

The Hunt/White Debate



An Analysis

Paula Fether
<http://www.fether.net>

The Hunt/White Debate: An Analysis

Paula Fether

©February 2011 First Edition

Contents

Introduction	1
CALVINISM AFFIRMED, by James White	3
CALVINISM DENIED, by Dave Hunt	7
Affirmed Chapter 1: GOD'S ETERNAL DECREE	9
Affirmed Chapter 2: MAN'S INABILITY	15
Affirmed Chapter 3: UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION	21
Affirmed Chapter 4: JESUS TEACHES THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE	25
Affirmed Chapter 5: THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF REDEMPTION	31
Affirmed Chapter 6: PARTICULAR REDEMPTION: TRUE ATONEMENT, TRUE SUBSTITUTION	35
Affirmed Chapter 7: IRRESISTIBLE GRACE: GOD SAVES WITHOUT FAIL	41
Denied Chapter 8: CALVIN AND AUGUSTINE: TWO JONAHS WHO SINK THE SHIP	45
Denied Chapter 9: THE CENTRAL ISSUE: GOD'S LOVE AND CHARACTER	49
Denied Chapter 10: REGENERATION BEFORE FAITH AND SALVATION?	53
Denied Chapter 11: TURNING THE BIBLE INTO A CHARADE	57

Denied Chapter 12: GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN'S WILL	61
Denied Chapter 13: SALVATION OFFERED TO ALL	63
Denied Chapter 14: BIBLICAL ASSURANCE OF SALVATION	65
Conclusion	67

Introduction

An overview of the debate

I don't remember precisely how many years ago it was when I first came across the the theological system known as Calvinism. But I was introduced to it by an online friend, who provided recommended links and book titles. I read through those and took notes over a period of about six months, and of course everything seemed so very airtight and logical. But in the spirit of Prov. 18:17 I knew I must give equal effort to examining the arguments in opposition to this system. So I did, and again I took notes.

At the end of it I compared the arguments and scoured the scriptures once again, concluding that Calvinism as defined by its proponents today is a reprehensible smear against the very nature of God, and an oft-mentioned reason for rejection of the gospel. If, as Calvinists frequently claim, all opposition to it is based upon failure to understand what it teaches, then we can only explain how so many and varied groups of people have thus failed by concluding that Calvinists have done the poorest job of clarifying their teachings.

Several years ago there was a debate on Calvinism between Dave Hunt and James White, with White arguing for the affirmative (supporting Calvinism). You can read the PDF of the debate at [Scribd](#). Since White is a respected representative of Calvinism and Hunt of non-Calvinism, such a debate serves as a valuable microcosm of the larger debate which has raged since Calvin. I reproduce below only the outline of the debate, adding my comments beneath each point. So please read through the debate first. And be sure not to skim over the parts by the opposing viewpoint to your own, only reading your side's assessment of their words. I made a similar mistake taking the word of my Calvinist friend's assessment, who naturally concluded that of course Hunt was obviously the "bad guy" with an un-Christlike attitude. Having later read it for myself, of course I have the opposite opinion.

CALVINISM AFFIRMED, by James White

Opening argument for the Affirmative

White begins with unsubstantiated claims: that Hunt “misquoted Matthew 23:37”, and that his objections to Calvinism were based upon “common misconceptions”. This is what every Calvinist I’ve ever met has claimed. Yet as I said, one must wonder why pretty much everyone who isn’t a Calvinist doesn’t know what their “actual beliefs” are, if this claim is true.

White then likens Hunt’s argument to those of Roman Catholicism, in an obvious attempt to assign guilt by association. Yet Calvin himself praised and got the bulk of his theology from Augustine, who is cited by both the RCC (Roman Catholic Church) and Calvin as their “father”. The irony of White’s tactic here seems to have escaped him. Then White tries to put himself in a position to judge Hunt’s qualification to go out and study Calvinism and then write a book, as if no one could possibly grasp Calvinism without years and years of study. But this too exposes the inherent complexity and high philosophy of the Calvinist theological system. If one must have practically a university degree in order to understand it (or be allowed to write a book about it), one suspects that Calvinists “doth protest too loudly” about being misunderstood.

In lambasting Hunt’s book, *What Love Is This?*, White uses much subjective and vague terminology: “the tenor was harsh... attacks upon historic figures were unfair and unkind, revealing a bias... misuse of sources... misconceptions... tradition over sound exegesis...”. I am sure White would not accept such cheap accusations in return. But his condescending attitude toward Hunt as some ignorant rube who needs to be properly educated is quite conceited and brash. Again, White would not endure such insults in return.

White boldly proclaims that “Dave Hunt does not understand the Reformed faith”, going on to hurl further invectives against his book. He basically calls Hunt a liar when discussing “traditions”, then claims as all Calvinists do that only Calvinism is real Christianity, and that Calvinism is the only possible conclusion one can come to from reading scripture “consistently, honestly, and thoroughly”. It is one thing to declare all who disagree with us mistaken or deluded, but quite another to call them heretics. (Note: White didn’t use the “H” word, but described it

thoroughly.) In light of all that, White's challenge to the reader about holding both sides to the same standards is quite bold.

Under "The Bible vs. Personalities" White ignores the fact of the RCC claiming Augustine as their theological founder, and accuses Hunt of believing "that if a teacher of the past held to doctrines he disagrees with, everything that person believed was wrong". How anyone could make such a claim and expect it not to be challenged is beyond me. But he continues to do the very thing he accuses Hunt of doing: assigning guilt by association. Is it not White who declares that everything the RCC teaches must be wrong? And then he tries to claim that Hunt errs in using the term Calvinism! But non-calvinists use the term for the same reason Calvinists do: it's a handy label. And Calvinists go on to assign the label Arminian to all who are non-Calvinists, regardless of whether or not they follow the teachings of Arminius. Yes, let's use the same standards for both sides.

Under "God's Character, God's Love" White accuses Hunt of bowing to culture by exchanging "sound biblical teaching" (which he already claimed must be Calvinism) for "sentimental traditions". Next White claims, in accordance with standard Calvinist thinking, that the free will of man to accept or reject salvation must necessarily mean that God is not free to elect and regenerate. But this is hardly an established or uncontested presumption; non-Calvinists argue that God has the sovereign right to allow man this freedom. White also argues that God cannot love all people while also being just to them and therefore punishing those who reject Him. This shows his fundamental misunderstanding of how God can be both loving and holy. He goes on to conclude that this makes "God less than the creature, man".

White recognizes that we all experience varying types of love, but ignores the scriptures saying that God "loved the world" and that we must "love our neighbor as ourself". So it is in fact White who fails to distinguish all the types of love, omitting love for mankind, the love of people just because they are made in the image of God. He does not seem to comprehend that God can rightly judge those He loves. This is very basic Christianity, not some modern sentimental invention.

White again displays great boldness in advising us to "point out the results of Mr. Hunt's assertions", as if he has made none of his own. Contrary to his assertion that "man must have the final say in the matter", God's allowance for us to freely choose is *God's* "final say in the matter".

White would deny God this sovereign right. And his extrapolations of this belief lead him to some absurd conclusions, showing not Hunt but himself to be the one not following scripture. Yet he continues to claim victory before his opponent has even begun to write, claiming Hunt “has no answers” and resorting to mockery to emphasize it.

White prefaces his Conclusion with the staple Calvinist belief that God would be both just and holy in sending every human being that ever lived to eternal hell, just because through no fault of their own they were born in sin and unable to “choose” anything but to reject the gospel. Those whom God “elects” are supposed to rejoice in their good fortune and glory in the “love” of God for only them. Were this being done by any human we would easily recognize the inherent evil and injustice in such a scenario, but somehow Calvinism must chalk up to “mystery” how God’s love and justice can be higher than ours while doing that which is lower than anything but the most vile scum of humanity has ever done. To use White’s own terminology, it is this reprehensible maligning of the character of God which is “scandalously false” and Calvinism’s “fatal flaw”.

In the Conclusion White again boldly invites the reader to examine tradition, admitting that it can be uncomfortable to do so. I can only hope that White’s prayer is one he will offer in sincerity concerning his own beliefs.

CALVINISM DENIED, by Dave Hunt

Opening argument for the Negative

Predictably, I agree with Hunt's assessment of the goal of Calvinism, and that it must be false if the God of the Bible is love. And I think his questions about the Calvinist view of non-Calvinists are valid and deserve clear, unambiguous answers. Either salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone, or it is by pledging allegiance to the TULIP. Either non-Calvinists can be Christians, or they cannot. In my personal experience, some Calvinists would concede that I *appear* to be as saved as they do, but that no one can be sure until they die. But if, as Hunt quoted Piper and Gerstner as saying, no one can be a non-Calvinist Christian, then the answer is clear: they consider us lost.

The Anabaptist issue is one that I never hear Calvinists acknowledge, so I would agree with Hunt's statement about Calvinists basically usurping the honor of having been the only Christian opposition to Rome. Resistance to Rome was not owned by Calvinists, their claims to the contrary notwithstanding. And my own research confirms Hunt's claims about the early Reformers stating that infant baptism was absolutely necessary for anyone to be saved. As Hunt stated, rejection of this was one of the two reasons Calvin had Michael Servetus burned at the stake. And lest anyone fault Hunt for giving such attention to these things, they should remember that these same atrocities committed by Rome were the part of the alleged impetus for the Reformation in the first place.

I did not realize before reading this part of the debate that Calvin is the source of the teaching that water baptism is supposed to be the NT (New Testament) version of circumcision. As Hunt points out, not only is this idea completely absent from scripture, it could only apply to males. But Hunt does bring up a vital point: that anyone who claims to be a teacher of scripture must exhibit the fruit of the Spirit and not only knowledge of the scripture (see also 1 Cor. 13). The apostle Paul made it clear that leaders in the community of believers had to have the highest standards of conduct and love for people. And Hunt's statement about the irony of Calvin's sacramentalism is important as well.

Another point not typically admitted by Calvinists to non-Calvinists is the belief that the children of the elect are automatically saved. While

this is the only consistent conclusion one can come to if also claiming inherited sin from unbelievers, neither is taught in scripture (see esp. Eze. 18). In the light of such basic errors, as well as lacking love for those who disagreed with him, how can Calvin be considered the great theologian many make him out to be?

Hunt ends this section with a return to the Augustinian roots of Calvin's theological views. Even Piper admits (calling it a paradox), "one of the most esteemed fathers of the Roman Catholic Church 'gave us the Reformation'". Calvinists need to answer Hunt's question: "What, then, of the boast that Calvinism is the Reformation?"

These two posts have still only been an introduction to the details of the debate. The next one begins detailed argumentation from each side.

Affirmed Chapter 1: GOD'S ETERNAL DECREE

by James White

White begins with a citation from the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith. But that quote says nothing a non-Calvinist would deny or object to. White implies, though, that those who deny **Calvinism's definition** of God's sovereignty are "in rebellion against Him" and "seek to 'edit' Him down to a more 'manageable' and 'manlike' deity." The Calvinist views this sovereignty as apparently unrelated to God's character, such that God must not allow man the slightest say in any decision of consequence. It so limits man's free will as to make it a mere case of choosing which evil thing to do. To disagree with this definition is, according to Calvinism, a desire to treat God as some sort of president in a democracy. This illustrates the Calvinist penchant for absolute black-and-white thinking; if it is not *this*, it must be *that*, and there cannot be any other choices.

