

I. GOD AND TIME

A. Biblical

Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. ⁸ "I am *the Alpha and the Omega*," says the Lord God, "*who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*" (NIV Rev. 1:7-8)

B. Pagan

When the Father who begat the world saw the image which he had made of the Eternal Gods moving and living, he rejoiced; and in his joy resolved, since the archetype was eternal, to make the creature eternal as far as this was possible. Wherefore he made an image of eternity which is time, having an uniform motion according to number, parted into months and days and years, and also having greater divisions of past, present, and future. These all apply to becoming in time, and have no meaning in relation to the eternal nature, *which ever is and never was or will be*; for the unchangeable is never older or younger, and when we say that he 'was' or 'will be,' we are mistaken, for these words are applicable only to becoming, and not to true being... These are the forms of time which imitate eternity and move in a circle measured by number. (Plato, *Timaeus* 37-38 [DP 3:355-56])

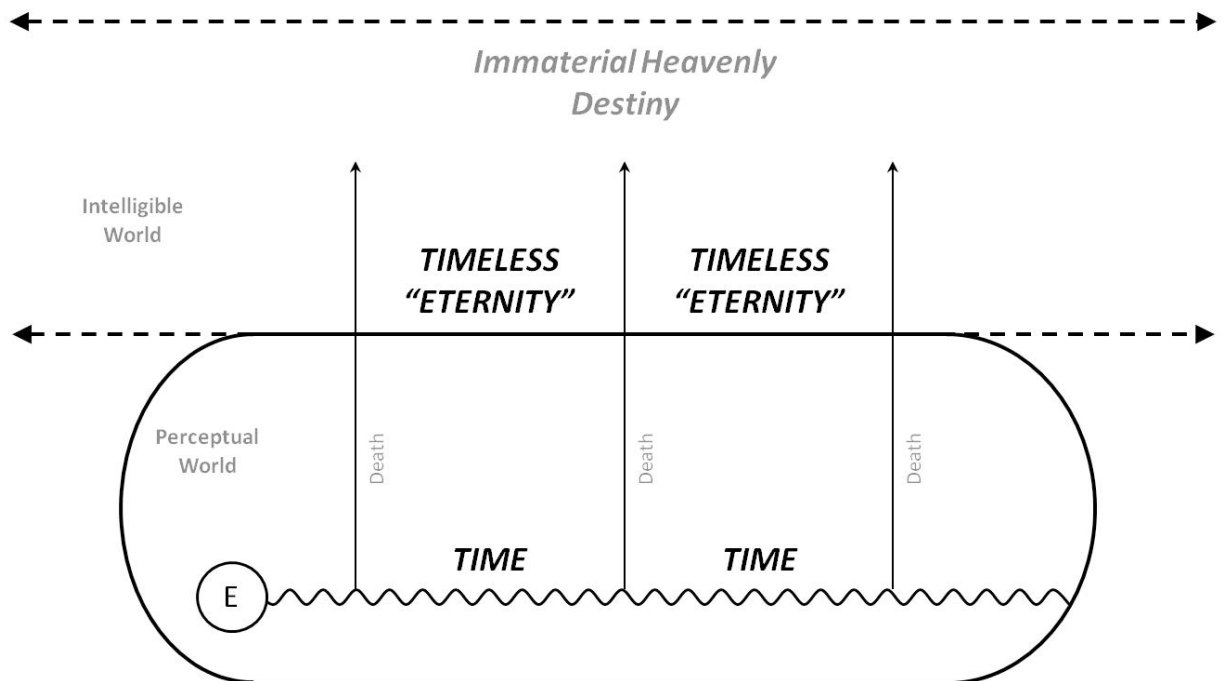


Fig. 2B – The Platonic Perversion of Time and Eternity

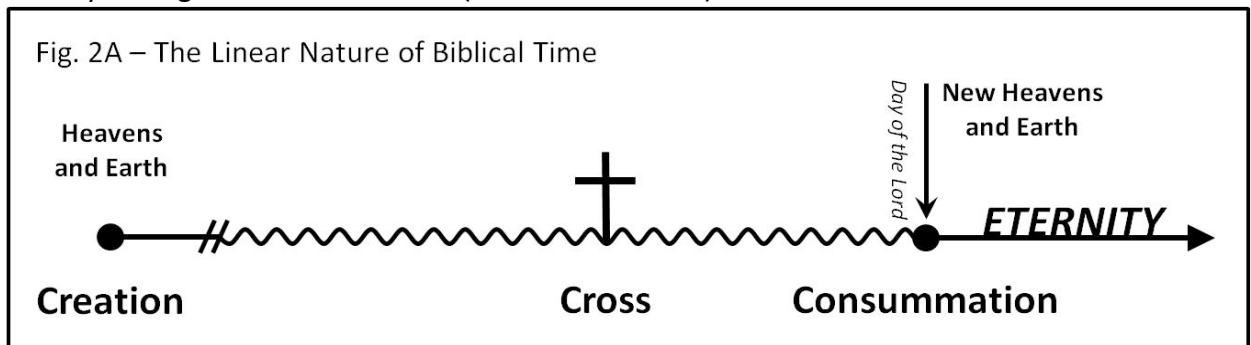
For Plato, eternity is not endlessly extended time, but something quite different; it is timelessness. Time in Plato's view is only the copy of eternity thus understood. How much the thinking of our days roots in Hellenism, and how little in Biblical Christianity, becomes clear to us when we confirm the fact that far and wide the Christian Church and Christian theology distinguish time and eternity in the Platonic-Greek manner. This then has important

consequences, and when the New Testament perspective of redemptive history is thereby affected, it leads to a radical transformation of the Primitive Christian preaching. (Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* [Westminster, 1950], 61-62)

