

On Grief and Endlessness

*The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.*

Let us pray: Lord of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things, graft in our hearts the love of thy name and increase in us true religion. Nurture us with all goodness and of thy great mercy keep us in the same. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now, what is your Christian name? My Christian name is Joseph. And who gave you this name? My sponsors gave me this name in baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. And what did your sponsors then promise for you? My sponsors did then promise and vow three things in my name. First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and the vanity of this wicked world and all of the sinful lusts of the flesh. Secondly, they promised and vowed on my behalf that I should believe all of the articles of the Christian faith. And thirdly, that I should keep God's holy will and commandments and walk in the same all the days of my life. And do you not think that you are bound, therefore, so to do? Yes, verily, and by God's help I will. And I heartily thank our heavenly Father that he hath called me to this state of salvation through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, and I pray unto God to give me his grace that I may continue in the same to the very end of my life.

Now you said that your sponsors promised and vowed that you should believe all of the articles of the Christian faith. Would you please recite those articles of the Christian faith? All right. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into hell, and on the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Now, what do you chiefly learn in these articles that you believe? Well, first I learned to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world. And secondly, I learned to believe in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all the world. Thirdly, to believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the People of God. And this Holy Trinity, one God, I praise and I magnify by saying, Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without any end. Amen.

Now, you said your sponsors promised and vowed that you would keep God's holy will and commandments—tell me now, how many of these commandments are

there? There are ten commandments, given in the olden time to the people of Israel. *And what does our Lord Jesus Christ teach you about these commandments?* Well, I learned two things from these commandments, my duty toward God and my duty toward my neighbor.

What is your duty toward God? My duty toward God is to believe in him. And to fear him. And then to love him with all my heart and with all my mind and with all my soul and with all my strength. *Then what is your duty toward your neighbor?* My duty toward my neighbor is to love him as myself and to do unto all men as I would that they should do unto me. To love, honor and help my father and my mother. To honor and obey the civil authority. To submit myself to my governor, to my teachers, and my spiritual pastors. And to order myself in that lowliness and reverence which becometh a servant of God and mankind. And not to hurt anybody by any word or deed and to bear no malice and no hostility in my heart. And to keep my body in temperance, in soberness and in chastity. And keep my hands from picking and stealing from others. And to be true and just in all my dealings. And to keep my tongue from speaking evil and lying and slandering other people. And not to covet nor desire any other man's honor or goods, but to learn and labor truly, to earn my own being and my own living. And to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me from time to time.

Now, do you know this, that you are not able to do these things yourself, nor are you able to walk in the commandments of God? Know ye this, that you are not able to serve him without very special grace which you must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer? What is a prayer that our Lord has taught us to pray under these circumstances? Why, it's the Lord's Prayer. *Well, let us pray it, as Christ, our Saviour, has taught us.* All right. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into trials, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen. *All right. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you from this time and forevermore. Amen.*

Now, what do you think of that? That's the Office of Instruction that came out of the ancient church. About every other day you feel like they should haul you up on the carpet, don't you, and ask you about these matters? When I stumble across such things, I find in my heart a new glow of appreciation that I'm part of the Church of Jesus Christ in history. With all of our stumblings in the church and bumbings and all of the blots on her sacred escutcheon, I am proud to be a part of it.

Now, I want to talk about The Other World. I believe that we're not going to be able to get that Other World into the mind and being of the last fat lady if we are not able to say with precise clarity what we mean in the Sea of Tranquility by the life of endlessness in the post-modern world.

You probably have become aware, as you've studied the chart of The Other World that, though finally there is no progression (there is only interrelatedness and interaction of the four or 16 or 64 states of being delineated there) all of them are in every one of them. To push one button is to finally turn them all on. Here is a paradox that belongs to the essence of The Other World itself: "salvation is once and for all," but the essential nature of once-and-for-all-ness means ever-again-ness. It's something like that kind of a problem that you are dealing with. And, as you looked at the charts, after the first several blushes of coming to terms with various parts of it you could sense something of that progression in it. For instance, when you think of the 16 states of being, the fourth one in each of the four arenas is really an intensification.

