

Eugen Rosenstock's "Life, Teaching and Influence" Raymond Huessy

My grandfather maintained that the difference between the un-educated and the educated is that the un-educated read books in translation and the educated translate books; I must confess to existing in an amphibious state, but in the hope that my inability to read most of the founding documents of our faith in the original is in some small way counter-balanced by my daring to translate his work.

It is a quixotic undertaking, an undertaking fueled by the simple fact that much of what he had to say is inaccessible in English, or needs to be strained out of the great bulk of the lectures; how quixotic my task has been is best shown by the fact that I decided, ten years ago, to translate *all* of *The Transformation of the Word of God into the Speech of Mankind*, in spite of the fact that *Fruit of Lips*, which comprises the bulk of the book, exists in English. A look at Marion Battles' loving edition of *Fruit of Lips* will perhaps explain why the undertaking is merely quixotic and not demented: ERH's most readable English works were written with an outside eye performing some of the roles of editor, and I hope that it is no dishonor to the author if I tread in the footsteps of Henry Greene and George Morgan, although in consideration of those attending this conference, I omit *Fruit of Lips* from this edition. [Those interested in a second version of it can give me their addresses.] That leaves a brief introduction and "IXθYC: Life, Teaching and Influence", an essay that I first met as a chapter of *The Age of the Church*.

So the following is a "re-issue" of a ten-year-old translation, and an invitation to argue against my conviction that the essay "IXθYC" is the most likely spine of ERH's whole life and work. I once likened Rosenstock-Huessy scholars to the blind men discovering the elephant and each describing the piece he happened to seize as though it were the whole; here I proclaim what I believe to be the heart of the elephant, however much some may say that I am still only holding on to my own little piece of the animal after all.

I first read "IXθYC" twenty-eight years ago; I first spoke of my grandfather's work in Waterloo twenty years ago, and spoke in response to his collaboration with Joseph Wittig on *The Age of the Church*. As I said then, it was my acquaintance with Wittig that gave me the courage to tackle ERH. Wittig wrote in *Höregott* is that ERH was the one person who actually *believed* that "with God

nothing is impossible" enough to act on it, as the documents of the "Wittig affair" report. I submit that this unquestioning acceptance of the authority of scripture, in this case Gabriel's words to Mary, is the hallmark of my grandfather's work. In *Fruit of Lips* he declares it a "post-critical" acceptance of scriptural authority, an acceptance that opens up new paths of thought and action because the Gospels become one long lesson in the necessary steps of incarnation, the need that Dietrich Bonhoeffer saw in every historical hour for action taken in conscience.

So ERH is not alone in his response. He himself recognized Abelard, Paracelsus, and St.-Simon as his elder brothers, and he had contemporary if distant cousins in Bonhoeffer, Dorothy Day, William Stringfellow, and many others whom he might or might not have recognized as kin; all of them blazed new paths in their attempts to live out the truth of the Gospel. You do not need to have lived in the Catholic Worker houses yourself to see that the radical option for the poor was lived out in lower Manhattan a generation before liberation theology; you do not need to agree with William Stringfellow about racism in America [and ERH, apparently, did not] to see that his vision of America as Babylon [rather than the New Jerusalem it would have us think it] finds persuasive evidence in the horrors of the wars fought simultaneously in Vietnam and in our society.

What astounds me in "IXθYC", aside from having been written in or before 1927, is the breathtaking sweep of ERH's position: he *presupposes* that what the Gospel says is true, that Church tradition can be taken at face value, and therefore expects the truths of the Gospel to be visible and borne out by every aspect of our lives, and not only in our time, but in the life of the tribes and empires as much as in the Christian era. The difference between the ancient times and ours is that we have been made explicitly aware of those truths by the life, teaching, and influence of Christ.

In spite of all recent events that seem to prove once and for all the poisonous power of ideology and the indwelling germs of death that power contains, we continue to live in a time of ideological division. One of the few original thoughts I could formulate for an adult-ed course on "Time and Eternity", in a doomed attempt to re-phrase ERH's teaching of the times for a modern audience, was that: (a) heresy adds and subtracts, and (b) ideology divides and multiplies.

In the churches today, for example, there are those who accept scriptural authority and fight all change, and those for whom the necessary change is everything, and scripture is an impediment and a stumbling block, and not many voices in between. Socialist thought, which ERH referred to in the 20's both as "the last poisonous flower of German idealism" and "the dictatorship of theory over the

proletariat", runs rampant in the US, the supposed proud victor in the Cold War. In our public schools for example: in the organizational mania and the daily flood of propaganda that make them a travesty of education, in the demands on teachers to take on more and more of the responsibilities that parents have simply abdicated. As a glance at any budget will tell you, schools have replaced all other factors as the hubs of our suburbs, and all community life in the US is suburbanized, whether it is in Times Square or former farming communities. (Our little town green has mysteriously become the school's property; no one can tell me when it happened, but the transfer of power was sealed with the installation of the enlarged school's leech-field below the surface.) In the sterile debate over our schools, the past is apotheosized on the one hand, and untested theories are passed off as truth on the other. But such divisions run through every other social space our society has to offer, and it runs deep.

"IXΘYC" opens up a third way, one in which gratitude for a living tradition leads to the exploration of new paths in the spirit of tradition. In it we hear an answer to Wittig's call for a church that could include the life of adult men [now, a lifetime later, so clearly the life of adult women as well], the public life of people whose reflection bears fruit in action. "IXΘYC" makes clear that those paths issue by necessity in the politicalCa true "imitation of Christ" requires the thinker to act on his insight. And there I think you see the fruit of ERH's early experience and his program for future action, whether in Waldenburg or Tunbridge. I look forward to your responses.

