

THE GOD OF WRATH IN RELATION TO THE ATONEMENT

At the time that this article was written, Frederick S. Leahy was professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland and author of *Satan Cast Out (Banner of Truth)*. The particular article I critique was taken from the *Banner of Truth Magazine* (Issue 379: April, 1995, pp. 23-25). **Fred Leahy**

INTRODUCTION

This brief paper comes to terms with the “Web cast” of the thoughts of Dr Leahy and on the score of his own test of doctrine dares to suggest that he, like many dealing with the doctrinal crux of *divine wrath* gets into a position not unlike that of my grand-daughter when she attempts to do the splits. I leave the matter of arbitration to the reader in the hope that serious thought on *how we apply divine wrath to men and women around us in the course of preaching and teaching may be more gracious* and that Jonathan Edwards may not continue to achieve more acclaim and glory for his tirade on wrath than our Lord for His forbearance and patience amid divine displeasure at our disobedience. The first and vital question is not theological at all-it is devotional. It is the question David faced towards the end of his reign (2Kings 24.1). It is the question “Have I the smiling of His face?” It begs a further question that is theological. That is “Does divine wrath fit a scale and is it a mere attitude of love? The answer is that God’s anger breaks forth even against his children along a gradation of displeasure which if we think of a scale runs from His being well pleased through displeasure at continuance in sin to His expressing serious indignation and acting in solemn though not sustained anger. From the glorious blue of His radiant joy through irritation(RAGAZ Ezra5.12)the amber of His indignation and constant provocation(cf. CAAS Jeremiah44.8) to the red warning of His anger (Cf. 2Chron.19.2 QAZAPH) is the wrong direction for any life to take in relation to God. But beyond all these there is the white heat of God’s wrath which is “reserved” (Romans9.22, 1Thess.1.10, Apocalypse6.16 et alii). It is the ultimate sanction – in the life of nations leading directly to judgment and however soon or late in the case of the wicked it is the ultimate sanction leading to the Lake of Fire. To misunderstand this is to seek to house wrath as a strange bedfellow with love as if they twinned readily. They are contrary the one to the other and not moods or attitudes of one another. In this whole treatment this axiomatic principle must be borne in mind.

Bob Coffey, Westgate, May 2013

Dr Leahy writes:-

If we are wrong in our doctrine of God, we are wrong all along the line. We shall be in error in every doctrine of the Faith if we hold an erroneous doctrine of God. So our doctrine of God will relate powerfully to our doctrine of the Atonement. If, for example, we do not believe that God is a God of wrath as well as a God of love, and that his essential holiness means the inevitable punishment of sin, then we shall not believe in the substitutionary and vicarious nature of Christ's death on the Cross. That is why the doctrine of God's holy wrath borne by his Son at Calvary is repugnant to the liberal theologian. He has an erroneous view of God.

Answer: Dr Leahy will know how moods and actions can be attributed to God with consummate ease and fragile reason. God is a God of Love by His own definition but whereas in His actions He reserves wrath for the day of wrath and judgment of ungodly men preachers and teachers are instant and insistent to apply it. We may speak of the wrath of God but not the God of wrath - wrath is contingent so far as God is concerned. God is always "light", always just, always holy and good, always loving but not always wrathful. Leahy does not define Judgment as falling on the wicked at the Great White Throne. Why? Is Reformed thinking deficient in warning of judgment to come? Has it dispensed with the bible's eschatological framework? Instead the good Doctor fast forwards to Hell on the Cross. But there is no biblical statement to support this notion. I do believe God is by nature love yet He has exercised and will duly exercise His wrath upon the wicked and rebellious. Jesus Christ took the penalty of our sin in His death and atoned by the shedding of His blood. That ransom satisfied divine justice and brings men by faith to God. The work of the atonement restores a relationship broken at the fall – through the Spirit then given produces the born again life also the possibility of heart holiness and the resurrection of bodies to which Matthew testifies. The atonement is dynamic.

Dr. Leahy continues:-

The Bible makes it clear that the unforgiven sinner stands under God's curse and that **'the wrath of God abideth (or rests) on him'** (John 3:36). 'When it is stated that 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us' (Gal. 3:13), not only is it implied that we

were 'the children of wrath' (Eph. 2:3), and under God's curse, **but also it is implied that when Christ was made a curse for us he was the object of divine wrath.** *(It is correct to state that we are naturally born with a nature which if not changed delivers us to wrath automatically but not instantly - God's mercy constantly abounds where His displeasure is to be found.)*

Answer

The passage only says "becoming (middle voice appearance active effect) a curse for us" i.e. "being a curse" as He hung upon the tree. There is no mention of wrath in Galatians 3.13 - it is inveighed.

On the Cross Christ bore the full penal sanction of the law of God which was our due. Our punishment was transferred to him. The curse which he endured consisted especially in his experience of being forsaken by God. **There was awareness in His human nature of a complete withdrawal of God, and that is the essential element of damnation and eternal death: that is hell.**

Answer A

The utter abandonment of Jesus' humanity by God is heretical - it is Quasi-Nestorian (urging that Christ is two persons not one - i.e. "a sinner" and "the perfect Son of God" who cannot sin at one and the same time) and if it implies that God is not "in" Jesus salvation itself is prejudiced - and it may be that Subordinationism is indulged- the teaching of an inferior God. How careful we must be that our doctrine of God is correct! God was "in Christ" and He attested to "never being left alone" because He always does the things that please God. To state against two references in Isaiah and the absolute consent of Gethsemane that matters are any different at the cross or that Jesus had ceased to please God is incorrect. Cf. John 8.39. Christ did not go to Hell on the cross there to be tortured -this is not redemption theology but rather re-constructionism.

