphoric-metaphysical shift in the west, it is certainly significant that British philosopher Anthony Flew, as a long-time defender of naturalistic atheism, announced in 2004 he had changed his position, stating, “But it seems to me that the case for an Aristotelian God who has the characteristics of power and also intelligence, is now much stronger than it ever was before.”¹⁰

⁵ John Micklethwait and Adrian Woolridge, *God is Back* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009).

⁶ The ages of tradition gave us the world religions; modernity produces thousands of religious movements.

⁷ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 16.

⁸ Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, trans. by Luca K'Isanto (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

⁹ Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, p. 17.

¹⁰ Anthony Flew and Gary R. Habermas, “My Pilgrimage from Atheism to Theism,” read from <http://www.biola.edu/anthonyflew/flew-interview.pdf>.

A generation ago modern social scientists triumphantly announced, “The evolutionary future of religion is extinction,” because “belief in supernatural powers is doomed to die out, all over the world, as a result of the increasing adequacy and diffusion of scientific knowledge.”¹¹ By no stretch of the imagination have we witnessed either in world affairs¹² or in our domestic politics¹³ the diminishing of the sacred as an impetus for stirring people’s passions or as a source of instruction that provides purpose for their lives. Educators all, social scientists, ministers, philosophers and theologians, journalists and politicians must wrestle with the reality that religion again motivates men and women to commit themselves to public political acts. As one historian put it,

¹¹ Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological view* (N.Y.: Random House, 1966), p. 265. Quoted in “Sociology of Religion,” by Rodney Stark and Laurence R. Iannaccone in the *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, pp. 2029-2030.

¹² A disproportionately small yet dangerous element within today’s revitalized religious environment is of course the Islamist terrorist, who acts as a member of an “extremist wing of a *political religion*.” See Niall Ferguson, “Clashing Civilizations or Mad Mullahs: The United States between Informal and Formal Empire,” in *The Age of Terror*, ed. by Strobe Talbott and Nayan Chanda (New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, 2001), pp. 113-141. Also, Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002).

¹³ Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming, The Rise of Christian nationalism* (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 2006), Chris Hedges, *American Fascists, The Christian Right and the War on America* (New York: Free Press, 2006), David S. Katz and Richard H. Popkin, *Radical Religious Politics to the End of the Second Millennium* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), Damon Linker, *The Theocons, Secular America under Siege* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), Walter Russell Mead, “God’s Country,” *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2006):24-43, Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), Melanie Phillips, *The World Turned Upside Down* (New York: encounter Books, 2010), and Joel C. Rosenberg, *Inside the Revolution* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009). These works may do no more than draw confusing battle lines over our shifting social landscape, yet nonetheless they demonstrate how intense is our experience of unresolved transition from one order of life to another. From another avenue of approach, President Obama’s 2008 speech on religion in Philadelphia and the one he later delivered as president before a Muslim audience in Cairo, and his recent remarks at the 2010 Ramadan dinner at the White House deserve study under the rubric of Robert N Bellah’s thesis about American civil religion. See Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus*, vol. 96, no. 1 (1967):1-22. President Obama may have already spoken more to the issue of religion than any other American president who occupied the office before him.

“Worldwide, religious trends have the potential to reshape the political assumptions in a way that has not been seen since the rise of modern nationalism.”¹⁴

Admission may be slow in forthcoming,¹⁵ but we are living in a post-secular era. The more honest secular-minded admit today to be less confident than their banner-bearers from earlier generations. More than a decade ago, novelist and social commentator Peter Marin decried that within the movements of contemporary secular humanism something had gone “radically wrong.” He said, “The struggle to live ethically without God has left us not with the just and moral order we imagined but with disorder and confusion.”¹⁶ As one of the contributing architects of the cyberspace world in which we live, Bill Joy, cofounder and chief scientist of Sun Microsystems, confessed he was nervous about the possibility that our powerful 21st century advances in human genetics, computer science and nano-technologies might well destroy us. By way of understatement Joy openly mused, “the truth...science seeks can certainly be considered a dangerous substitute for God if it is likely to lead to our extinction.”¹⁷ Liberal philosopher Jürgen Habermas understands these criticisms and uncertainties as one of the three reasons why he feels justified in describing “the change of consciousness” happening in modern European societies as “post-secular.”¹⁸ The post-secular person increasingly encounters on a regular basis people infused with religious consciousness. In addition to the social reality

¹⁴ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom, the Coming of Global Christianity* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 13. See too his other appraisals on global religion: *The New Faces of Christianity, Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2006) and *God's Continent, Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2007). A small yet highly violent and volatile element active within today's revitalized religious environment keeps us from seeing the enormity of this social change.

