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LIVING TIME IS JOY

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GREETINGS

FROM

MR. AND MRS. R. E. BISHOP

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LIVING TIME IS JOY

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THIS INSTRUCTION
IS NOT A METHOD,
BUT A MESSAGE.

LIVING TIME IS JOY

The subject that has been requested for today is "Eternity." The human soul has a natural craving for eternity. There is no aspect of the finite which is satisfying to the soul; no matter how much accumulation may be made in the finite, the soul is never satisfied. The more it has the more it wants, and this is most evident in respect to life. The accumulation of years never satisfies because there is in the human soul a desire for everlasting life, for eternal life, for immortality.

Many forms of theological thought have tried to satisfy this craving in man by offering, as a sort of panacea, the idea of the immortality of the soul. This is good as far as it goes, but it still does not entirely satisfy this craving for even more than the eternal life of the soul, because man cannot feel

satisfied with simply an idea that his soul is going to continue. He longs for the experience of immortality in the flesh.

Christianity has offered this. Christianity has given the great doctrine, not only of the immortality of the soul but the immortality of the flesh, of the body; and the Lord Himself came into the world that He might demonstrate to man that it was possible to overcome death in the flesh, to have eternity in the world of time.

With this consideration of aeviternity we must consider also the two extremes; eternity and time. Aeviternity is presented as the median, the way between eternity and time. It is like a place where eternity and time might be said to meet.

Eternity is the measure of permanent being. We apply the word particularly to God. We say God is eternal. In the Axioms of this instruction we discover that truth must be eternal. The word "truth" seems to us abstract.

But truth, meaning that which is, the Absolute, cannot be subject to time. Time indicates changes, and particularly the three great changes of beginning, duration, and end. But from that which is truth we have to strip off all the imperfection of time.

By eternity we do not mean the accumulation of time, piling up years upon years. The meaning of eternity is the renunciation of time, overcoming or transcending time. Eternity is an absolutely simple perception, and it is entirely positive. It is the most positive perception that could be attained. But the mind, because it is finite, is unable to have a positive perception of eternity; it perceives it negatively. We can only define eternity in negative terms, by the removal of the idea of time. We can have no concept in our mind of what eternity is, eternity not being succession in past and future, but being simultaneously whole, the procession of the simultaneously whole and perfect life; and this is inconceivable to the

mind except through negation. Eternity is the measure of permanent being. Time is our measurement of changeable things, of all things that move, of movement. We measure events by time.

The philosophers say that time and space are not actually entities at all. Their only foundation is as that in which one may extend events, as in time; or in which to have the idea of the extension of objects, as in space. But actually time and space in themselves are not entities. In other words they are entirely negative. Eternity is positive. Time is negative.

In fact no one has ever been able to lay his hands on time. We say that time is divided into past and future, and that all we can call a certainty is the present moment. But as the philosophers have pointed out; we are never able to grasp the present moment, for as we grasp it it has slipped into the past, out of reach. We are never able to lay our finger on this particular moment; the present moment is the most elusive of all.

As you analyze time it dissolves itself away into nothingness.

Eternity on the other hand, although you cannot grasp it, is the eternal positive; for it is the ever-present existence of Absolute Being, without any before or after. The mind cannot conceive of the eternal now because it is an absolutely simple perception, and the mind can only grasp things when they have the aspect of the composite. The mind has to grasp things through relationships and comparisons, so the absolutely simple, infinite eternity cannot be understood by the mind except negatively.

We really have three forms of measurement. Eternity, which is the measure of permanent, absolute being; time which is the measurement of moveable, changeable things; and this third, or intermediary one called aeivernity, which is described by the great mystic Dionysius, and by the most eminent doctor of theology, Saint Thomas Aquinas, as the measurement of spiritual substance through time. Perhaps this will help you

to grasp the significance of aeviternity.

Eternity, as we discover in the axiom of reason, cancels the idea of beginning and end, because beginning and duration and end are the three great changes; and these must be canceled because we have discovered that truth is unchangeable; we find it is not temporary, not subject to time. Eternity does not have a beginning nor an end. Time has beginning, successive duration, and end. Aeviternity on the other hand, has beginning but no end. And therefore it is called the measurement of spiritual substances, these things, the very essence of which God has created.

