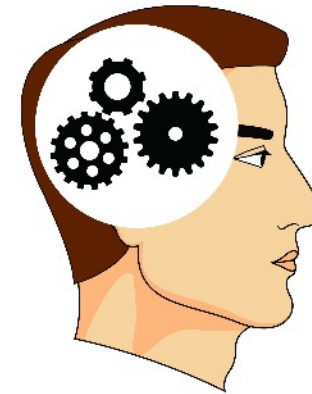


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***‘Debating Calvinism -
Five Points - Two Views’***

by Dave Hunt & James White
(June, 2004)

**by
Mike Claydon**

‘...Upon the question of what Calvinism really is: The most infamous allegations have been brought against us, and sometimes I fear, by men who knew them to be utterly untrue; and, to this day, there are many of our opponents, who, when they run short of matter, invent and make for themselves a man of straw, call that John Calvin and shoot all their arrows at it. We are not come here to defend your man of straw - shoot at it or burn it as you will, and, if it suit your convenience, still oppose doctrines which were never taught, and rail at fictions which, save in your own brain, were never in existence. We come here to state what our views really are, and we trust that any who do not agree with us will do us the justice of not misrepresenting us. If they can disprove our doctrines, let them state them fairly and then overthrow them, but why should they first caricature our opinions and then afterwards attempt to put them down.’ Spurgeon: *‘Exposition of the Doctrines of Grace’*, Sermon 11th April, 1861

With these words James White rests his case in the recent book *‘Debating Calvinism (Five Points, Two Views)’*. It’s a long read, 427 pages, during which Dave and James slug it out over the topic of the day *Arminianism vs Calvinism*.

Dave Hunt concludes with *‘Calvinists claim that God predestined multitudes He could save to the lake of fire...nonCalvinists can assure all men, ‘God loves you; Christ died for your sins. We know that all who believe His promise to ‘whosoever will’ are saved eternally’*.

As the work progresses the frustration of the authors with their opponents rebuttals becomes starkly obvious. James’ thoroughly sound exegesis and Greek interpretation bumps up against Dave’s strawmen arguments and emotional appeals to the ‘Love’ of God. Dave said recently *‘I know nothing about Greek. It might as well be Chinese. But I can read English’*. To which James replies *‘that is fine, but why make a statement that is unsubstantiated by any Greek scholarship and then use it to accuse Calvinists of mishandling the text of scripture?’* Within those statements lies the problem with this debate. On one side is a thoroughgoing Greek scholar and theologian and on the other a man who has merely brought his traditions and strawmen to the table and endeavours to impose them upon the texts of scripture. When one examines the original or plain language of the New Testament it quickly becomes apparent that this cannot safely be done.

The misquotes to suggest Spurgeon is speaking against ‘Calvinism’ are serious. If the reader cares to check, they will find Spurgeon is often misquoted, quoted out of context, or found speaking against hypercalvinism, (e.g. P.88, 133). As with Dave’s first book he is again demonstrably wrong in saying Spurgeon did not teach Particular Redemption (P.196, P.172). Even at the end of the book he yet again misquotes Spurgeon on this issue, when in fact he was speaking of Israel! (P.425)

After 427 pages have been written Dave can still say *‘White relies on a few passages of arguable interpretation, yet his interpretation does not fit God’s character as so clearly established throughout all of scripture’*. Meaning no doubt, that if God’s Will in the salvation of the elect runs counter to Arminian thinking then it requires reinterpretation to better fit the grid? To do this, however, scripture must be turned on it’s head. And this Dave does in many instances. ‘Calvinism’ simply acknowledges the fact that God must free us from the slavery of sin and spiritual death before we can believe!

For those wishing to read an excellent exegetical thesis for the doctrines of Grace, this is the book for you. Those looking for a tenable argumentation for the doctrines of mans free will and co-operation in salvation may find Dave’s often shrill and repetitive rhetoric disappointing. Dave strongly objects to being labelled an Arminian but everything he holds to in this debate would actually sit well with Jacob Arminius. Confirming his ignorance of true Calvinism Dave says *‘God predestined billions to eternal torment? What love and kindness is this?’* (page 102); he continues this deception to the end with the God of Calvinism depicted as *‘predestinating multitudes he could save to damnation’* and *‘eternal torment...to the lake of fire’* (page 425,426).

