

Debating Calvinism

A Sympathetic Synopsis

By: *B. K. Campbell*

(Part 1)

That Dave Hunt is a peddler of propaganda strategy and romanticism is evident from the pages in this book. Calvinism is the only consistent position of scripture.ⁱ The book begins with a positive and powerful affirmation of Calvinism, written by James White. James is sharp and wastes no time pointing out the logical fallacies, presented with repetition by Dave Hunt.

The dominant and recurring error of Mr. Hunt is that he misunderstands the doctrine of God's love. Hunt unblushingly persists, though refuted, to appeal to romantic, sentimental notions regarding the love of God.ⁱⁱ There is clearly no theology or exegesis involved in Mr. Hunt's argument. It might be said: Mr. Hunt is good at laying down assumed, theological propositions without biblical warrant. We give the following example: "The Bible always presents two sides to salvation: God's sufficiency and man's responsibility; God's love and provision and man's repentance and faith; God's drawing of man and man's seeking of God."ⁱⁱⁱ Does Dave back up these tautological propositions with scripture? Certainly not!

This is a sad method for forming theological conclusions, upon which to base arguments.^{iv} To state a proposition, that is to be considered authoritatively biblical and then not back such a claim with scripture is bad theologizing. The presuppositions utilized by Mr. Hunt make theology impossible.^v Critique of the above quotation from Mr. Hunt is as follows: 1) Mr. Hunt assumes that every passage of scripture that mentions salvation will "always" mention man's responsibility.^{vi} 2) The presupposition that God is obligated to love all of mankind, Hitler and Stalin alike regardless of condition and actions is theologically false.^{vii}

Another example of Mr. Hunt's rhetoric is found on page 21 where he states: "Never forget that the ultimate aim of Calvinism is to prove that God does not love everyone, is not merciful to all, and is pleased to damn billions."^{viii} That this is an error could not be clearer; that God takes pleasure in the damnation of men and that this is a doctrine set forth by Calvinism is just one example of Mr. Hunt's poor scholarship. Hunt's fallacious assumption is that condemned men are innocent men. That is, God has no right to damn whosoever He will, because all men are innocent and deserve a chance at God's Grace. In the words of R. C. Sproul, "God never owes guilty men mercy"^{ix}. That God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked is evident from (Ezekiel 33:11)-

"Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! NAS,

Calvinism's chief end is not to promote the wrath of God, but the glorification of God, through proper worship and sound doctrine that seeks biblical understanding of God's attributes. By page 87 Hunt has lost all ability to rebut White's position; thus he attempts a shy dismissal of White's argument, backed with no exegesis. The best Hunt can do is scoff and snicker saying "we differ on *what* and *whom*"^x; again Hunt resorts to rhetoric avoiding all exegesis, throwing out unsupported propositions. White's response to all of this jargon is as follows: "When the uncontested, established meaning of the very words of the text are overthrown, the serious student of Scripture must ask why? And there is one answer here: man's traditions."^{xi}

White is hip to Dave's method from the very beginning of the book. This is clear from the following quotation: "When faced with exegetical truths for which he has no answers, Mr. Hunt makes reference to the 'impossibility' of the Reformation interpretation because 'it violates what we know of God's love'. As soon as a person realizes that God will not be spending eternity in agonizing disappointment, weeping endlessly over the objects of His undifferentiated, unending, 'I tried but failed' love, the main plank of Mr. Hunt's anti-Reformation platform collapses."^{xii}

Hunt admits in the beginning of the book "I never wanted to engage in public debate about Calvinism",^{xiii} yet the whole time Mr. Hunt assumes the falsity of Calvinism and asserts, without warrant, the legitimacy of his anti-Reformation dogma. We can only speculate as to why Mr. Hunt did not want to engage in public debate. One thing is for certain: Mr. Hunt's deliberate dismissals and dodging of White's consistent challenges is not a sign of engagement.