Answer B

The first reference to the curse is in Genesis 3.17-19 and it is not just thorns and thistles or unending difficulty providing food all one's days but ultimately death that lies within the boundary of God's disfavour and curse. Secondly we read of the curse in Deut. 21.23 where we read

*“Cursed in one he that hangs on a tree”. We read in Isaiah not that God did curse him but He was **esteemed by men to be** under Gods curse as a blasphemer whereas Isaiah corrects to say that Christ represented our iniquity sin and transgressions and their consequences as in love He carried them and suffered death by consequence. The law said that any who dies on a tree is cursed and Jesus died that lowliest of ignominious deaths in our place to whom the curse attaches because we do not perfectly obey the law - but His perfect obedience and blood brings us blessing whilst He dies as representative both our sin and as a representative of sinners who are under the curse that we might know blessing. Galatians 3. 11-13 brings no hell or no eternal wrath on Christ. It speaks about His substitutionary atonement and the manner of it.*

Answer B

The complete withdrawal mentioned must deal with two issues - separating Father and Son - and it appears clear that Dr. Leahy falls into the trap he first states. Second the word “Near” + the term “inertial” or “absent” εγκαταλείπω speaks of a relationship continued in silence but simultaneously determined to deliver salvation and not to spare the ransom and to go on in this pincer movement of Father and Son in reconciling to victory for the redemption of mankind to tear the veil and send the light. Thus the cry of Christ was answered in returning light for the soldiers watched him as one ran to Him and they relaxed guard. Shortly Jesus shouted IT IS FINISHED and died victorious. The shout is a “shriek” like that of a carrion bird – clamouring for what is viewed - then almost immediately the cry was answered mightily as the veil opened and the way to God was secured and God opened a massive era of ongoing mercy for mankind in the gospel. As Richard Bauckham says

*When John the divine says John 3.36 the wrath of God abides on or against or over the unbeliever as far as his unbelief lasts - with the coming of faith condemnation that extended over him ceases. Wrath is concomitant with lack of faith in the Son of God revealed. Ephesians 2.3 is the other side of the coin and confirms this view - namely that by Gods great love we who had all the sinful evidence of unbelief about us were saved from wrath – whereas others in their sinful nature **are unpersuaded and hard** as we were remain under the energies of Satan dead in sin and in danger of that wrath of which scripture warns may bring the crisis of actual death and coming judgment at any time but*

we in whom the Holy Spirit works are escaped from this coming wrath. Christ did not have our sinful nature as the Socinians teach and so in His pure nature He was not subject to the spirit that works in the children of disobedience which attracts and deserves the divine wrath. Wrath thus is reserved for the wicked and unbelieving. Jesus I repeat saved us by His perfect life and sacrifice which was well pleasing and propitiatory as a mercy seat to God so we in him are accepted as sinless in God's sight. "Judge nothing before the time" Paul advised the Corinthians in 1Cor 4.5. "God has established a day when to judge the hearts of men by that man whom He has appointed" "God (daily) stands His love in our pathway (commends his love) in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." God parades about in search of sinners. Christ called the sinners to repentance - Matthew 9.13, Mark 2.17, Lk5.32. Jesus was a "friend" of sinners Matthew 11.19 Luke7.34. 1Tim 1.15 Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"

It was not that the Father hated his Son on the Cross. There was no *emotional* anger on the Father's part. He never ceased to love the Son in whom he was well pleased. There was, however, **a judicial suffering** caused by God. God's wrath in this context should be seen not as a divine *emotion*, but as a divine *act*, a point that is stressed by Dr. Shedd in his masterly treatment of the subject. Calvin makes this very point.

Answer

Leahy defines anger without feeling angry. This is casuistry to get him out of patripassianism. He has a category of a special sort of anger called "the anger of the judge". God's justice is not a blend of anger and pleasure. His justice is His righteousness - His peculiar ability to "be just and the justifier". God can retain the perfect standard of justice for all His elect and still justify them as sinners because of imputation of righteousness. Many hyper Calvinist theologians speak of wrath as the other side of the coin of anger and as the expression of love. This is confusion and misunderstanding of quite juxtaposed attributes. He can share righteousness with man because in His Son He found a ransom. It is not about how His anger works - it is how His justice works and His love of holiness and setting men apart in life. This works by the fulfilling for us of all righteousness in Christ.

Dr Leahy:-

Yet we do not suggest that God was ever inimical or angry toward him.

Answer

Is this really the case? The facility of volt face is extraordinary! Dr. Leahy turns one way and then another to avoid error but he is caught in Anselm's trap. You can't have your bread and eat it. You absolutely say God was angry with Jesus or you do not. Jurgen Moltmann takes it to the dialectic that you cannot avoid in wrath – the Father is at enmity with the Son but this philosophy is not atonement and owes little or nothing to the death and blood of the lamb. An outpouring of mysterious wrath additional to the death Christ said He was to suffer at the hands of cruel men out of which the Father could not extricate Him nor He withdraw and fulfil the two-fold commitment of redemption is what we are talking about. Dr. Leahy's might not with content place the Trinity in such bold polarisation yet he is doing the equivalent of the theological splits. Conveniently wrath can be recast as anger or it can be diminished by denial as in this sentence or embellished as in earlier sentences at will because it is both a theory and a mystery of unknown quantity and the best thinkers don't know where to bolt it on to the gospel of reconciling mercy love and grace. Such theories and mysteries cannot oblige us as creedal adherents.

Dr Leahy

How could he be angry toward his beloved Son, 'in whom his heart reposed'? (cf. *Matt.* 3:17). How could Christ by **His intercession appease the Father** towards others, if He were himself hateful to God? (*Institutes* 2:16:11).

Answer

*The intercession of the perfect mediator is presented by Calvin as the propitiation. **Calvin speaks of wrath but ends up with wrath muted to intercession supporting John Stott's forceful rider and the whole patristic understanding confirmed by Richard Bauchman.** The Hebrew writer says "He was heard in that He was reverent or obedient". It is the person of Christ together with His work of obedience refined more than any other in the death of the cross that is the basis on which Christ's atonement*

worked (Hebrews 5.7). Redemption does not source in the wrath of God borne at the cross but in the justice of God satisfied at the cross by the atoning blood of the Lamb of God. Christ's unprecedented obedience and blood bought our redemption and atoned for our sin. That is its source.

Dr Leahy:

God never loved his Son more than when he was suffering for the sins of his people on the Cross. *To some this may seem somewhat esoteric and scholastic*, but *really it is intended to avoid grave misunderstanding* about God's **attitude** when he caused the sufferings of our Saviour.

