

ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION

A CHALLENGE TO THE ENTIRE PROTESTANT REFORMED AND EVANGELICAL CONSTITUENCY ON THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The challenge is to the insidious growth of a theory embedding in the doctrine of the Atonement now set to gain a life of its own simply through sleepy-headed Christians singing it into vogue and pastors rejoicing in it as the Emperor's new clothes and theologians blandly affirming CALVARY WRATH as having a VITAL central role in saving our souls.

THE BASIS OF THE CHALLENGE

Justification by faith is a doctrine that no-one can impugn. Its understanding extends back to Abraham and its clarity was advanced through Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Paul and Luther. It is a doctrine drafted on the basis of law and dependent on the principle of penal substitution. It pivots on the fact that justice cannot be twice demanded "first at my Great surety's hand and then again at mine". The interposition of the perfect incarnate Lamb of God rendered His death through the imputed gift of righteousness a just remedy for man's sinful disunion with God. To add to that works or traditions as supplementary is contumacy as is compensating it by God-on God wrath alleging that with that deficit it is not valid. God forbid. Justification rests on the worth of the blood of the dying Lamb-our Redeemer's blood alone is the basis of the wholeness of the gospel.

THE NEED FOR THIS CHALLENGE

The existence of two schools of thought as to how the incarnation works in respect of penal substitution looks set to continue, sadly, for centuries like those of the Pharisees and Sadducees unless modern Protestantism returns to the death of Christ as the sole basis of justification, redemption and reconciliation.

The investing the entire evangelical capital in commitment to the medieval compensatory “philosophy of the atonement” of the 11th/12th century Benedictine monk Anselm (notwithstanding his questing mind, “Cur Deus Homo” treatise and articulation of the “ontological argument”) needs to be acknowledged as the cause of an asset crisis in Theology and truth and needs to be reversed. The gospel is not one of compensation but one of justification through mercy delivering the Perfect Lamb of God a substitute for sinners under the Damocles sword of judgment, death and the pains of Hell on account of their disobedience and iniquity. In no segment of this covenant is there room for WRATH- “God was in the whole circle of Christ’s heart and action “reconciling [‘changing from enmity to friendship’καταλλασω] the world to Himself”-ours is a gospel of untrammelled justice where “one died for all” and unadulterated covenant love where the love of God the Father is expressed through grief and by grace alone particularly at Calvary. The anger of God occasioned by our sin has ever been deprecated by the intercessions of our Mediator coupled with His atoning death.

WHAT’S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT?

All believers are free to think about the glorious news of the gospel and how it gets out to the whole wide world. On the other hand we have to be sure that we tell it “as it is” and not “how it is not”. Our Lord never indicated that the Father was about to pour wrath upon Him in order to save us. He simply told us that He was “*given*” by the Father to be “delivered” by rulers, “betrayed” by Judas and “crucified” by cruel hands . He also stated categorically that He was going to “*give* His life a ransom for many”. Never did He even hint that the love of the Father would turn to wrath as He spent His last 6 hours or last fading hour on the cross. To tell the wondering world that this is what happened at Calvary is pathetic as a gospel. It is not good news –it is a travesty of truth.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

(a) Like the Covid virus this CALVARY WRATH message spreads by singing and by coughing up matter difficult to counteract at scale that

untreated rampages against the wholeness of the gospel of CALVARY GRACE. There is no meaning in singing "He bore the wrath" when no such wrath was ever stated to exist by Christ nor prophesied by the prophets [I refer you to the textual verities below] nor proclaimed by the apostles in this connection. There is neither bonus nor benefit gained from talking up a fiction. This travesty of truth-CALVARY WRATH- did not sweep into hymnbooks before the recent virtuoso evangelical hymn-writers got a handle on it and hey presto it is travelling and surging by www. and powerpoint. Even the big internet players find it hard to cleanse their stables and the church is no more likely than King Canute to turn this tide-but the challenge is out there.

(b) This message derails "justification" insofar as "wrath" takes the prime place in the work of the cross instead of "justice". Under no consideration can this be right. Young credulous preachers and older pastors who have insufficiency weighed the considerations or perceived the sullied source of the concept may believe they enhance the message with greater assurance by tipping the balances with CALVARY WRATH. My friends, such wrath is not worth a scintilla in the work of the atonement which is a work where MERCY AND JUSTICE meet effectually and with the utmost kindness (grace) and sufficiency.