We read in Genesis that He brought all these things out of nothing and pronounced them good; He created them good, brought them into existence and pronounced them good, gave them the law of His own being, eternal, absolute goodness. His seal upon all things He had created was His own perfection, His own goodness; that is the mark of the Creator, the goodness; and these things He created He did

not create for destruction.

We are told in the Scriptures that God created not death, nor does He delight in the destruction of the living. He would not create things to annihilate them, He creates them to be. These things God has created have a beginning and source, that is, they come from His hand; but they have no end. Though in themselves they are not said to be essentially eternal; yet they have the gift of eternity from the Creator Himself. Should He so desire He could withdraw His word from these things and they would slip back into their pristine nothingness. But He did not create things to be annihilated; He created these things for Himself, and all things--if you wish to depict them by your mind, throw them on the screen of observation--might be described as making a circle from God to God; for God is the beginning and end of all things. He is the Absolute. So when He created the world and all these wonderful essences of being, to be revealed on the great

screen of nature, He created these things to be; not for destruction, not for annihilation, but to be.

In other words, He has sealed upon them this aspect of His eternity; and because it proceeds through what we call a world of time, we call it an aeviternity. All these things that have been created by God and are upheld by His divine mind, these things have in them that sense of eternity, even though we are able to know them in a world of time.

Should you want something to give you a better working understanding of what these eternal perceptions are in a world of time, we might give you, for an example, the truth presented to us in the form of the axioms. These are eternal truths that are uncovered and we call them axioms of unchangeability, of allness, of love, of goodness, of eternity. All of these are perceptions. They are abstract because it is only when they get down into what we call our world of appearances, our concrete

experiences, that things seem to be subject to change. But we have found out that that which is being, that which God has predestined, must participate in the eternity of God.

We speak of this participation in His eternity as the aeviternity. This is a combined word and the first part is from a Latin word which signifies "agelessness." So aeviternity has an ageless experience, an everlasting experience, without ending.

Saint Thomas Aquinas in explaining this matter says that while we may speak of before and after in regard to aeviternity, we must remove from this idea of before and after any sense of aging in connection with the word "after" or any sense of change that is implied as having to introduce new things. There is no innovation; no innovation can be attributed to aeviternity. There is no growing old in aeviternity, for it is that continuous procession of the spirit of life; not aging, not having to be renewed, not the sense of continuous

rejuvenation, but it is the continuous procession of everlasting life. This is almost impossible for the mind to conceive of. We have a word for it--aeviternity. Words can be repeated over and over again, yet the mind cannot conceive of what their magnificence would be if we understood.

"Immortal youth," we speak of, in trying to convey to the mind what aeviternity means in regard to oneself. The ancient Orientals tried to describe it by saying a person is like the Ancient of Ancient Ones, with the wisdom of the ages, yet with the flesh of a child; all the maturity of the ancient wisdom, yet with the physical body cells of a child, without the immaturity and the weakness of a child. So with all the imperfections removed from both infancy and age--if you could conceive of such a thing--you have your picture of immortal youth.

In the Kabbalah, the great and mystical Scriptures of the Hebrews, God is called the Ancient of Days, the Ancient of Ancient Ones. Yet this does

not mean that they attribute age to God, for He transcends all idea of age.

Eternity is not the accumulation of age or years, it is the renunciation of age, of years, of time. But it is possible even in our world of time, our secular experience, our temporal life, to have glimpses of this eternity, of this new kind of measurement of spiritual things called aeviternity.

As we said before, the abstract perceptions of the axioms are eternal truths, they are truth for all time from the beginning of the world on through all time. Customs in different ages of man cannot in any way touch upon or change these absolute, eternal truths.

Let me give you another instance of the operation of this spiritual measurement in relation to our own personal experiences. We know in our natural measurement of time what we call certain seasons of the year. Our time seems to be fastened to a calendar, and the year seems to roll around as a circle. On the movement of the year we have varying and

successive events, changing seasons, changing conditions. But fastened to this same calendar we have another measurement of time, and we give this the name of the Liturgical Cycle. This is fastened to our daily calendar, and we have devices by which each day we can see the places, the contiguous points between the natural and spiritual, points where the natural is touched by the measurement of these spiritual truths that are predestined, and therefore have the permanence of eternity. These spiritual events are predestined from all time by the foreknowledge of God, and yet they are fastened to our secular calendar for our convenience.