[**Note:** I have accepted the inevitability of translating the German verb "wirken" with its remarkable noun "Wirkung" as "influence", though "influence" lacks the connotation of action being taken and a more accurate translation that could still employ one word would be "effect". In truth, my heart is in the English cognate "working", in the way that we still speak of yeast "working" in bread dough. You will notice that I broke down and eventually snuck "working" back in, but all it proves is that a divided heart eventually confuses the head.... I have wrestled with the wonderful word "Mensch" and find that I cannot render it as "person" or the noun "human"; perhaps our better half will acknowledge that I act in the tradition of "good will towards men", which clearly included all mortals. I welcome amendments to the text.]

IN THE CROSS OF REALITY (from *Soziologie*)

All men kill, because to live they must seize other living things, and all men die. So nothing that happens could become history if there were no cure for death. The history of mankind is composed on one theme alone: how does love become stronger than death? The scores of this composition, the histories, must be re-issued in as many editions as there are generations of men, for the composition is re-scored by the members of each generation whose love manages to overcome a death or a murder.

So history becomes a great song, Augustine's *carmen humanum*; in it every line, perhaps every note, is a lived human life. As soon and as often as the lines rhyme, love has once again become stronger than death. And so unrhymed coincidences, terrible accidents, worthless garbage, meaningless occurrences become the epoch-making crisis in which a long-tolerated withering-away is finally objectively viewed, caught in the cross-hairs, and thereby overcome.

This rhyming, this connecting, is man's office on earth. And so it has been from the very beginning., though it is only since Christ's birth have we actually known that our office was this and not some more limited future or descent. This retrospective knowledge has no trouble reading even into the peoples of pre-history this same desire with its endless attempts, and out of this same knowledge we also condemn ourselves, as soon as we neglect our earthly office. That is why much in our own era stares at us with pre-Christian eyes, and, likewise, why we must continue to walk many paths first trod in the ancient eons.

And so the relationship which rules in the Bible is reversed. For the Bible freed us from the Babel of the nations; it judges the peoples, and places salvation in the future. We however persuade ourselves of the good in our origins; and preserve much that runs counter to salvation in our own era. In any case the Bible does not set the standard for our selection of material. In making value judgments, however, we are nevertheless subject to its standard. For thanks to the Bible, our voyage into the times is only a voyage of reflection. Where the Bible weeds the beds of times primeval and proclaims full salvation, I am already at home in its time-reckoning and enjoy the prerogative which clearly contrasts the glory and nobility of primeval times and the rust spots on our newest developments.

Doctrine always works that way. In the middle of the current rushing forward, it looks back gratefully to that which is already established. It is the time-sacrifices of the ancients which discovered and established for us the full complement of times. Neither a world-state as the false heir of the second millennium, nor a world-church as the false heir of the first, may usurp these new

spaces. Where in our own midst, Arnold Toynbee naively conjures up the world-state, that ghastliest of tyrannies, I measure the whole decline and fall of the proudest spirits of our spiritual journey from the visible into the invisible, out of the old eon into the new. But society is the only singular I recognize for the future. In the generation spans of the society of the third millennium, the modern mania of “space and time” must fall, even though it was that mania which explored our world. The times are plural. Every timely human type has its own ways, its own space, its own ages. The more we recognize their full number, the further peace can spread. We become peaceful, quiet on our land and full of the resonance of our hour, when we preserve the inheritance which we have received: the full complement of the times.

And how do we preserve it? Anyone who speaks, is moved by the three needs which entangle all men: our spaceship earth is ruled by death, which our physicists seek to clothe in the more elegant word “gravity”. But as the earth's crew, we courageously challenge this ruler of all, by the power of the health of our bodies, the passion of our sex, and the gift of meaning through our death in sacrifice and surrender. For millennia we space-sailors have celebrated these three rites, thanks to which we take place as men, which is to say, we take our place as men: in initiation, in the dance orgies, and in killing the God or sacrificing the divine—in these three rites all earth's people appear as one in spirit. This threefold epiphany is our religion. Bragging about one body's strength, rejoicing in our sexual passion, triumphing in the power to die are the eternal rites of our planet. We meet these three rites, to which Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost are related, in all places and at all times. But this ABC—of ritual is revolting to most humanists; educated people only take notice of concepts.¹

Here I want only to remind you of that before we come to speak of the life, teaching and influence of our predecessor. In that way, the reader will step into the son of man's planetary place from the beginning.

¹ Luckily the educated are outgrowing this. I can cite Adolf Jensen's (+1965) insightful work “The Murdered Divinity”. My own work “Healing Power and Truth” (Stuttgart 1952) already hit upon this “catholic” foundation of human history and indicates it in its subtitle: “Concordance of political and cosmic time”.

IX0YC: Life, Teaching, and Influence

[from *Das Alter der Kirche/The Age of the Church*, 1927]

Ever since Albert Schweitzer discovered the vicious circle in which the research into Jesus' life had moved in the previous century and a half, the chasm separating natural, scientific biography of Jesus on the one hand and ecclesiastical, dogmatic Christology on the other, is inescapably clear. Strong in faith, Schweitzer disarmed both tendencies of theological research into the question of Jesus Christ by publishing his book and then departing to the Congo as a simple doctor. Liberal theology has had to abandon all hope of encompassing and comprehending not only the Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth but of Christ as well.² On the other hand, the son of man, the son of Mary, is in danger of shriveling away to a docetical construct, in which something divine occurs, but in which nothing human can be grasped and therefore nothing understandable can be recognized. The great mass of orthodox church-goers still see actual, completely incomprehensible, miracles in the virgin birth, the resurrection, and the outpouring of the spirit. The “educated” crowd, however they may have been “educated”, sees in Jesus an only too comprehensible human being. In either case our highest spiritual power is no longer aroused, for it is fired only by mysteries revealed and by puzzles to be solved.

