

Life as a Painting Hanging before God – FOREVER

By

Gary Heartsill

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Jules Lequier

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Existentialism, Realized Eschatology, **God**, “Time, Death and Everlasting Life,” “The Promise of Faith”

Outline Quotes:

"...there is but one faith with which the whole of theology has to deal and that this faith is directed to one sovereign God who *alone* is the ground of our own and all men's authentic existence. *Soli deo Gloria* – to God alone be the glory." Ogden

"*What we have denied the moment, eternity will never give back.*" Schiller

"Each of us comes to maturity in the realization that, even as there was a time when he was not, so there will also be a time when he will not be any more...it is the very awareness of our mortality that endows the moments of our life with vividness and intensity. In this sense, our whole existence is, in Martin Heidegger's phrase, a 'being toward death' (*Sein zum Tode*)."

**And there are some who have no
memorial,
who have perished as though
they had not lived;
they have become as though they
had not been born,
and so have their children after
them. (Sirach 44:9)**

"Death is the last page of the last chapter of the book of one's life, as birth is the first page of the first chapter...The question of death then is, *How rich and how complete is the book to be?*" Hartshorne

"Death says to us: 'More than you already have been you will not be'...the virtues you have failed to acquire, you will now never acquire. It is too late. You had your chance." Hartshorne

"But this reward is *now*...My participation must be now." Hartshorne

"Because God's love...**the present moment for him never slips into the past as it does for us. Instead, every moment retains its vividness and intensity forever within his completely perfect love and judgment.** He knows all things for just what they are, and he continues to know..." Ogden

My Story - Background

Have been wanting to address this issue for a long time and with Jeanne's passing it has been a point of contention with some new questions about the survivability of death and follow on comments about who and what will be on the other side. A friend of mine, in a timely manner, asked me what my thoughts were on this issue and commented from what she was hearing me say, I needed to focus on where I really stood. Hence, this exercise in systemic profundity – yes, and the German word for this is *Tiefgründigkeit*.

The problem is still the same as it was about 48 years ago after I got home from Korea and was going to school at SMU. The problem is the same but the questions are different now that Jeanne is gone. This means there was (and still is) too much heaven talk. Then, my theme was "You are waiting for the bus to pick you up and take you to heaven but you are on the wrong corner," and "Jesus is not coming back - he is already here!" These issues were made clear in my study (grope) for the true and the

beautiful in classes on Philosophy of Religion, The Problem of Evil, The Problem of God, and the book of St. John.

However, for the last four years I have raised or better “fought” the questions and especially the answers to “When can I hold Jeanne again – hug her again – and tell her how sorry I am that we lost her?” In the past two years, beating back our meeting again and being able to reconcile my issues I have decided it may not happen this way. I am thinking as a finite person with an infinite God and the reality of holding her again just isn’t going to happen. Can I tell you how difficult it is to let go of this idea? For years “ALL” I could think about and wanted was to be with her again.

Then, it occurred to me I was acting like Mary Magdalene at the tomb with Jesus. All she wanted was to hug Jesus and why not, He was back! Then it occurred to me Jeanne is what Jesus was and both are spiritual beings. One has to be a spirit to hug a spirit person. Then, they say there are no marriages in heaven. Some say there are no dogs in heaven (we know this is wrong because Will Rogers knows better) but this spirit hugging in heaven is getting out of hand – past my finite understanding so I have revised my thoughts, theology, survivorability, and gone back to my realized theology in the Fourth Gospel and plugged in my existential response to the NOW of life. This NOWness has come full circle for me and now I have planted my flag right smart into the middle of where the reality of life NOW is!

And planted my flag right smart into the middle of where God stands on this – and this just came to me last night – God is the one who will handle this, I can’t. I will let him figure all this out and will go on living what time I have left and completing what I need to do.

The question that switched me over has to do with a transfer of feelings or love for someone. How can my desire to hug Jeanne again carry over to heaven? How can this feeling carry? God gave me the desire, he gave me Jeanne, he took her away, so how can I ever have this feeling back? Yes, here I go again thinking like a finite heaven looker (for the sake of a better term). The answer came and it is God who will handle this. He has got it figured out and I am wasting our time talking about it, no better, wasting time trying to make my hug show back up when those issues are already taken care of. My job is to live out my life authentically as I can and move on to be “in the presence of God” – this is where Jeanne is, my parents, and everybody else that matters who no longer is with us anymore.