Answer

First wrath is not an attitude of Love. God's wrath is a judgment of an inexorable sort. To apply the wrath of the Father to the sufferings of Christ as I have earlier shown is to confuse contraries and to mix the ultimate sanction when love is finally spurned with the cross where God is well pleased with His Son and providing a ransom in His justice through the perfect life of Jesus absolutely co-ordinate with the surrendered life of His blessed Son our Lord. May who crucified condemned the righteous but God approved Him as His obedient Son. The attitude was love not wrath. Theology is not an excuse for slick footwork and calling contradictories compatibles. Habakkuk who says "In wrath remember mercy" might seem to invoke an exception but he is speaking about RAGAZ or the situation where the nation provokes God and provocation is on the scale I earlier outlined.

*Letting God off the hook is only necessary because He had been put there by rash theological synecdoche. The scholasticism of the reformer has to be marvelled at and it emerges through postulating a level of cleavage in the deity and instigating a mysterious volume of wrath neither Dr. Leahy nor others can ground in scripture rightly understood. **The gospel warns of wrath to come and demonstrates that man whilst under God's displeasure enjoys forbearance and mercy.** Dr. Leahy might advantage by a further survey of the real suffering predicted in Isaiah 53.10 and spoken of by Christ in Matthew 16.21, 17.12, Mark 8.31, 9.12, Luke 9.22 & 17.25. In the prophet Isaiah God is spoken of as "sickening the wound" of Christ i.e. **allowed His Beloved without interposition to suffer***

the cross in extremis without sparing Him. But in so doing God is also torn through self imposed inertia and on account of compassion or empathy and feels the wrench. He is not featured as standing crying but I can affirm neither was He taking pleasure in the horror of the cross. He took pleasure in (a) The obedience amid those bruising that enabled a life to be offered as a basis for mercy - as what Paul called in 2 Corinthians 5.21 “Sin” for αμαρτια for the moral thinkers of Greece was between “that which is unrighteous” (αδικημα) and “that which is misfortune” (ατυχημα) and it meant “sin bearing” or “an act of satisfaction” cf. Aristotle Nicomidian Ethics 5.8.7 and Plato Politics 296B. Thus Paul using the active of the verb says “Christ made an offering of satisfaction” which was neither “misfortune” nor “unrighteous”. Let’s get real - Christ himself said “He was to suffer at the hands of sinful men and be crucified”. (Matthew 16.21, He willed one will with God and like Isaac agreed to be put upon the altar He fully consented to as the Father consented to give Him unto death – all for us.

Dr Leahy

It is clear from Scripture that Christ’s atoning death was substitutionary or vicarious and that by it he satisfied the holiness of God and so rendered him propitious or favourably disposed to his people. *John Murray says that ‘propitiation presupposes the wrath and displeasure of God and the purpose of propitiation is the removal of this displeasure’ (Redemption: Accomplished and Applied, p. 36).*

Answer

John Murray is close to my own position but he demurs going beyond substitution and Christ’s person and work by referring to a so-called presupposition. God did not remove His wrath because He feasted His wrath. He removed His wrath on us because he had found a perfect ransom and sacrifice in His beloved obedient son. In another sense the death of Christ presumes the wrath of God to come. God’s anger visited on mankind temporally from time to time is of one sort - not more or less because sinners become saints or abide in sin –it is ever mixed with mercy. God judges nothing before the time - all judgment is given the Son - the cross was determined in the provision of God and of Christ as the sentence of death which he suffered for us. Propitiation either as sacrifice ιλασμος to appease or a mercy seat to cover ιλαστηριον is

related to the law, the command of God and the ancient curse and sentence pronounced at the fall “dying you will die”. Man was called and loved of God but angels drove him from the garden because sin brought displeasure and continuance therein results in wrath entailing the second or ultimate death. The penalty of disobedience is death.

Dr. Leahy

The apostle Paul speaks of ‘Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, **by his blood**’ (Rom. 3:24f.). Many, following C. H. Dodd, replace ‘propitiation’ by ‘expiation’, a much weaker word. The word translated ‘propitiation’ has to do with the averting of divine wrath. Leon Morris comments: ‘If there is “a righteous anger” of God, and the New Testament is clear that there is then it cannot be ignored in the process of forgiveness’ (*The Cross in the New Testament*, p. 349). Propitiation, then, a turning away of God’s wrath, lies at the heart of Christ’s redemptive work. Well does John Murray say: ‘Grace indeed reigns but a grace reigning apart from righteousness is not only not actual; it is inconceivable’ (*Redemption*, p. 20).

Answer

Leon Morris speaks of “the hypothesis” of righteous anger. It is very clear that God can and does exercise “righteousness” but I ask “Has Leon himself made the case and shown chapter and verse for this anger?” God can show mercy and display love and express pleasure in having the means of ransom and share the sickening blows of the cross in His silence of affection but He “does not”, repeat “does not” in being present and immediately responsive at the hour of prayer which struck with Christ’s “Eloi, eloi” pour out wrath - He affirms His Son’s work in love - opening the gates to forgiveness and to grace and glory. While women weep at the cross God stirred from inertial silence of deep compassion in mighty affirming support and joy tearing the veil in two as Father and Son rejoiced in the fruit of the greatest victory and deepest obedience and most effectual atonement of all time. In its aftermath the joy set before our Lord was shared in time with sinners but immediately with the Father - indeed that joy had been known earlier in the eleventh-cum-twelfth hour the cross when the dying thief rejoiced to see the fountain on that day and there was joy in the presence of the angels of God - i.e. in a foretaste of what was to come.

Dr. Leahy:

When James Denney avers that the Atonement ‘is a homage paid by Christ to the moral order of the world established and upheld by God; homage essential to the work of reconciliation...’ (*Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 235), he betrays a radical flaw in his understanding of substitution. The Atonement was infinitely more than and qualitatively different from a ‘homage’ paid to God’s righteousness. If that is all that is meant by substitution, then the term is being used in a much lowered sense. Christ’s sufferings, on this view, were an example of what sin deserved, an exhibition of God’s displeasure with sin. It is really the old governmental or rectoral theory of Grotius (1583-1645) which sees no enduring of the penalty of the Law and reduces the Cross to little more than a symbol. It is not surprising, then, that Denney openly rejects the doctrine of the Atonement as held by Luther, Calvin and John Owen (*Reconciliation*, p. 263 and p. 49).