This highest arousal of the spirit afflicts neither orthodox nor liberal souls with awe for the life and death of Jesus—that is why Albert Schweitzer was struck dumb and went to Africa to heal disease. It seems that we are no longer permitted to discover with the tools of our understanding, but only to follow, overwhelmed and therefore silent. The two parties (and actually more than that the two methods) run parallel and unreconciled in the soul of every theologian. The contradiction between faith and knowledge today gapes not between theology and philosophy, but rather within the theologian himself, who receives his benefice as the vassal of a dogmatic church and his thinking from historical research without assumptions.

And that creates a life-threatening tension. So it is understandable that the first reaction to it is simply to find a way around it, as Barth does in his *Letter to the Romans*, for example, and as the

² I refer to Bultmann's “Jesus”.

Barthians have done ever since. In his concrete biblicism he tried to checkmate both ecclesiastical belief and scientific biblical criticism by—moving his pieces to another chessboard altogether. Though a servant of the church, Barth is untroubled by the questions of Christ's church; though a scholar, he is untroubled by the demands of secular scholarship. Instead all is revealed to him at one moment of world history, in the split second of the crucifixion. The early history of Jesus (that is, his life) and the later history of Christ (that is, church history) become worthless junk. He imagines himself addressed vertically from heaven, alone beneath the cross, without natural pre-history or an effective history of salvation.

This balancing act on the head of a pin stuck between orthodoxy and liberalism, between historical knowledge and church theology, is an understandable reaction to the high-tension of our opposites. And our attempt cannot hope to compare with the demonic force of the Barthians' crucifixion sermon. But it comes out of the same situation.

This chapter hopes only to open as quietly as possible a door which is already ajar and which perhaps could lead us out of this unbearable tension and into the open—that is the purpose of the title in three parts, which is neither the result of a mere numerological game nor a choice made without a method. For the time being, of course, the purpose is negative in nature: we are attempting to escape the dreadful custom of paired nouns (spirit and nature, knowledge and faith)—the beloved fashion of straddling a matched pair of concepts joined in speech by an “and” and by the same token usually torn asunder in thought by an “or”. This antithesis rules all literature for educated people. All philosophical thought lives by the division of concepts. And through this division in conceptual contradistinction, a single philosophical observation produces opposites. Since theology has been sailing in the wake of philosophy for some time, it has used this philosophical attitude all too often itself.

Jesus and Christ, life and teaching of Jesus, Law and Love, are paired concepts which schools of thought love to set in opposition. Those pairs are much more than mere vocabulary within a single sentence. Indeed all research proceeds in the dialectic of these concepts. And beyond that, the doctrine of the cross and passion of the Lord on the one hand and the birth and life of Jesus of Nazareth on the other, are torn poles apart into separate schools and schools of thought, into parties of faith and life.

But there is another way of intellectually conceiving reality, and it avoids falling prey to the division generated by the dialectic of concepts. For it seeks not to paper over reality with an abstract paragraph like scholarly dialectic, but rather to discover reality in the first place. This discovering activity is the spirit's highest rational effort. But it is so neglected, that its method must be made clear with a far-flung example.

As long as trial-by-combat was the highest spiritual activity in Germanic tribal life, legal speech was also an activity of discovery, and one which had to be constantly re-conceived. And so it required a manner of speech which was open and opening rather than syllogistic. For example, the formulas of this legal language are fond of joining three points of view, three approaches, in one unified expression. Everyone recognizes these triphonies in the formulas in which the criminal is left to the mercy of the birds of the air, the beasts of the wild wood, and the fish of the waters.

The executioner proclaims the pyre with the formula: Your hair to the smoke, your body to the fire, and your soul to God. This formula seems particularly instructive in demonstrating the utter difference of that manner of speech and our current way of thinking. How would we formulate it today? Well, we would **think** of something. A modern poet might perhaps separate the hair and the body “poetically”; a modern prose writer might set body and soul in opposition. But the old formula doesn't separate death by fire dialectically as poet and prosifier might do today, but dramatically re-creates the acts of the process in which first smoke ruffles the hair, then fire consumes the body, and finally the soul returns to God. The process rolls by cinematically in a series of scenes. The scenes create it, and the thinker has no “overall concept” of death by fire. Just as a drama can no more be understood by its title alone, neither do the five acts of which it is made up merely split up the overall concept logically or dialectically, but rather each must be created and have a life of its own. So our three-way formula seeks not to mutilate unity, but rather to create a paradoxical unity. A blood-curse needs to be “lifted, set aside, and done away with” or “recalled, destroyed, and cast off”. “Day, time, and hour” were set. The legal sources—as the abstract jurist might say today—“divide” into continuing regulation, personal command, and the law of custom. However, the old formula speaks of the old origin, law, and glory of the land (it is ignorant of the concepts of legal sources). So it cannot divide it, but rather creates it in these three acts.

One might call the process “associative”. The important factor is that each individual

association is aimed toward the whole which it also helps to create. The whole rises dramatically out of the movements. Of course there may also be two or four movements. It is not the numbers 2 and 3 that differentiate this dramatic speaking in stages from logic's habit of splitting things into opposites, but the fact that the logical opposites represent fragments of a unit, fractions, subordinate clauses of a sentence; the movements and scenes of creative speech are not fragments, but are complete in themselves, areas with their own color value, whose polyphonic sound uncovers and reveals the law of the movements or scenes or words. All thought is afterthought, thought about a finished world. Any writer today if called on to turn over the body to the executioner and the soul to God, would derive the ideas of "body" and "soul" from a sort of conceptual warehouse where all the concepts imaginable are stored. He stands outside the world, in the world of culture, and resets its music anew as his own object. The creative speaker on the other hand is the mouth of an unfinished world, one which is becoming a word in him. So he can't reach into any storage chamber and pull out labeled objects, but is instead seized by the forces of this world, which he attempts to reconcile and mention by name.