The case White has set up by page 83 is as follows: 1) White offered clear argument from Romans chapter 8 demonstrating the inability and unwillingness of sinful man to seek out and please God with his own saving faith. 2) A clear exposition of John 6:44 demonstrating that the text does in fact say that one "is not able" to come, not that one "is not willing" to come. Mr. Hunt ignores White's arguments criticizing that James provided "not one scripture that clearly states...man is unable to believe the gospel". However, if this is true then why didn't Mr. Hunt deal with White's argument in (John 6:44)?^{xiv}

Mr. Hunt often makes statements such as "for White" the text has this meaning. Of course, does Mr. Hunt ever stop and ask 'why' the text has such a meaning? Sadly, it seems that such an approach is beyond Mr. Hunt. The greatest exegetical error committed by Mr. Hunt has to do with his eisegesis of John chapter six.^{xv} As White accurately points out: "We yet again have a clear, concise, documentable example of eisegesis in its purest form: the insertion of a foreign concept into the text in violation of its original language and context. The foreign concept is derived from Mr. Hunt's tradition of libertarian free will, not from the sacred text."^{xvi}

In chapter four White presents a powerful position for the doctrine of election. There is really no possible way for the debate to continue beyond this chapter, but it does and not to the benefit of Mr. Hunt. The more the book progresses the greater the Reformed position stands out as being the authentic, consistent position of scripture. Opposite to this, Mr. Hunt continues to dig his hole, refusing to admit his eisegesis and error. This is a pure demonstration of Hunt's Arminian pride

Mr. Hunt's response on page 127 totally ignores the challenge of White's argument at the beginning of chapter four. Instead of dealing with White's challenge, Mr.

Hunt tries to change the topic, quoting Spurgeon out of context, indirectly arguing that if his interpretation of Spurgeon is correct than obviously salvation is 'for all' and James' Calvinism is bunk. To this White boldly resounds: "...the reader should note that even if the reference to Spurgeon were relevant (it is not), what does it have to do with the text? The only way to meaningfully respond to exegesis is to demonstrate errors from the grammar and context of the passage. Mr. Hunt offers no positive exegesis whatsoever. All we learn from his pen is what he feels the text cannot mean, not what it really does mean."^{xvii}

Sadly, all we learn from Mr. Hunt's position is that 'he does not like' the doctrines of scripture.^{xviii} He cannot demonstrate that Calvinism is wrong because he cannot demonstrate that scripture is wrong. Calvinism, like it or not, Mr. Hunt, is the solid teaching of scripture! To show that my witness and testimony regarding Mr. Hunt's position is correct I offer the following quote: "we simply reject as unbiblical Calvinism's 'grace'."^{xix}

Hunt gives no reasons, no biblical passages are cited without interjecting subjective interpretation, Hunt just says, "I simply reject". This is the position of a confused and defeated opponent. In reality it amounts to saying "I am not longer engaged in this debate, I am finished, this is my final conclusion"; yes, a conclusion based on assumption and emotion. Even White explains that Mr. Hunt "is not listening to the replies offered him"^{xx}. At this point Mr. Hunt has disengaged from the debate. Seems he might have gotten in over his head. Perhaps this is the real reason behind his statement, "I never wanted to engage in public debate about Calvinism".^{xxi}

Looking into chapter five we find that Mr. Hunt accuses White of holding to "an extreme view of sovereignty." Of course all the while Mr. Hunt is holding an extreme view of regeneration and man's free will. The problem is not that White holds (in Mr. Hunt's words) to 'an extreme view of sovereignty', but that Mr. Hunt has not provided a reason for his extreme view of autonomy. White has worked up to his position without being refuted by Hunt^{xxii}, all the while Mr. Hunt has assumed his position and been exhorted and refuted by White. There is no place in scripture where Mr. Hunt shows us what is wrong with White's position on sovereignty. However, up to this point James has stayed strong to the topics under debate and consistently refuted all attempts of Mr. Hunt to justify his extreme view of autonomy.

In chapter six White puts forth a most impressive case for limited atonement. This is nice for those not familiar with historic terminology and serves as a great introduction to this vital area of theology. Mr. Hunt's reply to White regarding 'limited atonement' is so obviously tainted and filled with error that one almost staggers with disbelief at Hunt's persistence. One is utterly amazed at his consistent misunderstandings and ignorant assertions.^{xxiii}

Hunt displays his unintelligibility regarding argumentation in the following quotation from chapter six: "White says that non-Calvinists use 'emotion and sentimentality' and encrust Scripture 'with oft-repeated platitudes of tradition'. Yet he promotes Calvinistic tradition."^{xxiv} Dave tries to use the authentic argument that White sites against Hunt's position as though the very same argument applies to White's position.

