

Tentmaker

Jesus Christ, the savior of all men, especially those who believe.
I Timothy 4:10



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Just What Do You Mean.... Eternity?

by J. Preston Eby

GOD HAS A PLAN!

AMONG all the questions that men have asked, there is one that is of supreme interest and importance. Why are we here? What is our destiny? What lies beyond the grave for the Christian, for the unbeliever? For old, for young? For our fellow citizens, and for the teeming masses in far-away lands serving strange gods? These questions were raised by one of the great poets of all times. I am speaking now of that American genius of letters, Edgar Allen Poe - an incomparable genius, and yet a man whose life was destroyed by unbelief. Millions of people have read his masterpiece, "The Raven," but few, I am afraid, have ever grasped the real spiritual significance of the struggle that was going on in the soul of this man. He asked four very significant questions - questions which every living soul, at one, time or another, must raise to God. First, Is there a God who comforts? Is there a God who can assuage the pain of life? (In this case it is the poignant pain of the loss of a loved one, his beloved Lenore.) Is there "some water from the river of paradise, the water of Nephenthe," which can take away the heartache that is driving him insane? Secondly, he asks, Is there really a Christ? Does He live? Is there a balm in Gilead? Is there One who can smoothe the wrinkled brow and soften the hard heart? Thirdly, he asks, Is there some place, some heaven, some distant Eden or future world where we shall be joined again with our loved ones? And, finally, Is there any hope that the darkness and hopelessness and despair of this life will be lifted? But always he directs his questions to his own unbelief which is personified in that grim and ghastly raven, a picture of doubt and unbelief. A few years after writing those chilling words, Poe became insane. Regaining his sanity, he drank himself to death, and this genius was found dead in the gutter.

Untold billions of human beings have lived and died without hearing the gospel of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. What has become of them? Is there no hope? For more than six thousand years generations of men, like the grass, have appeared and in a few fleeting years withered and vanished. Whence came those countless billions of human beings, and where do they go? This is the problem which has preoccupied the world's thought since the dawn of history. This is the question about which philosophers have theorized and theologians have dogmatized. Unquestionably the problem of the eternal destiny of mankind is the question of questions! It concerns every individual and touches everything of enduring interest. Life is a vapor that appears for a while and vanishes away. But there is a beyond! What is that beyond to be?

God has a plan indeed; a wonderful plan for this world! It is a plan of which the architectural drawings were made in eternity. It encompasses the minutest detail of all of creation. I assure you that when time has run its course, and the veil is dropped upon the final scene, we shall discover that that plan has been worked out to its very tiniest detail, just as God had planned it in eternity - that His will has been done!

That is an amazing thought because it often seems as if the world is flying off unattended, like a chariot where the driver has fallen off, the horses are running wild, the reins are flapping in the breeze, and it is threatening to go over the precipice at any moment. Yet the Scriptures would have us know that God, the Sovereign Lord of history, has His hands firmly upon those reins and that His plan is coming to pass. Think about it! Our God is perfect in all His attributes. He is perfect in His power. He is perfect in His holiness and justice. He is perfect in His love and mercy. He is perfect in His wisdom and in His omniscience. Therefore, His plan must be perfect. Indeed, it is a perfect plan!

This is not to deny that the world is filled with many evils; that all about us we see that sin and evil and disease and death cling to man. It is not to shut our eyes to those realities, but it is to open our eyes to the realization that God sovereignly overwhelms all these things to bring about His own will. God has created this world. Even though Satan let chaos loose into the midst of the creation, God created Satan and God knew precisely what this angel of destruction would contribute. He knew of the chaos and the sin that would be introduced into the peaceful calm of those Elysium fields. Yet God created him anyway. God knew that with sin would come the perfect judgment of God upon that sin, which means sickness, death, judgment, disillusionment and decay. Yet, God ordained all these things so that He might overcome them for good.

Central to the whole plan of God is Jesus Christ and His greater glory, but even more amazing is the realization that God has planned for us to share His glory and to work out for us our good as well. God has a perfect plan. My friends, I want you to understand one thing. This plan needs no human support!

In Madrid, Spain, there exists the Escorial, one of the greatest cathedrals ever built by man. For centuries the kings of Spain have been buried there. When that magnificent structure was under construction, the architect designed a vast arch, perhaps bigger than anything that had been built before. However, that arch was so flat at the top that the reigning king was frightened by the prospect of the tremendous weight of the roof collapsing on his head. He commanded the architect to build a column from the floor all the way to the center of that arch to hold it up. The architect protested vehemently that it was not needed, but the king insisted and, over the laments of the architect, the column was built. The king worshipped contentedly in the vast structure, having seen to it himself that the ceiling would not fall. The years went by, the church stood, and the king finally died. Only then did the architect reveal that between the top of the column and the bottom of the arch there was a quarter of an inch of space. In all these hundreds of years that have passed the arch has not sunk so much as a quarter of an inch. Today a board is still passed over the column and under the arch for all to see. So it is with the plan of God - that over-arching plan that encompasses all of reality and all of life. It needs no human support to hold it up. God is the LORD OF ALL and He is working out His purposes in our lives, in all of the world, and through the whole universe.

Read the words of that magnificent hymn: *"God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants the footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm."* What a beautiful hymn! Many people may not know how William Cowper was brought to write that hymn. His life was in shambles. He was not a Christian. He was filled with despair and discouragement. In fact, so overcome with despair was he that he determined to take his life by taking poison. Instead of dying, he became deathly ill. He bought a gun and tried to shoot himself, but the gun would not go off. In great anger, he threw the gun away, got a rope and tried to hang himself. The rope broke. So then, in utter desperation, he hired a carriage in London and instructed the driver to take him to the Thames River. The driver could not find the Thames River! The fog had settled in so thickly on the town that even a London cabdriver got lost! After several hours he brought Cowper back to his apartment. He went up to his room, totally dismayed, and his eyes fell upon a Bible. He opened that Bible and began to read. He read of the love of a heavenly Father who loved even William Cowper. Astonished by the events that had just taken place, he read of the sovereign providence of God working all things after the counsel of His own will. He embraced Him as his Saviour and wrote the wonderful words of that great hymn.

Perhaps I ought to state here for the benefit of some of my readers, that the idea that God HAS a plan may be to them a new one. According to the view of most Christians, God has no definite, prearranged plan, but is simply endeavoring to do the best He can through human instrumentality to repair the ruin that sin has made, and, though thus far the majority of the race have been overwhelmed in that ruin, yet in the end truth will triumph and sin will be confined in an eternal prison house.

As some ignorantly misjudge the skill and wisdom of a great architect and builder by his unfinished work, so also many in their ignorance now misjudge God by His unfinished work; but by and by, when the rough scaffolding of sin, death, and redemption has been removed, and the rubbish cleared away, God's *finished work* will universally declare His infinite wisdom and power; and His plans will be seen to be in harmony with His glorious character.

Since God tells us that He has a definitely fixed purpose, and that all His purposes shall be accomplished, it behooves us, as His children, to inquire diligently what those plans are, that we may be found in harmony with them. Notice how emphatically the Lord affirms the fixedness of His purpose:

"The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." "The Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it?" "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me... My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure ... Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa. 14:24-27; 46:9-11).

Therefore, however haphazard or mysterious God's dealings with men may appear, those who believe this testimony of His Word must acknowledge that His original and unalterable plan has been, and still is, progressing systematically to completion.

When we think of a plan, we think of something involving more than just a single element. An architect's plan for a building consists of drawings and specifications descriptive of its several floors, including styles of plumbing, decoration, arrangement of rooms, etc. Unless each floor of the building is to be identical to every other floor, necessarily the drawings and specifications for any given floor do not harmonize with the details of the other floors. No one, however, would construe this to mean that the architect is incompetent, nor that his plans and specifications are contradictory. God's plan, like the plan of a building, is also made up of many parts. Instead of different floors, however, it embraces *epochs* and *ages*. Through each of these ages the divine plan has steadily progressed toward completion. Only when it is complete, and mankind sees the result, will they all be able to appreciate the wisdom, justice, love and power of the Divine Architect. -Ps. 72:1-20

THE PLAN OF THE AGES

Upon your table today there is or should be a book we call the Bible. This book alone reveals God's secret plan of the ages. It unfolds with unerring accuracy the mysteries of ages in the dim and misty past and points with unerring finger to the purpose of countless eons yet to come. The Christian Church as we know it has been living in a fool's paradise, propounding pet doctrines, ranting and raving about an endless eternity with golden streets and harps and white nightgowns for some and crackling, searing, tormenting flames for others, but almost completely overlooking God's wonderful plan of the ages.