All discovering thought like the preconceptual speech of law, whose power first discovers the spiritual world, happens in just the same way—and it is only for this that we had to make this apparent detour. We only used the example of creation of legal precedent, because we couldn't allow this type of thought to be dismissed as merely "poetic". This is no question of the luxury of art, but of the spiritual discovery of the world. So it is not surprising that the creative life of the Christian people had to make use of the same form of expression. The discovery of a new divine world of the soul cannot be comprehended by the division of words, but only by the act-like arrangement of points of view. At the very threshold of the church the trinitarian formula of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bars the way to the creative life inside against the invasion of the philosophical way of thinking. The three persons of the Godhead mock any effort to understand them as fractions of God. Reason always tends toward this kind of impoverishment, and thinking has been only too eager to reconceive the three breaths of the creed as subordinate clauses of the overall concept "God". Unbelief scorns the trinity for the very reason that it is dead to the creative processes of the spirit. The linguistic secret of the three persons in one is no different from that of ancient German legal language. Here too a world is discovered rather than conceptualized; every person of the Godhead must be unveiled—the theologians say, revealed—with the full creativity of our soul's

spirit, just as the people in legal assembly had to “open” every legal act of its communal life and unfurl it in imagery. Nevertheless, in every act in which it thus experiences itself, the community is aware of its own presence as an undivided whole at every stage of the legal process.

In just the same way the Church knows that God makes himself real with each breath, with every act of faith. So on the one hand the short sessions of a county court, and on the other the world assizes of the triune God, are woven together out of fully living acts which are not fragments, but complete entities in themselves. If we are not completely off-base in interpreting the trinitarian formula, it is meant to represent the triumph of the grammar of time, of creation by speech, over the logic of the purely conceptual. If so, this may remain no mere conclusion, but must be turned immediately to treating the partial questions of theology, must be passed on by every believer, so to speak.

It is in this sense that we set the old formula IXΘYS (Jesus Messiah Son of God Redeemer) at the head of this chapter and added: “Life, Teaching and Influence”. It seems to us that we seriously harm our dealing with Jesus Christ as soon as we construct it dialectically on such dualisms as “Jesus and Christ”, life and death, “public ministry and cross”. Let us try a trinitarian formula instead, which instead of merely forcing us to establish contradictions, allows us to discover God breathing in and out.

The sterile dualism of “Jesus” and “Christ” finds its crassest expression in the way the division into opposites has affected our savior's teaching. No one, from any of the religious parties, seems able to decide whether his teaching belongs to Jesus' life or the passion and transfiguration of Christ. The Sermon on the Mount seems to many the crowning event of the natural spiritual life of the carpenter's son Jesus of Nazareth. The farewell speeches to the disciples appear to just as many as the revelation of the exalted Christ, *Kyrios*. And so the incision is made right through the middle of what matters most, his spiritual statements. One of these incisions is made so that we differentiate between what he told his disciples and what he told “the people”. But now and then he found true discipleship in the people, and encouraged it. Quite often his disciples were spiritually neither more open nor more mature than the people. The mystery of what he had to say cannot be deduced or divided solely on the basis of who was listening. The division of life and teaching—made by the pious and impious alike—arises as a necessary consequence of the unresolved use of the word “life”.

Life can only be set opposite teaching because the conjugation of life into spirit is not accounted for. Goethe's line "For life is love and the life of love is spirit" already points toward the conclusion that we must seek some other relation between life and spiritual expression, that we are dealing with life-forms and their metamorphoses, and not with contradictions. Goethe's verse is directly connected to the Christian doctrine of the spirit. It belongs to the very essence of IXΘYS in particular, that in it "life" and "teaching" reveal themselves as transformations of the same riddle.

Christianity assumes a turning-point in any person's life, or rather, it *inserts* such a turning point into each life. It smashes the generalization "life". The days of life cease to be fractions of a "whole" life, which proceeds uniformly from cradle to grave. A Christian's year is not made up of 365 individual days; a Christian's life is not made up of 70 individual years. The movement of life is separated into several creative acts. Before and after rebirth people live in different worlds. The soul ceases to live an "additive" life. It progresses in jolting steps, in creative acts.

Noone questions the central importance of rebirth. But very often this break is understood as the work of a moment. Conversion then is a short momentary event, where in reality it may take as long as five or ten years! And what's more, what conversion brings in its wake, the division of life into acts, is not given full weight. And yet conversion presupposes three discrete stages: the time before the turning point, the time of the turning point itself, and the time founded on the completed turn—all three proceed on different levels, and have their own internal laws. They may be interwoven: certain lines and threads of the old Adam are still bound up in the new. In some eddies and vortices the time of confession already rages beneath the surface of the child of nature. And within the time of crisis itself there are occasional glimpses of the golden background of the *vita nuova*. But it is precisely because these entanglements and overlappings occur, that it is important to recognize that these various levels of life are mutually incompatible. They may cross each other, overlap each other, but they can never actually mix. For they belong to different divine powers of the soul.

As far as the teaching is concerned, we have already indicated that a lot of territory was left unoccupied between the life of Jesus and the power of Christ, or has at most has been occupied as a frontier now by some, now by others. Right in the middle, between life and suffering, there remains a Something Else. There stands the spiritual asset spoken by this mouth: the treasure of his insights,

his spiritual view, everything that we know of Jesus' spiritual life only because he shared it with others as teaching. Religious doctrine speaks of the Savior's teaching and preaching, so we will accept that word for the act of spiritual reflection and vision. But the term "reflection" would also be acceptable. Whose teaching is it, Jesus' or Christ's? The key to undoing the crippling of our speech lies in the relation of his teaching backwards to Jesus' life on the one hand and forward to Christ's influence on the other. But our speech may be healed if Christ forbore to teach what we must learn anew each day from his continuing influence!

