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**UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR JULY 1998  
BEING THE FOURTH NUMBER OF VOLUME EIGHTY-NINE**

**EDITORIAL**

THERE is a measure of irony in Paul's comments to Timothy concerning those who wanted to be teachers of the law (*cf* 1 Tim.1:3-11). In teaching differently from Paul by bringing in the law, they did not know what they were getting themselves into. Those who insist on adding the precepts of the law to the evangel must recognize that they are putting themselves under the authority of the law. If they fail in keeping one of its instructions, they fail in all.

But to teach differently from the evangel is to oppose the sound teaching God entrusted to Paul, and this is against the law. The law clearly states that nothing is to be added or taken away from what God has said (Deut.4:2). To add the law to the evangel is just as much disobedience to the law as (using some of Paul's examples here) to malign or murder or lie! Teachers of the law need to recognize that it is against the law to take away from or add to the evangel of the glory of the happy God, because this evangel is God's word to us.

But, thankfully, we are not under the law. We are under grace (Rom.6:14). It is grace, not the law, that encourages and directs us not to add to or subtract from the evangel, though it is a struggle (*cf* Col.2:1; 1 Thess.2:2) in the face of current philosophy, empty seduction and human tradition (Col.2:8).

Those who oppose the evangel by teaching the law are also under grace, and, by their sin of adding to God's word, they cannot lose what Christ has gained for them. But they certainly lose a great deal of present joy, as well as reward at the dais. And their errors are harmful to fellow believers, especially to those who are not well grounded in the faith.

There are many other teachings, supposedly based on scripture, which oppose the evangel of the happy God. Revelations concerning God's indignation and judgments (added to certain mistranslations), and especially passages from the Lord's ministry to Israel, are often used to support the idea of eternal punishment, despite the fact that Christ came to save sinners (see the articles starting on pages 147, 170 and 185). But do those who teach this terrible doctrine apprehend what they are insisting? In being "stubborn to the truth" of Romans 5:12-19, Colossians 1:16-20 and 1 Timothy 4:9-11, for instance, they stand on shaky ground if their view of God's indignation is correct (Rom.2:8,9).

We have all heard teachers use Job 38:2 as a basis for dismissing Job's faithful confidence in God's deity (e.g., 1:20; 2:10). They have taken the position of Job's associates (despite Yahweh's reproof in 42:7), claiming that Job's sufferings represented God's just judgment against his sins stemming from his wrong choices. This is just the opposite of what we have been finding in the book of Job (see p.162), and it is wholly opposed to the evangel of gratuitous grace (*cf* Rom.3:23,24) and divine glory (*cf* Rom.11:32-36).

On the other hand, teachers will invariably commend David and criticize Saul for their responses to the challenge of Goliath (see p.181). But the view of the evangel, voiced by many, as a message calling for human cooperation with God in the achievement of salvation is not the way of faith. It is purely the way of Saul, founded on confidence in the flesh.

Here again such teachers do not apprehend what they are saying. If they are right, then Job's consummation and David's future, and *theirs* as well, is bleak and hopeless. No wonder Paul kept fighting for the evangel of the glory of the happy God!

D.H.H.

## THE JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

NATIONS have a destiny as well as individuals. Israel is an eonian nation (2 Sam.7:24). Other nations will endure eonian chastening, or receive eonian life, according to their treatment of our Lord's brethren (Matt.25:46). We miss much if we confound nations with individuals, and confuse the time of their judgment and reward with that of the persons who compose them. The fact that Israel *as a nation* is to live and rule until the consummation does not by any means imply that every individual in it possesses eonian life, and will share in the kingdom when it comes. Far from it. Only those who died in *faith* will receive their allotment in the kingdom at the resurrection of the just.

There are many parables in the Scriptures which deal with the individuals, such as the harvest, the darnel, the fishing, etc. But these are not specifically referred to *nations* as we have in Matthew 25:31-46. Individuals in Israel will also be judged at the commencement of the kingdom.

The mere fact that this parable occurs in *Matthew* should settle the matter, for this account is devoted especially to the King, and contains the kingdom charter (Matt.5-7). Here Christ quotes Isaiah (42:1-3) to the effect that *judging* shall He be reporting to the *nations* (Matt.12:18). In this Matthew differs from the other accounts, for in them our Lord appears in different characters. The Servant of Mark, the Man of Luke, and the divine Son of John dealt with individuals, as a rule.

Matthew is the *kingdom* account. It is intensely *national*. In it Christ forbade His apostles even to go on a road of

the *nations* (10:5). The testimony is not merely to men, but to *governors* and *kings* and the *nations* (10:18). At the time of the end *nation* shall rise against *nation* (24:7), and they will be hated by *all* of the *nations*. The evangel of the *kingdom* shall be heralded in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the *nations* (24:14). Therefore there is also a judgment at the inauguration of the kingdom, not of individuals, but of *nations*, as such, under the figure of sheep and kids. It is further illustrated by personifying the nations, comparing them to individuals. This has generally been taken literally, and so has led to much confusion, and to the idea that this is the “general judgment,” in which those who do well receive eternal life, and others everlasting punishment (Matt.25:31-46).

#### THE PARABLE OF THE SHEEP AND KIDS

The account as a whole is a *parable*, in which a shepherd's dealings with his sheep and kids are compared with the King's dealings with the nations. Each sheep or kid represents one nation, the former those favorable to Israel and the latter those who did not treat them well. Within the parable are several other figures. First, the *severing* is *as* that of a shepherd, a plain *simile* (25:32). Then, by the figure of *personification*, or *impersonation*, the animals, or the nations, are transformed into human beings. Each one of the sheep at His right hand is given a *kingdom* allotment made ready for them from the disruption. All this is only a graphic illustration of our Lord's dealings with the *nations*, not the individuals.

At the present time God is dealing with the nations *as a whole* (as well as with individuals in them) in contrast to Israel. This also is explained to us by means of a figure, the olive tree, hence has often been misunderstood. We are so selfishly preoccupied with our own personal salvation and destiny that we fail to see God's wider sphere of

operations, which are national in their scope. God deals with Israel as a nation as well as with the saints and sinners in it. He has functions for the other nations, either singly or as a whole, besides calling His own out of them. At the present time the *nations* are enriched through the discomfiture of Israel, quite apart from the few believers in them (Rom.11:12). The whole world is conciliated, not only those who receive this conciliation and are reconciled. The nations, in the olive tree, God's means of world illumination, will be hewn out without affecting the destiny of a single believer in them (Rom.11:16-24).

When the stone from heaven falls from on high upon the great image (Dan.2:45) it smashes all the great political organizations set up by man. On a smaller scale this has often happened to the nations of the earth. In fact it is happening oftener than ever in our own days. Yet practically always, especially when the people are distinct, with their own language and customs and history, the nation arises afresh, even after long periods of non-existence. The Polish nation is a well-known example. It goes far back in history, and has varied much in power and size, from a first-class domination to extinction. When Israel is restored from being no nation in the political sense to the leading world state, then the other nations must be given entirely new forms and proper places in the new alignment. The prophets deal with the place of the nations in that day, but enough is said at the end of the Unveiling to give us an outline. Satan is bound so that he cannot deceive the nations (Rev.20:3). They shall all come and worship Yahweh (Rev.15:4). Later, on the new earth, the nations shall walk in the light of the New Jerusalem and carry their honor and glory into it, and shall partake of the healing of the tree of life (Rev.21:24-26; 22:1-2).

If God deals with the nations, as such, at the present time, when no special nation is singled out to execute His

purpose in the earth, how much more should we expect Him to deal with nations, as such, when the chosen nation takes its place as Christ's complement in ruling the earth? At the commencement of the kingdom there must be a readjustment among the political powers of the earth to conform to the new regime. The King of Israel is also the Son of Mankind. He has all the rights and dignities which inhere in Adam as the head of the race. He is the Suzerain of all the kings of earth, and the Arbiter of the destiny of nations. He will assign to each nation its proper and preordained place in the kingdom.

Under *these* conditions we can readily understand and fully acquiesce in the principles of this judgment. Israel, as a nation, has been variously treated by the different nations of the earth during her long dispersion among them. They have suffered literal hunger and thirst and strangerhood and nakedness and imprisonment, as well as all that these suggest. By governmental action they have been deprived of the means of livelihood, denied the right to own land or become citizens, and have been exposed to the mercies of the populace without legal protection, and have been herded together in ghettos and otherwise robbed of their liberty. On the other hand, they have been so well treated in some lands that they have felt at home and have adapted the language of their hosts to their own use, and attained to wealth and influence far beyond the average.

The nations in the kingdom, during the millennium and in the new earth, will be allotted a place corresponding to their previous political treatment of Israel. Some will receive special blessing because they were kind to them. Others will be most severely disciplined because they had made no efforts to alleviate their lot. "These shall be coming away into chastening eonian, yet the just into life eonian." Such is the only possible import of these much-abused words, when they are kept connected with their context,

and viewed within the scope of the account which contains them. Matthew continues and completes the *kingdom* testimony of the prophets, and is in perfect agreement with it. As Son of Mankind our Lord will adjudicate among the nations. All wrong must be recompensed. It will not be revenge, such as the unregenerate Jew would like to have, but righteous adjudication, leading to the subjection of all to God at the consummation.

