

Let the Truth Be Known

Who Wants a Real Debate and Who Does Not? Let the Reader Decide.

... Below you will find the entirety of the correspondence that has passed between myself, Tom Ascol, Ergun Caner, and Emir Caner over the past few months regarding the October 16th debate in Lynchburg. I am posting it because the conversation has fallen to such a level that only public scrutiny and input can now possibly convince the Caners to allow for a meaningful debate.

—James White

Typesetter's Notes:

- ❖ The e-mails quoted in this document have only been edited to improve readability. No text has (knowingly) been inserted or deleted, or modified in such a way as to change context, meaning, etc. Only typesetting changes have been made (paragraph spacing, font size/type, tick/ditto marks into real quotes, etc.) to these documents.
- ❖ E-mails from the Doctors Caner are bordered by a light blue box, and text attributed to them are set on a light blue background.

3/22/06 4:22P.M.

Dear Drs. White and Ascol:Greetings.

I have returned from Israel, with 250 students. I need a nap.

However, before I search my luggage for errant laundry, I wanted to follow up on the discussion that continued while I was absent.

I have spoken to Dr. Falwell, and received permission to send the following official invitation and details. Please copy my brother and myself in all correspondence. Planning here at LU is somewhat akin to the Normandy landing—precision is key.

1. I would like to extend the official invitation to debate on Monday, October 16, 2006.
2. The location of the debate will be the new Thomas Road Baptist Church.
3. The time of the debate will be from 7-9pm.

Once confirmed by you, we can begin announcing the debate, calling it “Baptists and Calvinism,” or something of the sort. As it is our desire not to constrict the debate unnecessarily, especially given the context of the beginnings of this discussion.

Dr. Falwell has also instructed me concerning the two other points discussed—

1. We do not want to charge for tickets for admission. It shall be free, to the public and the students.
2. Secondly, all four participants shall have full rights to the actual debate, meaning any form of distribution, including CDs, DVDs, mpg, podcasts, etc. These rights are independent of one another, meaning we can do with it what we wish—uploads, etc.

Again— my apologies on my tardiness, but the Holy Land tour (or Baptist History Tour as I like to call it) was bigger than I expected!

Blessings,

3/27/2006 5:40 PM

Dr. Ergun Mehmet Caner wrote:

Dear Drs. White and Ascol:

Greetings.

I have returned from Israel, with 250 students. I need a nap.

Welcome home. :-) I do hope you only left with 250 as well!

However, before I search my luggage for errant laundry, I wanted to follow up on the discussion that continued while I was absent.

I have spoken to Dr. Falwell, and received permission to send the following official invitation and details. Please copy my brother and myself in all correspondence. Planning here at LU is somewhat akin to the Normandy landing—precision is key.

I'm sure it is.

1. I would like to extend the official invitation to debate on Monday, October 16, 2006.
2. The location of the debate will be the new Thomas Road Baptist Church.
3. The time of the debate will be from 7-9pm.

Any possibility of extending till 10pm? First, nothing ever starts on time; secondly, if we take a break, it always goes longer than announced; and third, two hours divided between four men is a grand total of thirty minutes each. Which of us will be satisfied with thirty minutes? :-)

1. Once confirmed by you, we can begin announcing the debate, calling it “Baptists and Calvinism,” or something of the sort. As it is our desire not to constrict the debate unnecessarily, especially given the context of the beginnings of this discussion.

We will still need a specific enough thesis statement to define who is for and who is against.

Dr. Falwell has also instructed me concerning the two other points discussed—

1. We do not want to charge for tickets for admission. It shall be free, to the public and the students.

Sounds fine. Since the location is being provided, that should cover any issues there. Will we all be responsible for our own flight arrangements, hotel, etc., then?

2. Secondly, all four participants shall have full rights to the actual debate, meaning any form of distribution, including CDs, DVDs, mpg, podcasts, etc. These rights are independent of one another, meaning we can do with it what we wish—uploads, etc.

Correct. We have a paper Christian attorneys put together after ACLU board member Barry Lynn tried to sue us to prohibit the distribution of the video tapes of his debate against me on homosexuality. Covers all that and makes sure everyone has equal rights to distribution, etc., without worrying about what others do. I'm cc'ing Rich Pierce on that.

After you get a rest, we can address the few remaining issues in the e-mails I had sent earlier. Good to hear back from you.

James>>>

4/13/2006 2:25 PM

From: James White

Greetings Brethren:

I would like to make mention immediately of the fact that I will be reviewing and responding to Dr. Ergun Caner's sermon from the Thomas Road Baptist Church this past Sunday evening on The Dividing Line this afternoon/evening, 7pm EDT, 4pm PDT. I do not know if I will be able to get to all of my response in 75 minutes, but I will try. Please realize the program is archived within about a hour of its airing, and should be available here by about 9pm EDT. I know I would find quite interesting any point-by-point, exegetical response to any of my sermons presenting the doctrines of grace, so I hope both Dr. Caners will be aided by my reply in understanding the true nature of the issues between us.

Next, I would like to revisit a number of issues that I have raised in past e-mails that have yet to be addressed. Most importantly:

1. the moderator of the debate
 2. the thesis of the debate
 3. the time frame of the debate
 4. the format of the debate
1. In the vast majority of debates I have done the moderator was a glorified time keeper; however, a good moderator, one who is trained in debate and dedicated to his task, is very valuable in keeping things running in an orderly, God-honoring manner. Pastor Bill Shishko of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church on Long Island has moderated the last four years of debates we have done against Roman Catholic apologists there, and has set a new standard for moderation, to be sure. Last year we were to finish by 11pm, and we finished at 10:59:49. That's why we need a good, fair, balanced moderator.
 2. The thesis of the debate has yet to be established. The general topic of Calvinism and Baptists surely speaks to the issues that separate us, however, as I have noted previously, unless we wish to be there till midnight, or, schedule multiple days worth of debates, even the issues relevant to that topic cannot be covered in a standard three-hour debate schedule. I would think, since we are all committed firmly to the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture, that we would wish to focus upon biblical exegesis and teaching, even if touching upon the historical issues of what past generations of Baptists have believed in regards to the central issue of election. "Baptists, the Bible, and Election" would be a good topic line, I would think. In any case, the more focus brought to the evening the more edification for the serious person in attendance, and I'm sure that is what we all wish for and hope for.
 3. I do not believe I have ever done a public, moderated debate that was less than 2.5 hours in length. The vast majority are three, some as long as four. The only shorter debates I have done were televised (hence the shorter time frames). What is surely the case is that for a four-man panel, 2.5 hours is absolutely a minimum amount of time, and three hours would almost be demanded. Given that I have heard from folks as far away as California wanting to travel to this debate, providing only two hours of interaction—indeed, in two hours, there would hardly be any time for actual interaction—would be quite unfair to them. The audience wants to hear the subject thoroughly addressed, and that requires time.
 4. Hence, the format of the debate is very much dependent upon the time frame that is available for it as well. Once again I emphasize, as in past e-mails, the necessity of cross-examination, especially examination based upon the text of Scripture. Without in-depth cross-examination those in attendance might as well obtain our competing sermons on these issues and not bother attending a debate. This is truly vital. I have offered to send DVD's of some of my past debates that illustrate what is, by far, the best form of cross-examination as far as the audience is concerned, but I have not received back any comments or requests thereon. I hope we can move to this point so we can begin to hammer out a format that is acceptable to all the debaters.

I look forward to hearing back from the Caner/Caner group in reference to these issues, and any commentary on my response to Ergun's sermon would be welcome. In fact, of course, if Ergun would like to join me on the DL with those comments, that would be fine as well. Be glad to do so.

Finally, I am quite confused by a comment you made, Ergun, to a correspondent today. He sent it to me because he was as confused as I am. It was very short, hence the confusion, I guess. It read:

I converted from Islam...and I am sure you will not change either. I have been equally upset at the view of the hatred of God and verses cited by Dr. White.

Could you expand, please, upon this? I do not understand the phrase "at the view of the hatred of God and verses cited by Dr. White." Thank you!

James>>>

4/13/2006 5:42 PM

Gentlemen:

My apologies, I had the wrong URL for the Dividing Line program I did today (it went 85 minutes, actually). I was off by one digit. You can here the program here. I believe it is currently uploading (5:42 pm PDT).

James>>>

4/14/2006 5:03 PM

Gentlemen:

I did not get any response from the e-mails I sent yesterday. I assume it is a busy week for us all, but I wanted to double check and make sure the e-mails had been received. Could you please verify?

I am headed out to pass out tracts and witness to the thousands gathered at the LDS "Easter Pageant" in Mesa, Arizona, this evening and tomorrow evening. We began our outreach to the Mormons there in 1984. It sure was a lot easier to stand for hours and talk to folks when I was 21! But in any case, I hope to hear back from you all that you did, in fact, receive my note of 4/13. Thank you!

James>>>

4/16/2006 8:02 PM

Dr. White:

I just had the pleasure of having two reports on the previous DL, which attempted to cover my sermon. Fun stuff. My assessment, of course, would be different than yours. As well as the e-mails from SBC seminary professors, thanking me for emphasizing the omnibenevolence of God. That and the CD requests to the OTGH with which we cannot keep up. Anyway, my travels have slowed a bit, so I have some time.

1. MODERATOR—An Orthodox Presbyterian? I don't think so, unless we add a Free Will Methodist. I am open to suggestions, but I doubt we will find someone who is not biased. At best we can aim for someone who dislikes all sides.
2. THESIS—Dr. White, we agreed to a full-fledged, no-holds-barred debate. We do not want an artificial limit placed on a debate, especially one birthed in an historical context. "Baptists and Calvinism" is fine, but if you insist on the "pro" and "con" categories, we will have to chew on that. Especially given your website and writings. Perhaps we can represent the "love of God," and you can represent the "hatred of God?" Or perhaps you can stand for "Hyper-Calvinism," and we can stand against it?
3. TIME—We do agree that with a topic this vast and of such importance, there should be ample time.
4. FORMAT—We both believe everything should be at our disposal— biblical, historical, philosophical, etc. The cross-examination might be a great idea—but certainly not limited to any type of cross-examination.

Finally, your coverage of my sermon shall have to be left up to others. I shall assume that the reports were from my supporters, who simply wanted to defend me. The response to the sermon, however, has been wonderfully refreshing. With the exception of some of your listeners, we have been overwhelmed with great and kind words. Since the death of Dr. Adrian Rogers, many of us have wondered who should stand against those hyper-Calvinists who have ceased to give biblical invitations, and embraced Protestant Scholasticism.

Truth is Immortal:

emc

4/16/2006 10:11 PM

Greetings Dr. Caner:

I trust your Resurrection celebration was a blessing and that you are in good health.

I'm a little confused here, sir. It seems, from this paragraph, and what came thereafter, that you yourself have not listened to the program? Is that the case? I would have to ask why this might be? If the format is not to your liking, I would be glad to send you a link to the mp3 since surely you have an iPod or similar device. But if it is just that you have no interest, I have to wonder why? I mean, if Shabir Ally wrote to me today and said, "I have responded to your comments about my position, and here is the audio file," I would be the first person to download it and listen to it very carefully. I would do so because 1) I have full confidence in the accuracy of what I have said about his position and in response to his arguments, and 2) I believe I need to be as accurate as I possibly can be in representing others, hence, the more I can understand their concerns and how they 'hear' what I am saying, the better I can facilitate communication in an upcoming debate/discussion.

