# THE PASCH OF CHRIST: OUR COURAGE IN TIME

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LET ME PUT the question this way: Can Christians today understand their share in the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the sending of his Spirit in a way that more clearly imparts courage for living? How can the pasch of Christ be a transformation turning us radically from every resignation to death towards renewed commitment to life? The question is concerned with *active* faith in the paschal mystery, with our daily management of such apparently disparate attitudes: the approach of death as life's termination, the hope of eternal life as its fulfilment. But the two, it seems, necessarily belong together. Our concerns about life and death are as inseparable as our fears about them. The passage through death is at the same time the truest way to life. This unitary character to the pasch of Christ may well be implied by the doctrine of redemption, the liturgy of the Church, and the life of Christians. And yet it is a faith that all too easily seems mere paradox—or, still worse, an ideological evasion. How can we experience its truth anew, and as active truth?

Let me organize my reflections with three related questions. First, does the experience of the paschal mystery lead us to health or to heroism? Put in other words, how realistic is it for us to hope for courage through our sharing in the passover of Christ? Second, how does our experience of the paschal mystery really bond us to Christ? Beyond the basic definition attempted in response to my first question, what are the specifically Christian dimensions of our courage before death and for life? Third, how does the paschal mystery give us a courage that bonds us to one another? Here, considering the courage of resurrection faith as a social reality, I must respond to the criticism that it is individualistic and self-centered. In conclusion, I shall say a brief word about our courage as today's form of faith and its relation to the virtues of hope and love.

## HEALTH AND HEROISM

Turning to our first question, the option of health or heroism, we must be frank about how foolish we can seem when we speak of taking courage from someone who died almost two thousand years ago and whose pattern of life we are supposedly invited to share. Might we not be better advised simply to take responsibility for our own limited lives? Who can presume to accept the burden of a message that pretends to embrace all human beings? Isn't such an invitation to heroism really a grandiose

immaturity that fails to recognize life's boundaries? Or is it, still worse, an abject subservience to a code others have devised, requiring us to model our lives after their own?

Just this critique of the contemporary moral situation has been proposed by important post-Freudian analysts of our culture. None among them more vigorously criticizes "all inherited therapies of commitment" than Philip Rieff, the distinguished sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania whose concern for the relation between culture and character has given us masterful revisions of the Freudian legacy.[1] Rieff distinguishes three character ideals which have dominated Western civilization and then a fourth which has emerged in our own century. The first was the pagan ideal of the political man, whose fundamental commitment was to the life of the polis, to public life. The second ideal emerged from Judaism through Christianity as the religious man, whose commitment was to an authority beyond the person's own conscience, ultimately that of God, though mediated in countless fateful ways by both church and society. The third moral type was the economic man, who emerged from the Enlightenment and whose confidence in the progress of reason led to drastically unrealizable dreams of the future. Now we are coming to recognize, according to Rieff, a fourth character ideal, the psychological man, in whose case history we can detect "the nervous habits of his father economic man: he is anti-heroic, shrewd, carefully counting his satisfactions and dissatisfactions, studying unprofitable commitments as the sins most to be avoided. From this immediate ancestor, psychological man has constituted his own careful economy of the inner life."[2]

Whereas the political type lived by an ideal of might and the religious type by an ideal of right, the psychological type is guided exclusively by insight, "practical, experimental insight leading to the mastery of his own personality."[3] Rieff cherishes Freud as both teacher and paradigm for this new moral vision. He argues that "the essentially secular aim of the Freudian spiritual guidance is to wean away the ego from either a heroic or a compliant attitude to the community.... To emancipate man's 'I' from the communal 'we' is 'spiritual guidance' in the best sense Freud

[1] See especially his *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1961) and *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966).

[2] *Freud* 391. Writing later of the therapeutic character type, Rieff adds: "Under foreseeable ideological and technological conditions, this emerging moral ideal is unlikely to be a working-man; on the contrary, the therapeutic will be a man of leisure, released by technology from the regimental discipline of work so as to secure his sense of well-being in highly refined alloplastic ways" (*Triumph* 236).

[3] *Freud*, loc. cit.

could give to the words."[4] With anguished eloquence he urges us to learn Freud's realism about the unavoidable conflict embedded in human life, the inevitable frustration of its expectations, the impossibility of all-embracing, comprehensive meaning, the ineluctable finality of death.[5] With Freud, or at least a major strand of his thought, Rieff draws no sharp distinction between the normal and the neurotic. Normality becomes an ethical ideal rather than a state of ordinary health on the basis of which other, more fully human aspirations may develop. Taking "self-concern as the highest science,"[6] psychological man turns from heroism. "To be a complete man, self-united and controlled, states that counter-ideal of health in the name of which the old constraining ideals of devotion and self-sacrifice are rejected."[7]

Rieff's analysis of the fundamental options for human life today has the great merit of criticizing all forms of repressive authority, even if he tends to identify public authority per se with repression. In distinguishing neurosis and sin, he is also clearer than analysts like Ernest Becker, although the task is, of course, made easier for Rieff by his critique of sin as an outmoded understanding of conscience. His very criticism of the aberrancies of religious consciousness heightens the contrast between the incapacities of freedom in neurosis and its misuse in what Christians know as sin. Whatever we may think of his psychological ideal, we may readily acknowledge that it well describes certain character types in contemporary society, and perhaps its own distinguished author most of all.

