

The Ages

God's Time Periods

Most of us are familiar with a time table, in some form or other. At school, the daily order of study is set out in timetable form, and, in workshop and factory, hours conform to an agreed time pattern. Transport concerns all issue their timetables and endeavour to provide the facilities they offer in accordance with the published schedules, which have all been carefully planned beforehand. If it were otherwise — if studies or duties followed no reasonable order or method, or if public transport services operated haphazardly at the whim of any who cared to provide them as and when fancy dictated, the result would be chaos.

The purpose of the Ages.

The thoughtful student of Scripture must readily conclude that God's dealings with mankind *conform to a timetable*. GOD has a PURPOSE. He has revealed it in His Word and He is working out that purpose in accord with the counsel of His Own blessed will (Eph. 1:11) and His counsel shall stand (Isa. 46:10). This purpose He has called "*THE PURPOSE OF THE AGES*" (Eph.3:11). In the Authorised (King James) Version, it is termed "the eternal purpose", but a moment's reflection will show the incorrectness of this phrase. A purpose which is "eternal" can have *no* fulfillment — it must for ever be inconclusive — but God's purpose is *absolutely certain* of complete and final realisation. However, if reference be made to the *margin* of the Revised Version (and to the *text* of other reputable translations), it will be seen that the exact translation of this phrase in Ephesians (3:11) is: "*purpose of the AGES*". This is worthy of prayerful thought, for we are thus introduced to a "time term" which indicates that, in the gradual unfolding of His vast and predetermined plan, God is working carefully to a timetable.

Now, if a further examination be made of this Ephesian verse (3:11) it will be discovered that God's "purpose of the ages" has been "*purposed*" (literally "made") in Christ Jesus our Lord. Allow this unique and blessed FACT to grip us and to hold our minds and hearts. It is confirmed in Hebrews chapter 1 verse 2, where we read:

"... by Whom (i.e. the Son) also He made the worlds."

In this verse, "worlds" is really "*AGES*" as will be readily ascertained if, again, reference is made to the Revised Version *margin* and to other Versions. The Scofield Bible margin also indicates "ages" as the correct word in this (and other) passages. There is no doubt at all, of course, that in Christ God also made the "worlds", for without Him was not anything made that was made — the TRUTH of John 1:3 is not for one moment questioned. In Ephesians 3:11 and Hebrews 1:2, it is pertinent to stress the fact that the *AGES* were made, or formed, in Christ, for this is an additional and most significant revelation. GOD has a *purpose* and this purpose is to be unfolded and realised during a period He has chosen to term "*THE AGES*" (or "THE EONS"), and that purposed is *centred in Christ*.

"AION" — AGE (EON).

When a correct understanding of the TRUTH, or DOCTRINE, of the *AGES* is based, it will be upon an accurate rendering, and consistent use, of the Greek word "*aion*". This word is used in the Greek Scriptures (the New Testament), in its singular and plural forms, over 100 times, and the adjective "*aionios*" occurs over 70 times. We will not seek the meaning of these words from secular sources, but will endeavour to determine the TRUE meaning from the living Word of God itself. Scripture is always its own best illustrator, and the internal evidence available for our consideration is by no means scanty.

Only by a careful examination of *all* the occurrences of the Greek words "*aion*" and "*aionios*" can an understanding of their meaning be gained. In the course of such an enquiry, it will be found that the Authorised Version translates "*aion*" by the word "*age*" on two occasions (shown hereunder) but resorts mainly to the use of two words, viz: (1) *world* and (2) *ever*, although several other terms are also employed. A few representative references are selected and quoted, in which the Greek word "*aion*" is used, giving the Authorised (King James) translation.