For even once he was publicly teaching, Jesus continued his inner life. That sets him apart from all Average Teachers. The usual person learns his little verse while young, and once he has acquired subordinates who have no choice but to listen, passes it on. The educated teacher does his research, makes some discovery, and then mounts the podium only to be transfixed there as the type of teacher who no longer goes on living; teaching rules him and squeezes the life out of him. At some point we stop moving and our previous life becomes the roof over our heads. We let the young follow in our footsteps and hope that they may catch up with us in time, but for them to be able to do that we must teach them what we have experienced. That is a law of nature and we cannot simply do away with it because we fear that we may turn to stone.

How can Jesus abolish the law? He wants to fulfill, not undo, what we must all undergo. And nevertheless we insist that *he* did not stop at any particular moment but lived on till the last moment, even though he already taught publicly. Behind the teaching and vision there is another stage, and the "*perfectus homo*" had to explore all the stages. It is true that by doing so he completely confused his listeners, for he was always one step ahead of what his listeners could perceive in him. When he still seemed to be the carpenter's son, he was already the teacher. When he was considered a rabbi, he was already a prophet. When they took him for a prophet, he was already the Messiah. When they finally took him for the King of the Jews, he was God's servant. And when they recognized him as God's servant, he had already become the crucified Son of God. He has a headstart, which he maintains to the end, and those who live with him can never catch up. He never stays put so that the others can catch up, and so they lose their breath. The hallmark of the so-called synoptic Gospels is that they are all still struggling to catch up and fail to see through the next-to-last stage from the last one. Jesus had galloped away from his physical disciples as well. The first generation of disciples was occupied with reconciling the contradictory stages which followed each other in such lightning

succession that the world could only see and remember one at a time. Only when they were done could John the Evangelist set his seal on a picture cleansed of all misunderstandings.

Whenever we learn, we are not yet full partners in life. The student of any doctrine remains in its power. John is the only evangelist who is both disciple and more-than-disciple of Him who taught him, and for that reason he can see the spirit of his teacher and the suffering of the one he loved as one and translate it as one. Let us take note: Jesus' public "effect" comes after his teaching.

This discovery has a complement in the opposite direction: How does Jesus' prior life relate to his teaching? We know nothing or almost nothing about his life. The shallow novels about "Jesus as a Youth", about his childhood or his wanderings, simply prove that we are only too aware of this ignorance. His natural life is passed on to us only in the form of the natural event of his birth and his parents' flight into Egypt for his sake. In other words, we can never know more about the natural man Jesus' experiences and way in life than is reflected in his teaching and vision. We said that even the mediocre teacher adds to his teaching what he has discovered and experienced himself. The spirit comes after life and grows out of it. Jesus' teaching must have come to him out of the experience of his earlier life. This earlier life, his "inner life", the development and formation of his life took place "beyond" all the outside world. We have this "beyond" only in the form of the sweet fruit of his teaching. We can only know the heavenly kingdom in his heart to which he bears witness by this his witness alone; we have no earlier stages which show how it came to him. All that remains "beyond"; and it is this "beyond" which makes the immature wax so enthusiastic, and the metaphysicians tell so many lies.

Conversely however, as soon as Jesus begins his ministry, we know him only through the effect he had on others, the effectiveness of his influence, his proving his worth in the outside world. As soon as we can see him he is "in this life"; what we know of his life is all a part of his cross. And in showing himself everywhere "in this life", the Christ in him starts and develops everywhere in him. Rabbi Jesus teaches us how to cross from the creaturely to spiritual life, but Jesus the Christ lives the other way around, coming from the spiritual into real life! Instead of a life of Jesus which remains unknown to us—we only know his effect as Christ, his life as chosen Son, his realization through his messianic office. ***All that remains of his earlier life is his teaching.*** The whole vegetative, natural

life is absorbed for us in the fruit of his teaching word, behind which its owner, the office-holder recedes like any other functionary. Jesus' teaching on the law and the prophets, on the Father and the Heavenly Kingdom, is the purified fruit of inner battles, enlightenment, instruction and experiences, the results of which have been fixed since his baptism in the Jordan, and so themselves lie far behind him. Bud and blossom are no longer visible in the fruit; it is only their quintessence. But the fruit forces us to presume that seed and blossom went before it—all natural life ripens to insight and wisdom. Jesus doesn't abolish the law of nature, he fulfills it. He really teaches what he has experienced. The perfect tense of this experience must be taken seriously: it preceded him! Human words come after an impression is made on us. Man may only and can only teach what is already behind him; our formulation in words limps along after the events. Man's thinking is *after*-thought! We can reflect only on that which has gone before, *quod factum est*. Jesus teaches what he has experienced as Jesus, that is for himself, a being in becoming and not yet binding on others, as a man turned inward. So as teacher he holds the prophetic office, is the teacher of Israel, the last prophet.

On the other hand, while he is teaching he leads the life of another character altogether, an official personage who lays claim to the power and authority to bind or cast off others: he is a man who decidedly embodies his calling. But his calling is not what one might expect based on his teachings. Because he teaches, he appears to be a professional teacher. But teaching is only the prerequisite of the effect he will have on others, which not a rabbi's. His teaching is not the essence of his office; he lives an office which has as yet no line in the budget of mankind's economy, but it is an office which he himself forms and invests with dignity.

And that is just how the Gospels formulate the effect he had on others. According to their view, it is not what he says, but when, where, to whom he says it that betrays the particular character of his function beyond mere teaching. The smallest feature has meaning in the process by which he is revealed. Here we are neither in the private life of a man nor in the intellectual life of a thinker. For where life can no longer play and change shape out of sight, there it has become rigid, irreversible action, “action” visible to the world. Embodiment is no longer an interior matter, but one of renunciation, one which requires the cooperation of the world. It is a political existence and is subject to the laws of politics.