¹⁵ Robert Kagan, for example, in *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008) sandwiches between the return of great power nationalism and his call for a concert of democracies the passing dismissal of radical Islam's hopeless dream. His entire analysis operates on the one side of western Enlightenment, which our age has impressed upon a global coin minted with two sides.

¹⁶ Peter Marin, “Secularism's Blind Faith,” *Harper's Magazine* (September, 1995): p. 20-22.

¹⁷ Bill Joy, “Why the Future Doesn't Need Us,” *Wired, Tomorrow Today* (April 2000): 238-262, p. 256.

¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas, “A ‘post-secular’ society – what does that mean?,” paper presented by the author at the Istanbul Seminars organized by Reset Dialogues on civilization in Istanbul from June 2nd to the 6th 2008, pp. 4-5/18, read from <http://www.resetdoc.org/story/00000000926>.

that naiveté is unavailable for "the believer or unbeliever alike,"¹⁹ there is a growing "awareness [that] living in a secular society is no longer bound up with the certainty that cultural and social modernization can advance only at the cost of the public influence and personal relevance of religion."²⁰ Habermas also acknowledges "religion is gaining influence not only worldwide but also within national public spheres."²¹ Finally, he realizes that the immigration of men, women and families "with traditional cultural backgrounds"²² only contributes to and accelerates this change.

However controversial, no matter how uncomfortable, it is time for us as either religionists or secularists and as post-secularists together to acknowledge, "Religion is central, perhaps *the* central force that motivates and mobilizes people."²³ Academics grounded in a scientific-rationalist frame of mind must awaken from their modern slumber in order to learn with their religious peers a new kind of hospitality within their respective disciplines. Without compromising the methods of scientific inquiry, we must find a way to coordinate the knowledge we gain accordingly with "classic truths to be found in the great literary and philosophical traditions"²⁴ both western and non-western, which are now universally accessible. What we judged before as perhaps being either too risky or unworthy of note, we should no longer overlook. We must bring into question "the hegemony of unbelief in academic and intellectual life."²⁵ The return of religion calls for reconnecting with the continuum of our historical selves. Philosopher Habermas gave voice to this new understanding when he wrote:

¹⁹ Charles Taylor, *The Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007), p. 17.

²⁰ Jürgen Habermas, "A 'post-secular' society – what does that mean?," p. 5/18.

²¹ Jürgen Habermas, "A 'post-secular' society – what does that mean?," p. 5/18.

²² Jürgen Habermas, "A 'post-secular' society – what does that mean?," p. 5/18.

²³ Samuel P. Huntington, "Response, If Not Civilizations, What?" in *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate, A Foreign Affairs Reader* (New York: Foreign Affairs, 1993), pp. 191-192.

²⁴ Walter Truett Anderson, "Four Different Ways to Be Absolutely Right," in *The Truth about the Truth*, ed. by Walter Truett Anderson (N.Y.: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), p. 113.

²⁵ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 13.

For the normative self-understanding of modernity, Christianity has functioned as more than just a precursor or catalyst. Universalistic egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. This legacy, substantially unchanged, has been the object of a continual critical reappropriation and reinterpretation. Up to this very day there is no alternative to it. And in light of the current challenges of a post-national constellation, we must draw sustenance now, as in the past, from this substance. Everything else is idle postmodern talk.²⁶

By way of an unexpected, post-secular doorway, we have entered that phase of history Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy described as “mutual permeation where everybody knows and hears of everybody else.” Our living room has become “so small that words fly like lightning and men fly like words.” In such a place, revolution has changed all wars into a single civil war. The revolution at work “presupposes the solidarity” of all humankind, and because it does so, it “comes upon the scene with a new significance.”²⁷ Historian Theodore H. von Laue spoke to this point about revolution and global solidarity in his history of the twentieth century, *The World Revolution of Westernization*.²⁸ Von Laue based the global state of integration at present upon Western expansion. “For the first time in all human experience the world of revolution of Westernization brought together, in inescapably intimate and virtually instant interaction, all the peoples of the world, regardless of their prior cultural evolution or their capacity -- or incapacity -- for peaceful coexistence.”²⁹

As a Christian, a historian, a social philosopher, a participant-observer and as a living member of corporate “western man,” Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy studied the history of the west rooted in Christianity, which as the progenitor of revolutionary passions he taught,

²⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity*, ed. by Eduardo Mendieta (MIT Press, 2002), p. 149.

