

The Other World
Trek XVI
Summer '72

THE ETERNAL LIFE

Throughout this summer we've been on a rather strange journey through the Land of Mystery, the River of Consciousness, and I the Mountain of Care. Now, this week we have sailed the Sea of Tranquility. And this last trek has seemed to be even a stranger journey, perhaps, than the fire: three we have been through. The beginning of this trek is the Radical Illumination, and then the Unknowable Peace, and the Unspeakable Joy. And now this morning we come to the last one which is the Endless Life, or Everlastingness at the Center.

A number of months ago, I was sitting in a meeting with a great big bellyful of dread. You could have poured the whole Sea of Tranquility down me, and I don't think you would have spotted any of it. And one of my colleagues asked another colleague next to me -- just out of the blue -- he said, "Are you happy?" And that colleague paused for a moment, and while he paused, all sorts of things went on in me. A churning began to take place, and then welling up in me, almost as if I had nothing to say about it at all, came the answer, "Yes." Now what I want to say is that the Yes probably could not have taken place unless I had participated on this last trek, Trek XVI, the one that leads us to the endless life. Unless man had invented these great symbols of the Endless Life, or Eternal Life, or Heaven and Hell to grasp his state of being, we could not finally sail on the Sea of Tranquility. And it is about that that I want to talk this morning, but before I do, I want to read you a few pieces of poetry which I hope will give us a way to grasp this state of being.

Merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life; in whom whoever believes, shall live, though he die, and whoever lives, and believes in Him, shall not die eternally; who also has taught us, by His holy Apostle Saint Paul, not to be sorry, as men without food, for those who sleep in Him; we humbly beseech Thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Him; and that, at the general Resurrection in the last day, we may be found acceptable in thy sight; and receive that blessing, which Thy well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all who love and fear Thee, saying, Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. Grant this, we beseech Thee, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. Amen.

And now the other:

The Spirit of God not only maintains this hope within us, but helps us in our present limitations. For example, we do not know how to pray worthily as sons of God, but his Spirit within us is actually praying for us in those agonizing longings which never find words. And God who knows the heart's secrets understands, of course, the Spirit's intention as he prays for those who love God.

Moreover we know that to those who love God, who are called according to his plan, everything that happens fits into a pattern for good. God, in his foreknowledge, chose them to bear the family likeness of his Sons, that he might be the eldest of a family of many brothers. He chose them long ago; when the time came he called them, he made them righteous in his sight and then lifted them to the splendor of life as his own sons.

In face of all this, what is there left to say? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not grudge his own Son but gave him up for us all -- can we not trust such a God to give us, with him, everything else that we can need?

Who would dare to accuse us, whom God has chosen? The judge himself has declared us free from sin. Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us!

Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble, pain or persecution? Can lack of clothes and food, danger to life and limb, the threat of force of arms? Indeed some of us know the truth of that ancient text:

For thy sake we are killed all the day long;

We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

No, in all these things we win an overwhelming victory through him who has proved his love for us.

I have become absolutely convinced that neither death nor life, neither messenger of Heaven nor monarch of earth, neither what happens today nor what may happen tomorrow, neither a power from on high nor a power from below, nor anything else in God's whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I. Living Death.

In this trek we have completed our journey so to speak. It is made up of four steps. One is Living Death, and then Resurrectional Existence, Everlasting Community, and finally Contingent Eternality. But to begin to raise our sail on this trek you remember that Camus said that we wake up at 30 -- and I'm sure that's a symbolic age -- over the hill and from then, the rest of our lives, we are projected towards death. We know that's exactly where we're headed. I recall when I graduated from college, I went to visit a friend of mine who was a classmate and had just gotten married. A few months later they called, saying he was ill, and asked that I come visit with them, which I did, and in another week, he died. I had been visiting with him regularly over those few days, but I was not prepared for the shock when I walked in to see his body. It was as though he had been dead for days and days. The skin was shrunken back, and the bones were sharply protruding underneath. They'd not yet prettied him up, and his face was yellow and green.