As to the omnibenevolence of God, it is very common for some to present a non-differentiated benevolence on God's part, though, of course, such a viewpoint is too easily refuted from Scripture itself. The fact that God has a redemptive love that is expressed for some and not for others is not even arguable, is it? Ask Pharaoh's army as the Red Sea closed upon them if God was expressing the same love for them He had just shown to the people of Israel. John Frame was correct, in his response to Open Theism, to point out an imbalanced view of omnibenevolence that presents in God a lesser ability to differentiate and discriminate than mankind itself possesses in the matter of the expression of love has led not only to elements of Open Theism but likewise is always part and parcel of the rise of universalism itself. I did not hear any discussion of these issues in your presentation, actually.

In any case, I would encourage you to listen to the response. Relying upon reports is not the way scholarship works, is it, sir? I'll be happy to provide you with the mp3 of the presentation at your request.

1. MODERATOR—An Orthodox Presbyterian? I don't think so, unless we add a Free Will Methodist. I am open to suggestions, but I doubt we will find someone who is not biased. At best we can aim for someone who dislikes all sides.

I had not suggested Pastor Shishko (I will be debating him only three days later on Long Island as it is), I was using him as an example of the kind of moderator we need. However, I would mention in passing that he has fairly moderated the past four debates I have done with Roman Catholics—the point is the ability of the person to moderate in an unbiased fashion while keeping control of the timing and process of the debate.

2. THESIS—Dr. White, we agreed to a full-fledged, no-holds-barred debate. We do not want an artificial limit placed on a debate, especially one birthed in an historical context. "Baptists and Calvinism" is fine, but if you insist on the "pro" and "con" categories, we will have to chew on that. Especially given your website and writings. Perhaps we can represent the "love of God," and you can represent the "hatred of God?" Or perhaps you can stand for "Hyper-Calvinism," and we can stand against it?

Full-fledged, no-holds-barred debates require clear theses, at least amongst those who seek to honor the truth by doing the debate in the first place. As for us, we will focus upon the Biblical testimony to the reality of God's freedom in salvation, and Dr. Ascol will likewise demonstrate the historical teaching of those same truths in the history of Baptists. If you wish to be unfocused and move from topic to topic, well, I can't stop you, however, once again, unless you are only debating for those who have no intention of thinking clearly about the issue, you will be doing yourself no favors to be scattered all over the countryside throwing out every possible red herring or torching straw men left and right. For the close observer, that kind of action speaks quite loudly.

Secondly, I don't believe anyone who has studied debate would ever view the thesis statement as an "artificial limit." The thesis defines the entirety of the debate.

Formal debates have two sides. That is how the discussion is framed. It's debate. Surely, since you have claimed to have engaged in sixty debates, even more than I have, you must know this.

What do you mean "given your website and writings"?

If you wish to represent the "undifferentiated love of God" and present a God who is lesser than His creatures, whom He made capable of loving in different ways (do you love your wife the way you love your neighbor's wife? Your neighbor's kids the way you love your own?) If not, then, obviously, God is capable of differentiating in His love as well, as the Scriptures plainly teach, and just as we are to hate falsehood and every evil way (Psa. 119:104, 113, 128) so too He hates the evildoer (Psalm 5:5, 11:5). Without these foundational truths, the concepts of mercy and grace become meaningless, as would be so very easily demonstrated in cross-examination. :-) So as for me, I will gladly defend the full-orbed teaching of Scripture rather than a mere portion that is popular with men. I will defend God's holiness, His hatred of sin, and His justice: which is the foundation that makes His mercy, his chesed, his grace, His love so awesome.

I would invite you to listen to my response to your sermon. I pointed out that you evidently do not have any idea what a hyper Calvinist is. Evidently, you feel you have the right to redefine theological terms that have been in use for literally centuries on a whim. No meaningful scholar would accuse me of hyper-Calvinism. None. No hyper-Calvinist would either, for that matter. No hyper Calvinist would have stood on the sidewalk outside the LDS Easter Pageant last evening passing out tracts and bearing testimony to God's grace. None would have calmed down the LDS gentleman who came by so very angry because of the KJV Only folks running around with signs yelling and screaming at the Mormons so as to end up having a very profitable conversation with him. None would have traveled to Salt Lake City to preach on the street corners there during General Conference for 18 years, as I and my ministry did. A hyper Calvinist, sir, denies that God ordains the ends as well as the means: they deny God's prescriptive will and claim knowledge of God's eternal will, resulting in their disobedience to the command to preach the gospel to every creature. This was one of the major errors of your sermon: you do not understand that we do not know the identity of the elect, hence, we proclaim the message to all. You seem to think that confessing the existence of the elect means we know who the elect are. This is a simple straw man. Again, we take the entirety of the Word to heart: we preach to all, yet, with Paul, we confess:

For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus [and] with [it] eternal glory. (2 Tim. 2:10).

Though Paul did not know the identity of the elect, yet, it was his confidence that God had His elect people that gave him the strength to carry on. You may think that you can close the ears of the audience with emotional appeals and straw-men, but I assure you, serious students can see through that kind of thing. You need to learn the difference between a historic Calvinist such as myself and a hyper-Calvinist. It would be simply too easy to refute such a false assertion, and I hope you will take the time to learn the topic well enough to recognize the difference.

I can assure you, I have no desires or intentions to misrepresent you. I honor the truth, and the author thereof, too much to engage in such activities. I encourage you to join me in making sure your statements, especially as you stand before the people of God, comport with the highest standards of accuracy.

3. TIME—We do agree that with a topic this vast and of such importance, there should be ample time.

Excellent.

4. FORMAT—We both believe everything should be at our disposal—biblical, historical, philosophical, etc. The cross-examination might be a great idea- but certainly not limited to any type of cross-examination.

I'm sorry, but I do not understand your final statement. Please expand. What do you mean by "not limited to any type of cross-examination"?

Finally, your coverage of my sermon shall have to be left up to others.

Again, I provided the response partly for others, but partly for you, Ergun. If I may speak plainly: I greatly respect your zeal and your passion. In many ways we are very much alike. I honestly believe you know very, very little about me directly. I believe you have made the mistake of going on 'second hand' information. I think you would truly enjoy the debate I did against Hamza Abdul Malik, and my testimony to the large group of gathered Muslims there that evening. I truly do. I think you would have applauded loudly at the end of my debate against ACLU board member Barry Lynn on homosexuality, and I would like to think that you would be in the amen chorus as I debate John Shelby Spong just a few weeks after our debate in October. Given this, I truly do not believe you have any sound, meaningful understanding of what I believe, or why. Now, you can run headlong into this debate insistent that you do, or, you can do what any sound and mature scholar would do, and take the time to examine the issues in first-hand fashion. This is the only way that you will be able to give a God-honoring presentation of truth without relying upon straw-men. There is no reason to fear my response to your sermon: if I am wrong, then you will only be sharpening your own presentations in finding my errors. For example, you said "ransom" appears only three times in the entire Bible: it appears many more times than that, as you meant to say the New Testament; even then, you confused *ἀντίλυτρον* with *λύτρον*; *ἀντίλυτρον* is a *hapax legomena* that does not appear in that form in the other two texts you noted. Now, I pointed this out in my response—if you take the time to listen your arguments will be improved (since this particular point was not overly relevant to your thesis). But, at the same time, I went through a number of uses of *πᾶς* in Romans and 1 Timothy that demonstrate that the term is defined, and limited, by context. Once again, what do you have to fear from listening to these examples? If what you believe is true, would this not only increase the clarity and force of your argumentation? Surely. So I encourage you to consider well the reasons why you would not even listen to a response to your sermon from "the other side."

I shall assume that the reports were from my supporters, who simply wanted to defend me. The response to the sermon, however, has been wonderfully refreshing. With the exception of some of your listeners, we have been overwhelmed with great and kind words. Since the death of Dr. Adrian Rogers, many of us have wondered who should stand against those hyper-Calvinists who have ceased to give biblical invitations, and embraced Protestant Scholasticism.

I discussed the issue of the invitation system, too. You should listen to what I had to say. :-) If you do not, you will never be able to accurately represent me, and, since you have agreed to debate me, if you hold to a Christian standard of truth, you have no choice but to seek to accurately represent me, correct? :-) What is more, since no honest man can accuse me of hyper-Calvinism, I guess that only means you will be joining me in refuting their errors as well!

Finally, Ergun, I hope and pray you will learn something, sooner rather than later. I am not your enemy. You are not mine. I believe you to be my brother in Christ, and I will treat you as such. That's why I have called you to a higher standard than you have so far exemplified in our past correspondence and in your sermon. I expect better of you as my brother and fellow servant of Christ. As I said, we are much alike—are you aware that only three years of age separate us? I have been on the battle lines for many years, just as you have. I have proven my ability to engage in spirited debate with brothers with whom I have strong disagreements within the bonds of Christian love. Will you join with me in praying toward this end as well? Will you join me and Tom in seeking God's blessing upon this encounter so that those there will have the clearest possible understanding of the issues, and that the debate will be completely without rancor, ad-hominem, misrepresentation, and anything else that would dishonor our Lord? I trust you will hear my heart here, Ergun.

Blessings in Christ,

James>>>

4/17/2006 6:16 AM

I trust your Resurrection celebration was a blessing and that you are in good health.

I'm a little confused here, sir. It seems, from this paragraph, and what came thereafter, that you yourself have not listened to the program? Is that the case? I would have to ask why this might be? If the format is not to your liking, I would be glad to send you a link to the mp3 since surely you have an iPod or similar device. But if it is just that you have no interest, I have to wonder why? I mean, if Shabir Ally wrote to me today and said, "I have responded to your comments about my position, and here is the audio file," I would be the first person to download it and listen to it very carefully. I would do so because 1) I have full confidence in the accuracy of what I have said about his position and in response to his arguments, and 2) I believe I need to be as accurate as I possibly can be in representing others, hence, the more I can understand their concerns and how they 'hear' what I am saying, the better I can facilitate communication in an upcoming debate/discussion.

Dr White:

Are you kidding me with this?

From our previous e-mail exchanges, here is your method:

1. Mock the other person's hermeneutics, or act as if they were obviously not intellectual.
2. Operating from your presupposition that Reformed positions alone preach the Gospel, you then offer your alternative.
3. Again, your alternative is presented as if it is the only choice of true Christians.
4. Then, when we call you on it, you feign shock, as if our indignation is not intellectually compatible or fair?

Please.

I have little time to follow your continuous rantings against all evangelicals who do not buy into your presuppositions or categories. IE: 2 Peter 3:9, if eschatological only, still leaves you with a logical problem—God is willing that no one perishes prophetically, but not eternally?

As far as accuracy, you have not accurately dealt with a single e-mail exchange, or accurately presented a "balanced" view of anything.

The only difference here is that, since we also debate, we are used to this.

