

CRUCIFORM CHARACTER OF HISTORY - 1967

Lectures 1-5 (Tippet Lectures)

Feränger notes

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Lecture 1

1. "We have at this moment in this world receded into a pre-Christian scheme of history." (p.5) ERH mentions Spengler and Toynbee as examples of historians who advocated historic cycles and constant progress, "the upward spiral" (never retrogression, only advance), Benedetto Croce who ERH calls "a new Hegel," and John Dewey believed in spirals theories, which ERH eschewed. "People were back to paganism...The ordinary human mind is pagan." (p.5)

Today there are advocates promoting the idea that various cultures should disappear, e.g. the Chinese, Jews, Serbs. Once we cannot accept certain peoples or cultures on earth, ERH asserts, we are back to paganism, which is a philosophy of chaos. The cyclical theory of history creates chaos. "Today the cyclical doctrine of history is taught in nine-tenths of our schools." (p.6)

2. These ideas come from philosophies of natural science, however "...no human being has ever lived in this manner." (p.7) This is a false doctrine, which, with any close examination, would belie reality. ERH claims that the pagans "stole history," and the fault lies with the Christians and all of us who were too timid or too silent, and thus allowed ourselves to be dominated.

3. I don't look at things...I am looked on by my creator. He looks at me and says "What a fool you are." It is more difficult to see ourselves in the middle of history and take responsibility for creating it. **THUS, IT IS ALWAYS EASIER FOR ALL OF US TO IMAGINE THAT WE ARE OUTSIDE OF EVENTS.** (p.8)

4.In sum the two opposing forces are 1) those who say that one cannot understand history unless one is objectively outside it, and 2) those who maintain that one cannot understand unless one sees themselves as inside, as part of events. THIS IS ESSENTIALLY THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE, or decision! That is to say, taking responsibility for the state of society.

5.Man is defined by his passions, not by his brain (logic), and "...the result a the world which is created by these passions. And it is a very mixed world, half diabolical, and half divine." Life is very risky! Old and new ways are no criteria for decision-making in themselves. We must learn to take responsibility for the state of society.

6.Scientific history assumes that the past and present determine the future. Cruciform history assumes the opposite, that the future determines the present (as well as what should be carried on from the past). Of course, we do not change past events, but we do reinterpret it as new experience reveals its lesson. Scientific history, is oriented only toward the concrete reality, it focuses only on physical cause/effect. Cruciform history assume the value of revelation, of our ability to create a better world (than living by the laws of the jungle).

...history is only that event which you have dreaded, expected, hoped for, which you then have seen -- helped bring about, and which at the end is there, and you have to cope with it, because it is your own doing. (p.11)

[RF - Rosenstock-Huessy interprets religion as a power within us to risk change, and to risk taking responsibility for something requires maximum fortitude. This power derives from the Holy Spirit. Thus interpreted, the nature of religion is universal and analogous to Christianity. History is the source of evidence for truth - seeking truth is divine.]

History is our power to create a future. "...without Easter, you cannot understand Pentecost...If you cannot delve into this event at the moment in which it hadn't yet happened, you will never understand Christianity." (p.12) [RF - I assume this means, history not only tells us what happened, but how it came to happen and that is valuable insight for beginning new movements.]

7.The future cannot be derived precisely from the past, because our dreams can (indeed should) change the present. One can therefore create some modicum of order in one's life by acting on the notion that the future governs interpretation of the past and action in the present!

8.IN ORDER FOR MANKIND TO BE CREATIVE, TO CREATE PEACE AND GOOD WILL, MAN MUST BE GOVERNED BY HIS DREAM AND ACTION ON THEM FOR A BETTER COMMUNITY IN THE FUTURE. So the notion of past should be replaced by the term "beginning," and the future, by "the end" of some phase, or epic.

Lecture 2

1.Progress is now interpreted to mean more and bigger material things. The content of the Christian message is to rise above this "fall of man." "...our Lord entered the world to heal

fallen man from his constant regress, from his constant cycles, from his constant superstitions that something had to be done tomorrow, because it had been done yesterday; that (in the US) the South cannot give up segregation as a token that they were not defeated." (p.6) In other words, Christianity was necessary to establish a set of rules by which "progress" toward a peaceful community could be created.