Later on, when I was in the service, after the battle had ended, they would send out large trucks to pick up the dead bodies of the enemy which were lying around. The men would use meat hooks to get hold of the bodies, which were bloated and full of all sorts of smelly things that you were afraid to look at even. As they would hook the bodies and throw them up in the truck, sometimes part of the flesh would remain on the ground; or a head would roll down a gully. Then they would take a shovel and scoop up the remains and throw them in with the body. Truckload after truckload after truckload would back up to a huge pit, and the bodies were scraped into it. Then bulldozers would cover the filled pit with dirt. So when we wake up facing a six-foot hole, the worms, the end, or anything you and I call death, we know that if we talk about spiritual death, it would be meaningless and filled with all sorts of watered down platitudes unless it had behind it the harsh reality of that death I just described, the literal death that is there, because that death relativizes everything. Uncertainty comes to all our truths, our cherished beliefs, and our knowledge. Anxiety chews at all meaning in our attachments, and all pleasures in our possessions; ambiguity is present in all our mores" and actions.

People in the other world realize that they were utterly condemned to choose between either living in illusion, where in your pride you refuse to live in this kind of world, and in your weakness, you succumb and are afraid to stand, and thereby whimper in the face of uncertainty, anxiety and ambiguity; or choosing to die to all the pretensions that life will ever be any other way. People in the other world have said yes to the latter. Death becomes their death. There is nothing ahead of us except our death. From birth on, we are catapulted toward death. Everything is contingent. Death wins. In the other world, one chooses to die his death, instead of letting death gobble him up. You take your death and expend it on behalf of the world and shove it into the breach of history.

This decision leaves you totally detached. Those in the other world have answered God's shout. As Kazantzakis articulates it, "God shouts, 'Burn your houses, I am coming! Whoever has a house cannot receive me. Burn your ideas! Smash your thoughts! Whoever has a solution cannot find me. Leave your wives' leave your children, your ideas, and follow me! Smash these idols, smash them all! They cannot contain me. Smash even yourself that I may

pass!" Yes, those in the other world have heard that shout, and are totally detached. They're detached from their possessions, their houses, or even their sailboats.

In one of the first PLC's we ever had in Chicago there was a fellow who kept saying he couldn't come to an advanced PLC because during the week he had to sail his sailboat. Then one day he showed up in one of the advanced PLC's we had at that time, and announced that he'd sold his sailboat. But he never came back, so I don't know whether he lied to us, or went home and committed suicide, one way or the other. But detachment doesn't end with possessions, but goes on to social relationships: wives, children, position and status. Total detachment for those in the other world also includes imaginal claims -- that is, your ideas and your righteousness. We were talking the other day about meeting the need of a situation, and someone said he could not tell a lie in that situation, that he had to hang on to his righteousness. Or, again, one person told me several years ago, "I'll give up anything for the movement except Sunday football." Imaginally and culturally, we get attached to the oddest things. Or again, in the other world we are totally detached from our historical claims. You remember the man in the Bridge Over the River Kwai, the colonel, who could stand the sweatbox, the ovens, and all the castigations that the enemy could give him. He could stand all that and then rise and pick up his troops and build a bridge which he said perhaps would last 1000 years. But he could not turn around, upon its completion, and blow it up. In the other world, one is always detached from the good job that he's done, his specific hopes for the future, and the creative effort that has taken place.

In the other world, we are forever dead. The eternal choice has been made to be obedient to the way life is and to lay our lives down. And the only thing that you and I now own is our deaths, and we are our deaths. And to be human is to intentionally expend that death. You and I now never can go grasping after life, trying to hold onto it again, for we are forever dead.

II. Resurrectional Existence.

Precisely arriving at that point, Resurrectional Existence comes; we experience new awe. In this happening awe breaks loose in a brand new way. Awe begins to appear at every point in life; life is alive, it bleeds with meaning, and it vibrates with existence. Nothing is left out. Everything is alive, burning, vibrating, exhilarating, rapturing, everything dances!' In becoming a forever dead man, it's as if the cover that had been spread over existence by all of our pretensions and illusions has been ripped off, and a whole new world appears. A whole new life is present, alive as we had never dreamed the possibility of being alive.