Does Mr. Hunt's reversal of White's authentic argument mean that the Calvinistic tradition uses excessive 'emotion and sentimentality'? What about 'encrusting' scripture

with ‘platitudes of tradition’? We say no to the former, and shout yes to the latter! Why? Because tradition is only wrong in so far as it is severed from truth. If Dave’s tradition was true it would not be wrong and full of danger, however, Mr. Hunt’s tradition is incorrect because his position is not true. Tradition is only bad in so far as it does promote and hold on to error without sufficient cause or reason.^{xxv} White explained why Hunt’s tradition is dangerous; did Mr. Hunt explain why White’s tradition is dangerous? If he did it is not in the pages of this book. Thus we conclude that Hunt should be embarrassed of his arguments and repent for misrepresenting the truth of scripture through his false ‘platitudes of tradition’.

Still further attributing to the evident-defeat of Hunt’s Arminian theology is his non-impressive argument in chapter seven, where he tries to conclude that irresistible grace is an ‘oxymoron,’ and that if it was a true doctrine of scripture one would find the literal word in the bible.^{xxvi} We might use the same argument against the trinity. Surly ‘trinity’ is not a biblical word, but the ‘concept is found in scripture’. Mr. Hunt seems to think that all concepts of theology must be named directly by scripture. Even to the dedicated Arminian this will look ridiculous because it is ridiculous. It is hard to believe that Mr. Hunt even argued such a point.

By page 217 James White is so tired of Mr. Hunt’s fallacious arguments that he quotes from Hunt’s (blasphemous, unintelligible) book “What love is this” seeking to keep the debate on course. White points out that Dave will not admit to error, but instead will try to squirm out of the debate by reinventing the rules of the game. Hunt does this by going back and redefining or dismissing erroneous propositions previously assumed true; that is, until such assumption have been challenged, dissected and annihilated.

On page 221 in chapter seven Mr. Hunt makes a mistake that is absolutely breath taking. It is cited as follows: ‘White claims that ‘looking carefully at his cited texts, we find (Hunt) is in error’...he rehashes arguable verses, devoting an entire page to 1 John 5:1, which isn’t crucial.’ At this point I would like to know what Mr. Hunt does consider crucial if he does not consider the Word of God crucial! If Dave has the ability to determine ‘crucial’ passages of scripture from ‘non-crucial’ passages of scripture then perhaps he should have given Mr. White a list of every verse that is important and every verse that is not.^{xxvii}

Even better and more to the point is that Mr. Hunt is not qualified to debate in areas of theology if he picks and chooses passages of scripture.^{xxviii} Perhaps the debate needs to be about the sufficiency and importance of scripture. And if the latter is the case then we conclude: Mr. Hunt needs training in scripture 101. This is a heretical stance that leads subtly to the undermining of all Biblical authority.

Mr. Hunt’s doctrine and arrogance is not only disgusting in that he feels he can point out the important passages of scripture, but is also sad because he is just only one among many who contort and twists the truth of scripture to mean something other than it says.

In closing we quote James White: ‘(Mr. Hunt)...confuses all of salvation with regeneration... ignores the fact that God ordains the ends as well as the means, and despite repeated correction, ignores the role of the gospel in God’s drawing His elect to Himself...the reader has surly begun to see the consistency of Mr. Hunt’s replies: He consistently ignores the exegesis that refutes his position, while repeating the same

mantralike phrases. He piles groundless accusations one upon the other, all in an effort to provide some semblance of argumentation.”^{xxix}

From all of this we may justly conclude that the Reformation is superior not only because it has emerged victorious through the centuries by refuting the dense doctrines of impious men, but also because it is the grand expression of truth found in the pages of scripture. As was so beautifully and powerfully demonstrated by James White, all opposition shall be annihilated, subjected to the clarity of *sola scripture*.

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ⁱ This is a conclusion reached by scripture. ‘Calvinism’ is just a made up word like that of ‘trinity’ to describe a certain teaching found in scripture.

ⁱⁱ That is, Dave Hunt isolates the doctrine of God’s Love separating it from all other attributes, making it alone the attribute that controls all other attributes.