By continually depicting God's right to allow human free will as man bossing God around, White carries on the Calvinist tradition of that which he claims only non-Calvinists do: mischaracterize the opposing view. Again, that God has the sovereign right to allow His creatures freedom to choose or reject the free gift of salvation in Christ is hardly a matter of God being placed beneath those creatures. If I allow my dog to choose which treat he prefers, am I placing my dog in authority over me? This is exactly what Calvinism thinks of human free will. In no way does this impinge upon the honor or glory of God.

Under The Counsel Of His Will and following, White continues to burn the straw man of Calvinism's own declaration of the non-Calvinist view of free will as being antithetical to God's sovereignty. He ignores the distinction between man controlling God and God allowing man to choose. Picking various incidents from the Old Testament (OT) which show God's power and plan, yet ignoring the many others which show God giving people choices, White hopes to convince the reader that this is the whole picture. But acknowledging that God will at times override the usual arena of man's free will is hardly an argument for denying it at all times. In his rhetorical questions White again mischaracterizes

the limited free will that non-Calvinists actually believe in as something completely unrestrained.

After all that straw-man burning, White cries 'misrepresentation' again against those who are allegedly "opponents of God's sovereignty". But it is not God's sovereignty we deny, only the Calvinist definition of it. Then we see that all this was for the purpose of building up a case in favor of absolving God from being the author of sin even though nothing can happen without His divine decree. He quotes the 1689 Confession which does no more than assert this to be true, as if one can win an argument simply by declaring their view to be so. In defining 'compatibilism' White carefully adds that this belief holds "when viewed properly". And who decides what is proper? This is exactly like the StarWars statement from Obi Wan that claims truth depends on one's point of view. The account of Joseph and his brothers is cited in support, but this has no bearing on answering the question of whether God decreed the evil Joseph's brothers intended in the first place.

The argument continues with the passage in Acts 4:27-28 concerning God's plan to use the evil men of Jesus' day to bring about the prophesied crucifixion. Again, this example of God's intervention in human history is not an argument against all free will, especially of individual responsibility. As with Pharaoh of old, God will sometimes use the evil people he already chosen and bend it farther for His purposes. But such exceptions never prove rules; they only disprove them. Again, we are only being presented with half the evidence.

White concludes this section with a repeat of the false dilemma between God's sovereignty and man's free will. It is most certainly *not* true that "God does not sovereignly reign over His creation" unless He always and without exception forces all people to act. If God chose to allow free will, who are Calvinists to deny Him this right?

Response, by Dave Hunt

Hunt begins as I did with an analysis of the Calvinist distortion of the concept of God's sovereignty. He rightly asks, "But where is God's love?" This is what non-Calvinists mean when we say they distort sovereignty, for it makes that sovereignty independent from all else that is true about God, as if sovereignty exists in a moral vacuum. Hunt adds an important point to the fact that Calvinism does indeed make God the ultimate author of sin: "The Baptist Confession exults that God's 'sight penetrates

to the heart of all things.’ Penetrates to the heart of what He Himself causes? What is the point?”

Continuing to expose the contradictions inherent in this disproportionate sovereignty, Hunt wonders how the Calvinist God could love those He predestined to eternal suffering. I would add that the non-Calvinist believes people are not sent to hell by God but by their own choice. If God is eternal and the source of all that is good, then the only kind of place He could make for people who do not wish to be with Him for eternity is an eternal place where there is nothing of God, which means nothing good. How could it be otherwise? In contrast, Calvin’s God does not love those whose eternal suffering He decreed from eternity past.

Then Hunt makes a point I’ve often made as well: without free will, man’s “love” of God would be a sham. Another one is the fact that if God either prevents a sin or turns it for ultimate good, this still does not explain what or who caused the sin in the first place. And he rightly points out that God receives no glory in forcing the wills of those whose will is already forced. Why else would God need to point out those exceptions to free will? The exposure of White’s slip of the pen (“God has a purpose in what He allows”) is excellent as well: can God ‘allow’ what He has ordained? This is a legitimate situation where only one thing can be true: either God decrees or He allows.

Defense, by James White

White begins this section with charges of *ad hominem* argumentation, a curious move for someone who prefaced the debate by declaring his opponent unfit to participate. He accuses Hunt of being off-topic and repeats the charge of misrepresentation— after cautioning the reader to watch for such repetitions. And he re-asserts the standard Calvinist claim that those who wind up in hell have “freely” chosen to do so, without addressing the inherent fallacy of declaring the existence of “choice” in the absence of alternatives to choose from. It is no defense at all to claim that by not choosing to save them, God has not reprobated them.

Then White appeals to the reader to simply declare Hunt’s responses to his cited scriptures as proof that Hunt did not understand the concept of compatibilism. He charges Hunt with ignoring God’s “good intentions” in allowing Joseph to be sold into slavery, even though these same readers can easily see where Hunt addressed them. He also charges Hunt with going “beyond the text” in saying scripture is silent about whether

God caused the evil in people's hearts, even though Hunt was only responding to the Calvinist claim that this must be the case. It appears that whenever Hunt follows White's statements to their logical conclusions, White calls it "going beyond the text" and "a nonresponse" [sic]. To demand to know where "foreknew" is seen in the text is no different than the demand to know where "fore-ordained" is seen in the text.

If the purpose of this debate is about Calvinism, why does White complain that Hunt "did not choose to present a positive defense of his own beliefs"? Had he done so, White would surely have repeated the charge of Hunt being off topic. In showing what things cannot be derived from the text, Hunt is only practicing both accepted exegesis and staying on topic. And White's string of sarcastic questions shows once again his own misunderstandings of his opponent's arguments. To call those arguments "objections to the sovereignty of God" shows White's own ignoring of his opponent's points. Even in his footnote at the end of the section, White adds more *ad hominem* in mocking Hunt by assuring the reader that "no reply will be forthcoming from" Hunt on the issue of types of love.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt points out that White claimed "God could... restrain all evil", which is quite incompatible with claims of God's love. In spite of God's statement in 1 Tim. 2:4 that He "desires all men to be saved", Calvinism teaches that this is not true at all. And since God does not desire to condemn anyone, then the fact that anyone is indeed condemned actually means Calvinism denies God's sovereignty. Hunt also calls White out on the sophistry of calling it "choice" to be unable to keep from choosing to reject God. Lastly, he shows quotes that refute White's charge of "'vague allegation of a connection' between Augustine and Catholicism", and reminds White of scriptural requirements for judging people by their works.

Final Remarks, by James White

White shows confusion here about Hunt's argument concerning why God doesn't restrain all evil, even though it was White's own statement Hunt was quoting. Hunt was asking White this question, not trying to give his own view. Again White shows his own inability to remember the topic at hand. Then he simply quotes someone else (Spurgeon), as if Hunt is

supposed to either debate him too or lie down in the face of an alleged authority whose statement ends all debate.

Affirmed Chapter 2: MAN'S INABILITY

by James White

In his effort to establish Total Inability (TI), White begins by asserting that the opposing view is only held on the basis of “tradition” since it is “so contrary to the inclinations of man”. He defines “synergism” as any theory that allows man the slightest part in determining the choice of whether to accept or reject salvation, as opposed to “monergism” which puts all the choosing in God’s hands. He boldly proclaims that the latter is what “the Bible proclaims”. Yet he mischaracterizes the free will choice of man as constituting man “aiding” God in salvation, as if God needs our help. But it is not a case of need at all; rather, a case of God’s sovereignly allowing man freedom of choice.

Citing the 1689 London Confession as “the Bible’s teaching”, White then quotes Rom. 3:10-18 as the scriptural backing for the Confession’s assertions of TI. Yet even the poetic passages quoted there by Paul speak of people “turning aside”, and the context is concerning Jews and Gentiles, against the assumption of the Jews that God would not hold them accountable for their sin simply because they were Jews. Chapter 1 of that same letter speaks of people who “suppress the truth”, that they “knew” things about God because He showed them these things, that their hearts “became darkened”, etc. All of this points to the fact that these people chose to turn away from God, and only then “God gave them over”. White admits that man is a “moral agent”,¹ but asserts that such agents, in denial of the definition of the words, are all “rebels”; that is, without exception they all choose sin.

White asserts that all of this proves TI. But he resorts to lifting absurdities such as those listed in Jer. 13:23 out of its context of judgement against the nation of Israel and applying them to individuals of all nations and for all time. And without offering any scriptural support, White asserts that all the descendants of Adam “share his corrupted nature”. No one denies that we share mortal *flesh*, but the concept of mortal *nature*

¹ Moral agent, a being who is capable of acting with reference to right and wrong. [Source: Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary (1913)]

is completely absent from scripture. The cited passage of Rom. 8:5-8 repeats the word "flesh", not "nature", so it does not help White's case at all. That he can even boldly proclaim that the lost "will never repent" is truly astounding.

Then White asserts that "the mind set on the flesh... does not subject itself to the law of God... but at the same time it is not able to do so!", but that this "does not take away [the fleshly mind's] guilt". This is nonsensical; **inability necessarily precludes responsibility**. Those who are **unable** to do anything but sin cannot be held responsible for sinning, any more than the blind person could be held responsible for not seeing. So we can say with confidence that since we are accountable, we are therefore able.

White asserts that Eph. 2:1-2 states we are "dead in sin", but a study of the Greek grammar gives a rendering that is compatible with other passages of scripture: "You **are** all dead **to** your sins, in which you once lived..." (ref. Rom. 6:11, similar for Col. 2:13). Being "dead to" something means to have a broken relationship with it, while being "dead in" something is a phrase foreign to first century Greek. Regardless, White claims that there is such a thing as literal "spiritual death" even though it is a metaphor, or else he would be promoting annihilationism. Then he takes 1 Cor. 2:14 out of its context of carnal believers to mean unbelievers are utterly incapable of comprehending salvation.

White then quotes Jesus' statement in John 6:43-44 about no one being able to come to Him unless the Father draws them, but he does not say who the Father draws. He also does not cite John 12:32 where Jesus says, "I will draw **all men** to myself". No non-Calvinist denies that we would be ignorant of God without His revelation, but we disagree that He does not draw everyone. Jesus' parable of the wedding banquet illustrates this fact, in that all were invited but only a few accepted the invitation. White denies this "general drawing" simply by saying it isn't so.

In his zeal to deny man any free will to choose the gospel, White uses the teachings about slavery to sin to claim TI. But no one denies our need to be "set free", which required Jesus to die, but only that we are unable to choose to place our faith in Jesus. He is confusing the need for Jesus to ransom the human race with individual choice about accepting His sacrifice on their behalf. And citing another instance of hardened hearts (the Pharisees) does not change the fact that nothing

is said about how they got that way.

White concludes this section by repeating his claim that man having the freedom to choose or reject the gospel means “the fallen creature has the ability to control God’s free and sovereign work of salvation”. He claims that the Calvinistic view is derived from scripture while the non-Calvinist view is rooted in “the philosophies and traditions of man”—an amazing statement given the Calvinist love of philosophy and citing confessions.

Response, by Dave Hunt

Hunt begins by pointing out that non-Calvinism does not deny the sufficiency of God, but that this does not preclude man’s responsibility. He observes as I have that White has been only giving scripture references that can be used to support TI while ignoring those that cannot. And he rightly notes that not a single scripture expressly states TI, so Calvinism must rely completely upon inference. But *ability* is not even the real issue, because scripture only speaks plainly about believing and accepting. And if, as White asserts, God causes and controls everything, then why does scripture contain so many references to God losing patience with people or having regrets?