Let me assure you that this is no Pollyanna world that gets us away from the harsh realities of life or away from the mundane. Indeed it shows us that precisely this mundane world of harsh realities in which we live is the world that is alive. In Resurrectional Existence, you have the burden of your body. For example, ever since sometime around forty, I've been tired, and like Mountain Rivera, I dream of 24 hours without an ache in my body. And that's just the way it is. And with my body, it's an irreversible process. It's going to be that way from now on. But the dead man living the Resurrectional Existence knows that he can press into the depths of his life, whatever form it takes or however broken it may be, because there is the life that dances. And then in the Resurrectional Existence, you have the terror of tornness. Life is strewn with torn lives, perverted situations, and peoples' sickness, but one embraces this terror of tornness and pushes it to the depths, for it too is alive and mystery bubbles up and is present there. And in Resurrectional Existence, one knows the suffering of the spirit. For the suffering of the spirit goes on wherever self-consciousness is present. And Resurrectional Existence knows that this is just a one-way street -- that suffering must increase. Yet it is precisely there, in the depths of suffering, that life is alive and vibrates and dances. And then Resurrectional Existence knows the massiveness of the mission. Every day there is more to do and there is less time to do it. It gets more complex; there are more demands on our psyche, our body, and our spirit energy. The scope is larger, and the task becomes more difficult. And that trend is just set in cast iron. And yet in the depth of that mission, and I would say only in such depth, is life alive, dancing on.

Someone has been telling the story of a 4minute movie recently produced. I guess we've all heard it by now, but I'll repeat it in case some of you haven't. In the movie there is a little man in a bowler hat who is walking down a lane and comes to a brick wall. He goes to the side and sits down. A few minutes later, another little man in a bowler hat comes down the lane. Seeing the brick wall, he backs up and runs with all his strength and butts the wall down with his head. He lies there on the debris. The first little man gets up, walks through the hole in the wall and over the other man, and continues down the lane. Suddenly he comes to another wall! End of Film. As we were talking about the film, someone said, "Who did you identify with?" All sorts of things flashed through my mind. The bystander? Yes. And then the man who butted the wall down? Yes. But that wasn't all. It was the man (in my imagination) who, after butting the wall down, picked himself up in all his pain and walked on to butt the next wall down. That is Resurrectional Existence.

Resurrectional Existence has made a radical decision to be forever dead. This is to radiate life, the explosive, the alive life that is there when the veil is ripped away. You can do anything. Power is at your fingertips, inside your being, in everything you grasp. The dance of life is your dance. Its energy, which goes to the bowels of the universe, is your energy. You now mold the future; your creativity is released to shape tomorrow. Your creativity is released in order that the last fat lady or that silly little man with a bowler who sat on the sidelines has that same possibility and the same power to release his creativity into history to mold the future. The Eternal Life XVI .5

The peculiar thing about it is that now you are totally nonchalant. Resurrectional man is totally nonchalant. For you see, being forever dead and living the Resurrectional Existence gives you a kind of aliveness, a new kind of power, and a total nonchalance. And you know, whether you come upon yourself living in a desert, or living in a land of plenty is utterly, beside the point. Life is alive with the mystery in each. Also whether you come upon yourself with hatred or love within you, they do not consume your energy; you're nonchalant before that; life is alive in relationship to each. I remember a number of years ago, I used to work with a fellow who was a great big slob, but oh, he could cover it up -- he always ended up looking good. You'd have to clean up after him: you'd have to do his job, and everything else, and he'd get the credit. He would do this again and again. It didn't make a damn to him that someone else did all the work while he received the credit. And you know, I used to get so mad at him. I thought, "I'm going to sink this whole ship. I'm going to make it sail so that people will see him for what he is." That kind of hatred burst loose. Not so the Resurrectional Man. He has fought those wild beasts and slayed them. He's utterly nonchalant before his hatred and his love, for life has already been given. And, again, he is nonchalant before his own rebellions and commitments. Whether he's filled with deep surging rebellion, or with happy, joyous responses, he can be utterly nonchalant. It's sorta like, "Well, well, well, so you're rebelling against that? I don't blame you." Or, "Well, well, well, there you go again; I might have suspected it of you." He is nonchalant even before that kind of strife within him. Then he is nonchalant before either life or death. The mystery brings both, and he receives them with tenderness and cherishes them alike. "If I live, I live unto the Mystery; if I die, I die unto the Mystery, so whether I live or whether I die, I am the Mystery's."