The greatness of this public transformation lies in all the worldly facts, all the hard objective bits: that John baptizes him, that the disciples react, that Lazarus wakes from the dead, that Judas betrays him, that the Romans crucify him, that Joseph of Arimathea buries him. All these facts are not assignments for the biographer of his soul or the systematizer of his spirit, but for the historian of his activity and the effect he had on others.

His character as the son of God can only become believable because the outer world dovetails with his life. All these dispensations make reality of the picture that Jesus carried in himself of himself and the world. The obedient collaboration of all the worldly powers on his trail confirms him; there is nothing left for him to do himself but attract those powers to himself. The world grows, falls, rushes toward him, until it has laid him on the cross. He attracts and pulls it close only by waiting for it. There were and are beautiful lessons in wisdom in every nation. But the inner vision of God is only made believable when it's shown that the wise one had a right to such high thoughts. Not every one has the right to think high or bright things, or even to imagine daring and great things. *Thought obligates the thinker.*

But no one can simply live out what he has thought out, either. We cannot practice what we preach, much as the world demands it, at least not as the words are usually understood. Instead we can only go on living, adjusting our thoughts to the day; our life is changed by our spiritual vision, but life flows on, just as original and surprising as ever. It is true that it has left the path of mere coincidence and has been molded by the vision granted in the inner sanctum. Our life is melted down to be recast as the effect we have on others, our becoming recast into the exposure of the lasting man shaped under God's countenance. The truth granted in vision must prove itself. And teaching is only a small part, that part which can be formulated, of the truth which overwhelmed us in the temple and the inner sanctum of our life's re-creation.

So that is the place of Jesus' teaching, between the life of the unbaptized Jesus and the influence of the professing Christ. He teaches what he has experienced. On the one hand his teaching is a result, his success; his teaching is the fulfillment of his "former life". But his teaching changes from an effect to a cause, from a result to an advance post, from a total sum to the initial value of his life's equation. The fruit of the "facts" of his youth becomes the fundamental "factor" of his adult existence, which is based on this factor but at the same time surpasses it. Jesus' teaching smashes

the tablets of the law; what else makes a new law possible after this end beside the fresh start in the effect Christ had on others? Jesus' teaching directs the Christian in life, as Christ's influence directs the church in the political world.

The objection may be raised that Jesus also expressed and interpreted his life as Christ, and that is certainly true: life is not divided so schematically that one period contains nothing of the other periods. Jesus' experiences as Christ did indeed become words in his sentences as Christ to his disciples, in the farewell speeches, for example. But here is the sharp incision between teaching for those who learn and revelation for the apostles. Jesus' teaching the people and the disciples, insofar as they learn, is the fruit of his earlier life, which is why he speaks to his students and listeners of inner freedom, of the heart's secrets, and of heaven, for instance, hoping as a teacher that they might understand. But on the other hand he has to allow the disciples to share his life although he knows that they don't understand and that there is one among them who will betray him. He doesn't need them as hearers of his teaching, but as witnesses of his influence. He lets them take part in the mysteries of his "influence", of a man's dying to the world. His words to them on this subject, the increasingly surprising fate of the man of influence they take for a teacher, are not teaching, but evidence, confirmation, proofs, interpretations, and exposition of what they experience in him, and in the world; they are not instruction but drama.

Only with the help of his words to them can they share the experience of his *experimentum crucis*. Christ's words to his disciples bind the collaborators to the "laborator", the man of influence, the limbs to the head. Here the Word has a different mission than where pure doctrine is passed on from man to man, from preacher to flock, in heavenly commandments. The Word is not teaching, but mortar and bond from which creates a sphere of influence. And in this sphere of influence all those laws of which "Christian morality" supposedly knows nothing suddenly hold sway: sovereignty and service, office and severity, division and separation, silence and anger, command and falling away, worry and reflection. There is in all this no sin to the man of influence.

Christ's sphere of influence was built up by Jesus after he had taken care of his vision and his teaching. All his powers were now concentrated on making this sphere indestructible, but not to teach it. Developing a doctrine of Christ's "working" and the way he built his sphere of influence, in addition to Jesus' own teaching, was something only a disciple who had not physically heard Jesus

teaching could undertake. Of Paul it has rightly been said that he lived what Jesus taught, but taught what Christ lived. That is precisely what we have called Jesus' influence, his effect as Christ. And so the long-term prejudice against Paul the “theologian” is part and parcel of the modern excitement over the “life of Jesus”. For Paul is the witness to the fact that Jesus' early life has nothing to do with us, but that his teaching on the one hand, as the end of the law, and his influence on the other, as the beginning of a new order of things in the Church, have everything to do with us.

A man's early life, his existence as a naive child of the world, bears fruit in his spiritual yield as a kind of inner “spirit lamp”. Whatever bears fruit is without sin. Once we make spiritual atonement for our youthful sins, they are forgiven. The passions of flesh and blood are the indispensable food of insight; no one need be ashamed that he has “a past” as long as he plunged into it with all his heart.

The most important aspect of any spiritual truth is its ruthlessness toward its human holder, the purity of its vision, its self-denying truthfulness, and its spiritualizing effect on its confessors. The only important thing about any influence, however, is the extent to which its powers are consciously engaged, the extent to which it proves its worth in flesh and blood, and the extent to which it rightly and properly masters the material it is meant to mold. The three stages belong together.

It goes without saying that influence without spirit and without the heart's experience is empty; it is the appearance of fruit, where there was neither seed nor blossom. There are sprouts that wither, blossoms that remain unchanging, fruit like empty nuts. A wasted youth, pointless reflection, and hollow busy-ness are the fate of the poor devils who fail to overcome the three infernal princes: the senses, the mind, and controlling authority.

