

TIME AND ETERNITY

By Robert Ellis Key

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Everything mortal happens in the course of time, at least that is the belief about it. What is not happening in the twenty–four hours of the day is not regarded as happening at all, according to the mortal testimony. The why and wherefore of our daily coming and going is supposed to be dependent on time and obedient to time's bidding. Mortals are victims of time, for they regard it as a yardstick of the day's processional, slicing it up into convenient pieces, measuring it out in minutes and hours, dividing it by morning, noon, and night. The earth sets the pace for time by turning every twenty–four hours upon its own axis. If we resided upon a distant planet, our concept of time and space would undoubtedly be different.

In "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" Mary Baker Eddy gives a definition of time in part as follows (p. 595): "Mortal measurements; limits, in which are summed up all human acts, thoughts, beliefs, opinions, knowledge." In view of this definition, it is clear we do not require more time; indeed, it is undesirable that we have more limits, or mortal measurements. Better by far to find shorter and more direct ways of action than to employ lengthy and well–worn timetables.

To estimate time in a better measure we must improve upon it. We do not find it easy at once to discard time, but we know in Christian Science that it is imperative to claim our dominion over it. The countless ways in which time claims to affect us must be overcome by the understanding of eternity.

At woman once remarked to the writer: "I cannot bear the thought of eternity. I can think of nothing more awful than to live forever and forever."

If we regard eternity as a sense of prolonged and indefinite time, then there might be some reason for the woman's trepidation, but eternity has nothing to do with time. Eternity is not unlimited time. With God there is no difference between one day and a thousand years. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8). Eternity is the perpetual unfoldment of inexhaustible good.

One way in which we are being constantly reminded of time is by the birth and death of mortals. Time ushers in the birth of a mortal, but eternity reveals timeless, ageless spiritual existence. Man, the image and likeness of God, has spiritual maturity. He lives in eternity, not in time. Manhood and womanhood are not hedged about by mortal measurements.

In answer to the question, "What is Life?" on page 468 of Science and Health, Mrs. Eddy points out three opposites of Life, namely, time, matter, finiteness. Of these three she places time in the forefront. She writes: "Eternity, not time, expresses the thought of Life, and time is no part of eternity. One ceases in proportion as the other is recognized. Time is finite; eternity is forever infinite." The fact that Life is without beginning or ending destroys the belief of birth and death, both of which are imaginary lines drawn by mortal mind to fit in with its finite conception of man and the universe. The universe, like man, is not the product of time but a creation of God and as such reflects invariable law, unlimited beauty, and immortal existence. The human mind endeavors to discard eternity with the excuse that the material sense testimony does not confirm the fact of the eternality of Life, and therefore if eternity exists, it must exist in some future state, of which at present we are ignorant. Scholastic theology approves this statement and places eternity beyond death, thus giving it a commencement and so placing it in the category of time, which is impossible. To conceive of eternity, we must put off the human mind. Man,

the image and likeness of God, does not possess a single element of mortal mind in his makeup. He is as independent of time and mortality as Spirit is independent of matter.

When the disciples discerned the risen Christ on the shore of the Galilean Sea, they had just stepped out of a long night of time and toil in their fishing venture. The Galilean shore was not a place of parting. Here was no occasion for weeping. That morning hour was golden with the glory of conquest, a moment made alive and lovely by the vanquishment of death and by spiritual resurrection. Their Master had proved the glory of life in God, and their eyes had followed him into this glory. The veil of the flesh had been rent from top to bottom. The stone had been rolled away from the tomb of matter, and spiritual light, herald of the dawn of the Christ, had opened the path to eternity. To this meeting with their glorified Master the disciples brought the fish they had caught, or in other words their own contribution. Their Master was with them and had prepared the meal. Their inspiration was renewed. Their joy returned. Surely in all this they gained a glimpse of eternity.

May we all find joyful renewal and spiritualization of thought in closer acquaintance with the Christ and in happier fellowship with our brother man. May we eagerly and joyfully quit the long night of materialism, with its dark, stormy tides of fear and separation, and find spiritual rest, refreshment, and renewal. In the clear light of revelation and progress may we partake of the morning meal, the understanding of Truth and Love, and thus with our fellow workers and indeed with all who love God may we feel the beauty and truth to be found in the words of a well-known hymn (Christian Science Hymnal, No. 64):

The vision infinite to me grows clearer,
I touch the fringes of eternity.

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