

An Introduction in Four Acts and an Epilogue (a work in progress, at least of as May 15th)

Overture

“The Word became flesh.” Everything else depends on that one sentence.

—Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy to Franz Rosenzweig, 1916¹

We believe that in the beginning the Word was, and that at the end the incarnation will be, because the gift given us in the Word’s further birth through Christ in each generation is added to our naked birth. Man the Re-teller, the Passer-on—began as the Son of Man and as the Word he perfects us to God’s own kind.

—Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, 1964²

Like many, Rosenstock-Huessy recognized the catastrophe of World War I as a historical watershed, but he also took the event as his personal destiny, declaring both church and state tainted by their part in the war. Like many, Rosenstock-Huessy decried and analyzed the impact of the mechanization of society on the life of the spirit, but he also spent fifteen years of his life in an effort to create new social institutions to replace those which had failed German society. Like many, Rosenstock-Huessy recognized the Nazis for what they were, but he also refused to teach a single class under Hitler, and reportedly tried to get his law faculty to vote itself out of existence for the duration of the regime.³ Like many, Rosenstock-Huessy tried to live out the gospel for his time, but he also found that his absolute faith that the power of the Word was reflected in the power of the word, led him beyond the church. (The subtitle of this volume captures that conviction in a single phrase).

¹ *Briefe*, 679.

² “The Fruit of Our Lips” (1964). See XX.

³ Sixty years later, Prof. Karol Jonca of the University of Wrocław tried in vain to find a record of that meeting of the University of Breslau law faculty in February of 1933. The preparation of “Fortress Breslau” in 1945 involved the destruction of large swathes of the city to create a landing strip and emptying the university library of books to build barricades in the streets. Even if such a motion had been minuted, the record may well not have survived.

In his 1916 encounter with Franz Rosenzweig, he saw how the two of them had each come to his own truth only through their meeting in friendly opposition; to the end of his life, he would continue to quote his friend's crystalization of that truth—that all real truth is polyphonous.⁴ The search for common ground despite fundamental differences became Rosenstock-Huessy's theory and *modus operandi*: with the Patmos group, Paul Riebensahm, Eugen May, Joseph Wittig, and the young men with whom he founded the volunteer labor-camps in Germany and the U.S. In the first book he published in German after 1945, he sought to re-express that truth:

Augustine spoke truth when he wrote that people are healed by love, faith, and hope. . . . In truly comprehending this sentence, we gain a new category, one of which sociology is in [desperate] need, if it is to break the strangle-hold of individualism and socialism: that of mutuality. . . . We speak to each other and live for each other.⁵

As the Jews were the coals at the heart of the fire that is God, and the Christians were the rays that reached out into the world,⁶ they could make common cause. “A Jew and a Christian momentarily put aside their insoluble antithesis and united against self-styled humanists of all descriptions,” seeing “the swindle of the academic class . . . in its murderous impact on the Western World.”⁷

I

The three essays which appear here in translation at the front (and as the heart) of this book were printed together in 1968 as *Die Umwandlung vom Wort Gottes in die Sprache des Menschengeschlechtes* (*The Transformation of the Word of God into the Speech of Mankind*). The three essays bear witness to the understanding of Christianity Rosenstock-Huessy had already formulated in his war-time correspondence with Rosenzweig. Fifty years later, in emending these

⁴ Find the SOURCE of the POLYPHONOUS QUOTE!

⁵ Rosenstock-Huessy 1951: 292-293. *Atem*.

⁶ Rosenzweig 1921: 200. Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 221.

⁷ Rosenstock-Huessy 1969: 71.

essays (and in unpublished codas to the last of them)⁸ he still articulated and defended his faith in the terms he used in that correspondence.⁹ Creation, revelation, and incarnation as on-going processes through the end of time; the rhythms in history; and even Marcion's role in forcing the church to formally proclaim Christ's "Father" to be the God of the Old Testament—all appear in the correspondence as they do in "The Fruit of Our Lips."

That correspondence in turn had its roots in a discussion the two men and Rosenzweig's cousin Rudolf Ehrenberg had several years before, in 1913, on the day after Rosenstock's 25th birthday.¹⁰ The discussion revolved around the last chapter of Selma Lagerlöf's *The Miracles of the Antichrist*, and its last sentence in particular: "No one can save mankind from their sorrows, but much is forgiven to him who brings new courage to bear them."¹¹ One could argue that both Rosenstock and Rosenzweig took that sentence as their marching papers. Rosenstock-Huessy himself spent his long life re-interpreting the Christian tradition for a world which had become deaf to its traditional language.

It was work that in its hopeful infancy took place largely outside the church and the established school system. His maiden efforts to overcome the social divisions of post-war Germany were made in adult education, for which he called for a fundamental break with accepted norms of "education." He called for a "school of suffering," a "school of events":

No teacher knows "more" than his students, he can only prepare a solution in patient meditation together with others, acquire the knowledge that solution requires, and receive the impulse to act. . . . The political school of contemplation we require sees its chief objective in preparing the leisure in which a man may meet a fellow-citizen of a different sort and both may find themselves compelled in the face of common danger to enter, reflect, and exchange opinions.¹²

In 1929, he reported to an international gathering that this work required a new language for a new time, if old truths were ever to become once more "self-evident":

⁸ Printed here as Appendices D (XX) and E (XX).

⁹ See possible Appendix I, XX.

¹⁰ See Appendix I, XX.