III. Everlasting Community.

The man who has this Resurrectional existence knows he is part of an Everlasting Community. He knows his life is always within a community that knows no boundaries of time or space. It's not that others influence him by affecting history in some way, but all these great hosts are a living presence; they are a host of witnesses which are with him now, and he experiences their being or their presence. He experiences their speaking to him and acting upon him. Sometimes you feel like you climb out of your shoes and go into the past. Like one colleague of ours said that for a long period of time he literally lived back in 1859 with Lincoln. I guess most of the time, however, we feel that host is present, with us now. It's as if we have them rattling around in our brains forevermore. It's as if we take an immense Journey through history, or, maybe that all of history is present with us. Remember how on the mountain Moses and Elijah were present with Jesus? Or, if you want to put it wholly in the secular, do you recall how Patton, looking over the battlefield at Carthage, had all the great hosts of generals at his side. Well, we stand on the crimson line that has no beginning or end. We're members of the league that is made up of a great host of witnesses.

You know, the African has a unique way of coming at this. He has 2 kinds of time: sasa time and samani time. Sasa time is micro-time, and Samani time is macro-time. Sasa, or micro-time, is the new, and the immediate past; it's where you experience the past, it's where conscious living takes place. Your ancestors now appear to you in the family. For example, my mother is 84. She remembers her great-grandmother, and she's the only one living who does. Therefore, my great great-grandmother is present with me in sasa time, in immediate past time. And she can come and speak to me as one of those ancestors. But when my mother dies, my great-great-grandmother will disappear into that they call Samani time. This is the graveyard of time. It's the period of myth. Tribal and mythological heroes appear to the community or tribe and talk to them. This kind of time binds together all created things and holds us present to them. It is that kind of everlasting community of which we are part, that is a gift to everyone.

Within that community the saints' presence knows no boundaries. All creation stands on tiptoe, whether it's Galaxy 917 or your great-great-grandmother. We are surrounded by a great host of witnesses. Always we're out to run the Resurrectional race that we have before us. And they have fought the good fight. As we continue the fight, we have sitting in our own rooms, whether we are working on tomorrow or praying over the mission, these great hosts of witnesses. They are witnesses not for the moral, but always for the ontological. I like Patton, but in relation to the great host, I could care less whether some general in the past said that you turn to the right with a tank or to the left, or anything else about the moral. But I will not give up Luther, or Amos, or Paul, who tell me what life is all about. Their presence is never to bear witness to the mediocre but to the miracles needed. They are there to illuminate the amazing happening of life and to point to the Life that is underneath life.

IV. Contingent Eternality.

The last part of this trek is called contingent eternity. Eternal life is one of the most difficult things to recover in our day, for the only images we have been given to grasp it come out of a two-story universe and chronological time. We want to try and recapture it as a state of being.

You know how on the late, late shows there are these old war movies? In many of these movies, you come to an impossible situation. The enemy has everybody pinned down. Our troops advanced and were shot down and other troops moved forward and were shot down, and the situation is just impossible. Now you know if you move toward the destination you have to take, that 95% or 98% of you will be killed. Everybody is sitting there paralyzed, and finally, some tough sergeant gets up and waves his arm, and says, "Come on men; do you want to live forever?" And I'm sitting in my chair watching the movie, thinking, "Yeah!!!" Now I have the death urge as much as the next person, and I also know I'm a contingent being, but what that "Yeah" signifies is that I want my life to be meaningful, significant to creation itself, contributing to its ongoingness. Yes, I want Eternal Life

