Tillich Presents ‘Theology Of History’ At Lectures

By MARY ANNE BOONE

In a series of three public lectures last week Dr. Paul Tillich presented his Theology of History. The lectures divided the topic into Historical Dimensions of Reality, Dynamics of History, and Historical Time and the “End” of Time.

In the first lecture Dr. Tillich cited four qualities which distinguish human history from any other development: man’s progress with intention and purpose, his character of freedom, the production of new events that are always unique in themselves, and the character of significance in each individual event with which human history deals.

DR. TILLICH SPOKE out against the ideals of a classless society and universal peace and justice which would cost man his freedom and sent him toward a state of “animal blessedness.” In this state not only history but man would come to an end.

The second lecture was concerned with the movement rather than the structure of history. Both contingency and necessity are always present in every historical event. If necessity predominates, we have an historical trend. If contingency predominates, we have historical chance. In every trend there is also a subordinate element of chance, and this prevents the establishment of historical laws. Dr. Tillich sees the period of the Cold War as under the predominance of necessity. However there are chances to avoid the dehumanization toward which we seem to be heading if someone takes them.

THE MOVEMENT OF life from self-identity to self-alteration and back to self-identity is the basic structure of all life. Where the life drive starts a new stage beyond conflict, then we have a dialectical process. A mistake is often made in trying to categorize history as Hegel did. Dr. Tillich emphasized that only that which is eternal can see the whole of the temporal.

He stated that the concept of progress cannot be applied where individual freedom is decisive and (Continued on Page 5)
where something qualitatively unique is in itself fulfilled. The concept of progress cannot be applied to moral acts themselves or to religion. Christianity overcame the scheme of progress in one moment which was not conditioned by what happened before or after but had a unique quality.

"History is the existential question and the Kingdom of God is the symbol which answers it—but only if the one who asks it understands the question," Dr. Tillich stated in his last lecture. The symbol of the Kingdom is now too often used in the connotation of a static heaven and must be reinterpreted as a dynamic power which is the judge of all other powers and also the Church.

THE KINGDOM HAS four connotations: political, the Old-Testament rule of Yahweh; social, peace and justice of God; personalistic, eternal meaning to an individual person; and universality, fulfillment of life under all expressions.

Dr. Tillich said that prayer, as often used, has lost its essential purpose of elevation of the centered self into the divine spirit. Whether or not the manifest content of the prayer is fulfilled doesn’t matter. He rejects the use of prayer as a magic influence.