

“The Nazarene” (1935), introduction to

“In choosing a subject for my senior theme [in Kenmore {NY} High School], I quite naturally directed my thought to the field through the study of which I could give and receive the greatest benefit. I started with the title, ‘Religion’, but finding this subject far too broad... ‘Christianity’ .... The process of selective elimination ultimately terminated in ‘The Nazarene’.”

I’m embarrassed, at age 95 ½, at my age 16-17 stilted speech. But there it is, the first paragraph of my preface. Embarrassed also at the just-pretend publisher: it seems we were told to imagine we were writing a book to be published!

But I’m not embarrassed at the cover, through which diffused light comes only through my cut-out letters THE NAZARENE. For me, Jesus was & is “The Light of the World.”

The 81 pages of “The Nazarene” include classic Western paintings of Jesus in monochrome: in 1935, neither color nor non-Western paintings of Jesus were available. The text refers to the paintings generally by number.

“The Nazarene” was finished Palm Sunday 1935, two months after I turned 17 & one month after my evangelical conversion. For some months, I had been going Sunday mornings to the liberal Methodist Church where I was baptized at age 12 after catechesis, & Sunday evenings to a conservative Baptist church, where I was re-baptized (immersed) after my evangelical conversion. “The Nazarene” shows my blend of liberal & conservative values: I’ve long called myself by the portmanteau word, “libergelical.”