We’ll leave the reader with these words from Dr. James White... *‘I believe what I believe not because John Calvin taught it but because the consistent exegesis of the text of scripture leads me inevitably to the truths of the doctrines of grace. I believe what I do because of the text of scripture, not because I follow a particular individuals teachings’*.

He is not at all happy with the KJV use of the word ‘foreordained’. In 1Peter 1:20 he labels it’s usage as ‘aberrant rendering’. Here he clings to the error made in his book ‘*What Love is This?*’, and states again that this word as used in Acts 13:48 it is not an eternal decree from God and ‘none of the seven other usage’s of the word ‘Tasso’ [‘τασσο’] in the New Testament connotes a divine decree from eternity past’. This blatant error was refuted by us in the Jan/Feb 2004 edition of ‘*Diakrisis*’ (page 11). Dave writes ‘the only reasonable answer is that those God knew from eternity past would believe the Gospel were predestined to blessing’ (page 156).

Hunt writes of Romans 6:23 that it says man can ‘accept or reject the gift of...eternal life’. But the text says no such thing!: ‘**For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**’

One of the most surprising misuse of Scripture is with Philippians 2:12-13: ‘**work out your own salvation...**’. Dave says this is about ‘mans responsibility’. But this is serious error since the passage is not about justification or responsibility, but refers to *sanctification* after salvation.

Time and time again Dave uses Scripture for Israel that have *nothing* to do with the issue at hand. He says the sacrifices were for ‘all’ and cites Israel (P.186). He seems not to realise that Israel *was* the ‘elect’ out of all other nations and they were *believers* in God already! An example of this is his denying that unsaved man does not seek God and bombards the reader with Scripture references to do with *Israel* being called upon to seek God (P.76,77). This is in contradiction to New Testament Scriptures that state that the natural man does not choose, or seek God but rather God chooses man, (Rom.3:11; Eph.1:4; Jn.15:16). Dave ignores these and instead cites Joshua 24:15: ‘**Choose you this day whom ye will serve**’. But this scripture is for Israel, not unbelievers!

Dave’s misquotes are numerous. These, now in both books, are becoming increasingly disturbing. For example, in one of his responses to James White, he says ‘White claims that in ‘the kind intention of his will’, God predestined billions to eternal torment’ (P.102). But nowhere does James state this! Dave also misquotes James as referring to John 6 instead of Romans 9 (P.350).

At the end of the debate Dave has learned nothing and is left repeating his misrepresentation of Calvinism just as he does in his book ‘*What Love is This?*’ Every scripture or strawman he uses to bolster his argument is thoroughly refuted or denied, yet he doesn’t seem able to recognise that and continues to repeat them.

Dave views the God of Calvinism as the author of sin and evil, ‘a God who...predestines to eternal doom...to the lake of fire...who could save if he wanted to but chooses to...damn billions to eternal torment’ and ‘is pleased to do so’... This grotesque, almost blasphemous caricature of historic Calvinism is often repeated several times on one page, in what would appear to be a blatant attempt to stir the emotions of the reader. James calls these ‘mantra like phrases’ and says: ‘It is easier, it seems, to attempt to inflame the emotions than to deal with the Biblical evidence’ (P.170).

150 years ago Spurgeon himself refuted these *very same arguments* in sermons such as ‘*An exposition of the Doctrines of Grace*’ and ‘*Human Inability*’. Yet elsewhere Dave in seeming contradiction says, and quite correctly, that God would be quite justified in not saving anyone!

Dave appears unable to grasp the doctrine of regeneration and salvation, separating them to build a straw man at which he throws his refutations. He claims Calvinism teaches God *imposes* Faith upon the elect and that they will not preach to all men on the basis that all are not ‘elect’ (page 140) This is simply not true as history shows and is the stuff of *hypercalvinism*.