As Paul puts it, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." And he also put it, "Sin gives death its sting, and the law gives sin its power." Idolatry, our attachments, is what makes death bite us so badly. And it's the structures of society that reinforce that idolatry to make that idolatry extremely strong and powerful. But Paul goes on to say, "Death is swallowed up in victory. For where now, O death, is your power to hurt us? Where now, O grave, is the victory you hoped to win?" Well, when one dies to illusions about life, when he becomes forever dead, he lives, he is a Resurrected Man. I like the way Dylan Thomas put it when he said, "After the first death, there is no other," In other words, one has Eternal Life now.

I only live when I face death. Death is a part of my life. My life is a part of my life. My life, then, is my life and my death. Or let me put it this way: my life is always my life embracing my death and taking it into myself. Then I have life. Now let me see if I can write that on the board.

Life = life death

My Life is my life embracing my death! And that's a constant process; that's a constant going-onness. In other words, death is there, that's the reality against which I'm held. At every point I have to embrace that reality which is now a concrete presence to every dimension of my life. And that is the only life I have, the life which is headed towards death, and which has to embrace it at every moment. In such an embracing I have life; I am alive. I have Eternal Life, the Life of the Eternal One. And this is what is called kairotic time over against the way we usually think of time as chronological.

Camus, in a recent book, *A Happy Death*, calls this kind of life that we've been talking about, happiness. He says it is only the one who embraces his death as a happy death that has happiness in this life. In fact, the main character in his book refused to be drugged as death approached, because he wanted to be utterly sensitive to his own death. He wanted to live death fully as it came to him. Listen to what the main character of the book is thinking to himself: "Of all the men he had carried inside of himself, as every man does at the beginning of his life, of all of those various rootless, mingling beings, he had created his life with consciousness, with courage. That was his whole happiness in living and dying. He realized now that to be afraid of this death he was staring at with animal terror meant to be afraid of life. And all those who had not made the gestures necessary to live their lives, all those who fear an exalted impotence, they were afraid of death because of the sanction it gave to a life in which they had not been involved. . . . For he had played his part, fashioned his role, perfected a man's one duty, which is only to be happy. Not for long, no doubt. He had destroyed the obstacle, and this inner brother he had engendered in himself. What did it matter if he existed for two or for twenty years? Happiness was the fact that he had existed!"

Contingent Eternality is continually embracing the relationship of life embracing its death. I live before the Eternal One; I have Eternal Life. And it's then you see that you can walk into the dark and the dark holds no terror. You know when they tried to frighten Jesus, he said, "No one takes my life from me, I lay it down." And in laying it down he had life. Nothing can harm him, nothing can destroy him, nothing can take his life. He is grounded in the mystery. Or, again, as Paul puts it, "If I live, I live unto the Mystery, and if I die, I die unto the Mystery. So whether I live, or whether I die, I am the Mystery's."

In uttering "Yes" to this relationship, it's at that moment, that spot, that I have Eternal Life. My being is not the things that happen to me, including my not breathing. My being is a transformed spirit that comes by the virtues of the "Yes." I remember a number of years ago talking to a one-armed man. One arm was deformed at birth. His forearm was a stump about two inches longer. A group of us were talking about the meaning of existence, etc., and finally he got angry; he took that stump and he waved it in our faces and shouted out: "You think that this made no difference to my selfhood!" That man could not know what Eternal Life is.

The "Yes" is in history. And once it becomes my "Yes" it is me. It is Man with a capital M. It is the Son of Man. And nothing can destroy it. It is what makes unreality reality. It is the one thing that does not pass away. You see, my life is bigger now than the Mountain of Care, for the "Yes" hears the burden of it. My life is bigger than the Sea of Tranquility, for the sea lives out of the "Yes." My life is bigger than the universe, for the whole universe rests on that "Yes." My life is one with the Mystery itself. For it takes the Mystery into itself. My life is Eternal. "For where now, O death, is your power to hurt us? Where now, O grave, is the victory you hoped to win?"

