

WHO are the Wicked & the Righteous in Scripture?

A Study by
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Part Two:
Counter-arguments discussed

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1. God's judicial wrath is upon the elect prior to their conversion, but God's decree of elective purpose is preserving them in love. This means that God loves and hates the elect, therefore, God can hate and love the reprobate. This means that God's love and God's condemnation are equally upon both the righteous and the wicked. The only righteous man is the effectually called believer.

Firstly, clearly unregenerate elect are under God's judicial wrath (Eph 2:3), but I dispute that the judicial wrath of God towards unregenerate elect is synonymous with God's hatred towards the reprobate. God looks at things in their finality; he is aware of the fulness, the maturity of a thing and judges it accordingly. This means that he must look upon the elect completely differently to the reprobate. Scripture supports this contention. God could love a sinful David or Jacob and yet hate an Esau who was possibly less sinful (there is no account of Esau killing a man to steal his wife).

Secondly, God never says that he hates the elect at any stage of their lives.

Thirdly, the elect are predestined to be sons from eternity (Eph 1:4-5), it is not conceivable that God could be said to hate his own children, even if they are in sin. The parable of the prodigal son also supports this.

Point One: God does not ever hate the elect. It is wrong to compare the elect and the

reprobate in this way.

Next, even an effectually called believer can be viewed as being sinful if he does not put off his old nature and commits sin (1 Jn 3:4). Only those *in Christ* are righteous, because only Christ is righteous. Only those putting off the old and putting on the new nature are righteous at any time (1 Jn 3:6,9). Is a Christian who sins hated by God? Is it not rather that a sinning Christian is chastised by a loving Father? Even the discipline is an expression of love.

If we are declared to be God's sons from eternity: '*he chose us in him before the foundation of the world ... he predestined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ.*' (Eph 1:4-5), then surely this is also a better way of looking at the unregenerate elect also, that is as a chosen, adopted son, but as yet actually outside the family; loved by God as Father, but under the sentence of God, as Judge, for a time. The idea of God loving and hating the same person, at the same time, is an offence to his simplicity.

Even if this were not the case, we know that God loves the elect because his word says so. We also know that God hates the wicked, but nowhere does the Bible say that God also loves the wicked. There is, therefore no ground for this assumption at all.

2. The righteous man in the OT is only a reference to actual uprightness, not the elect.

We must remember that this (O.T.) dispensation is prior to the cross. The idealised man as the recipient of covenant promise (e.g. Psalm 1) is always a reference to God's perfect man, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The apprehension of God's promises by New Covenant saints, is based upon being found *in Christ*. The cross has changed our basic constitution so that we actually share in Christ's inheritance as a result of union with him. No one receives God's promises by effort, natural faith or fleshly efforts to be righteous. But what about the Old Covenant saint?

The practical apprehension of the benefits of salvation prior to the cross is different to that afterwards. Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, it was impossible for OT saints to live a New Covenant lifestyle by faith or receive New Covenant blessings. They were locked into the law which was to lead towards Christ (Gal 3:23ff). Until the revelation of Christ and the gift of faith, the law restrained sin and unified the covenant people. The righteous man was thus the man who had faith in the Old Covenant worship system, the man who repented of sin by offering a suit-

able sacrifice and identifying with it in its death. The man who celebrated the feasts ordained by God and worshipped with God's people. The man who looked up to God's appointed leaders prophets, priests and kings to teach and direct him. All these things were done in faith and obedience to God's statutes.

Although OT saints did not have our revelation of union with Christ, they equally looked to God's provision for their failings. They relied upon material, objective symbols which have antitypical value to us, but to them was the means of life. They knew they failed (read Ps 51). They knew they were not righteous. They knew they needed God's provision of a substitute life, but were not told how the Messiah would enable that to take place. OT saints did not rely upon their own righteousness, they relied upon the offerings and worship system which God had provided. These offerings included restoration for sins done in ignorance.

The point is that the Old Testament promises to the righteous man did not then, and do not now, rely upon human strength and ability for enjoyment. No one is righteous, no not one! (Rm 3:10 **and** Ps 14:1-3, 53 :1-3.)

Before his conversion Paul saw himself as ritually clean and righteous (Phil 3:6), looking with open eyes years later, he saw himself as the chief of sinners (1 Tim 1:15). It is the beneficial application of the life of Jesus which enables us to appropriate the promises of God. For us now this is by faith, having received God's revelation of Christ in his word; for OT saints this was trusting in the performance of duties ordained by God's word, which Christ would perfectly fulfil.