²⁷ Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, *Out of Revolution, Autobiography of Western Man* (Norwich, VT.: Argo Books, 1969, originally published in 1938), p. 24.

²⁸ Theodore H. von Laue, *The World Revolution of Westernization* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

²⁹ Theodore H. von Laue, *The Revolution of Westernization*, p. 3.

produced the third order of human relations beyond either the church or the state, which we call, "society." He did so untiringly, wanting to help bring about an ever-changing condition of peace among the total set of living and dying human relations we experience at all levels of our lives, the personal and social, and at the global and through all generations.

Rosenstock-Huessy taught we all lived in one stream of human speech. "The infinite variety of languages does not at all alter the fact that the entire speech process is a single phenomenon spanning from Adam until the Day of Judgment."³⁰ Through this single socializing we gain our varied inherited identities. Together the languages form the body of speaking humanity living through its generations. Social speech in all its diversity delivers us into the Christian future of unexpected changes. He was confident that through our conflicts we created an ever-increasing unity (but not synthesis) that we suffer and celebrate on the way in time to the unity waiting for us all with out-stretched arms. Within the history of human generations, he understood speech as the medium of the Holy Spirit that "opens the spirits of the different times to each other."³¹ This One Spirit experienced as our many languages generating permutations of passion inspires us to speak beyond our past into the future because it is "at work behind the spirits of several periods."³² We can experience this work as individuals through moments of Death and Resurrection --living beyond ourselves --, and as nations as moments of sudden Revolution and periods of sedimentary Development.

Life is the constantly changing social reality through which we speak. What Rosenstock-Huessy called "the Christian future" enters our lives by different routes and at different rates of arrival. As a more conventional historian von Laue could not see built a global community, unless there was "the global confluence of our responsibilities," which he admitted, "means expanding our sense of selfhood, down to

³⁰ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts*, (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1963), vol. I, p. 281.

³¹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Fruit of Lips or Why Four Gospels* (Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: The Pickwick Press, 1978), p. 31.

³² Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Fruit of Lips*, p. 31.

the depths of our psyche, to global dimensions."³³ He thought that this could only be done "with the help of the culture-enhancing flywheel of an ascetic spiritual practice incorporated into daily routine, as in the Judeo-Christian religion of old."³⁴ However, this was only a personal observation and not an integral part of his historiography. From whence comes this flywheel, this habit, this harness, this impetus to move the human soul, to regulate and orient its motives, shifts, turns and speeds of motion, which in turn then galvanizes and organize our psychic energies and altruistic instincts to spring us into action? This is an unsettling question; asking it sobers us because we do not know how to answer. We also know how dangerous it is because our answering it easily leads to violence. Von Laue was correct to remind us, "In the sharply divided human family the quest for freedom, justice, and peace always raises the elemental issue of power: freedom for whom? Justice for whose benefit? Peace on whose terms?"³⁵

Rosenstock-Huessy taught that attending to this social question called for a third kind of knowledge based upon living human relations of listening, speaking and listening. He anticipated that although we can no longer speak to one another from either an exclusively religious or secular point of view, we must nonetheless think and speak from out of salvational history, or *Heilsgeschichte*, the history we really live. This describes for Rosenstock-Huessy the concrete and particular journey the generations of humanity have experienced by traveling speech paths Jesus made possible through his death. He called this Christian history, or salvational history because, as he put it, "I have no system outside of that which has happened to me and to the whole world, and what continually still happens."³⁶

We must answer questions of freedom, peace and justice for living men, women, children, communities and generations as social creatures, and no longer primarily as members of either a religious body or as peoples in the natural world. Society has become the communal sphere for human experience and relations. As a social condition

³³ Theodore H. von Laue, *The World of Revolution of Westernization*, p. 3.

³⁴ Laue, *The World of Revolution Westernization*, p. 368.

³⁵ von Laue, *The World of Revolution Westernization*, pp. 343-345.