The boy awakens to youth so that his feelings may “be thought through” as thoughts; the youth ripens to manhood so that his thoughts may become deeds. If the youth does not eventually overcome his glorious squandering of self, if the academic consents to remain tangled in systems and analyses, the man who grows out of them one way or the other, and who must somehow deal with life and its myriad circumstances, will deal with them poorly, lamed as he is in soul and spirit. He fails to find himself carried forward by a fruitful sequence in the electrical circuit of boy-youth-man, and can only work mindlessly, helplessly, senselessly, keeping busy; with a stunted, curdled view of the world in his head and a squandered heart, and therefore unable to love where he must take

action, and unable to work out what he once saw in visions. Such a man is only outwardly adult and lacks all authority for the freedoms and decisions which every life influence requires. So any work men do which does not flow downhill from the highest life is dead and also goes to the devil.

Here is the sore spot of our existence. Both as individuals and as a people, we have forfeited the natural progression of life's stages. Healing them is the content of all revelation, for it seeks not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.

Jesus came to combat the sensitive enthusiasts in the world, for in him all excess of feeling ripens to clarity in his vision of God. He came to combat the Pharisees in the world, for he relinquishes his clear teaching once it begins to take effect. But he came on behalf of the sinners in the world, for he replaces all worldly activity without thought or feeling with the influence of what it was given him to see in the inner sanctum. The "sinner" looks for life in busy-ness; the man of influence knows that busy-ness is only death. He has lived. His life has been transfigured in his vision. If he looks back at life, it is no longer his life that he rediscovers. He has set sail from his life, steering a strange ship into the world, that is to say, back into another life and into the lives of others, to perfect their lives as well. He obeys his God and his calling. The end which he has already experienced once in his life, when he denied himself, draws him on. To truly effect this end with all his powers, that is man's part. Young life gushes forth without connections, rising boldly to the very firmament, meeting at last its own limitations. Oriented to the star that rose over it, destined to prove the worth of what it has viewed, it descends from the bright space of the spirit into life on earth and timeliness.

Whether the slope of this path is gentle or steep, it is always a path toward death. On this path a man forfeits his life. And this forfeiture of life, the gravitational pull of the goal seen in vision, which Cromwell called "dying by inches", is no "natural" life but indeed its opposite: influence as calling. We cannot live "supernaturally" in this life, we are not gods. But we can live out of the supernatural, and take life from the supernatural which confronted us in our act of vision and illumination, rebirth and change; and that means accepting a call and influence. Theologians' speech is often lame, insofar as it only mentions the natural and the supernatural and fails to address the healed influence of the person touched by the divine as a third act in the drama of life.

This "working in the call" is no "humbly walking with your God", but a return to walking

humbly; it is no longer only the individual answer to God, but at the same time taking responsibility for God before men, something which mere life in us neither knows nor needs to. Responsibility for God before men? This is where those laws of real life about which “Christian morality” knows so little come into being. This is where the doctrine of authority takes root. Adult humanity, the spheres of influence which must be founded in human heads and hearts, receive their authority from their founders’ divine power of attorney. The authority of a man of influence is constantly renewed out of his “early life” and its wholeheartedness. Puppets devalue any office they hold. An office can only stay alive as long as the holder lets his “former life” flow into his perception and his perception flow into his office, as long as the vocation remains the vessel in which the truth of his life is in a position to work itself out and prove its worth.

Authority is really authorship. Nothing happens without some person laying out his life along a path from earth to the sun and back to earth in such a way that others can follow it after him. Where such paths draw men to them, into them, after them, there is authority, there is heightened trailblazing. There the *via exaltata* of the trailblazer takes effect.

Almost no one completely misses his path in life. Almost everyone comes to some influence on some modest path of life. But when the world disintegrates completely into enthusiasts, Pharisees, and tax-collectors, when a people seems to consist only of a youth movement's feelings, intellectual orthodoxy, and political organization of labor relations, a modest path is no longer enough. For then the missing piece, the little fragment of life to which their path is still restricted, drags all those who have fallen prey to such partial activities, down into the hell of nothingness without influence. The lack of influence is the curse of the intellectual world, for example. Either it fails to force the world of deeds to cooperate, or youth in mutiny deprives those who would teach some needed knowledge of their listeners. The heart misses the spirit it was destined for. When that stream dries up, which once led from the creature in Bethlehem to the vision of God, from his highest vision in the desert to the influence in the midst of creation, dries up, God's mercy blazes a new trail for man. New authorities arise. New men are allowed to see the trailblazer's path. And in these new men the path and its stations are established, that path which is drawn from death and birth, and knows three stages between birth and death: life, teaching, and influence, and knows that each of these stages is ruled by a different order and connection. Different things are allowed to someone who merely lives than to someone who teaches. No, there are three different moralities and

sets of ethics. The “naive”, the merely living, obey forces which they have not chosen; they are free of all responsibility, they can make mistakes and detours as they need to. Others act for them, as when Mary and Joseph flee into Egypt for their son's sake; they obey a foreign law.

The teacher sets an example. “Christian morality” in its narrow sense applies most of all to him. Anyone who wants to draw others along after him must use spiritual means. He cannot ramble like Faust, ranging wide and always aspiring, nor take arms against a sea of troubles. He has come to his own limits, he sets himself apart from truth; so he must teach relatively “selflessly”. For vision bears fruit only to those who forget themselves. He is free to any end of knowledge, but unfree in his means.

The man who “works” his influence is quite different. The “worker” completes and achieves. He must resist the seductive lure of new goals and persevere wherever he finds himself. For “who perseveres in steadfast truth, will make the world conform”. And so he can choose his own means. If profligacy is the pride of youth, manhood is miserly and husbands his assets, knowing their place, and none but he can determine their use or answer for it.