Finally, only last thing—just so I can be perfectly clear:

1. Emir and I look forward to this debate.
2. We will not allow it to be limited in any way, shape or manner. Remember—YOU came to us.
3. If you are not comfortable with free form debate, then simply say so.
4. However, NONE—and I mean NOT ONE, of the exchanges between the four of us, is for public use. Neither Emir nor I want or give permission for these exchanges to be posted publicly in any form. In our initial exchanges, you freely posted these on your website, which is simply bad form.

I will say, if I get the TIME to do so, I will happily listen. If the assessments of those who e-mailed me was wrong, then I will apologize. However, I doubt that is the case, given our history.

I will wear my leathers. You wear your kilt. We shall see how things fall.

emc

4/17/2006 6:18 AM

As to the omnibenevolence of God, it is very common for some to present a non-differentiated benevolence on God's part, though, of course, such a viewpoint is too easily refuted from Scripture itself. The fact that God has a redemptive love that is expressed for some and not for others is not even arguable, is it?

Well then, let us argue it, if you feel it is an easy win.

Of course, then giving invitations is logically lost, since God may not love the listeners.

It is, and has been, argued, since the Patristic fathers.

e

4/17/2006 6:20 AM

Full-fledged, no-holds-barred debates require clear theses, at least amongst those who seek to honor the truth by doing the debate in the first place.

Honoring truth requires openness to whatever arena truth may arise. Limited debate (i.e. Political debates of the 1960-present era) are not only boring, they are deceptive. The real issues are rarely addressed, as everyone operates from talking points already prepared.

That is not debate—that is the ETS break out sessions

4/17/2006 6:21 AM

If you wish to be unfocused and move from topic to topic, well, I can't stop you, however, once again, unless you are only debating for those who have no intention of thinking clearly about the issue, you will be doing yourself no favors to be scattered all over the countryside throwing out every possible red herring or torching straw men left and right. For the close observer, that kind of action speaks quite loudly.

No, we shall just systematically point out your inconsistencies.

Once again Dr White, calling our approach "names" pejoratively does not make them any less true or on point.

4/17/2006 6:24 AM

I would invite you to listen to my response to your sermon. I pointed out that you evidently do not have any idea what a hyper-Calvinist is.

Nice. Real nice.

In fact, I know EXACTLY what a hyper Calvinist is. You are stuck with God's authorial ownership of sin. Deal with it.

The fine line between "hyper" and "non-hyper" is the switching of the ordo salutis, which leads to reprobation. God foreordained the fall and double predestination.

Again, calling it names doesn't change it, does it?

4/17/2006 6:28 AM

Evidently, you feel you have the right to redefine theological terms that have been in use for literally centuries on a whim.

Again—here you raise an issue—

1. We could not possibly care less about the categories you establish and claim as "historically" set in stone.
2. We do not hold to the presupposition that the men you cite constantly are above scrutiny. We are Biblicists, and historically we are general atonement Sandy Creek, Anabaptist-kinship Baptists.
3. We do not accept a 16th-century (and subsequently 17th-century revision) movement as the "old time religion" passed down by the fathers.

We do not "redefine" anything.

We do not buy the modern interpretation.

emc

4/17/2006 6:31 AM

Though Paul did not know the identity of the elect, yet, it was his confidence that God had His elect people that gave him the strength to carry on. You may think that you can close the ears of the audience with emotional appeals and straw-men, but I assure you, serious students can see through that kind of thing. You need to learn the difference between a historic Calvinist such as myself and a hyper-Calvinist. It would be simply too easy to refute such a false assertion, and I hope you will take the time to learn the topic well enough to recognize the difference.

One final time:

Calling our position an “emotional appeal” does not make our position any less true.

If you believe God has created ANYONE without hope of eternal salvation, then by logic they were created for hell. Predestined for hell.

The elect, as well, will be saved regardless.

“Learn the topic?????”

We know the topic.

We point out the GLARING inconsistency of your view.

That is not an ignorance of your view.

emc

4/17/2006 6:32 AM

I can assure you, I have no desires or intentions to misrepresent you. I honor the truth, and the author thereof, too much to engage in such activities. I encourage you to join me in making sure your statements, especially as you stand before the people of God, comport with the highest standards of accuracy.

You JUST did. Our view is NOT an ignorance of Calvinism. It is the logical application thereof.

Stop claiming high ground from such a vulnerable position.

emc

4/17/2006 6:34 AM

I'm sorry, but I do not understand your final statement. Please expand. What do you mean by “not limited to any type of cross-examination”?

We mean the response may take any form—historical, biblical, theological, philosophical, etc. We will not be limited by false parameters. If in your answer, you casually call us “Arminian” or any such nonsense, we may deal with that, instead of any point you offered.

4/17/2006 6:39 AM

Now, you can run headlong into this debate insistent that you do, or, you can do what any sound and mature scholar would do, and take the time to examine the issues in first-hand fashion.

Again—really nice.

Maturity, I assume, would then spend every waking hour following your writings?

Now, having read your exchange with Hunt in the book you both wrote, I in fact do believe I know your positions.

Also, having read Potter's Freedom, I do know your positions.

I disagree with your presuppositions, and your conclusions.

Call names all you wish—I shall continue to hammer on the topics.

As an example, I could have responded your way:

“Dr. White, please lay aside this childish exchanges, and simply admit that you are caught in a dilemma. All reasonable scholars throughout history have rejected Calvinism, and simply examine the issues...I was once just like you...etc.”

4/17/2006 6:40 AM

Finally, Ergun, I hope and pray you will learn something, sooner rather than later. I am not your enemy. You are not mine. I believe you to be my brother in Christ, and I will treat you as such. That's why I have called you to a higher standard than you have so far exemplified in our past correspondence and in your sermon. I expect better of you as my brother and fellow servant of Christ. As I said, we are much alike—are you aware that only three years of age separate us? I have been on the battle lines for many years, just as you have. I have proven my ability to engage in spirited debate with brothers with whom I have strong disagreements within the bonds of Christian love. Will you join with me in praying toward this end as well? Will you join me and Tom in seeking God's blessing upon this encounter so that those there will have the clearest possible understanding of the issues, and that the debate will be completely without rancor, ad-hominem, misrepresentation, and anything else that would dishonor our Lord? I trust you will hear my heart here, Ergun.

Agreed. I pray it shall be God-honoring as well. Especially since there are churches that hang in the balance on this issue.

emc

4/17/2006 8:23 AM

James,

I was thinking that I had read this letter somewhere before when it flashed in front of my eyes. Ulrich Zwingli took the same approach to Balthasar Hubmaier after Hubmaier had destroyed him in literary debate. But Zwingli, pretending to be scholarly and fatherly, argued that Hubmaier did not understand the debate and would do well to be educated more properly. Though this type of condescending attitude is unwelcome in the Scripture, I am not sure I want to discourage it as it will be quite helpful come October. There is nothing quite as convincing to a student mulling the issues as an arrogant Calvinist who believes that anyone who disagrees with him is not scholarly.

James, if you actually want to preach the differentiated love of God, I beg you to do so on Dividing Line. But be honest when you do so. Please make sure to let your listeners know that God may hate them and still have a plan for their life—Hell. Please make sure that when you give this evangelistic appeal that they know that God will be glorified by their eternal torment.

No meaningful scholar would accuse me of hyper-Calvinism? Is Geisler a meaningful scholar?

James, if you want Ergun and I to know you better, this is certainly not the way to do so. It simply reconfirms what we have read and heard.

Truth is Immortal,

4/17/2006 9:34 AM

Caner, Emir wrote:

James,

I was thinking that I had read this letter somewhere before when it flashed in front of my eyes. Ulrich Zwingli took the same approach to Balthasar Hubmaier after Hubmaier had destroyed him in literary debate. But Zwingli, pretending to be scholarly and fatherly, argued that Hubmaier did not understand the debate and would do well to be educated more properly. Though this type of condescending attitude is unwelcome in the Scripture, I am not sure I want to discourage it as it will be quite helpful come October. There is nothing quite as convincing to a student mulling the issues as an arrogant Calvinist who believes that anyone who disagrees with him is not scholarly.

Greetings Brother Emir:

A couple of items immediately suggest themselves.

1. Ergun has never addressed any of my work, though, he has been invited to do so repeatedly in the past. Hubmaier and Zwingli had, in fact, interacted, on the most basic level of the text itself. Therefore, there is no parallel to the historical situation to which you refer.
2. Could you explain how asking for something more than mere assertion on the part of someone indicates arrogance on my part?
3. Since I deny the accuracy of the term “hyper-Calvinist” and can defend that denial historically, is it not condescending to continue to use it? Should I be looking for reasons to be offended, or should I be exercising Christian patience while seeking to call for a higher standard than mere assertions in this dialogue?

James, if you actually want to preach the differentiated love of God, I beg you to do so on Dividing Line. But be honest when you do so. Please make sure to let your listeners know that God may hate them and still have a plan for their life—Hell. Please make sure that when you give this evangelistic appeal that they know that God will be glorified by their eternal torment.

Sir, it is not a matter of my “wanting” to preach anything. I provided Scriptural references. I see no Scriptural references in your response. Can you offer a defense of denying to God an ability He somehow gave to His creatures? Will you deal with the reality that God shows a special redemptive love to some that He does not show to others? Since you have not taken the time to learn anything about me, even though I have offered to send materials, debates, etc., how can you even begin to comment on what I preach, or how I preach it?

I must confess, I do not understand the willingness of some to comment upon subjects about which they openly wish to remain willfully ignorant. What is the source of this kind of thinking?

No meaningful scholar would accuse me of hyper-Calvinism? Is Geisler a meaningful scholar?

Yes, he is, though once again, he is a philosopher, and his one foray into this field went very badly for him. However, are you asserting he has identified me as a hyper-Calvinist? If so, where? Are you confusing his “extreme Calvinist” moniker (one which simply describes historical Calvinists) with “hyper-Calvinist”? Do either of you feel you are at all bound by the discussions of the past, or are terms like “hyper-Calvinist” open for complete redefinition as long as you think it fitting? Again, I simply do not understand this kind of thinking. It defies all categories of Christian scholarship with which I am familiar, for it does not have as its ultimate goal the clarification and communication of truth.

James, if you want Ergun and I to know you better, this is certainly not the way to do so. It simply reconfirms what we have read and heard.

I take this to mean that you agree that so far you have failed to do any primary reading or studying, and have simply chosen to go on second-hand information? I cannot stop you from so doing. I cannot stop you from looking to be offended at every comment, no matter how truthful or logical it might be. I can only assure you that I will continue to refuse to treat you as you seem intent upon treating me. :-)

James>>>

4/17/2006 9:46 AM

James,

Thank you for not answering one question I raised in my previous email. At least you are consistent in your emails. And please do not think I would be offended by your comments. I have dealt with Muslims for years; what makes you think another fatalist like yourself would bother me?

Second, I wasn't saying you were preaching. I was challenging you to preach what you believe. I have yet to hear a Calvinist preach a sermon on the hatred of God. It seems you have plenty of “evidence” in Scripture, so enter the sacred desk and preach on God's “differentiated love.” I would love to hear Calvinists like yourself admit in open forum that God hates the majority of the world, did not die for them, and let the listeners know that, according to Scripture's narrow way, God most likely hates them and created them for destruction. But you continue hide behind the façade of saying you don't know who the elect are.