³⁶ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlag, 1952), p. 44.

for our speaking to one another society is revolutionary, the future is its very essence. We suffer this communal condition as a problem because we are still without peace in our relations. Science cannot help us secure this peace. We secure scientific knowledge by answering our questions about what is the nature of things. But the human person is not a thing. Beyond this, as Rosenstock-Huessy pointed out, "The technical, economic, geographic and scientific unity of the world has revealed that peace among men has nothing to do with technology, economy, and geography and nothing to do with science."³⁷ Further, he continues, "Humanity has experienced and proven that peace among men has nothing to do with ritual, or liturgy or with anything dogmatic or theological."³⁸ Thinking in terms of relation to a timeless God or in terms of one with the repetitive events of nature will not give us the knowledge we need for peace. In fact, both have committed excesses resulting in human abuses. Rosenstock-Huessy concluded that the "natural sciences had reached that hegemonic state precisely identical to that once reached by theology in the 15th century."³⁹ Timely thinking, thinking tuned to the timing of the human generations must "concern itself with the condition that all human structures remain transitory or are revolutionized."⁴⁰ Rosenstock-Huessy's fundamental thesis about man stated, "Man, truly like God, is greater than a form of appearance," yet, "like nature has only transitory forms of appearance."⁴¹ The human experience and social life should never be handled in abstract terms. Rosenstock-Huessy defined the human soul as our capacity to "live beyond" our "many multifaceted transformations."⁴² For him *überleben*, to survive, outlive or live beyond a transitory condition was the key to all human associations.⁴³ We have the capacity to live, to mentally breathe this way if we dare risk the death of our thinking, its falling in despair at it running aground, trusting

³⁷ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, p. 40.

³⁸ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, p. 40.

³⁹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, p. 26.

⁴⁰ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, p. 26.

⁴¹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, p. 26.

⁴² Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, p. 27.

⁴³ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, p. 27.

nonetheless we can overcome this "piece of death" through the infusing power of our soul.⁴⁴

Obviously, for Rosenstock-Huessy, there is more to history than what we can explain about what happened in the past based upon our methods of its scientific examination. We become who we are by asking, "Whom should we know?" Rosenstock-Huessy heard the apostle Paul declare God appointed him a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. He heard Paul's confidence in his suffering having purpose. In addition, he heard Paul give the reason why he was unashamed of this purpose when he confessed, "But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed..."⁴⁵ In turn Rosenstock-Huessy responded, "Again afresh I ask, whom? Whom?"⁴⁶ Rosenstock-Huessy learned from Paul that only the person who stands under a call and answers to this challenge truly speaks to call forth the future for others.⁴⁷ He challenges us, "Tell me who speaks to you and I shall know who you are."⁴⁸ He reminds us, "The power who puts questions into our mouth and makes us answer them, is our God."⁴⁹ He catechizes us, "In Him [the One God] the end of humankind, to live as one in peace, became known as the oneness already guaranteed in the creation of Adam."⁵⁰ Rosenstock-Huessy calls us to be cognizant of our highest human capacity, to hear God speak by listening to others, the quality of life that allows us to rise again from despair, since "victory over tragic conflict [is] the deepest meaning of our destiny."⁵¹ Beyond spending our lives as collectors, achievers and contributors of our own particular interests we need to bring "ourselves in the right germinal situation" that we might establish "an apostolate," for rightly preaching, teaching, suffering and

⁴⁴ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁵ 2 Timothy 1:11-12, *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2001), p. 1197.

⁴⁶ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, p. 10.

⁴⁷ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, p. 48.

⁴⁸ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Fruit of Lips* (Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: The Pickwick Press, 1978), p. 1.

⁴⁹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution, Autobiography of Western Man* (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1969), p. 725.

⁵⁰ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future* (New York, N.Y.: Harper Torchbook), p. 66.

⁵¹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 202.

unleashing “the germinal acts” necessary for connecting a healthy future with the next generation. He wanted us to see ourselves as co-founders of a future in which coming generations could experience relations of healthy authority, service, fellowship and creation.⁵² Beyond ourselves we need to hope, love and come to believe we can nurture a temporary peace that helps bring this about. The cunning prowess of death in us against which we press, the forces of chaos we unleash to bite and devour one another, our lust for vengeful and vainglorious war against outsiders and unbelievers, our disposition of decadent indifference toward promise of our common future and our disrespectful, impatient revolt against our traditions bequeathed us by our ancestors, all conspire to deceive us into doing the dead works animated by the idolatrous spirits of futile history heated by the flames of the gluttonous present.⁵³ In the midst of our living for today, we need to come alive to the calling of challenging our children to live for the ages.