<i>World.</i>	Matt.13:39	The harvest is the end of the <i>world</i> .	
	40	So shall it be in the end of this <i>world</i> .	
	Mark 10:30	and in the <i>world</i> to come, eternal life.	
	Luke 1:70	As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the <i>world</i> began.	
	John 9:32	Since the <i>world</i> began was it not heard....	
	1 Cor. 10:11 and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the <i>world</i> are come.	
	Eph. 3:9	the mystery, which from the beginning of the <i>world</i> hath been hid in God....	
	Eph. 3:21	...throughout all ages, <i>world</i> without end.	
	2 Tim. 4:10	Demas having loved this present <i>world</i> .	
	Titus 2:12	... we should live soberly ... in this present <i>world</i> .	
	Hebrews 1:2 by Whom also He made the <i>worlds</i> :	
	11:3	Through faith we understand that the <i>worlds</i> were framed by the word of God.	
	<i>Ever.</i>	Matt. 21:19	Let no fruit grow on thee (the fig tree) henceforward for <i>ever</i> .
		John 8:35	And the servant abideth not in the house for <i>ever</i> but the Son abideth <i>ever</i> .
Phil. 4:20		Now unto God and our Father be glory for <i>ever</i> and <i>ever</i> .	
Heb. 5:6		Thou art a priest for <i>ever</i> after the order of Melchisedec.	
2 Pet. 2:17		to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for <i>ever</i> .	
Jude 13		to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for <i>ever</i> .	
Rev. 22:5		and they shall reign for <i>ever</i> and <i>ever</i> .	
<i>Ages.</i>	Eph. 2:7	That in the <i>ages</i> to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace	
	Col. 1:26	Even the mystery which hath been hid from <i>ages</i> and generations, but now is made manifest to His saints.	

If the foregoing passages are examined with the thought always in mind that the words — "world", "ever" and "ages" (italicized in each reference) are *all* translating the *same* Greek word ("*aion*"), the question will present itself:

How can the *one* Greek word ("*aion*") bear the meaning "*WORLD*", with its definite time limits, for the world has a *beginning* (John 9:32 and Eph.3:9) and an *end* (Matt. 13:39,40), and "*EVER*" which indicates endlessness?

Face the matter squarely with honesty and courage, and, if this is done, it *must* be admitted that the single Greek word ("*aion*") *cannot* carry meanings which are so completely opposed to one another. Remember always that God is not the Author of confusion (1 Cor.14:33) and He would not and does not use a term which, in one instance, means one thing and, in another, its antithesis.

Thus, there is a problem presented. Is there a solution of it? There is and it is quite straightforward — the consistent use of a *single term* which meets the requirements of *all* the occurrences. Is there a word which will meet such a demand and will conform to the needs of each context? There is — it is the word "*AGE*" which is used in two instances cited in the foregoing list (i.e. Eph. 2:7 and Col. 1:26) and which is the word so frequently suggested in the margin of the Revised Version and by Dr. Schofield in his notes, and used by other translators also.

Let the reader who is anxious to know the mind of God in this vital matter of His TRUTH follow out all the occurrences of the Greek word "*aion*" in a reliable concordance — it is a splendid spiritual exercise — and substitute the word "*age*" (or, simply, the transliterated word "*eon*") throughout. Consider every reference in its context carefully and prayerfully, and the time devoted to such a study will bring, assuredly, its own reward. The discerning student will give thought to such a verse as Matthew 13:39 which speaks of the *end of the*

world and find that it cannot be reconciled with Ephesians 3:21 which indicates the world as being *without end*. These two verses consistently translated, read:

Matt 13:39 Now the harvest is the *conclusion of the eon*.
(or the end of the age).

Eph. 3:21 To Him be glory in the ecclesia and in
Christ Jesus for all the generations of
the eon (single) of the eons (plural). (or age of the ages).

(In this verse, the use of the singular and
plural — age and ages — is entirely
obscured in the Authorised Version).

There is no conflict now, for there *cannot* be contradiction in the TRUTH of GOD. It is with *us* that confusion belongs (Daniel 9:8).

Or again, when reading of the withering of the fig tree (which was in itself an act of *national significance* to Israel) (Matt. 21:17-22), we learn that no fruit is to grow on the fig tree "*henceforward for ever*". Yet, the Lord Himself, parabolically, tells us of the *future resurgence of the fig tree* when replying to His disciples' question — "what shall be the *sign* of Thy coming and of the end of the age" (Matt.24:3 and 32). If the phrase in Matt.21:19 is consistently translated, it will be at once recognised that there is no discord, but complete concord :

Matt.21:19 ... Let no fruit be coming on you *for the age*.

Israel, from then on, as a *nation typified in the fig tree*, could bear no fruit until the end of the age, when Israel's Lord will come and bring about His nation's rejuvenation.

There are other similar instances which could be cited where apparent conflict will be at once resolved by a consistent translation of "*aion*", but the two selected passages quoted will suffice to indicate the value of *concordant* translation.

Is it not evident, then, that "*aion*" is not a word used in Scripture indiscriminately of a vague, shadowy endlessness, but rather is it clearly indicative of a limited (albeit lengthy) period of time — a period with a definite beginning and marked by as definite a termination.