#### THE PROPHETS

Ezekiel is given the same title, "Son of Mankind," when he is told to announce God's judgment on the sons of Ammon: "Thus says my Lord Yahweh: Because you clap your hand, and you stamp your foot, and you are rejoicing with all your disdain from the soul over the ground of Israel, therefore, behold Me! I will stretch out My hand against you and give you as plunder to the nations, and I will cut you off from the peoples and destroy you from the countries; I shall exterminate you. Then you will know that I am Yahweh" (Ezek.25:6,7). So did God deal with the nations while Israel was still before Him. But now He is conciliated, and Israel is not avenged. All waits the day of their restoration. But then the accounts of the nations with Israel must be settled.

The prophet Amos records a series of retributive judgments on the nations round about because they harmed his people Israel. We will quote a few keywords of each, to show their drift. ". . . Because they threshed the pregnant women of Gilead with iron spikes. I will send fire upon the house of Hazael" (Amos 1:3-4). ". . . Because they carried away into exile a total deportation, to surrender it to Edom. I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza" (1:6-7). Tyre remembered not the covenant of brothers, so fire devours her citadel (1:9-10). Edom pursued his brother with the sword, so a fire is sent into Teman. Ammon does evil in

Gilead in order to widen their boundary, so a fire ravages the wall of Rabbah (1:11-14). Vengeance is Yahweh's, and He watched over His people and judged their enemies.

Obadiah actually gives us an example of the judgment recorded in Matthew. Speaking of Edom, he says: "Because of wrong done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off for the eon" (1:10). The basis of the judgment is found in these words (Obad.1:15,18):

For near is the day of Yahweh over all the nations.  
Just as you do, it shall be done to you.  
Your dealing shall return on your own head.

And the house of Jacob will become a fire,  
And the house of Joseph a blaze,  
And the house of Esau will be straw;  
They will flare up among them and devour them.  
And there shall not be a survivor for the house of Esau,  
For Yahweh speaks.

#### FIRE EONIAN

The incongruity of putting those who fail to succor the Lord's brethren into a fire not prepared for them (Matt. 25:41) has doubtless caused many a questioning thought. This is further intensified when we find that the Slanderer, or Adversary, for whom it seems to have been prepared, is not cast into it at all at that time, but into the abyss (Rev. 20:3). There is no record that his messengers are ever cast into the lake of fire. Is the failure to help a Jew quite as culpable as the career of the arch enemy of God and man? Does it deserve the same punishment? To punish an individual who is guilty of neglecting the Lord's brethren in the same way as the Adversary himself will raise doubts in every heart that knows God's justice. The words "the adversary" may just as well refer to a class of persons as well as to Satan. All who have been adversaries of Israel belong

to this class.<sup>1</sup> And the nations who have been used by God to afflict them may well be represented under this name, for many of their trials came as the result of false accusations, such as the use of Christian blood in their ritual.

Israel was afflicted in Egypt nearly half a millennium (Gen.15:13,17). This is figured beforehand to Abraham by a smoking stove, and afterward, to Moses, by a burning thorn bush. These figures are worthy of our closest attention. Let us believe the Bible literally, as it stands, whenever this conforms to the facts. But when this is not the case, let us look at it with the eyes of an oriental, and seek the facts behind the figure. No one can take these pictures of Israel's oppression in Egypt as facts. They were not in a literal stove. They did not literally burn. The fire was a figure of affliction, and a most vivid and impressive one. Nevertheless, not only were they *not consumed*, but they *increased* greatly while undergoing it.

Not only nationally, but generally, the inauguration of the day of Yahweh is compared with fire. Malachi (4:1-3) foretells the fate of the wicked at the time under this figure. "For behold, the day is coming, consuming like a stove, and all the arrogant and all doing wickedness become stubble. And the coming day will set them aflame, says Yahweh of hosts, which shall not leave to them root or bough. Yet the Sun of Righteousness will radiate for you who fear My Name, and healing will be in Its wings. And you will come forth and frolic like calves of the stall. And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall become ashes under the soles of your feet in the day which I am making, says Yahweh of hosts." Is it not evident that, in the same era in

1. *Editor's note:* Although the present CV uses "Adversary" with a capital "A" in Matthew 25:41, A. E. Knoch's suggestion that the passage refers to the "adversary [class of nations]" and its messengers has much merit and should be considered in future editions of the Version.

which the *nations* are judged according to their treatment of our Lord's brethren, other evils will be cleared out of the kingdom? All wicked persons, whatever their nationality, will also find affliction, which is figured by fire.

The figure of fire is used freely of our Lord's ministry in Matthew's account. John the Baptist not only warned them that the ax was already lying at the root of the trees, and those which did not produce fine fruit would be hewn down and cast into the fire, but he characterized our Lord's ministry as two kinds of baptism, one in holy spirit and one in fire. He would winnow out the grain in the nation, yet He would also burn up the chaff with fire unextinguished (Matt.3:10-12). So that, even in Israel itself, the kingdom judgments are figured by fire. Our Lord repeats the Baptist's warning with special reference to false prophets (Matt.7:15-20).

This is still more clearly connected with the conclusion of the eon in the parable of the darnel. Even as they culled out the darnel at harvest time, so shall the Son of Mankind cull out of His kingdom all the snares and those doing lawlessness, and they shall be casting them into a furnace of fire (Matt.13:40-42). Should we apply this figure literally, these offenders would be actually burned in a furnace. Then the millennial kingdom would consist only of good, and there would be no need of an iron scepter. Since the darnel is a figure, so must the furnace and the fire be figurative. To carry the figure still further, as in the prophets, the wicked will be as ashes under the feet of those who fear Yahweh (Mal.4:3).

What is indicated by the eonian fire for the nations who do not succor the Lord's brethren in their distress may be apprehended best by considering the sufferings of the chosen nation themselves at the present time, before our very eyes, for this also is characterized as *torment in a flame*.

Antisemitism is called a "flame" in the Scriptures. Is

it not most appropriate to characterize its judgment as "fire"? *In this flame* the chosen nation suffers as it once did in Egypt. But *it is not burned up*. Notwithstanding its painful lot, its numbers have *increased*. And such is quite possible in the kingdom, for at its end Satan mobilizes a tremendous host that threatens to destroy the capital. This revolt could easily be accounted for if these nations, at a distance from Jerusalem, had been reduced to political slavery, and forced to submit by the iron rule. Otherwise why should they object to the fullness of physical blessing with which the earth will be filled at that time? Satan wishes to *rule*. His aim is political. He deceives the *nations*. It is a national uprising.

The unbeliever is usually allowed to monopolize the fire of the future. For them we reserve the flaming judgments of Yahweh's day, the unextinguished fires of Hinnom's vale, and the fiery lake which is the second death. But the believer also has his testing time, not indeed to determine his fate but his reward (*cf* 1 Cor.3:15). No one, perhaps, thinks of literal fire in this connection, for our works are not, as a rule, such as can be tested by actual flames. Yet the figure of fire is there, and we may as well prepare ourselves for a most searching investigation of the character of our deeds. Much of our service, we fear, will feed the flames and disappear.

#### GOSPEL PREACHING

An equally impossible pass is reached if we take the judgment of the nations as that of individuals. How many who have quoted the last verse of the chapter in preaching the gospel have made it clear to themselves or to their audience that "these" who "go away into everlasting punishment" (AV), do so, *not* because they are *sinner*s, but *because they did not succor Christ's brethren according to the flesh*? And how many set forth the only road to

eonian life as the context demands? There is no repentance here, no faith in God, not even good *works*, except those done to suffering Israel. We may be sure that Paul would not tolerate such an evangel for this administration for a moment. Now it is *not* of works, but in *grace* through *faith* in God’s word concerning Christ and His *sacrifice*. Physical relationship, which is paramount here, is entirely ruled out (2 Cor.5:16).

It is very little relief to shift this strange evangel (which is no evangel at all) to the time of the end, immediately before the Son of Man comes. No doubt this will be the crucial period, but there is no limitation in the passage. It would be most unjust to punish a nation for their attitude in this short period *alone* if their previous history had been favorable.

Indeed, at that time, *all* nations will hate those of them who are disciples of Christ (Matt.24:9). The time is not limited, and justice demands that the whole history of a nation be taken into account, just as in individual judgment, all the acts of each come under review, not only those in the hours of death.

What sort of an evangel have we here, that promises eonian life to the individuals who succor the Lord’s brethren, and eonian chastening to those who do not! It is a message of works, pure and simple, done accidentally, as it were, by those who realize nothing of the gravity or significance of their acts. Now we know that Israel is scattered among *all nations*, so all governments will make contact with them. But will all individuals even find an opportunity to show their benevolence? Perhaps one in a thousand of earth’s inhabitants belongs to this favored race. They live in large groups. How little opportunity there would be for most people to avail themselves of the means of obtaining eonian life, even if it seems so simple to perform the necessary duties!

## IMPLICATIONS

But that which should make us hesitate is the fact that these works are done without faith in God, and in utter ignorance of His Christ, and without the aid of His sacrifice, without the least reference to His precious blood. Life apart from the death of Christ, and for the eons, sounds suspicious to everyone who knows the value of His work. We read that, apart from faith, it is impossible to be well pleasing to God (Heb.11:6). Even these brethren of His, who are succored, have no title to eonian life unless they believe. Yet, according to this passage if applied to individuals, one who feeds a Jew, whether he is a believer or not, thereby earns eonian life!