In placing faith in God, man certainly does not “aid” Him in any way. But rather than presenting scripture to support these claims, White has only offered “confessions”. And Hunt cites Eph. 2:10 to support the belief that works do not precede salvation but follow it, as well as Rom. 4:5 which clearly states that “to the one who does not work but believes... his faith is considered to be righteousness”. The statement “does not work but believes” is an explicit refutation of the claim that faith is a kind of work. Hunt then quotes many scriptures that tell us to do exactly what Calvinism says we cannot: seek the Lord, cry out to Him, come to Him, believe in Him. If, as Calvinism asserts, we are unable to do these things, then God is openly mocking His creatures and giving them false hope.

Regarding White’s citation of Jer. 13:23, Hunt adds to the issue of context that even our own experiences with those who have been able to give up various sinful habits denies his interpretation. If these sins had been aspects of “nature” as White claimed, this would be impossible. Similar for the citation of Rom. 8:6-8. And he wonders why White does not explain how the lost can have the ability to deliberately choose

to disbelieve but not to believe. Why would Jesus have told people to "strive to enter" (Luke 13:24) if they are unable to strive? And how exactly does freely accepting God's love amount to "controlling" God? Does the receiver control the giver?

Defense, by James White

White begins by describing his presentation so far as consisting of "overwhelming and consistent testimony of Scripture". He accuses Hunt of "ignoring the exegesis I offered" and dismissing others and ignoring context. He then claims Hunt turned "is not able" into "is not willing" (John 6:44 and 8:34), but examining Hunts actual words shows that he said no such thing; he was making the point that "can" in those contexts means *permission*, not *ability*. But I think a better explanation is along the lines of the ancient custom of a king having to raise his scepter to allow someone to approach him. A person had the right to come before the king, but if the king was not willing to listen to them they would be killed. So what Jesus is saying is that people can come to the Father, but the Father must give permission to live. Yet it cannot be overemphasized that **it is Jesus who makes us acceptable in the Father's sight**. And since Jesus said He would draw "all men" to Himself (a scripture White has ignored), it means He will not fail to make anyone who is willing acceptable to the Father.

White makes a big deal out of Hunt's misuse of Greek grammar concerning permission vs. ability, yet Calvinism does a significant amount of that itself (e.g. John 3:16). But the larger issue of course is that of interpretation, and White's continual repetition that Hunt relies on "tradition". Surely the reader has taken note of his repetitiveness by now. To add that Hunt is "adamantly refusing to allow Scripture to define the order of salvation and the nature of saving faith" is wild speculation since Hunt made no such statements. White seems to be having difficulty focusing on the point he is making about grammar. His mocking statement about placing one's interpretation over scripture in order to fit it into a preconceived theology is another case of irony in light of his own practice of the same, as we will see in the next chapter.

In quoting Luke 13:23 White hopes to convince the reader that when Jesus said that only a few would be *able* to enter through the narrow gate, it means only a few would be given that ability by God. But he imposes his interpretation on it, because it can just as easily mean that

only those who freely placed faith in Jesus will have that ability. In other words, White does not address how that ability is received, but only presumes his own view. This is exactly what he accuses Hunt of doing.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt begins by noting that White's "overwhelming" evidence consists only of a few select verses, none of which clearly states what he claims they do; the meanings must be inferred. He also points out that the issue, as I have noted as well, is not about the **requirement** of ability but the **source** of that ability. And White has ignored many verses himself, especially Jesus' command to "strive".

Final Remarks, by James White

White's response is yet another round of "Hunt relies on tradition", with added disparaging remarks about "libertarian free will". He introduces, in a conclusion no less (which he warned the reader about at the beginning), new terminology: "general" and "specific" callings of God. Hunt has never denied the general calling, so now White adds to the definition of "calling". Declaring himself the victor in exegesis, White proceeds to intimate that Hunt simply misunderstands a lot of verses. Note that the charge is not mere disagreement, but a declaration of misunderstanding. Then he makes much ado about Hunt's "eisegesis" while ignoring his own, as if he has not done any personal interpretation at all. Either both sides can interpret or neither can. Yes, we must apply the same standards to both sides.

Affirmed Chapter 3: UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

by James White

One necessary implication of TI is that God must therefore “elect” some people without “condition”, that is, without regard for anything in the person. He declares the standard Calvinist claim of “the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will” wherein God “predestinated these chosen ones to life”. But he offers no scripture to support this claim; it is simply asserted to be true. Calvinism **interprets** Eph. 1:5 to mean “predestined to be saved” in spite of the grammatical evidence that it is our conforming to the likeness of Jesus that is the object of “predestined”. Then he attributes the non-Calvinist objection to his interpretation as being based upon popularity and pride in man.

The section on Ephesians 1 is an elaborate effort to simply presume his interpretation to be what scripture plainly states. He does nothing to support the initial presumption upon which the entire argument rests, nor to deal with the grammatical basis for the non-Calvinist view. So he then offers anecdotal evidence from Paul’s ministry, specifically the incident where the Holy Spirit comes upon Gentile believers. But the context is about convincing Peter and all the Jews that God had now extended His grace beyond them to the whole world, not that God had forced His will upon greater numbers of people. This was a lesson for the Jews, not a doctrinal statement about Unconditional Election (UE). He wishes to take the “surface meaning” (more commonly called “the plain reading”) in this case, yet verses like John 3:16 are never read with this method. White does not attempt to explain why and when this method is to be applied.

No amount of study of the grammar helps White’s interpretation here; it is a diversionary tactic that hopes to capitalize on the earlier accusation about mishandling Greek grammar. But the problem for White is one of context. And White’s introduction of the teachings of the Jehovah’s Witnesses defies not only his statements about the rules of debate but also the fact that Hunt has not said a thing about this passage. White is presuming his opponent’s interpretations.

White cites John 1:12-13 as one of “the other biblical witnesses to the truth of” UE, but he ignores the very first words: “As many as received Him”. This is actually a good verse for his opponent! He tries valiantly to reverse the “surface meaning” but does not succeed. Neither does Mt. 11:27 help his cause since it speaks of “all things”, not “all people”, and he forgets again that Jesus wills to reveal Himself to “all”. Rom. 9:16, 18 is in the context of nations, not individual salvation, White’s mocking denial notwithstanding. I am beginning to understand why he has not explained how this plain meaning method works.

White ends the section by repeating his assertion that to accept man’s free will must require the rejection of God’s sovereignty, not attempting to justify it though his entire theology rests upon it. He mocks the non-Calvinist view as “decisionalism” and declares the scriptures to be devoid of such a concept, in spite of many scriptures telling us to choose—which Calvinism dismisses with the claim, “God frequently commands man to do what is impossible for him to do”.

Response, by Dave Hunt

Hunt notes White’s own reliance upon tradition, but adds that this alleged “freedom” of God is really not very free if it is limited to saving only a few select people. He also points out that there is not one scripture explicitly declaring God’s love and grace to be limited, while there are many that declare the opposite. Then he turns to Eph. 1:13 which gives the order of salvation that White denies and mocks: “in whom you also trusted, after you heard... the gospel... after you believed you were sealed...”. And he points out a flaw in White’s hermeneutical method: if the ‘us’ in Eph. 1:3 means only “the elect”, then the ‘me’ in Gal. 2:20 means that Jesus only loved Paul.

Then Hunt examines Acts 13:48 and notes that the word there is “ordained”, not “predestinated”. Would Calvinists claim that everyone who is “ordained” as a “pastor” was predestinated from eternity past to be one? Most likely, but this only lends support to the oft-denied charge of fatalism, where God must direct every single thing every person will ever do. Next Hunt examines John 1:12-13 and asks how White can use it to claim that people receive Christ because they are born of God. So it is not Hunt who reverses the order of salvation, but White. In John 5:40 etc., note that if Calvinism were true it would read in the opposite order: “You will not have life, that you might come to me”.

In his discussion of nations versus individuals, Hunt gives several references with context which show White's interpretation to be impossible. And is it surprising that White would admit that "before the first active assertion of God's hardening... Pharaoh hardened his own heart", since this serves as proof against his assertion of God's sovereignty. Finally, as I've also noted, Hunt denies White's assertion that faith is a work.

Defense, by James White

White begins with charging Hunt with ignoring his "exegesis" of Eph. 1. Hunt did not dismiss White's claims, but White refuses to acknowledge this and then accuses Hunt of not debating at all! And as before, White had expected Hunt to turn the debate from what Calvinism teaches to what non-Calvinism teaches, so again he scolds Hunt for not doing so. Appealing to "Christian theologians down through the centuries" (but only the ones who support Calvinism) is an appeal to tradition, not scripture or exegesis. Neither does declaring his view "beyond refutation" make it such.

Then White complains about Hunt allegedly not doing more to present his own views, again forgetting the topic and scope of the debate. He offers 2 Thes. 2:13 as proof of election, yet still ignores the grammatical object of that which is chosen. It is not merely "salvation" but the whole phrase, "salvation through sanctification". That is, God has chosen the method of salvation, not which individuals would have it. Per my own examination of the Greek it does not contain the phrase "from the beginning" but "firstfruits", nor the word "chosen" but "prefers" (aorist, which can be present tense), rendering it "... because God favors you as the 'firstfruit' to come into salvation...". One would have expected White to pay more attention to the Greek here, if it is truly scripture which he values above interpretation, even when it removes a proof-text from his arsenal.

In justifying his ignoring of Romans 9, White wishes to claim the right to only cite verses that support his interpretation. Yet since the debate is on Calvinism, Hunt has every right to demand an explanation of those verses which run contrary to the view. Yet White claims that the verses Hunt asked about are irrelevant to UE. Then he adds yet another complaint about what Hunt allegedly ignored, in a vain effort to change the scope of the debate. And White wishes to substitute his own Calvinist-punctuated rendering of Eph. 1:13 to change the order

of salvation, but his rendering doesn't make grammatical sense in either English or Greek.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt begins with a refutation of White's charges of failing to debate the issues. Then he reminds White of his own failure to explain how God can be "free" if He cannot save all, and how God can be sovereign if He cannot grant man free will. He also argues that "love" from someone who had no other choice is not love at all, such that only the free person can truly love God. Hunt agrees that White fails in his attempt to reverse the order of salvation in Eph. 1:13.

Final Remarks, by James White

White begins his final remarks by again asserting the freedom of God without answering Hunt's question, while continuing to badger Hunt for not enlarging the scope of the debate. Once again White cites "tradition" against Hunt, seemingly forgetting his own warning about repetition completely. And to declare that the non-Calvinist wishes "to claim the glory for his salvation" reveals failure on White's part to understand the scriptural divide between faith and works. This section is filled entirely with attacks on the person of his opponent and not any of his arguments.

Affirmed Chapter 4: JESUS TEACHES THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

by James White

White starts off with the claim that exegesis is the strength and confidence of the “Reformed faith”, implying of course that non-Calvinism has no such basis. He uses the Calvinist definition of sovereignty and adds the term “doctrines of grace” to claim Calvinism as the only teaching which properly understands that grace. Then with his own definitions White can confidently cite scriptures that speak of sovereignty, never dealing with Calvinism’s limited and distorted definition changing the meaning of those scriptures. This is an example of the eisegesis White keeps talking about, wherein one reads one’s own interpretations into the text. So to oppose their interpretations is, in their minds, to oppose God. It is interesting that White uses the term “free grace” since it is the name of a system diametrically opposed to Calvinism.

White begins his examination of Jesus by admitting that He said that people would not suffer spiritual hunger or thirst if they came to Him, and that many of them refused. Yet he proposes to nullify this glaring statement of free will by asserting that the cause of their refusal is election. Again he ignores Jesus’ statement about drawing “all” to Himself and only cites “all that the Father gives me”. Jesus draws all, but the Father only gives Him those that accept. Yet one must ask why the Calvinist phrase “all without distinction, not all without exception” only applies to John 3:16 but not John 6:37. White would like to make the “all” here mean “without exception” while denying it elsewhere.