The answer to all this was given in the last paragraph on the second page – **in red ink**. Let me explain, hang on, we are down hill now...did you get that? I said “now.”

Process Theology – well, maybe a hint of it...

Here is the complete quote¹ to hold the tension of letting God retain “the present moment.”

“Our final destiny, as Christian faith understands it, is not merely to be loved by our human successors, but also, and infinitely more important, to be loved by the pure unbundled love of God, for whom each of us makes a difference exactly commensurate to what he is and of everlasting significance. Because God’s love, radically unlike ours is pure and unbounded, and because he, therefore, both can and does participate fully in the being of all his creatures **the present moment for him never slips into the past as it does for us. Instead, every moment retains its vividness and intensity forever within his completely perfect love and judgment.** He knows all things for just what they are, and he continues to know and cherish them throughout the endless ages of the future in all the richness of their actual being” (p. 226).

“Man’s decision is only whether he shall accept God’s love for him and thus find himself freed for an authentic existence of returning love for God and for all the others whom God also embraces in his love” (p. 227).

“Not only is there no guarantee of the temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say of its eternal survival after death; but, in any case, this assumption completely fails to accomplish the purpose for which it has always been intended. Or is some riddle solved by my surviving forever? Is not this eternal life itself as much of a riddle as our present life? The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies *outside* space and time” (Wittgenstein²).

“An individual becomes, he does not de-become or unbecome; he is created, he is not destroyed or de-created” (Hartshorne³).

“Death cannot mean the destruction, or even the fading, of the book of one’s life; it can mean only the fixing of its concluding page. Death writes ‘The End’ upon the last page, but nothing further happens to the book, by way of either addition or subtraction” (Hartshorne, p. 363).

“A popular idea of immortality is that after death the artist will paint new pictures in some finer medium; by the same principle, the statesman will have some finer mode of group leadership opened to him, and so on. I wonder. The chance to paint pictures or lead groups seems to be here and now, and there will not, I suspect, be another – for us. Our chance to do right and not wrong, to love God and in God all creatures, is here and now.

Not only will there be ‘no marrying and giving in marriage’ in the heavenly mansions, there will, I imagine, be no personal actions for yours and mine other than those we enact before we die. And there will be no such thing as our feeling (with a feeling we laced while on earth) pain or sorrow as punishment for misdeeds, or bliss as reward for good ones. The time and place to look for the rewards of virtue are now and here. If you cannot on earth find good in being good and ill in being or doing ill, then I doubt whether you will find it in any heaven or hell...

¹ Ogden, Schubert M. (1963). *The reality of God: And other essays*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

² Wittgenstein, Ludwig. (1961). *On death and the mystical*. In John Hick (Ed.), *Classical and contemporary readings in the philosophy of religion* (2nd ed.)(p. 334). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

³ Hartshorne, Charles. (1962). *Time, death, and everlasting life*. In John Hick (Ed.), *Classical and contemporary readings in the philosophy of religion* (2nd ed.)(p. 360). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Death only says to us: '**More than you already have been you will not be**' (Emphasis mine) (Hartshorne, pp. 363-364).

"It is natural to find inspiration in the thought that another will live more richly because I have lived, and in this thought one may find a reward for courageous and generous actions. But this reward is now, while I am performing the actions...I shall not be there to share in the future joys that I will have made possible. My participation must be now" (p. 365).

Now to hang the painting

"Lequier said that we 'make our fame before God.' He also said: 'God has made us makers of ourselves,' and pointed out that in making ourselves we, in so far, decide what God is to contemplate in us. One might say that we mold the picture which forever will hang in the divine mansion. God will make as much out of the picture in beholding it as can be made; but how much can be made depends partly upon the picture and not merely upon the divine insight in seeing relations and meanings. The true immortality is everlasting fame before God" (p. 367). Let me say this again:

The true immortality is everlasting fame before God.

Well, I must tell you to move from my constant desire to be with Jeanne and hold her in my arms again to hanging the picture molded from my life actually put me to tears. I don't give up easy. As a matter of fact Ogden, after writing a whole book on this issue (maybe almost...) waffles on the last pages by saying "I regard the question of subjective immortality – or, at least, of our subjective survival of death – as an open question..."(p. 229) and this compounds my poor miserable position of reaching across the abyss and connect some dots about the survivability of death.

Talking like the finite person that I am I will have a request. I will just end this paper with my request because I have an out. I shall, by God, join my wife. I may not be able to hug her but just maybe the good Lord above will hang my picture right next to Jeanne's!