Paul writes of this plan of the ages in Eph. 3:8-11. *"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and make all to see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

The word translated "eternal" in the phrase "eternal purpose" is the Greek word AIONON which means "ages."

Young's Literal Translation reads, *"And to cause all to see what is the fellowship of the secret that has been hid FROM THE AGES in God, who the all things did create by Jesus Christ, that there might be made known now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenly places, through the assembly, the manifold wisdom of God, according to A PURPOSE OF THE AGES, which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

The Diaglott renders verse 11 thus, *"According to A PLAN OF THE AGES, which He formed for the Anointed Jesus our Lord"*

Rotherham says, *"According to A PLAN OF THE AGES which He made in the anointed Jesus our Lord. "*

It will be a wonderful day for you, dear one, when first your soul becomes enthralled with the revelation that God, before ever the world began or ever the ages were formed, looked forth from His temple of wisdom and omnipotence to chart with resolute care the course and purpose of every age. Your heart will throb as you read the opening proclamation of Scripture, *"In the beginning - GOD!"*

In the beginning of what? Not in the beginning of God, certainly, but in the beginning of His creation of all things, in the beginning of time, in the beginning of the orderly procession of the divinely destined ages. In the beginning stands God, omnipotent and omniscient, creating, sustaining and guiding all things and all people and all the ages of time according to the purpose of His own will. No purpose ordained by God from the beginning can possibly go astray or be hindered by the efforts of devil or man. Oh, for the hour when all creation will grasp the beautiful message, *"From Him everything comes, by Him everything exists, and in Him everything ends!"* (Rom. 11:36).

As men with the aid of God's Word have gazed into the vista of the future, it seems to have missed their understanding that God says very little in His Word about eternity, while devoting many hundreds of passages to His will and works wrought through THE AGES.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2).

What tremendous statements we have here! God has spoken to us through His Son - literally, "spoke to us in Son," or, God spoke to us in One who has the character that He is a SON, revealing the realm and relationship of sonship to God. This Son is heir of all things and, blessed be God! we are joint heirs with Him. *"By whom also He made the worlds."* Many people believe this refers to the creative act - *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* Actually, it does not refer

to that at all. The word here for "worlds" is AIONAS. It means ages- *"... by whom He made **the ages.**"*

This goes beyond His being the Creator of matter and its arrangement into multiplied billions of stars, suns, and planets with their atmospheres and inhabitants. This lends purpose to everything. ***He is the heir who gives the program for the future!*** He framed the ages, He ordained the end from the beginning; not only did He create everything, He did it for a purpose, and "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). Notice - the Amplified Bible says, *"But in the last of these days He has spoken to us in the person of a Son, Whom He appointed Heir and lawful Owner of all things, also by and through Whom He created the worlds and the reaches of space and the AGES OF TIME - that is, He made, produced, built, operated and arranged them in order!"*

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." (Heb. 11:3), but it should read, ***"the ages were planned by the word of God."***

God made, planned, and determined the destiny of all the ages by Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of this universe, and time and space, and there is purpose to it all. Abroad today is the idiotic notion that the universe is running at breakneck speed through time and space like a car that has lost the driver. The interesting thing is that when a car loses the driver there is a wreck, but this universe, even according to the scientists, has been running millions of years, and it has been doing pretty well, by the way. The sun comes up at a certain time every morning; it is very precise. The moon stays in a predictable orbit. As one of the men who works on the moon modules says, all they have to do is aim, and the moon will be there when the module gets there. This is not a mad universe in which you and I live. It has purpose, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who gives it purpose. HE is the architect and sovereign Lord of the ages. He ***formed the ages***, and appointed what should be done in each of them.

I must, therefore, with utmost force impress upon all who read these lines that, if we are to comprehend God's great plan for the ages, we must raise our eyes far above the engulfing muck and sucking quicksand of Babylonish Church tradition handed down to us by the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth to keep God's people in bondage to eternal hopelessness. God has a plan of the ages! It was conceived by the omnipotent and omniscient Christ of God, the Creator and Redeemer of the world. Its successful conclusion is as sure and unfailing as God Himself is sure and unfailing. God never "flits" from one thing to another. He does not begin one work and then tiring of it, drop it and start another. He does not create what He cannot control. He is not the proverbial mad scientist who creates an uncontrollable monster. The prophet Isaiah gives us the words of God wherein God declares,

"I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:9-10).

God's purpose is so unalterable, so fixed, so certain that He could declare from the very beginning just what the end would be, and that end will come to pass in just exactly that way.

For many years now multitudes of preachers and people in the Churches would have us believe that God has been in this great work of the ages for the short period of about 6,000 years. They tell us that in this day God is about to become so disgusted with the whole mess that He is going to close it down, take a few saints away to some far off heaven somewhere, and give up on the rest of the creation, the work of His love.

What a weak God some folk have and worship! They worship a God who changes, one who in the beginning did start out to bring about a glorious end, but somewhere along the line lost control of the situation and has now thrown up His hands in despair and decided to destroy the whole thing and be satisfied with a little handful for Himself for all eternity. What great pity I feel for such people and for the god they serve! For this is going to put their god in the unenviable position of

being filled with regret throughout all eternity because He was not able to carry out His purpose, and He will have to always remember that over in the hell He created is the vast majority of His creation suffering the tortures of the damned for ever and ever. What a prospect for God and His creation! If God knew in the beginning that it would turn out like this and included eternal damnation in His creative plans, then why did He create the world in the first place? Better to have forgotten the whole creation in the beginning! And if God did not know this from the beginning, then He is not God!

"AION" - AN AGE

This brings us to the thought I want to share in this chapter. Let us consider the wonderful Kingdom parable Jesus told of the sheep and the goats.

"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in: naked, and you clothed Me: I was sick, and you visited Me: I was in prison, and you came unto Me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, and fed You? or thirsty, and gave You drink? When did we see You a stranger, and take You in? or naked, and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come unto You? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of one of these MY BROTHERS, you have done it unto Me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into EVERLASTING FIRE prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat ... then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto You? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you did it not unto one of the least of these, you did it not unto Me. And these shall go away into EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT: but the righteous into LIFE ETERNAL" (Mat. 25:31-46).

There are many precious and important truths contained in this parable, but we must restrain ourselves from pursuing them at this time in order to deal briefly with two points. First, it is important to note that this separation of the sheep from the goats was brought about, not on the basis of whether one had accepted Jesus Christ as his personal saviour, but solely on the basis of **works**. Everything depended entirely upon what the sheep or goats had done or had not done. There was nothing of faith or a spiritual experience connected with this separation. The sheep were set on God's right hand because of the fact that they had done something - given meat and drink to the Lord's brethren, clothed them, visited them, and comforted them. All these things the Lord said they had done to Him. But the sheep confessed that they had never seen Him, so how could they have done these things to the Lord? He answered, "Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto Me."

All of this is a kind of ministry unto the Lord Himself and it brought all these people into a separation unto blessings of the right hand of God! This had nothing whatever to do with how the sheep treated the Jews, or the orphans in foreign lands, or the destitute masses or the poor drunk in the gutter. None of those are the Lord's brethren! Paul identifies the Lord's brethren in Rom. 8:29, *"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."* The Lord's brethren are the sons of God, the members of His body, of His flesh, of His bone, of His spirit and nature. The sheep had responded in a positive way to these brethren in their time of testing and preparation during their sojourn in the flesh, and now there is rich reward!

This meant an entrance into a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. This

kingdom was not to be some far-off land of ivory palaces, golden streets, beautiful mansions, white nightgowns, wings and harps, where there is nothing to do and all eternity to do it in. This is a **Kingdom!** And because it is a kingdom it denotes rulership and advancement of all kinds. It indicates the bringing of a great many people into a higher realm in the Spirit than they have ever known before. It means work and responsibility and a place of ministry and authority to bless.