This truth is further confirmed for us by the inspired precision with which we find the word used in the following varying combinations :

1. The eon (singular) of the eon (singular) : Hebrews 1:8
2. The eon (singular) of the eons (plural) : Ephesians 3:21
3. The eons (plural) of the eons (plural) : Romans 16:27 - Gal. 1:5 and nineteen other references.

The spiritual significance of these distinctive combinations (all of which are carefully regarded and preserved in the Concordant Version) is completely lost to us in most other Versions by simply, and quite indiscriminately translating these phrases in terms which indicate endlessness, e.g. "for ever and ever".

We will consider later the import of these three remarkable phrases, but, meantime, would remark that, if the Greek word "*aion*" is, by itself "EVER" (that is, without end), *why* should it be necessary to use the phrase "ever and ever" in several instances where there is the dual occurrence of the word? If it is "for ever" — which is undeniably endless — it is surely redundant to accord further endlessness to endlessness. It is not only redundant so to do, it is silly.

The alternative explanation, that this is Scriptural idiom to express, in the original, the idea of "eternity" or "unendingness" is not at all satisfactory to the careful student of the Word of God. Holy spirit is not lacking in the ability to express itself clearly at all times. Scripture is GOD'S revelation and is expressed in words, terms and structure seven times purified, as silver, in the crucible of God. Any variation in the use of a word or term — such as we find in the three phrases presently before us — is not without adequate and valid reason, and

these fine discriminations should, at least, arrest attention and induce enquiry.

Briefly, at this point, let it be said that these three phrases refer to the last, or the last two, of the sequence of five eons (ages) which, together, constitute the "eonian times" (Romans 16,25 etc.), and which follow this third or present "wicked eon" (Gal. 1:4). Phrase "3" is in connection with the fourth and fifth eons *together*, while phrases "1" and "2" refer to the fifth eon only, the final and most glorious of all the five eons, which is the DAY OF GOD (2 Peter 3:12).

The singular beauty and vital significance of these distinctions is hopelessly obscured from us when these phrases, pregnant with the TRUTH OF GOD, are, without regard, classed together by translators as varying forms all expressing but the single idea of endlessness. And the saddest feature of it all is, perhaps, that the TRUTH — and the JOY which is always inseparable from the realisation and appreciation of GOD'S TRUTH — are lost to His saints.

The well known words used so frequently in Tabernacle and Temple context, "the holy of holies" are very readily understood to mean the *most* holy of the two sacred apartments in the Tabernacle. They are not thought to be terms meaning some hazy, abstract idea of holiness. Likewise, the phrase "King of kings and Lord of Lords" (Unv. 19:16), is not construed to mean some indeterminate form of monarchical autocracy, but is at once recognised as pointing to *THE KING* of all kings, *THE Lord* of all lords, the King and Lord of GLORY. There should, then, be no difficulty in grasping and appreciating the TRUTH that the Eon of the eons is that final eon, or age, fraught with the transcendent GLORY of the accomplishment of the Beloved and Obedient Son of God, in which the "purpose of the eons" will be realised (Ephesians 3:11), and not a chance combination of words, slovenly handled by translators and thought to indicate some dim, cloudy and indefinable "eternity".

"AIONIOS" — AGE-LASTING (EONIAN).

Up till now, we have confined our consideration to the Greek *noun* "aion" and its proper English equivalent — AGE, or EON. Perhaps we might now give some thought to the adjective form "*aionios*", which, as has been mentioned, occurs some 70 times. The adjective has been mainly translated "eternal" or "everlasting" in the Authorised (King James) Version, once "for ever" and three times "world". A measure of inconsistency is, therefore, apparent, and this the Revised Version has done little to correct, for although that Version gives frequent marginal alternative for "aion" (age) (as has already been mentioned), no such correction is suggested for the *adjective*.

The Weymouth Version, however, makes frequent use of the phrase "*of the ages*" as a rendering of "*aionios*", and the Schofield notes to the Authorised Version indicate "ages" on three occasions. Other Versions translate the adjective by such phrases as "*age lasting*", "*age enduring*" and "*eonian*". We learn, therefore, that the words "everlasting" and "eternal" are *not* considered by all to be the exact equivalents of the Greek word "*aionios*".

Nor can they be, for they imply *infinity of duration* and must, therefore, *extend backwards* into the past, as well as *project* into the future. This must be borne in mind at all times when we think of this subject — "eternity" is *not a term related to the future only*. The human mind just cannot cope with such a concept.

