



The Christian Historiographical Revolution Notes and Questions
Loss of Transcendence
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Lesson 3

The Christian historiographical revolution means the Christian interpretation of history. Roman history begins with the founding of Rome. Christian history begins with the reality of God. Christians therefore were indifferent to the 1000 year celebration of Rome as the eternal city. Christian history is about the personal experience of the imminence of God's transcendence and how universal His presence is for all of us. It is about the experience of God's appearance to Moses' in a burning bush, or to Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus, or to the early Fathers' experience in the desert, or to your own experience of His presence. Christian history begins with conversions that do not cease until the "I Am" is seen as He is, and we see ourselves in His presence as He foresaw before we were born and what he wishes us to become in His Kingdom.

Session 3, Question 1: What recollection do you have of your first conversion, and were there more than one? Does the conversion seem to confirm what was already there? Evagrius Ponticus (345-399 A.D.) asserted that faith shows up in the heart before the mind is self-aware of having it (Hebrews 11:1, Mark 12:41-44, Luke 15:8).

One of the consequences of persecution against early Christians is they experienced a declining hope for survival with an increasing hope for the Kingdom of God. If you are going to get killed tomorrow in the arena, what do you feel? You develop an increased sensitivity towards sensing a heavenly destination. And so what followed is the Church became millenarian. It began to speculate on the 1,000 years of bliss that lies ahead. It contrasted with the celebration of 1,000 years of Roman history. The Christian hope is in continuity after death that completes our identity, an identity that is developed in this life and revealed in the next as living forever.

Session 3, Question 2: After death what identity do you think might be revealed to you in the world to come? Are there any God-given traits in yourself that have begun to take shape?

Dr. Houston sees the resurrection of his new self being filled by his personal experiences of the immanence of God's transcendence. Every day he receives another foretaste of his new self that he discovers in the presence of Christ, while his old self is being replaced, dying away to make way for the new wine skin (Mat. 9:14-17, Mark 2:18-22, Luke 5:33-39) that is able to be filled by the reflection of the wonders and splendours of seeing God as He is (1 John 3:2). Every day he lives knowing death may come next week, while sensing a thin veil of continuity between this life and the next where discontinuity no longer exists between the past and future life.

Session 3, Question 3: How do you experience your own personal change from your old self to your new self? Are you the same as you were ten years ago? Have you grown in wisdom?

A second century heresy that confronted the Early Fathers was the Marcion heresy. Marcion believed the morals of the Old Testament are not the morals of the New Testament. He sees an evil God having written the Old Testament and a good God the New Testament. His heresy has been haunting the Church for centuries and continues to haunt it today. Such dualism illustrates a misunderstanding of the personal continuity of God who adapts to circumstances in the Old and New Testaments, and who continues to adapt to us today. We see ourselves in the narratives of the past because we share with our forefathers' a personal experience of the reality of God. We are not sharing the same cultures or the same geopolitical conflicts, which require different responses according to the times.

Prophecy and typology [1] are yet other ways we see the past speaking to us. It is evidence of divine sovereign rule over all time. Christians therefore have far more empathy for acknowledging truth in the history of other people's personal experiences than Classical and secular historians have ever been able to acknowledge. Christians like Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Augustine can all acknowledge truth claims of Socrates and Plato, even though these Greek philosophers did not know

when their truth claims were pointing to Christ. Today we can acknowledge truth claims from the renowned physicist, mathematician, and self-proclaimed atheist Roger Penrose. Penrose asserts that the missing link to understand the nature of matter in quantum physics is consciousness. Well, Christian empathy would say, *“Penrose is unaware that he is striving towards giving the physical explanation of the miracles of Christ, who is the Lord of matter and whose consciousness rules over its properties.”*

Session 3, Question 4: How do you see the continuity from the Old Testament into the New Testament, and from the New Testament into your personal experiences today?

The Pax Romana, the peace of Rome, the search for primal harmony by the emperors, the search for peace recognizable even in paintings of prehistoric cave dwellers, was acknowledged by Christians as anticipation of the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7). It is a longing for peace far greater than the Roman military could ever give the empire. After witnessing the fall of Rome, it is Augustine, through his book the City of God, who guides Roman longing towards the peace that can only be found in the heavenly city (Rev. 21:2). The earthly city of Rome is in disjunction with the heavenly city due to a mistaken priority. You cannot define relations between the sacred and the profane when you rely on human time. The experience of the one will conflict with the other. The chronology of what exists inside time will conflict with what exists outside of time. There is a gulf between them. One must live with the understanding that the transcendence of divine chronology takes precedence. Giving priority to the chronology of divine time is how Augustine restores the unity of continuity between what exist in time with what exists outside of it. The fallacy of the moral dualism between Old and New Testament in the Marcion heresy is exposed when the continuity and growth of human development between the Old and New is understood.

Session 3, Question 5: How do you reconcile being in the world of time when Jesus reveals we are in the world but not of the world (John 17:14-16)? Why is it that divine chronology of time takes precedence?

Notes:

[1] Typology in Christian theology and Biblical exegesis are types depicted in the Old Testament narratives that prefigure and foretell the character of Christ in the New Testament.