

THE GOSPEL MESSENGER,

OR UNIVERSALIST ADVOCATE.

[“AND THE ANGEL SAID UNTO THEM, FEAR NOT, FOR BEHOLD! I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY WHICH SHALL BE UNTO ALL PEOPLE.”—Luko 2: 10.]

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SCRIPTURE TERMS EXPRESSING DURATION.

Statement of Facts, showing that the fact of the application of the words *eternal*, *everlasting*, &c., to punishment, is, no proof of the doctrine of endless punishment.

1. The words *everlasting*, *forever*, and *ever*, in the Old Testament, are translated from the Hebrew *olim*.—Taylor, Parkhurst, Stuart, and indeed all ancient writers, admit that the word *olim*, does not of itself, signify an endless duration. In other words, that this is not the radical meaning of the word. Hence, they define it to signify ‘a duration which is concealed;’ ‘time hidden from man, whether definite or indefinite; whether past or future.’

2. These words in the New Testament, are translated from the Greek word *aión* and *aiónios*. The authorities referred to above, admit that these words are frequently used to express a limited period of time: and also, that in their Scripture usage, they are synonymous with that term.

3. Although the authorities just referred to, contend that *aión* and *aiónios* are sometimes used to express endless duration, yet of this there is no proof. And although they assert that *olim* is sometimes used to signify endless duration, yet of this there is no proof; and, besides, even they themselves admit that it signifies this, not from the proper force of the word, but when the sense of the place requires it; as God and his attributes. But, following they are correct in this, (and in our opinion it is a point of but very little importance,) then it will follow that the extent of duration expressed by these terms, must be determined by the nature of the thing to which they are applied. And unless it can be shown that punishment is absolutely endless in its nature, the fact of the application of these terms to punishment, does not prove the endless duration of that punishment.

4. It is beyond all dispute, that these words are frequently, and in a great variety of ways, used in the Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testament, to signify limited duration. Out of six hundred and fifty-two occurrences of *olim*, and its corresponding words in the Old Testament, it is susceptible of the clearest demonstration, that in six hundred instances it expresses only limited duration.

5. Our translators have rendered *olim*, and its corresponding words, by nearly thirty different words and phrases; most of them signifying duration, but varying as to its extent, from three days to endless duration.

6. It is an indisputable fact that the words *olim* and *aión*, are used in the Scriptures in the plural number. Now, had the inspired writers understood these words to express endless duration, there would have been no necessity of their using them in the plural number; but on the

contrary, such use of them would be highly improper.

7. These words are not only used in the plural number, but words are added to extend their signification. The literal rendering of Exodus xv: 26, is, ‘the Lord shall reign from *aión* to *aión* and farther.’ Dan. xii: 3. ‘And they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars through the *aións* and farther.—Mic. iv. 5. ‘And we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God, through the *aión* and beyond it.’ Now if the word *aión* signifies *eternity*, then we should be under the necessity of reading these passages thus, ‘The Lord shall reign from *eternity* to *eternity* and farther.’ ‘And they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars through the *eternity*, and farther.’ ‘And we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God, through the *eternity* and beyond it.’ Now to speak of a period of time beyond eternity, or to speak of one eternity succeeding another eternity, is absurd. Hence, we conclude the Scripture writers did not understand these words to signify endless duration.

8. If we understand *aión* to express endless duration, then we shall read in the Bible of *eternities*, of the *beginning of eternity*, of the *end of eternity*, and of *this eternity*, and the *eternity to come*. Eph. ii: 7. ‘That in the *aións* (eternities) to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace.’ Col. i: 26. ‘Even the mystery which hath been hid from *aións* (eternities) and from generations.’ Eph. iii: 9. ‘And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the *aión* (eternity) hath been hid in God.’ Titus i: 2. ‘In hope of eternal life, which God that can not lie promised before the *aión* (eternity) began.’ Acts i: 21. ‘Which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the *aión* (eternity) hath been hid in God.’ Titus i: 2. ‘In hope of eternal life, which God that can not lie promised before the *aión* (eternity) began.’ Matt. xxiv: 2. ‘Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the *aión*.’ (eternity.) Matt. xxviii: 20. ‘Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the *aión*.’ (eternity.) Heb. ix: 26. ‘But now once in the end of the *aión* (eternity), hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.’ 1 Cor. x: 11. ‘And they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the *aións* (eternities) have come.’ Matt. xii: 32. ‘But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this *aión* (eternity), nor in the *aión* (eternity) to come.’ Eph. i: 21. For above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this *aión* (eternity), but also in that to come.’