3. An heretical split in the doctrine of the person of Christ.

The argument is that: if God does not love everyone, Christ as God does not love everyone, but only loves only the elect; but as a righteous man under the law, Christ must love even his enemies. This results in a heretical dichotomy in Christ's person.

If this can be maintained, it is a serious obstacle to the thesis proposed. Firstly, we have to evaluate if there are differences between Jesus' existence as a man and as God. Obviously there are many, since he laid his glory aside in order to perform the work of atonement as a man. Did Jesus, as a man, do things which God could not do? Again, there are clearly many things. Jesus bore the curse, Jesus took sin upon himself on the cross, Jesus was under the law. There were areas where Jesus was restricted as a man (e.g. expressing his glory), and there were areas where he did things God does not do (e.g. being subject to the curse, subject to physical confine-

ment). Similarly, God knew the time of the parousia, Jesus (at least as a man) does not.

So, our first point is that it is not unusual for there to be differences in function between the Father and the Son.

Secondly, God *has* shown love to his enemies, as we have already explained. The whole world rebelled in Adam. Everyone became an enemy of God. God dealt with this by revealing love to a portion of that rebellious society - the elect. (These choices all took place in God's eternal decrees before the events actually occurred. God did not react to surprises in time, but determined the course of actions in eternity according to his plan.) Man is to love his enemy to manifest supernatural compassion. This reveals godly people, it just is not natural to love those who hate you. In this we follow God, who not only loved those who were against him, but provided for their full and free salvation.

So our second point is that there is no real distinction in disposition, God had loved his enemies, Jesus as man could love his enemies.

The real difficulty, is: *did Jesus love the actual reprobates*, living at the time of his human existence, whom God must have actually hated? We have to say that this is getting very metaphysical at this point and splitting theological hairs. If the key argument relies upon this, then the case is slender indeed. The point is that Jesus allowed the restriction of the fulness of his divinity. It was still his, but it was restricted. He, through whom the world was made, was subject to the need for food and sleep for instance. Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh, he came to be a man like us. As such he lived the life of a righteous man, in the order of a man, a man with no knowledge of who the elect and reprobate are. He acted righteously to all. His knowledge, ministry, and power were given him as required by the Holy Spirit. This included times when he did see who were reprobate (see Jn 8:44-47; Mk 12:38-40; Matt 23:13-15 27ff). His expression then was not love, but righteous anger. This is a clear fact. If opponents state (as some have) that Jesus could not hate reprobates but must love them as a man under the law, they have no explanation for those passages in the Gospels where he clearly did not love certain men whom he said were hell bound.

It is impossible for us to go further into the mystical details in harmonising the differences between Jesus' human and divine natures. There is much here impossible to grasp. We must be satisfied with the facts on hand, and those are clear.

A final point is that due to our lack of knowledge as to the identity of the elect, we must love all in order to love our brethren. Saul was a vicious enemy of the

church, and yet was elect. We cannot dismiss and reject anyone.

4. Election from eternity

It is suggested that holding the view defended in this paper requires one to believe in an unorthodox view of election, that is the idea that election and adoption are from eternity, rather than resulting from faith in time.

This is not the case. Justification clearly arises from faith (Rm 5); this cannot be controverted. What is in view is that God's loving, elective purpose is towards his people, and only his people from eternity (Eph 1:4-5). We were chosen in love and predestined to *blameless adoption* in Christ from eternity; this also is very clear (Compare the illuminating passage in Num 23:21). A person actually becomes pardoned when the Holy Spirit applies the Gospel to him and he is converted. Before that he is under the judicial wrath of God in legal terms towards God as a Judge. However, the elect person is seen from eternity as a son in Christ by God as Father. This enables God to love him, not hate him. The blood of Christ answers for his sin to enable relationship, not only before conversion, but also afterwards when a Christian sins (1 Jn 1). This is why Jesus could speak of those given to him by the Father in loving terms, while they were yet still sinners (Jn 17). The blood of Christ, though not yet actually applied in time, was answering in heaven for sin. Jesus was the lamb slain from eternity.

One cannot deny this eternal and elective aspect to justification. If God predestines those who will be saved, then he predestines their justification. God sees his elect from eternity as justified, just as he sees them glorified as a bride for his son. God views the end from the beginning; we experience different aspects of God's plan in time, piece by piece as the Holy Spirit applies to us: regeneration, repentance, faith, assurance, sanctification, peace etc. The confusion is between the way we view things - from the past forwards - and the way God reveals that he views things - in their fulness or maturity.