¹¹ See Appendices G, XX, and J, XX.

¹² XXX. See Appendix G, XX.

Even St. Paul's comparison of the relations between Christ and His Church to the relation between man and woman seems to be too high and too far away from the man in the street. The tongue of the Christian faith has been worn out.¹³

New language, unheard-of action was called for. In response to Franz Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption*, he had written (in "*Ichthys*") that incarnation is the only way spirit can enter the world; it begins with insight granted in vision, develops in teaching, and ends in action in the world, which by its very nature is political. The final step is the founding of an institution that can outlast the man whose vision led him to teach and to act.

Jesus obviously came at the end of one era, and began a new era. He was the first Christian, gentlemen, and the last Jew, and the Jews came at the end of antiquity. . . . You can only understand the meaning of Christianity if you connect it with the whole beginnings that preceded Him, of which He is the fulfillment, and if you put Him as the seed, the famous seed of grain that falls into the ground and must die in order to bear fruit.¹⁴

Time was always at the heart of it, as Christ stood at the heart of history. Had Rosenstock-Huessy not denied that Christianity was a religion at all, he could easily have made Abraham Joshua Heschel's statement that his religion was "a *religion of time* aiming at the *sanctification of time*."¹⁵ Instead, he defined Christianity as the "science of timing,"¹⁶ proclaiming that

[t]he present, whether it be an hour, a day in our life, or a whole era, is not only created, but created by us; it does not simply happen to us, it is not a natural fact like space, not a datum in nature, but a constant social achievement, and neither comes nor lasts except by our own making. There time is not a gift but a task . . . the power to live in the fullness of time is something that has to be won arduously and preserved by perpetual vigilance.¹⁷

¹³ XXX. See Appendix G, XX.

¹⁴ *Universal History 1957*, April 9, 1957, 23-002.

¹⁵ *Sabbath*, 8.

¹⁶ *Universal History 1957*, Lecture 23, April 9, 1957, 23-019.

¹⁷ From a speech given May 22, 1940: *Impure*, 94.

He saw the gospel, and its explicit utterance of truths known to all the ages of man, as the engine that drove the rhythms even of modern history. In *Out of Revolution*, he would argue not only that history was rhythmic, as Giuseppe Ferrari had before him, but that the great national revolutions that had made Europe followed each other in succession every 125 to 140 years.¹⁸ In *Das Alter der Kirche*, he and Joseph Wittig had found those same rhythms in church history, which they divided it into four periods of 500 years, erasing the divisions made by academic historians. In both books, he declared that an era had come to an end, and that the new in-breaking millennium would call for unheard-of action, but he also traced that understanding back to Stephen's speech before his martyrdom (which he saw echoed in the gospel of Matthew) and to the gospel of Luke.¹⁹

Years later, he reformulated what our moment in history required of us, the "one necessary thing" for our time: if man is made in God's image, then man himself is triune:

We must all create originally (like the pagans), hope in expectation (like the Jews), and love decisively (like Christians)—that is to say, we must take part in the beginning, end, and middle of life. . . . Franz Rosenzweig was the first to express and explain this confounding fact of the openness of the three 'isms' to each other.²⁰

The "science of timing" called for action at the proper time, and for a new appreciation of the importance of time. Rosenstock-Huessy not only recognized the fifteen-year advance the German university system gained by giving a *Privatdozent* permission to teach what he pleased long before he could be called as a professor,²¹ he had long before tried to build that advance into his collaboration with his own students. Both in the Löwenberg volunteer work-camps in Germany and at Camp William James in the United States, he stepped back to allow the young men whose enthusiasm drove the projects to deal with the movers and shakers whose support made them possible—giving them an experience of leadership some ten to fifteen years "ahead of time." The loss of so many of his earlier collaborators was a terrible blow: Helmuth von Moltke was murdered by the Nazis in 1945; Horst von Einsiedel was murdered by the Soviets 1947; the

¹⁸ *Out*, 492ff; *Geheimnis*, 35-43.

¹⁹ See XX, and Appendix C, XX.

²⁰ *Geheimnis* 1958: 54.

²¹ *Geheimnis*, 22.

last survivor, Carl Dietrich von Trotha, was killed in a senseless speedboat accident in [Illinois?] in 1952.

In their deaths, and in the lack of response he had found in the United States, he found cause to concentrate on other thinkers and writers who had come “too soon,” whose truths would only find an audience after their death: Abelard, Paracelsus, and Saint-Simon, all of whom are discussed at length in his *Soziologie*. (He often said that he expected to be discovered only seventy years after his death.) Yet in that same period he also expanded the span covered by his understanding of history, elaborating on the changing role of the spirit since the beginnings of the ancient world in tribal ritual and the astrological empires, among the Jews and the Greeks, and in the three millennia of Christian history. The promise of the third millennium was his “good news.” He not only appropriated José Clemente Orozco’s image of Christ taking an ax to the cross, but imagined a counterpart to Michelangelo’s image of Adam’s creation, with Adam now surrounded by the *Elobim* who had surrounded God at his creation, with God facing the Final Man alone.²²

II

The publication of this book brings to an end a long chapter in my own life. I first translated the three essays at the front of this book into English over twenty years ago, when there was no prospect of the translation ever being published, and it is a great pleasure to see it happen after all, after all this time.