In quoting John 6:40 White explains away the “plain reading” of “whoever believes will be saved” by simply asserting that they believe because the Father made them to do so. He tries to invoke grammar in his cause, citing the present tense of the verbs as applying to the previous passage about “all”. This is an elementary blunder in reading comprehension. If we take this principle to its logical conclusion, then nothing in the present tense in the Bible can apply to us today. Even in English we say for example, “I’m going to the store”. Does it mean I’m actually on my way right now, or that I will begin my trip shortly? White

would have us ignore all idioms and figures of speech in order to claim intellectual high ground for his interpretation.

Then White mocks the non-Calvinist view of God “wooing” people to Himself via a “freewill decision”, ignoring the context of Jesus’ words, especially the people to whom those words were directed. Jesus is talking to Pharisees and hardened hearts who obviously **were** “taught of God”, so by Calvinist reasoning all of them (without exception) should have come to Jesus. White misses the irony in quoting “everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me” as a support for making “all” the foundation of his interpretation of the previous passage. That is, if “all” that Jesus gets from the Father are saved, then we must believe that “all” who are taught of God will be saved. That would mean the evil, unsaved Pharisees, along with all the Israelites living at the time (minding the present tense argument), were coming to Jesus and being saved.

White concludes with the inference that those who oppose Calvinism are only seeking to be popular or appealing to culture. Yet it is Calvinism which most heavily leans upon an alleged majority among theologians of all time, appealing often to tradition and consensus. Facing “hard truths” is a challenge worthy of being made for the Calvinist as much as for anyone.

Response, by Dave Hunt

Since White wants so much to appeal to Calvinist theologians, Hunt reminds the reader that Spurgeon “continually urged every unsaved person to believe”. Yet if, according to Sproul, a person has to be born again before they can choose Christ, that means “the gospel is only for those who have already been saved”. He goes on to cite Spurgeon’s own rejection of such a notion. If this claim by Sproul were true it would render the spreading of the gospel a pointless exercise since the elect are already saved. This also, as Hunt explains, flies in the face of infant baptism. What’s the point of baptism since the elect don’t need it and the non-elect cannot benefit from it?

Next Hunt cites the account of the prodigal son as another blow against the Father forcing His will on the elect. The son in that parable left his father, but the father did not pursue him. The son returned of his own volition, and all the Father had done was to wait and then rejoice at his son’s decision to return to him. And after several more

examples, Hunt points out the difference between a statement of fact and a statement of cause and effect concerning the “all” passages cited by White. Hunt explains: “It is not the Father’s giving of the elect to the Son that *causes* them to believe in Christ. Rather, it is upon the basis of the Cross and the faith of those who ‘believe in Jesus’ that the Father gives the redeemed to the Son...”.

In further refutation of the Calvinist argument that only the elect need to hear the gospel, Hunt reminds us that in John 6 Jesus, who no Calvinist would claim didn’t know who He had elected, offers Himself to an entire unbelieving multitude. He was telling them “all” that they could be saved, contrary to Calvinism’s denial. This, as Hunt explains, is truly “good news” as opposed to Calvinism’s weak assertion that God does (quite frequently in fact) mock man by giving him the mere illusion of having the freedom to choose salvation.

Finally, Hunt exposes White’s contradiction of his own teachings by asking how he could possibly pray for God to “grant grace to hear and obey” if God had already decreed from eternity past who would and would not hear and obey. What is the purpose of prayer in Calvinism? Is God free to listen to our prayers and change His mind about who shall be saved? What also is the purpose of grace in the context of eternal decree?

Defense, by James White

Again claiming that his own interpretation is actually exegesis, White brushes off the reference to Spurgeon, a leading Calvinist theologian, as “irrelevant”. Can Hunt likewise brush off all of White’s references to such people? Can he accuse White of misreading? And White again displays his denial of Hunt’s right to use exegesis to show the impossibility of the Calvinist interpretation for the verses White has selected. He insists that Hunt should have included Sproul’s teaching that they preach the gospel to all only because they do not know who is elect. But not only does this ignore Spurgeon’s rejection of this idea, it also walks right into the problem of Jesus’ offer of salvation to a crowd of unbelievers. Does White actually hope to prove that every one of those people were elect? Or does he plan to explain how Jesus could not know who was elect? Either way White has chosen (or was predestined) to ignore this vital point of Hunt’s.

Then White berates Hunt for a poor analogy, following it with one

of his own. Did the coach go out and force people who weren't even trying out for the team to join it? And why does White complain about Hunt's assertions when he makes so many of his own and attacks Hunt for exposing them? The reader will also note that White's complaint against Hunt for "repeating his traditions" is itself a repetition of his own accusations. He ends the section with more mockery of Hunt while accusing him of the same.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt picks up on White's terminology, reminding him of the fact that Calvinism does not "own" the Reformation; White has completely ignored this point by Hunt, along with the parable of the prodigal son and more. He also reminds him of the topic of debate and that White cannot forbid the inclusion of pertinent scriptures to the ones he wishes to focus on. And he calls out White on his continual claim that only he and not Hunt is using exegesis.

Is it not Calvinism that likens TI to the inability of a dead person to do anything? This is why White's objection to Hunt taking his analogies to their logical conclusions rings hollow. Calvinism cannot arbitrarily choose the meaning and scope of scriptural passages wherein metaphors and other figures of speech are used. And Hunt rightly asks why verses such as Joshua 24:15 don't become a charade if there is no free will. White has not explained this.

Final Remarks, by James White

White's appeal to "the careful reader" is, again, a very bold statement, especially when he accuses Hunt of "not listening". But this same reader knows that there is a great difference between "not listening" and "not agreeing". Should Hunt accuse White of not listening, just because he disagrees? And White shows no memory of his warning against repetition in his accusation of misrepresentation once again. But to go so far as to accuse Hunt of remaining "doggedly impervious to instruction" is both uncalled for and conceited, as if White considers himself Hunt's instructor. Hunt would have had every right at this point to declare White in violation of the terms of the debate on several counts.

Again White appeals to what he considers "clear" as being the end of debate on the matter, and again he brushes off all of Hunt's arguments as "failed". He goes on to imply that non-Calvinists are "offended" by

the gospel message, practically calling them lost. And his relentless charge of “tradition” against his opponent is becoming tedious. Once again he quotes Spurgeon, and once again he ignores Jesus’ offer of salvation to the crowd. But at least the quote exposes the sophistry of Calvinism’s claim that moving God’s coercion from direct to indirect (dragging against one’s will, and changing the will) absolves God of such coercion. To change a will is no less a violation of that will than to exert force against it.

Affirmed Chapter 5: THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF REDEMPTION

by James White

Now White turns to Romans 8, especially vs. 28-30, as “one of the clearest... of God’s absolute sovereignty in salvation”. He interprets 28 as meaning that God has to decree everything in order to make it “work together for good”. That is, he presumes that his view must be the only way to make this possible. He continues to impose his own definition of sovereignty onto all of scripture and makes no exceptions for any reason— except of course when it comes to making God the author of sin. And he seems to think that non-Calvinists actually take this verse to apply to unbelievers, but I’m sure Hunt will correct him on that. Yet White does not realize that he has shot himself in the foot with this emphasis: does God not sovereignly control all the actions of unbelievers as well, such that He causes all things to work together for evil for them? Is God “sovereign over human affairs” or not?

White moves to verse 29 and lists the five verbs there: foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified. Yet here again the predestination is not to salvation but to “become conformed”. The Greek reads: “that whom he-foreknew and he-predestined to-be-confirmed of-the image of-the son...” It is the foreknown who will be made to conform to the likeness of Jesus. White errs in claiming they are all in the past tense; the aorist is not necessarily past. It is presumed on the basis of context alone and could very well be rendered in the present tense. We would have legitimate grammatical right to render it “those he foreknew he predestines”.

Ignoring White’s further accusations of his opponent’s “traditions” and his mockery of the actual definition of foreknowledge. we see his attempt to make the fact that “foreknow” is an active verb into an indictment of those who he thinks (erroneously) take it to be passive. This is grasping at straws, because no one considers God’s foreknowledge to be something He does *not* do. And who has ever said that this foreknowledge is only applied to events and not people? Is it permissible for White to burn straw men, but not for his opponent? I am wondering

now if White intends to conduct both sides of the debate himself.

Moving on to White's examination of vs. 31 we note that he is still proceeding on the erroneous assumption that non-Calvinists think this all applies to unbelievers as well as believers. Verses that clearly state Jesus died for "the world" are ignored in this, such that White would divorce some parts of scripture from others in order to only allow discussion of the ones he can use in his argument.

At the end White once again declares that the passage "cannot be understood" without his particular definition of sovereignty. After all this time he still has not faced the point Hunt made, that God's sovereignty is not thwarted by man's free will, and that God is not as sovereign as they claim if He cannot go against His alleged eternal decree. He chooses instead to look forward to a discussion of chapter 9, which undoubtedly will be taken to refer not to Jews and Gentiles but lost and saved.

Response, by Dave Hunt

As expected, Hunt reminds White of his "extreme view of sovereignty", and his misunderstanding of grammar. And as 1 John 4:19 clearly states, it is the love of God, not His sovereignty, that causes us to love Him in return. Then Hunt reminds us that the context of Rom. 8 is not salvation at all, but blessings promised to the foreknown. So Hunt wants White to find any clear statement in scripture which restricts the offer of salvation to a select group who is guaranteed to accept it. The reason for requiring this precision is because it would have to overturn so many other scriptures to the contrary.

Hunt then focuses on the issue of foreknowledge. Calvinism clearly teaches that God can only foreknow what He decrees. But as Hunt asks, "what is 'foreknowledge' if not 'omniscient foresight'?" No one claims 'foreknowledge' for that which they forced to happen, because to foreknow is to know **without** causing. There is no divine power needed to predict the outcome of a rigged game. So Calvinism effectively robs God of His foreknowledge and assigns to Him no more prophetic power than any human would have. Hunt exposes the folly of this idea by inserting Calvinist definitions into Rom. 8:29: "for whom he did predestine, he also did predestine".

In continuing to examine White's claims concerning foreknowledge, Hunt shows that his attempt to turn it into "fore-loving" is self-defeating, because it means God must love all people, elect or not. He also observes

another case of Calvinism's inconsistent interpretation of "all" re. 1 Tim. 2:6, and calls out White on his attempt to shift the burden of proof (for the definition of "all") to non-Calvinists.

Defense, by James White

Finally, White admits to having an extreme view of sovereignty but indicates that he still does not see what's wrong with it. He still believes that an absolutely sovereign God does not have the sovereignty to allow man free will. So it appears that the inherent contradiction of his view remains beyond his grasp. While it is common for people to claim that their view is the "Biblical" one, this is hardly "proof" and is not appropriate in debate.

With more repetitions of "tradition", "misleading", "misunderstanding" and more, White only impresses the reader with his refusal to follow his own rules for the debate. He continues to deny Hunt the right to show that various scriptures cannot mean what White asserts, accusing him of ignoring his "lexical information" while doing the same to him in return. And he has the audacity to chide Hunt for trying to win by declaration! To top it all off, White describes Hunt as using "mantra-like phrases". I stand in awe of White's utter blindness to his own faults.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt begins with a refutation of White's interpretation of Daniel 4:34, focusing on his maligning of the character of God by making Him the cause of both good and evil. And he calls him out on the Calvinist practice of inventing terms like "prescriptive will" that is allegedly not the same as "decree". He repeats, because White keeps asserting otherwise, that God cannot have foreknowledge if He only knows what He decrees.