But the people who had never done all these things mentioned by the Lord were separated unto the left hand of God! They received no kingdom. There were no rewards for work done or attainments reached. Rather, they were set on the dark side of God, they were put under a kingdom and under authority and they were placed in a process of fiery judgment to receive correction. There is much subtle truth in these words of Jesus: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." The word punishment is from the Greek "*kolasis*" which means simply that - punishment. But it comes from the root "*kolazo*" which sheds precious light upon the nature of the punishment. *Kolazo*, according to Strong's Concordance, bears only two shades of meaning, namely, "*to curtail*" or "*to chastise*." To "*curtail*" means to restrain as a person is restrained in ail or a child is restrained when he is "grounded" for a week because of some disobedience. "*Chastise*" has one simple meaning according to Webster's New World Dictionary: to punish in order to correct, usually by beating. It should be clear to any thoughtful mind that the subject here is not meaningless, sadistic, unending torture, but **purposeful correction**.

While the King James version states that these goats go into everlasting fire and everlasting punishment and the sheep enter into life eternal, that is not quite the meaning of the Greek. The Greek word here translated everlasting and eternal is *aionios*-- which is the adjective form of the Greek noun *aion*. Some have contended that the punishment must be everlasting because the same word is used of the life of God - eternal life - and if the punishment is not eternal then the life cannot be eternal. But that is an argument put forth by the shallow reasoning of men who reach hasty conclusions not founded on the facts. "*If the punishment ends then God's life must end, if the life is eternal then the punishment must be eternal,*" we are told!

In late years there has been much controversy over the meaning of the little Greek word *aion*. Certain deceivers, to further their unscrupulous ends and uphold their blasphemous and Romanish doctrine of eternal damnation, have maintained--contrary to and in spite of all revealed facts--that it means eternal.

Our King James version renders it, together with the adjective *aionios* as: "*age, course, eternal, for ever, evermore, for ever and ever, everlasting, world, beginning of the world, world began, world without end.*" What a horrible mixture!

But we need not remain in darkness, for fortunately the Word of God tells us precisely what this Greek word means. Too few have taken the time or energy to consider the real meaning of *aion*. It is the word from which we get our English word *eon*.

Eon, according to Webster, means "a long period of time." Many attempts have been made to prove that eons are eternal. But this is more than a grave error; it is the height of stupidity--for the divine Author of the blessed Bible has not Himself used them in that way. *Aion* nowhere means eternal! Its simple meaning is an age. In its plural form it means ages. This fact can be unquestionably and incontrovertibly demonstrated from numerous New Testament passages. A glance at any Greek concordance proves that the noun *aion*, or *age*, is not the synonym of eternity. A study of each case would make a library; so, leaving this task to the reader, we must content ourselves with adducing a few specimens to demonstrate the fact. It is usage that determines meanings - *their* usage, not ours; the meanings that the holy prophets and apostles gave to their words rather than those that our English translators may try to give. Let me illustrate.

The term forever (and its equivalents, eternal and everlasting) often occurs when it cannot possibly mean unending. In the story of Jonah one is surprised to hear him say while in the belly of the fish, "*I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever*" (Jon.

2:6). But he was in the fish only three days and three nights!

When a Hebrew slave loved his master and did not wish to go free at the end of the seventh year, we read, "... *His master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him **for ever***" (Ex. 21:6). Of course, that couldn't be longer than his life span.

Again, when Solomon built the temple unto the Lord, he began his prayer of dedication with the statement, "*I have surely built You a house to dwell in, a settled place for You to abide in **for ever***" (I Kgs. 8:13). And the Lord answered Solomon, "*I have heard your prayer and supplication that you have made before Me: I have hallowed this house, which you have built, to put My name there **for ever***" (I Kgs. 9:3). But Solomon's temple lasted for only about 400 years! And it was never in God's mind to dwell there for ever!

Here is something that ought to be clear to any intelligent, honest man. A word that is used to mean in one case three days and nights, in another case to mean a man's lifetime, and in still another case to mean a period of about four centuries, surely does not mean unending or eternal, no matter what English word is used to translate it. ***Usage determines meaning.***

Another illustration is the Aaronic priesthood. According to the King James version, Aaron and his sons were anointed as priests for ever. It says, "*Their anointing shall surely be an **everlasting** priesthood throughout their generations*" (Ex. 40:15). Yet we read in Heb. 7:11-18 that the Aaronic priesthood is changed to that of Melchizedek.

"Now if perfection had been attainable by the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people were given the Law, why was it further necessary that there should arise another and different kind of Priest, one after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one appointed after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is of necessity an alteration of the law concerning the priesthood as well. For it is obvious that our Lord sprang from the tribe of Judah, and Moses mentioned nothing about priests in connection with that tribe. So, a previous physical regulation and command is cancelled because of its weakness and ineffectiveness and uselessness" (Amplified Bible).

Amazing, isn't it, that the priesthood which was ordained for ever has been cancelled! There would be no contradiction if the statement in Exodus were translated as it should be, "to the age throughout their generations." That is, throughout their generations ***as long as that age lasted.***

In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures which Jesus and His disciples used, the Greek word *aion* was the word used for the Hebrew *olam*. According to Hebrew and Greek usage, therefore, these words mean a period of time, a period of unknown length, the duration of which is determined by the fact or condition or person to which the term is applied.

Furthermore, Lev. 24:8 states that the covenant given to Israel was an "everlasting covenant." Yet, it was conditional and based on Israel's obedience (Ex. 19:5-6). And the inspired writer of the book of Hebrews declares, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, He says, Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... in that He says, A new covenant, He has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to ***vanish away***" (Heb. 8:7 8, 13). Ah, did you notice? The everlasting covenant has been done away! What a wonder, that we are told that the "earth abides forever" (Eccl. 1:4), but Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away.. (Mat. 24:35).

The Lord announced through the prophet Isaiah, "*Upon the land of My people shall come up thorns and briers; yea upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: for the palace shall be forsaken; the populous city shall be deserted; the hill and the watch-tower shall be dens **for ever**; a joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks; **UNTIL** the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest"* (Isa. 32:13-15). Verse 15 limits the use of the word in verse 14, for the desolations of the land are "for ever" only UNTIL the Spirit

is poured out from on high bringing glorious restoration!

As regards animal sacrifices, dietary laws, ceremonial observances and sabbaths, each was to be "observed as a statute for ever" (Ex. 31:16-17; II Chron. 2:4; Lev. 16:31). But the New Testament clearly shows that these were, one and all, but "carnal ordinances imposed UNTIL the time of reformation" (Heb. 9:10).

It is clear - if "for ever" really meant *eternal* - we would still be offering sheep, bullocks, and goats as sacrifices to God! But - more startling still - the idea of endlessness does not adhere even to the reign of Christ.

Heb. 1:8 says, "*But unto the Son He says, Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever...*" Now turning to another Scripture bearing on the same subject, we obtain additional light on this subject. "*Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign TILL He has put all enemies under His feet. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, **THEN SHALL THE SON ALSO HIMSELF BE SUBJECT UNTO HIM** that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all*" (I Cor. 15:24-25,28). The Kingdom of the Son will have a conclusion. In some remote time the Son delivers up the Kingdom to the Father, the Kingdom continues no longer in the rule of Sonship, but in the rule of Fatherhood, that God may be known no longer in and through the Son and the Sons, but transcendentally as *all in all!*

Dear reader, it is high time to stop acting the fool. It is high time to cease from exalting ourselves and our ignorant imaginings above the knowledge of God. It is high time to bow in humble submission to His Word and cease our own blasphemous and ignorant pratings. It is high time for a lot of people to curb their wagging tongues and do some listening for a change, if perchance they might at length learn something worth talking about.

The Hebrew word OLAM and its Greek equivalent, AION, mean a limited time, an age, and their plural means ages. No one who is sane and reasonable can maintain otherwise. To do so is to contradict all known facts and to contradict God's own Word. That is precisely what all the "eternal damnation" people are guilty of. God be merciful to them!