In the first one it is *the adoration of God*—falling in love with the mystery. In the second one it's *the intensification of self-knowledge* which is to be found only in that state of being in which you, in fear and trembling become overwhelmingly aware of the fact that you are absolutely and utterly accountable for your 'Be' in history. And only at that moment are you able to see through everything and do you know yourself, even those parts of yourself it is impossible for you to ever know. Only when you grasp the fact that one day you shall stand before the throne of Being-in-itself and *account* for this fantastic opportunity that you have had to live yourself one mighty life and die yourself one mighty death—only when you grasp that you are going to account for this life of yours—the way you expended it, the way you appropriated it, the way you forged it—do you really know what the consciousness of the consciousness about consciousness is. Only then are you intensified, rarified spirit.

And then, the fourth category in the area of the Mountain of Care (in many ways this is the hardest one on the board, save the one I want to talk about in a moment): All my life, and I suppose all your life at one level of consciousness or another, you've struggled with what spiritual power is. I think perhaps you only know what it means to love Christianly—I don't mean some other kind of love—when you understand that Christian love is a release, a creation, a bestowal of unbelievable power that other men do not possess.

I've even fooled with the idea that again and again the church has slipped into a kind of sentimentalistic concept of love precisely because of that power: for the gift of daring to care, not for your own little family and your own little self, your own little church, your own little nation, your own little anything—I say the gift that comes is the gift of power to enable people to serve people. And without that gift, perhaps you've noticed, most of your efforts on behalf of other people are like the seed that was sown on the rocky soil. This is not a matter of pride—this power of Agape—it is a matter of wrenching humility. That's the intensification of the Mountain of Care.

The intensification of the Sea of Tranquility is that state of being which I call *endlessness*. It's the intensification of the fulfillment of serenity, and the fulfillment of joy in the midst of blazing uncertainty, tumultuous anxiety, and tragic-filled joyfulness. The intensification of that is that state of being which is *endlessness, end-less-ness-ness, endlessness, end-less-ness*. But also it's intensification of the love of God, the power of Agape, and the inescapable knowledge that you and you alone give an account of the investment of your life in Being.

I sometimes think that such a chart as *The Other World of Teresa's Seven Mansions*, though utterly necessary because we are rational people, destroys the very thing that your soul reaches for and that something in your mind points to. But if you didn't do that, you'd have sheer chaos. I suppose that epistemologically, I've never gotten over the Kantian insight, which he obviously got from Aristotle, that at this moment forty billion impacts are made upon my sense mechanism providing sense which, if my rational facilities did not have some way of organizing, I would never have what Kant called knowledge or understanding. It's something like that in the states of being. These are—I want to qualify Kant—the relative, socially conditioned categories that organize the billion and one states of being that are constantly attacking your interior depths—categories which enable you to be present to the states of being. But at the same time, they get in the way. The moment that they are organized, the numinal dimension is reduced into the phenomenal in which you are dealing with the real one step removed. And harken well to that; even if you don't understand it, harken well to it; that this is but a screen that enables me to be present to the states of being that I have.

Now, I'm coming back at that indirectly, and I'm coming through the state of being that I've lived with now for a while—grief. I like to think that the guy who invented that word was an artist. Grrr. Eecccc. Fffffff. In a way, that tells all. I am more and more persuaded that the invention of words is the communication of being states.

You and I, if we work in *The Other World*, are moving from being teachers—though we have to teach, from being prophets—though we have to prophesy, from being priests—though we have to mediate, to being pastors (only that word still dries up my mouth), shepherds, carers. We pseudo-clerics got trapped into pastoral counseling in which we used a pseudo-other world to give us our clues to states of being simply because we had no chart of *The Other World*. You and I are going to have to be dealing with many states of being. One of them, of course, is grief. This is a tragic world. I doubt if there has been any pastoral ministry in the dimension of grief even one time anywhere in the world since I was born. There may be exceptions but not many. As evidence of that, you'd be surprised at the way clergy and religious people have tried to minister unto me in the last two weeks. About all you can say is "thank you" and go on.

You have to begin by recognizing the state, and that's crucial. The first experience, of course, is—you're stunned. I was not stunned at my father's death. I cannot remember being stunned ever before. I'm trying to locate this grief in my life. Now this "stunned" is: first of all your future is cut off. Stunned is not some ethereal word; it's dealing with your guts underneath your guts. When you say your future is severed, that means your life is frozen, and it is absolutely frozen and not simply a part of it. It's crucial that you see that. There is a total cutting off of your future which is a frozenness.