Your interaction with Geisler is proof itself of your condescending attitude and hyperbolic remarks. His second edition response to you is sounding quite familiar right now...

Truth is Immortal,

4/17/2006 10:10 AM

Caner, Emir wrote:

James,

Thank you for not answering one question I raised in my previous email. At least you are consistent in your emails. And please do not think I would be offended by your comments. I have dealt with Muslims for years; what makes you think another fatalist like yourself would bother me?

Sir, if you would be so kind as to point out the meaningful questions I did not answer, I would be glad to do so.

I am not a fatalist. I am a Christian theist who accepts the Bible's teachings on God being the Creator of all things. If you insist upon confusing Islamic fatalism with Reformed theology, once again, I cannot stop you from following your error. But an error it remains, and the wise man will not wish to remain in error when offered correction. One thing is for certain: when I encounter

those who willfully refuse to seek to truthfully represent others, it speaks volumes to me. I shall continue to do my best to expend energy to accurately represent my opponents' views out of love for my Savior and a desire to honor His truth. If you do not join me in that, I only feel sorry for you.

Second, I wasn't saying you were preaching. I was challenging you to preach what you believe. I have yet to hear a Calvinist preach a sermon on the hatred of God.

Really? Well, just how much Reformed preaching have you listened to, sir? Have you ever heard of Jonathan Edwards, perhaps? Have you listened, as of this day, this hour, to a single sermon I have preached (they are readily available on line)? I am quite consistent in preaching the whole counsel of God, sir.

It seems you have plenty of "evidence" in Scripture, so enter the sacred desk and preach on God's "differentiated love."

Not only have I done so, but I have done so in print. Since you do not seem to think it proper to read someone's published writings before attacking them (another activity that defies imagination), allow me to be of assistance:

God's Character, God's Love

Mr. Hunt certainly has one advantage in this exchange. Modern evangelicals have adopted, in the place of sound biblical teaching, sentimental traditions regarding God's character and love. Hence, the mere repetition of those traditions is often enough for those who do not have the desire to conform their traditions to the Word of God. Reformed believers know the meaning of the motto, *semper reformanda*, "always reforming." It is a lifelong duty to conform one's beliefs to the Word of God, to always be growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. And when it comes to the issue of God's character and love, one must allow the Bible to define one's beliefs.

It is Mr. Hunt's repeated assertion, in the articles he has written since he initially began addressing this issue only a matter of a few years ago, in his book, in his talks, and in the encounter he had with Dr. Joseph Pipa of Greenville Presbyterian Seminary, that Calvinists deny God's omnibenevolence. Seemingly, it is Mr. Hunt's belief that unless God loves each and every creature in the same way then God is not "all loving." There can be no distinctions in God's love. If God in His patience withholds judgment from a wicked man, this cannot be included in God's "love" unless God does everything in His power to save that person (even if the person is utterly undeserving and justly condemned). For Mr. Hunt, God must love each person equally, try to save each person equally, and leave the results up to men (which is why he denies the freedom of God in election and regeneration), so that God's love for the Apostle John in heaven will be equal to, and completely undifferentiated from, the love He will have for Adolf Hitler as Hitler undergoes His wrath in hell for eternity. God's love can admit of no degrees, no differentiation, for if it does, then God is not "all loving."

Of course, from the start, we see that this makes God less than the creature, man. We rightly and properly discriminate in our love. Men are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. I am not to love my neighbor's wife as Christ loved the church. The love I have for someone other than my wife is of a different nature, substance, and intensity. The same is true for my children and my family. This is why the Lord said that, in comparison to the love we have for Him, our love for family and friends must be different. We are expected to recognize this basic fact. Even the Bible refers to the "apostle whom Jesus loved" (John 19:26), showing that the Lord, though He loved the Apostles with divine and perfect love, had a special love for John. It is obvious beyond question that the love God showed to Moses is substantially different than the love God showed Pharaoh. No one can possibly argue that God expended the same effort to redeem the Assyrians that He expended to redeem Josiah or Isaiah or Ezekiel.

God is not less than His creature, man, and since it is proper for man to differentiate in the nature, extent, and purposes of his love for others, so too God demonstrates different kinds of love toward His creation. Indeed, consider even the phrase "as Christ loved the church." Do we not have to see that Christ's love for the church is of a completely different nature and purpose than His love for anything else?

We need to point out the results of Mr. Hunt's assertions. God's love cannot be redeeming love, since in his system, man must have the final say in the matter. Hence, God must love everyone equally, and try to save each one equally, and fail with regularity in doing so. Indeed, we must conclude that God will be eternally unhappy, since He will be loving those in hell with the very same kind of undifferentiated love He has for the myriads of redeemed surrounding His throne. Surely we cannot even begin to consider such an obviously unbiblical concept. It is a tradition—a very popular tradition indeed, to deny to God the freedom in His love that we have as His creatures. But it is a tradition that must be rejected upon biblical examination.

Recognizing this completely undercuts the primary thesis of Mr. Hunt's attacks upon Reformed theology. When faced with exegetical truths to which he has no answers, Mr. Hunt makes reference to the "impossibility" of the Reformed 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 agonized disappointment, weeping endlessly over the objects of His undifferentiated, unending, "I tried but failed" love, the main plank of Mr. Hunt's anti-Reformed polemic evaporates.

I would love to hear Calvinists like yourself admit in open forum that God hates the majority of the world, did not die for them, and let the listeners know that, according to Scripture's narrow way, God most likely hates them and created them for destruction. But you continue hide behind the façade of saying you don't know who the elect are.

Please note that you are introducing all sorts of accusations here—I have been extending as much grace as possible, but I don't see any of it being returned. :-)

Be that as it may, your ignorance (and the term is not an insult, it is a statement of fact) of my belief continues to cause you to make error after error after error. How do you know the percentage of the elect, Emir? Where did you get this information? I know on the basis of Scripture that all men outside of Christ are "children of wrath," are they not? Do you agree with this? Is this a true statement? Now, since I do not know the identity of the elect (do you? Is it your assertion that we think we do know? If so, please document), how (or why) would I preach about what I do not know about? God calls men everywhere to repent. That is my message. That is what I do. Are you seriously going to suggest that God will be spending eternity mourning over the lost objects of His undifferentiated love? Are you going to seriously attempt to defend the interpretation of *σκεύη ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπόλειαν* that breaks the parallel in Paul's argument? I assure you, sir, I am hiding behind nothing.

Your interaction with Geisler is proof itself of your condescending attitude and hyperbolic remarks.

Documentation, please? Citations? References?

His second edition response to you is sounding quite familiar right now...

Will you do what Ergun refused to do, and actually interact with this:

<http://aomin.org/CBFRep2.html>

James>>>

4/17/2006 11:01 AM

Dr. Ergun Mehmet Caner wrote:

I trust your Resurrection celebration was a blessing and that you are in good health.

I'm a little confused here, sir. It seems, from this paragraph, and what came thereafter, that you yourself have not listened to the program? Is that the case? I would have to ask why this might be? If the format is not to your liking, I would be glad to send you a link to the mp3 since surely you have an iPod or similar device. But if it is just that you have no interest, I have to wonder why? I mean, if Shabir Ally wrote to me today and said, "I have responded to your comments about my position, and here is the audio file," I would be the first person to download it and listen to it very carefully. I would do so because 1) I have full confidence in the accuracy of what I have said about his position and in response to his arguments, and 2) I believe I need to be as accurate as I possibly can be in representing others, hence, the more I can understand their concerns and how they "hear" what I am saying, the better I can facilitate communication in an upcoming debate/discussion.

Dr White:

Are you kidding me with this?

No sir, no kidding at all. Your message indicated you did not seem interested in listening. If someone replied to a sermon or presentation and I was going to be debating that person, I would have an interest in hearing what they had to say. Seems fairly clear to me.

From our previous e-mail exchanges, here is your method:

1. Mock the other person's hermeneutics, or act as if they were obviously not intellectual.

Dr. Caner, I cannot stop you from seeking to take anything or everything I say in the worst possible light; however, the fact of the matter is that I am not alone in pointing out that you are venturing into an area where you have not provided any meaningful foundation for taking your word as the word of an expert. I have asked to be able to review your debates, and you have not given me a list, so I believe I am accurate, as far as I can be, in saying you have never debated a published author who was presenting

and defending a Reformed soteriological viewpoint. As far as I can tell you have never written a book on this subject. And to be perfectly honest, I remain strongly convinced that you have not interacted with my own works on the subject either. Again, I am not alone in pointing out that you have made many, many statements in our past correspondence, and in your recent sermon, that are simply not accurate in the view of anyone who has, in fact, engaged this subject to any meaningful depth.

It is not “mockery” sir to point out **errors** in someone’s hermeneutics. If you wish to say I have mocked your hermeneutics, please provide examples, and we will see if they are examples of mockery (which means they will not provide evidence of error on your part) or if you are misinterpreting disagreement and refutation with mockery.

Not intellectual? I do not believe I have even raised the issue. There are many intellectuals who could never address this issue simply because they have never done the requisite study to do so in a meaningful fashion. An intellectual trained in nuclear science would be unwise to simply step into this field and expect to be able to address it accurately or fully. What published work can you present that demonstrates you have engaged in first-level scholarly study of primary sources in this field? Is that an unfair question to ask? I hardly see how it could be. I have addressed issues of Reformed soteriology in such published works as *God’s Sovereign Grace, Drawn by the Father, The Potter’s Freedom, Debating Calvinism*, and *The God Who Justifies* aside from published articles in the “CRI Journal,” “TableTalk,” and “Modern Reformation.” In our past correspondence I sent to you pages and pages of documentation to which you offered not a syllable in response. So could you please explain upon what basis I am to simply assume you have, in fact, done the requisite study when you repeatedly utilize non-standard terminology, show no familiarity with the primary sources, and refuse to provide any published works documenting your study? If someone came along and claimed expertise in Baptist history, would you give them standing in the field without the first bit of documentation of their work, especially when they insisted upon redefining the basic terms Baptist scholars had always used in their own self-descriptions?

2. Operating from your presupposition that Reformed positions alone preach the Gospel, you then offer your alternative.

I am going to assume, given the penchant I am observing to read anything I write in the worst possible light, that you think that means I believe you are not preaching the gospel. I would challenge you to document such an assertion on my part. You won’t find it. Do I believe a gospel presentation that exalts man and limits God’s freedom is fully honoring to Him? Surely not. Do I believe, to use my fellow elder’s words, that God can draw a straight line with a crooked stick? Most assuredly; that is, God uses imperfect presentations (like my own) to bring His elect unto Himself. Hence, if you would take the time to listen to what the other side is saying and exercise discernment in recognizing differences (just as I recognize differences in non-Reformed presentations), you would see that many of us put ourselves out to make these distinctions out of a sense of fairness.