But most of us reading Rieff today are likely to stumble on his fundamentally individualistic interpretation of existence. Acknowledging his astute criticisms of various social and political movements over the last two decades,[8] one suspects nevertheless that his interpretations both of Freud and of reality are shaped more than he realizes by World War II and its aftermath, a time first of horrified recovery from totalitarianism and then of increasing American conformism. Individuals, it is true, are in continual need of rediscovering and redefining themselves vis-à-vis the various communities to which they belong. But apart from such com-

[4] Ibid. 361 f. One is reminded here of Hans Urs von Balthasar's analysis of the "solitude beyond love" to which so many writers earlier in our century aspired; cf. *The God Question and Modern Man* (New York: Seabury, 1967) 107 ff.

[5] Among recent theological essays on death, few so boldly explore a similarly ironic perspective as Bartholomew J. Collopy, S.J., "Theology and the Darkness of Death," *TS* 39 (1978) 22–54.

[6] *Freud* 390.

[7] Ibid. 65. One hero remains, the first psychoanalyst who himself has led us into the promised land of antiheroism.

[8] Cf. his *Fellow Teachers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

munities they will not have the opportunity of finding what precisely is unique in their own experience and personality. Furthermore, our present social context, both domestically and internationally, suggests that it is not so much the threat of totalitarian society as it is the loss of fundamental human solidarity that presents the basic human dilemma of this and future decades. Rieff's criticism of the aspiration to heroism falls short of being adequate to a new historical situation.

Most basically, however, it is the naturalization of experience, the exclusion of any truly self-transcending dynamism, to which I most object in Rieff. He has, indeed, a severe and demanding moral vision. As Don Browning has written, "Rieff, more than any other Freudian interpreter, has demonstrated that the neutral, analytical attitude of psychoanalysis constitutes a certain kind of ethic—an ethic of honesty."[9] But honesty about one's experience is not yet the choice of direction for that experience. The criticism of earlier, repressive moral standards is not yet the construction of new and more adequate ones. And no one, of course, who is unwilling to allow ultimacy in ethical questions is likely to acknowledge human self-transcendence as stirred by an eternal ground and goal. For commitment both to the good and to the Good absolutely, one needs courage as well as commitment. But neither courage nor commitment proves fully possible on a foundation of self-concern alone. It is one and the same movement, however differentiated through time and circumstances, that carries us towards a life shared with others, a life truly our own, and a life recognized as coming from an eternal ground that is also its goal. As far as I can see, we are wiser to choose what Jarl Dyrud calls "the triumph of relatedness over inwardness"[10] rather than Rieff's "triumph of the therapeutic."

May I suggest, then, what courage means as the corollary—or better, the power—of commitment and trust in our lives? What is crucial here is the example of Jesus, the courage with which *he* approached both life and death. In his death, as in his preaching of his Father's intentions for human life, we see him living his life for others. In the Passion we see him accepting the apparent power of his opponents over him, resolutely faithful even in his final hours to the gospel of God's reign in human affairs. In this death all those share who believe in him—and are thereby offered not only eternal life as future promise but present new life as its pledge. The practice of resurrection faith can be seen as its indirect verification, for ourselves as well as for those with whom we would share it. No concern for eternal life can be genuine apart from concern for life

[9] Don S. Browning, *Generative Man: Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (New York: Dell, 1975) 44. Browning is convincingly critical of Rieff's "penultimate ethic."

[10] Jarl E. Dyrud, "Facing the Future," *Criterion* 14 (1975) 11–13, at 13.

in the present, especially for the life of those who lack most of its privileges.[11] Through Christian courage a new community arises, with life increasing in proportion as it is shared with others. The basic elements of our analysis, accordingly, are: a centering of courage on the human person of Jesus; its embodiment in the communal life of disciples whose lives are shared as his was; the offer of courage to all men and women of all times; and its ultimate direction as coming from and invited towards the One whom Jesus calls his Father.

Christian courage may thus be defined as the capacity to live for others, the ability to accept the challenge of giving one's life for the sake of human solidarity before God. Communal rather than selfish, it dares to act on behalf of a shared humanity. Its primary lesson from the life of Jesus is the law of the cross, the hope for one's truest self through the very sacrifice of self.[12] What seems at first most paradoxical about this lesson becomes gradually in the experience of Christian courage most familiar: the deeper and more inclusive love that arises when one gives not because of one's own need but because of another's. Our courage is thus called to share in the pattern of Christ's life daily and, at our deaths, definitively. It lives at once contemplatively and actively, from both recollection and anticipation of the humanity God takes for God's own in Christ. Anyone who acts with courage for the sake of that humanity, who professes it publicly and lives according to that profession, is guided by the Spirit of Christ—as we learn each year anew on the feast of Pentecost.

Certain precisions are in order if this concept of courage is not to become so all-inclusive as to lose its meaning. Clearly, I am suggesting a more active, social conception of faith than is generally implied by theories of faith which center on its elements of trust and conviction. Undoubtedly, faith should be understood as implying trust in God, and sometimes it means that especially. Martin Luther is the classic Christian representative of this view. From a psychological point of view, Erik Erikson has proposed an epigenetic plan of development according to which a basic sense of trust becomes gradually integrated with a succession of human virtues critical to the various stages of the life cycle. Contemporary theology as well underlines the centrality of trust in faith. Avery Dulles, for example, has spoken of the three elements or compo-

[11] This is a common theme emerging ever more clearly from authors such as H. Richard Niebuhr through Edward Schillebeeckx. Peter Selby, for one, puts it well when he writes: "No community can credibly speak of the resurrection unless it has placed itself in the situations of the struggle for justice and truth in human affairs which raise the question of who has authority" (*Look for the Living: The Corporate Nature of Resurrection Faith* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976] 179).