5. The promises of God are conditional.

The argument is: God's promises are extended to *all men* to be embraced as part of the Gospel message. They are genuinely offered to everyone as part of a loving benevolence to all.

But can this be true? How can God offer promises of life to wicked men he knows will never respond because they are destined to condemnation? If the benevolence

(love) of God is only towards the elect, the promises of God are covenantal and tied to salvation. These cannot be for the reprobate. Certainly, the proclamation of God's promises should be universal. All who respond to the Gospel can be directed to the promise of life, but that is not the same as claiming that the promises are equally intended for those who will never respond.

6. Scripture says that God is long-suffering to all, and this does not simply mean delayed judgment, since God is not said to be long-suffering to Satan even though his condemnation is delayed. This word is identified with grace and mercy, therefore, God is merciful to the wicked.

Scriptures adduced in support of this include the following:

Ex 34:6

The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger (long-suffering),⁷ and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

However, we need to continue reading in verse 7:

keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty. RSV

This passage is about the renewal of the covenant with Moses and starts a pattern, repeatedly noticed, where long-suffering is contrasted with poured out wrath upon the wicked. Here God declares his love and saving purposes for his people. It is to these people that God is gracious, merciful and slow to anger, not to outsiders of this covenant who will be condemned for their iniquity. There is no grace or love of God to the wicked here.

7 “Long-suffering” and words associated in Exodus 34:6

Analysis of words used from Strong's abridged BDB with Strong's reference numbers:

Long-suffering (slow to anger) 750 Hebrew אַרְאֵךְ 'arek {aw-rake'} • from 748; *Theological Word-book of the Old Testament* (Botterweck und Ringgren hereinafter **TWOT**.) 162b; adj • AV - slow 9, long-suffering + 639 4, longwinged + 83 1, patient 1; 15 • 1) long (pinions) 2) patient, slow to anger.

Merciful

7349 Hebrew רַחֻמִּים rachûwm {rakh-oom'} • from 7355; **TWOT** - 2146c; adj • AV - merciful 8, compassion 5; 13 • 1) compassionate 1a) always of God with one possible exception.

Gracious

2587 Hebrew חַנּוּן channuwn {khan-noon'} • from 2603; **TWOT**- 694d; adj • AV - gracious 13; 13 • 1) gracious

Goodness (and mercy v7)

2617 Hebrew חֶסֶד chesed {kheh'-sed} • from 2616; **TWOT** - 698a,699a; n m • AV - mercy 149, kindness 40, lovingkindness 30, goodness 12, kindly 5, merciful 4, favour 3, good 1, goodliness 1, pity 1, reproach 1, wicked thing 1; 248 • 1) goodness, kindness, faithfulness 2) a reproach, shame.

6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. KJV

Long-suffering is here connected with words which are dedicated to the covenant people of God e.g. mercy, steadfast love, graciousness (Cf. Footnote 7 page 27 herein) and are not applicable to the reprobate. The verse cannot refer to the reprobate; but can the idea of *long-suffering* ever apply to them?

Is long-suffering benevolence?

It is when associated with mercy; in itself it simply means slowness to anger, patience. The scriptures and word studies examined (Ps 103:8, 145:8. Ex 34:6, see also appendices) show that in the Old Testament, benevolent long-suffering is reserved for the Lord's people only. God says that he is angry with the wicked (Ps 5:5, 58:10), that they go astray from the womb (Ps 58:3), God's wrath is already hanging over them, they are condemned already (Jn 3:18,36). God's blessing is only upon the elect, only they are covered with favour, which includes being long-suffering with their failures (Ps 5:12).

All the remaining OT references of the word, in this form, apply the long-suffering of God towards the elect only or are characteristics of a godly man (one ref. is literally to a long wing). *Long* (as in long-suffering / Strong's 750) appears 15 times: Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; Ps. 103:8; Ps. 145:8; Prov. 14:29; Prov. 15:18; Prov. 16:32; Eccl. 7:8; Jer. 15:15; Ezek. 17:3; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2; Nah. 1:2-3. The last reference is most interesting as it contrasts God's long-suffering with his wrath towards the wicked.

God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. Nahum 1: 2-3

One way to explain this text is to apply the long-suffering of God to the elect and the wrath of God for the reprobate. Some writers see God's long-suffering here as referring to the wicked. Num 14:18 is similar:

The LORD is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty. (RSV)

In emphasising God's patience with sinners, the Biblical writers stress that this does not mean that sin is ultimately unpunished. On the contrary these passages show extreme prejudice towards sin.