Naturally, the idea of averting the wrath of God by a substitutionary suffering is repugnant to liberal theologians. Carl Henry quotes Titus: *To many it seems immoral to picture God as . . . one who needs to be appeased by the blood of a victim. We cannot think . . . of atonement as the propitiation of an angry monarch God. We feel a moral revulsion at the thought of sinners in the hands of a wrathful God. . . . Many conceptions which are set forth in terms as blood atonement, expiation, ransom, substitution, satisfaction . . . and the like, have not only lost much of their meaning, but they offend the enlightened moral sense of today. (What is a Mature Morality? pp. 146f; Henry’s Christian Personal Ethics, p. 364f).*

Thus man would make God in his own image!

Certainly this aspect of the Cross has been caricatured and misrepresented as when it is suggested that Christ had to placate an angry God in order to change him into a loving God. Recognition of the love of God is crucial at this point. ‘God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us’ (*Rom.* ‘5:8). The Cross of Christ is the supreme demonstration of the love of God. God ‘spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all . . .’ (*Rom.* 8:32). The costliness of the sacrifice matches the greatness of the love. There is no conflict between God’s wrath and God’s compassion; they exist simultaneously. There is this difference, however; God’s wrath against sin is inevitable, whereas His

mercy is optional and depends entirely on His sovereign pleasure. As a holy God he must punish sin; but he is not obliged to propitiate his own wrath.

In mercy he determined to do this and he has done so by the Cross of Jesus Christ. There is no conflict, then, between God's holy wrath and God's holy love. John Murray puts it neatly: **'It is one thing to say that the wrathful God is made loving. That would be entirely false.** It is another thing to say that the wrathful God is loving- that is profoundly true' (*ibid* p. 37). 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 4:10).

Answer A

*To juggle love and wrath is the Reformer's consummate balancing trick. As you will have gathered from my introduction wrath does not resolve in terms of love but rather represents love resolutely spurned. It classifies under judgment and the ultimate sanction but is never applied to those who are approved or well-pleasing to God. John the divine is saying that God is Love and loved us and as a result in love and accompanying His Son in reconciliation He sent His only Son as a ransom and in His **PERSON** He died to turn away the wrath of God for our sins on the mercy seat or propitiatory of the cross pleading for us and dying in our place. His perfect life, strong crying and tears and righteous plea for us based on the precious blood He shed on the cross constitutes the sacrifice He made – as the incarnate Son of God. John says that twice in 1John2.2 & 4.10. This is not wrath but as the early church showed love incarnate carrying the means of our salvation and God's redemption.*

*The mercy seat also figures in Romans 3.25 & Hebrews 9.5 In these contexts the "mercy seat" is a picture of the redemptive-intercessory act of Christ. It is His **WORK**. Thus Paul says "We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus - it is not in any external wrath. It is in Christ. God set him forth or foreordained Him as the Lamb to perform the task of atoning or bringing us back. In this character His work is referred to by Paul as the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. In this character He is presented by John the divine 29 times. All the benefits of this are realisable through faith in His*

blood – and Christ declares God’s righteousness or “shared righteousness” δικαιοσύνη at this moment or through His death on the cross. The act of the cross was a Passover by which He became the lamb for the households who trust him. God declared righteousness by being just as the Father who found a ransom and took in Himself the Lamb of God the penalty of death and so is the justifier of the believer.

Again in Hebrews 9.5 we read of the mercy seat as part of the furniture of the tabernacle and in Hebrews 9 v15 Christ as mediator consecrated the testament by the once offering of Himself to bear the sins of many for Isaiah says they meet on Him as the hands of every era are placed on the lamb.

Answer B Christ as a sin offering

Dr. Leahy’s attention might once more be drawn to Isaiah 53.10 where prophetically and aptly God is portrayed as sickening the wound of Christ - allowed Him to suffer the cross in extremis without sparing his beloved. But in so doing God is also torn and feels the wrench. He is not featured as standing crying but I can affirm neither was He taking pleasure in the horror of the cross. He took pleasure in (a) The obedience amid those bruising that enabled a life to be offered as a basis for mercy-as what Paul called in 2 Corinthians 5.21 “Sin” for αμαρτία for the moral thinkers of Greece was between “that which is unrighteous” (αδικημα) and “that which is misfortune” (ατυχημα) and it meant “sin bearing” or “an act of satisfaction” cf. Aristotle Nicomidian Ethics 5.8.7 and Plato Politics 296B. Thus Paul using the active of the verb says “Christ made an offering of satisfaction” which was neither “misfortune” nor “unrighteous”. Let’s be very real - Christ himself said “He was to suffer at the hands of sinful men and be crucified”. (Matthew 16.21). He willed one will with God and like Isaac agreed to be put upon the altar. He fully consented to as the Father consented to give Him unto death –all for us.

Dr Leahy borrows from Luther not the bible:

(a) "It was the anger of God itself that Christ bore - the eternal anger which our sins had deserved. . . The inner sufferings of Jesus, His anguish an anguish in comparison with which all human anguish and fear are but a

slight matter was *the feeling of the Divine anger.*" (Martin Luther)

(b) Luther interprets Gal. iii. 13: foolishly "All the prophets saw this in the Spirit, that Christ would be of all men the greatest robber, murderer, adulterer, thief, sacrilegious person, blasphemer, etc., than whom none greater ever was in the world, because He who is a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world now is not an innocent person, and without sin, is not the Son of God born of the Virgin, but a sinner who has and bears the sin of Paul who was a blasphemer, a persecutor and violent, of Peter who denied Christ, of David who was an adulterer, a murderer, and made the Gentiles blaspheme the name of the Lord; to sum up, who has and bears all the sins of all men in His own body, not because He committed them, but because He took them, committed by us, upon His own body to make satisfaction for them with His own blood." (Martin Luther) *I would not go there with Luther any more than join him in his vitriol against the Jews. Hurrah for his emphatic stand on justification but with Him I am obliged to part company with him on his diatribe on the Lamb of God.*

Answer

Joining ranks with Luther is as Calvin found quite difficult. Calvin had to heavily scale down Luther's rhetoric on wrath. In his day Luther did the church a mighty favour in proclaiming the doctrine of justification by faith but spoke unhappy words about Jews and Israel. He was voluminously unwise in what he stated about Christ and he is utterly wrong in his interpretation of Isaiah 53 which I have examined above