In the world time has subjugated man and we find people bound and dominated by it. Time has become their slave driver, especially where they know only mechanical time. Aristotle describes mechanical time as measured by the clock. Time by the clock is man's slave driver. Time was not intended, however, to be a slave driver to man;

it was intended to be a track upon which man could receive his eternal good. The intent was for it to be, and it actually is, for man's convenience.

If you see the manner in which each day of your year is fastened to the Liturgical calendar, and you discover these wonderful eternal prayers, these meditations, foreordained from all time to be man's glorification and salvation, if you can see how, on your track of time, these wonderful spiritual goods run, meeting you at every instant, you will have an entirely different viewpoint of your secular experience.

Instead of being dominated and pressed by time and the inability to make your time cover your needs, you will find that you have discovered the essence of time itself which is joy; and in this joy which you partake of through your spiritual meditations, you will discover this movement within your soul accelerated to the infinite, and you will find the timeless self that Dionysius speaks of shining through into a world of time.

What is this timeless self shining through? What would it mean to you to have the revelation of this? It would be the discovery of your immortal youth, not the imperfection of immaturity, but the wisdom of the ages; all the wisdom of the world, and the flesh, the physical perfection of a child.

Everything that is has divine predestination as the very root of its being. The subject of aeviternity is fundamentally the subject of predestination. So often the subject of predestination is misunderstood because of the heresies regarding the idea of anything being predestined. Predestinarianism is the heresy that seems to deny man any rights of his own. This heresy implies that man's destiny is entirely out of his hands, that what he is predestined for he cannot escape from.

Now this is all very well if one connects this idea of man's destiny, of his predestination, with the goodness and the mercy as well as the justice of God. But if into this idea of predestination

comes the fallacy that anybody could be predestined to evil or to sin or to eternal punishment or to hell, then it becomes a heretical view. For the predestination of God does not make evil infallible; it is the deliverance from evil.

Divine predestination is distinct, and yet it is almost one doctrine with divine providence, the providence of God that has arranged for man's salvation and has given man the faculties and the graces and the opportunities by which man himself, may co-operate with God in the experience and in the realization of this salvation. But the predestination of God does not determine the inevitability of any evil, of any mistakes, of any errors, of any falsity.

On the other hand, it is proper because in His great foreknowledge God recognized that man could not be said to be infallible, that man might make mistakes. He saw the possibility that man might fall, and arranged for the forgiveness of man's failures. The

predestination of God is God's will for man's salvation. Gaume says that from all eternity God foresaw the Incarnation of the Word and He had, as it were, before His eyes from all time the immolation of the Great Victim, so that in a certain sense it might be said that man was forgiven his sins even before he committed them.

This is an example of aeviternity, predestination in our realm of time. And this wonderful message is brought to us on the Liturgical Cycle, on that great wheel of the doctrine that coincides so perfectly with the wheel of the law, our secular experience. They run side by side, and yet the movement in them is not the same timing, not of the same measurement. Those who have caught, through their spiritual joy, the glimpse of eternity even while living in a realm of time, recognize what it is to march to the beat of another drum, to have all their experience on the ground of time and their temporal world, still in the very heart of eternity. And they even

find the things that they engage in will reveal glimpses of eternity in the form of a permanence, and such things will not wear out.

The saints are an example of this. It has been discovered that often after years and years of what we might say was death, their flesh still shows the incorruption of spiritual perfection; that their bodies did not decay, their possessions did not wear out; that even in a world of time it is possible to bring forth the permanent health, permanent wealth, good, perfection and beauty. For all things that can be carried back to truth, that can be identified with truth, these things that are predestined from the divine wisdom are eternal things, and they come to us and are perceptible to us in a world of time--spiritual substances we say, and yet such dominant spiritual substances that they shine through into a world of time.

