



Rethinking age and time

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We think differently about time, depending on what we are experiencing. If we are waiting to grow up or if we are anticipating some special event in the future, we may want time to move quickly. In contrast, we may want time to slow down when we are fearful about the future or about aging.

Time, by its very nature, puts limits on good. It is measured out by the rotation and revolution of the earth. In essence, time is the belief that the continuity of life can be divided into past, present, and future. It is really the human mind's measurement of itself. *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy states, "Time is a mortal thought, the divisor of which is the solar year."¹ We certainly don't need more mortal thoughts!

Time, together with what seems to be its aging effect, is a mortal thought that has as its premise the supposed material origin of man. This false sense insists that man is a mortal, locked in a cycle that ends with inevitable decline. It argues for loss of sight, hearing, strength, beauty, usefulness — indeed an eventual loss of our whole identity! But man's identity is wholly spiritual and permanent, and mortal thought is not the reality of existence.

The reality of being is that man has his origin in indestructible Spirit as the image and likeness of God. Man's substance, then, is the reflection of Spirit, the individualization of the qualities of God. Spiritual qualities such as love, integrity, joy, insight, strength, have no age. Love cannot be ten or a hundred years old. It is a quality unconfined by time and age. Since man is composed of the qualities of Spirit, he can't be described in terms of time and age. Spiritual qualities never diminish, wrinkle, nor can they be altered or destroyed. They are infinite and forever appearing in man. That's why we don't have to yearn for their appearing in the future or mourn their loss in the past. Because man is forever at one with God, the source of these spiritual qualities, man has unlimited joy, strength, integrity, and all the qualities that make up his individuality. Thus man is always at the point of renewal and completeness. Having only the substance of Spirit, man has no matter to build up or diminish with age.

Sight, hearing, beauty, usefulness, are not truly in matter or governed by material laws, but are in Mind, God, and are governed by divine law. They are controlled exclusively by the laws of divine Life. This spiritual reality was glimpsed and demonstrated by Moses, whose sight, strength, vitality, remained undiminished even though the Bible tells us he lived to be a hundred and twenty years old.

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Science and Health reaffirms that man has dominion over time when it recounts the story of a woman who was seventy-four years old but looked under twenty. This woman had been disappointed in love while young, and she became insane and lost track of time. We read, "Having no consciousness of time, she literally grew no older." And further on, "She could not age while believing herself young, for the mental state governed the physical." The account concludes by noting, "One instance like the foregoing proves it possible to be young at seventy-four; and the primary of that illustration makes it plain that decrepitude is not according to law, nor is it a necessity of nature, but an illusion."²

Today, those in the scientific and medical community are finding surprising results from their research on aging. For instance, an article in the *Chicago Tribune* stated, ". . . there may be no immutable biological law that decrees human beings have to get old and sick and die." In the same article, Richard Cutler of the National Institutes of Health's Gerontology Research Center stated, ". . . aging is unnatural There are no such things as 'programs' that age us for our own good"³

While this is heartening, there are a number of theories about the cause of aging that demand rethinking in the light of spiritual fact:

- Aging is often associated with disuse of one's capacities. In reality, man is forever established, declared, and positioned as a witness for God, good. Think of it! Man is the perpetual expression of inexhaustible good! There's no possibility for man to be in disuse. He is empowered to bear witness

to the infiniteness of God's goodness. This fact impels activity and lively endeavor regardless of changes in our vocation.

- Another mortal thought is that aging occurs because of random changes in normal processes. Randomness has no validity, because man is governed by undeviating Principle. Principle, God, maintains all elements in man in one concordant whole and synchronizes every aspect of his being in perpetual harmony.
- Some research suggests that genes determine how one ages. But the spiritual man's identity and individuality are not defined by genes. Man's true nature is clearly stated in the first chapter of Genesis, which says that he is made in the image of God. Man's identity is defined by Spirit, and his individuality by Soul. A variable mix of a long line of ancestral characteristics is not the determining factor in the man of God's creating.
- Food is sometimes perceived as a catalyst in the way the functions of the body operate. *Science and Health* states clearly, "The fact is, food does not affect the absolute Life of man, and this becomes self-evident, when we learn that God is our Life."⁴ Christ Jesus instructed us to seek first the kingdom of God, to drink of living water, and to partake of the bread of life. Partaking of the bread of life means we are living and demonstrating the truth of being embodied in the Master's life and teachings. This feeds our thought and sustains our individuality with the freshness and newness of Spirit, the vitality and immortality of divine Life. Jesus promised of the "bread which came down from heaven," "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."⁵
- Aging is also believed to occur when the brain ceases to trigger action that repairs and renews the body. The omniscience of Mind leaves no place for another mind called brain to control Mind's idea, man. Man is governed by the law of Mind. He is the very expression of Mind. Divine Mind, then, not brain, stimulates, regulates, harmonizes, every aspect and every system of man's being, causing all to function orderly and perpetually.

One can see that time, a mortal thought, cannot seem valid and cannot hold sway when we hold to the spiritual reality of life. This was proved practical in the experience of a woman who was of advanced years. She was in the healing practice of Christian Science, and for fifty years she had never asked anyone else for help in bringing healing to any physical difficulties she had. A life threatening heart condition suddenly confronted her, however, and she asked a fellow practitioner

for help. In talking with the practitioner, she said that mortal thought was clamoring that she was very old. But she added, "I don't like that thought!" She recognized that it was not her view but mortal thought. And she wasn't about to listen!

Together they prayed to put off the limitations of time and aging, to reject the mortal thought of man with the spiritual understanding of his identity as revealed by Christ. Christ, Truth, declares the presence right now and always of the spiritual man. A perception of this ever-presence of the real man and the spiritual universe counters time and its supposed effect, aging. *Science and Health* says, "Man is the idea of Spirit; he reflects the beatific presence, illumining the universe with light."⁶ Man never lives in time but in Spirit. There is no time in Spirit or in the spiritual man and universe. This true concept of man is, in fact, the only one present, leaving no room for an old, mortal sense of man. The heart condition was quickly healed, and the woman continued on, mounting the steps of her church with vigor and agility, participating in church activities and in the public practice of Christian Science.

We, too, can continue on, putting off the mortal thought of man and beholding the spiritual man that we actually are at this moment and forever. There is no time—just the timeless presence of Spirit and its shining expression.

¹ *Science and Health*, pp. 598-599.↑

² *Ibid*, p. 245.↑

³ *Chicago Tribune*, December 8, 1991.↑

⁴ *Science and Health*, p. 388.↑

⁵ John 6:51.↑

⁶ *Science and Health*, p. 266.↑