3. Again, your alternative is presented as if it is the only choice of true Christians.

4. Then, when we call you on it, you feign shock, as if our indignation is not intellectually compatible or fair?

I’m sorry, but it is very frustrating to realize that you are the one refusing to listen to my response to your sermon and yet you continue to act as if you are representing my own position (when you could not possibly do so). You have no idea what I said in my response, and yet you seek to say you have “called me on it”? I’m sorry, Ergun, but honestly, there seems little reason to attempt to dialogue with you about this since you simply have no basis upon which to stand. Just like before, when I called you on your reliance upon Geisler’s appendix, you had no response in the face of page after page of documentation, here again you are talking about a subject upon which you have no foundation to stand. I have replied to your sermon. The wise man will listen and see if there is anything to learn. I cannot begin to understand why someone would not, or, why someone would seek to be offended for my having replied to it. But I leave that to you.

I have little time to follow your continuous rantings against all evangelicals who do not buy into your presuppositions or categories. IE: 2 Peter 3:9, if eschatological only, still leaves you with a logical problem—God is willing that no one perishes prophetically, but not eternally?

I’m sorry you choose language like “continuous rantings,” since such language is unfair, imbalanced, and quite simply inaccurate. However, once again you have provided me with further evidence that you have never read *TPF* (though you claim to have done so). Any person who has done so would know exactly what I am talking about. I likewise spent a good bit of time in my response to your sermon following the pronouns in 2 Peter 3:9, discussing the relationship of ὑμᾶς, τινᾶς, and πάντα, and pointing out what you would have to do, exegetically, to substantiate the disjunction of πάντα from ὑμᾶς as its immediate referent (which is what your interpretation demands). If you are going to even attempt to discuss my position, please, please, at least familiarize yourself with it:

2 Peter 3:9

This is surely the most popular passage cited (almost never with any reference to the context) to “prove” that God could not possibly desire to save a *specific* people but instead desires to save *every single individual* person, thereby denying election and predestination. The text seems inarguably clear. But it is always good to see a text in its own context:

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Immediately one sees that unlike such passages as Ephesians 1, Romans 8-9, or John 6, this passage is not speaking about salvation as its topic. The reference to "coming to repentance" in 3:9 is made in passing. The topic is the coming of Christ. In the last days mockers will question the validity of His promise. Peter is explaining the reason why the coming of Christ has been delayed as long as it has. The day of the Lord, he says, will come like a thief, and it will come at God's own time.

But the next thing that stands out upon the reading of the passage is the clear identification of the audience to which Peter is speaking. When speaking of the mockers he refers to them in the third person, as "them." But everywhere else he speaks directly to his audience as the "beloved" and "you." He speaks of how his audience should behave "in holy conduct and godliness," and says that they look for the day of the Lord. He includes himself in this group in verse 13, where "we are looking for a new heavens and a new earth." This is vitally important, for the assumption made by the Arminian is that when verse 9 says the Lord is "patient toward you" that this "you" refers to *everyone*. Likewise, then, when it says "not wishing for any to perish" but "*all* to come to repentance," it is *assumed* that the "any" and "all" refers to *anyone at all of the human race*. Yet, the context indicates that the audience is quite specific. In any other passage of Scripture the interpreter would realize that we must decide who the "you" refers to and use this to limit the "any" and "all" of verse 9. For some reason, that simple and fundamental necessity is overlooked when this passage is cited.

2 Peter 1:1-3 tells us the specific identity of the audience to which Peter is writing:

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

Peter writes to a specific group, not to all of mankind. "To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours." This not only refers to faith as a gift, as we will see in a later chapter, but it surely limits the context to the saved, for they have received this faith "by the righteousness of *our* God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (emphasis added). There is nothing in chapter three that indicates a change in audience, and much to tell us the audience remains exactly the same.

Since this is so, it becomes quite clear that the Arminian is badly misusing this passage by ignoring what Peter is really saying. The patience of the Lord is displayed toward His elect people (the "you" of verse 9). Therefore, the "not wishing any to perish" must be limited to the same group already in view: the elect. In the same way, the "all to come to repentance" must be the very same group. In essence Peter is saying the coming of the Lord has been delayed so that all the elect of God can be gathered in. Any modern Christian lives and knows Christ solely because God's purpose has been to gather in His elect down through the ages to this present day. There is no reason to expand the context of the passage into a universal proclamation of a desire on God's part that every single person come to repentance. Instead, it is clearly His plan and His will that *all the elect* come to repentance, and they most assuredly will do so.

Dr. Geisler is well aware of this interpretation. But he uses the same kinds of erroneous forms of argumentation in response to this exegesis of the text so as to avoid its force that we saw with reference to 1 Timothy 2:4. Again the assertion is made that *CBF's* interpretation is the “plain meaning” of the text. He writes,

And contrary to the unreasonable view of the extreme Calvinists, this does not mean “all classes of men,” namely, the elect from all nations. Words have limits to their meaning by context. And when “any,” “all men,” and the “whole world” (1 John 2:2) are taken to mean only “some” (unless used as figures of speech), then language has lost its meaning.¹

We are not told how it is “unreasonable” to recognize the contextual clues we noted above. Words do have limits to their meaning by context, and we have demonstrated that the context *clearly* tells us who the “you” and “any” and “all” of 2 Peter 3:9 is.

But most disturbing is the response offered by Geisler to the exegesis we offered above. Here are his words:

Others offer an even less plausible suggestion: that “God does not will that any of us (the elect) perish.” As a firm believer in inerrancy, R.C. Sproul is aware of how dangerous it is to change the Word of God. God the Holy Spirit was surely capable of using the word “some” instead of “all.” But He did not. Furthermore, the “any” and “all” are called to repent. Also, the “all” who need to repent cannot mean the “beloved,” (vv. 1, 8), since they were already saved and in no need of repenting. In addition, this would mean that God is not calling on the non-elect to repent, which is clearly opposed to other Scriptures where “he commands *all people everywhere to repent*” (Acts 17:30). “All people everywhere” does not mean “some people everywhere” or “some people somewhere.” The text speaks for itself.²

Amazingly, the argument begins with the accusation that recognizing the use of “all” in the sense of “all kinds” is an implicit denial of inerrancy and runs the danger of changing the Word of God! Such an accusation is simply without merit. Saying, “Well, God could have said ‘some’ if that is what he meant” is a tremendously weak argument, normally reserved for use when no exegetical argument can be presented. The fact is that *CBF* does not even attempt to offer a response to the arguments drawn from the text itself. There is no discussion of the grammar, pronouns, or anything else relevant to the passage, in *CBF*. Just assertions. Peter limited his use of “all” and “any” to a specific audience, “you.” This is a fact of the text utterly ignored by *CBF*.

Next, it is asserted that the “any” and “all” are “called to repent.” Actually, the text says that God wills (βουλόμενος) for the “all” to come to repentance, and of course, this is quite true. And since God *grants* repentance (2 Tim. 2:24-25), God’s purpose *will* be accomplished, and is accomplished in the elect. They all, as a group, *do* repent. Why anyone would wish to say “It is God’s will that every single individual repent, but, alas, His will is constantly thwarted and refuted by the will of the creature” is hard to say.³ *CBF* misses the point when it asserts that this cannot be the “beloved” because they have already repented. The point of the passage is that God will bring the elect to repentance throughout the time period prior to the parousia, the coming of Christ. At the point of Peter’s writing, the repentance of every single individual reading this book was yet future.

Next Dr. Geisler confuses the prescriptive will of God found in His law, which commands all men everywhere to repent, with the gift of repentance given to the elect in regeneration. It does not follow that if it is God’s will to bring the elect to repentance that the law does not command repentance of everyone. This is a common error in Arminian argumentation.

Dr. Geisler is right about one thing: the text speaks for itself. But when we actually *exegete* the text, what it says is the opposite of what the Arminian *assumes* it says.

Ibid., p. 199.

Ibid., pp. 199-200.

We do not here refer to the revealed will of God found in His law which commands all men everywhere to repent: we speak of His saving will that all the elect come to repentance, and His ability to perform that will.

As far as accuracy, you have not accurately dealt with a single e-mail exchange, or accurately presented a “balanced” view of anything.

The only difference here is that, since we also debate, we are used to this.

Given that I posted the entirety of our correspondence, how I could have been “unfair” or “imbalanced” is hard to say. However, as with each of the accusations you have made in the past, I note not the first attempt at substantiation.

Finally, only last thing—just so I can be perfectly clear:

1. Emir and I look forward to this debate.

As do we.

2. We will not allow it to be limited in any way, shape or manner. Remember- YOU came to us.

Debates have to have a topic and a thesis. If you insist upon ignoring that, there is nothing we can do about it...other than let everyone know at the start we asked for focus, you refused to give it. We will be focused. If you wish to wander about on a dozen different topics, that is up to you. However, as Dr. Ascol has so wisely pointed out, let's go to the debate professors and coaches at Liberty. Wouldn't the experts at your own institution be a good source? Perhaps they could give us the text book they utilize for their debates, and we could use that? I think that is an excellent idea.

3. If you are not comfortable with free form debate, then simply say so.

Free form debate? Perhaps you could direct me to a listing of all of the recordings of your public debates so that I can obtain one of these “free form” debates? I have offered to send you DVD's of my own debates as examples, but you have, to this point, not even acknowledged the repeated offer.

4. However, NONE—and I mean NOT ONE, of the exchanges between the four of us, is for public use. Neither Emir nor I want or give permission for these exchanges to be posted publicly in any form. In our initial exchanges, you freely posted these on your website, which is simply bad form.

I do not make the same request, and you are free to post this exchange in its entirety. I am saying nothing at all here that I would not proclaim from the rooftops. I have nothing to hide. And by the way, **you** said that your only request was that the entirety of the exchange be posted. It is there in your own words. Did you forget that you said this? Many people did indeed find that exchange most enlightening, for just as now, one side was offering documentation, argumentation, and consistency...and the other was not. I say we remain open in our discussions, just like before. I would be glad to abide by the “post all of it, not just snippets” rule, which you yourself asked before. Isn't that fair?

I will say, if I get the TIME to do so, I will happily listen. If the assessments of those who e-mailed me was wrong, then I will apologize. However, I doubt that is the case, given our history.

Ergun, we have no history. You have never provided word ONE of interaction with my published works or debates. How can we have a history?

I will wear my leathers. You wear your kilt. We shall see how things fall.

OK, you've got to admit, whether you want to or not...you liked that line. :-)

As to the omnibenevolence of God, it is very common for some to present a non-differentiated benevolence on God's part, though, of course, such a viewpoint is too easily refuted from Scripture itself. The fact that God has a redemptive love that is expressed for some and not for others is not even arguable, is it?

Well then, let us argue it, if you feel it is an easy win.

Please do not take this wrong, but, do you ever comment on Scriptural passages offered in dialogues like this? I gave references, but, you simply ignored them. Do they not make relevant statements to the issue at hand?

Of course, then giving invitations is logically lost, since God may not love the listeners.

Ergun, honestly, only Pelagian presuppositions could give rise to such a statement, coupled with the continued error of assuming Calvinists claim to know the identity of the elect. We do not, so, we proclaim the good news to all creatures. It is a truly liberating thing to be able to trust the Word and the Spirit to do the work. It truly is.

It is, and has been, argued, since the Patristic fathers.

If you mean the nature of the love of God, yes; if you mean invitations, well, no, I assure you, the patristic period knew nothing of such a concept, would you not agree?

Full-fledged, no-holds-barred debates require clear theses, at least amongst those who seek to honor the truth by doing the debate in the first place.