2.Given that man is half animal and half potentially divine, the Christian notion of progress is that man may fall "less profoundly." (p.8) It relates to man's relation to the divinity. When man realizes that he is responsible for the collective sin, that he is daily crucified, that all humankind is his brother and sister; this is progress.

3.Progress is the ability to move in the direction of concluding conditions by which we can live in peace with others, (especially ones "in-laws"). "...suffering is the only source of wisdom, and not my brain here." (p.14)

Lecture - 3

1.MAN MUST LIVE IN THREE GENERATIONS AT ONCE. Thus the title of this lecture: "Love, hope and faith." Love is practiced in the present, hope is for return of certain things from the past and faith must empower one toward action to create a better future.

2.In the 4 gospels that describe the message, meaning, and heritage of Jesus, hope is not mentioned. Jesus was hope-less in this sense, he lived on faith. With hope, one knows what is worth hoping for, bigger, better, a return to what was good about the past.

Faith grows from despair, where there is nothing to hope for it is the amount of expectation to know things not now known, of being led onto new ways, we are open to being told, to being informed, to being led into His (God's) world. SO FAITH IS OUR CONNECTION WITH THE CREATIVE PROCESS OF THE FUTURE. THE FUTURE IS EMBEDDED IN OUR HEARTS BY FAITH. Hope connects us with what we have experienced. (p.3)

3.Christianity is not the Judeo-Christian traditions. It's the only truth. (p.5) Modern theology books omit the notion that hope isn't in any of the 4 gospels. "Lord of creation has incarnated." (p.5) He was incarnated because he embraced 3 generations, the future, present and beginnings (past). Hope holds onto beginnings. The true stature of man is that he belongs to and holds 3 generations at all times.

4. Human beings have no problems, and are no problems, but they are creatures, unfinished creatures. And that's much nicer than to be a problem,...this unfinished creature is now responsible for the harmony of these three great branches of the outstretched cross over our heads, of the divine. This cross is stretched out backward by our hopes, by which we retain the memory of things past. It is stretched forward by our faith. It allows the Creator to enter quite a

new page in His book of His creation. And the love holds the two together, as in the case where the parents are asked to agree to the innovation that this girl now has a right to call this wicked man her husband. (p.6)

Lecture 4

1.The future beckons and can be grasped only by faith and willingness to be open to the possibilities of being transformed. This lecture addresses this need to change, and thus its name, "Between Halloween and Labor Day."

2.The problem is that for this 3rd millennium we must change and in order to change we must be freed from the past (1,000 years.)

We are all "nailed to a cross" metaphorically speaking, between the past and the future, in the present. The "gallows beam" of the cross symbolizes this dilemma. Winston Churchill said, "Everyman is nailed either to a cross of action or to a cross of thought."

3.History is the recalling of the past that is capable of allowing us to change, and anticipating a new future. We must admit that what was once future (an expectation), became a past, then was sanctified by the next generation (our grandchildren). Only thus can there be progress and peace.

4.What we should learn from war is to sanctify and keep the memory of the soldiers who died, because they died for a cause. If the cause was worth fighting for, it (history) means that we too might be called upon to fight. History reminds us what is important. It places us in time. WE KEEP ALIVE THE MEMORY OF SACRIFICE, BY WHICH THE WORLD IS MADE POSSIBLE. The Gospels represent the story of Jesus, what he sacrificed for, and why he died.

5.For mankind, history is more important than the natural sciences because it tells us what is important, and what is important is told to us by our heart. The direction of that knowledge changes, depending upon one's present insights and dreams:

...the crucial form. Only in the Cross has man found a form in which the directions -- changes, in which one thing is true, although the opposite is true, too. (p.9)

(the heart, and the term "although") They cross out the tendency, the trend, the statistically probable, the, the recommendation, the reasonable, the sober. ..although reason tells you you shouldn't, - you do it. That's worth doing. Nothing in life is alive, or is human, that is not able to defy some natural causes, some natural reasons. (p.10)

6.If mankind on this earth is to grow the rules to guide his social values, he must be capable of resisting the principles of physics, the principles that apply to dead things.