We have been talking about kairotic time. What does this say about chronological time, which, incidentally, is a great invention of man? But first, kairotic time. Man never has any other time than the "Now." And when tomorrow comes, it will be the "Now." Therefore he is always called on in every situation to respond, to die, to have Eternal Life. Now in kairotic and chronological time both, you might say, I've been preparing all of my life for the hour of my death. That death is demanded now, and it will always be demanded in the future, including the time when the six-foot hole gobbles me up. And when the six-foot hole gets hold of me, my life will be fulfilled, completed, rendered up to history, at rest completely in the mystery. I will now become one with the Mystery, which constantly births and deaths all creation. Or again, you become one with the Mystery, which calls us, in Kazantzakis' words, to the ascending Path, or to place our footsteps on the crimson line. Your life is taken into the heart of the Mystery.

But what about your uniqueness, the "I" that is "you," the "pour soi," the relationship you hold? Resurrectional Man voices the "Yes" to what it means to be man, to be man with a capital "M," to be reality, or to be one with the Mystery. In one sense you could care less about your uniqueness because you're after the one thing of being the Yes. On the other hand you have no choice about your uniqueness. Your time and space only you occupy. And not another poem with your particularities can ever be written again. Your being is in history. And then the strange thing is it joins the ranks of all the cloud of witnesses of the fellowship of the saints. And, as such then, others continue to write your poem, as your presence is lo here and lo there. Just as you are continuing now today to write Luther's poem, so the others will finish your work, and they will reap where you have sown. But you say, "Well, one day, Luther and I both will be unknown, and that is true. But what you can say is, "In the beginning Mystery, and in the end Mystery." My life is one with the Mystery. I know Eternal Life now and that will be my life forever. "For where now, O Death is your power to hurt us? Where now, O Grave, is the victory you hoped to win?"

Other great symbols that have been used to allow us to grasp our life here and now, are the symbols of Heaven and Hell. Now as You know today, the use of these symbols as articulated in a two-story universe, has horribly perverted them. But still they are powerful and need to be recovered for our day. As you know, Sartre, a nonchurchman, attempted to recover the symbol of hell in his play, No Exit. In Hell, people are frozen in their inauthenticity. In other words, when they die, they were dead and they were frozen. Up to the last 1,000th of a second, there is always possibility, there is freedom, but at death, that is all frozen. In Hell, Sartre has all these people who lived in pretensions and illusions where they cannot blink. Everywhere they looked they saw mirrors and faces of other people who knew who they were.

Heaven and Hell are great inventions of mankind, and you and I have to remember that the Mystery makes no distinction between those who go to Heaven and those who go to Hell. We have to remember that our puny little inventions, however great they are, do not box the Mystery in. And if we make some distinctions between Heaven and Hell, we must remember that the Mystery loves all exactly the same. The Mystery is utterly impartial in its love. What it means to be human is that if you sow to the wind, you reap the whirlwind.

And now Heaven. I don't have anything as powerful as the artform Sartre used, but if you'll allow me to use one that tends to be a little sentimental, I think it can freight the image. It comes out of a movie called The Yearling which is a number of years old now. It is a story of people back in early 18th Century in Florida, out on the frontier, carrying out a civilization in that wild and frightening land. The main character is an 18-year-old boy who is trying to become a man. He is the only boy in a family which needs manpower greatly. He has to be physically as powerful as a man, able to think like a man and act like a man, yet he has the body of a 12yearold boy. It's the story of his struggle on the frontier. Well, one of his friends, another 12yearold boy, who lives down the lane about 10 or 15 miles, is not very effective as far as the frontier is concerned. He is crippled and therefore can only sit around. Not only that, but he's a little bit "tetched" and can't even do things like count out ears of corn and things like that. So what he does is sit around and play with birds and rabbits. Now what do you do with a young boy on a frontier where you need every available manpower there is, and one of your family is utterly useless except to play with birds and rabbits? One day the 12yearold boy down the lane dies, and they have a funeral, and they ask the other boy's father to say a word over the grave. The prayer goes something like this: "Dear God, we thank you for the life of Peter. We know that in Heaven his leg has been made whole, and he has many birds and rabbits to play with. Amen."