Aficionados of Marion Davis Battles’s 1978 edition of the title essay will find both the title of this book and most of its content unfamiliar. In 1954, my grandfather clearly named the title essay “The Fruit of Our Lips” in the words of Hebrews 13:15; why Mrs. Battles chose to alter the title is a mystery. During his lifetime, he presented the essay to the world in only two ways: once as part of his collected works on speech, and again, as one of this troika of essays, in 1968. (Mrs. Battles’s edition of the lone essay is posthumous.) The heart of this book is a translation of the 1968 volume; to make that explicit, I have taken its title as a sub-title.

²² See *Out of Revolution*, 727-728.

The title essay exists in two versions in two languages, both of which contain material not to be found in the other. Four “chapters” of the “finished” English-language typescript are missing from the German version, to which the author added material that did not exist in the English original.²³ (Much of Rosenstock-Huessy’s American work was translated into German by others, and then edited and expanded by him before publication.) The final 1954 English-language version is the most substantial, but was never prepared for publication during the author’s lifetime; the final German-language version is the only version he ever approved for publication, but is missing a considerable amount of material. So there is no best or “final” version.

The important thing is that between the covers of this book you will find *all* the text written under the name “[The] Fruit of [Our] Lips,” in its original context. The essay as printed in German, with the material added for *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts*, is in the main body of the text and the 1954 English-language version is reprinted complete as Appendix C. (Anyone interested in either Rosenstock-Huessy’s work or the subject of the essay should read the English-language original for the sections which were not included in the German version.)

Neither of the first two essays in this volume has appeared in English before. The first “new” piece is a brief summary of two claims made by Rosenstock-Huessy: the place of the cross in every aspect of social reality, and of the existence of the truths made explicit in the life of Christ in all of human history. It is a slightly altered version of that coda to the second volume of his *Soziologie, Die Vollzahl der Zeiten (The Full Complement of Times)*²⁴ which Wayne Cristaudo has said is “perhaps the key to his entire corpus.”²⁵ The second essay, “*Ichthys: Life, Teaching, and Action*,” first published in *Das Alter der Kirche (The Age of the Church)* in 1927, is a more significant addition.

²³ See the introduction to Appendix C, XX.

²⁴ 759-60. The title given is in my translation. ERH’s translation of the Latin passage from “Hilarius Isaac” contains a near-equivalent, “the plenitude of times”; see D98. In “Hinge of Generations,” he refers to “the full count of the times” (see Appendix F, XX).

²⁵ Cristaudo, 216.

“Ichthys” is central to Rosenstock-Huessy’s understanding of Christ and Christianity; more than anything else, it was my desire that this essay should finally appear in English which led me to take on this new edition of *The Fruit of Our Lips*. It gave me great pleasure to discover not only that he had composed it in 1923 as a birthday present for my grandmother, Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy, but that he had explicitly described it to her and to Franz Rosenzweig’s mother Adele as his response to the final section of Rosenzweig’s *Star*.²⁶ (The hand-written 1923 manuscript opens with a long quotation from the last two pages of *The Star*.) Rosenstock-Huessy included a printed copy of the revised essay from *The Age of the Church* in his 1928 New Year’s greeting to “Tante Dele,” and introduced it by saying:

Shakespeare’s statement that the benefit of “ill” consists in its tearing up the better, and that renewed loves grows in greater beauty, power, and scope, touches on a thought in my *Age of the Church*, in “[*Ichthys*:] Life, Teaching, and Influence,” where I polemicize against Franz. I say there that an adult is no longer capable of walking humbly with his God. He can at most walk humbly once more—just as an adult cannot be a child, but can only become like a child (which is not the same thing as “being” one).²⁷

So in “*Ichthys*: Life, Teaching, and Influence” Rosenstock-Huessy wrote an epilogue to his war-time correspondence with Rosenzweig on Judaism and Christianity, and explicitly formulates his “doctrine” of incarnation: how Christ’s life bore fruit in His teaching, and how Christ lived backwards into life out of the vision granted in “the sanctum which is in the innermost center,”²⁸ his life of action a third phase quite separate from his teaching. Rosenstock-Huessy also proclaims that sequence to be the inescapable conjugation of any fruitful spirit; in laying out the relation between Christ’s life, teaching, and actions, he also shows how he understood his own life and had tried to live a life of action “backward” from his own insights.

²⁶ Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt, 1921). Rosenzweig is referred to in notes hereafter as FR.

²⁷ See Appendix B, XX (D163-169). Here, as elsewhere in this book, I have replaced ERH’s underlining for emphasis with *italics*; where the original German is given, I have retained his German style, including the use of “ss” for “ß.”

²⁸ See Appendix A, XX (D123).

In *I Am an Impure Thinker*²⁹ he relates his decision on demobilization to pass up the offers to return to his chair at the University of Leipzig, to help draft the constitution of the new republic, and to join Carl Muth as the co-editor of Germany's leading Catholic magazine, *Hochland*. Instead he went to work for Daimler-Benz in Stuttgart to create peace where management and labor were at war. That, his work in adult education, and his program for the Löwenberg volunteer work camps, what he called attempts to "create new social order" in a country utterly divided by party politics and class hostility, emerge as the clear fruit of this post-war, "post-modern" understanding of the medieval "*imitatio Christi*."