...unless you have this power to resist all the highways of the world, wide as they are,

convenient as they are...making you as welcome as they do...you are not borne by the spirit. You are not a second-born human being. And this old rule that man has to be born twice is unfortunately simply true, although the churches have forgotten it. (p.11)

[RF - Obviously, he means the term "born again" differently from the present-day Christian fundamentalists]

7.Christianity did not begin with Christ. The willingness to sacrifice was present in all pagan tribes, "Otherwise there would be no mankind alive today." The meaning of the cross is that when one sacrifices, one belongs to the ages. (p.16) [RF - In another essay ERH called the birth of Christ, "The center of history." I assume the meaning of this statement was that, these universal principles, while practiced before, had not been articulated.]

Lecture 5

1.The thrust of this final lecture seems to belie statements ERH makes elsewhere, to wit that the "Cross of Reality" is not rooted in religion. Here he seems to make the point that IT IS INDEED SO ROOTED. That is, that we live in multiple times and multiple places, that we observe events as "inside them," or outside (as objective observers). And that the nature of these times and places is not caused only by natural events, but also decided by participants in the community. That an old social practice may be changed. The meaning of events, past and present, is constantly fought over on the battle field. - the dignity of a nation for instance. [RF, have we not just witnessed this in WW I and II, and in Serbia/Bosnia today?] This, ERH asserts is what William James means in his essay THE MORAL EQUIVALENT OF WAR. In war then, meaning is decided!

What is now, and what has been cannot be known. It can only be decided. (p.3)

The first few pages of this lecture are eloquent statements to this effect. And later...

...the superior light of the man who went to the Cross without complaint in order to elucidate that on this earth, without the gallows beams (of these types of decisions) on his back, man could not live as he was meant to live: in peace with the past and future. (p.10)

2.It is the weakness of these times that the notion of multiple times and spaces is not understood, and therefore we seem to lack references points for evaluating our experience.

So this I think explains our growing neglect, or our decreasing understanding of the mystery of times. Take the relation between the generations. The hurry with which we move through time makes it for the young man quite feasible to forget the greatest riddle of mankind is the peace between fathers and sons, and grandsons, and how this should be obtained or created that a grandson is even patient to continue what his father and grandfather have started. (p.4)

3.This then reflects the riddle of speech, that in order for the future generations to continue what

must be continued, they must understand what we say today. And therefore...

This is the riddle of speech, that the speech is a flow, is a stream, a river that must fertilize and wet all the banks of the river, whenever the water touches the ground. Every foot of this riverbank is a year of mankind. And the river, of course, must connect these various decades, years, centuries. And he must not form puddles, and where every puddle is left alone to itself.... (p.5)

4. In sum, history has amply demonstrated changes in direction that were necessary at a particular point in time; when some emphasis of action was no longer needed. There was a time when it was no longer necessary to be martyred professing the love of Jesus. There was a time when the emphasis on the "church" needed to be changed to an exploration of the earth, the result of which was a rise in science and technology. And ERH admonishes us that the present challenge is to learn to regenerate society.

At this moment, where the Great Society knocks at the door, we must make peace with people of other creeds, with people of other races, with people certainly of other idioms, and other religions. (p.11)

Cruciform Character of History - 1967 - Review

This is a transcript of the Tippett lectures delivered by Rosenstock-Huessy at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. Their focus was to differentiate scientific (or cyclical) history, which is how all of us were commonly educated in school, from "cruciform history." The difference is crucial to our survival and growth toward peace in the world. Scientific history puts mankind outside events, inferring what will happen in the future, in spite of our efforts. Cruciform history puts mankind inside events, and is based on mankind taking responsibility for creating a future guided by his dreams. Having laid out this issue the body of the lectures indicates specific examples of how cruciform history can be fruitful. This essay also describes a fundamental building block for the author's views on the future of Christianity.

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