Let us look at how the word *aion* is used in a number of passages. About 37 times in the New Testament it is rendered "world," twice as "worlds," twice as "ages," and once as "course." Every place where the word "eternal" appears, with but one exception, it is a translation of this word AION or its adjective form AIONIOS. Twice it is rendered "evermore." Every place where the word "everlasting" appears, but one, it is this same word or its adjective form. With but thirteen exceptions, every place where the word "ever" appears it is the same word or its adjective form. And aside from all this confusion, the word also appears in the plural, and in a number of confusing combinations, such as "the aion of the aion," "the aion of the aions," and "the aions of the aions," etc.

Some of the passages where AION is found will give us added information concerning it.

In Eph. 2:7 we find, "*in the ages (aions) to come.*"

In Col. 1:26 we find, "*the mystery which has been hid from ages (aions).*"

In Eph. 2:2 we find "*you walked, according to the course aion of this world.*"

In Heb. 1:2 we find, "*by whom also He made the worlds (aions).*"

In Heb. 11:3 we find, "*the worlds (aions) were formed by the Word of God.*"

In about fifteen instances, such as Mat. 12:32, 1 Cor. 1:20, etc., we find it rendered "this world (aion)." Twice we find "this present world (aion)."

In Gal. 1:4 we find, "*deliver us from this present evil world (aion).*"

In Eph. 6:12 we find, "*the rulers of the darkness of this world (aion).*"

In 11 Cor. 4:4 we find, *"the god of this world (aion)."*

In I Cor. 2:6 we find, *"the wisdom of this world (aion)."*

In Lk. 16:8 we find, *"the children of this world (aion)."*

In Mk. 4:19 we find, *"the cares of this world (aion)."*

How much more understandable it would be if the translators had used the word age instead of world!

In Mk. 10:30 we find that there is not only this present aion, which is evil, but also *"the world (aion) to come."*

In Lk. 20:35 we find, *"but they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world (aion), and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage."*

In Heb. 6:5 we find, *"and have tasted the powers of the world (aion) to come."*

And in Lk. 1:70, Jn. 9:32, etc., we find that the aion had a beginning: *"since the world (aion) began."*

And now in reviewing the Scriptures we have just quoted, we note that this aion is something which has a king; it has princes; it is in darkness; it had a beginning; it has an ending; it is evil; it has wisdom; it has children who marry; it has cares. The aions we find were made by Christ, simply through His spoken Word, and we also find in Col. 1:26 that the mystery of Christ in us, the hope of glory, has been hidden from these aions.

Now, if *aion* means *eternal*, consider how ridiculous the Word of God would be! The Holy Spirit would be found saying, *"the mystery which has been hid from eternities;" "the mystery of Christ which in other eternities was not made known;" "in the eternities to come;" "You walked according to the eternity of this world;" "by whom also He made the eternities;" "the rulers of the darkness of this eternity;" "now once in the end of the eternities has He appeared;" "the harvest is the end of the eternity;" "since eternity began;" "in the eternities to come,"* etc. etc. Let the scholars whose business it is delve into the many intricacies of expression, and worry over the many grammatical combinations. Suffice it to say here that there have been "aions" in the past, there is this present "aion," and there are "aions" to come. And these all combined make up TIME, encompassing the whole of the progressive plan and program of God for the development of His creation.

Any thinking person should clearly see that if you translate the word aion--which means an age--by the word *eternal*, which has nothing to do with time, you immediately get the wrong idea. The same thing applies when the word aion is translated by the word *world*. It is incorrect and brings nothing but confusion. That is why so many Christians have been worrying about "the end of the world" when they should have been understanding God's special dealing here at "the end of the age."

There is a great deal of difference between the expression, "He shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," and the expression, "He shall be tormented day and night unto the ages of the ages." For ever and ever has no end. The ages of the ages do have an end, and their end will see every knee bowing and every tongue confessing that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:10; Rom. 14:10-11). The first expression forbodes complete hopelessness for billions and makes the faith of God of none effect. The second expression, which is completely correct, not only offers hope but expresses the ultimate fulfillment of the purpose which was purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began or before the ages were framed.

THE AGES OF THE AGES

The best way to arrive at the true meaning of a word is to study carefully the way it has been used. If we are to study a Greek word, we must go to the Greek text and not to a translation, nor to a definition which has been derived from an interpretative translation. If, in the original text, the word appears in different forms, surely these forms must have some special significance. A singular form

cannot have the same meaning as the plural. Since both forms are used they should be distinguished when they are translated. Yet in certain places the singular form is translated by exactly the same words as the plural form and thereby the true import of the words is hidden. For example, compare the following passages:

Heb. 1:8 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever (Gr: for the *aion* of the *aion*);

Rev. 1:6 To Him be glory ... for ever and ever (Gr: for the *aions* of the *aions*);

Eph. 3:21 Unto all generations for ever and ever (Gr: for the *aion* of the *aions*).

In I Cor. 10:11 we have the expression, "The *ends* of the aions."

In Heb. 9:26 we have "The *end* of the aions."

How can a period that is definitely said to come to an end be endless? How can a group of such periods, each said to come to an end, be forever?

I am aware that some people will oppose us on the grounds that the Greeks of today use the phrase "the aions of the aions" meaning eternal, everlasting. A Greek gentleman told me several years ago that "the ages of the ages" is how they express eternity in Greek, and that when the book of Revelation says "and the smoke of their torment ascends up to the ages of the ages" (Rev. 14:11) it means *forever*. Ah, that sounds convincing, conclusive, final and unanswerable, does it not? But precious friend of mine, in studying Bible language we are studying ANCIENT GREEK, not MODERN. The Greek language in two thousand years has changed to such an extent that the ancient tongue is altogether unintelligible to a modern Greek.

The fact is, for over a thousand years, up till the year A.D. 1453, Greek was almost unknown or forgotten in most of Europe. Even in Italy, which formerly had been dominated by Greek, it became almost unknown. Ancient Greek has been a dead language for 1500 years! Anyone who knows anything at all will at once see the utter ridiculousness of this form of argument. Ancient and modern Greek are as different as day and night. As well might we teach our children the English of 2,000 years ago, and then expect them to be proficient in modern English, as to try to apply modern meanings to ancient Greek. The older the English, the more unintelligible it becomes. The spelling changes, word meanings change, sentence structure changes, until finally one is hopelessly lost in a morass of indecipherable hieroglyphics. Even in the four centuries since the translation of the King James Bible, what changes have taken place "Thee" and "thou" have been replaced by the more familiar "you" and are no longer used except in classical literature and religion. "Let" meant to "restrain or prevent" in King James' day; now the word means exactly the opposite, to "permit or allow"!

So with Greek. Ancient Greek is a dead language, while modern Greek is a living language, with about as much similarity as there is between German and English.

It was the false doctrines of the apostate Greek Orthodox Church that caused the meaning eternal to be placed upon the modern Greek phrase "*the ages of the ages*." And don't think for one moment, dear friend, that religion doesn't influence language! The English word "hell" once meant "a dark hidden place" but Church dogma has through the years caused the word to take on an altogether different connotation. Word meanings do change! And religious dogma has effected many such changes!

So usage is the fundamental key to unlocking the meanings of ancient Greek words. That the expression "*the ages of the ages*" cannot mean an endless succession of ages, or eternity, is clearly revealed by comparing Rev. 11:15 with I Cor. 15:24-28.

In Rev. 11:15 our Lord is said, in the Greek text, to reign "*for the ages of the ages*" but in I Cor. 15 His reign is said to end. He does not reign "*for ever and ever*" though He does reign "*for the ages of the ages*." As the Son, God reigns unto the ages of the ages through a process of subjecting, subduing all things unto Himself. When that work is completed and there is nothing more in all

God's vast universe to subdue and reconcile unto Himself, God reigns no longer as the Son, but as Father He shall finally and eternally be **all** in **all**.