(c) CALVARY WRATH sticks out like a sore thumb in the message of grace-in fact it is a contradiction in terms. The message, far from signaling re-conciliation, introduces conflict within the Godhead. Think about it-you speak of the gospel of GRACE and in the next breath you insist it must begin in GRIEF on the one part and WRATH on the other between persons one and two of the triune God-how will that read among the world's religious thinkers? How does it get legroom and footfall among Evangelicals?

(d) How does it sit with the Reformed message? It stems from a Benedictine's compensatory Philosophy that everything the sinner deserves the Saviour suffers. It is not biblical doctrine-it is a theory-and expanded to where Christ is under CALVARY WRATH and suffering in HELL it is pathetic and nothing to be dogmatic and pugnacious about-it is the Achilles heel of Reformation.

(e) In the midst of such evangelical concern to preach CALVARY WRATH the message of the WRATH TO COME (genuine wrath) is sadly neglected. With this neglect comes neglect of the doctrine of the rapture and neglect of the teaching of Revelation 4-19 and the issues involved in what our Lord called “Great Tribulation” which as He warned will be without parallel since the world began. If every service must include preaching THE CROSS, (and why not in some measure?) albeit to largely converted persons- then let there be teaching of the true prophetic context of the WRATH TO COME!

(f) CALVARY WRATH might a priori seem to increase the significance of God’s love for the sinner in that He preferred our comfort to Christ’s agony and our drawing near to His drawing away from Christ. This is an utterly bogus concept, perverted psychology and a proposition worthy only of the trash bin. Nor can any blend of CALVARY WRATH sweeten the gospel of CALVARY LOVE with greater assurance. It is the fact that Jesus died for me that matters and that He gave His soul a ransom in sweet loving accord with the Father’s heart & plan that rejoices me and assures me as I await that meeting by and by. Theologians of the tighter sort cite Anselm or early reformers who bought into his philosophy to bolster a plea and argument for a wrath dividend for the Father to be extracted from the Son. Despite their dogmatic legal fiction the Father did not aggravate the passion of the Son and God’s righteous anger expressed against sin and sinners in the round is fully met and deprecated by our Saviour’s Mediatorial prayer.

BIBLE TEXTUAL VERITIES

There are a substantial number of texts that present as central to this challenge that both show and sustain the doctrine of justification by faith whereas there is absolutely no textual perspicuity in support of God-on God wrath in the outworking of the atonement.

Texts of vital relevance are as follows:-

(1) Genesis 15.7 Abraham’s sheer faith in “the (promised) Seed” for righteousness

(2) Leviticus 6.25 on ὁλος-αμαρτια Codex Alexandrinus-where 2Cor5.21 finds its setting.

(3) Psalm 51.1-18 "Have mercy on me, O God according to Your unfailing love...you who are my Saviour" linked to 2 Samuel 7.14(The prophecy of Nathan concerning the servant-Son of the house of David "I will show or test" Him by the sceptre of mighty ones and the smitings of the sons of Adam" (cf the "testing" of Rebekah by Eliezer jky and the demonstration of the Messiah both figure under the Hebrew verb jky)

(4) Isaiah53.10 "And the Lord inclines to(or is pleased at) the smiting of Him(Messiah)with stripes sickening as He sickens or being crushed as He crushes His spirit" yljh wakd xpj hwhw-the Hiphil reflexive carries the meaning "The Father was sickened in the sickness of the Son" or "grieved in His grief" whilst esteeming and admiring the fortitude and obedience of the Son. The deep turbulence of our Lord was reflected in the silent grief of the Father. In the entire OT Hebrew scriptures there are only 3 such verbal usages-the other two are Hosea7.5 & Micah 6.13

(5) Jeremiah 31.31 "Behold, the days are coming when I will make a New Covenant with Israel and Judah" Whilst this hvdj tyrbytrk "cutting a fresh covenant" appears to have its full flower at our Lord's return and kingdom so far as concerns Israel it is of "His cutting" and its observation is fully annotated in the gospel. It is of divine and not human provision and it has power to purify the heart unlike the former covenant.