Many of the occurrences of "aionios" are connected with LIFE and the Authorised Version gives "eternal" or "everlasting" life in these instances. But the recipients of the promised life have *not* enjoyed it "eternally" or "everlastingly" *in the past*. LIFE will come as the gracious gift of God in the *future*. More will be said of this matter later.

The same observations apply in the instances where "punishment", "damnation", "habitations" and "fire" are qualified by the adjective "*aionios*". None of these existed eternally with that infinity of duration which knew no beginning and can have no end, as the word "eternal" *must* imply. These judgments are future, and having a *beginning*, they cannot be correctly termed "eternal" or "everlasting".

In three passages in the Authorised (King James) Version, the translators were forced to *abandon* the use of "eternal" or "everlasting" as the translation of the Greek adjective "aionios" and substitute the word "*world*". The three passages are listed below, the renderings of other two Versions being given along with those of the Authorised:

Reference	Auth. Version	Rotherham's Version	Concordant Version
Rom 16:25	the mystery which was kept secret since the <i>world</i> began.	sacred secret, in <i>age-past</i> times, kept silent.	a secret, hushed in times <i>eonian</i> .
2 Tim 1:9	according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the <i>world</i> began.	according to the peculiar purpose and favour — which was given us in Christ Jesus before <i>age-during</i> (or <i>age-past</i>) times.	in accord with His own purpose and the grace which is given to us in Christ Jesus before times <i>eonian</i>
Titus 1:2	In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the <i>world</i> began.	In hope of life age-abiding: which God, who cannot lie, promised before <i>age-during</i> (or <i>age-past</i>) times.	In expectation of life <i>eonian</i> , which God, Who does not lie, promises before times <i>eonian</i> .

At once the question which arose in connection with the Authorised Version translations of the word "aion" (age) recurs and presents itself in regard to the *adjective* — *aionios* :

How can the one Greek word ("aionios") indicate endless or infinite duration in some contexts, while, in others, there is a finite connotation? Why had the translators of the revered Authorised (King James) Version to reject terms expressing endlessness and use the word "world", with its time and physical *limits*, in the three instances cited above?

In each of the three instances (Roms. 16:25, etc) the Greek adjective "aionios" qualified the Greek noun "*chronos*" — TIMES — and therefore, as it could not be phrased "eternal times", resort had to be made to the expedient — "*world*". But again it has to be stressed that God does not use a word to mean that which is contradictory in its several occurrences. The difficulty with which we are confronted is resolved simply by using a term indicative of age-duration, and there is none better than the simple translation — *EONIAN* — which is a transliteration of the Greek term.

If these passages have been carefully read, it will not have escaped notice that, in the third of the above three references (Titus 1:2) the word "*aionios*" occurs *twice*. In the Authorised Version, it is translated in the first instance "*eternal*", and, in the second, "*world*". To say the very least, such rendering cannot lay any claim to consistency and is, therefore, suspect in this very matter.

The *TRUTH*, or doctrine, of the *AGES* requires the understanding and recognition of that fact that an "*aion*" (age), or that which is described as "*aionios*" (eonian), has limited duration — it has a beginning and an end. Neither term expresses endlessness, but refers to a period of time, albeit that such periods may be of considerable duration.

EONIAN LIFE

Of the 71 occurrences of the adjective "aionios", 44 of them qualify the noun *LIFE*, in the familiar phrases "eternal LIFE" and "everlasting LIFE". It will be at once protested — if "aionios" is that which is of *age-duration* only, having a beginning and an end, is the promised LIFE, then, not eternal? In this connection, it will be of interest to note that Sir Robert Anderson in his book "Human Destiny" (at page 65) states:

"... the solemn language of Scripture, which declares aeonian life to be the peculiar blessing of the believer, loses all its significance, unless we understand the word to describe the quality of the life, and not duration merely."

This is a most interesting observation and one worthy of careful thought. Aeonian (eonian) LIFE is that life which will obtain *during the ages (eons)*, and it is that LIFE, the quality and nature of that LIFE, which will be enjoyed as God's gracious gift in the future two ages or eons which are to follow this present "evil eon" (Titus 2:12 etc.)