Answer - Calvin & Luther wrath run aground

*Passive penal satisfaction has been already alluded to; and it can hardly be denied that, in systematising the Reformation doctrine, **Calvin added some new strident features, which however were implicit in the (offensive) teaching of Luther.** They only serve to show how unwise it is to **theorise** about the infinite.*

*Dr. Harnack takes the notion of "eternal death" (in itself a theological anomaly deriving from "Second death". Granted it is widely understood as a "lost eternity" etc. Harnack goes on to say "Either Christ could suffer only one eternal death and so could pay the debt of only one sinner, or else that eternal death is equal to all eternals, in which case the perdition of all mankind is exactly equal to the perdition of one. Such quantitative comparisons between guilt and satisfaction are **frivolous arithmetical***

*sums. The matter of equivalences of wrath is **not** dealt with in scripture so we have every right to depart from the issue and theoretical mystery of which so many appear so well informed on such want of scripture warrant.*

Answer

*Calvin says wrath is **the attitude of God** toward sin. That is always true so long as the theologian rightly stresses 2 Corinthians 5.21 and acknowledges the interplay of that commensurate truth that God loves the sinner- which Calvin does. The statement is evidence of the very considerable scaling down of wrath Calvin manages-something with which I cannot take exception. Through transference to “attitude” mercy and forbearance are found space in an accommodation rather better than Jonathan Edwards achieved.*

Dr. Leahy:

Thus the apostle Paul, **with the Cross in view**, could say: ‘We shall be saved from wrath through him’ (Rom. ‘5:9). We are saved from the wrath to come, the wrath that will be ‘dispensed to the ungodly at the day of judgment’ (Redemption, Murray).

Answer

At length Dr. Leahy arrives at the vital eschatological approach of scripture. This is why preachers should not fume at their people but rather with gravity and most kindly appeal seek humble repentance in view of the fact of coming judgment. The reality of Christ’s return as judge must be the most compelling factor. The apocalypse assures us that all who died without faith will appear before Christ and the books will be opened and they will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

The apostle, however, was not referring to the cross but to the coming wrath as he did in 1 Thessalonians 4. What was in view was the future of Christians and the church. The interpretation can so easily become skewed. Paul is stressing that when Jesus comes to take the Church home we will be spared the aftermath of the tribulation. The reference to Murray does not clear the air. The mercy of God’s provision of atonement in the cross ensures we shall not face the Great White Throne nor shall we face the tribulation outpoured temporal wrath of the end times. The main body of modern Calvinists no longer preach the

parousia nor the judgment of nations nor do they refer to the Great White Throne and indeed seldom even to judgment to come.

ATONEMENT AND CREEDAL PRINCIPLES

CALVIN'S THEORY IN BRIEF

CONFIRMED AT DORDT

For Calvin, this also required drawing on Augustine's earlier theory of predestination. Additionally, in rejecting the idea of penance, **Calvin shifted** from Aquinas' idea that satisfaction was penance (which focused on satisfaction as a change in humanity), **to the idea of satisfying God's wrath**. This ideological shift places the focus on a change in God, who is propitiated through Christ's death. The Calvinist understanding of the atonement and satisfaction is penal substitution: Christ is a substitute taking our punishment and thus **satisfying the demands of justice and appeasing God's wrath** so that God can justly show grace. Calvin states his position variously reducing it at one point to little more than obedience and intercession of Christ. His main contribution was to tie satisfaction to the elect.

Paul says God is just and justifier because Christ is who He is – the one ordained as “mercy seat” or propitiation by blood and this relates to the instrument of faith in His atoning death. This mercy was to declare the shared righteousness of God for the passing over of bygone sins. Paul is linking the mercy seat to the idea of “Passover” in the armistice or long suffering of God aimed at the present display (in Paul’s day & since) of righteousness shared out of faith in Jesus. Paul tells the Romans that a long rebellion has come to the issue of offered peace and right standing. It is not just for Jews in Egypt but all who would seek Christ in the world. Propitiation is nothing other than the shedding of Christ’s blood for us.

COMMENT OF JOHN STOTT

John Stott has stressed stressed that **this must be understood not as the Son placating the Father**, but rather in Trinitarian terms of the Godhead initiating and carrying out the atonement, motivated by a desire to save humanity. Thus the key distinction of penal substitution is the idea that **restitution is made through punishment**.

Hence, for Calvin, one is saved by becoming united to Christ through faith. At the point of becoming united with Christ through faith, one receives all the benefits of the atonement. However, because Christ paid for sins when he died, it is not possible for those for whom he died to *fail* to receive the benefits: the saved are *predestined* to believe,

COMMENT

The key is punishment or ransom or justice satisfied and the wrath of God represented by the curse annulled. The curse upon as in Genesis 3 17-19 has incorporated within it the particular pains and strains of food production for sustaining life and ultimately death (and its long future history of attendant afflictions because of sin). Man is described as “dust” i.e. not naturally eternal. The curse was pending before the fall and patent at the fall. As Solomon said “Man is born to death as the sparks fly upward” but the ultimate judgment of the second death brings about the situation where “dying man surely dies”.

MY POSITION

I believe what the scriptures as originally given and by comparison teach under the Holy Spirit of God and to that I yield my conscience.

I am not Docetist. Christ really suffered in his human flesh heart and mind. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was a man of or fitted for sorrows and yet he felt every nail-blow and every insult and both were terrible-yet when reviled he reviled not again and when he suffered he threatened not

I am not a Socinian I believe that the death of Christ satisfied **Divine justice** and when the in obedience He died the accursed death of the cross he satisfied the **Holy** Father on all counts. I believe He died to provide truce from and security against the enmity and wrath of God and of the Lamb for all who would believe.

I am not Patropassian. As Isaiah said God was grieved or sick when he in the divine council outworked his Son was put to grief. This does not mean

God suffered as in the flesh man suffers but that God loved his son and as we might say was moved with compassion and love because God is love.

I believe in penal substitution I believe the wages of sin is death and that Christ paid for the sins of “many” as Paul said in Romans 5. 15, 19. *How many* I leave to God but hold a brief for John 3.16 where we read “God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”. I believe further that Christ was in his person the propitiation or substitute for sin and that in His death or shedding of His precious blood that penalty was paid.