In *Ichthys*, Rosenstock-Huessy proclaims that "thought creates obligations [to act]." Compare this to Heidegger's ghastly dictum that "thinking acts insofar as it thinks."³⁰ (Rosenstock-Huessy's commitment to the sequence of "insight, teaching, and action," his fifteen years of attempts to "create new social order," and his immediate recognition of the Nazis offer a pointed contrast to Heidegger's easy accommodation after 1933.) Here is the full statement of the meaning of "*respondeo etsi mutabor*" and its claim that social truth must be represented in the flesh—or, to use an older term: incarnated. (Cristaudo makes the wonderful comment that "Rosenstock-Huessy is exploring the process of incarnation as a social fact.")³¹ Anyone who has listened to the recordings of Rosenstock-Huessy's lectures will recognize how his life informed his "teaching." The more interesting claim is that his life from 1918 to 1941 with his varied attempts to create institutions based on his insights social and religious, shows how he lived out his own declaration that the path of action is always a political path; most of those attempts met political opposition and a premature death (though as he would later write, "by accepting defeat, Christianity built the truth of the Old Testament into itself.")³²

Even his first attempt to make visible the recognition of the essential unity of revelation, and the necessity for Protestants, Catholics, and Jews to make common cause for revelation against the dead hand of abstract rationalism, had but a short life. During that short life, however, the *Patmos Verlag* had united Rosenstock with Rosenzweig's cousins Hans and Rudolf Ehrenberg,

²⁹ 182-190.

³⁰ Heidegger, 217.

³¹ Cristaudo, 201.

³² D227.

Rosenzweig himself, Werner Picht, and Leo Weismantel. As early as 1919, he and Leo Weismantel presented a “conversation before witnesses” on the subject of university reform, decades before the “discovery” of the panel discussion. Karl Barth, having let the Patmos group publish his 1920 *Christ in der Gesellschaft* (*The Christian in Society*), fell out with the rest over their insistence on re-thinking everything in the light of the new historical moment.³³ Like many of Rosenstock-Huessy’s German efforts, the *Patmos Verlag* was largely funded by his childhood friend (and brother-in-law), Max Hamburger. Planned as one of three linked publishing houses, it was the only one to see the light of day, and even its life was short. “Patmos” did leave one inspired legacy, however: *Die Kreatur* (*The Creature*, 1927-1930), the first periodical ever jointly edited by a Catholic, a Protestant, and a Jew. The editors were Joseph Wittig, won for the undertaking by Rosenstock-Huessy, Martin Buber, won by Rosenzweig, and Viktor von Weizsäcker, won by Hans Ehrenberg. The complete *Die Kreatur* has been almost impossible to find (or afford, once found) except in the facsimile volumes issued by Kraus Reprint; it is now available on-line, complete, at the University of Frankfurt’s website—but listed, in a typical academic move, as a “Jewish” magazine.³⁴

My defense of the central importance of “*Ichthys*” to Rosenstock-Huessy’s “life, teaching, and action” should not be understood in any way to denigrate the importance of the essay “The Fruit of Our Lips.” On the contrary, he made a point of setting it at the very end (and so presumably as the capstone) of his great “speech book”: he had at one point even planned to name the entire work *Die Frucht der Lippen* (*The Fruit of Lips*).³⁵ It is the final statement by a man who believed so implicitly in the truth of the gospels that he repeatedly called for the *incarnation* to be

³³ “Barth only knew that the church and the university existed. . . . for us it was just these buildings and facilities that had forfeited their trustworthiness. . . . We had experienced the World War; he had not. That is not meant as a reproach to Barth . . . the war had given us a new route to march, a new time-reckoning, a turn away from theology and philosophy in obedience to the path of salvation. . . . for Barth it was only a subject to be handled objectively.” (*Ja und Nein*, 81.)

³⁴ In 2003, the Forum Guardini issued a book of selected essays from *Die Kreatur*. The on-line version at www.compactmemory.de is part of the *Internetarchiv jüdischer Periodika* (accessed XX, 2014.).

³⁵ There is a table of contents for an early version of *Die Sprache* with that title in the Rosenstock-Huessy Archive in Bielefeld; I am grateful to Gottfried Hofmann for bringing this to my attention.

explicitly represented by the human *body* in the various positions dictated by the spirit as new symbols for the four Evangelists.³⁶

By paying attention to the additions made to the title essay for the 1964 version, which appear in {"French" brackets}, the reader may easily follow what the author chose to make more explicit or more emphatic for the essay's first public appearance, as the capstone of his great work on speech. The 1944 original (and its 1954 revision) had been something of a polemic; the 1964 German version is more of a valedictory. In fact, the later additions become something of a running commentary on the original text—a conversation the 75-year-old editor was having with his 55- and 65-year-old self. Some things are clearly more important to the editor than they had been to the author. One of the most profound is his emphasis on "passing on," or re-telling, as a fundamental part of the Christian faith—though he had already written twenty years earlier that a convert's early hearing of the gospel was always meant to be the first step toward passing the faith on in turn.³⁷ Although some of Rosenstock-Huessy's attitudes have aroused the ire of feminists over the years, it is striking that in this *envoi* he twice emphasizes that the spirit moves mankind to a point beyond gender.³⁸ And, after decades of lambasting his professional colleagues for their Greek way of thinking, here he humbly declares his own failure—as a Greek—to understand the story of Lazarus!³⁹

We can also see that, even in his seventies, he was still capable of changing his mind. Few enough people retain the ability to change their minds over the course of a lifetime without also losing their integrity that we would do well to honor those who do, as other times honored the saints. (There are many more men like Lester Maddox than there are like Malcolm X.) It is not too much to say that the 1959 appearance of *Studia Evangelica*⁴⁰ "made epoch" for Rosenstock-Huessy. The man who had accepted the work of scholarly giants like Adolf von Harnack and Donatien de Bruyne, of kindred spirits like John Chapman and Basil Christopher Butler, and of

³⁶ See Appendix C, XX (D104, D248-9).