But, it may be pressed, what of the *duration* of the LIFE God has promised for faith? The "UN-endingness", or future *endlessness* of the LIFE in Christ Jesus, God's gracious gift to the Believer, is a blessed *FACT* and vital *TRUTH*, and it results from the fact that all believers shall be "made alive" or "VIVIFIED" in Christ in His Presence (Cf. 1 Cor 15:23). Christ abolishes death and illuminates LIFE and incorruption through the Evangel and will ultimately abolish the last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26 and 2 Tim. 1:10). This glorious LIFE, from its inception, will be without end,

although, in the first place, it is termed "aeonian" or "eonian" life, for it will last *throughout the eons* (or ages) yet to come, but its continuance will not be limited to the eons (or ages). This will be ensured *beyond the eons* because we are "VIVIFIED" in Christ (1 Cor 15:22-23). EONIAN LIFE, then (may we repeat and stress) is the nature and quality of life appertaining to *the eons yet future*, and is the gracious gift of God, in Christ Jesus, our Lord. (Roms. 6:23).

THE EONS (AEONS, AGES).

In the foregoing, an effort has been made, very simply but earnestly, to direct attention to the value of a sound and consistent rendering of the Greek words "aion" and "aionios" and, in the course of so doing, reference has been made to the TRUTH, or DOCTRINE, of the AGES. Some thoughts in this connection are now offered, in the hope that further interest may be stimulated and understanding gained.

An "aion" (EON, AEON, AGE) is a period of time and is the name given to the longest segment of time mentioned in the Scripture. That there is *more* than one eon or age is discerned from several passages in Scripture, for example :

- Eph. 2:7 That in the *ages* to come
- Eph. 3:11 According to the purpose of the *ages*
- Heb. 11:3 Through faith we understand that the *ages* were framed by the Word of God.

And it is the sum of these ages, their duration in totality, that form the AGE or EONIAN TIMES. (cf. Roms. 16:25 - 2 Tim. 1:9 - Titus 1:2 - Concordant Version translation shown at pages 5 and 6). This is what we know as, and generally call TIME.

The infinity of duration which *preceded*, and will *succeed*, TIME — to which no time-term can be applied — is referred to in Scripture in the following passages :

- 1 Cor. 2:7 God's wisdom in a secret, which has been concealed, which God designates *BEFORE* the EONS for our Glory. (Concordant Version).
- 1 Cor. 15:28 ... that God may be *All in all*. (C. Version).

So, from these Scripture (and others) we learn that there are AGES (EONS) and, as there is mention of Divine activity *BEFORE* the AGES, the AGES or EONS must, of necessity, have had a definite beginning. Scripture also tells us of the *END* or *consummation* of the AGES (EONS):

- 1 Cor. 10:11 ... to whom the consummations of the eons have attained. (Concordant Version).
- Heb 9:26. yet now once, at the *conclusion* of the eons, for the repudiation of sin through His sacrifice, is He manifest. (Concordant Version).

Although *each* AGE varies in its length, and the duration of AGE-TIMES (or preferably, EONIAN TIMES) (Roms. 16:25 etc.) will span many millenia, the AGES have a *commencement* and they will have an *end, individually and collectively*.

Thus *neither an AGE (EON) nor the SUM of the duration of all the AGES*, is the equivalent of "eternity". If we really desire a proper understanding of the TRUTH of GOD in this matter (as in others), the period of the AGES (EONS) — although lengthy — is *LIMITED* and *must never be construed* in our minds to mean that infinity of duration which is implied by, and required by, the *NON-Scriptural* terms "eternal" and "eternity". The position can be indicated very simply as follows :

BEFORE THE EONS (AGES).	THE EONIAN TIMES (AGE-TIMES).	GOD THE FATHER ALL in ALL.
1 Cor. 2:7	Roms. 16:25	1 Cor. 15:24-28.
2 Tim. 1:9	2 Tim. 1:9	
Titus 1:2	Titus 1:2	The Son Himself subject.

THE NUMBER OF EONS.

The mention of this doctrine of truth of the *EONS*, will naturally, raise in the mind the question — "*How many ages* are there in the Divine Calendar?" As we have seen, there is more than one. A painstaking study of the Scriptures will reveal that there are *FIVE* in all. We will devote some time in presenting references to these eons (ages), commencing with those relating to the "*present*" or "*current*" eon (age), that in which we live.

THE PRESENT AGE. (Concordant Version renderings).

2 Cor. 4:4	in whom the god of <i>this EON</i> blinds the apprehensions of the unbelieving so that the illumination of the evangel of the glory of Christ ...
Gal. 1:4	so that He might extricate us out of the <i>present wicked eon</i>
Eph. 1:21	up over every ... name that is named, not only in <i>this eon</i> , but also that which is impending..
1 Tim. 6:17	Those who are rich in the <i>current eon</i> be charging not to be haughty..
2 Tim. 4:10	for Demas, loving the <i>current eon</i> , forsook me and went to Thessalonica.