Honoring truth requires openness to whatever arena truth may arise. Limited debate (i.e. Political debates of the 1960-present era) are not only boring, they are deceptive. The real issues are rarely addressed, as everyone operates from talking points already prepared.

Since I have offered to send you debates with Roman Catholics, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, ACLU board members, and even good ol-fashioned anti-Calvinists, and you have so far refused to even acknowledge the offer, I can only say that you are incorrect. Scholarly debate has always had a thesis and a focused topic. Look at Erasmus and Luther. Leipzig is another example... but I shall not invest more time in it, since to be perfectly honest, in my opinion, it is not an arguable point. Dr. Ascol and I will present the biblical evidence for God's sovereign freedom in salvation and its consistency with historic Baptist belief. You will do as you wish. I leave it to the audience to determine the result.

If you wish to be unfocused and move from topic to topic, well, I can't stop you, however, once again, unless you are only debating for those who have no intention of thinking clearly about the issue, you will be doing yourself no favors to be scattered all over the countryside throwing out every possible red herring or torching straw men left and right. For the close observer, that kind of action speaks quite loudly.

No, we shall just systematically point out your inconsistencies.

Once again Dr White, calling our approach "names" pejoratively does not make them any less true or on point.

I'm sorry, Dr. Caner, but could you tell me where I used pejorative "names" in the above? A red herring is an invalid form of argumentation in debate, a misleading tactic; a straw man likewise refers to a misrepresentation in argumentation; both disqualify a person in formal scholastic debate. So, while I would gladly invite you to attempt to point out inconsistencies, you will only be able to do so on the basis of the presentation we have already made. Be that as it may, could you tell me where I used "names" in the above? Thank you.

I would invite you to listen to my response to your sermon. I pointed out that you evidently do not have any idea what a hyper Calvinist is.

Nice. Real nice.

In fact, I know EXACTLY what a hyper Calvinist is. You are stuck with God's authorial ownership of sin. Deal with it.

I'm sorry, but there is no reason to argue in this fashion. You did not use any standard historical definitions of hyper-Calvinism in your presentation. None. You missed its central character and defining characteristics. If you wish to continue to operate outside standard scholarly definitions, again, I can only point this out to those who care about such things. I will not waste more time arguing since this would require me to accept you as the ultimate authority in a field in which, again, you have never even published. Where is the benefit in that?

As to theodicy, I will gladly ask you if you are an Open Theist? If not, then when God created, He fully knew that every act of sin and evil that has come to pass would, in fact, come to pass, did He not? Now, did God create that world, fully knowing that evil would come, with a purpose in that evil, or without a purpose in that evil? Which is it? Just what is the advantage, sir, in saying God knew evil would come, knew exactly what it would entail, but had no purpose in it? How is that superior to saying that God knew evil would come and had a purpose therein? Where have you addressed, in preaching, or writing, Genesis 50:20, Isaiah 10: 5ff, and Acts 4:27-28, and the compatibilist view found in the Scriptural texts? Could you direct me to these? I can direct you to tremendously in-depth discussions in Edwards, Turretin, and others, if you would like.

The fine line between "hyper" and "non-hyper" is the switching of the ordo salutis, which leads to reprobation. God foreordained the fall and double predestination.

When you refer to "switching of the ordo," to what do you refer? What does a Calvinist believe regarding the ordo that a hyper-Calvinist does not, and vice-versa? Please provide documentation to standard historical and theological sources, please. Thank you. Further, how do you deal with the fact that those who believe in "double predestination" likewise strongly deny the misrepresentation of their position inherent in your own sermon, i.e., that the act of reprobation is parallel to and equal to that of predestination? Where have you addressed this in writing or teaching or preaching? Could you refer me to your works on these subjects?

Again, calling it names doesn't change it, does it?

Please document the use of any "names" in what I wrote above, sir. I have made an assertion: you are in error in your definition of hyper-Calvinist. If I am wrong, provide me with recognized, scholarly reference sources. If I am right, why act as if you have been attacked personally?

Evidently, you feel you have the right to redefine theological terms that have been in use for literally centuries on a whim.

Again—here you raise an issue—

1. We could not possibly care less about the categories you establish and claim as “historically” set in stone.

Sir, scholarship uses terminology to discuss particular issues. Why redefine these terms? Should I be able to call you a Socinian while ignoring the historical meaning of that term? If not, why not? For your benefit, I note:

Sproul insists that:

to understand the Reformed [Calvinist] view...we must pay close attention to the crucial distinction between *positive* and *negative* decrees of God. Positive has to do with God's active intervention in the hearts of the elect. Negative has to do with God's passing over the non-elect...He does not create unbelief in their hearts. That unbelief is already there.⁹

Thus Calvinism formulates election in positive-negative terms, while hyper-Calvinism does so in positive-positive terms. Although both of these views are accurately referred to as “double predestination,” few non-Calvinists understand the fine distinctions between them and subsequently associate the term with supralapsarianism. Inevitably the orthodox Calvinist, affirming double predestination (in the sublapsarian sense), is held in disdain as a virtual heretic.¹⁰ A greater awareness of Calvinist doctrine could eliminate this misunderstanding.

9. Sproul, *Chosen* 142 (italics his).

10. McBeth, *Heritage* 176-178, would seem to make this mistake in relation to John Gill, the English Baptist theologian. He quotes several passages of Gill's *Body of Divinity* regarding double predestination, apparently convinced that these represent an heretical understanding of election and reprobation. He believes that this doctrine led Gill and his followers to reject evangelism. Though McBeth is probably correct in labeling Gill a hyper-Calvinist, his justification for doing so would seem to lie only in Gill's view of evangelism. It is not at all evident from the quotes that McBeth provides that Gill is propounding anything but the orthodox sublapsarian view of election also held by Calvin, Edwards, and many others (including Andrew Fuller, whom McBeth sets in contrast to Gill).

The Evangelical Theological Society. (1990; 2002). *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* Volume 33 (Vol. 33, Page 192). The Evangelical Theological Society.

2. We do not hold to the presupposition that the men you cite constantly are above scrutiny. We are Biblicists, and historically we are general atonement Sandy Creek, Anabaptist-kinship Baptists.

Who have I cited? I am asking **you** for meaningful historical and scholarly sources that give a consistent definition of the terms at hand. Can you provide them?

3. We do not accept a 16th-century (and subsequently 17th-century revision) movement as the “old time religion” passed down by the fathers.

Which has nothing to do, honestly, with your mis-use of terminology, does it? I don't find Finney-style man-centered revivalism to be the “old time religion” either, but as your fellow biblicist, I test all things by God's inspired Word. Could we get back to the basis upon which you ignore the real issues regarding hyper-Calvinism and seek to paint me as something I am not?

We do not “redefine” anything.

We do not buy the modern interpretation.

Yours *is* a “modern” interpretation that ignores the historical development of the positions under scrutiny. I challenge you to provide scholarly grounds for your definitions as I provided one above from a recent recognized theological journal. Thank you!

There are still a few portions of Ergun's reply to go, but this is getting very long, so I will break this up into two parts, and get to the rest a little later today. Thank you all for your patience.

James>>>>

4/17/2006 11:16 AM

Dr Ascol:

Greetings! I have only a few minutes to add my thoughts, but I am happy to do so.

1. TOM ASCOL: Is it a debate that you look forward to or a free-for-all? Liberty has attained wide acclaim for its excellent debate teams. Why not consult with the professors on campus there about the format and tenor of genuine scholarly debate?

Answer: Excuse me? Is this debate about form or substance? We will NOT be entering the classic system of modern academic debate. A free-for-all, as you put it, puts all the cards on the table. I have little interest in offering a political roundtable, with Jim Lehrer moderating. Question and Answer, Lions-Den type response. Refusing to allow one's opponent to dodge due to time constraints.

2. TOM ASCOL: You will not "allow" for a properly structured debate? Sir, with respect, you do not have the right to set the format in this debate on your own. There are other parties involved. Furthermore, your last comment, "Remember—YOU came to us" is at best only partially correct and could more accurately be seen as simple historical revisionism. Let me remind you of the facts: It was you and your brother who invade my blog with bombastic accusations. When asked to back them up, you refused. When challenged publicly to debate, you refused. Even when you decided to take James' challenge out of the public arena (a wise move on your part) you continued to hesitate before finally agreeing to a 4 man debate. To suggest that we came to you looking for a debate is simply not true.

ANSWER: To be fair to you, Dr Ascol, you are partially correct here. We DID come on your blog unannounced. Absolutely. When your readers began to disparage the character of Johnny Hunt, along with his biblical literacy, we did. However, we DID answer the questions asked; you just did not like the answers. Once again- the arrogance of Calvinists to think, for a second, that someone with biblical knowledge would disagree with them? It is unthinkable to that camp. Thus, we "did not answer."

3. TOM ASCOL: "Free form debate." Ask Liberty's debate coaches to define that for me.

ANSWER: I could not possibly care LESS what any debate coaches. This is not 1960 Kennedy-Nixon, it is Hubmaier-Zwingli.

4. TOM ASCOL: Why are you concerned that these exchanges be kept out of the public eye? Are you embarrassed by what you have written? You need to know that I make no such promise and your insistence to the contrary carries no weight with me. Given what you have written both publicly and in emails to James, I hardly think you have any ground on which to stand and call his shedding light on your exchange "bad form."

ANSWER: No, I just think that, when these e-mails are shared among the four of us, that Dr. White posts them on his website, without any permission granted, is cowardly, imprudent, unprofessional, and quite frankly, quite telling. Since you make no such promise—Emir and I will write with that knowledge.

We do not for a second hesitate to debate you. We are ready.

4/17/2006 11:57 AM

Dr White:

Then quote this, entirely:

1. A blog is public correspondence.
2. A private e-mail is, by nature, private correspondence between those addressed.
3. Publishing, on a public blog, a private e-mail, without the consent of those involved, is cowardly.
4. However, as we now know that you use anything at your disposal to further your cause, we shall adjust accordingly.
5. I have, finally at your insistence, listened to your critique. I could not disagree more heartily with your assessment. It is not a categorical error to claim that being Baptist is separate from being a Calvinist (7.27 on the commentary). It is historical. Otherwise, Calvin would not have written so vehemently against the Anabaptists (see the Baker book on Calvin's Treatises against the Anabaptists). Otherwise the Diet of Speyer would not have condemned them entirely. If Baptists were like the Puritans, there would have been no Five Mile Act.
6. "Let the Judge of all the earth" (13.25) Did not answer the question—do ANY babies go to hell?

7. Confusion of foreknowledge and predestination “jumbled together?” Apparently not. People sitting at Thomas Road confused? Too many people have written that this clarified the issue once and for all for them...and of course every other non-Calvinistic theologian. I assume you think they are all just off base.

As for food, I do hope we get a chance to eat some Middle Eastern food while here. I have some amazing cooks at my disposal here at the Seminary. I have too many things on my plate at the moment to mess with this.

