

that usually alleged could not be effected by a single rescript addressed to a few Italian bishops, and dealing with a case of merely local interest. The sins recited from the *libellum* were apparently those which, whether trivial or heinous, were known to the offender and the priest alone. That Leo is not prohibiting the public acknowledgment of open and notorious sins, seems evident from the fact that public penance for this class of offences still continued in both the East and West, although more and more difficulty was experienced in enforcing it.

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NOTE ON THE MEANING OF THE WORD
ΑΙΩΝΙΟΣ.

SOME time ago some papers appeared in the EXPOSITOR, from the pen of Dr. Agar Beet, "On the Future Punishment of Sin." He carefully examined the meaning of the word *αἰώνιος*; and I believe I am right in saying that the only passage adduced by him in which the word apparently meant "endless" was Plato, *Laws*, 904A. But does not the word here mean rather "perpetual" or "abiding"? Does not Plato say that the "animal soul" and the "body" are indestructible, but not perpetual or abiding (*αἰώνιον*)? They are always undergoing a process of dissolution and reconstruction. They have, as we should say, no "individuality." On the other hand, they are indestructible, because, if either of the two were destroyed, living creatures could no longer be generated. They are described as τὸ γενομένον, whereas the rational soul belongs to a different category of things. It is not transmitted in generation, but is drawn from the great "treasury of souls" by the Author of all things.

Similarly in Aristotle *αἰδῖος* is used as the contradictory

of τὰ γένητα and τὰ φθάρτα. With him, as with Plato, αἰδιος and αἰώνιος are practically interchangeable, as also they are in much later Greek, as, e.g., the *Apostolical Constitutions* (circ. 340–380 A.D.), in which αἰώνιος κόλασις and αἰδιος κόλασις are convertible terms.

To Plato and Aristotle both these words signified the “abiding” realities of the ideal or noumenal world, as opposed to the unceasing flux or change of things phenomenal. Indeed, I doubt whether, either in Plato’s age or in the time of Christ, or even in the fourth century A.D., the idea of “eternity” in the sense of “endlessness” can be said to have existed.

On the other hand, it is well known that in the LXX. αἰώνιος varies in its meaning, as Dr. Beet showed, according to the range of time in the writer’s mind. But are we at liberty to say the same of the New Testament? Doubtless the classical use had modified the meaning of the word in Hellenistic Greek. But do not the use of the LXX. and that of classical Greek meet in the one idea common to both, viz., “lasting” or “abiding” as opposed to “fleeting” or “changing”? That, however, the word was still used of a limited range of time, appears from the following passage, which occurs in the *Apostolical Constitutions*, a work of the fourth century. In v. 19. 4 the author, referring to the institution of the Eucharist and the observance of Easter, makes the apostles say, “καὶ τοῦτο ὑμῖν ἔστω νόμιμον αἰώνιον ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.” Here αἰώνιον is used simply in the sense “perpetual,” and a definite limit is put to the time denoted, viz., the end of the world. A remarkable parallel occurs in the English Prayer-Book, in what is known as the “Consecration Prayer,” in the words, “a *perpetual* memory of that His precious death.”

Abiding or continuous pain seems to be the idea contained in the awful words, “Where their worm dieth not,

and the fire is not quenched," which are, of course, a quotation from Isaiah lxvi. 24. Pain which, so long as it lasts, has no pauses or reliefs may be called "abiding," or "perpetual," or pain may be so called simply from its perpetual gnawing. But these words of Isaiah, which Christ adopted, by no means necessarily imply endless pain.

A friend drew my attention to the use of *αἰδιος* in Josephus and iv. Maccabees. He thinks that the word is clearly there used in the sense of "endless." In the *Jewish Wars*, ii. 8. 14, and *Antiquities*, xviii. 1. 3, Josephus, in describing the beliefs of the Pharisees, says that the souls of the wicked are punished *αἰδίῳ τιμωρίᾳ*, or suffer *εἴργμον αἰδίου*. But does not this simply mean that the wicked suffer an "abiding" penalty, or "the penalty of perpetual imprisonment"? Nothing is said of endless imprisonment. In this present "æon" perpetual imprisonment has a limit, viz., death. And there may be similar deliverance for the "souls in prison" in the "æon" which is to come.

In iv. Maccabees my friend quoted such expressions as "*αἰώνιον βάσανον διὰ πυρός*" (ix. 9), and "*ἀκαταλύτους καρτερήσεις βασάνους*." But does not this last mean "torments which one cannot break loose from"?

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