And then there is an experience of being rendered immobile. Everything stops; time dims out; and it is very difficult even to see any movement whatsoever, even a rustling of a leaf or the passing of an automobile; and you experience this in terms of

the flow of time within your mind which is your thought process. At the same time you become sensitive in an extremely 'super' sense. I do not mean other kinds of experiences, such as you have had in the past, of perception or your capacity to see through something. That's not there at all. But you are aware of every single thing that is happening; and you've got to throw that over against the fact that time itself has stopped; that some way or another you do not miss a thing. For instance, if you were in the presence of this state of being in somebody else, you had better not go trim your fingernails in public or probe your proboscis—it'll be seen. And you'll see in a moment why that is true. But there is not depth perception, there is not seeing through. Quite the contrary. The curtain is down.

Then you are aware of a thick quietness, a thick silence, and you know there's noise going on. That would be a fine time to live in East Garfield Park along the Expressway on the West Side of Chicago where the noise is always there. You would know it's going on, but you wouldn't hear a thing. The silence itself seems utterly objective. And in a strange fashion, then, you are forced to hear everything. You do not miss a thing. But all you experience is silence.

Here you're dealing with a crucial part of our theology. What you are describing in depth is contingency. But you are describing it now, not through intellectual constructs or concepts, but through the language of the state of being. And this is fine and proper. This is not for initiates. It's for your old hands in the Way. My pedagogical point here is that, if the job of the serving order is to care for the movement, now you are going to be caring for people who have been at it for five years, ten years, fifteen years and more; then you and I have to learn how to care for them, and to care for them in the deeps. Many of them have failed along the way because we did not know how. You don't beat yourself over the head. What you don't know, you don't know. You give what you have to give, and if later you have more, you give more.

Now, a second way to run through the state of being of grief is the experience of being empty. And it's a sudden sense of being absolutely drained. The crude illustration I have is: you've been in some bathtubs where the suction is so great that if you pull the plug . . . shhhh . . . it all goes out at once. The bottom falls. Some of you remember in our early studying of Tillich, in the last chapters of *The Courage to Be*, he deals with spiritual vitality and then relates spiritual and physical vitality. There is a total evacuation of your universe. You are aware immediately that something is missing; and yet it doesn't come to you as *something* is missing. It's as if suddenly *everything* is missing.

You've seen some mystery stories in which somebody was killed in a big furnished room, and you were there. You had to go to the police and you come back, and it's an empty room. Remember some of those mystery stories? It's like you've never seen it before, but you *know*; you thought you knew that an hour before, that was a . . . it's an empty room. I mean, your universe is gone. You've got to understand clearly that I am not describing what might happen. I am describing what *does* happen, or you don't have *this* state of being. You have some other state of being. This is not my subjectivity that I'm fooling with in any way whatsoever.

You also begin to see the cloud appear? That's not the cloud of a postasy, the cloud of the desert, the cloud of the darkness that a spirit man always lives with. That is not some kind of ethereal image or idea you have in your head. That's the real stuff. When you bite on it, it says "Ouch." Adler's concept of the hole at the center of being becomes very real to you in the sense that the hole is broadened in such a fashion that it utterly consumes your whole inner being. It becomes like a stovepipe, one of those straight ones—no bottom, period. It doesn't funnel into a hole. Then this hole seems as if it's utterly unbridgeable. There is no way whatsoever to ever get a bottom within that.

It is then that you become aware of your own *fragility*. I like that word. I don't like the words "You become aware of your own death." Of course you become aware of your own death, but it's far more subtle than that. We've have some wild ones in our group who can go off on cloud nine at the snap of your fingers, but you see, all the rest of us can go off on cloud nine with the snap of our fingers. That's what I mean by fragility. Or some under this hardship or that hardship collapse in the way. You and I have to remember that we are just as collapsable as the one who stumbled over a daisy and gave up his mission. That kind of fragility is there. You grasp that you could be blown over if somebody stood at the right place and blew. You experience yourself as that fragile. *You're not there*. There's nothing to blow over. It's emptied. It's drained. Therefore, a puff could send you.