It is this *same* PRESENT, CURRENT EON (AGE) which is referred to in such well known verses as Matthew 13:39 and 40 - Luke 16:8 and 20:34, etc. etc., and as to the *END* or *CONCLUSION* of which the Disciples enquired of the Lord (Matt.24:3). (In the Authorised Version, the word "world" is used, but this should be *AGE* or *EON*, the correct rendering of "*aion*").

This is *the EON (AGE)* distinguished from *all* others by reason of the *CROSS* of *CHRIST*. In it — this present evil age, the rulers or chief men of *this age* crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. 2:8) and cast out its Prince (John 12:31).

THE AGES (EONS) TO COME.

As the *CROSS* is at the very *centre* and heart of *GOD'S PURPOSE* of the *EONS* — for upon the *CROSS* the realisation of the *PURPOSE* depended — this *present* eon (age) may be considered the *CENTRAL* of *FIVE EONS (AGES)*. *TWO* preceded the *present* eon and *TWO* are yet to follow it, and these *TWO future* eons (ages) are referred to collectively as "*the eons of the eons*" in such passages as :

Concordant Version.

Roms. 16:27	to the only wise God ... be glory for the <i>eons of the eons</i> .
Gal. 1:5	... God and Father, to Whom be glory for the <i>eons of the eons</i> .
Ephes. 2:7	that, in the <i>oncoming eons</i> , He should be displaying the transcendent riches of His grace....
1 Tim. 1:17	Now to the King of the eons ... be honour and glory for the <i>eons of the eons</i> .
2 Tim. 4:18	to Whom be glory for the <i>eons of the eons</i> .

Paul wrote these words from the vantage point of this *present* eon (age), looking forward to these *TWO* "ages to come" (ONcoming EONS) (Ephesians 2:7), which will by far transcend in excellence the three eons which by then will have gone before them.

ALL Scripture is inspired of God (literally "GOD— breathed) and the inspired terms used of the eons (ages) are employed with the greatest precision. A few selected passages referring to the *combined two future eons (ages)* have just been quoted in the foregoing, but these two ages are also referred to *singly* and *individually* in the following references:

(1) *The fourth eon (age) : i.e. the eon following the present.*

Concordant Version.

Matt. 12:32	it shall not be pardoned him, neither in this eon nor in <i>that which is impending</i> .
Mark 10:30	and in the <i>coming eon</i> , life eonian.
Luke 18:30	and in the <i>coming eon</i> , life eonian

John 10:28 and they should by no means perishing for *the eon*.
Eph. 1:21 not only in this eon, but in *that which is impending*.
Heb. 6:5 and tasting the ideal declaration of God, besides the powerful deeds of the *impending eon*.

The inception of the *FOURTH EON (AGE)* is marked by the promised return of CHRIST to the *earth*, and its thousand years' course by the righteous and glorious reign of CHRIST, the subject of so much of prophetic Scripture. The GREAT WHITE THRONE judgment session will terminate the fourth eon.

(2) *The fifth (and final) eon (age)*.

Concordant Version.

Eph. 3:21 to Him be glory in the ecclesia and in Christ Jesus
for all the generations of the *EON* (singular) of the *EONS* (plural).
Heb. 1:8 Thy throne, O GOD, is for the *EON* (singular) of the *EON* (singular)

The *FIFTH EON* (age) is called the *EON of the EON* or the *EON of the EONS* and it bears the fruit of Christ's righteous reign in the fourth eon. It is the only eon (of all five) which will not conclude in catastrophe or judgement. In this *FIFTH EON*, there will be a NEW HEAVEN and a NEW EARTH and the tabernacle of GOD will be with mankind and HE will tabernacle with His peoples. (Rev. 21:1-3). This is the DAY of GOD (2 Peter 3:12).

The need for the child of God to give close attention to the *precise* terms of Scripture in this matter of the TRUTH of the EONS (as in ALL truths of Scripture), cannot be overstressed. The value to the saint is inestimable. In this section, we have seen *combined* reference to the *FOURTH* and *FIFTH EONS* and *individual* reference to each. We should always be careful to distinguish between them — the benefit to the student will be apparent.

THE FIRST TWO EONS (AGES).