Endlessness is expressed in the Scriptures by the simple phrase "no end" (Lk. 1:33; Dan. 7:14; Isa. 9:7). The thought of permanence is also expressed in Heb. 7:16, "the power of an endless (or indissoluble) life," and in I Pet. 1:4, "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away." Now had the Holy Spirit wished to indicate true unendingness or true eternity as the time issue in the punishment and suffering of the lost, He could have used the word that He used in Rom. 1:20 to describe God's "eternal power and Godhead," literally God's "perpetual" or "imperceptible" power and Godhead, one being unable to see to the end of it! You see, had the Holy Spirit wanted to convey unendingness in reference to the punishment of the enemies of God, He could have used words that plainly denoted that, rather than the words "to the age..... to the ages," "to the age of the ages" "to the ages of the ages," etc., all which plainly denote SPANS OF TIME.

"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever (to the ages of the ages): and they have no rest DAY NOR NIGHT, who worship the beast..." (Rev. 14:10-11).

Notice, dear reader, that these are tormented **day and night** unto the ages of the ages and have no rest **day nor night**. The very terms day and night and for ever and ever prove beyond question that we are still dealing with the realm of time. The expression for ever and ever is misleading and throws us into confusion, for, while on one hand *eternity* is indicated, on the other hand *time* is indicated by the use of the words day and night. There is no day nor night in eternity! Both are creatures of time. There is no way of knowing how long a time this will be, but since it unquestionably deals with day and night and ages, it does therefore belong to time and no endeavor must be made to equate it with eternity. These words are solemn and awful, and we have no desire but to acknowledge both the wicked deeds and the dreadful and fearful doom of those who are so justly condemned. I have no desire to spend even one day under the terrible hand of God's severity! But to refer to these words as bespeaking eternal, endless, hopeless, and merciless torture is to invite the fearful curse of those who "add to the words of this book" (Rev. 22:18).

Once we understand that *aion* and all the compounds of that word denote *time*, how clear everything becomes! And how ridiculous the ignorant pratings of men! In an effort to harmonize the Scriptures with the false doctrines of the apostate Church, the translators rendered "the ages of the ages" as "for ever and ever." This one little mistake once and for all exposes their folly. Even in English we can see that "for ever" cannot be endless if "and ever" may be added to it. Eternity cannot be added to! Only time may be compounded. Eternity is absolute timelessness. Eternity is without either beginning or end. There cannot be more than one eternity. You cannot add a second eternity on to a first eternity. Forever in English means "for eternity; always; perpetually; endlessly." Now if "for ever" is "eternity" how can you add "and ever," attaching ANOTHER ETERNITY to an already existing eternity? That isn't even correct English grammar! Ah - but ages are time--and time, beloved, can be added to! When the Greek speaks of "the ages of the ages" it is speaking of **aggregated periods of time** - not eternity! And you cannot get eternity by compounding all the time periods of the past and the future, for time began and time ends. The ages and all the time and times combined do not equal eternity. There simply is no such thing as "the endless ages of eternity" as the preachers love to say, for the phrase is a complete contradiction of itself. No one who is sane and reasonable can maintain otherwise. To do so is to contradict all known facts and to contradict God's own Word.

No other book that was ever written can be compared to the Bible, which is the Word of God. I am a believer in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, and I am not a believer in the folly of uninformed and unenlightened men who by ignorance of the facts and misinformation try with puny human reasoning to tear it apart. There are a great many people who forget their scholarship,

however, if ever they had any, and contend for the King James version even when it is manifestly wrong. One thing I should like to say in passing is, that while the Bible is inspired in its origin, you have to be exceedingly careful of two things: **first, that you have the original manuscript; and second, that you have a good translation.** Original manuscripts are inspired, but translations are not. To hear some people talk you would think that the good old King James Bible was the one Paul preached from!

It is interesting to note that the word "Easter" appears one time in the King James version in Acts 12:4. *"And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."*

Here Easter is translated from the Greek *pascha* which appears twenty-eight other places in the New Testament, and in all of those instances is translated "Passover." The Greek *pascha* comes from the Hebrew *pasach* which means to pass, to leap, or skip over. We see from this that the English word "Passover" is the correct meaning of the original.

How then did the translators of the King James version come up with Easter? Easter, according to Webster's New World Dictionary, is from "Eastre," the ancient Anglo Saxon goddess of the dawn-her festival being in the spring of the year. And "Eastre" is the Anglo Saxon form of the Babylonian goddess "Ishtar" the pagan Queen of Heaven! Hundreds of years after Christ, the Romish Church, as a compromise with the pagan converts, adopted the pagan rites and customs associated with the worship of Ishtar into the Church as a celebration of the resurrection of Christ - and called that celebration **Easter!** Naturally, Easter is celebrated at approximately the same time as ancient Israel celebrated their Passover. But the point is - because of deeply entrenched apostate religious practice, the translators of the King James Bible mis-translated the Scripture according to **church tradition** instead of **truth!** We must never forget that the King James version was translated under the auspices of a state Church, which Church was even at that time persecuting, torturing and martyring humble followers of Jesus who dared to resist and denounce its apostasy and shame.

It lets in light on the attitude of the translators of King James' Bible to know, as stated in the Bible helps of Bagster's edition, that King James instructed the men who gave us our Authorized Version, *"To sanction no innovation that would disturb the orthodoxy or peace of the Church."* It is said that, *"The translators were careful in the main to respect the rules laid down by the king."* What a vast difference it would have made in our thinking today had these translators followed consistently and accurately the Hebrew and Greek texts, instead of conforming to the heresies of the mother of harlots! Especially where "eternity" the age of the ages and the "ages" are concerned!

Thus, the translators were at the disadvantage of never being able to say or write anything that conflicted with the accepted belief of the nominal Church, its leaders and the ruling element of the nation. In support of this I would give you a quotation from page seven of the Emphatic Diaglott as follows, concerning the King James version: according to Dr. Gell, it was wrested and partial, and only adapted to one sect; but he imputes this, not to the translators, but to those who employed them, for even some of the translators complained that they could not follow their own judgment in the matter, but were restrained by reasons of State." Little wonder, then, that we have eternal damnation taught in the King James Bible! (For more on the King James Version and 'aion', see link below)

THE AGE OF THE AGES

While the Scriptures speak of an age, and the ages, and the ages of the ages, - one age proceeding from, or out of, a previous age until all the ages have run their courses - it also points to that glorious climatic age of all ages. We read the phrase, "Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb. 1:8). These words "for ever and ever" come from the Greek which literally reads to the *age of the ages*. This is very familiar terminology in the Scripture.

Few men have been caught away by the spirit of inspiration as was the wise king Solomon when he penned the beautiful Song of Solomon. God dropped one thousand and five songs down into the

heart of Solomon, but of these, only five comprising the Song of Solomon, have been preserved and have found a place in Holy Scripture. Inspiration named it "*The Song of Songs*," that is, the one song which was above and beyond all the songs that have ever come from human heart and human lips. Just as the "*Song of Songs*" was chief above them all, just as the "*Holy of holies*" was the Holiest place of all, just as the "*heaven of the heavens*" is the highest heaven of all, just as the "*King of kings*" is the greatest King of all, so all through the Scriptures, though obscured by many translators, we have this remarkable phrase *to the age of the ages*. It points to that age which shall be the most glorious of all, and which finds its type in the year of Jubilee.

This is the Holy Spirit's way of expressing the superlative, and so far as God's plan of the ages is concerned this *age of the ages* is the *age par excellence* of them all. A simple illustration of this is our expression, "a day of days," meaning a day that comes out of previous days, which crowns them, and embodies not only what they contained, but the full fruition of all that was elementary in them. Eternity does not emerge full grown in man's consciousness until this wonderful age is ended. This age of the ages is that glorious climax to His purpose and process of the ages, wherein He states, "*Behold, I make ALL things new*" (Rev. 21:5). And when He says, "*ALL*," it is self-evident that there is nothing remaining in the universe which shall not be made new, else all is not all. "*For He must reign until He has put ALL enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*" (I Cor. 15:25-26). When the last enemy is under His feet, destroyed, and there is no more death in any creature anywhere in all God's great universe, then shall God be ***all in all!*** The Amplified gives, "***Be everything to everyone.***" Time comes to an end when the ages end and eternity, with God "all in all," becomes a conscious reality.

"AIONIOS" - THE LIFE OF THE AGES

I have pointed out previously that the word for "everlasting" as used of punishment and "everlasting" as used with life is often the same word in the Greek - *aionios*. Some sincere and well meaning people assert that if *aionios* does not mean eternal, that is, if the punishment is not eternal, then the life is not eternal. If the "aionios punishment" ends, then the "aionios life" of God must end, say they! That sounds like a reasonable argument, but when one searches beneath the surface he discovers that it merely reveals the ignorance of those who labor the point. Let us see!