II. THE LINEAR VIEW OF TIME

A. Biblical

Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands... ²⁶ and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation... ³⁰ Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, ³¹ because *He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness* through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (NASB Acts 17:23-31)



B. Pagan

Origen clearly represents and develops a construction of the Christian faith in which eschatology has been swallowed up in an emphasis upon transcendence. The only time which truly matters is that time until one's death, which determines one's experience in paradise and in the resurrection. *"Heaven" as cosmographic place now occupies the central position once occupied by the eschatological kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching.* That, too, occurs on the authority of progressive dialectics, the refinement of Pauline metaphysics. (Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton, *Jewish and Christian Doctrines* [Routledge, 2000], 183)

III. THE TWO AGES

A. This Age Vs. The Age To Come

Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in *this age*—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions—and in *the age to come* eternal life. (NRSV Mark 10:29-30)

The sons of *this age* marry and are given in marriage, ³⁵ but those who are considered worthy to attain to *that age* and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in

marriage, ³⁶ for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. (^{ESV} Luke 20:34-36)

God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in *this age* but also in *the age to come*. (^{NRSV} Ephesians 1:20-21)

Command those who are rich in *this present age* not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves a good foundation for *the time to come*, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (^{NKJV} 1 Timothy 6:17-19)

B. The End Of The Age

This is how it will be at *the end of the age*. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (^{NIV} Matthew 13:49-50)

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... And behold, I am with you always, to *the end of the age*. (^{ESV} Matthew 28:18-20)

C. "Present Age", "This Life", "This Body", Etc.

For I consider that the sufferings of *this present time* are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (^{ESV} Romans 8:18)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from *the present evil age*, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. (^{ESV} Galatians 1:3-5)

The god of *this age* has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (^{NIV} 2 Corinthians 4:4)

It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in *this present age*, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ... (^{NIV} Titus 2:12-13)

But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of *this life*, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. (^{ESV} Luke 21:34)

Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in *this world* will keep it for eternal life. (^{ESV} John 12:25)

Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to *this life*! (^{ESV} 1 Corinthians 6:3)

If in *this life* only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. (^{ESV} 1 Corinthians 15:19)

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both *the present life* and *the life to come*. (NIV 1 Tim. 4:8)

D. Eternity: The “Unending Ages”

The word used to express eternity, αἰών (‘age’), is *the same word* that is also applied to a limited division of time; otherwise expressed, between what we call eternity and what we call time, that is between everlasting continuing time and limited time, the New Testament makes absolutely no difference in terminology. Eternity is the endless succession of the ages (αἰώνες). (Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 62.)

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats... ⁴⁶ Then they will go away to *eternal* [Gk. *aiōnios*] punishment, but the righteous to *eternal* [Gk. *aiōnios*] life. (NIV Matthew 25:31-46)

For our light and *momentary* troubles are achieving for us an *eternal* [Gk. *aiōnios*] glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is *seen*, but on what is *unseen*. For what is seen is *temporary*, but what is unseen is *eternal* [Gk. *aiōnios*]. (NIV 2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to *the day of eternity* [Gk. *aion*]. Amen. (ESV 2 Peter 3:17-18)

E. The Day Of The Lord And The Partitioning Of Time

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in *this age* or in *the age to come*... ³⁶ I tell you that men will have to give account on *the day of judgment* for every careless word they have spoken. (NIV Matthew 12:32-36)

They will suffer the punishment of *eternal destruction*, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. (ESV 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10)

IV. DISCIPLESHIP AND THE ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

A. The Transformation Of The Mind And Heart

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, *in view of God's mercy*, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to *the pattern of this world* [Gk. *aiōn*], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (NIV Romans 12:1-2)

And do this, understanding *the present time*. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly

over; *the day is almost here*. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, *as in the daytime*, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. (^{NIV} Romans 13:11-13)

This is what I mean, brothers: *the appointed time* has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives *live as though* they had none, ³⁰ and those who mourn *as though* they were not mourning, and those who rejoice *as though* they were not rejoicing, and those who buy *as though* they had no goods, ³¹ and those who deal with the world *as though* they had no dealings with it. For the present form of *this world* is passing away. (^{ESV} 1 Corinthians 7:29-31)

Therefore, *preparing your minds* for action, and being *sober-minded*, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." ¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout *the time of your exile*. (^{ESV} 1 Peter 1:13-17)

B. Loving The Age To Come Vs. Loving This Age

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me *on that Day*, and not only to me but also to all who have *loved his appearing*. ⁹ Do your best to come to me soon. ¹⁰ For Demas, *in love with this present world* [Gk. *aiōn*], has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. (^{ESV} 2 Timothy 4:7-10)

Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and *the cares of this world* [Gk. *aiōn*] and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (^{NKJV} Matthew 13:22)

And do not *set your heart* on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ But *seek his kingdom*, and these things will be given to you as well. ³² Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there *your heart* will be also. (^{NIV} Luke 12:29-34)

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would *save his life* will lose it, but whoever *loses his life* for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he *gains the whole world* and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. (^{ESV} Luke 9:23-26)