Truth is Immortal:

emc

4/17/2006 3:06 PM

Dr. Ergun Mehmet Caner wrote:

Though Paul did not know the identity of the elect, yet, it was his confidence that God had His elect people that gave him the strength to carry on. You may think that you can close the ears of the audience with emotional appeals and straw-men, but I assure you, serious students can see through that kind of thing. You need to learn the difference between a historic Calvinist such as myself and a hyper-Calvinist. It would be simply too easy to refute such a false assertion, and I hope you will take the time to learn the topic well enough to recognize the difference.

One final time:

Calling our position an “emotional appeal” does not make our position any less true.

Dr. Caner, referring to the use of emotional appeals (“I’m gonna be the one standing on top of my hands, standing on top of my feet, standing on a stump, crying out, He died for all!”) and straw men is once again the language of debate. These are forms of improper argumentation. That’s why there are rules in debate: they require those debating to think clearly and to avoid false forms of argumentation. That is why scholastic debate is so hard, to demanding: it requires discipline. Preaching loudly is, as we can see by looking around our nation, well within the purview of many. Accurately handling difficult materials and avoiding false forms of argumentation---that is a much more difficult skill.

If you believe God has created ANYONE without hope of eternal salvation, then by logic they were created for hell. Predestined for hell.

Partial truths are almost always untruths, Dr. Caner. Partial truth: not all are elected unto salvation. Missing part of truth: all deserve eternal death, justly, for being in union with Adam, his fall was our fall; we are born in sin, and none “deserve a chance” since that would make grace and mercy something that can be demanded. Next error in your statement: predestination, or the other biblical term, election, is never used in Scripture outside of the realm of grace and mercy. Hence, it would not be predestined or elected to hell, but only predestined to glory. There is no exercise of divine favor or grace or even power that is necessary to say “the soul that sins will die.” Hence, as I mentioned in my response to you, election and reprobation are not equal things.

The elect, as well, will be saved regardless.

“Learn the topic?????”

We know the topic.

We point out the GLARING inconsistency of your view.

That is not an ignorance of your view.

I only point out your mis-statements and improper use of terms for your benefit. The person who knows the field will likewise see your misuse of these terms and your mixing of contexts and meanings, and you will destroy your credibility with such people if you are unwilling to become familiar with the field and engage it properly. Again, if you choose to redefine everything, that is your choice—but realize that would be as meaningless as someone calling the Book of Mormon the Qur’an and critiquing Mormonism based upon Islamic distinctives. What good would that do?

Stop claiming high ground from such a vulnerable position.

I await the listing of your published works on the subject. :-) Till then, it seems to be Ergun Caner versus the entire body of Reformed scholarship for a number of centuries, including the likes of Boyce and Spurgeon.

Now, you can run headlong into this debate insistent that you do, or, you can do what any sound and mature scholar would do, and take the time to examine the issues in first-hand fashion.

Again- really nice.

Maturity, I assume, would then spend every waking hour following your writings?

Of course not. But be honest, Dr. Caner. You have hardly provided much in the way of serious interaction with...well, almost any Reformed writer in our correspondence. I provide citations, Scripture references, and you ignore them. That is a documented fact. I took the time to review your sermon and provide a good deal of response to it. Back in February you were touting replies from "Dr. Hunt" and Geisler's appendix, yet, when I forwarded you complete refutations of Geisler's appendix, you once again ignored it en toto. So obviously, I am not asking you to spend every waking hour—but *some* kind of meaningful interaction would be a great improvement, wouldn't it?

Now, having read your exchange with Hunt in the book you both wrote, I in fact do believe I know your positions.

As much as that book would allow, that would at least be useful. TPF is much better than the Hunt work simply due to the word limitations and the lack of order in the debate book (a problem I warned the publisher about, but Hunt refused to allow editing of his materials, and refused to stick to one topic in each section).

Also, having read Potter's Freedom, I do know your positions.

I'm sorry, but when you provide a meaningful and accurate exegetical interaction with *something* from TPF, I'll begin to believe the assertion that you have engaged the work. The February interaction convinced me otherwise.

I disagree with your presuppositions, and your conclusions.

Call names all you wish- I shall continue to hammer on the topics.

I continue to look for a single instance of name-calling. Please provide citations of this on my part. Thank you.

As an example, I could have responded your way:

"Dr. White, please lay aside this childish exchanges, and simply admit that you are caught in a dilemma. All reasonable scholars throughout history have rejected Calvinism, and simply examine the issues...I was once just like you...etc."

I have no idea what you are talking about, Dr. Caner. You have never been like me; and the list of Reformed scholarship is massive.

Finally:

1. A blog is public correspondence.
2. A private e-mail is, by nature, private correspondence between those addressed.

Dr. Caner, we are arranging a public debate. Whether both sides remain true to their principles and their promises should not be a deep dark secret unknowable to those interested. I had no interest in posting the correspondence; however, I do believe that there will be many questions if the debate is a maze of disjointed presentations, and I believe it would be quite appropriate for me to quote from our attempts to make sure the debate is done properly. And, I will admit, I believe the unbiased observer would be somewhat taken aback by today's exchanges for a number of reasons. Be that as it may, in reality, all those who are addressed in an e-mail exchange must agree to it being "private," and that simply isn't the case.

3. Publishing, on a public blog, a private e-mail, without the consent of those involved, is cowardly.

You gave your consent when you asked that you be quoted completely. I complied with your wishes and provided the entirety of the conversation. I am unashamed of anything I said to you. The response to the correspondence was, indeed, overwhelming, but it was overwhelmingly positive from my perspective. Unbiased folks can tell who is approaching the topic seriously and who is not. I think the current correspondence, sadly, bears similar characteristics. In any case, it seems odd to repeatedly accuse me of cowardice when I have offered to come to your very classes at Liberty and engage you in front of your own students. :-)

4. However, as we now know that you use anything at your disposal to further your cause, we shall adjust accordingly.

I.e., we have nothing to hide, and you shouldn't either. :-)

5. I have, finally at your insistence, listened to your critique. I could not disagree more heartily with your assessment. It is not a categorical error to claim that being Baptist is separate from being a Calvinist (7.27 on the commentary). It is historical. Otherwise, Calvin would not have written so vehemently against the Anabaptists (see the Baker book on Calvin's Treatises against the Anabaptists). Otherwise the Diet of Speyer would not have condemned them entirely. If Baptists were like the Puritans, there would have been no Five Mile Act.

Since I am both a Calvinist and a Baptist, I am a living, walking refutation of your confusion as to categories. There are Arminian Baptists and Calvinistic Baptists. Insisting otherwise does not help your cause, I assure you. Besides, all I have to do is point to the London Baptist Confession and Charles Haddon Spurgeon and the argument is over, leaving you to engage in special pleading. But again, if you wish to go that direction, I cannot stop you. But especially in debating me you are in a hard place: I have debated paedobaptists and defended credobaptism multiple times; I likewise wrote a chapter in the book on church government wherein I specifically critiqued the Presbyterian view of church government. You can say I am not a Baptist all you want. Reality is a hard thing to hide.

6. “Let the Judge of all the earth” (13.25) Did not answer the question—do ANY babies go to hell?

Possibly you listened too quickly? I avoid both extremes: I do not rob from God His freedom to deal with this issue in the same fashion He deals with all of human salvation. I do not deny to Him the freedom to bring any sinful son of Adam into His presence as He sees fit, but at the same time I refuse to go to your extreme, for this turns abortion into the greatest heaven-filling device ever created by the depraved mind of man. It was hard to tell, given how brief your comments were, but I truly wonder if you actually believe in a full doctrine of original sin, for you seemed to indicate that babies do not die because of sin—if they do not die because of sin, why do they die? In any case, what part of ‘I believe God has the freedom to extend or withhold His grace, since grace must be, by nature, free, in the matter of human salvation,’ is not clear?

7. Confusion of foreknowledge and predestination “jumbled together?” Apparently not. People sitting at Thomas Road confused? Too many people have written that this clarified the issue once and for all for them...and of course every other non-Calvinistic theologian. I assume you think they are all just off base.

Well, since I know Reformed writers clearly distinguish the terms, and I know that you made no reference to the difference between philosophical foreknowledge and the Biblical use of the verb “to foreknow” (which always has a personal object when God is the subject in the NT), then anyone who would profess to be addressing Reformed theology who inaccurately claims we jumble the two terms into one would “just be off base,” yes.

Finally, since you have now listened to the response, would you not agree that $\pi\alpha\varsigma$ has a semantic domain that is, in fact, often contextually limited? Secondly, how do you respond to the use of $\pi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\varsigma$ at Isaiah 53:11, $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\sigma\alpha\iota \delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\nu \epsilon\upsilon \delta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\nu\tau\alpha \pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota\varsigma \kappa\alpha\iota \tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma \alpha\upsilon\tau\omega\upsilon\alpha\iota \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\iota\sigma\epsilon\iota$?

James>>>

4/17/2006 6:14 PM

Dr. Caner, someone just showed me a comment allegedly made by you on Tom’s board a few weeks ago. I never saw you retract it or apologize for it, yet, it was such a major, and obvious, blunder, that I have to ask if you even wrote it, or if someone was impersonating you. Specifically, under your name, it was said that John Gill would have had you “killed for refusing to baptize my sons as infants.” Did you actually write that? And if you didn’t, have you pointed this out, since a number of folks are still chuckling about how you could possibly represent the most famous Baptist of his day, Spurgeon’s predecessor in London, as not only a practitioner of infant baptism, but one who would seek the death penalty on the issue! Could you elaborate? I’m only sending this to you as I really have to wonder if someone wasn’t using your name there, and you need to make a public comment on it?

James>>>

4/17/2006 8:57 PM

Emir:

This is going to be fun. Law of the Excluded Middle. All deserve eternal death, neglecting the fact that, regardless how they want to dance around it, Christ died for all. Either Christ died for the world or He died only for the elect.

Drs. White and Ascol—we truly look forward to this.

As far as future correspondence—feel free. I shall exercise my free will, to respond or not, depending on whether I am irresistibly drawn to it.

And two final points, gentlemen—Arrogance is not a debate tactic. I cite **your statements in red**, and **my answers in navy**:

(*Typesetter’s Note: to preserve continuity of this discussion, Dr. Caner’s statements will be highlighted in blue (as previously), and statements of Drs. White and Ascol will be black text on white background (as previously).*)

Scholastic debate is so hard—

MY ANSWER: so apparently scholarly debate is bereft of pathos.

Partial truths are almost always untruths, Dr. Caner. Partial truth: not all are elected unto salvation. Missing part of truth: all deserve eternal death, justly, for being in union with Adam, his fall was our fall; we are born in sin, and none “deserve a chance” since that would make grace and mercy something that can be demanded.

MY ANSWER: Thus, you have told a partial truth. Your statement would only be true if God’s intent were not so clearly stated in Scripture. 1 Timothy 2: 1-8 is a simple place to start. I believe the statement should read Partial truth: all deserve eternal death. Missing part of truth: But God is willing that all come to repentance.

I only point out your mis-statements and improper use of terms for your benefit. The person who knows the field will likewise see your misuse of these terms and your mixing of contexts and meanings, and you will destroy your credibility with such people if you are unwilling to become familiar with the field and engage it properly.