Rosenstock-Huessy often used the auxiliary verbs “need” and “must.” He spoke holistically, that is, as the person he had lived through, out of and into repeatedly. He resisted discriminating against, segregating or censoring his living person. Without violating the passions and truths that formed his life and career, he sought peace with others, which he understood as “that experience of love and fellowship that offers the opportunity to listen.”⁵⁴ Like Nietzsche before him, Rosenstock-Huessy spoke therapeutically, believing life took precedence over knowledge. He said, “A social order may be pronounced *sick* according to the amount of tyranny instead of authority, or causation instead of creativity; or it may be predicated *healthy* because of its degree of fellowship, of rhythm and sympathy instead of blueprint bureaucracy, or of its quality of serviceable compassion instead of power.”⁵⁵ A truth for all time however, cannot heal now, and what fails to heal us now cannot be truth. For Rosenstock-Huessy, we do not gain peace as the prize we finally win by scientifically securing the theory about everything, as if we will enjoy peace only when scientific truth eventually wins out. The

⁵² Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 193.

⁵³ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Speech and Reality* (Norwich, Vermont: Argo Books, 1970), pp. 11-15.

⁵⁴ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Speech and Reality* (Norwich, Vt: Argo Books, 1970), pp. 36-37.

⁵⁵ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, pp. 196-197.

truths we live to live in peace, Rosenstock-Huessy said, are as “mortal as an infant baby.”⁵⁶ We cannot create truth but we can create the time in which we seek to speak to our differences in voices of mutual respect while trusting in the mutual permeations collectively ours that stir us to speak. In this way we build temporary truces, which allows us to live together.

Rosenstock-Huessy accepted Nietzsche's invitation to his readers to hear him when he wrote in 1874, “The unhistorical and the historical are equally necessary for the whole health of a person, a people and a culture.”⁵⁷ Who among us today *listens* to Rosenstock-Huessy? Who within range of my voice believes we can reach agreement over what is the “central conflict”⁵⁸ of our time? Rosenstock-Huessy warned us that we have “no chance of living crucially” unless “the greatest conflict of a period is...faced, [otherwise] all its minor conflicts will re-open, under its pressure.”⁵⁹ We, the learned, the scholars, the tenured, the professors should tremble with excitement and shudder with fear entering into the global society we are coming to be if we hear Rosenstock-Huessy's briefing us, with his saying:

Now the Great Society appeals to you and me to form forms for a third, unheard of, mentality. The Great Society which shall contain all the nations will receive no mental uplift by the threat of war. She cannot stay alive if the spirits of various times, inside of her, are not pitted against each other in all their energy. Lest we cease to compromise all our conflicts dispiritedly, we will have to go on destroying each other physically.⁶⁰

But how do we do this, how do we renew our minds to pursue peace while maintaining “a mental equivalent of war”?⁶¹ I believe our health would improve on all

⁵⁶ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben,” *Die Geburt der Tragödie Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I-IV Nachgelassene Schriften 1870-1873*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, my trans., (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), p. 252.

⁵⁸ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 215.

⁵⁹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, pp. 214, 215.

⁶⁰ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 234.

⁶¹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 234.

levels -- the personal, national, global and generational -- if we listened to the fruit of Rosenstock-Huessy's thoughts he bore by listening to Nietzsche rather than by busying ourselves trying to glean what Nietzsche has left us. None of us mad or sane need hear spoken in the footsteps of Nietzsche, "...after the old god has been assassinated, I am ready to rule the world..."⁶²

This is the case not only because of what Nietzsche said, but also because of from where we listen to him now. From "within the context of no context,"⁶³ we too must ask with George W.S. Trow, "And if there were more people on the face of the earth who understood Nietzsche in 1957 than there had been in 1890, what did that mean in the face of television - or rock and roll?"⁶⁴ What does another Ph.D. or published paper mean in the swirl and "the hullabaloo of all verbiage"⁶⁵ that loops and flips its way through our souls at a nervous daily nano-rate? We are splinters of ourselves within and fragmented in our relations with one another. Even if we would at once together cast down our lanterns in the marketplace, each of us would stumble about in a different darkness. Oh for the day when we might ask Trow's question, but about Rosenstock-Huessy rather than Nietzsche! Thankfully, perhaps those days are approaching.