From the several passages quoted in pages 9 and 10, it will be realised at once that there are numerous references to the *present* (i.e. the *central*) and the two *future* eons (ages). There is no direct reference to the *FIRST TWO EONS, as such*, but an understanding of the *fact* of their *existence* can be gleaned from consideration of the following verses, which should be read with care :

(1) Eph. 2:2 — Wherein in time past, ye walked according to the *course of this world*.

The phrase, "*the course of this world*" is of considerable interest, but the truth it would convey is concealed from us by the use of the word "course" as a rendering of the Greek word "*aion*", in the Authorised Version above quoted. The correct rendering is, simply — "*age (eon) of this world*" and reference to the *margin* of the Revised Version (1881) will confirm this. The Concordant Version and Rotherham's Emphased New Testament give this phrase, respectively, as follows :

"EON of this world"
"AGE of the world"

and the New English Bible (N.T.) renders it — "this present age".

When the correct rendering of the phrase is given its due weight, the TRUTH stands revealed, viz., that each "*aion*" (i.e. eon or age) has, and synchronises with, its own particular "*kosmos*" or world system. This Ephesian verse under notice, connects the *present, central eon* (age) or time segment with the world order of things obtaining *from* the Deluge of Noah's time (which terminated the *SECOND EON* as indicated below), *till* the judgments and events leading up to the return of Christ to the earth. The "*EON of THIS WORLD*" — the eon and the world in which Paul (and we) once walked in accord with the "prince of the power of the air".

If, as is now suggested, each eon (age) has its corresponding world-system, and each world-system its particular eon (age), then the discovery in Scripture of reference to "*WORLDS*" before the present world in which we live, will also determine for us the existence of the *related eons (ages)* prior to the present. With this suggestion, this thought, in mind, may we consider the following verses penned by the Apostle Peter as he was "led on by Holy Spirit" :

(2) 2 Peter 3:5-6 — For they want to be oblivious of this, that there were heavens of old, and an earth cohering out of water and through water, by the word of GOD: through which the *THEN*

world, being deluged by water, perished. (7) Yet the heavens *now*, and the earth.....

Here, then is a powerful reminder of the *FACT* (when in these days there is such wilful ignorance of it) that there *was* a *WORLD* which perished in a primal deluge. This was the *WORLD* (the heavens and the earth) created by *GOD* "in beginning" and which ultimately *became* "chaos and vacant" as a result of a deluge, which was an *earlier* inundation than that of Noah's days (cf. Gen. 1:1-2 and Isa. 45:18). This *WORLD* is distinguished by Peter by the significant phrase — "the *THEN* world" or the "*the world that then was*" — and the very *first* EON (AGE) would correspond with that *first* *WORLD* and run concurrently with it.

(3) 2 Peter 2:5 — and spares not the *ancient* *WORLD*, but guards Noah, an eight, a herald of righteousness, bringing a deluge on the *WORLD* of the irreverent.

The first chapter of Genesis from the second part of verse 2 is the inspired account of the rehabilitation, or restoration, from the chaos which had resulted from a primeval cataclysm, which is referred to in later Scriptures as "*the disruption*" (e.g. John 17:24 - Eph. 1:4 - 1 Peter 1:20 etc. (Concordant Version)). The verse from 2nd Peter (2:5) quoted from the Concordant Version, immediately above, relates to that *WORLD-SYSTEM* which Peter terms the "*ANCIENT*" or "*OLD*" *WORLD*, which was the world-order existing from the *restoration of the FIRST world until the world-wide flood of Noah's time*, which swept degenerate humanity from the earth, upon which it had corrupted its way. This flood (of Noah's time) is not to be confused with the deluge to which Peter refers in his second letter, chapter 3 verse 6. These two passages from 2nd Peter should be carefully studied and distinguished.

This "*ANCIENT*" or "*OLD*" *WORLD* is, then, the *SECOND* world, or world-system. In the light of the *TRUTH* derived from Ephesians 2:2, this *WORLD* would have its related *EON (AGE)* — the *SECOND* EON — occurring simultaneously with it.

