

**EXEGETICAL ESSAYS ON  
SEVERAL  
WORDS RELATING TO  
FUTURE PUNISHMENT**

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Exegetical Essays on Several Words Relating to Future Punishment by Moses Stuart

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## PREFACE.

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As no subject can be presented to the human mind so deeply interesting as the inquiry, whether we shall be happy or miserable in a future world through endless ages; so no apology is needed, for choosing such a topic of discussion in the following pages. Very many embrace the opinion, that the present is not our only state of probation; and of course, that if our lot be that of punishment in a future world, yet our condition even then is not to be regarded as hopeless. Has this any foundation in the Word of God, or does it proceed rather from our *wishes* than from reason and evidence?

The following pages do not profess to treat of these questions at large. It would require a volume of much greater size than the present, to do even tolerable justice to the whole subject. My design, however, is to discuss, almost entirely in a philological way, some of the most interesting topics relative to future punishment. This I have endeavoured to do, unembarrassed by any particular opinions or systems. My conscience bears me testimony, that I have endeavoured to come at my subject, in the way of an original and disinterested inquirer. If I have not always succeeded in doing this, I must beg the reader to attribute it to human infirmity, and not to design.

That I have not referred, in the general course of discussion, to those who differ from me in opinion, (one instance only excepted), they must not put to the score of neglect; for neither have I referred to those with whom I agree. My wish is, not to appear in a polemic attitude, on the one hand; nor in that of one who appeals for support to mere human authority, on the other. I hope this will not be considered as betraying any neglect of my opponents, or overlooking of those with whom I agree. Simple, philological disquisition, conducted by approved rules of interpretation, and unembarrassed by friend or foe to my own views, is what I have aimed at. How far I have succeeded, must be left, of course, to the judgement of my readers.

One thing I do earnestly desire to say to the reader with affection and deep concern; 'Look well to it how thou examinest and judgest; it is for thy life!' If it were a matter of taste, or of common lexicographical or grammatical dispute, it would be of little consequence to give such an admonition; for the consequences could not be very important. But it is not so here; for the *interests of eternity* may be connected with the decision which the reader will make. As a philologist, I am unable to doubt the certainty of the conclusions to which the examination that is detailed in the following sheets has led me. Deeply impressed with this myself, it is natural that I should wish to impress others in like manner. If they do not agree with me, after examining the subject, they will not, I trust, take umbrage at the manner in which it has been brought before them.

In regard to the writer in the *Christian Examiner*, whose sentiments are briefly reviewed in p. 72 *seq.*, my only apology for departing from the general rule which I have observed, and making opposition to him, is the earnest solicitation of some respected friends that I should take this course. I would rather have avoided it; but since I have done it, and the writer has replied in the *Christian Examiner* for Sept. 1830, I feel it to be my duty still farther to notice his reply; which I have done in a brief Appendix at the end of this little volume.

As my object is discussion on original and fundamental grounds, which have respect to the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, so it must follow, that my book can be read intelligibly throughout, only by such as have some knowledge of these languages. Yet I have endeavoured so to write, that intelligent readers, unacquainted with Hebrew and Greek, may get at the scope of my arguments; and I would fain hope that in this I have succeeded.

I only add, that the time seems to have come, when appeal to the original Scriptures appears to be the only effectual method of satisfying the public mind, in regard to any controverted religious subject. That there is a portion of the public who will not be satisfied even with this, I deeply regret, but am constrained to believe. Yet since for the greater part profess to believe in the declarations of the Bible, to this I have made the appeal; and by this only I desire the doctrine in question, and my little treatise respecting it, to be tried.

M. STUART.

Andover, Oct. 1830.

## *AIΩN and AIΩNIOΣ.*

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### § 1. *Importance of the subject.*

To a being endowed with a spirit which can never cease to exist, and who can live at most but a few years in the present world, the question, What is to be his *future* condition? is the most important question that can possibly be agitated. Will his condition after death be unchangeable? Will his probation be at an end, when his present life shall cease? And if so, on what does the happiness or misery of his future state depend?

An instinctive desire of happiness and dread of misery, form an elementary part of the nature which man possesses. They are interwoven with the very being of his soul, and must be immortal as the spirit from which they spring. At the prospect of happiness, he is filled with delightful anticipations, which make existence a blessing, and cause the soul to exult in the possession of its powers and capacities; at the prospect of misery without relief and without end, an instinctive horror closes every avenue of pleasure, and the soul loathes its own existence, and would fain resign the possession of it.