³⁷ D57. The theme is repeated in one of the essays originally intended to follow our title essay in *Die Sprache*, which is reprinted in Appendix D.

³⁸ D104.

³⁹ D75.

⁴⁰ The volume presented the papers presented to the International Congress at Christ Church, Oxford, which followed immediately on the annual gathering of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* in Birmingham.

friends like Franz Rosenzweig and Joseph Wittig, now yielded to the persuasive powers of Jehoshua Grintz and W. H. Cadman.⁴¹ “Jesus the Illiterate,” one of the planned codas to “The Fruit of Our Lips,” echoes and builds on the work of Grintz and Cadman; those echoes are profound and heart-felt. The appearance of *Studia Evangelica* may even have been the impetus for his decision to publish “The Fruit of Our Lips” after all. In that essay he had laid aside all thought of the “Christianity *incognito*” he required of Christians in making common cause with their neighbors, to plead for an understanding of the true role of the gospels, and of what to him made Christ the hinge-point of all the eons of human history.

III

It is still a claim difficult to make in polite society, let alone in academe. Despite the honorary theological degree conferred upon him at age 70 by the University of Münster, Rosenstock-Huessy remained a layman all his life (claiming to have an advantage in never having been “a minister nor a theologian by profession”);⁴² nevertheless, as a layman who deeply believed in the priesthood of all believers, he consciously and conscientiously took “responsibility for God before men.”⁴³ For all the obeisance made to the role of lay-people since Vatican II, there is still precious little interest in an educated layman’s opinion in theological “circles”—and there was of course even less interest before. (Joseph Wittig (like Ernst Michel, Rosenstock’s collaborator at the Frankfurt Academy of Labor) was considered dangerous in Rome precisely for championing laypeople’s role in the church.⁴⁴ What that dangerous priest and those dangerous Levites shared was a belief in faith itself, not constrained by philosophical or legalistic definitions, which put them at odds both with the official churches and their watchdogs, the theological faculties.

The strangle-hold of 19th-century scholarship still continues, despite Mrs. Battles’s hopeful statements to the contrary.⁴⁵ If anything, it has intensified in the intervening decades, as that

⁴¹ Excerpts from their essays appear in Appendix G.

⁴² Appendix C, XX.

⁴³ See “*Ichthys*,” XX (D23).

⁴⁴ Eugenio Pacelli, *Die Lage der Kirche in Deutschland: Der Schlussbericht des Nuntius vom 18. November 1929* (Hubert Wolf und Klaus Unterburger, Paderborn 2006), 141-150. I am grateful to Professor Unterburger for the reference.

⁴⁵ See her introduction to “The Fruit of Lips” in Appendix F, XX (D326).

scholarship has consumed the pastorate as well as the academy, and invaded the “educated” laity of the mainstream churches. I have often had to listen to liberal Protestants declaring that they did not believe in the God of the Old Testament, thus firmly if unwittingly setting the authority of the Gnostic Marcion above that of the four Evangelists. I once confessed to a rightly beloved eminent churchman my belief that all four gospels carried apostolic authority, only to receive the unsettling reply that 99% of scholars were against me. The figure may have been a little high, but it is a difference of degree rather than substance.

Elaine Pagels is only the most extreme example of the hegemony of *gnosis* in religious studies today, but at least she has the honesty to declare herself a proponent of Gnostic Christianity, and deals with existing Gnostic manuscripts. Generations of “scholars,” from Griesbach to Burton Mack, have now made careers out of the dissection of “Q,” a document no one has ever seen, or even seen mentioned in any document written before 1800, but whose existence is now taken as “gospel.” Earnest believers now follow the professors in sifting through the Nag Hammadi manuscripts for “the real story,” and any Gnostic manuscript discovered is immediately hailed as offering some new “truth,” ignoring the possibility, for which documentary evidence *does* exist, that what they offer is more likely very old un-truths.

What the years since the composition of “The Fruit of Our Lips” seem to have brought is for the most part a hardening of party lines, a growing identity of any defense of the four gospels as a unified, coherent witness, with a particular (and usually pre- and anti-critical) interpretation of our tradition. “Conservatives” who see interpretation as open-ended are few and far between; “liberals” who support the apostolicity of the canon are in vanishingly short supply. Even Jaroslav Pelikan’s *Vindication of Tradition* did not in fact set out to vindicate much of that tradition. Rosenstock-Huessy neither made nor condoned any attempt to retreat to a position held prior to the era of biblical criticism. On the contrary, in consciously rearticulating the truth of Christianity for the post-war period, he proclaims the arrival of a post-critical era.

Just a few years after his death, his stance found an echo in the work of a radical very much surprised to find himself a champion of the canon. I would like to think that, as a conservative expert on revolutions, Rosenstock-Huessy would relish the idea. Does anyone read John A. T.