[12] See, e.g., Avery Dulles, *The Survival of Dogma* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971) 52–57.

nents of faith as conviction, commitment, and trust.[13] In a later essay, developing his view of faith as a combination of commitment and discernment, Dulles distinguishes the intellectualist theory of faith, which emphasizes conviction; the fiducial theory, centering on trust; and more recent performative theories, such as liberation theology, with roots in a commitment to justice and social transformation.[14] Without entering into a consideration of revolutionary praxis, I have tried here to propose an understanding of faith that includes both the theoretical and the practical dimensions. I speak, then, of our faith as self-transcending courage, understood both interpretively and performatively.

I speak, furthermore, not so much of heroism as of courage. No one word, of course, suffices for the central reality of faith. But it seems to me more appropriate to conceive it in terms of courage, which may be understood in a more democratic and daily manner, than in terms of heroism, which so easily connotes the aristocratic and the ideal. We may still tend even to understand courage in terms of the singular actions of the soldier or the exemplary leadership of the national hero. But we should recall that the actions of a Martin Luther King, Jr., or a Dorothy Day intend not so much to establish heroic ideals as to call us to lives of similar dedication, to a similar courage on behalf of our fellow human beings. Courage has thus seemed a more timely concept than heroism. For similar reasons I have preferred it to notions such as creativity and risk. We want courage not just for the singular challenges in our experience but for the fabric of everyday life as well.

Are we not still asking too much, however, by suggesting courage as the basic dynamic of Christian experience? Are we adequate to the criticism of analysts like Rieff when we propose a capacity to live for others as the core of Christian life? Must we not acknowledge that all too many in our contemporary society of power and affluence are nevertheless so insecure and troubled that it would be foolhardy to advise them to give their lives for others? In fact, the immediate goal for many people in this therapeutic society must be to come to some peace with themselves long before they can contemplate what generous contributions they might make to the community around them. They must indeed be themselves before they can give to others.

This relation between being and giving is certainly fundamental. If you do not recognize the demands and unique rhythms of inner experience, you can scarcely be a reliable guide to the possible harmony of communal

[13] Ibid., chap. 1, "The Changing Forms of Faith." Among theologians interested in trust as a fundamental category, Schubert Ogden and David Tracy in this country and Hans Küng in Europe deserve special mention.

[14] "The Meaning of Faith Considered in Relationship to Justice," in John C. Haughey, ed., *The Faith That Does Justice* (New York: Paulist, 1977) 10–46.

experience. But we do seek a structure and goal for human experience that builds on natural abilities and freely transforms them through the conflicts of everyday life towards a passage from death to life. We do not intend to overlook sickness, conflict, or failure. On the contrary, death so evidently can symbolize a possible term for each of these experiences. But correlative to a realistic view of life's limitations is an appreciation of the possibilities inherent in those very limitations. And so I suggest that we conceive courage as the capacity derived from Christ of making our fragile lives into something lastingly loving.

My proposal, far from overlooking the frail character of human psychic equilibrium, demands insight into the developmental relationship between health and courage. Giving one's life for others supposes that one has already integrated it at a certain level. We may not overlook this basic requirement of personal identity when we assess challenges to it. But the gospel is not addressed to people for whom sickness or health is the basic issue; it answers those who ask whether there is a final value and direction for their lives. In this century of depth psychology we probably know more intimately than ever before how repeatedly the human personality is called to the reintegration of its experiences and powers. But we also know how finally helpless one remains if integration becomes a goal in itself. For this reason the Christian message may summon us to a new courage about the human prospect, while it also testifies to its own truth by the healing power it imparts. As the Gospels attest, healing is a sign of still greater promise for healed lives: God's own reign in a new human community. But even where healing is not whole, seed may be planted that will give us courage to act in hope of that coming kingdom. We may also expect that advances in personal identity can provide occasions for greater generativity. Neither health nor basic trust should be taken for granted, but we fail to appreciate them most critically if we disregard the higher aspirations because of which they exist. As a student of mine recently wrote, when petitioning for ordination, "In this back-and-forth movement between success and failure, neurosis and integration, I have found that God has been an invitation into reality."

It may thus be appropriate to speak of a dialectic of maturity and generosity. This may be viewed, in fact, as the psychologically developmental side of the more general creaturely dialectic of activity and passivity. Maturity as an ease with the different and often inevitably conflicting demands of life is the necessary condition for socially constructive generosity; we should expect courage of ourselves and others only in some proportion to a developing sense of ourselves. Without an appreciation of human vulnerability and life's unpredictability, our ability partially to direct and control experience becomes a diminishment rather

than an enhancement. Just as under the conditions of a finite creation we can never separate the elements of activity and passivity, of self-expression and self-surrender, so also we can never entirely separate the aspects of maturity and courage in our experience. Nevertheless, we may reasonably distinguish, first, health as a state of physical and psychic adaptability for functioning as a human being; then, maturity as the ability to deal with the conflicts and tensions of adult experience; and finally, developing maturity as the basis for what may be increasingly courageous lives. Under ordinary circumstances the courage of mature faith understands that it is called to give its life daily rather than all in a day.

But how, more specifically—and this is our second question—is our courage also Christ's?

## COURAGE WITH CHRIST

In a classic study of courage and anxiety, Paul Tillich saw the need to distinguish clearly between courage and health as aspects of human life. In his Terry Lectures at Yale, subsequently published as *The Courage To Be*, Tillich acknowledged that psychotherapy must often approach neurosis and well-being simply as different points on a continuum, with everyday life comprising moments of each. Nevertheless, he held that even psychological research into anxiety needs a criterion in order to determine which phenomena are more basic than others. Such a criterion should be framed in view of the recognition that *existential* anxiety about the possible loss of reality is a natural and inevitable determinant of human life. Anxiety of this sort is ineradicable for a realistic person. The courage to be faces anxiety and admits its needs to struggle for the preservation and fostering of life. The pathological personality, however, turns from such conflict and succumbs to *neurotic* anxiety. While healthy self-affirmation acknowledges that human existence is threatened by negativity at various levels, "he who does not succeed in taking his anxiety courageously upon himself," wrote Tillich, "can succeed in avoiding the extreme situation of despair by escaping into neurosis. He still affirms himself but on a limited scale. *Neurosis is the way of avoiding nonbeing by avoiding being.*"[15] Neurosis resists conflict, in other words, by reducing reality.