I am not a Universalist Scripture speaks of the wrath of God which has been prefigured temporally in the flood and a Sodom but will be dispensed in judgment at the Great White Throne

I believe that God is just and the justifier This entails absolute belief in the forensic of imputed righteousness and the judicial conferring of standing only through faith and not by works of righteousness which we have done.

I believe the whole doctrine of the Nicene Creed

I believe the Apostles’ Creed

I believe the Westminster Statement. "The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Him self hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father" (Ch. viii. sect. v.)

I believe in limited atonement but state it in Pauline terms “Christ died for the many”. I believe God foreknew and pre-horizoned and in every age has those who are His yet I believe He did not disable man’s faculties at the fall and through the cross every obstacle to faith is removed excepting the will or capacity to obey or resist the Holy Spirit. I do not believe in universalism. I believe the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ is efficacious for all who will believe and are known to God as His own. ***Please note that Lutherans do not believe in limited atonement or in unconditional perseverance.*** I consent to both these doctrines – the first in the above terms.

I reject the dogma that Christ became a cursed sinner as Luther verging on blasphemy taught in his literal interpretation of Galatians interpreting the prophets in error

Gal. iii. 13

The prophets saw this in the Spirit, that Christ would be of all men the greatest robber, murderer, adulterer, thief, sacrilegious person, blasphemer, etc., than whom none greater ever was in the world, because He who is a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world now is not an innocent person, and without sin, is not the Son of God born of the Virgin *Martin Luther*

An explanation

First notice the use of “Not knowing sin”. It is not the absolute οὐ in Greek but the speculative or cognitive μη for our Lord knew the heart of man and was in one sense absolutely aware of sin and its consequence. He himself said that He came “Not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” Mt. 9.13, Mk 2.17, Luke 5.32. This means several things:-

(a) Our Lord did not observe sin insofar as he did not look up observe and ever feast his eyes on sin.

(b) He did not think judgmentally about sin so as to be continually passing sentence like the Pharisees though His awareness was greater. He had compassion on those who sinned and were out of the way.

(c) He did not once have carnal knowledge of or actual involvement in sinning in His person during His whole life.

Our Lord was perfect in devotion to the Father and purity, open accepting (receiving sinners) and sincere in attitude and sinlessly perfect.

HE BECAME SIN 2 Corinthians 5.21

There is no issue if the next word *αμαρτια* is taken to mean sin offering” But if it is demanded that the next word is actually **sin** there is a theological issue. If Paul had wanted to say “He became sin” he could plainly have done so using the Greek exactly as in the LXX 2 Kings 12.30 where it says the “word of God became sin” using the verb *εγενετο* with *εις αμαρτια* but Paul uses *εποιησαν* nor does he show a turning to sin by using *εις*. We have to conclude that he is not stating that our Lord became “sin” or that he became a sinner”.

(1) He represented sin

There are three options open to us. The first is somewhat scholastic. The verb is active and aorist and the expression in plain Greek reads “He created sin”. There obviously has to be a legal or special sense if the word sin is “sin” as generally understood though Calvinists are not infrequently accused of arguing that God is the author of sin. What then is the meaning? Let us study the words!

(a) **He made** It could mean (i) “Create” “Bring into existence” “inspire”(and in particular “to represent” as poetry does life so **He represented all sin” in His person** coming under the judgment of death) “invent” “cause” or (ii) in the abstract “to make a sacrifice...when connected to the next word understood in a special sense it would read perfectly well a sin offering. This is in line with the patristic understanding of the death of Christ.

(b) **Sin** (1) Various of the meanings as “missing the mark”, “failure”, “deprivation” make no sense in English without interpretation; but (2) according to Buttmann who took the meaning further back than any it is linked to the cognates **αμειρω αμερδω αμβροτος (αμβροσια)** with the significance “to take away the share” to “amerce” or to “lose” (sometimes of life). This meaning enables Paul’s expression to read **“He was amerced of the elixir or food” of His relationship with the Father-converse-God’s word – there was silence.** It appears to mean also “death” itself. This was utterly outside of God’s previous experience - extraneous to the very nature of the living God. This sense balances with the apodosis for he was amerced and we were endowed.

(c) **for us** In place of our becoming without the food and word of God and dying that death where there is no life word He died. The mystery inspires awe and worship. The spirit of Christ went to the Father and He visited Hell and many bodies arose subsequently and when He arose their spirits returned. But note that bodies were given through his death and before his resurrection (Matthew 27.53). The cross amerced him of his share as the righteous one and made him sins’ representative in dying that we might have a share in divine righteousness.(**δικαιοσυνη**). Notice the use of “become” – it means “to have life” and to have standing.

As to the much simpler interpretation “sin offering” if we render the Greek word **αμαρτια** into Hebrew and read the text of 2 Corinthians 5.21 in Hebrew when we read it in its best sense it renders **“He offered Him**

as a sin offering for us who knew no sin". Universally in the Mosaic ceremonials the words "sin" and "sin offering" are identical.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself not accounting or reckoning their transgressions to them" and on His own behalf and by His action placing in our circle (as Christians) the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are empowered ambassadors on behalf of and on the part of Christ, according as and as if God in Christ is appealing or moving by his Spirit to appeal through us we beg a favour on Christ's behalf "Be reconciled to God". So the gospel presents divine favour and seeks the favour of men for what it offers. In the ministry of the gospel we are willing to be reduced to "beggars". The specific reason that enforces this craving for the ear and heart of men is that "He who (still) does not have any experience of sin or sinning for our sake created a sin offering.

We need to understand that when the AV says "*God made Him to be sin*" where the verb "made" is active this does not mean that Christ was made "a sinner". Luther used extravagant even blasphemous language in this connection-see above

(2) GREEK ETHICS AS A PRESUMED PAULINE CONTEXT

It is widely agreed to mean "He made Him to be a sin offering" under the Hebrew understanding as set out below. **For the Corinthians who knew Aristotle and his ethics the Gentile understanding would be that there was "sin" between that which was "unrighteous" and that which was "unfortunate"**.

Paul may well have been explaining the cross as much more than a simple misfortune and also denying that the death of Christ was simple injustice. It was "sin bearing" or an act involving *satisfaction for sin*.