None of Israel will get into the kingdom on any such terms. Peter makes this very clear. Jesus Christ is the only one Who can save them. “There is no salvation in any other one, for neither is there any other name, given under heaven among men, in which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Many a Gentile today has fulfilled the conditions here laid down, but I am sure that he will not receive eonian life as his wages, for now God’s righteousness comes to him who is *not* working but believing (Rom.4:4). Nationally, this message of succoring Israel no doubt has its place today, but individually it is impossible.

We implore all who use the threat of “everlasting punishment,” and the promise of “eternal life” here given, to carefully consider the conditions which are set forth in each case, and fearlessly face the facts. If this is individual, it is eonian life awarded for a few good deeds, or eonian chastening for negligence within a very confined sphere of life, quite apart from God’s grace based on Christ’s blood, or faith of any kind, or the commission of any positive sin. Then the whole life is overlooked, and will not come into judgment at the great white throne, as this is only for the dead. I feel sure that, the more we inquire into the actual

words here given, the more we will be convinced that a personal application is not only contrary to the words themselves, but to all the rest of revelation.

Contrariwise, the more we investigate the details of this passage, the more we will be convinced of its national application, not only because of the express word to that effect, but because it will harmonize with the words of the prophets, and agree with all other passages on the same theme.

Perhaps no other passage has been so freely used to prove the endlessness of punishment. And now we see that it is an excellent passage to prove the opposite! The life of nations cannot be endless. The nullification or abrogation of every sovereignty and every authority and power at the consummation (1 Cor.15:24) makes nations obsolete. What kind of a nation is it which has no government? The time is coming when the Son, having subjected all, will Himself be subject, and God the Father be the only Suzerain, and His family the only government. The eonian life of nations has its limits, and so, of course, has eonian chastening. Because the life is *limited*, the “everlasting punishment” will end.

#### ADVANCES IN UNDERSTANDING

One of the greatest advances in truth in modern times was the placing of this passage in its proper time, at the beginning of the reign of Christ, and limiting its scope to the living, thus rescuing it from the “general judgment,” with which it is so often confounded. Now we propose another advance, limiting it still further to the *nations* (as such) at that time, according to its own declaration. We have already insisted on this at various times but further study has clarified the details and led to the entire rejection of the thought that it might be applicable to individuals at the time of the end.

This leads to the interesting conclusion that *nations* may

have eonian life, or may be subjected to eonian chastening. That there will be nations in the thousand years and in the new earth is abundantly clear from the various references to them in the Unveiling. It is the essence of Christ’s reign that He shall have authority over the nations and that He shall share this with the overcomers in Israel (Rev.2:26, 12:5). Even in the last eon, when priesthood is no more, the glory and honor of the nations will be carried into the holy city, new Jerusalem (Rev.21:26). As they will not war among themselves and will be under the iron club of the great King, there is no reason why the nations which exist when the kingdom is set up should not continue throughout its course, and thus have eonian life or chastening until the consummation.

#### HEEDING THE CONTEXT

The judgment of the nations as set forth by our Lord in Matthew has long been recognized as such by some, especially in contrast to the judgment of the individual at the great white throne. But even here there have been details which were not satisfactory. Gradually the light has been increasing. The final flash which illuminated the whole to full satisfaction came through the study of figures of speech. The literal interpretation grew more and more untenable. Once it became apparent that the *nations* are intended, not only by the sheep and the kids, but also by those who take part in the judgment, and not individuals, all of the difficulties vanished except that of making it clear to others.

Those who have grown up with the thought that this passage is the general judgment and gives us the destiny of the two classes into which all mankind is divided—the wicked and the just—have evidently never taken the context to heart, for only a small fraction of them have ever visited anyone in jail, or base their hopes upon the giving of

food, drink or clothing. Most of my readers will know how utterly contrary this is to the true evangel of God's grace. We therefore urge them with all kindness to *consider the context*. See how impossible it is to base eonian life for individuals on the action here spoken of. It is in conflict with the kingdom evangel, which demands repentance. It militates against the evangel for today, which excludes works. It is diametrically opposed to God's dealings with His creatures to give eonian life to anyone apart from Christ and His sacrifice.

Those who have already recognized that this judgment is not concerned with sinners as a whole, or with the general conduct of mankind, but is based only on contacts with the Lord's brethren, will find that this gives only partial relief. Even if this is confined to the time of the end, for which there is no adequate evidence, there still remains the impossibility of setting the eonian destiny of anyone on such grounds.

There was a time when I limited the action here to the time of the end. Destiny in the kingdom for each *nation*, it seemed to me, depended upon their attitude to Israel *at that time*. But this has its difficulties. The *judgment* is at that time, indeed, but the action being judged is not thus limited. It seems better to include the whole "times of the Gentiles" or eras of the nations, for at the time of the end the nations are angered, without exception (Rev.11:18) and *all* of them are in the toils of Babylon (Rev.14:8), and *all nations* will hate the disciples of Christ (Matt.24:9). There would be few sheep to stand at His right hand in that case. It seems far more just to deal with the nations according to *all* of their contacts with Israel, for this has varied greatly from time to time.

Now, however, that I see in this judgment the complete squaring of accounts between the nations and Israel, introductory to the setting up of the kingdom, all seems

supremely satisfactory. This is just what we should expect at the end of Matthew's account. It agrees with all the facts, for the Lord's brethren have been scattered among all nations and have been *politically* in distress most of the time, even when they managed to gain a good livelihood or amass wealth. And when the Son of Mankind sits on the *throne* of His glory, with *nations* before Him, what else can it be but the long delayed adjudication between Israel and the nations? Each must be assigned its place according to some standard, and the one given here is in full accord with the righteousness on which the kingdom is founded.

We submit this interpretation to the earnest and prayerful consideration of the saints, well aware that it may not immediately commend itself to all at first glance. As God has been patient with our tardy advance in this matter, so we hope to bear with all who cannot quickly loose themselves from conceptions long held dear. It is startling, at first, and seems incredible, that those well worn phrases, "eternal life" and "everlasting punishment" should have been so universally misapplied to saint and sinner, when the context so clearly contradicts it. But how much added light is thrown upon the page of prophecy when we see that the *nations* will be judged according as they have treated God's nation, and they, not individuals, will receive eonian chastening and eonian life.

A. E. Knoch

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"THE OUTCOME OF INFINITE GRACE"

We have prepared a new edition of "The Outcome of Infinite Grace," by Loyal Hurley. This publication, written in a popular style, with Scripture quotations from the Authorized Version, serves as a helpful introduction to the great truth that God is the Saviour of all mankind. "In the end, God will be 'All in all,' 'for out of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things.'" Included as well are two writings by Joseph E. Kirk, "The Good News Gospel," and "The Eons of the Bible with Concordance" (72 pages, plus cover; \$3.50; \$1.50 shipping; CA residents add sales tax).

### IT IS YAHWEH'S

THE PLACE given to Satan in the book of Job is intensely interesting. The Hebrew word "satan" means "adversary" as rendered in the Concordant Version. He is the one who is adverse to God, who opposes that which would glorify God. However, if we carefully follow the revelations of this book it becomes obvious to us that this work of opposition is by no means a threat to either divine authority or responsibility.

The direct references to this personage in the first two chapters show us his subordinate position before Yahweh. He comes in the midst of "the sons of Elohim" on a certain day, presumably set by God. Yahweh Himself initiates the procedure by asking the Adversary to make a report of his activities (Job 1:7). It is Yahweh as well Who brings up the subject of Job's service and upright standing before Him. The power to afflict Job lies in Yahweh's hands alone; it would never have happened apart from His permission (1:11). He sets a certain limit on the Adversary (1:12), and though He reverses it later, it is reversed by His authority alone, as is the imposing of a new limitation in 2:6.

The only question that could remain is whether or not Satan manipulated Yahweh by the cunning way in which he sought this permission and its expansion. Few would want to claim that the Adversary gained the upper hand here. But if not, we must be ready to find what the book of Job says about God's overall purpose for His glory, against the background of Satan's adversity toward Him. Why did Yahweh agree to the Adversary's requests?

We must be prepared to face the possibility that God wanted this testing of Job, that He had His own purpose for Job's sorrows and pains, that this purpose was for Job's eventual good, and that it was ultimately for the glory of God. We must face this possibility boldly and honestly, so that we see that it is more than a possibility. It is a fact.

Throughout the long debate between Job and his associates, and in the speeches of Elihu, there is no direct reference to the Adversary. Job himself centers on Eloah as the cause of his sufferings, and the others seek to redirect the focus away from God and bring it squarely upon Job as a sinner. Satan is mostly ignored.

The most significant *indirect* reference to him occurs in 26:13 where Job says of God: "His hand travailed with the fugitive serpent." And this clearly brings praise to God as a passionate Creator and only disdain for the Adversary.

It is not until chapter 41 that attention is drawn again to Satan, and even here it is indirect. We see him only as he is pictured by a powerful and fearful animal called in Hebrew, *leviathan*, and in Greek, *dragon*. Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu mostly ignore the Adversary, but Yahweh concludes his words to Job with a lengthy discourse that, as a reference to the Adversary, puts this opposer in his proper place.