Now all of us need to reduce reality to some extent in order to live successfully. It is natural rather than neurotic to limit the challenges one will accept at any particular time in life. But Tillich's point was that the neurotic personality affirms itself with a limited realism that is also fixed; its neurosis is not only a defense but also an escape. It is not a person's sensitivity to conflict that can make the person sick. That sensitivity is

[15] *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1952) 66; italics his.

a source of creativity. But when adjustment to conflict fails and a form of escape from reality is chosen, then neurosis results.

Tillich's distinction between health as a fundamental state of human life and courage as its most conspicuous aspiration seems to me to be fundamentally correct.[16] When psychoanalysis restricts itself to considering "psychic reality" exclusively, it begs the question what is truest and most valuable in human life. Within the limited scope of one's own conscious responses, neurotic and healthy moments may indeed be located on a relative continuum. But as experience expands and involves the convergent and divergent perceptions and expectations of others, criteria for reality (Tillich's being itself) become necessary. Conflicting claims about the truth of religious statements or the justice of a moral policy cannot be adequately solved by psychoanalysis, no matter what depths of consciousness it discloses for us. On the final issues of life—on what is truest and most lovable in it, whether anything more than rational human planning and mere chance guide it, whether it somehow survives death—appeal must be made not to a theory of consciousness alone but to a theory of reality.[17]

This sense for the ontological as well as the ethical dimension of courage constituted Tillich's major contribution to our understanding it in a Christian way. Surveying courage as it has been understood from Plato to existentialism, he wrote: "Courage as a human act, as a matter of valuation, is an ethical concept. Courage as the universal and essential self-affirmation of one's being is an ontological concept. The courage to be is the ethical act in which man affirms his own being in spite of those elements of his existence which conflict with his essential self-affirmation."[18] As a result, theological reflection may approach courage in either of two ways. It may use a more limited, ethical sense, understanding courage as one virtue among others, or it may take a more comprehensive view, including both the ontological and the ethical components and then interpreting faith through the investigation of courage. Tillich took as his starting point the second of these approaches, and I have obviously agreed with his choice. It is faith in action, constructive Christianity, with which we have been concerned.

[16] Tillich distinguished without separating these aspects of life, and so he was able to propose helpful guidelines for co-operation between "the theological and the medical faculties" (ibid. 70 ff.) For a complementary discussion, cf. Karl Rahner, "Guilt and Its Remission: The Borderland between Theology and Psychotherapy," *Theological Investigations* 2 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963) 265–81.

[17] One of Bernard Lonergan's greatest contributions is to have clarified precisely this relationship between the intentionality of consciousness and the metaphysics (or ontology) of the real. David Tracy's revisionist method in *Blessed Rage for Order* has taken up the issue in a transposed form.

[18] *The Courage To Be* 3.

Tillich's second major contribution here was his appreciation of the contemporary problem of anxiety and his theological response to it. Stoicism already knew the difference between the fear of a particular, dreaded object or event and the "fear of fear itself" which today we call anxiety. However, Tillich's ontological analysis pushes the question further. He spoke of courage as the self's affirmation of itself *in spite of* the threats to it. Of these, the most radical is the threat of the loss of existence itself, of nonbeing. Courage, therefore, most basically is the power of the self to affirm itself, to be in spite of the threats of nonbeing. It was through an analysis of the modes of nonbeing and their threats to existence that Tillich reached his understanding of anxiety, its fundamental typology, and its historical epochs.

He distinguished three fundamental types, each of which has been predominant in a different historical period. "Anxiety, if not modified by the fear of an object, anxiety in its nakedness, is always the anxiety of ultimate nonbeing."[19] But as there are different aspects of our personal reality, so too we are confronted with unreality under different aspects. The first of these arises from the threat to our existence itself which is posed by the contingency of life and ultimately by death; it dominated the end of ancient civilization. A second type of anxiety has to do with our moral self-affirmation; as the anxiety of guilt and condemnation (or self-rejection), it appeared in sharpest profile in Luther and characterized Western culture from the Late Middle Ages through the Reformation. Still a third type of anxiety arises for our spiritual and cultural self-affirmation from the threats of emptiness and meaninglessness; Tillich found this anxiety of meaninglessness especially dominant at the end of the modern period. But the dominance of one type does not imply the disappearance of the other two. And in each case, whether anxiety is ontic, moral, or spiritual, courage responds not by ignoring or denying the anxiety, but by taking it upon itself, by dealing with it realistically in the hope of drawing some profit or at least lesson from the challenge. Here Tillich is interpreting in more existential terms what he elsewhere states ontologically: being as living creativity has nonbeing always present to it, but it constantly overcomes that nonbeing.[20]

This basic analysis of the anxieties to which courage responds provides not only a brilliant contemporary statement of chapters 5–7 of the Epistle to the Romans but an equally incisive reading of psychological foundations. On it Tillich built his presentation of three interdependent, mutually related forms of courage, each with its own way of taking into itself

[19] Ibid. 38.

[20] A recent, more evangelically expressed version of this dialectic may be found in the work of Eberhard Jüngel. I have reviewed his contribution in "The Mystery of God as a History of Love: Eberhard Jüngel's Doctrine of God," *TS* 42 (1981) 251–71.

the anxieties of death, of condemnation, and of meaninglessness. The three forms center respectively on participation—the courage to be as a part; individualization—the courage to be as oneself; and transcendence—the courage to accept acceptance.