Robinson today?⁴⁶ No one who has read either *Honest to God* or *In the End God* could call Robinson a conservative—and yet Robinson’s 1976 *Dating the New Testament* ends by dating the entire canon within the first century AD,⁴⁷ thereby explicitly allowing the reassignment of almost every canonical entry in the New Testament to the authors credited by tradition. Robinson hedges some on Matthew and the Petrine letters, but clearly accepts tradition on Mark, Luke-Acts and the gospel and epistles of John, and rails against the presumption of prophecy “after the fact.”⁴⁸ He admits at the start that his “position will probably seem surprisingly conservative—especially to those who judge [him] radical on other issues.”⁴⁹

At the end of the book, while back-pedaling furiously so as not to be seen as buttressing “the fundamentalism of the fearful” or the “conservatism of the committed,”⁵⁰ he prints both a 1972 letter from C. H. Dodd in which Dodd writes that he agrees that “much of this late dating is quite arbitrary, even wanton, the offspring not of any argument that can be presented, but rather of the critic’s prejudice;”⁵¹ and A. H. N. Green-Armytage’s 1952 statement setting Churchill’s prophecy of war in 1935 against the assumptions of the Biblical critics.

There is a world—I do not say a world in which all scholars live but one at any rate into which all of them sometimes stray, and which some of them seem permanently to inhabit—which is not the world in which I live. . . . In my world, if I read that Mr. Churchill, in 1935, said that Europe was heading for a disastrous war, I applaud the foresight. In that world no prophecy, however vaguely worded, is ever made except after the event. . . . In that world (it would appear) [men and women] come into being, write a

⁴⁶ I should hesitate to cite him, as ERH never did so. Robinson had a piece on the “fourth gospel” in *Studia Evangelica* (1959), from which ERH did cite two other essays: Cadman’s “The Raising of Lazarus” and Cunliffe-Jones’ “The Four-fold Gospel.” Unlike ERH, the Bishop of Woolwich hedged his arguments carefully; it has done him little good. Like ERH, the Bishop is out of favor, though in his case more as the flavor of last month. But then, anyone who tells uncomfortable truths is best forgotten or, to use a glorious German word, *totgeschwiegen* (ignored to death).

⁴⁷ *Dating*, 101, 117.

⁴⁸ *Dating*, 337; 13ff.

⁴⁹ *Dating*, 11.

⁵⁰ *Dating*, 356.

⁵¹ Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London, 1976), 360.

book, and forthwith perish, all in a flash, and it is noted of them with astonishment that they “preserve traces of primitive tradition” about things which happened well within their own adult lifetime.⁵²

This neatly parallels Rosenstock-Huessy’s argument in “The Fruit of Our Lips” on his own experience with prophecy: in his 1919 essay “Ehrlos—Heimatlos,” ERH prophesied the rise of a *Lügenkaisertum* (empire of lies) if Germany did not stop trying to live as though the war had not swept the old society away.⁵³

At times it is hard to escape Rosenstock-Huessy’s (and Green’s) conviction that the lunatics have taken over the asylum. While it is true that Protestantism has been leery of tradition ever since Luther pronounced the Letter of James an “epistle of straw,” that incipient doubt has now been carried to an extreme. Has the day of the Jesus Seminar come and gone? It would only be justice, as if its members were to be believed, there is hardly a document in the canon not worthy of a similar designation. Rosenstock-Huessy’s own feelings about such pruning of the gospel may be inferred from the fact that his wife’s gravestone carries only her dates and the citation of James 1:25.

To Rosenstock-Huessy, the gospel was one indissoluble unit, encompassing the ministry of Christ himself as well as the events that are His four “lips.” However unwelcome the fact may be to some adherents who come to him through an interest in speech and “speech-thinking,” Rosenstock-Huessy believed implicitly in the truth of scripture and its fruits in the two millennia of Christian history, and himself sought to translate the truths of that tradition for the dawning new eon. For him and for Franz Rosenzweig, “speech-thinking” rooted in the creative power of speech proclaimed in Genesis 1:1-2:4. Joseph Wittig, his excommunicated Catholic colleague at the University of Breslau, wrote of him: “He did for me what there was no other man left to do, because he had, as no other man had any more, the faith that God’s omnipotence first begins with the impossible.”⁵⁴ As Rosenstock-Huessy stated explicitly in *The Christian Future*:

⁵² Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London, 1976), 356.

⁵³ D107. See also Appendix G, XX.

⁵⁴ Wittig, *Höregott* (Gotha, 1929), 333. See also Luke 1:37.

Christian Dogma is not an intellectual formula but a record and promise of life. It does not propose ideas for our minds to master; it tells actual events which can master and transform us as they did the first Christians. It is not a mere topic of thought but the presupposition of sanity.⁵⁵

Similarly, Rosenstock-Huessy's "cross of reality," which also makes its first appearance in his correspondence with Franz Rosenzweig, is not an intellectual construct imposed on reality, but a recognition of our crucifixion in every moment in the tension between the claims of our inner and outer lives, and between the claims of our past and the future we seek, and in the conjugation of our life experience from call to response to community and finally to objective reporting of the facts. In it he proclaims that if God is indeed the ground of all reality, then the cross too must underlie all reality.⁵⁶

Yet Rosenstock-Huessy's life and work also declare that "the ground of all reality" by definition cannot be, and indeed is not, confined within the Church. In 1919 he wrote:

In their battle against sensuality, [Catholics and Protestants] have both lost . . . the sense for what is rotten and ripe, dead and alive, decaying or blossoming. It was this . . . which seduced them into elevating themselves above God. . . . Where God is headed in any particular time is something we can only hope to scent; and it is our ability to scent [the future] that leads us in every hour, to where God appears in living form. That is why God has turned away from churchly Christianity, whatever it may be like. . . . God's ways are not the ways of Christianity: his love seeks to heal all that Christianity has been lacking.⁵⁷

He spoke to an audience that had witnessed the end of a world as much as the first Christians had (he also often quoted Chesterton's line that "the end of the world was long

⁵⁵ ERH, *The Christian Future* (New York, 1946), 98.