Now if you take the sentimentality out of this, you can get at the picture. The Mystery created what it did. And whatever we think is crippled is whole in the Mystery's sight! In Heaven, your crippledness. your perversions, your twistedness, are made whole. What this means for my one-armed friend is that he, and all of us with our own particular brand of crippledness, can live our crippledness as whole, NOW! Or again, you and I brag about our great achievements, but what the Mystery created is what is significant, and if through me he created playing with birds and rabbits, that is just as significant as other things he has chosen to create. Who is to question what the Mystery has done? In Heaven, one's life is frozen in authenticity, it is frozen in Eternal Life. In the other world, one knows that he may live his creativity now on behalf of all. In heaven one's life is seen in its fulfillment.

In Hell, one's life is frozen in eternal torment, and in Heaven one's life is frozen in Eternal Life. Let's see if I can illustrate this again. Because you see, these great symbols address you and me now. There is a movie called An Inspector Calls which goes something like this: it is the story of a family of a mother and a father and a son and a daughter. All of them are mixed up with a young woman, but they do not know that the others even know the young woman. The young woman has committed suicide, unbeknown to them. A police inspector calls and tells them about the suicide and begins to question them. As it comes out in the questioning, the father, who had her as his employee, out of an irrational fit of anger, and an utterly uncompassionate relationship to his employees, fired this young woman. In the sociological situation, in the age in which this went on, the woman would be an outcast. And then the son happened to pick her up. He was a drunken slob who was seeking to escape life in the warmth of some body, and warmed himself with her body and got her pregnant. The daughter was a prudish snob, raised in the upper social structures of her day. Now and then she came into touch with this young girl. She would have nothing to do with her, and would give her a cold shoulder or a snobbish look. The mother was the head of the welfare agency that was going to grant this girl money, until she found out that the girl had no husband. So the policeman stopped in to ask some questions. And, oh, he was ruthless. He ground to dust the pretensions of mother and father. The illusions they had were ground down to where they were dust that blew away. And the same with the son and the daughter. As I mentioned, all of this was initially unknown to any of the other members of the family, and as the inspector questioned them, the full story unfolded before them all.

First of all the son and the daughter, and the mother and the father just sat there. The mother and father refused to recognize any involvement or responsibility and stoically held themselves against their illusions being torn away. The son and the daughter, after great anguish and shouting of "NO" and shaking of fists at the Inspector, finally became dead ones before the happening. And now a strange turn took place in the movie. In a telephone call they found out that this inspector was not a genuine police inspector. You can imagine what happened. Mother and Father immediately snapped back with full-blown pretensions and illusions. They haughtily stated that they knew all the time that this couldn't be a real police inspector. But the son and the daughter had become the dead ones. They now picked up the situation as free people, with new possibilities at hand and acted, saying that it made no difference who inspected them and how they were inspected, but the fact was that they had been inspected!

Now if they all died, Momma and Papa would go to Hell; they would be frozen in inauthenticity. Mind you, wouldn't it be something to sit there forever without any eyelids, looking into the mirrors, looking into the eyes of other people who knew exactly who you were? Or, with the son and daughter, they would go to Heaven. Now the son morally was exactly in the same boat as the whores in Sartre's play No Exit who were frozen in Hell. Morally the son and the whores were exactly the same, but ontologically it was the difference between Heaven and Hell. The son and daughter, on going to heaven, would have been frozen in authenticity. They had lived in the relationship of "Yes" to life. They had lived in relationship to the Mystery; indeed, the Mystery itself was that particular relationship. They had Eternal Life.

In the other world, these great symbols about the way life is are freeing. They were created to grasp what it means to die, in order that you and I might know what it is to live, what it means to live Now, what it means to live eternally, and what it means to sail on the Sea of Tranquility. I wish You a blessed happiness.

Joseph Slicker