In all God's works there is law, order and arrangement and it is in accord with the faultlessness which characterises His designs to find in the *order* of the EONS the beauty and harmony of perfect symmetry. The *CENTRAL* of *FIVE* EONS (AGES) (unique by reason of the fact that, during its course, Christ took upon Himself the form of a slave, came to be in the likeness of humanity (Phil. 2:7-8) and endured the Cross (Heb. 12:2)) is bounded by *TWO preceding* and *TWO succeeding* EONS. The complete *STRUCTURE of the EONS* — with the *CROSS* at the very heart and centre and *GOD's PURPOSE* running its destined course throughout — is thus seen to be in perfect equipoise. The structure may be indicated very simply as follows:

IN BEGINNING (Gen. 1:1).	1st EON.
DISRUPTION (Gen. 1:2 etc)	2nd EON
DELUGE (NOAH) (Gen. 6-8)	3rd EON (present. The CROSS).
DAY of WRATH. (Rev. 6:16.17)	4th EON (coming or future eon).
GREAT WHITE THRONE. (Rev. 20:11)	5th EON (eon of eons).
CONSUMMATION. (1 Cor.15:24 etc.)	
GOD ALL IN ALL (1 Cor.15:28).	

THE PURPOSE OF THE EONS.

The references which have already been given in this paper relating to the *FIVE* EONS (AGES), by no means exhaust the passages concerning them, but sufficient have been cited to bring into prominence the doctrine of the EONS (AGES), a very vital *TRUTH* which has been, for too long, neglected or disregarded by many who love the Lord. It is the *privilege*, as well as the *duty*, of each child of God to become acquainted with the *TRUTH* of *GOD*

"Thy *WORDS* were found, and I did eat them: and Thy *WORD* was unto me the *JOY*

and REJOICING of mine heart" (Jer.15:16).

We are nourished and rejoice in the measure we partake of the LIVING WORD. ALL GOD'S WORD brings joy to the heart and not the least the TRUTH of the EONS and their related PURPOSE.

The glorious theme or doctrine of the TRUTH of the EONS has, of course, as will be readily appreciated, a direct and powerful bearing upon matters pertaining to "judgment", "punishment" and "human destiny". It is outwith the scope of this present paper to deal with these subjects which are, in themselves, extensive. Suffice here to say that such matters, viewed in the glorious LIGHT of the TRUTH of the EONS are seen in sharp focus and correct perspective. The God-dishonouring dogma of "eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46) and its associated belief "tormented for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10, etc.) are tenets foreign to Scripture, and which the consistent and concordant translation of "AION" (EON) and "AIONIOS" (EONIAN) must force us to discard. UNending punishment, never ending torment, apart from being FOREIGN to the very NATURE of GOD WHO IS LOVE and LIGHT (1 John 1:5 and 4:8 and 16) would rob GOD of His ability to consummate HIS PURPOSE. That could NEVER BE.

Throughout the EONS (AGES), saturated as they are (and will yet be) by the varied events which combine to form what man is pleased to term "human history", "THE PURPOSE of the EONS" — which God makes in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. 3:11) — has moved and will continue to move undeviatingly towards its complete and satisfactory fulfillment. In spite of so much that is apparently to the contrary, the working out of that PURPOSE is in strict and irresistible accord with the COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL (Eph.1:11). No power, nor any combination of powers, can thwart the reaching of the GOAL GOD has in view or the ultimate realisation of HIS INTENTION. (Roms.9:19).

And what is that GOAL? Has GOD confined to us, His saints, the ULTIMATE HE has in mind and towards which HIS PURPOSE is directed? He has, through His inspired penman, Paul, the beloved Apostle to the Nations — it is :

Eph. 1:9-10 (Concordant Version) ... in all wisdom and prudence making known to us the SECRET of His WILL (in accord with His delight, which He purposed in Him) to have :

an administration of the complement of the eras,
to HEAD UP ALL IN THE CHRIST —

both that in the heavens and that on the earth —

In these sublime words, GOD has declared to us HIS INTENTION — to HEAD UP ALL in the CHRIST. Through CHRIST GOD made the eons (Heb. 1:2) — in CHRIST GOD formulated the purpose of the eons (Eph. 3:11) — in CHRIST, GOD is going to HEAD UP THE ALL, for, at the conclusion of the eons, ALL will be subject to the SON of GOD (1 Cor.15:25-27). When that is accomplished, as assuredly it will be, then the SON HIMSELF will also subject Himself to His GOD and FATHER, that GOD may be ALL in ALL. (1 Cor. 15:28). Not part in all, ALL in part, ALL in ALL.

GOD'S PURPOSE, formulated in Christ before the EONS, required the EONS for its unfolding and realisation. The concept of the EONS required a correlating reason and that reason, adequate and satisfying, was the PURPOSE OF GOD, which had its source in the WILL and LOVE of GOD. The EONS and the PURPOSE required GOD'S SON — HE DID NOT FAIL HIS GOD and FATHER.

To our GOD and FATHER be glory for the EONS of the EONS.
(Phil 4:20).

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