He repeatedly asserts that scriptural election is never unto salvation but only to the resultant privileges and blessings - yet 2Thessalonians 2:13 says ‘*Because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation by the Spirit and faith in the truth*’. Neither is this scripture ever mentioned in his book ‘*What Love is This?*’ Incredibly, and contrary to all orthodox teaching, he writes ‘election is not unto salvation but unto blessing...’ and that Ephesians chapter 1 is ‘not about salvation’!

In an effort to illustrate his belief that man has a free will to choose or reject Christ, Dave uses texts from Leviticus and Ezra, confusing as he does so, the Calvinist position on the 'will' of man. Calvinism never claims that man has no will!

Dave, by his own admission, has not read the works of the Reformers, and thus has no real notion of their teachings. On page 12 James quotes Dave as saying he is '*very ignorant of the Reformers. I have not had time to read them...so whether the Reformers said this or that, I don't know*'.

Although he takes offence at the suggestion, James rightly accuses him of standing shoulder to shoulder with Rome in his writings. Yet Dave can say '*No wonder so much Roman Catholicism remains in Calvinism*' (page 229). But it was Arminianism that re-aligned the Church with Roman dogma! - that human effort is required in Justification and that one can fall away and be lost.

Dave says that he once thought of himself as a *one point* Calvinist, in that he held to the doctrine of the perseverance of the Saints...now he confuses this. Calvinism teaches that a believer is secure because of his *election* to salvation, whereas Dave believes that our perseverance is brought about by our clinging to the *promises* of God. If, as Dave says, we have a freewill ability to choose God in salvation by making a 'decision', surely we don't lose that freewill at regeneration? Therefore what is to stop us from falling away from that position? That's not eternal security.

Amazingly, he says '*It is Calvinism that in effect offers salvation by works because it looks to works for assurance of salvation*'. A brief glance at any of the Reformers work would dispel that inaccuracy. Calvinism simply looks for evidence! The Bible speaks much of faith - and yet it clearly shows that some have a false faith that does not result in salvation - there are those that 'believe in vain' and anyone not holding to the doctrines of grace position must struggle with this fact. (Matthew 13;1-8, 1 John 2;19) If Christ's work of salvation is dependent upon our cooperation to be effective, there is no reason to believe it is eternally secure *at any point*.

Dave says that those who hold to the doctrines of Grace, (central to the Reformation itself), are: '*carrying the sovereignty of God too far*'. '*Most of Calvinism's errors are rooted in it's extreme view of God's sovereignty, which allows man no freedom even to sin, much less to accept Christ*' (page 396) In so doing Dave presents a God that has done all He can to save *everyone*, loves the whole world *equally* (denying Him the differing degrees of love that we humans have for others, and directly contradicting Romans 9), and now waits passively for our response. No matter how intense a search one undertakes, a God of that ilk is not found in the Bible.

James has endeavoured throughout the debate to ensure that Dave is at least disagreeing with *genuine* 'Calvinism' - but to no avail. Dave insists '*His conduct (Calvin's) was in line with his rejection of God's love to all and his denial of human choice to believe the Gospel*' (page 236) and '*Calvinists are without compassion for the lost, but how could they have compassion on those for whom God has no compassion and whom He has predestined to eternal torment for His good pleasure?*' But the very thought that Edwards, Whitefield, Spurgeon and Martyn Lloyd Jones had no compassion for the lost is simply staggering! It would be fair to say that these men shed more tears for the lost than has Dave. Such consistent errors, as saying that Calvinism teaches a predestination to eternal torment, denies that man has a will, denies that faith is important in salvation, and again denies the use of the Gospel in calling men to salvation, are all well refuted - yet they *reappear* in Dave's final presentations just as they do in the initial ones!

Dave tells us that Jesus ceases intercession for those who enter hell. Then does it not follow that his sacrifice and constant intercession on their behalf before the Father, failed to accomplish what He desired? Is His Will frustrated at any point? In Dave's theology, yes.

Romans 8 and John 6 are reinterpreted by Dave. He says that Romans has Paul speaking to believers only - when he is actually *comparing* unbelievers with believers.

The text of John 6 says that '*no man is able*' but Dave reads that as '*every man is able*' and states '*Christ's statement here cannot signify inability*' (page 295).