The noun *aion* nowhere means eternal. Its simple meaning is an age. In its plural form it means ages. We have unquestionably and incontrovertibly demonstrated this fact from numerous New Testament passages. Now once we understand that *aionios* is the adjective form of the noun *aion*, a simple little sixth-grade grammar lesson should once and for all establish the exact meaning of *aionios*.

A noun is a word that tells what you are talking about. A noun is a word that names something, a person, place, thing, quality, etc. Boy, water, tree, age and truth are all nouns. An adjective is a word that is used with a noun to describe it. It is a word that tells you what kind, what color, which one, etc. If you wanted to tell me about the hat a woman was wearing you would describe the hat in some way. You might say that it was a large hat, an atrocious hat, or a red hat. These are adjectives, words that describe what kind, what color of hat. When you add one or more of these "describing words" or "adjectives" to hat, you give a clearer picture of what the hat is like. Some words are both nouns and adjectives, that is, the same word can be used both ways. Sometimes the adjective form of the word is identical to the noun form, while at other times the spelling is slightly different. Look at these sentences: "I would like to visit France." "I am learning the French language." France is a proper noun, but the adjective form of the same word is spelled differently - French. But in both cases they indicate the same setting. Anyone with even an elementary knowledge of grammar (English or Greek) knows that the meaning of a noun and the meaning of the same word in its adjective form ***must correspond!*** It cannot have one meaning as a noun and exactly opposite meaning as an adjective!

Let me illustrate. If we say "John is in college," the word college is a noun. But if we say, "John has sixteen college credits," college is an adjective, modifying the word credits - telling what kind of

credits. Now we all know what a college is - an institution of higher education that grants degrees - so we understand what kind of institution John is attending in the first sentence. Since we know the meaning of college, when we come to the second sentence we have no difficulty understanding what kind of credits John has - college credits - credits gained through study in an institution of higher education granting degrees! No one in his right mind is going to read the second statement and conclude that John has just finished kindergarten, or that he has a diploma showing that he finished sixteen lessons in leathercraft at the YMCA, or that he has \$16.00 worth of credit at a department store! College as a noun and college as an adjective cannot have altogether different meanings. They mean the same in both cases!

Ah, brethren, let's be fair with the basic rules of English grammar and interpretation, and Greek, too, for they both follow the same basic rules. No one can say that *aionios* means eternal without breaking the basic rules of English or Greek. The adjective *aionios* which is directly derived from the noun *aion* occurs seventy times in the New Testament. It is an axiom of grammar that derivatives cannot have a greater force than the parent word. When we have an adjective derived from a noun, the meaning of the adjective is dependent upon the meaning of the noun. A daily paper is one that comes every day. A monthly bill is due for payment every month, not once a year. A yearly automobile license is good for one year, not for ever.

Thus the adjective *aionios*, a derivative of *aion*, carries within itself its own solution; for *aionios* is simply what belongs or relates to the *aions* - the ages - hence it cannot carry a force or express a duration greater than that of the ages of which it speaks. If therefore these ages are limited periods, some of which are already past, while others are yet to come, the word *aionios* cannot mean infinity!

And yet men who should know better tell us that the Greek noun *aion* means an age, or ages, which is *time*, and then proceed to ridiculously explain that the adjective form of the same word means exactly the opposite - unending, everlasting, eternal! A child of ten should be able to understand that that is not so. The adjective *aionios* modifies two nouns in Matt. 25:46 and numerous other passages: punishment and life.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

It tells what kind of punishment and what kind of life Jesus is talking about. It is ages-lasting punishment and ages-lasting life, or better stated ***the life of the ages***. Now I can hear someone protesting, *"But isn't the life we have received from God ETERNAL LIFE?"* Certainly God's life is eternal life. But we have received that life injected into *time*, so that the inworking of that life through the processings of God is experienced in relation to time rather than eternity.

Let me explain. Anything that is absolutely eternal is not only unending, but is also unchangeable. Anything that changes in any way is not eternal, for in the change some characteristic is left behind and a new one acquired. In every change something ends and something else begins, at least in form. That which dwells in an eternal state knows ***no change***. Change is possible only in that which is limited, imperfect, or not fully developed. The Lord declares of Himself, "I am the Lord, ***I change not***" (Mal. 3:6), and the inspired apostle says of Him, with Whom there is ***no variableness, neither shadow of turning***" (James 1:17).

God is never surprised. God has not learned anything this week, nor last year, nor in the last several trillion years. If God learned one thing today, it would destroy Him. He would no longer be the omniscient One who knows the end from the beginning, for known unto Him are all His works from the creation of the world. God does not experiment. God does not become stronger, mightier, or increase Himself in any way. God is the omnipotent and omniscient one. He changes not. He eternally is all that He is without an decrease or increase or fluctuation whatsoever. Therefore He is the eternal God! It means more than unending, it means unchangeable, and therefore unending! But we, in our spiritual life, are still being changed! "And all of us... are constantly being transfigured (changed) into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to

another" (II Cor. 3:18, Amplified). Therefore the life we have received is not truly eternal yet, it is the life of the ages--God's life injected into time to be processed and matured into that unchangeableness which He Himself is!

TIME VS. ETERNITY

It is a great and blessed fact that God is the eternal God. Transition, adjustments, change - these words seem to be constantly with us, until we fain would grasp for something that seems to be stable, solid, enduring. Much of the inner drive for change is simple evidence that man is not satisfied, has not found his completeness in Christ, for "beloved *now* are we the children of God, and it does not yet appear *what we shall be*: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall (then) be like Him for we shall see Him as He is " (I Jn. 3:2).

Here is stability - immutability - the quality of His nature remains the same, ***He is the eternal!*** And this is the nature of which we would be a partaker, the fullness of which we find in Christ, and through union with Him with which we shall be changed until we become changeless in the absoluteness of that which He is. He who is eternal cannot be influenced, affected, moved, changed, altered, damaged or destroyed in any way. He cannot grow tired or old. The character of God is eternal, changeless, unaffected. The love, joy, peace, righteousness and power of God do not rise and fall, rise and fall, rise and fall. Matters not what happens or what men or devils say or do-- the love of God, the purpose of God, and the power of God are steadfast, unmoved, unquenched, unaffected, without fluctuation. The eternal existence of God is certain for He is the source of all life. Death cannot touch Him for He is not dependent upon the sustaining power of another, He is Jehovah, ***the self-existent one.***

A concept we must immediately grasp in order to understand God's plan of the ages is that time is a created phenomena consisting of past, present, and future just as man is created phenomena having youth, middle age, and old age. No, you cannot smell, touch, or feel time, but it is there, ever-present, always marching into the future. Time was created; it had a beginning, it shall have an end. It is only one thing among countless other things that are part of the entire created universe. It is as much a "species" of creation as, for example, rocks, elephants, trees, and water are species of creation. Before the creation of the universe, there was no time; at the end of the ages when the present material universe is dissolved and replaced by a new, spiritual universe, time shall cease to be. It will be swallowed up into eternity just as all death will be swallowed up into victory, and there shall be no more death. Time - composed of milliseconds, seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries, milleniums, ages was created in the beginning, and will be dissolved at the end of the ages.

A proper understanding of time as a created phenomena having beginning and ending is an absolute prerequisite to a proper understanding of eternity. Time is relative only to the physical universe and the purposes of God therein. Let me ask - If there were no such thing as the planet earth, would there be days? No! If earth didn't have a satellite called the moon, would there be months? No! If both earth and moon didn't have a thing called the sun around which to orbit, would there be years? No! If there were no stars, no suns, no planets, would there be time? No! Time is "duration set forth by measures;" the ticking of a clock, the beating of a pulse, the burning of a candle, the falling of sand through a certain aperture, - these, and a thousand similar regular movements, may serve as measures, more or less exact, of time. Time, then, because it is a created phenomena, can be studied to some extent just as any other part of the creation of God can be studied. We know how it functions by its effects in passing: decay, corrosion, erosion, deterioration, or progression, growth, development, maturity.