The long-suffering of God towards his people is closely connected to a tolerance of God towards the wicked. In order to show mercy to the elect, God defers judgment on all. **The Old Testament passages often reveal this proximity of patience and judgment.**

To sum up the Old Testament texts, there is no clear reference to this word being applied to the reprobate or the wicked. Possibly one or two passages could be interpreted as showing God's patience with sinners in a general way, but there is no connection of long-suffering in the sense of graciousness with the reprobate.

There simply is no evidence to make a case of grace for the wicked.

In the New Testament, long-suffering is a characteristic of the redeemed e.g.: 2 Tim 3:10, Gal 5:22; or is specifically referring to the grace of God towards the elect:

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

1 Tim 1:16

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

2 Pt 3:9

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

1 Pt 3:20

In one place, Peter directly relates the word to salvation:

And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.

2 Pt 3:15

So far, every Old and New Testament reference to *long-suffering* has, without significant doubt, been applied to the Lord's people, the elect, only.

However, Rm 2:4 and 9:22 seem to be applied differently to this meaning.

This requires careful examination.

Rm 2:4

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness Greek: χρηστοτητος (chrestotetos) and forbearance Greek: ανοχης (anoches = tolerance) and long-suffering Greek: μακροθυμια (makrothumia); not knowing that the goodness Greek: χρηστον (chreston) of God leadeth thee to repentance? ⁸

Paul is writing to explain the Gospel to converts at Rome whom he had never met. He knew that they needed instruction, and that they were a mixed company, some Greeks, a few Jews and mostly Gentile Romans. The beginning of his presentation is to expound the seriousness of sin and its root in all men. He changes from the third person (e.g. 1:26) to the second person in chapter two to bring his point home. Here he speaks hypothetically to his audience which would have been mainly elect people, but Paul could not be sure that there were not professing, superficial believers attending.

So he uses general terms to apply to both. God's kindness is meant to lead to repentance. Someone with a hard impenitent heart will store up wrath to judgment (v5, 8,9). Others, who respond to God's kindness, repent and show the fruits of repentance in good works, and have eternal life (v7, 10).

Verse 5 is thus a warning to this mixed assembly. The passage cannot be said to only apply to the reprobate as verse 7 and 10 are clearly about the elect. Long-suffering here, therefore, also refers to the elect and not the reprobate.

In any case, it is not said that the wicked experience God's long-suffering, rather they despise it. If one tries to make this verse speak of a graciousness of God towards the wicked, then we have a gigantic failure on the part of God, for this goodness is despised. God extends goodness, and long-suffering in grace to reprobates and they spurn him. In other words this makes men stronger than God. To make this passage speak of grace to reprobates, one has to be an Arminian.

⁸ "Long-suffering" as used in the NT.

In the NT the equivalent Greek word used for the Old Testament מַלְאָכָה (see footnote 7 on page 27) is Strong's 3115 μακροθυμία (makrothumia; pronounce it as mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah) • from the same as 3116; TDNT - 4:374,550; n f • AV - long-suffering 12, patience 2; 14 • 1) patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance 2) patience, forbearance, long-suffering, slowness in avenging wrongs • For Synonyms see entry 5861. [Thayer]

μακροθυμία noun dat fem sing , from μακροθυμία, ας, ἡ as a state of emotional quietness in the face of unfavorable circumstances *patience, long-suffering*; (1) as *patience under trial endurance, steadfastness* (HE 6.12); (2) as *constraint exercised toward others forbearance, patience* (2C 6.6); (3) as *God's constraint of his wrath long-suffering, forbearance* (RO 2.4). [Friberg's Lexicon].

The word used in the LXX is very similar : μακρόθυμος adj nom sing masc.

Rm 9:22

What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured⁹ with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

We cannot avoid the connection of the word *long-suffering* to 'vessels of wrath fitted to destruction'. However, the emphasis is upon God *enduring* the vessels of wrath not his patience. 'Long-suffering' here is incidental, and explanatory, to God's enduring. One could make the case that the sense is rather: in being patiently merciful towards the elect, waiting for the full number to be complete, God endures the wicked. In order to be long-suffering to the elect, God must also tolerate the wicked for a season because the elect live in the same world as the wicked.

The overriding use of the term is in connection with the elect, as we have seen. This is logical. If God is going to show mercy, love and grace to rebellious sinners (unregenerate elect), then he must be long-suffering and slow to anger regarding their sin until they are completely righteous. What is significant is that this term is a simple description of God's patience. It carries no thought of grace or loving disposition on its own. Its connection to the words mercy etc. show that it is a characteristic of God's attitude towards the elect, but on its own it has no other content than 'slow to anger'.