The other way people in history have talked about this is with the category of *weightedness* or *heaviness*. Isn't it funny that when God gives us a chance in our time to think through into the deep secrets of the spirit dimensions of life, you begin to grasp the ontological wisdom that our fathers held, which you and I lost because our immediate fathers had lost it. When you push through, you begin to see that they knew what they were talking about; and you can find many books on these subjects. Certainly a strange heaviness comes, and it comes immediately. You become aware, I think, that your mind is heavy. It's almost as if you feel your brain is heavy, and then you become aware, I think, that your body is heavy, and then, unbelievably, you become aware that your life is heavy.

It's like there is no resting place. Like many of the moans that come out of the grief-stricken black man in his seemingly impossible situation in life, you have a deep sense of the burden of life itself. It's like nobody could ever tell you again that life is a ball. The first thing you would say to that is "bullshit." That's what you experience! Life is nothing but sheer burden. Then you are obviously tired beyond anything you could ever dream of without a sleepy bone in your body.

The same experience of weightedness comes when you become suddenly old. At first I thought that's because I'm sixty. Then it got through my skull that it had nothing to do with whether you are twenty or sixty. I felt like I was one hundred years old. But so does the twenty-year old. He's one hundred years old—no more, no less—just one hundred years old.

Only a mature spirit person can begin to smell the grace that is in this (it has nothing to do with age). You are dealing with contingency and that awareness obviously is the grace of God.

The other experience of weightedness is: everything becomes trivia. *Everything* becomes trivia. Some people are not bright enough not to bring up some practical problems. If you want any sensible answer, this is not the time to bring up a problem that *you've* got, because this person (it has nothing to do with intention)—*he just does not care*—about anything. You could even tell him that you wife and twelve children were burned to death in a fire. *He would not care*. I'm not talking about what ought to be. I'm just telling you the way it is and you're going to have to minister to people. Then everything becomes *raw intentionality*. And this is a flip. If you decide to move a foot over here, it doesn't just happen. You *decide* to move a foot over here. If you decide to walk into that room, you have to stand there and *decide* to look Pat in the eye. All of the spontaneity is gone. Life has burdened and crushed it out.

Another way people have described this is that you experience *radical abstraction* of yourself. You experience not being there. This is what people mean when they say they are out of their mind. They are abstracted from themselves. And yet they experience themselves as being there, but they are not there. It is *somebody else* that is there where they are. While you who are *not* there are casually observing what is happening to somebody else that is there; this is what I call *negative transcendence* in which you are out in front of yourself unintentionally and with unfreedom in utter disrelationship.

Now that's just your immediate state of being. But you can't stop there. Because if you stop there, then in The Other World it's obvious there are problems. But everybody knows that in The Other World there are no problems, no burdens, no hostility. Therefore, you can't stop there because that's just one big mess of problems, period.

In the midst of this the spirit begins to operate. It's not as though it wasn't operating, and then starts. You become *aware* of the spirit operating. And here is obviously where temptation enters; for this is the same thing I mean by spirit operating. First of all self-pity sets in. There's a subjective side and an objective side to it. Inside, you experience yourself as persecuted. Outside, whatever reality there is in this world is being unfair. It's asking just *one ounce too much*. It's the sense that it's got something against you. This isn't good or bad. It is the way it is. You go through your life and you think of your wife; you think of your first boy; you think of your second boy; you think of your third boy. And then you go into your range of collegiality in history. Then you go into what your mission has been in history, and you're flooded with *self-pity*. And no morality here. This is an ontological state of being. At the moment you don't think of this, but later you'll see (only on the other side of what I'm going to talk about in a moment) that this is exactly true of every human being's life. And he's aware of this in the midst of the shock: Everyone. It shows on some people's faces more than it does on others. But here is intensified *life has mistreated me*. Not her, not him. It has mistreated me. And your being is consumed with self-pity, and you know every ounce of what you are saying is *true*. That's the key.

The second thing that happens is what I call *the flagellation of pride*. Some people, I suppose, who operate on the moral level would think that at times of grief

you think of the things you've done wrong in life. That's not true. I'm sure it is true of other states of being but here it is exactly the opposite. You feel that God is being vindictive, and He's punishing you, not for immoral mistakes of life, but for ontological mistakes of life. This comes, of course, under the rubric of weakness or pride, but it's not morality. It has nothing to do with the immediate object or occasion of your grief. In terms of pride, I suppose a million times down deep in myself I'd say "Get off my back!" I wish to hell I'd never mentioned showers of blessing. I wish to hell I'd never mentioned that God had been unusually gracious to us in the last ten years. I repented a billion times that I'd ever suggested that we had a great outpouring of the Spirit and that we ought to learn to be spontaneously grateful to God. That's what God did; he decided He'd teach you a lesson about your *pride*. Therefore, He's *vindictive* and from now on you'd better be careful how you say out loud what the wonders of life are. You'd better be careful about how you write songs about waltzing over the waters of the abyss. For whatever goes on in this universe, He can take the snot out of any snot-nose there is. And He's just the one who does it. (I'm not saying this is the way it ought to be—it is the way it is.)