The late Dr. Einstein discovered, at least theoretically, that time and space are interdependent, inseparably related, and form a four-dimensional continuum (length, height, depth, and duration). That is to say, there is no space without time, and no time without space. Space cannot be traversed without the passage of time; without the passage of time, there is no traversing of space. That is why in His post-resurrection, spiritual body, Jesus was able immediately to transcend and traverse

the space-time continuum with the speed of thought. By Christ's power, space and time cohere and consist. Without His binding power, space and time would become nonexistent. Also, since we know from the Scriptures that space is created, we can then know that time is created, too. We can also understand that both time and space (as we presently know them) will end together at the conclusion of the ages.

I am compelled to state that the Bible says very little by way of a definition of eternity because the Bible is essentially a book of time and for time. It was written for man who lives in a temporal state and who is not yet a totally eternal being. Only as we enter that state of being called eternity... only as HE who *is eternity* becomes "All in All" in us... only as we are spiritually metamorphosized into our eternal condition... only as eternity becomes an absolute reality to us... only then will formerly temporal beings such as we now are truly comprehend and understand eternity and things of an eternal nature. This marvelous work has now begun within our spirit as our spirit has been quickened by His Spirit. I stated that the Bible is relatively silent about what eternity is; that is not to say that human teachings and theology haven't taught us a great deal about eternity, but, alas! much of it over the past centuries has come from the carnal minds of Babylonish theologians and not from the mind of the Eternal One via the Holy Spirit.

Eternity is a state of absolute timelessness, not of unending time. Eternity is a ***state of being***, resident in the very nature and person of God in which such concepts as past, present, future, before, after, change, transition, growth, decay, etc. do not exist. It is wrong to assert that, when time ends, eternity will begin, because eternity has no beginning. Neither did it end when time began, as so many charts indicate.

Therefore it is very important that we make a clear distinction between ages, which belong to time, and eternity, which is timeless. It is more important still that we, in our study of the Bible, search out diligently those passages which refer to time and those which refer to eternity. Do you have it yet? Do you see? Time is not part of eternity; eternity is not composed of segments of time. Eternity is not time standing still; it is simply not time at all. Eternity doesn't go on and on and on, ad infinitum. Eternity doesn't go anywhere, nor does it do anything. Eternity simply *is*. Eternity is part of the very nature and person of God. Eternity transcends beyond our knowing anything having to do with time. It is not time at all. It is just a glorious experience of ***being!*** Eternity simply is, just as God simply is. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (Jn. 8:58) - not "Before Abraham was, I WAS." There are not past or future tenses in eternity. There is only one eternal ***NOW***.

THE GOD OF THE AGES

Now the eternal God has injected Himself into time. The Bible rarely speaks of God as eternal; both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures reveal Him as the ***God of the ages***- time. "*In the beginning God created...*" Since that wonderful dawn God has been,

the God of His creation,

the God of heaven and earth,

the God of the ages,

the God of history,

the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

the God of Israel,

and the God of our salvation.

God is said to be living "for the ages of the ages" not because God must die when the ages end, but in contrast to multitudes of His creatures whose days upon earth are limited to "threescore and ten years." Generation after generation, through the rise and fall of empires, and the shifting sands of history, God remains.

The great revelation of the Scriptures is that this universe is governed by a throne and that throne is not in Moscow, it's not in London, it's not in Rome, and it's not in Washington D.C.--- it's in *heaven*, the *eternal dimension*. Time is being governed by eternity, creatures are being governed by the Creator. There is a whole order of cosmic government that those of us who have had our eyes opened, our spirits quickened by His Spirit, raised up and made to sit together with Him in heavenly places, have beheld. And the first thing we saw was that ultimate reality sits upon a throne and governs mountains, governs hills, governs streams, governs insects, governs animals, governs things, governs man, governs time, governs history, governs creation, and governs the whole vast, unbounded universe!

God in Christ became man as well as God. God *as man* has tenses to His being: the yesterday of the past, the today of the present, the tomorrow of the future. This is not the eternal God, but the God who has dispensed of His eternity into time. "*Jesus Christ the same - yesterday, today, and to the ages*" (Heb. 13:8, literal).

"And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8).

Day and night do not exist in eternity - they fill up the whole of time. HE is praised and extolled both **day and night**, this God who *was*, and *is*, and *is to come*, the God of *the ages*, the Architect of history, the Lord of time, the King of the universe, the Most High who "...*lives for the ages, whose dominion is an age-during dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants - of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?*" (Dan. 4:34-35, literal & KJV).

Oh, take me not back through the long ages to a Christ that walked the shores of Galilee, to a Christ that was! **He is!** He lives! He is here! In my today! I can never again be alone, never grope in the dark for a hand, never be forsaken, never lack in the hour of need, never fail in His ongoing purposes, never need a Saviour, a Redeemer, a Sanctifier, a Guide, a Master, a Friend, a Husband, a Father. I have Him, He who was everything in the yesterday of the past, and who will be everything in the tomorrow of the future, is mine today; and at each conscious moment of my existence - here, and in all ages, praise His wonderful name! Not a far-off, untouchable God, "*inhabiting eternity*," as the King James version erroneously states, but a God made nigh, **inhabiting the ages**, involved in His creation, working tirelessly and unceasingly and unfailingly until His wonderful plan is brought to a successful conclusion and He becomes gloriously **all** in **all!**

"Crown Him the Lord of Years - The Potentate of Time,

Creator of the rolling spheres, Ineffably sublime.

All hail, Redeemer, hail! For You have died for me;

Your praise shall never, never fail As long as Time shall be!"

FROM TIME TO ETERNITY

This phenomena called time was created by God for man. Why? Time is the womb from which God is birthing a people like unto Himself. We get the germ, the beginning and foretaste of eternity in time, but this is only the *seed* of eternal life. This womb of time is provided to aid man in his development, to assist him in preparation for a new, totally spiritual existence *beyond time*, beyond the last age, when the umbilical cord is cut, in a state of existence called eternity. Man, as he is dealt with by God, is passing from a gross, largely material consciousness, into a glorious spiritual existence. Time serves only as an instrument to help man, to give him time and experience to develop into that new state of being. In time there is change - in eternity there is no change. All

change and development must take place in time.

Thank God! We are being changed! But that means that the life of God within is still in a limited, imperfect, underdeveloped state. That life as to our condition and state of being is limited, imperfect, and in some measure immature. God has dispensed that life into us in time, that through a process of time with its experiences the spiritual life may be perfected and matured, brought to the fullness of that which **He Himself is**. When the process is completed and we are like Him fully and see Him as He is, there will **be no more change**. We will then truly know what eternal life is! But as long as the life within is passing through the process of change, growth, and development, it is not viewed as eternal, unchangeable life, but as the **life of the ages**, life undergoing the dealings of God in time.

The eternal security of the believer is known only by the overcomers who have fully and forever conquered every vestige of the world, the flesh, and the devil, being conformed into the image of the Son. Of these triumphant ones it is written, "To him that **overcomes** will I give to eat of the Tree of Life," and again, "He that **overcomes**... I will NOT BLOT HIS NAME OUT of the Book of Life" (Rev. 2:7; 3:5).

The inference is clear ... until this "overcomer" state is attained, it is possible to have one's name blotted out of the Book of Life! That does not mean that the name cannot be written there again, any more than it could be said that it was impossible for it to be written there in the first instance. But it does indicate that the life possessed by a Christian who is not fully an overcomer is not by God's definition **eternal life**, for if it were absolutely eternal it could not be lost! Little wonder, then, that our Lord says to the Church at Smyrna, "**Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a CROWN OF LIFE**" (Rev. 2:10). It is my deep conviction that He speaks not of the death that takes this old body to the cemetery, but the death that comes by the inworking of the cross until all that pertains to the realm of carnality has been completely and forever dealt with. Then, and only then, are we **crowned with life**, His life reigning within without interference or possibility of defeat.

