

usage : it means an indefinite period of time marked off by some peculiar dealing of God—a dispensation. The ages may vary in length, but they have each definite bounds. It is an infelicity, if not an inaccuracy, in our English version, that the Greek word is so seldom rendered “*age*” and so often “*world*.” Dr. Upham suggests that the term, *αιων*, should be uniformly translated “*time-world*.” Certainly the word should be represented by some English equivalent which expresses *time*, for these ages, or æons, are to the kingdom its successive periods of preparation and development, and both must be studied together to be studied successfully.

According to the testimony of the Word of God, the ages form a part of the *created order*. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read that God “*made the ages*,” *ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας* (Heb 1 : 2) ; and more emphatically, that “*the ages were framed together by the Word of God*,” *κατηρτισθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι Θεοῦ* (Heb. 11 : 3). About three structures of God kindred terms are used—the world, the church, and the ages—all of which are said to be built, framed, fitted together according to His almighty fiat. All are His creative products ; the physical world, because matter is foreign to spirit ; the Church, because a spiritual temple is foreign to sinful man and a carnal nature ; the ages, because time is foreign to eternity.

The ages, then, are, as much as the universe, both a creation and manifestation of God. History is His story. As creation came forth at His word, cosmically framed, in architectural symmetry and æsthetic proportion, so the æons have been built up upon a divine plan, in numerical symmetry and geometrical proportion ; in other words, there is, in the construction of these time-worlds, something which corresponds to architectural design and artistic structure. In all true architecture there is a fixed relation between the parts of a building, as in all normal Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian columns there is a certain proportion of length to breadth. So God built up the time-worlds, first laying the foundation ages ; then story upon story, columns upon their bases, and capitals upon their columns ; and finally there is to be a heading up of all in Christ. — *ανακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ χριστῷ* (Eph. 1 : 10) ; as all the lines of the pyramid head up in the apex, as all the subordinate parts and proportions of a symmetrical building reach completion in spires or pinnacles, capstone or dome, so the ages are to find termination and consummation in Him.

Five ages are distinguished in the Epistle to the Ephesians : “*Before the foundation of the world* ;” “*from the beginning of the world* ;” “*this age* ;” “*that which is to come*.” (Cf. Ephes. 1 : 4, 21 ; 2 : 2 ; 3 : 5, 21 ; Heb. 9 : 26). These expressions distinctly outline *four* periods of duration : one terminating, having its end (*τελος*) at creation ; a second, reaching from creation to Christ’s ascension, and, therefore, “*past*” when Paul wrote ; a third, called the “*present age*,” and reaching to Christ’s second advent ; and a fourth, known as the “*coming age*.” Beyond all these lies yet a *fifth*, concerning which we find that most remarkable expression, “*unto all the generations of the age of the ages*,” *εἰς πάντα*