Since reality is basically structured through a polar relation between the self and the world, the courage of self-affirmation may be concerned with the loss of either one or the other. In one case, it affirms the world through participation in it, risking the diminution of the sense of the self. Alternately, it stands for itself above all, with the possible consequence of losing its relation to what is other than itself. The first of these, the courage to be as a part, can be found in what Tillich called the semicollectivism of the medieval Church, the neocollectivism of present-day Russia, or the democratic conformism of America as he experienced it. The courage to be as oneself, on the other hand, is represented in various rationalistic, romantic, and naturalistic forms, but above all in the stream of existential thought which Tillich at once deeply appreciated and critically analyzed. If his book seems in many respects to be a classic of twentieth-century existentialism, it nevertheless objects to the lack of ontological foundation and fulfilment in that movement. Tillich held that while individualization and participation are reciprocally interdependent, they can be united in a stable way only by a further form of courage, the transcendent courage to accept acceptance. "The courage which takes this threefold anxiety [of death, meaninglessness, and condemnation] into itself must be rooted in a power of being that is greater than the power of oneself and the power of one's world."[21]

Now I agree with Tillich's fundamental thrust as he pursues the concluding phase of his argument, namely, that all courage has a religious root, whether openly or implicitly. Nevertheless, it is precisely his discussion of transcendence and the idea of God that I find flawed. In developing the notion of an absolute faith which could respond to the issue of contemporary anxiety and meaninglessness, Tillich distinguished between the transcendent courage of mystical experience, which seeks union with ultimate reality, and the transcendent courage of personal encounter with the divine, which seeks communion with the source of all reality. Absolute faith embraces both of these, he held, by transcending them and adhering to "God above God," "the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt."[22] As in his analysis of the courage of participation and the courage of individualization, he saw mystical courage and the courage of divine-human encounter related to one another and interdependent. Once again, as he exposed the development of the courage of transcendence, the dialectical pattern of Tillich's

[21] *The Courage To Be* 155.
[22] Ibid. 190.

thought led him to ask how the two different forms, the mystical and the personal, may be reunited in a higher synthesis.

But might we not ask what they have in common in the first place? Tillich's distinction has a limited validity insofar as it provides a useful historical typology, but the typology rests on the assumption of an ever-present, self-transcending movement of secular human reality towards its transcendent source, ground, and goal. Tillich spoke indeed of self-transcendence as the law of life, but he seemed to hold its full power in reserve until he had shown that neither the option of mysticism nor that of personalism is entirely satisfactory. As a result, he was led to suggest a conception of ultimate reality which is curiously neither personal nor impersonal, but somehow beyond both. And yet he clearly understood life as a gift and human freedom as dependent. It seems to me, accordingly, that a more comprehensive idea of God might point to God through a less abstract and more historical ontology, in terms derived from our experience as finite beings in time. God could then be understood as the one who calls us to the exercise of intelligent freedom at the different stages of our individual and social history, and ultimately towards a point when our lives at their end rely on God alone.

Tillich's absolute faith is required to the extent that only God can finally free us from death, guilt, and meaninglessness. But God is already present even in our limited efforts to meet those anxieties. God may be spoken of as "God above God" in the sense that God is always more mysterious than our common sense or religious formulations allow. But then it is perhaps better to speak of the "ever-greater God" to which an ancient Christian tradition testifies. The original center and final gathering for our lives—in its demands, its mercies, and its loving presence—is the ever-greater God whom no personal or historical experience can contain and whose union with the blessed is less the end of a journey than the fulfilment of the journey's purpose, a lasting achievement of insightful love.[23]

We should say, then, that self-transcendence, in its ground as in its goal, is interior to self-affirmation and self-donation. The same sap moves through life's root and branch: self-transcendence is operative in every act of self-affirmation that is loving, the invitation of our transcendent ground sounds in every moment of our development towards greater

[23] Cf. Henri de Lubac, *The Discovery of God* (New York: Kenedy, 1960) 167: " 'God is dead!' or so at least it seems to us ... until, round the next bend in the road, 'we find him again, alive.' Once again he makes himself known, in spite of all that we have left behind on the road, all that was only a viaticum for one stage of our journey, all that was only a temporary shelter till we had to make a fresh start.... And if we have really progressed along the road, we shall find God himself greater still. But it will be the same God. *Deus semper major.* And once again we shall move on in his light."

inclusiveness. What enables us most pervasively to recognize the loneliness of an isolated self or a true community's need to encourage the individualization of its members? It is the redeeming Creator's new covenant with God's own people.

Crucial to such an interpretation is a preference for a personal conception of reality, both finite and infinite, in contrast to Tillich's brilliant dialectics of being and nonbeing. In the latter, being's creativity is stated most basically in terms of its capacity to vanquish nonbeing. In the former, ultimate reality is discerned in terms of its capacity freely to give of itself, to share life in a sense analogous to our human experience that life is richest precisely when it is shared.

But I do say "preference" with respect to this suggestion; for I recognize that no ontology can fully account for the mystery of reality or claim the final truth of the matter. It is also undoubtedly true that personal experience and confessional background influence the way an ontology is developed. Tillich's position incorporates the permanently valuable critique that he called "the Protestant principle." My own strives to be faithful to "the Catholic substance."