9. It is a matter of some doubt, whether these words do of themselves primarily

signify duration at all; and whether, when they are used for this purpose, they are not used in an accommodated sense. Dr. Clowes says on this subject, ‘there has been at least one writer (Rev. Mr. Goodwin, in the Christian Examiner, published in Boston) who has with great learning and judgment examined these words, and who has come to the conclusion that *olim*, and its equivalent *aión*, mean spirit; and *aiónios*, means spiritual; and that these words never have necessarily the meaning of duration. Without admitting or rejecting the correctness of this sentiment, we must declare that our Saviour has so carefully defined eternal life, as consisting in ‘the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ as sent by him’—and as being that which is here enjoyed, before the resurrection—as something in short, which is exclusive of that life which shall be enjoyed in the future world, that we feel ourselves compelled to admit, that in the teachings of our Saviour, the term *aiónios*, rendered *eternal*, in the phrase *eternal life*, refers much more to the character of that life, than to its duration. The only question is, whether the terms *olim*, *aión* and *aiónios*, have not in other parts of Scripture a corresponding meaning.’

10. If we understand these terms to be expressive of endless duration, we put an unanswerable argument into the hands of the Jews. It is an incontrovertible fact, that these terms are applied to God’s ancient covenant with the Jew; to the statutes of Moses, and to the priesthood of Aaron. With what propriety, then, may the Jews contend, that all these were designed to be of perpetual continuance; and that Jesus must have been an impostor; inasmuch, as one ostensible object which he had in view, was, to abrogate the institutions of Moses and bring the legal covenant to a close.

11. But, we also set the Bible at variance with itself. We have seen that these terms are applied to the ordinances of Moses, and yet in Heb. viii: 13, and ix: 10, we are expressly told, that the old covenant and the Mosaic ordinances are done away. We have seen that these terms are applied to the Aaronic priesthood, and yet in Hebrews, 7th chapter, we are told that that priesthood is abolished. These terms are also applied a number of times to the kingdom of Christ, and yet in 1 Cor. xv: 24, we are told that this kingdom shall come to an end. ‘Then cometh the end, when he (Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father: when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.’

12. Although these terms are applied to the punishment of persons twelve times in the Bible, yet in not one single instance are they applied to punishment after death, or in a future state of existence. We have examined every passage, particularly

and carefully; and have not been able to find, even one, which has any reference to a future world. Now this is an important fact. How can it be supposed now, that the Scripture writers believed in a future state of unending punishment, and understood these terms as expressive of endless duration, and yet should not in a single instance, apply these terms to that punishment? This is an absurdity so glaring, that it must not be overlooked.—The Bible abounds with exhortations to, and warnings, and threats, and denunciations against the wicked, yet no where between its lids do we find the terms *olim*, *aión*, and *aiónios* applied to any punishment whatever in another world. This fact upon the minds of the candid, will have, and upon the minds of all, ought to have great weight.

13. It is also a fact that a great majority of the Scripture writers have not applied these terms to punishment, i. e., the punishment of persons at all. And of those who have they have done so only in a very few instances. Job, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Malachi, are the only Old Testament writers who apply these terms to punishment; and they, each only once. Jesus Christ applied the terms in question to punishment only twice; Paul, twice; Peter, once; Jude, once; and supposing John to have been the author of the Book of Revelations, he, once. Now, can it be believed that Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Solomon, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Naham, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Zechariah, could have believed in the doctrine of future endless punishment; and that these terms were expressive of endless duration; and yet, that in all their denunciations against the wicked, they should never apply these terms to punishment of any kind, either in this world or another? The man who can believe this, must have a mind not regulated by evidence in making up his opinions. Such an one, is prepared to believe almost anything.

We will now notice some objections.—It is said that ‘these terms must express endless duration, because they are applied to God.’ If the objector means by this, that because a term expressive of duration is applied to God, therefore it expresses endless duration in all cases, we have shown this to be contrary to fact. For we have seen that the terms in question, are applied to God, and yet are applied to things which have had, and to things which are to have, an end. If he means by it, that because a term expressive of duration is applied to God, therefore, that term is of itself expressive of endless duration, this also, is contrary to fact. For we have shown that the term *olim* is applied to God, and yet that eternity is not the radical meaning of the word; and that if it expresses endless duration when applied to