Final Remarks, by James White

White declares Hunt's lexical information to be in error and accuses him of having "no concept of the issue at hand". But White cannot even follow Hunt's simple rebuttal to his (White's) own argument. Hunt is disputing White's interpretation, which is based upon that of Augustine, but White thinks Hunt is instead arguing with Paul. And then White repeats his acceptance of "foreknow" as "fore-love" in spite of all Hunt's refutation.

Affirmed Chapter 6: PARTICULAR REDEMPTION: TRUE ATONEMENT, TRUE SUBSTITUTION

by Dave Hunt

I don't know how much more I can stand of White's "mantra" of "tradition".

Again White asserts that his interpretation is the clear, obvious meaning of scripture. Again he attributes any disagreement with his view to emotion and sentimentality. He blames these straw men for heresies against the atonement, ignoring his own "tradition's" contribution to that which he calls "strange and grossly unscriptural theories". He appeals to the entirety of scripture even after having repeatedly denied this approach to his opponent in this debate. That is how White introduces his defense of "particular redemption", better known as "limited atonement" (LA). The "reformed" answer may indeed be "plain and clear" but this hardly makes it right.

He begins by defining substitutionary atonement as necessarily saving all who were died for, such that any other view which uses a different definition will be summarily dismissed as universalism. But as with sovereignty, everything hinges upon having the right definition in the first place. This correct one, White and all Calvinists would assert, is their definition. So White has already set up Hunt to fail by insisting upon his definition of substitutionary atonement.

First White claims that if Jesus died for all, then He died for many who were already dead. But this presumes spiritual death in the first place, which is a circular argument. So his charge of inconsistency is groundless, and presents a false dichotomy between Jesus dying for the dead or only dying for the elect. He then tries to turn the guilt of LA upon non-Calvinists by claiming that atonement only for the elect is somehow less limiting than atonement for all but only some accept the gospel. But the foundational presumption is that Jesus' death is what determines who goes to heaven; that is, that the atonement is the **only** component of salvation.

So White's proclamation that anyone who isn't a universalist "limits

the atonement” is only true if we presume his view of that atonement. But surely even White would not think that the OT sacrifices were what actually took away anyone’s sins, rather that it was always the person’s faith and obedience to God in the sacrifice which took away their sins. He appeals not to scripture but to Spurgeon for his authority, who dared to call Jesus’ blood wasted if not all He died for came to saving faith. White’s rhetorical questions are answered by scripture, which I trust Hunt will provide later.

White finally does come to scripture, but his first choice does not help his argument. Heb. 7:24-25 says that Jesus saves “those who draw near to God through Him”, which no one denies. It does **not** say “those who He died for” but those who came to Him in faith. And White contradicts himself in saying “if Jesus intercedes for you, you **will** be saved”, since he just argued that Jesus only died for the already saved. Does he no longer believe that Jesus saved all the elect on the cross? Or is it now by Jesus’ continual intercession? Does He have to keep interceding in order to keep the elect saved? If even the elect were not saved at the cross, then why does White care who Jesus died for?

The next reference, Heb. 9:11-12, does even more damage to White’s argument since it clearly states that Jesus **had already obtained eternal redemption** when he first entered the holy place “once for all”. So who is Jesus continuing to save through intercession? The next one, Heb. 10:10, 14 puts the final death blow on White’s argument: “For by one offering He has perfected **for all time** those who are sanctified”. Is “perfected” saved? Or is it possible, however un-Calvinistic, that Jesus’ sanctification and perfection concern not initial salvation but cleansing of that which is already His Bride?

In citing Luke 19:10 White has surely forgotten the basic teachings of Calvinism, for he must believe that “the lost” are “the elect”— which in turn means the non-elect aren’t lost! And if, per his appeal to a Dr. Pipa, “many” never means “all”, then what do Calvinists do with Rom. 5:15a? “For if the **many** died by the trespass of the one man...” means, according to White, that Adam’s sin did not infect “all”. Or consider Rom. 5:18b: “... justification that brings life for **all** men...”; does this not mean that “all” are justified and thus saved? Clearly, Calvinist pronouncements on the meaning of “all” and “many” aren’t doing anything to bolster White’s claim of consistency. Even 1 Tim. 1:15 turns against White, for it repeats the fact that Jesus came to save **sinners**, not the elect.

White argues against the teaching that Christ died for all sins “except the sin of unbelief” and states that such an exception is not consistent with universal atonement. But aside from the fact that Hunt has not yet stated any such belief, White is confusing the **type** of sin with the **extent** of sin. This teaching has nothing to do with whether or not Jesus was “the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). To be Calvinistically technical, it says “the sins of all people”, not “all types of sin”. And has Hunt argued that unbelief is the **only** sin Jesus died for?

Incredibly, White decides to label “the vast majority” of those who call themselves Calvinists but reject his view of LA as “not Reformed at all”, because he equates that with “objecting to God’s freedom”. He has once again stepped outside the bounds of the debate. And who are Calvinists to criticize anyone else’s alleged redefinition of terms? So far the reader has not even been told how and when to take “all” as “all”. But again, unless White will say that 1 John 2:2 contradicts Mt. 1:21 etc., he has no choice but to concede that his interpretations are not scripturally accurate.

Response, by Dave Hunt

Hunt calls out White on his overuse of pejorative terms, and turns the charge of “tradition” back on him, because he has kept appealing to Calvinist interpretations for everything as being authoritative and “Biblical”. Again Hunt asks White for explicit scriptures instead of nothing but inferences and interpretations. And he points out that the phrase “His people” is not synonymous with “the elect”; if it were, then what is the meaning of “If my people... will seek my face...”? Do the elect need to seek God?

After dealing briefly with White’s claim about “many” never meaning “all”, Hunt does deny his accusation about unbelief being the unforgivable sin. So White has only burned a straw man here. But Hunt explains as I did that dying for the sins of all people is not identical to dying for every type of sin. Then he makes a similar argument to mine concerning exactly when Jesus saved people. If it was at Calvary then no one after that would need to be saved, since all salvation was accomplished at that point in time. And if it was not accomplished at that time, then why all the fuss about how many people Jesus died for?

Hunt points White to John 3:18 which clearly and explicitly states the

reason that the lost are “condemned already”: they have not believed; it does not say it is because they have not been died for. And the charge of non-Calvinism only believing in a “potential” salvation is not avoided by Calvinism, since it does not teach that the elect were saved at Calvary, but only when God changes their will to make them believe. And what does Calvinism do with verses like John 1:29 which clearly says Jesus took away “the sin of the world”— not the elect? Other verses are mentioned as well, each one clear in its context that “world” means all people without exception.

The issue White had raised concerning the brass serpent lifted up on a pole in the OT actually is a very good argument against his view. There was only one serpent, one pole, and it would have been lifted up even if none ever looked to it in faith. Those that did so were healed, and obviously the serpent on the pole was not “wasted” because some did not have faith. There had to be both an object of faith and the voluntary placing of faith, without regard to quantity. Salvation could never have come to anyone without the atonement, yet it comes to no one without faith.

Defense, by James White

White begins with questions which have already been answered, and still ignores those Hunt has raised. He focuses on the purpose of the atonement but seems to want to examine it in isolation. But above all, he wants to focus on his opponent and accuse him of many things. Though he claims to be tiring of Hunt’s alleged flaws, I suspect the reader is also tiring of White’s constant *ad hominem* barrage and nauseating repetition of “tradition”.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt makes a good point against the charge of Jesus’ sacrifice being wasted on the lost: “No, God does not exact it; the Christ-rejecters themselves insist upon eternally paying for their own sins.” He repeats his request for explicit scriptures restricting Jesus’ sacrifice for the elect but none have been forthcoming. He is still waiting for White to show scriptural backing for his theory about God’s intention in the atonement.

Final Remarks, by James White

White cannot grasp the idea of sinners choosing the punishment of hell voluntarily, yet if he is a Calvinist he holds them accountable for exactly

that. All Calvinists insist forcefully that no one has their will violated, so they can't claim this idea is nonsense. Not if they wish to be consistent.

Affirmed Chapter 7: IRRESISTIBLE GRACE GOD SAVES WITHOUT FAIL

by James White

The Calvinist doctrine of Irresistible Grace (IG) states that God will overcome all resistance to His will to save someone. Thus it can be claimed that they really don't teach that grace is "irresistible", even though that is the eventual outcome. But again White simply asserts that God is "free" to do this, completely ignoring Hunts several attempts to get him to answer how God can be "free" if He cannot go against His alleged decree made in eternity past. White thus denies man any part in the choice, likening it to Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Yet scripture never draws any such analogy; Calvinism must extract it from all references to the word "dead", even when the context clearly indicates a figurative death.

I refuse to address any more of White's references to "tradition". Just FYI.

Then White quotes Eph. 2:8-9, but non-Calvinists also believe that the method and offer of salvation is entirely in the hands of God. Yet this grammatical understanding does not make individual faith itself a "gift of God", but rather that God should offer this method of salvation. White is apparently unable to see the distinction. So he errs in thinking that God must give us our faith, and besides, what is the purpose? God could just "give us salvation" without faith, repentance, or anything else. It is this right to be saved by faith that God gives us, not the faith itself.

White also shows poor attention to grammar in quoting Heb. 12:2, which he knows can as easily be rendered "the" faith, and which has a significant effect upon its meaning, and the context does not lend any more weight to his interpretation than to any other. This is hardly a clear and obvious support for having our faith "given" to us by force. White asks why anyone would rejoice over the faith of others if it isn't forced upon us by God, but why would they rejoice if it is? Isn't our rejoicing directed at God for his payment and offer of salvation, and in people because of a great choice freely made? I am much happier when my child freely chooses to listen to me than when he only does so out

of obligation. Can God reveal Himself to us as “Father” and not appeal to our own experiences in this regard? It would seem at this point that the Calvinist God is more interested in the exercise of His raw power and immutable decree than in love freely returned by his creatures.

Then White brings up one of the more popular proof-texts: Acts 16:14, where Lydia is listening to Paul’s gospel presentation and “the Lord opened her heart to respond”. He asks why God would “have to” open her heart, but the scripture says nothing of the sort. Does God not draw everyone? Does this negate their need to choose? Not at all. And like all Calvinists, White ignores the part about her first having **heard the gospel**. They never explain why God apparently was unable (or not free) to open her heart until she heard the gospel.

White and other Calvinists would also have us believe that God’s foreknowledge of Paul could only have been due to God’s eternal decree to force Himself upon him. Yet God is free, in spite of Calvinism’s teachings otherwise, to know who will respond in faith given the opportunity. That some require more “noise” to get their attention is hardly a proof of IG. And again, these incidences must be taken in isolation to work at all. They respond, as White does, by mocking God’s sovereign right to allow free will in depicting Him as “wringing His hands” should anyone not respond to His invitation. This is unconscionable coming from those who consider themselves in possession of all truth.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to endure more of White’s mockery and mantras, but we must resolutely complete our analysis of this debate, of which we are only now approaching the midpoint.

Response, by Dave Hunt

Hunt leads off with an expose of the self-contradictory nature of the very concept of IG. Grace is an act of kindness, not the exercise of an irresistible force. And as noted already, the fact that man can only resist it for a time does not make it any less irresistible. Then Hunt elaborates on the false analogy of physical death to spiritual, figurative death. The literally dead cannot even do evil; could Lazarus have done evil while dead? The analogy fails when tested against both logic and scripture.

So also with explicit verses like 1 Peter 1:23, 25, which says we are “born again... through the living and enduring word of God... and this is the word that was preached to you”. Even more problematic for White is John 20:31b: “... and that believing you may have life in his name”.