Such a conception of reality as personal also opens a place within our analysis of courage for the figure of Christ. Tillich's book is clearly a work of Christian theology, but it strangely suppresses the person of Jesus until a few pages before its close, and then makes only glancing reference to him as the crucified one. But in my view we derive our courage in the face of death and our courage on behalf of life precisely through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. We certainly need a universalist heuristic, seeking to discover through dialogue with other world religions how the one God's saving grace is operative for them as well. But there, too, courage is possible only to the extent that it is lived and offered from one human life to another. It must, in other words, be personally centered, in its origin, in its temporal process, and in its goal. Tillich acknowledges this, of course, by his insistence on the reciprocity of being an individual and being a part. Others, like Ernest Becker, have emphasized it inasmuch as they argue for the reciprocity of self-expression and self-surrender. Through our own reflections on death and resurrection, I hope we may see more clearly what is written into the human heart by its Creator at all times: that the truest self-expression is achieved through self-surrender, that the truest discovery of life entails the risk of it, that the Lord of life is allowed to appear when human beings respond to the Lord's call to give their lives as freely as they have been received (cf. Mt 10:8). For the cross of Jesus is not so much God's unpredictable correction of history's course as it is the irrevocable focus for what God always means for creation: a promise of ever more abundant life, though at the cost of suffering love.

God is a term of our courage, then, only through the mediation of the Christ. But the Christ is unthinkable apart from a people for whom he gives his life. In the pattern of that life, individualization and participation are synthesized from the start. The full implications of finding one's life only at the risk of losing it dawn slowly on most of us, as they did also on the disciples. But in the very process of this discovery we re-enact the self-dispossession which established for all human beings the possibility of being their true selves in a renewed human community. Living in our own ways and times with a courage that we learn from Christ, we truly share in his redemptive activity. The grace of God, centered on Christ, can thus abound in human lives and have cumulative meaning, even though God alone can guarantee its final achievement.

## COURAGE IN COMMON

Let us consider more closely, then, as our third question, how the paschal mystery relates to our courage in common. Despite Tillich's claim for the reciprocity of individualizing courage and participating courage, it seems clear that his primary allegiance attached to the former. And understandably enough. He had emigrated from Germany as the Nazi horror began; he witnessed the rise of Russian imperialism after World War II; he was a keen observer of what he considered a threatening social conformism in American democracy. Our political and cultural situation has changed notably since the 1950's, however, as I remarked in the first section of this paper. While the problems Tillich signalized remain with us in many ways, new and equally serious ones have emerged. Renewed racial strife, the war in Vietnam, the energy and ecology issues, the madly accelerating arms race, and the specter of world hunger have brought many Americans newly face to face with themselves. We have become painfully aware of the need for a regeneration of our society, a regeneration that must be accompanied by a recognition of our interdependence with other societies and our special relation and responsibility to societies whose exploitation has enriched us while further impoverishing them. Many of us still struggle, it is true, with meaninglessness as a deeply felt anxiety. But a sense of death and guilt, of waste and isolation, has newly impinged on us. In contrast to Tillich's and Rieff's focus on the individual, a new testing ground for human courage is today being cleared: it is the very notion of a common humanity, the question whether human societies can really be reconstituted on the basis of human solidarity. Are barriers between us to be built higher, and differences of race and culture to divide us still further? Or is a renewed humanity possible?[24]

[24] Religious expressions of a new desire for community have been all too frequently rehearsed. But there is also important cultural evidence for a recent movement towards a new humanism and sense of relatedness. One need only recall the new naturalism that has

Here precisely Christian courage takes it stand. Having learned from the gospel that true courage is the capacity to live for others, the ability to accept the challenge of giving one's life for the sake of human solidarity before God, we as Christians propose not a detailed political program as such but a fundamentally renewed human motivation. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics have shown the death of individualized Christianity, the impasse of a faith that no longer has social consequences. Now a Christianity that knows how to distinguish between church and world recognizes that its motivation will only survive if it is constructively engaged in the world. In our hope that God may one day be "all in all," we will only be credible to ourselves as to others if we recognize that in current social issues "God is in the details" (as Mies van der Rohe used to say of his architecture). It is those details of life that we must seek in common with all men and women of good will.

This focus on human solidarity as the issue for Christian courage also helps us, I think, to appreciate both the contribution and the deficiency of contemporary process theology in its approach to the questions of death and resurrection. Aware of the religious bankruptcy that marks so much preoccupation with an individualized salvation, this school has striven to respond forcefully to the Marxian and Freudian criticism that Christian eschatology, through illusory promises about a world to come, represents a diversion of responsibility for life in the present world. In more strictly theological terms, process theologians point out that concern with the question of resurrection easily betrays a self-centeredness and self-assertion that corresponds to the fundamental sin of man as it is described in the Book of Genesis.[25] They also remind us that personal resurrection is often made an idol of security in competition with the God whose grace alone can save us. In this critique one often finds a challenging summary of Reformation priorities: that we are saved by faith alone, that only God's grace accomplishes this, and that to God alone belongs the glory.

In a contribution to essays in honor of the late and beloved Daniel Day Williams, Schubert Ogden has given us a lucid summary of this point of view. He proposes that "the meaning of Christian hope may and must be so redefined that the hope for our own subjective immortality can no longer be held to be essential to it," although, indeed, "the end of our life, like its beginning, is nothing less than the everlasting life of God him-

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been noted in the theater, the burgeoning interest in classical and neoclassical ballet, the new openness to representationalism in the plastic arts, the romanticism of contemporary music, and the search for a more expressive and feeling postmodern architecture. The final question, of course, will be whether these trends prove to be creative or reactionary.