The life we now have is a progressing, growing, conquering life - the **life of the ages**. It is life that has come by the quickening of our spirit by His Spirit, giving a new beginning, and the potential to become, in due time, all He is. But I am sure my readers, with myself, must confess that there is a great deal of progress still to be made, considerable growth to be experienced, much transformation to be wrought before we stand in Him in the fullness of that life that needs no change, no further development, no additional experience, no more growth, no fuller stature, no added triumph, no increase of wisdom and knowledge - that state of being as unchangeable as He is unchangeable, as **eternal as He is eternal!**

Only faintly now do our eyes behold the splendor of that eternal realm which lies before us, but if we approach softly with reverence and godly fear, not disrespectfully and thoughtlessly as nosey children prying into some sacred thing, then the Lord of glory will meet us and will be a Father unto us and we shall be the Sons of God in whom the Father shall unfold the fullness of His life, mind, will and glory. Thus shall we come into that same image and be sharers with the Christ in the glory He had with the Father before time was--**eternal glory!!** GLORY!

I think I know why some become so enraged when we tell them that we do not now possess the absolutely eternal life. Is it not because they would rather ignore this life of the ages, somehow projecting themselves into that life which is eternal, claiming "by faith" the finished product, while by-passing the tedious processing? Ah, dear ones, it doesn't work that way! God has graciously given unto us life aionios - the life of the ages - and how I thank God that my present state of being is **not eternal!** There is **more!** I would follow on to know Him in all fullness. And it will take "the ages," my friend, to unfold it all. As long as there is need for growth, change, and advancement, there is need for time. But redemption as a completed plan has a unique relationship to time. Until redemption is complete its work will proceed in time, but the finished work of redemption stands at time's end. Thank God! There is an end - then eternity, God all in all!

As God's plan of the ages has progressed there has been a level of life, a spiritual vitality, for each age. Each age has been different. Men in antediluvian times knew God in a certain way and received life of a particular order. Israel, under the law, and the ministry of the prophets, entered into another degree of spiritual life. Perhaps I can give you a simple illustration in this way. There is a difference between "fetus" life and "baby" life and "child" life. There is a difference between "youthful" life and "middle-age" life and "old-age" life. Can we not see by this that there is a continuing development of God's life in us, until **His fullness** is attained, and there shall be a continuing development of His life in the whole human family in the ages to come until God becomes all in all.

God is cultivating within His Sons an eternal nature. The thoughts of God's people are becoming boundless and eternal, no longer controlled and motivated purely by carnal memories of the past, by present events, or by dim hopes for an endless future in "mansions over the hill-top". The fledgling spirits of God's Sons are fast growing up into the limitless expanses of God's own eternal, spiritual nature. Yes, the whole man is becoming a new, eternal creation, no longer limited by the space-time continuum. God's maturing Sons see the reality of **a state of being called eternity**, and their hearts strain and leap upward toward that "place" in God!

AGES-LASTING CORRECTION

We miss so much vital truth by our careless scanning of the Bible, and by clinging tenaciously to the time-worn traditions of the religious systems, mistaking them for the holy truths of God. It should be clear that if the "eternal life" of Mat. 25:41 is really the "life of the ages", then the "eternal punishment" is likewise an age-lasting correction.

The Diaglott says, *"Depart from Me, you cursed ones, into that aionian fire... and these shall go away into a cutting-off age lasting."*

The Bible in Modern English by Farrar Fenton reads, *"And these He will dismiss into a LONG CORRECTION."*

Rotherham's New Testament says, *"These shall go away into age-abiding correction."*

Young's Literal translation renders, *"And these shall go away to punishment age-during."*

The word punishment is from the Greek *kolasis* which means simply that - punishment. But it comes from the root *kolazo* which reveals the true nature of the punishment. *Kolazo*, according to Strong's Concordance, means *"to curtail"* or *"to chastise."* The word means *"a pruning"* according to Liddell and Scott's Greek English Lexicon. It is so used all through the Greek language.

That punishment of which the Christ spoke was the very thing that helped me to see the glorious hope for all who are unbelievers or rebellious against God - because the word punishment there means chastisement or pruning. I saw in a moment that it was not the *destruction* of the man; it was the *correcting* of the man. it was not the destruction of the tree; it was the cutting back, and the pruning, that it might bring forth fruit.

Some rightly reason that *kolasis* cannot mean corrective punishment or pruning if it is everlasting. But everlasting is itself wrong - who ever heard of **everlasting correction**? But the proper translation is, *age-abiding* correction, or *age-during* pruning.

There are those who did not enter into His life in ages past, there are those who do not enter into His life in this present age, and there shall be those who will not enter into His life in the age to come. But in the world where God is the King you can count on it - every man will finally have to face up to his waywardness, and being thoroughly disciplined, broken, and purged of self-will, until he is prepared to respond to the love of Christ, to advance from the realm of punishment into the blessing of His life and victory. If you do not punish a criminal for his improvement, for what do you punish him? There are just two right reasons - to protect society and to restore the criminal to society improved by the punishment. The *"aionian"* punishment which will come to every sinner who goes to hell will be a punishment that will break his stubborn, rebellious spirit and bring him back to

God!

It is most regrettable that many Bible translators have been careless in their translation of words that concern the ages. The common thought seems to have been that any age following this present age must be identical with eternity, which, of course, is gross error, and we get ourselves into all manner of confusion by thinking that such is the case. For instance, according to the King James version, Jesus, speaking of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, is clearly quoted as saying, "*He that blasphemeth the Holy Ghost has never forgiveness*" (Mk. 3:29). Because of this faulty rendering we have concocted the fallacious notion of an unpardonable sin. But the Emphatic Diaglott translates the passage correctly thus: "*Whoever may blaspheme the Holy Spirit has no forgiveness to the age, but is exposed to aionian (age-lasting) judgment.*"

Likewise also the passage in Mat. 12:32..... "*Whosoever speaks against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*" The word world here, as the margin of your Bible will probably indicate, is translated from the Greek word *aion*, which means age or a period of time. (See also Young's Concordance). Hence the translation should be, "*It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in the coming age*" (Diaglott). Jesus was born in the age of law. Therefore, when He spoke of this age, He was speaking of the age of law, the age to come being the Church age in which we now live.

God's precious people, saturated and literally "oozing" with the false doctrines of the harlot Church systems have long viewed God's judgments as a vindictive action prompted by a motive for revenge and supported by a tumultuous wrath that must be pacified. ***Not so!*** Such is a gross caricature of our God! His mercy and grace are super-abundant, His mercy endures to all ages, and though He finds it necessary to chasten, His wisdom and righteousness produce a just and pure chastisement conditioned to correct the situation, and bring forth a creature prepared to respond to the delivering and redeeming power of God. ***All of God's judgments are corrective in nature***, conceived in His wisdom, motivated by His love, administered by His power, and used to work out the divine purpose, into our good, and unto His praise!

This does not deny that "*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*" (Rom. 1:18). There is no doubt whatever as to the fact that the Bible clearly teaches wrath - not only in this age but in that which is to come and in dim and distant ages beyond that. But it is a *just* wrath; the judgment is everywhere said to be ***according to our works*** (Ps. 62:12; Rom. 2:6; Rev. 20:12-13). The punishment will fit the offense, and it is for a purpose. If we teach that it is endless we will have to tear the Bible all to pieces.

Those who are hard and impenitent of heart treasure up for themselves wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God who will render to every man according to his works. If you don't believe it, ask the antediluvians, ask Korah and his followers, ask the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, and ask all the rest of men who have lived and died trampling under foot the righteousness and mercy of the Lord. To them that are rebellious and obey not the truth but obey unrighteousness shall be wrath, indignation, tribulation and anguish upon every soul, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. All that the Scriptures actually teach about the wrath of God will surely come to pass. The wrath of God is an awful thing and it is not my purpose to minimize it in the least. I do rejoice, however, in the knowledge that it will accomplish its work until all men are broken before God and call upon Him for mercy full and abundant.

Thank God - He has a plan! And it will work. You can count on it. Grace has intervened. Love will conquer. The wisdom of God will be vindicated. God will actually win! Hallelujah! Isn't that good news?! The devil will have none left to possess. The grave will claim not one victim. Death will hold no more power over any creature anywhere in all God's vast universe, for death shall be destroyed. Sin and rebellion shall raise their ugly heads no more, for God will be all in all. You can count on it! That is God's plan!

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