#### LEVIATHAN, DRAGON

The Hebrew word transliterated *leviathan* and rendered *dragon* in the Septuagint is associated with "fugitive serpent" and sea-monster in Isaiah 27:1, where all these terms speak of the Adversary: "In that day, Yahweh shall visit with His sword, hard, great and steadfast, upon the *dragon*, the fugitive serpent, even upon the *dragon*, the tortuous serpent, and He will kill the monster which is in the sea." This, in turn, points us to Revelation 12:3-13:4 and 20:1,2.

Here in Job 41 Yahweh refers to a crocodile-like creature with which Job must have been familiar. But it is not only its name that suggests there is an allusion to the Adversary in Yahweh's words. The character and characteristics of this creature parallel those of Satan.

The behemoth avoids contact with humanity, but as for the leviathan, the human is wise to avoid it. Yahweh questions Job about fishing for it (41:1,2). It is not simply that Job is not able<sup>1</sup> to capture the dragon, but that it would also be foolish to attempt it.

Something more than a common beast of the land and sea is indicated by Yahweh's words. It is an uncompromising creature that successfully refuses any submission with tender words in covenant with humanity (3,4). It will contribute nothing to human pleasure or profit (5,6). Job could not deal with it or have any hope of getting the better of it (7-9). Its cruelty debars approach and blocks any thought of bringing it under human control (10a).

In any confrontation between it and a human, the human is helpless. On the other hand, the dragon cannot station himself before Yahweh in confrontation for his gain (41:10b,11a). The Adversary did station himself in Yahweh's presence (1:6), but he only appeared to confront Him with a devious challenge. The consummation of Job's experiences will make it manifest that nothing occurred apart from God's purpose and intention.

*Whatever is under the heavens*, whether Job or Elihu or you or me, whether reptile or Adversary, *it is God's!* (Job 41:11b.)

This is that climax in the book of Job which leads to Job's exclamation of praise to God, "I know that You can

1. The word "can" is in lightface type, indicating that it is added for English idiom; it is agreeable with the context, but a lightface "do" or "would" might serve as well.

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*Concordant Version of Job*

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JOB 41:1-34

- 41** Can you **'draw** out the **dragon**<sup>◇</sup> **'with** a **fishhook**,  
**+Or 'hold down his tongue** **'with** a **line**?
- 2** Can you **'place** a **rush rope** in **his nose**,  
**+Or 'pierce his jawbone** **'with** a **gaff**?
- 3** Would **he** **'make** **'many supplications to you**,  
**#Or 'speak to you** with **tender** words?
- 4** Would **he** **'contract** a **covenant with you**  
 That **you may take him** **'as** a **servant** for the **eon**?
- 5** Can you **'sport** **'with him** as with a **bird**,  
**+Or 'tie him up for your maidens**?
- 6** Would **partners** **'bargain over him**  
 That **they may divide him** up **'among traffickers**?
- 7** Can you **'fill his skin** **'with barbs**  
**+Or his head** **'with** the **fishing spear**?
- 8** **Place your palm on him**;  
**Remember the battle**;  
**you would certainly not** **'do it** **'again!**
- 9** **Behold**, one's<sup>◇</sup> **hope is proved a lie**;  
**Even**<sup>◇</sup> **'at the sight of him** one is **'hurled** down.
- 10** Is<sup>◇</sup> he **not** too **cruel** that one **may rouse him**?  
**'Who** **'then** is **he** who can **'station himself before Me**?
- 11** **'Who** can **confront Me** and **'would** **'fare well**?  
 Whatever is **under the entire heavens**, it is **Mine**.
- 12** **I shall not** **'keep silence** about **his** **'constitution**  
**+Or the matter of his grand mastery**  
 that is **~without~ appraisal**.

41:1 **dragon**: or, *leviathan*, cf Jb 3:8; Is 27:1.

41:9 one's: lit., **his**.

41:9,10 **Even** . . . Is: Hb interrogative sign transposed from v.9b to v.10a.

41:11 **'--** would **'fare well**: Hb I would **repay**.

41:12 **---** without: Hb and grace of **his**.

do all things, and no plan of Yours can be thwarted . . . .  
With the hearing of the ear I had heard of You, but now  
my eye sees You” (Job 42:2,5).

All that is said here reflects on God. In speaking of leviathan Yahweh directs attention to Himself as the Creator of this fierce power of adversity, and to His responsibility for such a creature. The words concern the dragon, but Job comes to *see* Yahweh.

#### THE DRAGON’S CONSTITUTION

Yahweh, Who travailed in making the fugitive serpent, knows all about his constitution and the greatness of his mastery (41:12). God has made him in such a way that he is impervious to human control or even influence (13-17). One after another Yahweh lists features of this reptile that picture those of Satan. Its closed eyes (“doors of his face”) and its dreadful teeth (v.14) imply that we cannot know what he perceives or hope to approach him unscathed. But God, Who is over the Adversary both knows and controls him.

Like the coverings of the dragon’s body (15-17), the Adversary is strongly shielded from us. The metaphors of the irradiating light of dawn (18), torches and fire (19), smoke and steam (20), and flaming embers and blaze (21) express the dangers of intense pain that the leviathan, whether reptile or spirit being, represents. In neck and body flaps and heart the dragon is immovable (22-24).

As human subjectors shrink back before the reptile, so also invisible subjectors recede when the Adversary breaks forth (25). This occurred in his operations toward Job, where no power or authority interfered. But Job does not need to despair because *whatever* is under the heavens, it belongs to God. Job 41:11 continues to dominate and shape every thought of this chapter.

Yet Yahweh still presses His point, more and more directed concerning the Adversary, less and less concerning a

- 13 **“Who has rolled back his surface garment?**  
**“Who can ‘enter ‘through his double ~coat-of-armor~?”**
- 14 **“Who has opened the doors<sup>o</sup> of his face?**  
**All around his teeth is dread.**
- 15 His ~body~ is made of **channels of shields,**  
**Closed<sup>l</sup> by a constricting seal.**
- 16 **One ‘to the other, they are so ‘close**  
**+That the wind cannot ‘enter between them.**
- 17 **They are ‘clung together each ‘to its fellow;**  
**They ‘seize each other and cannot be ‘parted.**
- 18 **His sneezings ‘make the light ‘irradiate,**  
**And his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn.**
- 19 **Flaming torches ‘go out from his mouth;**  
**Darts of fire ‘escape forth.**
- 20 **Out from his snorting nostrils smoke goes ‘forth**  
**As from a steaming cauldron ‘or burning rushes.**
- 21 **His soul <sup>m</sup>sets embers ‘aflake,**  
**And a blaze goes ‘forth from his mouth.**
- 22 **In his neck ‘lodges strength,**  
**And shock ‘romps before him.**
- 23 **The flaps of his flesh cling together,**  
**Solidly<sup>l</sup> set upon him; it is ‘immovable.**
- 24 **His heart is solidly<sup>l</sup> set like stone,**  
**+Even solidly<sup>l</sup> set like the “lower grindstone.**
- 25 **‘At his lifting up, the subjectors ‘shrink back;**  
**‘At his breaking forth, they ‘recede.**
- 26 **Though the sword overtakes<sup>l</sup> him, it does not ‘avail,**  
**As also the spear, the dagger and the short arrow.**
- 27 **He ‘reckons iron ‘as crushed straw,**  
**Bronze ‘as rotten wood.**
- 28 **The son of the bow<sup>o</sup> cannot ‘make him run ‘away;**  
**Sling stones are turned to stubble for him.**

41:13 --- coat-of-armor: Hb *bridle*.

41:14 doors: dual in Hb.

41:15 --- body: Hb *pride*.

41:28 son of the bow: i.e., the arrow.

reptilian beast. No human weapon can faze him (26-29). His own weapons explode with destruction (30-32).

“There is no one on the soil comparable to him who was made to be without dismay. He stares down on every haughty creature; he is king over every strutting beast” (Job 41:33,34). Such is the dragon. And with this, Yahweh concludes His speech.

#### WHO IS OVER WHOM?

What shall we say of this conclusion? Yahweh has not been delivering a lesson in zoology, or before that in physics and astronomy. He has been speaking of His wisdom and power, not simply as objective facts but as subjective realities that are involved in Job’s world and experience, and so reflected in every human life.

What Yahweh has been saying has critical application to Job’s sufferings and sorrows. God knows all things. God has made all things. The dragon may be greater than all creatures on the soil, but whatever is under the heavens, it is Yahweh’s. To say that the dragon is incomparable to any other creature, operating without dismay, intimidating the haughty, and exercising authority over every strutting beast is dreadful praise, if that is all Yahweh has been declaring. But to conclude with this blunt description of entrenched power and authority *under the light of God’s own wisdom and power* is masterful. By directing attention to the most daunting and dangerous of creatures, and showing that it belongs to Him and is under Him, Yahweh gives Job assurance and endurance in his woes.

The dragon is great, even as Job’s afflictions are great. But the greatness of these evil things is as nothing compared to the greatness of the Supreme Subjector, Who owns all things and can do all things and Whose plans cannot be thwarted.

D.H.H.

