



## **Articles**

# Time and Eternity

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As a young child I feared eternal life almost as much as death. The prospect of a never-ending sequence of hours, stretching on and on, without climax or conclusion, droning through eternity, terrified me. But as I grew in my understanding of Christian Science, I saw that what I feared was my misconception of eternity as endless time, somehow extending backward and forward to fill infinity.

Yet eternity is the opposite of time, not its extension. In *Science and Health* Mrs. Eddy writes: "Life is without beginning and without end. Eternity, not time, expresses the thought of Life, and time is no part of eternity. One ceases in proportion as the other is recognized."<sup>1</sup>

"Time is no part of eternity"! Matter is no part of Spirit. Evil is no part of God, all good. The mortal concept of the universe as haphazard, as intelligent and non-intelligent matter, is no part of the immortal understanding of the universe as God, Spirit, and His perfect, ordered, spiritual manifestation. Time marks the hours of human reckoning; eternity marks the endless moments of spiritual awakening. Then the dreams of time and sense fade away, for centuries and parsecs have fallen short, and only this single measurement of good remains—God's allness.

Throughout history men have glimpsed a spiritual goodness that transcends mortal limitations and inspires human aspirations. The Psalmist recognized the practicality and superiority of a spiritual understanding of God-governed life. He declared: "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand."<sup>2</sup>

A day in God's courts is that moment of intelligent perception which abandons matter and trusts all—work, family, future, life—to God, Spirit. That perception finds more of Life than any search of matter could discover. It recognizes the immortality and perfection of spiritual being. Christian in its love, demonstrable in its truth, powerful in its purity, it frees one from the sense of human limitations, time included, and reveals the certainty of overcoming every mortal fault, stopping nowhere short of the perfection of spiritual being. That moment foretells eternity.

The man paralyzed for thirty-eight years, who lay helpless at the pool of Bethesda vainly hoping for miraculous healing by the waters of the pool, explained his problem to Christ Jesus: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." But Jesus did not share the man's limited outlook. He roused the invalid with the command: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."<sup>3</sup> And the man did so, perfectly healed.

Has the one who claims that the three-dimensional material universe is all considered the infinitely many dimensions of spiritually inspired thought?

Anyone entertaining the common belief "I need more time" might well turn to the definition of time in *Science and Health*. If he expects to discover just what spiritual qualities he was striving for in his desire for more time, he might be surprised to read: "Time. Mortal measurements; limits, in which are summed up all human acts, thoughts, beliefs, opinions, knowledge; matter; error; that which begins before, and continues after, what is termed death, until the mortal disappears and spiritual perfection appears."<sup>4</sup>

Surely if that's what time is, we don't need more of it! What we do need is the consciousness of freedom from the limitations of time that a sense of eternity provides. Since time measures material accomplishment, and eternity the limitlessness of spiritual truth, the way to gain a freeing concept of eternity is to place life on a spiritual basis.

When we think of our work as material activity, expressing the functions of a material brain, we subject that work to the limitations of time. But as we see that accomplishment is a spiritual function reflecting the perfection, the completeness, of God, eternal Mind, we free our work from material considerations, time included, and uplift it with the inspiration of eternity.

What do we need, then? Certainly not to prolong our sense of time but to develop our comprehension of eternity. Progress in Christian Science and growth in the understanding of God demand it.

All work should partake of the spiritual inspiration and freedom of eternity. A time-oriented, matter-bound standpoint might make work seem mere grinding through material processes for a number of hours. But as thought rises to an eternity-oriented, Spirit-oriented standpoint, we find work becoming interesting and absorbing; we lose track of time and material environment and begin to exercise our spiritual and timeless comprehension of accomplishment and completeness, forever ours as God's reflection.

Work need not be tedious. I recently faced an hour of what I considered totally inconsequential and unimportant work—doing the laundry. Unlike my schoolwork, it did not seem to demand any particular intelligence or ability, nor did it promise any rich rewards.

I was mentally checking it off as a necessary but almost worthless hour, when a sentence from *Science and Health* came suddenly to mind: "Good demands of man every hour, in which to work out the problem of being."<sup>5</sup> As I realized the importance of devoting every single hour of our lives to the expression of good, I rejoiced, for an insignificant hour had become an important one.

Mrs. Eddy recognized in her own life the importance of every hour. Her dedicated service to God resulted in a powerful recognition of the omnipresent healing power of the Christ, Truth. Spurning gossip, idleness, indecision, self-satisfaction, daydreaming, and thoughtless activity, she set a tremendous example of the power and integrity of consecrated work.

In writing *Science and Health*, in preaching and teaching, in founding the Church of Christ, Scientist, and several publications, including *The Christian Science Monitor*, she demonstrated an all-embracing sense of eternity above the limitations of time.

A clearer sense of the actuality of eternity comes hand in hand with the daily expression of the eternal qualities of God. These qualities of God belong to man as God's eternal reflection. We have God's promise to those who look to Him for help: "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."<sup>6</sup> Man, the immortal reflection of Mind's wisdom and intelligence, is forever active and effective in all he does, and his consciousness of accomplishment is not threatened or limited by a lack of time.

God's work of creating the universe, including man, is complete and intact. Man therefore reflects the harmony of God, divine Principle, the unity of infinite Life and Love. As a result we can expect to use time intelligently as the human expression of right activity.

The clear view of time and eternity can elevate every aspect of our lives. We can paraphrase the Psalmist: "In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what [time] can do unto me."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Science and Health*, p. 468;↑

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 84:10;↑

<sup>3</sup> See John 5:2–9;↑

<sup>4</sup> *Science and Health*, p. 595;↑

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 261–262;↑

<sup>6</sup> Isa. 65:24;↑

<sup>7</sup> Ps. 56:4.↑