This, however, it cannot do. He who made us *in his own image*, made us immortal like himself; immortal in regard to the powers and faculties, as well as the existence, of the soul; the immortal subjects, therefore, of



happiness or misery in the future state. We can no more cease to be the subjects of the one or the other, than we can cease to be what we are—rational, sentient beings, whose very constitution, whose essential nature, necessarily involves with its existence the experience of either happiness or misery.

However discrepant the views of men may be, in some respects, with regard to our condition in a future state, there will be—there can be—no important difference of opinion in regard to the point now under consideration; at least, there can be no important difference, among those who believe in the immortality of the soul. To all such, then, the questions, Whether we shall be happy or miserable in another world? and, Whether we shall be *unchangeably* so! are of such unspeakable moment, as to make all other questions appear to be of comparatively small importance.

How are these great questions to be answered? The immortal soul, that is not sunk in the grossest ignorance, or rendered insensible by the most debasing sensuality and love of the world, cannot but feel an interest—an all-pervading interest—in this inquiry. Good men exhibit their interest in it, by long-continued and solicitous inquiries into their spiritual condition and prospects; and even the wicked, in most cases, exhibit their interest also in the question, by their constant efforts, in one way and another, to bring themselves into a condition of quiet with regard to it.

All sober and rational men will surely be disposed to ask, From what quarter can these all-important inquiries have light thrown upon them? What cheering sun is there, which will shed his radiance over the darkness that rests upon them, and disclose the object of them to us by the full light of day?

And is not the answer to these last inquiries comparatively easy? *The light of nature* can never scatter the darkness in question. This light has never yet sufficed to make even the question clear, to any portion of our beighted race, Whether the soul of man is immortal? Cicero, incomparably the most able defender of the soul's immortality of which the heathen world can yet boast, very ingenuously confesses, that after all the arguments which he had adduced in order to confirm the doctrine in question, it so fell out, that his mind was satisfied of it, only when directly employed in contemplating the arguments adduced in its favor. At all other times, he fell unconsciously into a state of doubt and darkness.

It is notorious, also, that Socrates, the next most able advocate among the heathen for the same doctrine, has adduced arguments to establish the never-ceasing existence of the soul, which will not bear the test of examination. Such is the argument by which he endeavors to prove, that we shall always continue to exist because we always have existed; and this last proposition he labors to establish, on the ground that all our present acquisitions of knowledge are only so many *reminiscences* of what we formerly knew, in a state of existence *antecedent* to our present one. Unhappy lot of philosophy, to be doomed thus to prop itself up, with supports so weak and fragile as this! How can the soul be filled with consolation, in prospect of death, without some better and more cheering light than can spring from such a source? How can it quench its thirst for immortality, by drinking in such impure and turbid streams as these? Poor wandering heathen! How true it is—and what a glorious, blessed truth it is—that “life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel!” It is equally true, that they are brought to light *only* there.

Thus much then, is certainly plain. If the heathen did not, and (all their circumstances and passions considered) could not, sufficiently answer the inquiry which respects the immortal existence of the soul; much less could they *satisfactorily* answer the question, Whether our future state is to be happy or miserable? And if either, On what conditions is our happiness or misery suspended? These awfully momentous questions, they never did answer. 'The world by wisdom knew not God.' Nor did they know that he had made man in his own image; much less that man had been redeemed by the death of God's own beloved Son. They did not know any thing definite, respecting either the happiness which the gospel proffers to the penitent and obedient, or the miseries which are threatened to the impenitent and disobedient, in the world to come.

Nor has all the light which has been cast upon the subject of the soul's immortality, since the gospel was first published, enabled men, independently of the gospel itself, to demonstrate this truth; certainly not to shew, with any good degree of satisfaction, what the future state of the soul will be.

If there be any satisfactory light, then, on the momentous question of a future state, it must be sought from the word of God. After all the toil and pains of casuists and philosophers, it remains true, that the gospel, and the gospel only, has 'brought life and immortality to light' in a satisfactory manner.

Most men among us either expressly acknowledge this, or else implicitly concede it. The latter even those do, who make strenuous efforts to shew that the Scriptures can be construed in such a way, as to render the doctrine of the ultimate, universal happiness of mankind at least