Three human laws arise in place of “Christian morality”, all three of which we must honor as long as we draw breath. For where we love, we squander. Where we hope, we do not sow like one who teaches and devoutly fulfills his duties; where we hope, we plant and nurture our own sphere of influence like a garden with all the gardener's art. We live in three orders at once, and each is revealed in turn, even if only completely revealed in the course of our life. The commandments of love are different from those of faith. The hope of the gardener is different from that of the pious planter. The order of influence is the manly order of public life, is the hope of the people. It differs from teaching passed from mouth to mouth in the separated fields of thought and from the order which now applies. And different again is the circle of the loving community youthfully bound together and ordered without compulsion.

Time has a different meaning for the natural “man”, the visionary, and the “working” man, or man of influence. We must differentiate three time reckonings. The natural one dates by individual years, epochs, periods of growth and the self's development. Rightly so, for “he” lives from the outside in, influenced by the seasons as well as by his environment. Vision has no knowledge of time. An insight may take 80 years or a second; the muser knows nothing of time's external

deadlines. The “working” man only knows how much of the work at hand has to be finished on any particular day. Here time-spans of different lengths make no difference; an artful transposition of times makes sense. Jesus' death on the cross “means” the same as the second half of Goethe's works, as a time of “working”. In both, if in differing perfection, the way back each “working” man requires to become complete are different, though the length of former natural life is the same for each.

Now we have our hands on the key to the mystery, newly stirred up by the World War, of the difference between the “political” morality of the statesman as opposed to the morality of the private citizen. It is not that the state and the individual have different codes, but that the creator, the visionary, and the child of nature in us (in *each* of us, please note) must know what he is doing. As soon as the state and the individual are opposed to each other, you have to make Leviathan of the state, and the lowly Christian soul of the individual. The state is made absolute and set adrift without being ensouled by divine commandments. However, as soon as the statesman instead of the state apparatus is accorded his rightful place as the carrier of spiritual creation, he is none other than the man who must carry out what he is given to do and embody what he is called to do. “Reasons of state”, of pure interest, are placed in service to mission and calling, and may only work out these and their little measure of truth. So the mere politician's final hour is come; he forfeits his office as soon as idolatry of the state holds all acts of the state to be holy. We can only bear so much influence of political reasoning about the ends, as life and understanding are simultaneously at work in peoples and spirits; the three orders must all be equally powerful. Only where they mutually spur and challenge each other can the human divine trinity be fulfilled. The polemics of Machiavellian *Realpolitik* and ethical fanaticism are both so unappealing because they seek the divine in men in mere dictatorial imposition on the one hand, and in mere bourgeois morality on the other. That is why the full miracle of the trinity had to take on personality in one man, so that the division of man into a diabolical giant and a divine dwarf, into state and individual, could be done away with once and for all. We have always understood and still understand only the irreconcilable opposites of “national governmental interest” and private morality, of ethical theory and practice. The chattering of the preachers make the statesman sick to his stomach; the Christians despair of the world. But God's creation is kept alive because it moves in three mutually determined orders.

The same orderer went ahead of each of these orders, and they are all explored by God. Our own

trail only follows the luminous tracks he left in all three of them. Only because God bore witness to himself in all of them can we men summon the courage to struggle free of the divine embrace of each separate hour and make the leap from one order to another as the new hour requires. Only those who remain open to the call to change from one of the three personal forms to another, should that should be God's will, can still be called living souls. And that was the perfect obedience of the firstborn whom He revealed to us. Doesn't man collapse beneath this cross? Doesn't he lose his rigid character and his proud personality? Yes, he loses both these natural signs of age, but he does not collapse.

What God speaks takes form before men's eyes. The words of God are not only the words that his children speak but also the paths they take. The "working" man *becomes* the word that the creator intends to enter into the Book of Life. He receives the name by which men will now hear him, call upon him, understand and misunderstand him until Judgement Day. Man can walk humbly, because God has commanded him to do so by name, and not just in the manner of men. For God says everything he has to say in the names that his sons must bear before men until their influence is extinguished. A man's name awaits him from the first day that God makes his life a life of name and calling. A name is a present given at birth, an award made when the call comes to us, and an obligation on whatever path the call illumines. Names combine life, vision and influence in our transformation. The trinity in which we stand becomes simplicity through the name we bear, which also bears us up.

Jesus' life defies biographical reasoning. His teaching defies the textbooks of morality. His influence entered world history as a foreign body. For his story juts into this world from another. His vision flowed from limitless aspiration; his life bore fruit completely and utterly. But all this happens in divine simplicity since it happens the name of God's son. Wherever we may open the book of life without him, wherever life calls out to us, bubbling up anew and unconcerned with us, we soon ask ourselves where the seal of life may be, that name which all human life must bear. And when we need a standard, a benchmark for life, he whom we forgot while underway for love of life, the founder of our faith, then returns to us, revealed in every shape as the perfecter of our faith, returns to us by name.

It takes a long time for languages to be opened up, to set the events heaven blows their way to

their own melody and sing them. It takes however much time it takes for God's breath to become a living soul. Luther had to write on his wall in Koburg: *Christus vivit*. We cannot translate the theologian's word xp̄ystos into English if we only transliterate it as "Christ". *Christus vivit* can only be translated once the Christian ways of living have entered our flesh and blood. Because human life in its highest form draws us on after it, and therefore our race too leads us out of our place in life into a "beyond"—where we receive a vision—and back into this life—where we take effective action—it's possible to express Jesus of Nazareth's path toward death as our Savior in our own language. Instead of "*Christus vivit*" it is: Jesus works on in us. And the three breaths of the divine creator, revealer, redeemer is reflected in the image of the threefold God in Life, Teaching, and Influence. Creature of the Father, Brother of the Son, Collaborator in the Kingdom—that is the trinity in us.