And then comes *the spirit of rebellion*. This spirit of rebellion happens when the image of what goes on out there is demonic. And it's malevolent. This is when you cry, "Why me?"—that there is no justice, let alone mercy. But oh, this theme has been in history, hasn't it? And only after that does the despair of cynicism set in. This is the big joke—that you've been forsaken. And then you discover that your capacity for trusting *anything* is gone. This is the flip side: That you're utterly forsaken, therefore you can no longer trust creation, you can no longer trust the church or a bearded whippy-hippy in a white long robe that wandered around the highways and byways, you no longer can trust Luther or Aquinas, you no longer can trust your colleagues. Your life has been a joke. And your cause exists no more.

First of all is the objective description of the state of being; and these are the dynamics of selfhood within it. And you have to get very clear on these, with a subjective side and an objective side. And only then do you become aware that you are being attacked by a third party.

On the plane coming home they were showing *Cabaret*. I conned my brother into buying both of us earphones. I saw it this time, I saw it, I saw it, I saw it! There's no doubt in my mind but it has a message which I couldn't see, it was so repulsive to me. Every man has his other world and without the other world you cannot exist; and if you do not have *The Other World*, then you have to *conjure up* the other world, or you have no existence whatsoever: Come to the Cabaret. That's why inside the Cabaret they were rehearsing everything that went on outside. I saw some things I did not see before. The devil's face would just appear for a moment on the screen and then fade off. When she was deciding to abort and therefore continue being a harlot and not pick up her life and start afresh, his face just appeared. And it was shocking. Yes, and by the way, that word *shocking* is in the movie!

You become aware that you are being attacked by a third party. This is why Paul has always astounded me when he personified sin. You grasp that once you give

yourself over to a reality, that reality is operating as a third party relative to you. That was his insight about sin—and so the personification here of the devil. If it's just something going on *inside* you, you struggle and struggle. Not here. You're attacked this way, then you're attacked that way, then you're attacked . . . and you become aware that what's going on does not engage intentionality relative to any place where you are being attacked. Therefore, they are not after this or that or the other in you; they are after *you*. Because you are attacked from many sides, they slap you and get away, and they slap you and get away. They are not after a response to that slap. Then you see he's not after anything he is pressing you on—he's after *you*. And of course, obviously what he wants is two things. One is a betrayal of *God*, or a disavowing of God. And a betrayal of *yourself* and a disavowing of yourself.

Dr. Carolyn Palmer was with a group of people in a conference. She got angry and showed her anger and she said the devil appeared and said, "Uh-huh, Carolyn, God doesn't love you, or He wouldn't let you get angry and make a fool out of yourself!" She struggled with this, and right in the midst of the group she said out loud (they didn't hear Satan, you understand), *He does too*. They thought she'd gone berserk, but she said Satan took to his heels. He wants to destroy selfhood. And it's at this point that you become aware that what is going on here is not a problem in your life; it's the struggle of authenticity itself, or the love of God. One doesn't have to be very bright to get hold of Job. I don't know how many sons and daughters he had, but they all went, didn't they? And his cattle and so on. Satan was sent and Satan struck him here and struck him there and Job says, "No, I am an authentic man." Can you grasp that? Authenticity and the grace of God are but two sides of the same coin, and you cannot dishonor the one without the other. Now what comes out of this struggle when you stand? This is the great indicative. You see, as if you never saw before, the dreadful impartiality of God. And that's like the fires of hell itself. GOD HAS NO FAVORITES. Do you understand that if that had been some wino's son down in one of the streets of Chicago it wouldn't have upset me at all? Who am I, in God's eyes, different from that wino? nothing whatsoever! That is *the horrible impartiality* of God that finally, as the Hebrews saw, makes God God, and not the figment of our imagination. And tomorrow it may be *you*, and it may be *you*, and it may be *you*. God doesn't care whether you are twenty or sixty, black or white, male or female, affluent or not affluent. It's as if you never saw that before. The holy impartiality of God. The wholly other, the wildness of God which can never be captured by our rational sense of justice nor our rational sense of mercy. God is freedom. He has no favorites—even His own Son. our fathers have known this.