ⁱⁱⁱ Debating Calvinism, Multnomah publishers, pg,75.

^{iv} If the theology is wrong and the argument proceeds from the theology than how can the argument be correct?

^v That is, Dave Hunt has a set of principles by which he interprets the rest of scripture, if scripture contradicts these presuppositions, it seems to be that he does not drop false presuppositions he dismisses and ignores relevant scripture. It is exactly in this way that systematic theology becomes impossible through Dave’s System.

^{vi} It might also be noted that Mr. Hunt interprets all of scripture through biased colored glasses that say, “the bible will always say it this way;” thus (from Mr. Hunts perspective) any passage of scripture that refutes his commitment to this position must be ignored and dismissed. This is how Mr. Hunt is able to continue in his warped position of theology. If we will only try on his ‘biased-colored-glasses’ we too might see as Mr. Hunt sees.

^{vii} This is the major presupposition of Mr. Hunt. It is the main point he reiterates again and again. Hunt’s view of God is contingent on his presupposition that God must conform to a set of actions based upon a dominant, undefined idea of “God as love”. Mr. Hunt’s view refuses to acknowledge all the attributes of God.

^{viii} It is not certain how Mr. Hunt arrived at this conclusion. He cites no historical references regarding the aim and stance of Calvinism. For a good definition of what Calvinism aims to do, what is considered its main objection see, the enduring Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), Albert Martin “The Practical Implications of Calvinism”. Another good book is Boettner’s “Reformed Doctrine of Predestination.” And perhaps, mentioned last, but should be read first is Charles Spurgeon “In Defense of Calvinism”.

^{ix} See R. C. Sproul “Chosen by God”, Tyndale Publishers.

^x This is a statement by Mr. Hunt referring to the doctrine in John chapter 6 and Romans Chapter 8. James explains from scripture that men cannot come to Christ. This is evident from Whites exegesis of John and Romans found: pages 83-86.

^{xi} Ibid pg.89

^{xii} ibid pg. 19

^{xiii} *ibid* pg.21

^{xiv} How about because as said in a previous footnote: ‘any passage of scripture that refutes his commitment to this (all scripture must fit into my box) position must be ignored and dismissed’.

^{xv} Here Dave tries to alter the meaning of Christ’s message by interjecting the foreign concept that He was really teaching those around Him that men are ‘not willing’ not that men are ‘not able’.

^{xvi} *ibid* pg.86 This refers to Mr. Hunts interpolation of John 8:43. Hunt’s position is as follows: “The is not a statement of inability but of unwillingness. If they were unable to hear His word, they would be unable to hear his statement, and He would be wasting His time talking to them.” Sadly, this is another example not of theology, but of Hunt’s strange philosophy and interpretation. His theory of this text has nothing to do with the original grammar or syntax, let alone Biblical theology, but is pure tautology.

^{xvii} *ibid* pg. 135

^{xviii} It might be noted that to argue for preference based on emotion is not even to argue, but is merely to give one’s opinion. This cannot be considered debate but is more of like shopping for dinner at the grocery store; we cannot prove that cucumber are the greatest vegetable on earth we can only say that we like them.

^{xix} *ibid* pg. 139

^{xx} *ibid* pg. 141

^{xxi} *ibid*

^{xxii} Thus we conclude White’s view is the correct view found in the pages of scripture. Even if Hunt has arguments that should hold this would not disprove the Sovereignty of God. White’s view is not correct because he has defeated Hunt and Hunt has a position that is not found in scripture; White’s view is correct precisely and only because it is found in scripture.

^{xxiii} Dave is not even willing to admit his misrepresentation of the system and position of Calvinism. Of course, this was pointed out long ago in an open letter by James White to Dave Hunt

^{xxiv} *ibid* pg. 181

^{xxv} To put in another way: ‘without biblical warrant’.

^{xxvi} See the beginning of page 209

^{xxvii} Also if Dave can pick and choose what is crucial and what is not, then he needs to explain and defend the criterion by which he has this authority.

^{xxviii} Such a debate as this must presuppose the validity and inspiration of scripture. If it does not then the debate should be about scripture not about theological conclusions drawn from scripture.

^{xxix} *ibid* pg. 224