However one comes to believe it, out of selfish ambition or from altruistic motives, we see plainly now that we are all members of one body, which is neither a religious body nor a political one. The urgency of our times as measured by the unsettled state of

⁶² Friedrich Nietzsche, "Fragments from a Shattering Mind," in *The Antichrist and Fragments from a Shattering Mind*, trans. by Otmar Lichtenwörther (Creation Books, 2002, 2007), p. 152.

⁶³ George W.S. Trow, "Within the Context of No Context," in *Within the Context of No Context* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997), p. 82. "The work of television is to establish false contexts and to chronicle the unraveling of existing contexts; finally, to establish the context of no-context and to chronicle it." We are overwhelmed by far more layers and facets of media and simulacra today than just television. This only exasperates our loss of the future, keeping us from seeing any "clear lines of advance." Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2000), p. xvi.

⁶⁴ George W.S. Trow, "Collapsing Dominant," in *Within the Context of No Context* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997), p. 28. However, as Trow makes clear elsewhere in "Collapsing Dominant," in the late 1950s the parents of children among the educated elite expected the next generation to continue having "respect for ancient rituals," although they were handed over to them already "shorn of their mystical or religious significance (p. 16)."

⁶⁵ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 4.

human affairs presses itself upon us. Rosenstock-Huessy confessed that the "crux" of his life had been "to break the impasse between the tradition of the Holy Ghost and the workings of the spirit of the times in the courage and faith of simple soldiers."⁶⁶ He was not merely speaking biographically. Rosenstock-Huessy realized we all suffer from the strain of fantasizing over peace and fearing the ravages of war. "Peace and war together represent the cross of reality to which we are nailed, changing natures in a changing world."⁶⁷ "Christian soldiers of the future," he said, "must wage war against the indifference and indolence, the coldness and barrenness, of human relations in the machine age."⁶⁸ Here is a task that only those acting out of love in behalf of our new neighbors in global society will dare risk. Pioneers of tomorrow's song of unity know that the "future does not consist of the extension of existing trends, nor of ideological opposition to them." They know, "The future must be created."⁶⁹ They know only those who cease to be dogmatic, who dare to despair, who open themselves up to the end of their thinking can do this. They know this requires an act of courage; indeed, an act of conversion from "self-conscious orthodoxy to simply believing"⁷⁰ God has put a life process in place through Christ that unfolds as the *Heilsgeschichte* for the world. This gift allows each of us to continue walking in the truth through "the unending stream of rhythmic speech,"⁷¹ which as the medium of the Holy Spirit has as its innermost impulse the yearning in all its ways and with all that is said to get us in touch with one another and connect us together.⁷²

Rosenstock-Huessy's alternative historiography is rich Christian thinking deserving further exploration with an aim to cultivate in the life of the next generation of our listeners the hearing of God's call for them to be elders within many, many local churches

⁶⁶ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. lvii.

⁶⁷ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 49.

⁶⁸ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 27.

⁶⁹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 33.

⁷⁰ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Heilkraft und Wahrheit*, p. 22.

⁷¹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts*, vol. 1, p. 284.

⁷² Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts*, vol. 1, p. 283.

– assemblies, temples, political parties, nationalities, tribes, ideologies, mosques, synagogues --, while being servants to the community of nations together living in one post-secular global society. No one chooses the land of his or her birth. We now know it is just as true that the choice is not ours of whether or not we witness the coming to life of the global community in which God calls us to live.

Rosenstock-Huessy was convinced that a crucial element of history as it really happens works in rhythm to an arrangement that does not rely upon encounter, association or influence among participants except by way of a preconditioning process inaugurated by Jesus Christ. His influence upon history through his life, death and resurrection in history allowed him to prepare connections between events that were separated by many years and generations. Rosenstock-Huessy believed that the Christian era “achieved something very different from the pagans” of the ancient world. The unique characteristic of the Christian era is the “inter-penetration” and “coexistence” of the basic forms of government and constitution we know since Aristotle as monarchy, aristocracy, democracy and dictatorship.⁷³ In the Christian era, “the world was redeemed from the curse of blind repetition.”⁷⁴ Because of Jesus coming into history we all live in one another’s lives and can adapt one another’s habits and choices of personhood. This is the hallmark quality of His unique transformation of speech, which manifested itself in the unsettled nature of the western experience. As a principle of historiography, Rosenstock-Huessy expressed this fullness of life experienced as “mutual dependence” as it pertains to the nations within a European context. “The peoples co-operate and co-exist, not merely geographically or mechanically, but morally, as one collective system of interplay and mutual dependence.”⁷⁵ This state of mutual dependence and moral interplay now defines our post-secular global living quarters.