- <sup>29</sup> The **bludgeon** ~is reckoned **’by him~ as stubble,**  
**And he ’ridicules** › the **whizzing of the dart.**  
<sup>30</sup> **His underparts** are **sharp** pieces of **shard;**  
**He ’strews spike** marks **on the mud.**  
<sup>31</sup> **He** ◌makes the **shadowy** deep **’boil like a pot;**  
**He** <sup>pl</sup>◌makes the **sea** appear **like** foaming **ointment.**  
<sup>32</sup> ◌**Behind him he** ◌makes his **track** **’resplendent;**  
 One would **’reckon** the **abyss** to be **greyhaired.**  
<sup>33</sup> There **is no** one **on the soil** comparable to **him,**  
 ◌Who was <sup>d</sup>◌**made** to be ◌**without dismay.**  
<sup>34</sup> **He** **’stares** down ◌on **every haughty** creature;  
**He is king** over **every strutting** beast.

41:29 --- is reckoned ’by him: Hb they are reckoned.

#### LEVIATHAN

The term *leviathan* is a transliteration of the Hebrew word. There are six occurrences of the word in the Hebrew Scriptures (Job 3:8; 41:1; Psa.74:14; 104:26; Isa.27:1 [two times]). Much uncertainty exists as to the meaning and identity of the indicated animal. The Septuagint translates by the word *dragon*, and we suggest this rendering has sufficient value to warrant our use of it in the CV. The term, besides being used in the Greek translation, has also come in our language to signify an animal monster.

In Isaiah 27:1 we have the dragon explained as a serpent and a monster of the sea. The details of Isaiah, when carefully considered, do not imply a denial of the redoubtable character of the dragon. Rather, Isaiah, while using the term to figure one who is most formidable, indicates a time when Yahweh is to withdraw the dominance He has afforded hitherto to the dragon. To this end He brings His sword near to him who has so far spurned anything that threatened the loss of the mastery of his office.

E. H. Clayton

## EON, AS INDEFINITE DURATION

(Part Three)

*God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all.* (Rom.11:32)

*Indeed though He afflicts, yet He has compassion according to the abundance of His benignities.* (Lam.3:32)

*God is love.* (1 John 4:8)

### Question:

RECENTLY I purchased a copy of the CONCORDANT LITERAL NEW TESTAMENT, which you publish. Since I had soon become deeply troubled through reading your version, I asked my pastor concerning it, especially in regard to your renderings “eon” and “eonian,” instead of “[for] ever,” “everlasting,” and “eternal,” as in nearly all other translations.

My pastor was somewhat familiar with your translation; however, he said that it was designed and prepared in order to support universalism, which you teach, and to deny eternal punishment, which is the doctrine of all orthodox Christians. He also stated that all scholars worthy of the name repudiate universalism, as well as the translation “eonian,” instead of “everlasting.” I want you to become aware of some of the things he shared with me, in the hope that it might cause you to reconsider your mistranslations and false teachings.

In support of his claims, my pastor read several passages to me from various books in his library; later on, he furnished me with photocopies as well of the pages of these books from which he had made his citations.

The principal work from which he quoted was FOUR

VIEWS OF HELL, from chapter one, “The Literal View,” by the famous and acclaimed theologian, Dr. John F. Walvoord, of Dallas Theological Seminary. Professor Walvoord states: “The Old Testament revelation . . . clearly suggests that the sufferings of the wicked continue forever . . . . While the term ‘forever’ may sometimes be curtailed in duration by its context, such termination is never once mentioned in either the Old or New Testament as relating to the punishment of the wicked. Accordingly, the term continues to mean ‘everlasting’ or ‘unending in its duration’ . . . . As Buis points out, the Greek word *aiōnios* [eonian, CV] is used in the New Testament sixty-six times: [in fifty-nine of these occurrences] there is no doubt as to its meaning being endless, and seven times of the punishment of the wicked . . . .”<sup>1</sup>

“In support of the idea that *aiōnios* means ‘endless’ is its consistent placement alongside the duration of the life of the godly [i.e., in Matthew 25:46] in eternity. If the state of the blessed is eternal, as expressed by this word, there is no logical reason for giving limited duration to punishment. As W. R. Inge states, ‘No sound Greek scholar can pretend that *aiōnios* means anything less than eternal’<sup>2</sup> . . . . A confirmation of eternal punishment is found in the use of the Greek word *aiōnios*. A most convincing evidence that eternity usually means ‘without beginning or end’ is found in the definition of this word in Arndt and Gingrich.<sup>3</sup> This word is used normally in the New Testament to mean

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1. Harry Buis, THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT, p.49 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1957).

2. W. R. Inge, WHAT IS HELL? p.6 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930).

3. William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, A GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT and Other Early Christian Literature, pp.27,28 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

either 'without beginning or end' or at least 'without end.' None of the passages uses the word in a sense other than infinity in time . . . [Therefore,] if exegesis is the final factor, eternal punishment is the only proper conclusion; taken at its face value, the Bible teaches eternal punishment . . .

"Eternal punishment is partly mental, partly physical, and partly emotional. The fact that confinement in hell is pictured also as a place of total darkness is no doubt contributory to mental anguish . . . The emotional problems of facing eternal punishment are beyond human computation and are certainly a major portion of the judgment that is inflicted on the wicked . . . The frequent mention of fire in connection with eternal punishment supports the conclusion that this is what the Scriptures mean . . . There is sufficient evidence that the fire is literal . . . Punishment is eternal and . . . is painful, both mentally and physically. Scripture never challenges the concept that eternal punishment is by literal fire."<sup>4</sup>

My pastor then read me the graphic illustration of hell contained in one of the sermons of the great eighteenth century theologian Jonathan Edwards: "The wrath of God will be poured out upon the wicked without mixture. Imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven . . . and imagine also that your body were to lie there for a quarter of an hour, full of fire, as full within and without as a bright coal fire, all the while full of quick sense: what horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace? Oh! then how would your heart sink if you knew that after millions and millions of ages your torment would be no nearer to an end than ever it was. But your torment in hell will be immensely greater than this illustration represents . . .

4. FOUR VIEWS OF HELL, pp.17,18,23,24,26-28; edited by William Crockett (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).

"You cannot stand before an infuriated tiger even; what then will you do when God rushes against you in all His wrath? It is *everlasting* wrath . . . There will be no end to this exquisite, horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you . . . you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all . . . Your punishment will indeed be infinite."<sup>5</sup>

By publishing and using a Bible which denies the truth of eternal punishment in literal fire, you may deceive yourself for now about the reality of this subject. But, unless you repent, you will spend eternity in the very hellfire which, at present, you audaciously deny. My only question to you is, What will you do with this information, now that I have presented it to you?

**Answer:**

YOU ASK what I now will do with this information which you have set forth. Earlier you had said that you wanted us to "become aware" of some of these things which your pastor first shared with you, in the hope that it might cause us to reconsider our "mistranslations" and "false teachings."

We have long been familiar with such claims as those found in these works which you cite. We have nearly all these books in our library, besides many more such titles. For many years we have spent much time conscientiously considering the "orthodox" claims concerning both *olam* and *aiōn*, not to mention innumerable arguments of every sort in favor of eternal torment.

So in response to your "only question," which is what will I do with this information which you have presented

5. Sermon II, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," THE WORKS OF JONATHAN EDWARDS, vol. ii, pp.7-12 (London: Ball, Arnold, and Co., 1840).

to me, my answer is that I will critique certain points of it, briefly, in the text which follows.

#### WELL-VERSED OBJECTIVITY

I would like to suggest at the outset that the arbiter of truth is not Christian “orthodoxy,” which only speaks of the commonly accepted view, or customary, prevalent opinion. The majority is often wrong, even among those of similar conservative views of Scripture. Indeed, especially in a day of widespread apostasy such as the present, to appeal to majority opinion is not a sign of strength but of weakness.

Similarly, the fact that certain professors or preachers may be “famous” and “acclaimed,” or, in some respect, “great,” is no indication of the correctness of their opinions. Similar commendations may be made concerning certain of their opponents—with no more benefit to be gained by so doing. The apostle Paul says ideally, “Let *no one* be deluding himself. If anyone among you is presuming to be wise in this eon, let him become stupid, that he may be becoming wise, for the wisdom of this world is stupidity with God. For it is written, ‘He is clutching the wise in their craftiness.’ And again, The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are vain. So that, let *no one* be boasting in men . . .” (1 Cor.3:18-21a).

We should not act prematurely, much less rashly, in forming our opinions. Ideally the proverb declares, “He who replies with speech ere he has heard, it is folly to him and confounding” (Prov.18:13). And, “The first pleader seems right in his contention, until his associate comes and investigates him” (Prov.18:17). To apply these aphorisms, then, to our subject at hand, my advice to you is for you to learn a great deal more about this disputed subject than you presently know, before claiming which side is correct. It is important that you become familiar not only

with the arguments of the proponents of the side which, at first, appears to be correct, but for you to become well-versed as well in the arguments of the proponents of the side which initially seems to be mistaken.

You state that unless I repent (of my “universalism”), I will spend eternity in the very hellfire which, at present, I “audaciously” deny. I must confess that according to the first definition of “audacity,” which is, “fearlessly daring; bold,” I have not always been thus, having sometimes failed to speak out when I should. However, I hope I have not often been guilty of walking according to the second definition of this word, which is, “arrogantly insolent; impudent.” Even if I do not always succeed, I seek to write in an irenic spirit and in a gracious manner. In any case, it is not necessarily wrong to reject any opinion, including a majority opinion, simply because any certain man or group of men hold that opinion to be true.