Calvinism must reverse it to say "... and that you may have life in his name and believe". Hunt offers several additional examples where this reversal is necessary in order to agree with Calvinist dogma.

White faces the same problems on the matter of whether faith is a gift. Hunt offers many passages of scripture which speak of our own faith, sometimes in negative terms, but always "our" faith. And if faith is a gift, can it be called a gift if forced upon the receiver? No, it isn't a gift unless it is both freely offered and freely accepted. So the Calvinist is forced into teaching that man is a mere puppet whose every movement has to be made by God. Hunt also makes an excellent point in observing that Lydia "responded". Can the dead respond? Did God make her alive before He opened her heart? Exactly how many steps are there in this Calvinistic salvation?

In closing, Hunt shows that Calvinism's God is very limited indeed: in grace, in compassion, in love, and in atonement, making God much more limited than His creatures.

Defense, by James White

In his invective against Hunt, White eventually gets around to proposing a new factor not seen in the debate thus far (is this a debate on Calvinism or Hunt's book? White doesn't seem to remember): that salvation is not the same as regeneration. He defines salvation as only "a subset of [regeneration]", which I guess could be considered a very late response to the question about the atonement. Yet it still doesn't answer it, since not all the elect of all time were even regenerated at Calvary. White has only complicated his theology by breaking down "salvation unto faith" into atonement, quickening (he hasn't told us this stage yet), and finally faith. What's to confuse?

White's circularity simply astounds me. In reaming Hunt for his quotation of Col. 1:3-4 White imposes his own theory about why people would rejoice over the faith of others upon it, then takes that presumption as rendering Hunt's point meaningless! And then he proceeds to claim Hunt has ignored his argument about Eph. 2:8-9. It is all I can do to refrain from typing out what I'm thinking right now about White's qualification to debate, on this or any other topic. Perhaps God is testing my resolve to see this debate through to the end.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt rightly exposes White's "regeneration" theory for the baseless assertion that it is, creating such untenable entities as the unsaved elect or the quickened lost, however brief the interval might be between steps. And he asks what part the persuasion Paul talks about plays in God's sovereign plan to irresistibly coerce people into faith. This whole Calvinistic teaching makes God, and those He elects, calloused toward those He allegedly reprobated.

Final Remarks, by James White

White states that "coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration". Where is this in scripture? Where is "coming to Christ" ever called an "effect" of anything? Ironically, the quote from Spurgeon he prefaced this with does not say what he claims; it only says that "coming to Christ is the **one** essential thing", not the **first** thing. And only now does White introduce the Calvinist trademark term "quickenings". The story he makes up is quite entertaining ("No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him."), but of course is nowhere found in scripture. In fact, White himself would be hard-pressed to testify to having experienced this sequence. And if it all happens so fast that we aren't aware of it, then what evidence is there of it happening at all?

While White may feel honored to "write in defense" of Calvinism, I wonder how many of his colleagues share that sentiment. Yet from the quotes of his authorities, including those I've read myself in Calvin's *Institutes*, perhaps they would assess his work here as adequate; I can only speculate. In keeping with his Calvinist tradition White re-asserts its standard dogmas, but then he appeals to the reader again in an almost suicidal quest for self-implication.

Denied Chapter 8: CALVIN AND AUGUSTINE: TWO JONAHS WHO SINK THE SHIP

by Dave Hunt

Hunt opens his Denial by recounting the historical facts concerning the founders of Calvinistic theology: John Calvin and Augustine. That such attention should be paid to the founders of a theological system should come as no surprise, since the majority of scriptural warnings and requirements concerning Christian leaders have to do with character, not doctrine. This is of course not a dismissal of doctrine, for the best and holiest behavior is no substitute for truth. Yet we cannot ignore the emphasis upon character required for all who would influence the community of believers, and the “most excellent way” so poetically conveyed by Paul in 1 Cor. 13.

After a lengthy report on the influences, behavior, and teachings of both founders, Hunt touches on the common disclaimer, “a product of his time”. Yet as Hunt points out, scripture makes no such allowance, even for the non-leader among believers. Paul could easily have continued on as “a product of his time” but lived and taught the opposite. His transformation was radical and consistent; he never returned to his former life in the slightest. Should we have absolved Paul of responsibility for his actions had he, in accordance with the age, crucified heretics? Should we have accepted his writings as scripture regardless of whether he had showed murderous hatred toward his critics, who were many and who hounded him from place to place his entire life after conversion? Would not Paul’s writings about love have been hollow without a life that showed the fruit of the Spirit he himself espoused?

Clearly, a man like Calvin, who lifted his theology and violent religious practices from the “father” of Roman Catholicism, should never have been revered by true believers, who were often his victims, their crimes being only to disagree with him. Though he wrote in his *Institutes* against inventing God in our image, it doesn’t take psychic powers to see that this is exactly what Calvin did, for his view of God mapped his own view of how religion should be implemented. He was trained as a Catholic

and a lawyer, which shows in his portrayal of God.

Response, by James White

White, as has been his custom, responds with a lecture on how to debate. Then, incredibly, he charges not Calvinism but non-Calvinism with standing “shoulder to shoulder with Rome”! He misses Hunt’s whole reason for what he wrote about Calvin the man, presumably because he didn’t want Hunt to bring it into the debate that bears his founder’s name. Again, I stand amazed.

In his attempt to make Calvin a Christian, White ignores what Hunt had written about the “product of his time” excuse to make it anyway. He accuses Hunt of a one-sided history, though he concedes that Hunt did make a statement about some of the good things Calvin did, but brushes it aside as “unbalanced”— as if that short list of good behavior should equally balance “the thrust of his writing” and life. One cannot balance 50 bad things with 3 good things. I rather suspect that what White is demanding is not accuracy but whitewashing.

Despite White’s protests to the contrary, Hunt’s point about scriptural requirements for believers, especially leaders, is central to this debate. Calvinism *does* “stand or fall upon the personal standing of Calvin himself”. Did not Paul describe a person with “all knowledge” as only a clanging cymbal if devoid of love? And while White makes a concerted effort to squeeze a confession of faith out of Calvin’s writings, he can only find what he has been finding in his alleged exegesis of scripture: inference. Not even his expanded quote of Calvin clarifies the issue, but White latches onto the word “godliness” as somehow the mark of a Christian. Would he accept such a “confession” from anyone else? Is his theology alone supposed to be all that is required to prove his election?

Amazingly, White reacts to Hunt’s treatment of Augustine by citing Warfield’s statement, “the Reformation... was just the victory of Augustine’s doctrine of grace over Augustine’s doctrine of the church”! So apparently Calvinism can divest itself of RCC influence simply by inventing a sort of split personality for Augustine. With the NT writer James we must ask, “Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?” (James 3:11) But we observe that White is only following in Calvin’s footsteps to choose the parts of Calvin he likes while ignoring the parts he doesn’t. One must wonder why it is, then, that White is so eager to pounce upon beliefs of Hunt’s that he deems cultic. Why

couldn't Hunt only take what he likes from, say, L. Ron Hubbard or even the Pope? Isn't that what Calvinism is doing regarding Augustine?

White finally admits the contradictions in Augustine's theology but attributes this to timing and experiences. Yet I know of no record of Augustine having given up the former beliefs when adopting the later ones. That is, he continued to hold to both at the same time. Whether the "reformers" rejected Augustine's earlier teachings is beside the point; the fact remains that Augustine himself never repudiated his RCC theologies. That the RCC was rooted in his teachings in spite of his having died before it formed (according to White) pulls the rug out from under White's appeal to timing. He can claim that the RCC only took up the "dark side" of those teachings, but only Calvinists believe his "doctrines of grace" are the "good side".

If, after admitting Augustine's aberrant teachings, White can still fault Hunt for "painting him as a heretical, false teacher", then does this mean White would not so describe him, even considering his "dark side"? Is Hunt supposed to keep from telling the whole true about someone just because White likes some of their teachings? Even scripture never shrinks back from airing out the dirty laundry of its heroes, such as King David. Why does White wish to hide such things about Augustine or Calvin? And why does he try to deny his own fellow Calvinists' statements confirming Augustine as the founder of both theologies, especially since he himself had just admitted as much?

At the end White actually claims that he has "presented a positive, exegetically based position", even though not one scripture was cited and there was certainly nothing positive about his treatment of Hunt.

Defense, by Dave Hunt

I really don't have anything to add here, since it turns out that Hunt and I have made the same observations about White's response.

Final Remarks, by James White

White accuses Hunt of engaging in "poisoning the well", even though there is ample evidence that it is Calvin and Augustine who poisoned it. But when the scriptures require Christian teachers to be of exemplary character, exposure of sinful ones is only following its precepts (1 Tim. 5:20). Hunt is not appealing to anyone's emotion but to the Bible. And has White not been trying throughout this debate to paint his opponent

in the worst possible light, appealing to the reader to side with him against Hunt and continually accusing him of all kinds of incompetence and malice? Why is only White allowed to engage in this?

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt simply states that White has not refuted any of his facts but only tried to impugn his character for presenting them at all. He also uses the same tactic as White in saying “no one is wrong about everything”, which I’m sure he wrote tongue-in-cheek. If White can glean only some of Augustine’s teachings, then he cannot deny Hunt the right to glean some of them too.

Denied Chapter 9: THE CENTRAL ISSUE: GOD'S LOVE AND CHARACTER

by Dave Hunt

In this chapter Hunt examines the inherent injustice of predestination. If, as scripture states clearly, God is "love", and if His love cannot be less than ours, then it follows that He could not predestine anyone to hell, or command His followers to love others as we love ourselves. If Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan means anything, it is that we cannot call only an "elect" our "neighbor". But as Hunt explains, Calvinism reduces this love to mere favoritism and raw power, resulting in a hollow "love" from creatures whose will He had to change in order to produce it.

With a list of questions Hunt leads to the conclusion that this God of love is not the God portrayed by Calvinism. The Calvinistic God produces followers who can only rejoice in their own salvation, having no more concern for the reprobated than their God does. Is this the God who said He is not "a respecter of persons" and does not "look on appearance"? Why would the NT writer James tell us not to be biased if it is the very nature of God to be exactly that? Everything the NT teaches flies in the face of the Calvinistic God's reprobation and distorted sovereignty.

And what of justice? Again, if we know it is unjust to condemn people for their inabilities, then how can God be less just than we are? Can Calvinism escape this problem by writing it off as "mystery"? And again, what of God's mercy and compassion? These are not merely academic exercises but vital questions about the roots of our beliefs. Our view of the nature of God will color every other issue, theological or behavioral.

Then Hunt enumerates the ways in which Calvinism attempts to qualify the very love of God and dissect it into this bit for the elect and that bit for the lost, in spite of the fact that scripture does no such thing. The various Greek words for 'love' do not help, for no matter how they define it, it isn't any kind of love to show a lesser degree of kindness to the doomed in this life and then throw them into hell for eternity. Over all, it is apparent that Calvinism's God is far below His creatures in all

the most important ways.

Response, by James White

White seems predestined to keep repeating “tradition” against Hunt and all non-Calvinists.

Ignoring Hunt’s many scriptural references concerning the love of God and the God that is love, White simply asserts that there *must* be divisions or levels of God’s love for people; it simply must be so. To justify this White actually states, “Our capacity to love... comes from the fact that ... we have **the freedom and ability** to express” the image of God we are made in. Has he completely forgotten that man has no free will, or at least only enough to “choose” evil? No one denies that love is more than an emotion but an act of will, so how does this help his case?