(3) THINKING IN HEBREW PAUL'S EXPRESSION FAVOURS "SIN OFFERING" 100%

Read or understood as a Hebrew statement it would mean "He made an offering (ASHAH) of Himself (ATHO) for *the* sin (LEHATTEATH) on our behalf in order that we might become and stay alive in His house belonging to or related to the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God." This is the English transliteration of the Hebrew NT rendering of the Corinthian passage.

(4) CHRIST MUST REMAIN THE PURE LAMB- HE CANNOT BECOME WICKED FOR THE RECEIPT OF THE PUNISHMENT OF HELL

Returning to “He (God) has made Him (Christ) to be sin for us” we must eschew the tendency to adopt a “whipping boy” approach or endangerment to the person of Christ.

The verb is *ποιεω* and the noun is *αμαρτια*. The verb is not *εγενετο* “He became” and this is good. Had it been any combination of *γινομαι* Christ would have become what He is not. He would have turned into Luther’s *wicked sinner* or become the “sin” of high Calvinists. As it is thankfully neither is possible to argue accurately from the grammar. Theologically if Jesus changed to being a “wicked sinner” deserving and attracting wrath upon the cross He could not have continued to be who He is - the perfect lamb of God. If He “became” something called sin or was “made to be” sin a missing verb would have to be substituted for *ποιεω* or *ποιεω* would have had to be changed from indicative to middle or passive voice and what theological implications could be drawn from such a caprice one boggles to imagine

(5) ROOT DEFINITION OF SIN & CONSIDERATION OF BEING MADE SIN ACCORDING TO THE MEANING OF THE ACTIVE VERB PAUL USES

Buttmann in his lexicon follows the meaning of “sin” further upstream than anyone. He makes the link between *αμαρτια* and *αμβροσια* between “missing” or being without the “elixir of God”. Sin is not about shooting arrows and missing a target although that is the meaning of the old English word. It is about a deprivation of what pagans called the “nectar of the Gods” or the “elixir of immortality”. In the case of our Lord who was put in exactly this position being deprived during the throes of His passion of any word to annul from heaven amidst that agony – this deepest humiliation and highest obedience is described well by Paul in Philippians 2. This ultimate in self-emptying had never before touched the life of God. Only Jesus knew that experience – it has no equivalent in the universe of self abnegation. It was most as Isaiah describes it “most grievous”.

As to the root meanings of (*ποιεω*) if we grant that against all the rules of grammar “made sin” or made to be “without the sustainment of the life of God” is the intended meaning of the apostle; there are three-

1. The external effect
2. The successful effect
3. The continuous effect.

First, God who is a Spirit might send His Son in the flesh when our Lord the **PROPER MAN** on the cross went through an experience absolutely **external** to Himself in being stripped of heavenly things that had

nourished Him eternally and since His incarnation. This would be an experience external or strange, grievous and private to our Lord and not susceptible of explanation in the absolute sense. Mysterious and unprecedented things might happen within this divine foray of care for the creature.

Second, He might be “made sin” in that as the “**MEDIATOR**” between God and man in this deepest obedience and most radical identification with Man – though still possessing deity He dealt with sin and destroyed sin’s power. This is the successful effect of that unique obedience.

The third effect might take us to the continuous nature of the benefits which flow in the form of the “elixir” of God and of immortality out of the Lord’s great work of love. If sin is the want of the elixir in ancient definition Christ might die that we might live as He said “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abides alone-but if it die it brings forth much fruit”. Every day in every nation through every age the benefits of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ flow backwards and forwards as (AMBROSIAL) **MEDICINE** for all our souls diseases (the benefits of God’s grace) into a myriad lives who look in faith and repentance to the Saviour. Christ lost the elixir of life as a human being that human beings might receive it-the idea is attractive. It is everywhere plain from the writings of the Apostles that through Jesus’ death there is released life and power which brings the very life of God into the soul of man. Christ’s death is not only the basis of justification – it is also the source of our life. Jesus said “Unless a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone but if it die it brings forth much fruit”. The travail of His soul was to justify many and as Isaiah said He brought forth *a posterity*. This new life is produced by the moving of the Spirit of God and the Word of Christ’s power and promise and it is the gift of God. To those who believe in Jesus as Lord. Sin existed before the commandment as *rebellious disobedience* against a holy God in Eden where it first entered and its descriptor was the deprivation of spiritual life which was remedied at the cross by the *signal obedience* of our Lord Jesus Christ as the God given lamb and mercy seat – the one who satisfied divine justice and brought us to God by the shedding of His precious blood - thus saving us from the wrath to come. I am not arguing for the idea of becoming sin for one has to be linguistically a gymnast to support it.

CONCERNING THE PROPHET ISAIAH I UNDERSTAND THAT

(1) It is in no way necessary to interpret the “bruising” of Isa53.v5 where the text states “**He was bruised** for our iniquities” differently from the bruising of v10 “where we read “And” or “But” “**it pleased the Lord to bruise Him**, he has caused Him to be wearied or become sick (even to the point of supplication)” **Brad Jersak** in his blog takes the second reference to be an additional “bruising” but the additional words in v.10 read in Hebrew “Therefore it pleased the Lord to bruise Him...when You will make His soul and offering for sin, He will see a seed and prolong His days and *the pleasure of the Lord* will go on with success or grow well by His hand”. (a) The first “pleasure” is that of the Father to “bruise” in declaring His Son just and for His sake justifying men and thus bring forth everlasting righteousness shared with man by imputation (cf. akd with xpj in Job 13.3”I desire to put a legal defense”, 33.32 “I desire to justify you” as here in Isa.53.10”. *The Lord was pleased to have an answer in the sacrifice His beloved Son made for our justification*) (b) The second pleasure is that of the Son who immediately rejoiced in that He “succeeded” in atoning or completed the work the Father gave Him to do. This propitiation atonement and reconciliation was measured by His resurrection and its first fruits and by those born again of the Spirit - first the thief and shortly thereafter the 120 and after his ascension the 5000 and a never ending stream... The “bruising” was no surfeit of mysterious tribulation but the cross with the glorious just one never stooping to revile but becoming God’s perfect sin offering and satisfying divine justice. The atonement is for ever a glorious manifestation of the length and depth to which **divine sorrowing love** will go.