I am confident that in time you will see for yourself that it would be quite impossible for me to “spend eternity” in “hellfire.” I say this because Christ died for my sins (1 Cor. 15:3), and because I was conciliated to God through the death of His Son (Rom.5:10). Furthermore, before the disruption of the world, God chose me in Christ to be holy and flawless in His sight, in love designating me beforehand for the place of a son for Him through Christ Jesus. This was all in accord with the delight of His will for the laud of the glory of His grace (*cf* Eph.1:3-6).

In due time, God called me through His *grace*, to unveil His Son in me (*cp* Gal.1:15,16). After the pattern of Saul of Tarsus, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ overwhelmed my calumny, outrage, and unbelief (*cf* 1 Tim.1:12-16). As Saul, who is also Paul, declares of God, “Now whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also, and whom He calls, these He justifies also; now whom He justifies, these He glorifies also” (Rom.8:30).

I am assured that whenever Christ, my Life, should be manifested, then I also shall be manifested together with Him in glory (Col.3:4). This is because, even though I still sometimes sin quite badly, according to the blessings of the evangel, “where sin increases, grace superexceeds, that, even as Sin reigns in death, thus Grace also should be reigning through righteousness, for life eonian, through Jesus Christ, our Lord” (Rom.5:20b,21).

#### PORTENTOUS CLAIMS

The arguments which you have conveyed against the Concordant Version and the teaching of the Concordant ministry together with those in favor of eternal burnings, may be summed up thus, under five headings:

(1.) A pastor declares that the Concordant Version “was designed and prepared in order to support universalism . . . and to deny eternal punishment.” This same pastor also states that all scholars worthy of the name repudiate universalism, even as the translation “eonian,” instead of “everlasting.” Similarly, a theologian claims that “No sound Greek scholar can pretend that *aiōnios* means anything less than eternal.”

It simply is not true that the Concordant Version was designed and prepared in order to support universalism and to deny eternal punishment. Such a charge is as false and unjust as it would be for us to claim that the Authorized Version and its many imitators were designed and prepared in order to support eternal torment and to deny the salvation of all mankind. All honorable translators seek to be faithful to the Word of God according to the light given to them, and do not willfully seek to support any certain disputed teaching.

Likewise, it is far from the truth to say that none who are worthy scholars and learned in Oriental languages “can pretend that *aiōnios* means anything less than eter-

nal.” Nor do all such ones, by any means, repudiate either universalism or the translation “eonian,” instead of “everlasting.” The simple fact is that universalism, though likely always a minority view, has at times been a sizable minority view. Many accomplished scholars and recognized theologians have affirmed the teaching.<sup>6</sup>

(2.) A lurid phantasm of the supposed nature of hell is presented, from the pen of Jonathan Edwards.

This fanciful piece of speculation is no proof whatever of the position taken. Such terror-inspiring sensationalism has no place in a sober consideration of revealed truth.

(3.) After appeal to Buis, then Inge, and to a lexicon, Arndt and Gingrich, Walvoord then claims that Scripture always uses *aiōnios* in the sense of “infinity in time,” from which he concludes that “if exegesis [i.e., objective, scientific interpretation] is the final factor, eternal punishment is the only proper conclusion.”

In reply to this we need only say that Buis and Inge simply make claims, and that the Arndt and Gingrich lexicon (1974; after Thayer, 1886) merely gives the three definitions which it perceives for *aiōnios*, that of (1) without beginning; (2) without end; and (3) without beginning or end. None of this constitutes proof of the position affirmed. Further, Walvoord’s claim that valid exegesis requires the conclusion that eternal punishment is the teaching of Scripture, is merely asserted, not proved.

6. See such works as our reprints: RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS (Andrew Jukes, 1891); CHRIST TRIUMPHANT (Thomas Allin, 1890); EON—EONIAN (John Wesley Hanson, 1875); SALVATOR MUNDI (Samuel Cox, 1879); THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF UNIVERSALISM (Hosea Ballou, 2nd, 1829); THE MODERN HISTORY OF UNIVERSALISM (Thomas Whittemore, 1830); also see: Thomas B. Thayer, THEOLOGY OF UNIVERSALISM (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1891); F. W. Farrar, ETERNAL HOPE (London: Macmillan & Co., 1892); F. W. Farrar, MERCY AND JUDGMENT (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1881).

(4.) Walvoord appeals to Matthew 25:46 (“And these shall be coming away into chastening eonian, yet the just into life eonian,” CV), declaring that if the state of the blessed is eternal, as expressed by this word, there is no logical reason for giving limited duration to punishment.

This specious argument goes back at least to Augustine. As has long ago been said, however, due to its unreasonableness, it ought never be heard again. From the fact that the life of the just nations and the chastening of the unjust nations are herein described by the same adjective, descriptive of duration, it does not follow that the latter group of nations, therefore, will be subjected to endless punishment. The argument assumes what is at issue by presuming that the life of the just, here, is termed an endless life. Simply because, on certain grounds, the life of those persons comprising the just nations will prove to be endless, it does not follow that the blessing of life afforded *here* to any such nations is therefore that of endless duration. It is as unreasonable to assume that *eonian* life doubtlessly signifies endless life as it would be to claim that youthful life actually signifies aged life, simply because our presuppositions and predilections may dictate such a conclusion.

Professor Tayler Lewis (who was not a universalist) in commenting on what he calls the *Olamic* or *Æonian* words of the Scripture, affirms that “they denote . . . the world [i.e., in the sense of duration] in *time*, or as a time-existence” (i.e., the “life” of the object thus described or delineated). He insists that these words are, in themselves, wholly indefinite (even though he conceives that, in Matthew 25:46, the scene is one of “finality”). Hence, concerning *aiōnios*, he states: “It would be more in accordance with the plainest etymological usage to give it simply the sense of *olamic* or *æonic*, or to regard it as denoting, like the Jewish *olam habba*, *the world* [i.e., duration] *to come*.

“These shall go away into the punishment [the restraint, imprisonment] of the world to come, and these into the life of the world to come.’ *That is all we can etymologically or exegetically make of the word in this passage.* And so is it ever in the Old Syriac Version [i.e., the Peshito], where the one [i.e., uniform] rendering is still more unmistakably clear: ‘These shall go away to the pain of the *olam*, and these to the life of the *olam*’—the world to come.’”<sup>7</sup>

(5.) Walvoord intimates that the ordinary meaning of *olam* and *aiōn* is that of endlessness (though this “may sometimes be curtailed in duration by its context”; otherwise, these words continue to mean “unending in its duration”).

It is simply contrary to historical fact to suggest that the essence of these time expressions is that of endless duration. As Thomas De Quincey, the nineteenth century essayist and literary critic states: “All this speculation, first and last, is pure nonsense. *Aiōnios* does not mean ‘eternal,’ neither does it mean of limited duration . . . What is an *aiōn*? The *duration or cycle of existence* which belongs to any object, not individually of itself, but universally, in right of its genius [i.e., inherent nature] . . . The *exact amount of the duration expressed by an aiōn* depends altogether upon the particular subject which yields the *aiōn*.”<sup>8</sup>

The British Congregational minister and preacher, G. Campbell Morgan, makes the following remarkable declaration concerning *olam/aiōn*: “Let me say to Bible students that we must be very careful how we use the word ‘eternity.’ We have fallen into great error in our constant use of that word. *There is no word in the whole Book of*

7. Tayler Lewis, *LANGE’S COMMENTARY*, vol.5, Ecclesiastes, pp.45,48 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, reprint 1969).

8. Thomas De Quincey, *THEOLOGICAL ESSAYS*, pp.143-165; cited in *EON-EONIAN* (John Wesley Hanson, 1875).

God corresponding with our ‘eternal,’ which, as commonly used among us, means absolutely without end”<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, the Presbyterian Bible scholar, M. R. Vincent, in his extensive note on *aiōn/aiōnios* states: “Neither the noun nor the adjective, in themselves, carry the sense of *endless* or *everlasting*.”<sup>10</sup>

Walvoord’s mistaken notion on this very issue, however, comes to the heart of the question whether the Concordant Version is justified in its rendering “eon.” After all, not only Walvoord, Buis, and Inge, but all intelligent students acknowledge that *olam* and *aiōn* sometimes refer to limited duration. Here is my point: The supposed special reference or usage of a word is not the province of the translator but of the interpreter. Since these authors themselves plainly indicate that the usage of a word is a matter of interpretation, it follows (1) that it is not a matter of translation, and (2) that it is wrong for any *translation* effectually to decide that which must necessarily remain a matter of interpretation concerning these words in question. Therefore, *olam* and *aiōn* should never be *translated* by the thought of “endlessness,” but only by that of indefinite duration (as in the anglicized *transliteration* “eon” which appears in the Concordant Version).

In this response to your “deeply troubled” encounter with the Concordant Version, I have principally sought not to prove my position, but to open a door to its consideration; a door of further inquiry, with a view toward your attaining an awareness of the grace of God in truth, even as of the purpose of the *eons*, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Eph.3:11). May our God and Father be pleased to use this writing unto such an end. J.R.C.

9. G. Campbell Morgan, GOD’S METHODS WITH MAN, p.185; (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898).

10. M. R. Vincent, WORD STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, vol.2, pp.950-952 (Mc Lean Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Co., n.d.).