Likewise, his appeal to the analogy of how parents love their own children more than other people’s children ignores the scriptural fact that God loves the world. Would White actually argue that we would not try to save the life of someone else’s child, just because they aren’t ours? And does love mean we can never administer justice? A good parent will discipline wayward children, their own more than others’. Does this mean parents have less love for their own children? Yet White would have us believe that God cannot love those he reluctantly sends off to the hell they chose, because His justice demands it. So again, White creates a false dilemma to justify the unloving, unjust God of Calvinism.

Even if White brushes all that off, he still must face the fact that even we would never stand idly by while a friend or neighbor or even a stranger needed rescue from death and it was within our power to do so. Yet only by assigning willful evil to those that have no free will can White put all the un-elect into the same boat as the thief or mugger or murderer. And in his analogy of families, he ignores God’s willingness to **adopt as sons** any who come to Him in faith. God has no natural-born children except Jesus, so according to White God could only love Jesus enough to “save” Him. White would have us believe that human parents would, given the ability, pick only some orphans to adopt while consigning the rest to die of starvation.

And reader, please tell me you don’t believe White is predestined to keep saying “tradition”! I shudder to blame God for that.

Defense, by Dave Hunt

Hunt begins his response by explaining that regardless of how many types of love there may be, *none* of them could be so evil or unjust or cold as to simply decide not to save someone that could have been saved. And it is a strange “love” indeed which can grant people life and comfort temporarily, then take it away permanently. In other words, Calvinism must so twist the meanings of words that they become their opposites. This is exactly like the modern claim that rule is a different kind of service. He also points out that love never forces itself on anyone—even the love of God. That many spurn that love is no proof that God did not have it in the first place.

Then Hunt looks at Gal. 6:10 and explains that to do good even to unbelievers does not mean doing so temporarily, then hating and torturing them. So it follows that if God is “good to all”, then He can do no less, such as giving unbelievers blessings in this life and then decreeing that they should suffer for all eternity. Instead, the love of God for the lost is not “failed” but simply rejected, which God in His sovereignty is “free” to allow.

Final Remarks, by James White

White obviously does not like the taste of his own medicine, complaining about Hunt’s charges of ignoring or forgetting scriptures, since he has leveled this very charge repeatedly against Hunt. And he seems to imply that his space to respond is somehow more “limited” than Hunt’s, apparently in an effort to excuse the things he has failed to respond to. Then after all that White admits having “passed over” much of Hunt’s material, since in his estimation it was all “based upon a misunderstanding on Hunt’s part and hence are irrelevant”. Would White tolerate such a lame excuse from Hunt? Can Hunt use this excuse the next time White accuses him of ignoring his arguments? I think the “careful reader” White keeps appealing to will see through such a double standard.

Instead of showing any comprehension of Hunt’s description of the “extreme sovereignty” of Calvinism, White uses the *tu coque* (“you too”) fallacy in reversing the charge: that Hunt promotes “extreme love”, which he defines as “unbalanced”. With large Latin words White mocks Hunt’s claim, from scripture, that God “is love”, and this being the case, it is indeed “the central, all-defining attribute of God”. He labels this scriptural view “error” and “fatal” to the non-Calvinist view, again accusing

Hunt of misrepresentation. At the end he adds that without the Calvinist definition of love, "there can be no redeeming love". Why this must be so, he does not explain.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt denies White's allegation of having shown him to be in error, even widening the scope to White's book. Then he points out the fallacy in White's argument against God's love, explaining that "God is not 'free' to act contrary to His character or to His Word"; both sovereignty and love hinge on this principle. And he makes an excellent point in saying that since the elect are no less guilty than the reprobate, then if God is not unjust to save one, He is not unjust to save all. Then Hunt denies White's claim that he had forced Hunt to "admit the weight of [his] argument".

Denied Chapter 10: REGENERATION BEFORE FAITH AND SALVATION?

by Dave Hunt

Hunt now addresses the issue of the order of salvation, commonly known in Calvinism as “regeneration before faith” (RBF). He cites Acts 16:31 which states that belief precedes salvation. But what about “regeneration”? Calvin believed that people were regenerated and justified at infant baptism, a time long preceding the possibility of faith. Inconsistently, today’s Calvinists reject this teaching of Calvin yet retain the assertion of RBF. It should be obvious that giving up Calvin’s teaching on infant baptism necessarily removes the very basis for this RBF, since one led to the other (without the ability to exercise faith, infants **had** to be chosen by God). Modern Calvinists have only moved the starting point, meaning they have no logical reason to reject infant baptism, since *when* God elects is irrelevant.

Quoting several prominent Calvinists, Hunt shows their unequivocal belief that regeneration must precede faith, which means faith is not the **cause** but the **effect** of the new birth. Quoting White: “A man is not saved because he believes in Christ; he believes in Christ because he is saved” (also a nearly identical quote using “regenerated” instead of “saved”). The problem is that this is the exact opposite of what scripture tells us. Along with Acts 16:31 Hunt adds Rom. 10:9, Luke 8:12, John 3:15-16, 5:24, 6:40, and many more, especially 1 Tim. 1:16 which says to believe in Him toward everlasting life.

Hunt also relates a quote from Sproul which betrays the inconsistency in Calvinist teachings: “Once Luther grasped the teaching of Paul in Romans, he was reborn.” Shouldn’t he have said, “Once Luther was reborn, he grasped the teaching of Paul in Romans”? Hunt proposes that Calvinist hold to such inconsistencies because their system demands it; without RBF, there can be no TI, no UE, and no IG.

As for White’s emphasis on man’s inability, Hunt asks what ability has to do with placing faith in Christ so as to receive Him? Faith is not a work so it cannot be a matter of ability. It requires no ability to receive a gift. He then mentions 2 Tim. 3:15 with the emphasis on the faith

of a child, but this too speaks of the order of salvation: "... the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto **salvation through faith...**". The only way Calvinism can keep asserting RBF in light of such verses is to equate, without any scriptural warrant, *drawing* with *regeneration*. But even then, this would mean that Jesus "regenerates" all men to Himself!

Then Hunt examines the issue of ability by showing, through scripture, that "cannot" does not always signify inability, but frequently unwillingness as well. Knowing this, it removes all basis for the Calvinist to claim any scripture saying that depraved sinners lack any ability to believe in Christ. As already explained, Calvinism errs in equating spiritual, figurative "death" to physical, literal death, such that no "regeneration" is even necessary in order for a person to place faith in Christ, and hence no special "ability".

Response, by James White

White seems to begin his response with an excuse to ignore more of Hunt's argumentation, judging it to be so full of errors as to exceed his word count limit. This is his second such complaint and excuse.

White accuses Hunt of confusing regeneration with "the entirety of salvation", but must infer that Hunt even said this. After repeating earlier assertions on faith being a gift, White lumps all of Hunt's quoted scriptures under "empty rhetoric", never grasping the fact that neither he nor Hunt can manufacture scriptures that mention the Calvinist invention of "regeneration". How can Hunt be expected to quote scriptures about "regeneration" when none exist? And whether White used the term "special" to describe the ability to be saved or not, he does teach the concept, which is what Hunt responded to. Yet when Hunt only appears to teach something by inference, White wants the right to treat it as an explicit teaching.

And if I had a nickel for every instance of the word "tradition" in White's writing, I'd be rich.

He goes on to insist that "draw" does indeed mean "regeneration" but never explains that verse he has yet to face, where Jesus said He'd "draw all men" to Himself. And of course he berates Hunt for allegedly failing to explain only the verses he'd like to use. Then he complains about "Hunt's refusal to see these texts outside of his" interpretation, which of course is a complaint Hunt could launch against White just as easily.

And the expanded quote he offers to replace the shorter “misleading” one Hunt provided does even more damage to his argument, since it clearly states what he denies it states: that man is “incapable... to submit himself to that gospel” nor to “understand and embrace the gospel”. In addition, there are no scriptures that provide such minute details in what the lost can or cannot do; it all must come from inference based upon the presumption of Calvinism in the first place. Why White keeps expecting Hunt to argue from that premise is truly puzzling.

White then claims that he is “not talking about good works”, yet has he not insisted, as all Calvinists do, that faith is a “work”? Is faith a “work” or not? Does Hunt have to spell out such things before White even knows what argument he’s making?

Defense, by Dave Hunt

Hunt begins by reminding White that his fellow Calvinists do in fact equate salvation with regeneration, then proceeds to explain the logical and scriptural impossibility of a regeneration that is apart from faith. That is, since White insists that regeneration is the first event in this alleged process, and faith another, then what does he do with all the scriptures that only mention faith in conjunction with salvation? Where is this regeneration? Scripture only knows “believe and be saved”, but Calvinism adds regeneration or “quickening” as a prerequisite. As Hunt notes, this means that between regeneration and faith is a person who is alive but unsaved! (Or as another non-Calvinist Herb Evans put it, “**born again unbelievers**”.) And it is Christ Himself who equated being “born again” with being saved. If regeneration is the point of rebirth, then White must conclude that Christ was mistaken in equating it with salvation.

Then it’s back to the issue of ability and what is meant by “come”, examining various passages of scripture to try once again to explain what he means, with a final question about exactly what this “regeneration” is without faith.

Final Remarks, by James White

White begins this section as he began the previous one, accusing Hunt of confusing terms. But as we’ve seen, Hunt is only trying to get White to define them according to scripture. If scripture, and Jesus Himself, equates “born again” with salvation, who is White to call this “confu-

sion"? The rest of his response is a repeat of Calvinism's assertions, still not recognizing Hunt's right to view all this through a non-Calvinist framework. Who else should debate against Calvinism?

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

White has done nothing to face Hunt's argument that the regenerated are unsaved until they exercise their God-ordained faith, then defends his non-confusion of terms. And he has every right to ask how the OT saints could exercise faith when "regeneration" wasn't even hinted at until Jesus came.

Denied Chapter 11: TURNING THE BIBLE INTO A CHARADE

by Dave Hunt

No one would dispute that scripture is filled with commands for us to spread the gospel, and that the gospel is to accept Jesus as Savior because he died for our sins and rose again. But according to Calvinism, most of the people who will ever have heard the gospel were reprobate, making them unable to respond. And since God saves by His own eternal decree, then of what purpose is repentance and faith? Of what purpose is hearing the gospel? Of what purpose is all the Bible says about choosing? If Calvinism is true, then most of the Bible really is a charade.

The quotes from Calvin and others prove beyond doubt that Calvinism believes God ordained the fall of man. But as Hunt rightly asks, how does this not make God the author of sin? If White wants to assign guilt by association, he should realize that this teaching is identical to that of Mormonism. And the standard rebuttal from Calvinism, that God can violate the very principles He gave mankind about justice and mercy, is exactly like the Islamic principle of “abrogation”, where Allah can be as nonsensical, fickle, and incomprehensible as he pleases while holding his creatures to much higher and stricter standards. But it was Jesus Himself who said, “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Mt. 7:11). So here we have explicit scriptural backing for the principle of using our own sense of mercy, evil though it may be, to show that God’s must be higher and greater.

The narrative Hunt gives about this is exactly what I have heard for years from atheists who testify to the reason they hate and reject God. But they have heard the Calvinist teaching and rejected it, not the Biblical gospel. It is only Calvinism which paints this picture of a God who would create sinners and then condemn them for being what He made them to be. So it is only Calvinism which can be held responsible for so maligning the character of God as to harden the hearts of many. Calvinists claim that it is only “the offense of the cross” that does this, but in my experience I have only heard these lost souls speak of the

particular view of God given by Calvinism.