This is the description of immortality of the flesh. It is called an immortality of glory. The body is

described as being spiritual, not because the substance of the body is less tangible, or is no longer palpable, but because the soul so completely overpowers the body, that spiritual form of the body completely dominates, that the body is filled with the vigor of incorruption. This is immortality, immortal youth, and this is man's craving.

We know there is a natural craving in the human heart for this permanence. We find people everywhere trying to make their possessions last, trying to make their houses and their clothes last, and above everything trying to make their bodies last. What are the beauty parlors for, what are the places of physical culture for? What are the doctors for? What are all these various new forms of science for but to install permanence in man's life? The hope is for permanence.

And this natural craving in the heart of man cannot be in vain. Why should he have this craving for permanence if he did not have the fundamental

right to the everlasting? The root of man's being is permanent. That which is in man is permanent, and that is the reason that he craves so constantly for a greater and fuller expression of this permanence.

Let me read you the description that Saint Thomas Aquinas gives of eternity and time and aeviternity:

*As eternity is the proper measure of permanent being, so time is the proper measure of movement and hence, according as any being recedes from permanence of being, and is subject to change, it recedes from eternity, and is subject to time. Therefore the being of things corruptible, because it is changeable, is not measured by eternity.

Aeviternity [on the other hand] differs from time and from eternity, as the mean between them both.

Now, anything that we might classify as evil, all the things that are corruptible, cannot be measured by eternity. Corruption is evil. Anything that

*The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas, Volume 1, pages 104, 105

belongs to this classification cannot be measured by eternity. We have found in the first chapters of Genesis when man made his great mistake, was disobedient to God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he was banished from Paradise lest--as it says--he should put out his hand and eat from the tree of life and therefore live forever. That knowledge, that experience, contemplated in the idea of good and evil, relative good and evil, cannot have a place in eternity. Evil is finite; its very nature is finiteness. It cannot belong to the plane of eternity, and therefore we know that we can be delivered from it for it does not belong to the being of permanent things.

What is our seeming entrance into a mortal life where it seems as though we have receded from eternity into a world of time? How can we, in the very being of our nature, in that root of our being, how can we recede from eternity? That which is true in us, the essence of our being, can never recede from eternity;

it is rooted in eternity itself. But all this corruption which belongs to the world of time we need to relegate to the place of absolute nonexistence. It has no place in our experience. The things that have a place in our experience are those things that participate in eternity, that are predestined by God, the perfection, the beauty, the goodness, the love, the happiness, the joy.

All things in our experience that we can find to be axiomatic, these things are the true things. These are predestined, they are everlasting; we can say they have a beginning, as they have proceeded into our experience, but they have no end for God did not create things to be annihilated. We can count on these things that have the authority of the Divine Word in them as certainties, as being permanent. And it is these things that are brought to us in our world of time, fastened to our secular calendar under a different kind of timing--all together an everlasting predestined salvation that is brought to us into a world of time.

Let me read you the account offered by the translator of the great mystic, Dionysius the Aeropagite in his book, the "Divine Names." He has given us such a wonderful revelation of what this experience is, and how it is possible for us today at this very instant to experience eternity in time. It is not something that is only for a few privileged souls, but it is something available to everyone; for each one of us is constantly in touch in that innermost root of our being, with the Absolute.

*There is in each one of us
a timeless self. It is
spoken of by all the
Christian mystics as the
root of our being.

And this root of our being can never be destroyed. It may seem to us as though we have lost track of the root of our being. People think that they know this is so, but what is really known to them is this ego they have built up and which obscures what they truly are. An ego

*Dionysius the Areopagite, Divine Names, page 172 (Note), C. E. Rolt

built up, what they think about themselves, their habits of thought, their accumulation of circumstances, this has to be cleared away to find the root of their being, the timeless self.

Saint Thomas Aquinas says that sin can never destroy the root of man's being, that the root of his being is indestructible; it is permanent. This is what we discover in the axioms when we identify ourselves with truth: that if we exist at all we must be truth, therefore we must be as eternal and unchangeable as truth. But this being seems to be concealed, obscured under a great cloud of what we think we are; and this has to be cleared away. The root of our being is indestructible, never can it be lost nor destroyed. It is this root of our being that is predestined for God. Saint Thomas says that we may obscure this divinity of our being indefinitely, but it can never be diminished by subtraction. We find in the Axioms--and these are eternal truths, self-evident facts--that that which is truth is not

divisible, you cannot subtract from it, it is all there is; it is infinite. So this truth within each person, this timeless self, the root of our being cannot be subtracted from; even though what you are might be obscured almost completely from your consciousness, still it can never be diminished by subtraction. And this is what the Christian mystics call the root of man's being. There is in each of us a timeless self.