[25] Freud himself made a similar, secularized criticism of resurrection hope; see, e.g., *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1964) 88 f.

self."[26] Here Ogden develops and clarifies the position of an earlier essay in which he had suggested that the sole theme of Christian eschatology is the promise of faith. By this he had meant "the promise immediately implied in the witness of faith in Jesus Christ that we are all, each and every creature of us, embraced everlastingly by the boundless love of God."[27] With an adroit combination of existentialist interpretation and neoclassical or process theology, he maintained that "in making each of us the object of his boundless love, God accepts us all into his own everlasting life and thereby overcomes both our death and our sin."[28]

In the later essay Ogden scrutinizes the difference between subjective and objective immortality. By subjective immortality he means one's individual survival of death as an independent center of consciousness. A common meaning of objective immortality is a person's survival in the memory of posterity.[29] But the more basic sense of the term which Ogden uses is this: the world which depends for its existence on the primordial nature of God is destined by God's plan of love to be included in His consequent nature (using the polar conception of God's reality which Ogden shares with other process thinkers). Because God's love is limitless, nothing created perishes entirely: "for him the transience of life is overcome, or, rather, simply does not exist. Because his love of others is literally boundless, whatever comes to be is fully embraced by his love, where it is retained forever without any loss of vividness." While the creation, and human life above all, would succumb to permanent perishing if it were left to itself alone, in fact it exists always in relatedness to the actuality of God. "Such value as it has, whether positive or negative, becomes an integral part of his own divine life, and thus is in the strict sense immortal or of everlasting significance." And thus for God, according to Ogden's conception, "everything always counts for exactly what it is and never ceases to make just its own unique difference."[30] This view

[26] "The Meaning of Christian Hope," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 30 (1975) 153–64, at 156. Cf. Daniel D. Williams, "What I Believe about Life after Death," ibid. 17 (1962) 315–20.

[27] "The Promise of Faith," in Schubert M. Ogden, *The Reality of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) 206–30, at 220.

[28] Ibid. 223.

[29] Ibid. 225 f.

[30] "The Meaning of Christian Hope," quotations at 155. In a repetition of his basic thesis, Ogden says that "in spite of the death and transience of all things, their final destiny is to be embraced everlastingly by God's love for them and that human beings, at least, through faith and love in the present, can already share in their final destiny, of eternal life in God. In other words, the symbols of resurrection and immortality must be taken as pointing not to some other life beyond this life but to the abiding significance of this life itself. This is to say that the only immortality or resurrection which is essential to Christian hope is not our own subjective survival of death, but our objective immortality or resurrection in God, our being finally accepted and judged by his loving and thus imperishably united with all creation into his own unending life" (ibid. 160).

he considers not merely a creation of wishful neoclassical theism but the reflected faith of specifically Christian theism; the ground and object of Christian faith, hope, and love is precisely God as decisively re-presented in Jesus Christ. As Jesus really rises from the dead by being incorporated into the abiding actuality of God, so too may those who belong to him. And this is the "hope against hope" by which, as Ogden says, we may trust that all human beings can be sustained.[31]

But is it really? Is this sense of the risen Christ and his body underway to completion really the source of courage and joy that Christian faith through the centuries has found it to be? Is the redeeming Creator, the actuality of God, conceived as vigorously as faith requires? Admittedly, Ogden and other process theologians can speak forcefully about the suffering of God and God's participation in the creative process. Their conception of the relation between God and the world strives to build on an explicitly social base. And they are able to place resurrection faith where I myself would locate it in the preaching of Jesus. It is neither a central topic nor an unexamined assumption; rather, it is implied as the ultimate significance in the proclamation of the coming reign of God.[32] Despite these advantages, however, I am unconvinced by Ogden's construction, not only because it seems constrained by the same individualistic presuppositions it seeks to overcome, but more importantly because it diminishes the full personal reality of the risen Christ, those who belong to him, and even the God who is his Father.

For what can it mean to speak of a person who transcends death by being taken into the reality of God not subjectively but objectively? How can a human person, whose very definition is conscious relationship, count "for exactly what it is," making "its own unique difference" in God, if God's incorporation of the person into God's own eternal life is really *about* the person but not *for* the person? Furthermore, while this is the state of the question as Ogden discusses it, we must really broaden it further. The full import of the argument is disclosed not in the discussion of a single person's fate but rather with regard to the new human community centered on Jesus Christ. Is it adequate to Christian experience and traditional testimony to speak of Jesus in this way, as being objectively but not subjectively (i.e., as a person) contained in the reality

[31] While I have chosen Ogden (and implicitly Williams) as representative, I am aware that other process thinkers have explored alternate approaches to the notion of subjective immortality. For a sampling of such efforts, see Lewis S. Ford and Marjorie Suchocki, "A Whiteheadian Reflection on Subjective Immortality," *Process Studies* 7 (1977) 1–13; Marjorie Suchocki, "The Question of Immortality," *Journal of Religion* 57 (1977) 288–306; Lori E. Krafte, "Subjective Immortality Revisited," *Process Studies* 9 (1979) 35–36.

[32] See Leo J. O'Donovan, "Immortality in Judaeo-Christian Perspective," in William C. Bier, ed., *Human Life: Problems of Birth, of Living, and of Dying* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1977) 276–95, at 290–91.

of God? Is this the living Lord the community recognizes in practice and in prayer? Is this what we hope for, as we put our shoulders to the world's wheel, not only with regard to those we love but also for all the innocent who have suffered and died apparently in vain? Does objective assimilation in the actuality of God really preserve the sense of personal relatedness and responsibility which is the essence of human community and without which it can scarcely be conceived as entering into communion with God? Hasn't this whole conception, in fact, accepted too rationalistic and individualistic a ground on which to argue, so that its solution itself suffers from some of the very limitations it set out to correct? Such a process view of eternal life may be a valuable reminder of the narrowness or even smugness with which we often view the matter. But it remains itself inadequate to the depths of human longings and to the full promise of faith.[33]

The struggle for life, then, is more profound than the suggested scheme allows, and so too must be our conception of its ultimate fulfilment. We are not called simply to be "knit together into one integral and everlasting life"[34] but to enter a community in which true union differentiates and in which unity in difference may one day be consecrated forever. At issue is the struggle for true solidarity among human beings, one that not only recognizes and tolerates but rejoices in variety, taking responsibility for the existence of human differences by seeking their fruition. The author of such a humanity in process must be conceived with a proportionate sense of ever-greater mystery. Thus we always ask two questions at once: (1) What are we really like? (2) What is our Creator really like? In Christ these two questions come together in an irrevocable way. With respect to both life and death, we ask what his courage before God makes possible for our own. Will the promise of human solidarity be our cause or simply our consolation? Shall we have the courage to live for a new community, one that will ultimately, just as much as any individual, be put to the final test of dying to itself that God may reign all in all?