The lifestyle we bequeath our children however in this new setting threatens unborn generations to suffer decadence, the suffocating condition of being trapped in the present, overwhelmed with options and without a calling to create the future. The style of life

⁷³ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution*, (Norwich, VT.: Argo Books, 1969), p. 455.

⁷⁴ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution*, p. 454.

⁷⁵ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution*, p. 455.

into which we have drawn them promotes an inflated premium upon displaying leisure, luxury and the second-hand, simulacrum kind of life. They wage a thousand battles a second against a myriad of distractions that keep them from seeing the future. They stand stunned and overrun by too many opportunities that hold them captive to the present. As their teachers and leaders we too easily become absorbed in our role as "hyenas"⁷⁶ roaming the past battlefields we have lodged in their minds. We too quickly before them bend the knee to the inertia⁷⁷ of competing dogmata -- scientific-socialist/progressivism, *sola scriptura*, American exceptionalism, *Magisterium*, The Market, or *Sharia* -- with an idolatrous air of nostalgia for days of bygone glory or contempt for the glory days won by others. We forget that we need to listen-speak-listen to one another with humility, one person to another, realizing that within the social reality in which we meet, none of us has the authority to speak for all the generations of humanity. We forget the Spirit is the one who bears witness through us, giving us the timing and forms with which we should speak the truth. We neglect the dying of our noble death of thought to breathe again with new life beyond the earlier ways we gave witness to truths we continue to hold dear. We fail our children by failing to demonstrate to them, "Man's dignity lies not in producing [or protecting, or promoting] private opinions but in timing public truth."⁷⁸ We are not called to abandon our respective grasps of truth, but we are called to learn how to live them out as speech and action in one another's lives for purposes of peace.

The timing of inter-penetrations among peoples occurs through episodes of change, which Rosenstock-Huessy calls "World Revolutions."⁷⁹ Revolutions can neither be planned nor announced. Revolutions are "explosions" which occur in the "realm of fact."⁸⁰ The timing of these revolutions works out of the dialectic of life between love and law. "Nature has no rest and has therefore no choice; man has. Human love

⁷⁶ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, "Teaching Too Late, Learning Too Early," in *I Am an Impure Thinker* (Argo Books, 2001), p. 95.

⁷⁷ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, "Teaching Too Late, Learning Too Early," p. 96.

⁷⁸ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, "Teaching Too Late, Learning Too Early," p. 95.

⁷⁹ See Chapter Eight, "Polybius, or, The Reproduction of Government," in *Out of Revolution* for thirty-two statements about the nature of these Revolutions, pp. 453-482.

⁸⁰ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution*, p. 128.

condenses an eternity into a drop in time's ocean. Human law can keep life unchanged for centuries."⁸¹ Thus in the world of human suffering and human joy, "Law and love, nature and creation, are in perpetual opposition and struggle with each other" in a way which is "inexplicable."⁸² Daily life, filled with the "regular and recurrent" is also an arena of "love, change, grace [and] surprise."⁸³ Rosenstock-Huessy fought against the "black-and-white logic" of the Enlightenment, which he condemned as "futile." He did so for the sake of nothing less than human salvation, seeking to join history and science, law and theology "into an indissoluble unit."⁸⁴ We cannot follow the single-note, siren call of the secular sciences because they "presume that the future is not created but caused, the past not looked upon as an authority but as mere tyrannical cultural lag, the mind not experienced as brother fellowship but as a blueprint, and the earth not experienced as waiting to be led to its perfection but as an objective obstacle to be crushed or exploited."⁸⁵ The Jesus of whom Rosenstock-Huessy spoke said, "Behold, I am making all things new (Revelation 21:5, ESV)." This "making" is the mystery of history, the creative and painful path of seeking and finding new says into the truth. It is revealed through bouts of rest, leisure we enjoy as freedom commemorated as proclamations of gratitude; through systems of law, every hard fought "therefore" won in this world by scientific work; and through revolutions of love, incited by the incessant "neverthelesses" among us. These men and women never give up giving themselves away to those who are yet to be born.

