

"Our Raft in Time"

"World History, Church History, History of Society."

The man of our era looks into the welter of human forms from cave man to Cesar with the security of one (who) has been removed and the longing of one who has to renew them.

Standing on a raft, so to speak, we all bend over an abyss in which a whole marinorama of quavering lives is visible. And every one of our era's generations dares to dive down deeper and deeper into the secrets of the deep sea fauna and flora.

Man's history in our era is reconquest, the slow recuperation of his own full precedents, his own evolution.

Don't forget your standing on the raft, don't forget the diving./

II.

No talk on a Vermont farm where he now is, can convince him that his world history might be wrong, and that it does not make sense to escape from Vienna, for such an ideal. The only thing he approves of in farming is mink; since, with the war, you might be rich in a very short time.

The example occurs in Bernard, this very moment. So it is not far fetched. And it goes to show that a man's world may be anything from underworld to heaven. The world's history is a useless term unless you know what kind of world is acceptable to the historian.

The secret of Western Man's infatuation with World History lies in the fact, that his World by a most peculiar gadget, was kept from falling flat and becoming the kind of world the playboy adores. Their world, "Mundus", was the Non-Church, Non-religious History of all secular Powers within the horizon of the Church and Christianity. These Great Powers are pure world and - as we later shall see - a world produced by the Church out of all its antagonists and fellow actors, like the Roman / Empire, or The European Nations, or China and Mexico and Japan. The World as seen with the spirit of detachment which behoves a "critical" historian trained by Christendom - is the World of World History, not the World of the Night Club student. World History is based on the assumption that the historian has resigned from its temptations, himself, and that by freeing himself from his own lust for power, can describe the rotating revolutions, oppositions, constellations, of Spain and America and Russia etc., as though he were talking of astral bodies, of powers in the universe.

III.

This wonderful abstraction as though this world was not the home of the historian, but a globe to be studied like a planetarium, cleans out all lower worldliness. Only the highest powers, so to speak, attract the world historian. If you press him hard to tell you why the history of Charles V is more essentially a chapter in World / history

IV.

than the getting quick rich of our little friend Fuchs from Vienna, he will try to shake you off. Mr. van Loon has made a definite effort to tear the edifice of Power history down to its lowest possible level: on p. 198 you find him describe Charles V as though he were just one average individual of the age of the Reformation. He has inherited from tradition the fact that Charles V. belongs into world history, but he definitely has made him from one of the main actors into a mere contemporary. He gives away the secret behind "World"history, on p. 205: "Charles V, as the ruler of half the world, was forced to remain on pleasant terms with the Pope."

The Whole world, and the whole world in relation to the human spirit, is the topic of the World's history. Charles V, the ruler of half the world, accordingly, belongs into it as well as his battles with Pope and Protestants.

V. Under the afflation of the human spirit, the world ceased to be numbo jumbo of arbitrary powers, robber bands, clans, kingdoms, cities, and began to become a whole. This is the actual law followed implicitly by any historian / of the world, of some rank. But it had because of this bussiness of afflation, a never mentioned fact. The rivalry between Church history and World history was such that the secret dependency of this "whole" or "one" world, on a spiritual afflation by Christianity was absolutely suppressed. The "aspiration" of the World's historians - of which your new teachers are derivatives - was to be Humanists. They lectured on the 14 15 16 century with gusto, because there the "aspiration" of their own modern profession was born.

The very word "aspiration" is of a spontaneous tint. It is an old struggle between eros and agape, in our world.¹⁾ This struggle corresponds to the struggle between the aspirations of the world and the inspiration by the Spirit.

VI. The Greeks believed in Eros, the Church in Agape. What is the difference? The power which makes man love, can either he suppose / to be desire from the lower up to the beloved ideal, the good the true, God, Order, beauty. Then, the power is one of longing and of picturing the "higher" in the terms of which the lower's imagination is capable. Or, love might take us from above, bending over us graciously, and lifting us, if we only do not resist, out of our own little wits, and teaching us more about God, truth or beauty, than we with all our force of mind or will ever could presage.

1) A fine work in 2 volumes by the Swede (Anders Nygren, Den kristna kärlekstanken genom tiderna. Eros och agape. Stockholm: S.K.D. Vol. I, 1930; Vol. II, 1936. Agape and Eros. A Study of the Christian Idea of Love. Vol. I. Authorized translation by A.G. Herbert, London: S.P. C.K., 1932) exists on this topic. Try to get the English edition.

Eros: man gets on his toes. Agape: man is freed from standing on his own feet, he is lifted beyond himself. Eros: we lift us by our own bootstraps, mentally as well as physically. Agape, our will ceases to be needed. A more central power not located in ourselves, gets hold of us.

VII. Now the Greeks, especially Plato, were the priests of Eros, the Churches of Agape. The History of the Church is the history of the inspirations of man. The World History / is the story of Man's Aspirations. Nobody can doubt that nations and individuals do will a lot and do try to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, time and again. World history is the platonic rival to Church history. It implies that our aspirations if all combined, make sense in one whole, make as much sense as the history of the inspiration (which you usually hear quoted as history of Revelation, or as the Christian era). In this "as much sense as" the secret of all world history of the last 400 years stands revealed. It promised to reach the same level as the Christian era of the Church. It promises to be the true continuation of the history of the Church, with equally good meaning. World History is the Continuation of the History of the Inspiration into the aspirations of the secular Powers. /

VIII. In German, the secular powers are called States, in English preferably nations. World History is history of States and Nations rivaling with the Church. However, the rivalry must be made explicit, today, because we otherwise get Hitlerite textbooks and Japanese dream-books of history; and they are well under way. As the continuation of our era, the world's history is indeed important. Otherwise, it is not. The course on Renaissance is so central in American tradition because there, this continuation idea originated.

The rivalry between Church and World is still flamboyant at Harvard. It is absolutely dated. The Two World Wars have seen to that. If the world becomes one, their (=there) will soon be little to say of the World's warring powers. And the history of our era will take on a new colour, it will deal neither with Church nor with State but with a third element in human affairs. The history of Society will neither speak of churches nor of wars.

Manuscript of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, found at Four Wells, Norwich Vt.

8 pp. About 1945 I guess the date of writing.

Within the brackets of the ^{note} note is found an addition of the transcriber.

In the manuscript you find a line left open. The original has no title.

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