

PROJECTING INTO THE FUTURE

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INTRODUCTION

Scripture directs itself to the reader in three dimensions that correspond to the three tenses of our existence. For each time dimension there is a type of biblical literary material:

<u>times</u>	<u>literary genre</u>
present	= wisdom literature
past	= history
future	= apocalyptic and prophecy

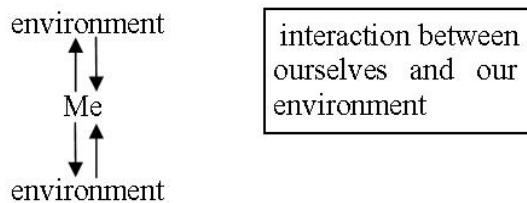
We cannot change the past; so we focus on the present and future.

I. TWO DIMENSIONS OF LIFE

A. Latitude

Existential/sideways/love

The concept can be represented by a spinning wheel, which pictures the give-and-take of everyday living.



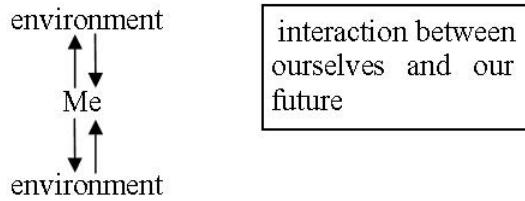
Saying #1: “*The meaning of an event is in the event.*”

Life is in the living, rather than out ahead that we never to reach.

B. Longitude

Eschatological/forward/hope/direction

The concept can be represented by a rolling wheel, which pictures the ever-expanding horizon that opens up before us toward future goals.



Saying #2: “*The future of an event belongs to the event.*”

The present does not equal a discrete entity; it is not disjoined from all else.
No act happens by itself.

As memories of the past impact the present, so anticipations of the future should impact the present.

The law of the harvest teaches that how we act now issues in future experiences that come back on us.

No one lives in complete disregard for the future, but we may not regard it enough. It is greatly determined by what we mix into it through present action.

Saying #3: “*The meaning of an event becomes in the future of that event.*”

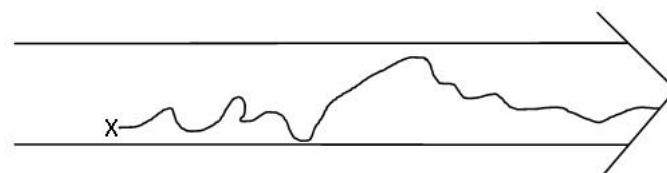
Meaning “becomes” as it echoes along in time. The decision we make now limits the decisions we have left to choose from in the upcoming future. We speak of direction-setting events because they impact significantly the subsequent direction of our life. Getting married leads to many other things that would not have been the case without that decision; getting married also removes some options that would have been possible otherwise. Since one decision leads to another in this ongoing way, the full significance of a past decision becomes clearer as the domino effect of that decision unfolds itself over time.

To be complete and fulfilled persons, we must live in light of the “fulfillment” of what we do as well as enjoy the experiences along the way. In more than one sense, actions have consequences.

II. INTERACTION BETWEEN PRESENT AND FUTURE

A. The present grows toward the future.

1. Not just eventuation but predestination



Life does not just eventuate; it goes somewhere intentional because God has set natural, providential, and mandatory limitations in its range of possibilities.

There is more to it all than one experience leading to the next.

2. Not just what it produces from inside of history (*futurum*),
but what God brings into it from the outside (*adventus*)

The Bible is a history of God's mighty acts in-breaking into the world.

Not the communistic view, but the Christian view of history.

Not the communist charge that religion is an excuse for present irresponsibility, but the Christian recognition that there is more to the future than what we put into it.

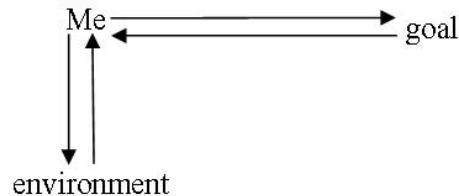
Not evolution, but creation. Creative acts of God add to the potentialities of the present. Consequently, things are not limited to what has already been; there is the possibility of the truly new.

B. The future shapes the present.

The future affects the present.

The present causes the future by natural causation; the future shapes the present by mental anticipation; projecting the natural future back into the present causes us to act differently than we would otherwise.

Mental penetration of the future adjusts perceptions and behavior in the present.



Mind makes the connection both ways: it interprets present experience so that action results and shapes tomorrow; it projects into the future by planning and revealed prophecy to qualify present actions.

Since life does not just eventuate, we should live by planning. We can get so caught up in living life that we do not plan the future.

III. THE POWER OF THE FUTURE

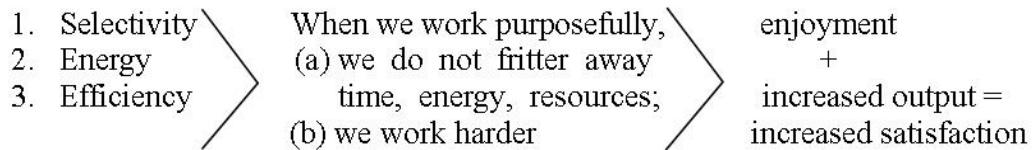
Living toward the future: conscious planning *vs.* stimulus-response

acting *vs.* reacting

Take charge of your life; take responsibility for the future.

The future . . .

A. Increases satisfaction by organizing life.



Half the fun of having fun is anticipating it.

Not reacting to the strongest influence often means avoiding sin.

Our environmental influences are directed to the fleshly pleasures.

B. Restraints sin by providing consequences.

1. Causes us to think twice about words and deeds because of long-range effect

Bad deeds and words “come home to roost.”

Omitted deeds and words also “come home to roost.”

It is easy to put a wall across our minds toward the future.

2. Causes us to replace immediate gratification with delayed gratification
(Hebrews 11:24-27)
3. Invisible things are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

temporary-eternal
tangible-intangible
visible-invisible

two kinds of invisible:
transcendent &
eschatological

We must live
the visible in
terms of the
invisible.

4. Causes us to live the time here in light of the hereafter (1 Corinthians 15:32b)

C. Gives strength by offering triumph.

1. Prophecy gives hope of deliverance from present evil.

Prophecy is not writing history ahead of time.

2. The future gives strength in the present for meeting present challenges.

The future is not an escape hatch from the present.

Proverbs 29:18: “*Where there is no vision the people perish.*”

3. The actual future triumph of God brings a solution to the present distress.
The future is not an imaginary utopia.
The future bails out the present with its inequities and inadequacies.

D. Instills more wonder by creating new things.

Isaiah 43:18-19; 42:29; 48:6; Revelation 21:5

Scripture pictures a linear *vs.* cyclical view of history; that is, the future does not consist of bouncing around between the same old possibilities that have always been; the future holds out through God's creative power the possibility of the truly new.

CONCLUSION

We must combine latitude and longitude because we cannot control the future completely, and many times the goals we seek seem to keep moving away from us. In such times, latitude can bail out frustration even as longitude does in times of persecution, pain, and inequity.

We have "*eternity in our hearts*"; we cannot imagine not being. We take that as a reminder to live in terms of eternity.

We must live toward God above and toward his future ahead.

We need to live the temporal in light of the eternal.