"In the final analysis," as an American Scripture scholar has written, "the central theological issue in the death of man is the character of God."[35] The great Christian symbolism of the paschal mystery, the death and resurrection of the Lord, can encourage and inspire in many ways.

[33] It should be noted that I am questioning the systematic adequacy of Ogden's treatment, not raising a charge of reductionism or of hostility to the very notion of immortality. On the impasse of this latter approach, see Peter L. Berger, "Secular Theology and the Rejection of the Supernatural: Reflections on Recent Trends," *TS* 38 (1977) 39–56, and then Langdon Gilkey, Schubert M. Ogden, and David Tracy, "Responses to Peter Berger," *TS* 39 (1978) 486–507.

[34] Ogden, "The Meaning of Christian Hope" 158.

[35] Leander E. Keck, "New Testament View of Death," in Liston O. Mills, ed., *Perspectives on Death* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969) 33–98, at 98.

As with symbols in general, it operates on different levels, emotional and intellectual, individual and communal, historical and transtemporal. The symbolism of Christ our pasch gives us courage by evoking powerful feelings while leading us also to think and to understand. It deepens the individual's sense of life's destiny, but still more strikingly it establishes a common world in which many people may recognize their destiny. This symbolism lives from history and helps to create it, for it has dates and a life line at the same time that it resounds with a power that grounds and transcends history. But ultimately this symbolism looks beyond itself, as did Jesus himself, and dies, as it lived, in dependence on the holy mystery of its life, the ever-greater God. There, we may say with some modest understanding, Tillich's three anxieties are indeed finally one: in the question whether we are condemned to death as the final word on the meaning of life, or whether an ever-greater God has led us to a life of shared self-giving, centered vision, and communion.

## WITH HOPE AND LOVE

In this paper I have tried to gather together the elements for a Christian understanding of the courage we derive from the paschal mystery. First we considered a typical contemporary critique of what may appear as an ideology of courage. Then we discussed the human solidarity which the courage of Jesus discloses, in relation both to himself as the mediator of God's love for us and to our fellow human beings with whom we are called to share our lives in Christ. In the effort to live out courage in time, we are guided by the Spirit who recalls and interprets for us the power of the paschal mystery for the present; the God of Jesus "strengthens [us] inwardly through the working of his Spirit" (Eph 3:15). In this sense we were discussing faith en route from the rationalistic individualism of recent centuries towards constructive courage in our own epoch. As we cannot understand basic human questions apart from commitment, so too we cannot be committed without courage. And so, particularly in a rapidly changing world, we may rightly speak of faith not only as trust and conviction but also and especially as a form of courage.[36] Faith of this sort sees the world as God describes it through the life of Jesus and decides for it on those terms; it takes the pattern of Christ's passover as its own and lives in the conviction that there can be eternal value to every sacrifice made on behalf of life, even the sacrifice of life itself.[37]

[36] Cf. Leo J. O'Donovan, "The Courage of Faith: An Essay in Honor of William F. Lynch's Seventieth Birthday," *Thought* 53 (1978) 369–83.

[37] Karl Rahner sometimes speaks of faith in terms of fundamental self-acceptance; at other times he speaks more actively of it precisely as courage. Among recent writings, the former approach can be found in the concluding essay in his book with Karl-Heinz Weger,

In conceiving faith as courage, I have not intended to separate it from the other theological virtues, hope and love. No one of these virtues, or ways of living humanly before God, serves apart from the others. Of the theological virtues we may say what H. Richard Niebuhr said of the virtues of Christ: "Any one of the virtues of Jesus may be taken as the key to the understanding of his character and teaching; but each is intelligible in its apparent radicalness only as a relation to God."[38] The three theological virtues are structures of a unified whole through which the Christian community lives by faith, sees in hope, and works through love. If I have emphasized the focal value of courage, it was because it seems so necessary in a time of anxiety and indecision about Christian contribution to the needs of the world. But if Christian courage is proposed as the fundamental alternative to fearfulness and anxiety, we may also say that faith, hope, and love together constitute the alternative to skepticism, despair, and selfishness as these threaten the world God has chosen to inherit. Courage is not real apart from hope and love. It lives from the promise of hope, just as it acts in order that love may prevail. Indeed, we might say, in a summary way, that sharing in the paschal mystery of Christ gives us the courage to hope that love may prevail, that it may endure as the crown of all, the bond of all the virtues (Col 3:14). For, as St. Paul knew, a loving and hopeful courage is not simply a fortunate attitude for a time of trial; it is rather the becoming of our very selves. We do not act with courage and then somehow move beyond it; we become human precisely through courageous action, in the hope of being confirmed in love, of reaching a lasting communion with the Lord and the Lord's new people. "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13).

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*Our Christian Faith: Answers for the Future* (New York: Crossroad, 1981). The latter is clear in his essay "Faith as Courage," *Meditations on Freedom and the Spirit* (New York: Seabury, 1978), where he proposes that "courage, understood in its existential necessity and radical nature, is in fact what is called faith in Christian theology" (11).

[38] *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951) 27.