## THE UNACHIEVABLE REWARD

(1 Samuel 17:23-30)

AT his father’s request David came to the vale of Elah where Israel gathered against the Philistines for battle. He brought provision for his brothers and asked about their welfare.

### WHAT SHALL BE DONE?

<sup>23</sup> + **While he** was speaking with them, + **behold, the champion** was coming up from the arrays of the Philistines; his name was Goliath the Philistine *f*of Gath. + **He spoke those** *as*usual words, and David heard them. <sup>24</sup> + **All the men of Israel,** *i*when they saw *˘*the man, + **fled *f* before him and were exceedingly *f*fearful.**

<sup>25</sup> + The men of Israel **said** to themselves, **Have you seen that *˘*man *˘*coming up? *t*Surely to challenge *˘*Israel** is he coming up. **And it will *b*occur to the man who *˘*smites him that the king shall enrich him with great riches; + he shall give to him *˘*his daughter, and he shall *d*make *˘*his father’s house free in Israel.** <sup>26</sup> + **Now David *lsa*asked *˘* the men who stood *wi*near him, *˘* saying<sup>-</sup>, What shall be done for the man who *˘*smites *˘*this *˘*Philistine and takes away the reproach from *on* Israel? For *a*who is *˘*this *˘*uncircumcised *˘*Philistine that he challenges the arrays of the living Elohim? <sup>27</sup> + **Then the *wi*soldiers *lsa*told *˘* him in *as*accord with *˘*this *sp*promise, *˘* *sa*declaring<sup>-</sup>, Thus shall it be done for the man who shall smite him.****

While speaking with his brothers, David heard Goliath’s challenge and saw the great fear of the men of Israel, who also said:

“And it shall occur to the man that smites him [Goliath] that the king will enrich him with great riches; he shall give to him his daughter, and he shall make his father’s house free in Israel” (vv.25,26). This *promise* (v.27), is of undesignated origin. But the following events are suggestive that Saul may have made a formal announcement that a deliverer rising from the ranks would be rewarded in this manner. Probably such an announcement included that the hero for Israel should be brought to the king, and that he would wear the king’s armor and use the king’s sword, as mentioned later in verse 39. Notice that when the men speak of this great reward, it is only in relation to overcoming a great foe, and it suggests that the deliverer would be worthy of wealth, position and privilege. Any thought of God’s glory is absent from the soldiers’ discussion.

But when David asks the same question, the focus is on God. “What shall be done for the man who . . . *takes away the reproach from Israel?* For who is this *uncircumcised* Philistine that *he challenges the arrays of the living Elohim?*” (vv.26,27). Here again with the words *reproach* and *uncircumcised* we are taken back to Gilgal and reminded of the inability of the flesh. Saul and the arrays of Israel could not achieve the victory. The flesh can never achieve the works of God, and so the thought of obtaining life by obeying the law is just an illusive pipe dream for the flesh.

David, through faith and the enablement of God, accomplished the great feat of slaying Goliath, but, as he owned, “Yahweh’s is the battle” (v.47). But did David receive the promise as the men said? The king did not enrich him with great riches. Instead he hunted and pursued him throughout the country, forcing David to live in caves and hideouts in the wilderness, where he even had difficulty finding his daily food. Saul promised David the hand of his daughter Merab in marriage, yet he gave her to Adriel instead (18:19). Then later he did give Michal to David,

but only with the intent that she would be David’s downfall (18:20,21). Did Saul make the house of Jesse free in Israel? David moved his family out of Israel into the land of Moab so that they would be safe from Saul (1 Sam. 22:3,4). The flesh offers no reward to faith. It struggles against it, knowing that the presence of faith is the harbinger of the end of the flesh.

But what does God give to the one who conquers this great foe? In time, David became king. He was not just an *in-law* of the royal family. He was not second to Jonathan and Saul’s other sons. He was king. The wealth of Israel was at his disposal. His family was not just free from national taxes, they were part of the royal family. God’s gracious workings far surpass even that of which the flesh dreams (*cf* Eph.3:20).

#### REJECTION

<sup>28</sup> +When his <sup>e</sup>eldest brother, Eliab, <sup>h</sup>heard <sup>i</sup> him speaking <sup>-</sup> to the men, + Eliab’s anger grew <sup>h</sup>hot <sup>’</sup>against David, and he <sup>h</sup>said, Why is <sup>t</sup>this that you have come <sup>d</sup>down? And <sup>on</sup>with <sup>a</sup>whom did you let the little flock go, <sup>’</sup>those sheep in the wilderness? I know <sup>’</sup>your arrogance and <sup>’</sup>the evil of your heart, for you have come <sup>d</sup>down that you may <sup>see</sup>watch <sup>-</sup> the battle. <sup>29</sup> + David <sup>lsa</sup>replied, What have I done now? Was it not just a <sup>sp</sup>question? <sup>30</sup> +Then he turned <sup>’</sup>around from beside him <sup>’</sup>toward another and <sup>lsa</sup>asked <sup>as</sup>this <sup>sp</sup>question. +When the <sup>wi</sup>soldiers <sup>h</sup>replied to him, their word was like the first word.

Eliab becomes the voice of Israel. Hearing David speak with the men, he explodes with anger. We can suppose that Eliab wanted to deliver Israel, but, like everyone else, he was frozen with fear. And so, feeling that he could not accomplish what needed to be done, he transferred his feelings of inadequacy and guilt to David. “And with whom [literally, “*on any?*”] did you let the little flock go, those sheep in

the wilderness?” (v.28). “Did you even tell anyone to take care of your responsibilities before you ran off to watch the battle? You arrogant and evil-hearted delinquent!”

Poor Eliab. He was so frustrated by his inability to do what needed to be done, and he was so pre-occupied with his need to justify himself, that the thought seems never to have entered his head—“my brother is here. It must be my father’s love for me that has sent him.” The Jews of Christ’s day were the same. They were frustrated trying to keep a law that none could keep. They were pre-occupied with self-justification. Their response to the possibility that the Messiah had finally come was not to praise God for sending Him, but to criticize Him, and, finally, in their jealousy, kill Him. Their only perception of God was derived from the requirements of the letter of the law. They were ignorant of God’s love for them. Such an attitude still, today, plagues those concerned to please God by fulfilling some law; they do not grasp the magnitude of His love.

J. Philip Scranton

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NEW CVOT PUBLICATION:  
PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, SONG OF SONGS

The publication of the Concordant Version of the Old Testament (CVOT) is an ongoing project endeavoring to provide, in a consistent English translation, a closer reflection of the grammar, syntax and wording of the ancient Hebrew manuscripts than can be found in other current versions.

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*He Shall Save His People*

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## COMING WITH POWER AND MUCH GLORY

ALL ALONG in this study of Matthew we have tried to keep in mind the defining presentation of Jesus given in 1:21. He will save His people from their sins. It has not been easy to see this work of salvation in process. From the very beginning of His ministry, we find Jesus warning of fearful judgment ahead; and we find the nation itself moving farther and farther away from salvation.

We come now to the Lord’s discourse on the Mount of Olives recorded in Matthew 24 and 25. And here the theme of future judgment and loss seems to dominate so strongly that special effort is needed to avoid losing sight of the significance of Jesus as the Saviour. The fundamental issue of final glory is easily neglected or relegated to secondary and highly qualified positions, as it has indeed been in the minds of many.

### POWER AND GLORY

The Son of Mankind will come with power and much glory (Matt.24:30; 25:31). Because of the emphasis on divine anger and judgment in Matthew 24 and 25, we are apt to overlook the fact that these works of power are also and unreservedly operations of “much glory” and are fully consistent with the promise of Matthew 1:21. The cutting asunder of the “evil slave” from the “faithful and prudent slave” and the lamentation and gnashing of teeth that result (Matt.24:45-51) are not operations of power that block salvation and glory. Likewise, the throne on which the Son of Mankind sits in judging the nations is termed “the throne

of His glory" (Matt.25:31). This means that every manifestation of divine power coming with the presence of the Lord at the conclusion of this eon (Matt.24:3) will bring honor and praise to God.

Glory is that which impresses a highly favorable opinion or evaluation on us (*cf* KEYWORD CONCORDANCE, p.124). In powerfully gathering His scattered people together and wisely judging both them and the nations, the Lord will be revealing that which favorably impresses them all concerning Himself. The power is not a display that brings abject terror or futile despair but that, sooner or later, creates approval and appreciation in the hearts of *all* involved.

#### GRIEVING AND LAMENTATION

The coming of the Lord in power and glory follows times of severe suffering, many battles (24:6,7), pangs (24:8), afflictions, snares, deception, lawlessness (24:9-12), abomination and woe (24:15,19). It is *immediately after* the affliction of those days that the sun is darkened and stars fall from heaven and the *powers of the heavens* are shaken (24:29). "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Mankind in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land shall grieve" (Matt.24:30).

Grief is not contrary to glory when it arises from a sense of deeply felt relief. The grieving of the twelve tribes of Israel is over their past unfaithfulness, but it comes with the overwhelming and joyful recognition of the Saviour. It is the weeping of those rescued out of great danger and insecurity. Here we readily see that the divine power being displayed truly glorifies the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. What an achievement, to end affliction with the joy and peace of willing subjection! (*cf* Psa.110:3).