Rosenstock-Huessy urged us to reject "the dogmatic self-complacency" that dulls us into thinking man is a thing of nature "like anything else."⁸⁶ In place of this reductional "uniformity of man" explaining how Man works, he called us to join him in

⁸¹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution*, p. 185.

⁸² Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution*, p. 189.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution*, p. 193.

⁸⁵ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future or The Modern Mind Outrun* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 194.

⁸⁶ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Multiformality of Man* (Essex, VT: Argo Books, 2000), p. ii. From lectures originally given at the Lowell Institute in Boston in 1935.

being "convinced of the unity of mankind, of a common goal and destiny for all men," and therefore, "of an urgent need for restoring the humanities"⁸⁷ for learning how to live as men and women through the generations. As a Christian who wrestles with the dual dogmatism of theology and science I share his conviction. Therefore, as an exercise of faith I seek to contribute to this restoration project by building upon the embarrassing foundation of the Bible. The planetary translation of the Bible continues the process of restoring humankind's "unity in speech," which Rosenstock-Huessy confessed "was the pride and rallying cry of every total revolution in Europe and America." So convinced was he of this fact that he added, "So definitely is the revolutionary process of the last thousand years bound up with the unification of thought by the common possession of the Bible that every revolution passionately claimed a special section of Biblical history as the classical text for its own drama."⁸⁸ I confess our different pasts have joined us together to live in one post-Christian, post-secular global society. This reality calls me to open the Bible not only as revelation, but also as a meeting place for studies in the global humanities and as a corpus of literature to be examined – experimented upon -- for further developing the skills of translation and the tools of literary criticism. These two post-secular fields of speech together form a healthy diachronic arena for discussing our differences while exploring our common destiny.

How does a new science come into being? It becomes necessary beginning with the stirring of individual passions. Necessity may be the mother of invention, but fatigue is the father of change. Those who are tired of the way things are have a chance to create the timing of life beyond despair. "Bring a thing into fashion, create a fresh interest, make it timely, and, as a climax, let it be clear that it is inevitable and necessary -- and it will be incorporated into the lists of reality."⁸⁹

I believe we owe it to ourselves, to those who taught us and to our children to study further Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy's philosophy of history. We are not Elliot's Hollow

⁸⁷ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Multiformity of Man*, p. ii.

⁸⁸ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution*, p. 738.

⁸⁹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution*, p. 720.

Men. We have the hope it takes to live out commands of love, believing in the new meaning we bring to life through our speaking beyond derision and despair. We have the opportunity to die to and rise again from our subjective religious worldviews and our isolated political identities. We live in a new setting beyond what we had once been to become, if we choose to do so, what Rosenstock-Huessy called men and women of good will, those who believe in the unity of man. This is not an abstract faith based upon "scientific knowledge," but lived faith as "a mighty dangerous task,"⁹⁰ which we take up as this unity yet to come. It "is not demonstrable on paper, but a bold faith in a truth to be revealed, a common speech to burst forth, after much moaning and groaning."⁹¹ As an "invisible remnant" this group of men and women of good will "always overcome the cowardice of class and family, clan and race, the pretense of a better pedigree, of a better promise, for their own class."⁹² Should we join them, Rosenstock-Huessy believed, our struggle "creates a common language, a common spirit, a common rediscovery of prayer, praise, confession, [and] remission of sins."⁹³ He called us to join their ranks. If we do so, then like him, we will be changed.

⁹⁰ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, "Comments on the document by Emil Brunner on THE ETHICAL REALITY AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH," remarks in a letter addressed to Mr. Bennett, dated December 2, 1942, p. 7/8; read from *Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Collected Works on DVD*, Item number: 366, Reel number: 7.

⁹¹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, "Comments on the document by Emil Brunner on THE ETHICAL REALITY AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH," remarks in a letter addressed to Mr. Bennett, dated December 2, 1942, p. 8/8.

⁹² Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, "Comments on the document by Emil Brunner on THE ETHICAL REALITY AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH," remarks in a letter addressed to Mr. Bennett, dated December 2, 1942, p. 3/8.

⁹³ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, "Comments on the document by Emil Brunner on THE ETHICAL REALITY AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH," remarks in a letter addressed to Mr. Bennett, dated December 2, 1942, p. 7/8.