(2) In Isaiah 53.6 the Father is said to have caused all our Iniquities to meet upon His Son. In a sense [jp speaks of “striking” or “killing” besides “lighting upon” or reaching Jesus on the cross. Better still we are to consider that “all the iniquities” of Israel and the world fall upon Christ at the cross. **The meeting in Jesus of all our sin is more than fortuitous** - because of who He was that meeting is the last stand of sin as an enemy and the opening of victory because meeting is also supplication since sin cannot meet Christ without the sinner and at the cross sinners meet with supplication together with a Mediator who says “Father forgive”.

(3) The adversative “yet” in Isaiah 53.4 has no equivalent in the Hebrew. The text simply states “**We reckoned or invented the notion** bcj that He was “stricken **smitten of God** and afflicted” (as a sort of leprous punishment for his supposed blasphemy). Then comes the adversative “**But he was pierced or wounded for our transgressions and bruised or sorely hurt in spirit for our iniquity**” (53.4). It was all about man’s sin and human malice - not divine wrath upon Him. There is then 53.10 where **Tregelles** renders “It pleased the Lord to sicken His wound”. What is this? Is this God adding grief to grief? What can “bruising sickness” or “trampling sorrow” mean? It means that his sickness to death was refined yet further. The image comes from “threshing” and brokenness so that in **the deepest refined obedience the life of Christ** was put under extreme pressure and strain of knowing the sickness of death amid the instant totally irreversible and unprecedented circumstances of this death. We are facing what **Kierkegaard** speaks of as “sickness unto death” the final throes. The Hiphil verb “to make sick” must speak of the final breaking of the heart. ***This cup was to be drunk to the dregs***. Both Gethsemane and Calvary declare what Paul calls the humility or humiliation of the cross. At Gethsemane there was an angel and here there was “darkness” **yet was Christ to endure the non-interference of the Father until his heart was broken in death**. The Father chased the heckling chiding reviling crowds away in the darkness and through the quaking but yet Christ in his spirit had to endure to the bitter end - but as Peter stated He showed himself “perfect” with unprecedented obedience of a refined sort not found in men below and as the perfect lamb amid most awful torture suffering of mind and body. When He was reviled He reviled not again (1Peter2.23).

(4) Verse 10. And the Lord is willing or inclines *to continually smite Him with stripes* crushing His spirit He makes Himself sick (cf. *the same usage in Micah 6.13 where God makes Himself sick by striking others – clearly He turned to making Himself sick for them!* Hebrew *yljh* Hiphil with the reflexive meaning) because You will place His soul or physical life as an offering - that *by which one contracts guilt* (Numbers 5.7-8) (Hebrew *mva*). This is the experience of a deep love – for God’s compassions fail not in the event of the death of the Son of God. This deep turbulence of spirit in the Son of God is reflected according to Isaiah deep in the loving heart of the Father of Spirits. So much for theories of wrath.

A CAUTIONARY NOTE FROM THE PAST

The patristic era has much to teach and stood nearer the apostles and breathed the cleaner air of doctrine before scholasticism or Reformers sought to delve into the counsels of God.

Athanasius

Athanasius in the 4th century explained Christ's cry of abandonment as identification with our human affections. He says "In the incarnation the Son receives them from us and offers them to the Father interceding for us that in him they might be annulled (Against the Arians) This is so clear and good a commentary on the action of Christ at the mercy seat of His death as Calvin cannot resist –it may well be at the heart of propitiation and would spare us much debate if we returned to the simplicity and grace of this church father.

Ambrose mentor of Augustine

"He speaks bearing my terrors for when we are in the midst of dangers we think ourselves abandoned by God". (Post Nicene Library)

Gregory of Nazianzus

The eternal and holy second person of the Trinity did not "become" sin. What Christ became was a sin offering, an offering for sin (a reading entirely consistent with biblical text and supported by marginal readings) It was "Not that the Lord was transformed into either of these[sin or a curse], how could He be?" Gregory like myself thought it literally non-sensical and unthinkable - although there is the Greek Ethics path of which I am not sure he would be familiar. He further states "By taking them upon Him He took away our sins and bore our iniquities"

Cyril of Alexandria

Second Corinthians 5.21 shows the fact that Jesus Christ was "counted among the lawless" so when we hear the cry of dereliction we should not think in terms of a broken and forsaken man. We are to understand that in becoming man the Only Begotten spoke these words as one of us and on behalf of our nature. It was as if He was saying "the first man transgressed. He slipped into disobedience...but you Lord have made me a second beginning for all on the earth, and I am called the Second Adam. In me you see the nature of man made clean, its faults corrected, made holy and pure (Cyril on The unity of Christ)

John of Damascus 7th-8th Century

Neither as God nor as man was He ever forsaken by the Father, nor did He become sin or a curse, nor did he require to be made subject to the Father. For as God he is equal to the Father and not opposed to him or subjected to Him. Ranking Himself with us He used these words for it is we who are “bound in the fetters of sin and the curse as faithless and disobedient, and therefore forsaken”. The idea is that Jesus identifies with us and bridges the gap of our forsakenness and rescues us from the curse.

Concluding postscript

The Fathers of the first seven centuries cannot be so wrong and the Church of the Reformers so right as we think is the case on the contrived mystery of weighing the wrath of the Second Death against that of God imposed on Jesus and theorizing about the pains of Hell as they apply to the cross. These are areas I should like Calvinism to leave well alone for they are not cogent to stating how we are justified or how we are loved neither can they be particularly demonstrated. Those who were nearer clearly saw Christ as reconciliation and a means of bringing us back to God. All that He spoke from the cross can probably be fitted into that concept. Have we made a seriously flawed analysis and imagined the Lord confused over a mission He had committed to before the world was – a mission He accomplished in full correspondence with the Father and shared with the apostles as He told them it would be completed when He was delivered into the hands of men and suffer from them many things? Could He have missed His way after all that happened to encourage and confirm the high purpose of the cross in Gethsemane? Was the purpose to be that the Father rolled wrath over Him or was this glorious obedience the basis for a successful appeal on our behalf? Was the Christ of the cross dynamic in a sense never before known in opening up heaven for believers? Was the line of victory to run from here to the New Jerusalem through the centuries of Church History whilst the Lord saw of the travail of His soul and found the true “satisfaction” of men and women for God in every age - a church to take as a bride - an elect to enjoy throughout eternity? Maybe we have made it all disingenuously complicated!

FINIS