(6) Habakkuk2.4 "And the righteous one will live (the life of God) by faith" hujy wtmab qydxw Emunah(faith) involves "security" and "fulfilling or keeping to promises" Thus exactly like Abraham, each believer must take God's promise at its face value and thus place his trust in this fundamental security.

(7) John5.24 "Whoever hears my word and believes ~~אמן~~ in Him who sent me [The point being "Divine concerted action to "give" or "deliver" ransom by incarnation & for atonement was a united commitment in line with Genesis 1.26 &3.13 and with the Lord's express purpose of life in Matt.28.20 &Mark10.45] there is the life of eternity for him and he does not come into judgment but has passed the landmark ("migrated" or "translated")~~אמן~~ from death to life".

(c)The spirit that perceives the coming of the Lord

(d)The spirit that ever revives

(e) The spirit that senses the presence of the wolf.

The contrast with the unconverted Paul “breathing out threats and slaughter” could not be more stark.

(11) Revelation 14.10 The Lord causes Babylon to drink of the mixed cup of HAMATH ~~המז~~ AND ROGAZ ~~רוגז~~ which is without dilution.

Wrath is seen outpoured upon the wicked-it is the feature of the “White Throne” not “The cross” and to substitute justice with wrath is absolutely impermissible. The effect is to concentrate upon Christ bearing wrath whereas He bore sin and its penalty –death. The second effect is to fail to preach the “wrath to come” and indeed the whole spectrum of prophetic future judgment. This departure from the duty to herald the coming rapture and the time of “great tribulation” and ensuing millennial rule of Christ is the sad corollary of concentration on the wrathification of the atonement.

(12) [a]Revelation 20.14 “*Death and Hell i.e wicked men & angels were cast ~~המז~~ into the lake of fire-this that actually exists(or still subsists) ~~המז~~ is the second death*” The Greek repeats the words

“The lake of fire” as the strange abiding essential ultimate judgment and the destiny of the devil in 20.10(cf 20.3 where He like demons was for an era in the Abyss)[b] In 20.10 there in the Lake of Fire the beast and false prophet were(or “will have been” *Βασισθησενται*) daily tormented until the age of eternity when they succumb in judgment. [c]The dispatch of the devil (*εβληθη* who was thrown there at the end of 1000 years-also the final judgment) when the wicked depart there after the millennium straight from the White Throne(20.13). The Lake of Fire has a BASANOS [touchstone] torture in respect of rejecting Christ who between death & resurrection proclaimed His victory in Hell. It also has a final destructive capability. The death spoken of by John as “second” was expounded by our Lord in Matt 10.28 & Luke 12.4 as the means by which God can destroy “both body and soul”. *These solemn verses demonstrate that we are saved from Hell and its terrors as men await the judgment*

and from the "second Death" when the second capability of the Lake of Fire is released.

SO WHERE SHALL WE NAIL THIS THESIS?

That stout defender of the doctrine of Justification Martin Luther nailed his theses to the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg. He wanted no adulteration of this central biblical doctrine of salvation and both his sentiment and his action were warranted. There is no better door to the world today than the internet and this modest document of challenge will live on to bring to every hearth and home that cares about God's Great Salvation and reconciling love the conviction that Justification is by Faith alone through Grace alone in Christ alone. Think about it-the beloved Father of the Only Begotten was twice grieved through the ages of time-once when He witnessed the deluge and again when He witnessed the crucifixion. Reconciliation is precious and ever fragrant because it comes out of the heart of a gracious Father who in the grief of His only beloved was "sickened in spirit" though exultant in heart and pleased that such a glorious valiant Son should be willing to be "given" to ransom sinners lost and otherwise born to death as the sparks fly upward and destined for hell's bitter remorse and the judgment of the second death at the Great White Throne.

In concluding I quote a very great and dearly loved hymn writer of our time with just a few of whose stanzas of course I have such reserve that I would not sing them or in singing substitute them. It would be obtuse and ungracious not to acknowledge talent and very significant contributions to worship but equally unwise not to encourage and request serious thought amongst musicians, theologians who advise them and preachers who affirm them as to how with felicity and biblical validity and accuracy to express the faith. This faith we received from the witnesses who are gone before and the apostles upon whose shoulders we stand and the Saviour whose grief and covenant love found echo moment by moment in the Father's heart when -CALVARY LOVE-moved all who stood at the last around that old rugged cross.

How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure

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