The second thing that you come away with (somebody called these the souvenirs): All of your life from that moment on is nothing but a testing. *Nothing but a testing*. Everything that happens to you is just a testing of both imputed and imparted righteousness—the integrity of your election.

The third souvenir is *the ceaselessness of apostasy*. I have said in lectures that nothing ever again could shock me. I had seen it all, I said, I lied. I had not seen it all. It is easy to talk about the cloud of apostasy, the cloud of darkness in which meaning

goes away, about the experience of aridity, where the vitality that makes you iron is no longer present. So easy to talk about. But you see this cloud of apostasy you bring from the center *is real*. Yes, one must thank God and one must have courage to talk about showers of blessing. I mean *showers* of blessing. I don't mean the kind of thanksgiving that comes on the other side of the struggle that I described. Yet, one must be ever mindful not of his moral weakness—to hell with that!—but his ontological weakness. That's the cloud of apostasy, of the desert.

The last point you come away with is the sense of *being doomed*. I can best point to that by very briefly saying a word about endlessness. Plato said in his treatise on religion that every high religion had an ultimate reality, an object of devotion, an ethical system, and a view of immortality. I've spent most of my life fighting that, but I'd like more and more to get back inside of Plato. If you work back—through what western civilization did with that to make it into an abstract doctrine—to the state of being, then I think that you and I can have something to say to our time. In a spatial metaphor as well as a temporal one, as Richard Niebuhr points out, we can talk about endlessness as well as resurrection. And to bring the two together, you are dealing with a state of being.

Now a state of being knows nothing about time or space. Therefore, when you are dealing with endlessness in our time you are not dealing with chronological time nor external space. That kills once and for all any spatial concept after death and any temporal concept after death, and a state of being therefore only has one time dimension, and that is *Now*.

Neanderthal man put his hand on his head and tried to get an image to grasp hold of this state of being within himself. Later centuries made that into an abstract system of time and space after death. This abstract system was not in the mind of Mr. Neanderthal who came up against the awareness of the state of eternity. The great image, the great think is that you are related to that without which you cannot recognize your contingency. The awareness of the passingness of all things is an impossible state of being if there is not a fixed point. Do you grasp this? There is no such thing as motion without a fixed point. And for the man within this state of being, as we would grasp it today, he has become aware of the Eternal Mystery before he can grasp the coming-to-be and the coming-not-to-be.

It's hard to get that said, in terms of your interior state, because you've been so conditioned with this, as man invented the concept of death. Cummings say, "Oh death, I wouldn't have death, but dying is fine." Man experiences dying; he invented death. It is man who said that death was the end of that which is meaningful life. Otherwise death, as your Australian aborigines believed, is a return to the dream-world, as they call it. I'm pointing out the fact that man, and particularly man in the western world, invented the concept of death as the conqueror of that which alone is meaningful.

In the awareness of the Mystery, before which life goes and before which death goes, or when we grasp that both our life and our death are equally meaningful within the Mystery—that is when you experience what I mean by endlessness. You can say

God takes my death from me and God takes my life from me, but what He does not take from me is my *Be*. And that *Be* is the relationship to that which is the transparency equally of both life and death; Sheer Mystery. That's the endlessness.

It's like you made a little compact with God, and you say to God that you will be your *Be* and in being your *Be* you will enable God to *Be* concretely. And God said, "Very fine. Therefore I will allow you to participate in my endlessness of Mystery itself." If you begin to get concretion on that, you see that your poetry of heaven and hell If you don't like that poetry, take some other. But it's the question of the one who intentionally *be's* his *Be*, and the one who, if you can put it this way, *be's* without intentionality—and therefore his *be* is *not* a *Be*. What's the difference? That's the problem. Here I have to work with the man who for me has done most in this area, Jean Paul Sartre. His key to other people, or hell, or the *No Exit*, is that your death is that experience in which your life is frozen—immortalized, if you please. And the difference between the one who did *not* be his *Be* is that he dies a closed, frozen life. The one who *be'd* his *Be* lives an open, frozen life.