But Jesus explains that there will be a separation between those out of Israel who have been "faithful and prudent" and those who have not. Concerning the latter, as with the

evil slaves of the parable of Matthew 24:43-51, "There shall be lamentation and gnashing of teeth" (24:51). The glory of the Son of Mankind involves powerful works that produce not only the weeping of joyful deliverance, but also the lamentation of loss and separation.

The problem is not with the grief of Israel when their Rescuer comes out of Zion. We all rejoice in such an operation of salvation to the praise of God, knowing that it is only in His mercy that these chosen people are faithful and prudent. The problem comes with the lamentation of those who are separated from the joys and privileges of the kingdom. In what way does this work of separation bring glory to the Son of Mankind in the hearts of those who are condemned? We can see how the blessing of the "faithful and prudent" instills a highly favorable opinion of the Lord among the blessed. But the cutting off from these blessings can bring Him glory only insofar as it is just and beneficial. Even then, this glory is dimmed if it is absent in the mind and heart of those who are cut asunder.

If this separation is eternal, and if it is merely an expression of divine vengeance, and has no further purpose for good, then it does not bring God much glory. The use of power for the endless crushing of sinners, or for their extinction, does not instill a highly favorable opinion. In light of the facts that God created them and willed to save them and gave His Son to save them and is fully able to bring them into the realization and enjoyment of these blessings, justly and effectively, there is no way God can be glorified for such a hopeless state of woe.

#### MATTHEW 25:46

In speaking of these things to come, the Lord directed attention not only to the separation within Israel of the faithful slaves from the evil slaves, but to the separation of the nations in accord with their treatment of Israel during

its times of hardship. This also involves the grief of loss for many. Yet like the lamentation of Matthew 24:51, the condemnation of 25:41 and 46 is subservient to the glory of God. It also must accord with impressing a highly favorable opinion of God on the hearts of all the nations.

If it is true that Jesus spoke in Matthew 25:46 of "everlasting punishment" for certain people, then His coming as the Son of Mankind will not be with that display of divine power that is welded to divine glory. It is as simple as that. When God's glory is manifested there will be no dark spots of mystery in God's use of His power. It is impossible that woe and weeping and chastening be everlasting. Revelations of the power of God's discipline and of His righteous anger against sin, as they surely are, His operations of condemnation cannot last forever or serve as a vain and purposeless retribution. Everything we learn about God in His Word, especially as He is manifested in His Son, contradicts any concept of eternal hell.

When we stop to think about it seriously, we realize that no one can fully escape the charge of being wicked and slothful. It will be the same for the nations at the conclusion of the eon. No nation will have shown perfect kindness and concern toward Israel in their times of trouble. Some are called "the just," but this is a relative term, in comparison with those nations that are placed on the left. Any group of people or any individual who is rewarded by the Lord for faithful service will find this a humbling experience. Their exultation will be in God Who opened up their hearts to compassion, not in themselves, with self-congratulation. How can such a nation be blessed in the face of everlasting woe for those who were judged to be more wicked than themselves?

#### EVANGEL

When the disciples asked Jesus, "Tell us, when will these

things be? And what is the sign of Thy presence and of the conclusion of the eon?" (Matt.24:3), they were not thinking only of the destruction of the sanctuary spoken of in 24:1. No stone would be left on a stone, but that would also mean that the Lord will be with them once more as the Blessed One (*cf* 23:39). The words Jesus spoke concerning destruction, lamentation and separation are steadfastly connected with words of glory.

The message will not be simply a word of condemnation, but it will be an *evangel* (Matt.24:14). It is good news. Affliction and hate and snares and deception and lawlessness will be in the past. The kingdom will be joyfully welcome, although indeed it involves the necessary separation, for awhile, of the afflictors from the afflicted.

Those who were afflicted and now are to be blessed are "the chosen" (24:22), whose joy in the kingdom could not be sustained in view of hopelessness for those not chosen, as wicked as they may have been. In every way the kingdom will be good news for these delivered people who have suffered so much.

It is a strange twisting of the word *evangel* to bring in a sense of blessing for the chosen in the face of eternal, inescapable woe for those not chosen. It is more than twisting! At best it is dark confusion, puffing us up with pride and hardening us with hypocrisy. At worst it robs God of all He claims to be.

#### DANGEROUS CONTRADICTION

This passage does not speak of anything close to "everlasting punishment." The Greek word *aiōnios* does not mean "everlasting." And the Greek word *kolasis* does not mean "punishment." This translation and its defense by countless believers through the centuries is disgraceful enough. But the dishonor to the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the confusion introduced into God's written revelation by this

concept is of such shameful proportions that it can only be described as profane, reflecting perfectly that corruption and mortality and sinfulness which we all share.

Nothing in the context of our Lord's discourse to His disciples on the Mount of Olives (Matt.24 and 25) could prepare us for such a conclusion. The severity of divine judgment, made clear throughout the ministry of Jesus, is always purposeful, always with an end of glory in view, always a message of the One Who came to save His people from their sins.

Thankfully, many have seen the utter contradiction of Matthew 25:46, as it is generally rendered in translation, with the spirit and message of the Saviour. Different arguments are used, sometimes with misdirected motives, often with wrong and confusing thinking. But at least there is a recognition that something is drastically wrong with the traditional idea.

We do not endorse every argument presented against the traditional translation of Matthew 25:46, but we commend the spirit that recognizes how dangerous and misleading the common translation is. Countless believers must feel this danger even while accepting and defending the usual rendering. It is wise to be cautious. It is fitting to honor those who have brought truth to us. But we all must judge what is taught in light of the revelation of God given in His Word, and in light of that message of power and glory and love and righteousness concerning His Son which we have accepted, in which we stand, and through which we are being saved (1 Cor.15:1,2).

#### TO GOD BE THE GLORY

Over and above the issues of translation and word meaning stands the central issue of the evangel itself. Our Lord's message to His disciples on the Mount of Olives was delivered soon before He was given up to crucifixion. What He

said about woe and fire and chastening is firmly associated with His death and resurrection.

Quite apart from the fact that an examination of the Greek word *aiōnios* in all its occurrences proves it does not mean *everlasting*, stands the fact that Jesus died for sinners. In speaking of their eonian chastening He was steadfastly set on the pathway which would bring life and deliverance to them in God's own time. In His warnings of eonian fire, of sorrows and loss, for individuals and for nations, the Lord had one clear end in view, the glory of His God and Father. God's declarations of good news are themselves the foremost and final argument against the doctrine of everlasting hell.

Those who insist that the Saviour spoke of everlasting fire and everlasting punishment face the task of reconciling this with His agony and sorrow at Golgotha, on the sinner's behalf. They need to show how the power of His resurrection has any significance to those condemned, or even to those who are saved into life while pain and sorrow and death rage on and on and on, without end. When, then, is the victory, and where, then, is the powerful glory of God?

#### GIVEN UP TO CRUCIFIXION

Matthew 25:46 is followed by these words: "And it occurred, when Jesus finishes all these sayings, He said to His disciples, 'You are aware that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Mankind is being given up to be crucified'" (Matt.26:1,2).

The disciples did not seem to grasp this message. Perhaps their minds were concentrating on the twelve thrones Jesus had promised them, and on the glories they would enjoy in the kingdom. Perhaps, as well, their thoughts were centered on the vengeance the Lord would bring on the nations for their mistreatment of Israel. But Jesus, the

Saviour, Who had just told them of joys and judgments to come, was focused on the cross, which would make those joys certain and the judgments beneficial and finally matters of the revelation of God's glory.

Today also, we do not often hear much of the cross when the subject of divine judgment comes up. Like the disciples, we do not seem to grasp the significance, or even the need, of this astounding sacrifice, not for the chosen alone, but for all mankind, and for all creation. For those of Israel who suffer through affliction, the cross brings a blessed ransom (1 Peter 1:18,19). Because of the cross, our sufferings today do not deserve the glory about to be revealed for us (Rom.8:18). And even for those who are condemned in judgment, the cross makes that judgment a manifestation of the power and glory of God, so that both the fruit of His righteous judgment may be manifested and the achievements of the Saviour may be realized and enjoyed. Truly He comes with power and much glory.

D.H.H.

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FOR FURTHER READING

The following articles from former issues of *Unsearchable Riches* will help supplement the preceding thoughts regarding Matthew 25:41 and 46:

*The Economics of Eternal Torment*, by A. E. Knoch, vol.38, p.279.

*The Adjective Eonian*, by A. E. Knoch, vol.57, p.105.

*Is Punishment Everlasting?* by A. E. Knoch, vol.66, pp.92,137.

*The Glory Throne Judgment*, by Adlai Loudy, vol.21, p.255.

*The Associates of Israel in the Millennium*, by A. E. Knoch, vol.33, p.221.

*The Judgment of the Nations*, by A. E. Knoch, vol.35, p.263 (reprinted in a slightly abridged form in this issue, p.147).

*The Divine Judgments of the Nations*, by M. Jaegle, vol.52, p.21.

*The Judgment of the Nations*, by James R. Coram, vol.84, p.29.

*Eonian Fire and Judging*, by James R. Coram, vol.84, p.79.

*"Punishment" or "Chastening"?* by A. E. Knoch, vol.22, p.47.

*Contradictions*, by A. E. Knoch, vol.44, p.18.