In this sense, God, who has decreed to delay pouring out his wrath upon the wicked until the day of judgment, maintains an attitude of long-suffering towards reprobates throughout history. This is just a simple fact. It does not mean that God is also gracious towards them, rather, the penalty of judgment hangs over sinners, who are condemned already, throughout their lives.

Consequently, although one can interpret all the occurrences of the word *long-suffering* as applicable only to the elect, it seems prudent to suggest that, at least in a couple of passages it has a restricted meaning to the wicked. We can, therefore, state the following:

- God is long-suffering, slow to anger, especially towards the elect. This is the overwhelming use of the term in scripture.
- God is also patient towards sinners in that judgment is deferred. One or possibly two texts support this.
- There is no sense of grace being extended to the reprobate in the use of this word.

⁹ **Endure** = (5342) ἠνεγκεν verb ind. aor. act. 3rd per sing, from φέρω (phero) • a primary verb TDNT - 9:56,1252; v • essentially: to carry some burden, to bear, to bear up i.e. uphold, endure, to bear patiently or spare one (abstain from punishing or destroying. This word only appears 5 times in the Greek NT, four of them translated as 'brought' (e.g. Acts 4:37).

 Conclusion

The overwhelming and inescapable conclusion of our study is that the term *wicked*, in the Old Testament covenant promises, refers to the reprobate and the term *righteous* refers to the elect in Christ. I will close with two final considerations from Scripture.

Prov 16:4

The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble. (RSV)

The Lord has made all for himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom. (NKJV)

If the Lord made the wicked for the purpose of condemnation, then it would be totally contradictory for him to show love to them and give them hope. If the Lord made the wicked for damnation, he is not going to promise them life. This is why there is no clear reference to a love or grace of God to the reprobate. God's promises are based upon election. God's blessing is for the elect in Christ alone.

8 When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel (or 'sons of God').

9 For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. Deut 32:8-9

When God planned the division of the nations and the separation of mankind, his foundation for so doing was in direct connection with the elect. The Lord's dealings with men are on the basis of his love for his own people, his inheritance, his offspring. The Lord does not deal with reprobate men in grace, he deals providentially with all on the basis of his plan for his own children.

This song of Moses is important and referred to in Revelation. The same concept is seen in Paul's words about Jesus:

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Eph 1:22-23

Jesus is head over all things, including reprobate men, in order to complete God's purposes concerning the church, the elect. God's compassionate provision to all is part of his plan to bring all the elect to repentance and maturity. To the sons of God

this is grace, to the wicked it is undeserved compassion. God does not deal with the reprobate in the same way He deals with His own family.

APPENDIX
Two Types Of Men
A Sample Seen Throughout Scripture

Scripture repeatedly draws a comparison between two sorts of men, variously delineated as: ELECT / REPROBATE, NEW NATURE / OLD NATURE, LOVED / HATED, GOOD / EVIL, RIGHTEOUS / WICKED.

This is a fact which cannot be ignored. God's dealings are quite different with each group.

Ps 5

The righteous are those that love God - v11-12
The wicked (NB quoted by Paul in Rm 3) v4-9.

Ps 11:5-7

The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, and his soul hates him that loves violence. On the wicked he will rain coals of fire ... For the Lord is righteous, he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.

Ps 50:7,16

Hear O my peopleetc.
But to the wicked God saysetc.

Ps 58:3-11

The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent ...He (God) shall take them away ... in his living and burning wrath. The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance.

Ps 106:5

I may see the prosperity of thy chosen onesthat I may glory with thy heritage.

Prov 3:33

The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesses the habitation of the just.

Prov 11:24

One man gives freely yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.

Eccles 2:26

For to the man who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to the one who pleases God.

Eccles 3:17

God will judge the righteous and the wicked.

Rm 9:13

Jacob I have loved, but Esau I hated

Rm 9:15

I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

Rm 9:21-23

Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use ... vessels of wrath made for destruction ... vessels of mercy ... prepared beforehand for glory.

2 Cor 2:15-16

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a savour of death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

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We are extremely grateful to Mr. Fahy for allowing us to print the foregoing tract. If readers wish to furnish themselves with copies of the same they should apply to Mr. Fahy at the address above, where he also carries a range of similar most helpful materials in booklet form. Editor.

See also: *“Does God Love Everyone”* by Paul Fahy, printed by permission in the British Reformed Journal Issues Nos. 15 and 16 and available as a booklet from the author at the above address.