⁵⁶ If this assumption is a figment of Rosenstock-Huessy's imagination, it was a figment of Augustine's and Francis of Assisi's before him. Indeed, Augustine looms large in much of Rosenstock-Huessy's thought, but you could also say that Rosenstock-Huessy sought eloquent ways of expanding on the sermon of the Evangelist John which he so often quoted: "the Lord has said it, and it is enough."

⁵⁷ "Die Tochter" in *Hochzeit*, 36-37, also in *Die Tochter*.

ago.”)⁵⁸ In *The Age of the Church*, he and Wittig explicitly declare an end to that age and look forward to Society’s inheriting the Church’s role as both the marital and the sparring partner of the State. As he had written Rosenzweig in 1916:

Do you believe Zionism is a coincidence? Israel’s day as the people of the Bible is over. The Church [itself] . . . is the Synagogue of today! . . . Christ has enough people to crucify him in his own Church. . . . The Jews no longer crucify, judge, or sentence any more at all.⁵⁹

This book is in part a layman’s defense of the unity of the gospel in the face of a *trahison des clerics* on a scale unimaginable to Voltaire. Beyond that however, it also seeks to define truth as having been made anew in the Christian tradition. The scholastics had called their God “*actus purissimus*,” in whom word and deed were one; the subtitle of this book expresses the conviction that the creative act of speech in Genesis can also transform our own lives, if our words bear fruit in deeds. Towards the end of his life, Rosenstock-Huessy was quite explicit about the dimensions of truth:

A word can be true in its content; it can secondly be true enough to prove the author right; and finally it can be so true that it forces the next speaker to respond and speak in turn. . . . As I said before, I am concerned with the third aspect of all truth, *with its full power to beget a response by changing language*. . . . The gospels were each true enough to force the next speaker to continue beyond the last word of the previous speaker. . . . In this process the “four gospels” become a continuation of Jesus’ life through the minds that were overpowered by their office as Evangelists. They were re-created as lips of the Word.⁶⁰

Rosenstock-Huessy was convinced that this third aspect of truth was the secret spring that drives the endless renewal and innovation that is the history of salvation, anchored in the willingness of people in each succeeding epoch to live “tomorrow’s life today”.⁶¹

⁵⁸ G.K. Chesterton, “The Ballad of the White Horse,” first published in 1911. ERH claimed to have known all of Chesterton by heart.

⁵⁹ *Briefe*, 695-6. The European nations as the new Old Testament is the hidden theme of *Out of Revolution*.

⁶⁰ D95-96.

⁶¹ The recurring refrain of Brian Wren’s 1989 hymn, “There’s a Spirit in the Air.”

[The] gospel by necessity preceded later writings, which were absolutely expected, absolutely necessary, and absolutely still to come. Matthew already anticipated the gospel of John when he wrote his own. That is the real time-revolution of the Christian faith: the true faith in progress, in the future's ability to change the past: Jesus had re-created the patriarchs in Abraham's bosom! We are only Christians if we think and speak and act backwards from the end.⁶²

So Rosenstock-Huessy is at one and the same time an utterly orthodox believer, and an interpreter of scripture and tradition who continually surprises and discomfits the established powers of the churches and the academy—and that is perhaps the best evidence for his continuing relevance and the importance of his life and work for the future. He himself often said that he expected to be “discovered” only seventy years after his death, and as he wrote in his mid-seventies:

We may have our descent from the past, but we must assent to our future; the body is produced at birth, but the spirit is produced by death. . . . there is salvation in no other name because only he took on the task of giving us that voice, thanks to which we mute creatures are granted the human office of constantly changing assignments. . . . All the more honestly do we need to honor the almost inaudibly still, small voice out of which each New Assignment must first sound to us humans, before it may take visible form.⁶³

It was the *transitory aspect of our laws* which had to be achieved and made our own in addition to Adam's mortality, and this is the gift we receive from the Lord and his Apostles: He made possible the death of the law. . . . To this day the Jews do not understand the meaning of the death on the cross: Weren't millions of Jews killed? what's so important about a single crucifixion? . . . The death that opens the eyes of the survivors, perhaps even the eyes of the executioner, is the seed of a future proclaimed by the lips of the dying and so liberated from the mere busyness of grown-ups, a future to which [*all*] our newborns may lay claim. . . . Because the Jews may not change their law, but can at best ignore it, Christ's death remains incomprehensible to them. He was not

⁶² D293.

⁶³ D315.

meant and did not want to become the martyr of a faith; instead he became a blood witness of our need to shed the garment of any one eon, for all our little eternities to die.