Our perfection consists in this ultimate reality, which is each man's self, shining through his whole being and transforming it.

The great saints have said that as God knows them so they are. This is the truth, for as God knows you so you are. The knowledge of God cannot be compared to our knowledge. We say that because a thing is, we know it. But not so with this great foreknowledge of God, for God knows a thing and therefore it is. God knows you as perfect, therefore that is the reality of your being.

Our perfection consists in this ultimate reality, which is each man's self, shining through his whole being and transforming it.

What you are shines through into a world of time. This is your perfection, this is your immortal youth.

Hence man is at last lifted on to the eternal plane from that of time. The movements of his spirit will then be so intense that they will attain a totum simul.

That is the simultaneously whole, the total and permanent possession of eternal life.

We get a foretaste of this when, in the experience of deep spiritual joy, the successive parts of time so coalesce (as it were) that **an hour seems like a moment.**

Many people have had this experience when the hours almost vanish in the great moments, great experiences of joy; years would seem like a day, ages like an instant.

Eternity is Rest and Time is Motion. Accelerate the motion in the individual soul, through the intensification of that soul's bliss to infinity. There is now in the soul infinite motion. But Infinite Motion is above succession, and therefore itself a form of repose.

If you could imagine that perfect operation for an instant, the perfect functioning of your mind, your body--your eyes in seeing, your ears in hearing, the perfect experience of all the faculties of your body in perfect operation--this would be the rest of these faculties. For any interruption in the performance of this functioning is quieting, disturbing; but the perfect rest of the body is in the perfect functioning of the body, the perfect operation of the whole physical system. This kind of motion, or infinite motion is the body's rest.

But Infinite Motion is above succession, and therefore itself a form of repose. Thus Motion has been changed into Rest, Time into Eternity. Mechanical Time, or dead Time

(of which Aristotle speaks as mere movement or succession) is Time measured by the clock; developing or living Time...is real Time, and is Aevum, which partakes of both mechanical Time and of Eternity.

It is this that Saint Thomas Aquinas describes under the term aeviternity, that measurement of spiritual substance, of spiritual being, proceeding through a world of time. Time cannot hinder it, time cannot affect it, time cannot influence it. It is eternity in time, the eternal perception of truth through a world of time, personally experienced through the physical body as the revelation of one's true self, the root of one's being, one's soul shining through into his experience.

And this is brought to pass--the secret of it--through spiritual joy. That is why all these spiritual meditations fastened to your secular calendar offer you opportunities to discover this joy in your soul, and to accelerate your soul to that very essence by which all

time coalesces and you find yourself on the plane of eternity.

O Eternal and Unchangeable God,
Grant to us the benediction of
Thy ever merciful countenance.
Let this, the expression of Thy
love, shine upon our personal
lives and make us worthy to
participate in the permanence
and living experience of truth.

Pour upon our souls their fill
of spiritual joy, that in this
miracle our perceptive powers
may be accelerated to the
realization of Thy supreme good-
ness, and may this goodness so
pervade all human affairs that
the great healing of Thy
presence may be felt throughout
the world.

Lift us out of the dead
calculations of mechanical time,
where the wearisome process of
successive moments blinds us to
the real values, and place us

instead upon the plane of eternal truth, where everlasting goodness, perfection and beauty fill our lives to completion.

Deliver us from all subjection to corruptible time, from all the accruing succession of events, harrowing us with their agonizing uncertainties.

Rather let us, from this very instant, be the voluntary recipient of Thy eternal Spirit, proceeding forth with the infinite wisdom of Thy predestination.

In this eternal decree of everlasting life, may we each and every one, discover our own timeless self and may this everlasting root of our being shine through our physical flesh as the revelation of immortal youth.

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