Response, by James White

White immediately launches into a diatribe against his opponent, seemingly oblivious to all that he himself has said about such fallacious tactics. He would not, as I have stated several times, tolerate such behavior from Hunt. Again White seems to think this debate is entitled something like “Why Dave Hunt is a Heretic” instead of “Debating Calvinism”, demanding that Hunt turn from the real topic and put himself on the witness stand. And he has the gall to accuse Hunt of “harsh rhetoric”! White offers no new arguments but simply rehashes his earlier assertions about how various verses are to be interpreted. He continues to chide Hunt for not veering from the topic of what Calvinism teaches and acts as though Hunt has never addressed any points he’s made, even while claiming he misunderstands and twists them.

After many words White finally settles down enough to respond to Hunt’s point about Calvinism turning the Bible into a charade. But his response is merely to state what Hunt has already shown to be a non-answer: God can decree that which is in violation of all we know about His nature. In all the paragraphs following he never even discusses why he believes this is not a cruel joke by God against the reprobate.

Defense, by Dave Hunt

Hunt addresses White’s wild accusations and emotional outbursts with calmness, and reminds him that he has in fact discussed those passages White accuses him of ignoring. That Hunt disagrees with the Calvinist interpretation does not amount to ignoring or misunderstanding anything. He goes on to describe the Calvinist concept of “free will”, which turns out to be much like the statement in Orwell’s book *Animal Farm*: “Some animals are more equal than others”. In Calvinism, some wills are more free than others. And in that same vein, Hunt calls such contradictions “double-talk”.

Later he notes that what White says about how God saves— that God “uses the preaching of the gospel to bring His elect unto salvation”— is an admission that regeneration isn’t what precedes faith. Finally, Hunt states a pivotal truth: that “Calvinism puts the blame on God instead of on Christ-rejecting men.” Either man has no choice but to sin and thus no responsibility for sin, or man does have this choice and thus not this

responsibility.

Final Remarks, by James White

I was unable to find any new or pertinent point to comment on in this section.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt simply observes as I did that White has not addressed the point of this chapter at all.

Denied Chapter 12: GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN'S WILL

by Dave Hunt

The Calvinistic definition of sovereignty, as noted many times, is what drives it to the logical conclusion that God must be the ultimate author of sin, regardless of their attempts to break all the rules of logic to avoid it. This is a terrible slur upon the honor of God and the concepts of love and justice. It also raises many unanswerable questions for Calvinism concerning many passages of scripture as well as our own experiences.

Hunt then spends the bulk of this chapter listing all the scriptural references that speak of the will of man, all of which is rendered meaningless or a cruel hoax if there is no such thing or it is redefined to turn "not free" into "free" simply by declaring it to be so. Then Hunt discusses the power of God and how this is not violated by man's free will any more than sovereignty is.

On the matter of punishment and reward, Hunt argues against Augustine's claim that "when the reward shall come, God shall crown his own gifts, not your merits". But I am surprised he did not mention passages such as Mt. 6 which mentions rewards half a dozen times, or 1 Cor. 3:8 and 14, Eph. 6:8, Heb. 11:6, or 2 John 1:8 among others.

Response, by James White

Seeing White's response, filled once again with name-calling and bitterness, I am reluctant to even read through anything else he may have to say. Hunt has been more than gracious in spite of it, but there comes a point when one must walk away from an uncivil and mean-spirited opponent. However, Hunt is obligated to complete the debate, especially since he is the only participant who remembers the title.

Defense, by Dave Hunt

Hunt continues on in spite of everything, addressing once again the arguments White keeps repeating and the teachings of Calvin. This system, Hunt explains, reduces God to one that cannot endure the freedom of His creatures, is too small to live by His own standards, and cannot be loved without forcing them to love Him. This is a very strange sovereignty

indeed.

Then Hunt notes White's claim of accepting "everything the Bible says about man's will" while he brushes off all the ones Hunt listed as being "irrelevant". And by example he shows that White confuses Hunt's *rebuttals* to his claims with Hunt saying it's what White argued. And Hunt is justified in responding to White's claim about God hardening hearts, "If they were 'dead' and 'unable to respond positively to God', He wouldn't need to harden them, would He?"

Final Remarks, by James White

I made myself read White's response, but couldn't find where he actually address what he was supposed to respond to, at least nothing he hasn't already said more than once. Did he not read what Hunt said about "hardening hearts"? Or did he not comprehend it? But rather than actually face Hunt's arguments White prefers to introduce an extreme philosophical view that free will is completely impossible. But this view is in the same class as things like theoretical physics, which are completely based upon mathematics and nothing on reality. I've studied this elsewhere and it leads to the absurd conclusion that not even God has a free will, which White should have known would contradict his many claims to the contrary.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt agrees with my assessment of White's mere repetition of prior claims and failure to offer anything new.

Denied Chapter 13: SALVATION OFFERED TO ALL

Though Christ commands us in the Great Commission to preach the gospel to every creature, Calvinism teaches that the elect are regenerated without it and the non-elect cannot accept it. If **the gospel** is the **power** of God “to the salvation of everyone that believes” (Mark 16:15), then that power to save is **not** “regeneration”. Why do the regenerated need to hear the gospel? According to White, regeneration is only the first step, so he must agree that there are people who are regenerated but unsaved. Yet if, according to Sproul, “the man, being regenerated, is saved already”, White must be mistaken about his assertion that regeneration is not salvation— a point he has used against Hunt many times. So if there is confusion, it is caused by Calvinists themselves, not their opponents.

Then Hunt spends considerable time illustrating the OT practices and teachings that establish God’s offer of salvation for “all people” and not merely “all kinds of people”. Likewise for the NT, where the notion of “all kinds” of people is conspicuous by its absence. But Calvinism must interpret verses like John 3:16 as “For God so loved the elect...”. Then another contradictory quote from Spurgeon is given, along with noting that not even Spurgeon can get away with hiding his absurd conclusions under the blanket of “mystery”.

Response, by James White

Again, nothing new to report. The redefinition of terms already covered for verses like John 3:16 is simply asserted again. And who can make sense of God showing “love to the world” but only for His elect? Is God mocking the reprobate, saying “See, I love these few, but not you!”? He still tries to inject the Calvinist twist onto that famous verse, asserting it as the clear and proper meaning, but assertions are not proofs. The gymnastics required to turn “whosoever” into “who I chose”, especially when it depends upon a minority interpretation of the Greek, is sheer desperation. As always, nothing like this would be tolerated if done by non-Calvinists.

Defense, by Dave Hunt

Hunt notes the obvious fact that White did not touch on the issue of whether regeneration is salvation. And if Hunt is reading into the account in Acts about salvation for Gentiles, then why is White allowed to go to such great lengths to read his interpretation into John 3:16? Turning this Calvinist insistence that “world” means “all kinds of people” back on White, Hunt lists several verses that are reduced to absurdities not even Calvinists could accept were they consistent in their substitutions.

Final Remarks, by James White

Other than White’s ignorance of the Hebraic idiom “children of” meaning “people of”, nothing new to report.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt expresses shock at White’s continual denial of God’s frequently expressed desire to save everyone. If White can brush off anything he deems irrelevant, even when it directly addresses the topic at hand, then there is little incentive for Hunt to keep trying. And he notes, as I did, White’s mistaken interpretation of “children of”.

Denied Chapter 14: BIBLICAL ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Hunt begins this final chapter by explaining the difference between the assurance of the Calvinist and that of the non-Calvinist (my note: of course, not all non-Calvinists accept assurance, but that is outside the scope of this debate). For the non-Calvinist, assurance of salvation comes solely by faith in the work of Jesus, not us; for the Calvinist, it comes by presuming oneself to be one of the elect. But few if any Calvinists are absolutely sure they are elect, since they teach that many reprobates think they are saved. This effectively removes all assurance for the Calvinist, who can only hope (and strive for good works just in case).

He also notes that in spite of quotes from Calvin and others showing basic theological errors regarding works and baptism, White considers them great theologians. Yet it was Calvin who expressly stated his belief that God deliberately fools many of the lost into thinking they are saved.

After a diversion back to the question of free will, Hunt refutes the argument that if we are free to accept salvation, then we must be free even in heaven to reject it. The flaw in that is the scriptural assurance that the saved become like Jesus, having the same “mind” and “likeness”, such that we can only rebel if Jesus can. If it is His righteousness that saves us, then it is His righteousness that keeps us. This takes all the focus off man and onto Jesus.

Response, by James White

White begins by denying Hunt the right to believe in eternal security since he doesn't accept the Calvinistic definition of sovereignty. But this means White is actually demanding that Hunt adapt the Calvinistic definition! How is the non-Calvinist view of sovereignty in conflict with security? And why does White persist in claiming Hunt denies God's freedom? Why is he, even to the end of this debate, still trying to get Hunt to change the subject?

As for White's question about the difference between the “false faith” of Calvinism and that of non-Calvinism, surely he can grasp that in the former it is **by God's decree**, while in the latter it is by man failing

to accept the gospel. This is what Hunt was talking about. And he continues to equate faith with works.

Defense, by Dave Hunt

Again Hunt has to correct White's mischaracterization of the non-Calvinist view of sovereignty; again he points out that Calvinism severely limits God's freedom; again he explains that if Christ's death "actually saved", then the elect were saved at that time, before any of them could first be regenerated. He wonders how White can disagree with Calvin on such serious issues as infant baptism yet call him a great theologian, and why faith is such a big issue when people are elect and regenerated without it. And finally, he wonders how White can accuse him of showing no concern with false professions of faith, in spite of Hunt's many books and articles on exactly that topic. Shall we say with White, "No answers will be forthcoming"?

Final Remarks, by James White

Nothing of substance to report.

Final Remarks, by Dave Hunt

Hunt finds a way to respond to White's non-statement, but only to express more dismay at his words.

FINAL AFFIRMATION, by James White

One last time, White asserts his view of sovereignty and freedom, declaring the Calvinist interpretation of scripture to be the consistent one. One last time he uses the "t" word. One last time he insults Hunt as incompetent, putting himself above him as a "guardian" of truth. Was Calvinism affirmed? Let the reader decide.

FINAL DENIAL, by Dave Hunt

After having to correct once again White's baseless charge of "tradition", Hunt focuses on the topic of debate and its central teachings. He notes that the promised refutation of the "calumnies launched at... Calvin" has yet to be offered, as well as any attempt to address the problem of how Calvinism limits God's freedom, love, grace, and mercy. Regarding the issue of uncertainty of salvation, one could also ask why Calvinists are sure *they* are preaching the correct gospel.

Conclusion

What's the point of Calvinism?

As I mentioned at the beginning, I spent considerable time studying Calvinism at the request of a friend. However, when I had finished my studies of both sides and supplied him with links and books for the opposition, I was met with resistance and hostility. I was not to be afforded the same courtesy I had shown to my friend, all because I rejected Calvinism. Sadly, in my experience this reaction has proven to be typical.

But when one considers the fact that both sides preach essentially the same gospel message in evangelism, one wonders why this system is so important to its adherents. What practical difference does it make? Both sides reach out with the same gospel, both believe in training new converts and exhorting them to live lives that please their Savior, and both (regardless of accusations to the contrary) hold scripture in the highest regard.

So Calvinism is truly a divisive force in Christianity, and needlessly so. While this is certainly not the only topic believers have divided over, forgetting to distinguish the vital from the disputable and secondary, it is a prime example of such divisive forces. By studying this debate we are better able to warn others about division and get them to think more deeply about the gospel itself and the nature of God. I would have preferred that Calvinism had never taken root, but it may be one of the ways in which God tests our character by observing how we treat those who disagree with us. And it certainly does motivate us to dig deeply into the scriptures.