IV

In the archive recently moved from Four Wells (my grandparents' home in Norwich, VT) to Dartmouth's Rauner Library, I found not only the original typescripts of "Fruit of Our Lips" and the hand-written manuscript of *Ichthys*, but also several draft essays Rosenstock-Huessy had labeled as intended conclusions for the 1964 "speech book," to follow directly on the essay "The Fruit of Our Lips." (If I had paid closer attention to the work of Gottfried Hofmann, who had arranged and cataloged the manuscripts at Four Wells over the years, and of Lise van der Molen, compiler of the magisterial 1997 bibliography,⁶⁴ I might have found them much sooner.) The juxtaposition of "The Fruit of Our Lips" with either of the intended conclusions provides considerable food for thought; taken in tandem, especially together with the other essays included in this volume, they provide a unique overview of the mutual interpenetration of Rosenstock-Huessy's work on faith and his work on speech. I am glad to have the opportunity to include these concluding essays here, even as appendices, along with the German original. Since much of the support for Rosenstock-Huessy's argument in "The Fruit of Our Lips" has never appeared in English, and much of it has been called into question, even by his own editors, I decided to include excerpts from his sources as well. If the result is that the appendices threaten to overwhelm the "book" itself, so be it.

Appendix A contains a full transcription of the 1923 presentation copy of *Ichthys: Leben, Lehre, Wirken*, and its English translation. Appendix B contains a full transcription of Rosenstock-Huessy's hand-written letter to Adele Rosenzweig dated January 1, 1928, and its English translation. Together they make explicit how *Ichthys* arose within the intimate sphere that included Franz Rosenzweig and both Margrit and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy.

Appendix C is the text of the original 1944 typescript of "The Fruit of Our Lips," with its 1954 revisions and hand-written corrections; Appendices D and E contain the two draft essays

⁶⁴ *A Guide to the Works of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy* (Essex, VT, 1997).

contemplated as codas to *The Speech of Mankind*, to follow on the heels of “The Fruit of Our Lips,” and their English translations.

Appendix F is Marion Davis Battles’s introduction to her 1978 edition of the title essay. Appendix G presents excerpts from the sources cited by Rosenstock-Huessy, especially on the gospel prologues. Appendix H is the editor’s bibliography with a glossary of names cited in the text, Appendix I is the editor’s bird’s-eye view of the war-time correspondence with Rosenzweig, and last and not least, Appendix J is a brief biography of the author.

Rosenstock-Huessy rarely capitalized the pronouns for God and Christ; I have followed his lead, except where capitalization makes a reference clear which otherwise might not be. Footnotes are numbered. The author’s are marked with his initials, as are Mrs. Battles’s in Appendices C and F; my own appear in square brackets throughout.

In one of the proposed codas to “The Fruit of the Lips,” Rosenstock-Huessy connects the role of the spirit in the Christian era to the zoologist Adolf Portmann’s theory that humans continue gestation “in the womb of society” for several years after their physical birth.⁶⁵ I would like to thank the board of the Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Fund for its patience with the similarly protracted gestation of this new edition of *The Fruit of Our Lips*. After the Fund decided to issue a new edition, I had to put the entire project on hold for several years. First I led the preparation of the Four Wells archive for deposit at Dartmouth’s Rauner Library, and then I took a “sabbatical” to recover from the six years of chaos that had followed the loss of my profession and the end of my marriage. Returning to the project after many years’ absence, I have had to discover anew the extent to which the devil is indeed in the details.

The originals of all the manuscripts and typescripts on which this edition is based (including the 185 letters that passed between Adele Rosenzweig and my grandparents) are among the tens of thousands of pages of original letters and other documents now held (along with fourteen boxes of manuscript material) in the Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Archive at Rauner. The library offers open access to the entire collection, and I can only add that scholars so happy as to be working with the staff at Rauner should count their blessings. I know I am deeply grateful for their continuing patience and good humor.

⁶⁵ See Appendix E, XX.

I would like to express my thanks not only to the extraordinarily helpful staff at Dartmouth's Rauner and Baker/Berry libraries and the Putney (VT) Public Library; but also to Norman Fiering, for his careful copy-editing and his questioning of my editorial decisions; to Gottfried Hofmann; to Otto Kroesen, Lise van der Molen, and the other members of the Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Society for helping me locate references from my grandfather's works; to Eckart Wilkens of the Rosenstock-Huessy Gesellschaft for access to his electronic version of the correspondence with Georg Müller; to Richard Drummond and Lloyd Craighill for sharing their knowledge of Christianity in Japan; to the staff at Gnomon Copy in Hanover; to Marion Davies Battles, in spite of all our disagreements; to Google, for digitizing and so making available to anyone with an internet connection scholarly editions of a by-gone era; and especially to Elizabeth Margrit Huessy for her help with the translation of Donatien de Bruyne's essay and just for being herself.

Epilogue

This book is dedicated to the memory of Freya von Moltke, whose brief introduction to *The Fruit of Our Lips* is the only real addition to the body of the book. Her years of work and organizing Rosenstock-Huessy's papers and amassing his correspondence would be sufficient claim on our gratitude, but I must add to that her extraordinary generosity to everyone who came to Four Wells to work with or on those papers, not least to me. Spending day after day with her during the last year of her life is a privilege I will never forget.

During the twelve years she shared my grandfather's life at Four Wells, and in the thirty-seven long years she lived on there alone (making it more her home than anyone's), she was a constant friend to the large and far-flung Huessy family, and the beating heart of that wider "family" which is the community of both former students and new discoverers of Rosenstock-Huessy's work. She is sorely missed (as the Germans say, "at every edge and corner") and will remain so as long as our memory endures.

It is a great pleasure to be able to present this volume to an English-speaking public at last. No edition is without errors, and I look forward with complete equanimity to the day on which some wiser scholar questions the assumptions of this edition in turn. In the words of one recent president of the United States, "bring it on."

Raymond Huessy

(date)