Now, practical consequences: Richard Niebuhr *be's*—it has nothing to do with you; I'm talking about a state of being. Richard Niebuhr *be's* his *Be*—it has nothing to do with memory whatsoever. His being *be'd* the being of Being. And is there forever. And when all things pass away, that *Be* will be there. It has nothing to do with his doing this or knowing that; it has to do with his *Be*. It'll just be there forever. And that state of being I am describing is NOW. It's beyond time. In a strange way, Kazantzakis was able to communicate this far more backwards than he was forwards, but he was trying to communicate this state of being.

Now, you ask, what are the great feels? I think that terror is in it. It's the terror of responsibility. I mentioned self-pity. It's that kind of terror If you have that state of being, it's impossible. It's that kind of *terrifying* pity that comes. You knew, in the 19th century at least, when people thought of going to heaven as something really downright tremendous, they'd lost the concept of endlessness as a state of being: it is terrifying. I've used the word *the in-finality*. I believe what I've heard people say, that it is God's gift that all of us die. We couldn't stand to go on and on and on and on. That's the terror I am talking about.

Nine thousand years from now, what will I be . . . Why did I say nine thousand? Why not 99? How long is there going to be Something and not Nothing? And even then, the Nothing, that is the Nothing because the Something was, will be there. That's the fright.

The next one is impertinence. I've dealt with that category a great deal. But, it seems this state of being is where that dread is intensified to the limits. You participate in the everlastingness of Being. I mentioned the West having invented death. Don't forget that. The whole concept of Nirvana—which I do not agree with, but it's pointing to this—there's a frightfulness in it that I think has been overlooked even by the East. But there's some indicative that it has not.

Then comes the dread of fanaticism. This is a strange kind of fanaticism. John is very clear that this eternality was now; it had nothing to do with grave or no grave in

this instance. This means passion. In that state you cannot exist without passion. I am wondering to myself if this is not the full release, and only here, of passion. *You* are deciding the manifestation of Being, in daring to become, daring to acknowledge the indicative of endlessness. It's the passion that is present. Now I don't care what poetry you use (the church has known this in the past, and they have so moralized and woodenized it that you and I had to laugh at it and reject it)—right this moment you and I are deciding whether we are going to heaven or to hell. Use your own poetry. That means passion. As long as you have your goddamned feet propped up on a table, reflecting this way or that way, then you don't know about this state of being: endlessness. Again and again and again in history, in the histories of all peoples, this state of being has intruded itself. Now you have the metaphysics bracketed in any phenomenological exposition; you're not interested in that; you're interested in describing the state of being that forges my being, and therefore the Being that *he's* in history.

I'll not deal with what you take away from this, but only point out two things which we have pointed out before. This one is Paul: "If I live, I live unto the Lord. If I die, I die unto the Lord so whether I live or whether I die, I am the Lord's." That's an articulation of what I mean by endlessness. That was his practical stance in the midst of life, out of which flowed the being-filled courage that made Paul the beginner of that body of people that transformed the earth.

The other one is from the the Old Testament. It's more a matter of lucidity squared than anything else. In the early days when the theological revolution was more in its fluid period than it is now, we fooled a great deal with the Exodus understanding of the term *Yah*. You remember lectures—the "I am that I am." In our day it has been translated, "I will be what I will be." Then, I've always liked Buber. He said the word *Yah* meant "This is it." Or "You've had it, brother." I like that. But in terms of endlessness, I like the way King James' boys rendered that: "I am That I am." Let's say the Lord himself uttered those words.

On this trip I saw Marcel Marceau, a great, great privilege. He did the whole evening by himself, the only soul there—captured the audience. He did one of his scenes behind a screen about four feet wide. He did David and Goliath. He came out as David and didn't look very tall. He'd go behind the screen, then come out again and look like he was nine feet tall. Then he fought back and forth and had Goliath chasing David around. Just as fast as he could, he'd run as David, then come out as Goliath right behind him. An unbelievable skill! I figure when the Lord broke loose the heavens and said who he was, he swelled up like Goliath: "I Am That I Am." On the day he did that, he was articulating the state of being that I mean by endlessness. That's the state that He agrees to allow whosoever will pay the price in, and through, and with His Son. And whosoever knoweth this state knows like the back of his hand the 63 above it, some way or another.