MY ANSWER: You have invented a new logical fallacy, Dr. White: An Appeal to Your Arrogance. I am sure we will do fine without your help for our “benefit.” I only offer this to you for your benefit, Dr. White. Anyone in the arena would be taken aback by such a shrill form of snobbery. Those that disagree with you will immediately sense this, and you will have lost credibility.

I have no idea what you are talking about, Dr. Caner. You have never been like me; and the list of Reformed scholarship is massive.

MY ANSWER: So too is the list of those who loathe your position.

Whether both sides remain true to their principles and their promises should not be a deep dark secret unknowable to those interested. I had no interest in posting the correspondence; however, I do believe that there will be many questions if the debate is a maze of disjointed presentations, and I believe it would be quite appropriate for me to quote from our attempts to make sure the debate is done properly. And, I will admit, I believe the unbiased observer would be somewhat taken aback by today's exchanges for a number of reasons. Be that as it may, in reality, all those who are addressed in an e-mail exchange must agree to it being “private,” and that simply isn't the case.

MY ANSWER: Ashamed of my correspondence? Of course not. Surprised by something so juvenile as posting personal correspondence? Yes. However, Emir and I do understand your desire to do this. Your don't mind if we post your personal e-mail address, do you? Simply for clarity sake?

Possibly you listened too quickly? I avoid both extremes: I do not rob from God His freedom to deal with this issue in the same fashion He deals with all of human salvation. I do not deny to Him the freedom to bring any sinful son of Adam into His presence as He sees fit, but at the same time I refuse to go to your extreme, for this turns abortion into the greatest heaven-filling device ever created by the depraved mind of man. It was hard to tell, given how brief your comments were, but I truly wonder if you actually believe in a full doctrine of original sin, for you seemed to indicate that babies do not die because of sin—if they do not die because of sin, why do they die? In any case, what part of “I believe God has the freedom to extend or withhold His grace, since grace must be, by nature, free, in the matter of human salvation,” is not clear?

MY ANSWER: Is that a YES, all babies go to heaven, or a NO, not all babies who die go to heaven? It is about as clear as the Westminster Confession, and the citation of “elect babies.” OR, is your answer—God is fully within His nature to send a baby to hell? No need to answer—as you say, it was clear.

Well, since I know Reformed writers clearly distinguish the terms, and I know that you made no reference to the difference between philosophical foreknowledge and the Biblical use of the verb “to foreknow” (which always has a personal object when God is the subject in the NT), then anyone who would profess to be addressing Reformed theology who inaccurately claims we jumble the two terms into one would “just be off base,” yes.

MY ANSWER: The Reformed writers do not “clearly distinguish the terms,” they invent new categories. That is what is most vexing to your position, I assume. We do not buy into a philosophical system that invents its own prism through which it filters all Scripture.. I care not one whit what Edwards, the Puritans, or any system teaches. We are Biblicists. We take the text first. NOT an interpretation of the text that explains away the “world” citations, and the “for all” statements. Either Christ died for the world, and thus His death is offered for all who believe, or He created some for hell. That would be reprobation. That would be hyper Calvinism.

ONE FINAL MEA CULPA—On John Gill—yes, this was wrong. As a historian, I claim a lapse in thinking here. I should have said Cotton Mather, though he might have just fired me, as they did Henry Dunster at Harvard. Perhaps I should have said Obadiah Holmes who was whipped by Puritans in 1651 for building a Baptist church. Or Thomas Painter of Hingham, who was tied and whipped by Puritan Calvinists. Take your pick. We could go on all night.

So, since our conversations are not for personal use, I sign off. I'll respond when I have time. Greet your listeners.

4/18/2006 5:20 PM

Dr. Caner:

I wanted to begin by noting I discussed on the DL today the issue of what makes a debate a debate, and I wondered aloud if the staff members and students at Liberty who are involved in the debate team know of your views of scholastic debate? Our first caller was a Liberty grad from May of '05, and he mentioned how mortified and shocked he was when he heard your statements about Romans 9 and Esau. I, too, am a bit surprised you did not even mention this in your e-mails yesterday, since it was such a momentously obvious mistake on your part to say God hated Esau because of what Esau did. We have had many people comment on that amazing statement, in light of the plain words of Scripture:

...for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." (Romans 9:11-13)

I really have no idea how you could possibly defend your statements in the pulpit on that text, Ergun. You did not mention my response to it. How do you, in fact, defend the idea that God's attitude toward Esau was based upon what Esau did, when Paul goes out of his way to say the exact opposite? What Esau "did" would be his works; you say "because of works" and the Bible says "not because of works." What kind of exegetical process can defend this viewpoint?

Finally, before turning to your e-mail, I have a direct question to ask. I hope you will answer it directly. As I have thought back over our correspondence (I searched the file of our February exchange), I do not recall you ever referring to me as a Christian brother. I have addressed you in those terms multiple times. Given that you have said Calvinists are worse than Muslims, I'm wondering: do you see this upcoming debate as one between brothers in Christ? Or do you view me as a non-Christian heretic?

Dr. Ergun Mehmet Caner wrote:

Emir:

This is going to be fun. Law of the Excluded Middle. All deserve eternal death, neglecting the fact that, regardless how they want to dance around it, Christ died for all. Either Christ died for the world or He died only for the elect.

I would invite you to take the time to read John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, Ergun, and to do so in light of the fact that I firmly believe a hypothetical atonement (as Dr. Geisler put it, Christ's death did not save anyone, it simply made all men savable) is impotent to refute the heresies of Rome, let alone is it a ground for the glorification of a powerful and perfect Savior. You may call it "dancing" all you wish: again, those who take exegesis and theology seriously will not find that a compelling form of argumentation. I love proclaiming the perfection of the work of Christ! I agree with Spurgeon:

Blessed be God, His elect on earth are to be counted by millions, I believe, and the days are coming, brighter days than these, when there shall be multitudes upon multitudes brought to know the Saviour, and to rejoice in Him. Some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say, "It is so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men; it commends itself," they say, "to the instincts of humanity; there is something in it full of joy and beauty." I admit there is, but beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might admire in the theory of universal redemption, but I will just show what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were lost before He died. If the doctrine be true, that He died for all men, then He died for some who were in hell before He came into this world, for doubtless there were even then myriads there who had been cast away because of their sins. Once again, if it was Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has He been disappointed, for we have His own testimony that there is a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, and into that pit of woe have been cast some of the very persons who, according to the theory of universal redemption, were bought with His blood. That seems to me a conception a thousand times more repulsive than any of those consequences which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of special and particular redemption

Drs. White and Ascol—we truly look forward to this.

As I look forward to proclaiming these truths this Friday in debate in Illinois as well, I assure you. :-) I would be happy to send the audio of this Friday evening's debate, if you would like, but since I have offered such materials many times before, I'm slowly getting the idea that there isn't a lot of interest on your side of the aisle, so to speak. But I will keep offering!

As far as future correspondence- feel free. I shall exercise my free will, to respond or not, depending on whether I am irresistibly drawn to it.

Well, as that ol' pagan Nebuchadnezzar learned, the hard way, 'all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"' (Dan. 4:35).

And two final points, gentlemen- Arrogance is not a debate tactic.

Correct, it is not. Straw men and ad-hominem are not either; they are formal errors of argumentation.

I cite your statements in red, and my answers in navy:

Scholastic debate is so hard—

MY ANSWER: so apparently scholarly debate is bereft of pathos.

Untrue, of course. But sound scholarship and the love of truth causes the followers of Christ to combine disciplined argumentation (for without it, you cannot claim that what you are saying is, in fact, true, over against falsehood) with passionate presentation. I have offered, repeatedly, to provide you with DVDs or audios of debates that demonstrate the fact that you can combine both successfully, if you are willing to work hard enough at it. As for me, I believe God's truth is worth the effort to be disciplined and hence to follow the rules of debate (which exist to show which side has the truth). How about you?

Partial truths are almost always untruths, Dr. Caner. Partial truth: not all are elected unto salvation. Missing part of truth: all deserve eternal death, justly, for being in union with Adam, his fall was our fall; we are born in sin, and none "deserve a chance" since that would make grace and mercy something that can be demanded.

MY ANSWER: Thus, you have told a partial truth. Your statement would only be true if God's intent were not so clearly stated in Scripture. 1 Timothy 2: 1-8 is a simple place to start. I believe the statement should read Partial truth: all deserve eternal death. Missing part of truth: But God is willing that all come to repentance.

How do you answer the refutations that have been offered to you repeatedly, Dr. Caner? I went through 1 Timothy 2 in my rebuttal, and, like your comments on Romans 9, you ignored *μεσίτης* and the presence of semantic delimiters in the context in reference to *πᾶς* both before and after the text (which was likewise laid out in TPF). How do you respond to my comments on the DL, in my published works, and in these e-mails, regarding the pronouns and context of 2 Peter 3:9? Do you feel you can just ignore these things, not offer a word of rebuttal or refutation, and keep repeating them over and over again?

I only point out your mis-statements and improper use of terms for your benefit. The person who knows the field will likewise see your misuse of these terms and your mixing of contexts and meanings, and you will destroy your credibility with such people if you are unwilling to become familiar with the field and engage it properly.

MY ANSWER: You have invented a new logical fallacy, Dr. White: An Appeal to Your Arrogance.

Dr. Caner, you cannot logically accuse me of arrogance for saying you are misusing terminology. It would be arrogant for me to say, "I am the greatest scholar who has ever lived in this particular field, therefore, I can alter definitions that have been in use by generations before me based upon my own standing." That would be arrogance. I have not done this. I have provided you with references, and could provide you with many more, that would accurately identify the term "hyper-Calvinist." I do not have to refer you to my own authority in the field. Hence, there is no more arrogance in saying to you that you are in error than there is in your saying to one of your history students that they were wrong to say the Council of Nicea took place in AD 415.

Now, I have asked both Dr. Caners to direct me to your published works in this field. My requests have been ignored. I trust there is no question that Dr. Ascol and I have published numerous works in the field of Reformed theology. I have written book length works, articles that have appeared in widely read journals, and have engaged in numerous public debates on the topic against a range of opponents. I am currently working on a scholarly article on the biblical witness to compatibilism built upon the exegetical foundation of Genesis 50:20 (the direct parallelism of ~T_iib.v;x] with Hb'äv'x], likewise reflected in the accurate rendering of the LXX by ἐβουλεύσασθε and ἐβουλεύσατο, is striking, is it not?), Isaiah 10:5ff, and Acts 4:27-28. These are simple facts, are they not? Is it arrogance on my part to note that you have not published or debated in this area? Or could it be construed as a far more virulent form of arrogance for any man to enter a field of study that presents a massive body of scholarly writing and, ignoring that completely, decide to redefine the terms of discussion, all on a whim?

An example, if I may. Certain words have established meaning in the field of Islamic apologetics. *Shirk* and *Qiblah* are two such examples. When Shabir Ally makes reference to *shirk*, I know exactly what he is referring to, for there is an established definition of the term, a range of meanings that allows us to communicate. In the same way, when we discuss the change in the *Qiblah* in the Qur'an, and point to the historical realities regarding the earliest mosques and their orientation, and the design and form of the Dome of the Rock, etc., again, there is a meaning to the term that allows for meaningful discussion, is there not? Now, you may wish *shirk* had a different meaning. You may wish to change the meaning to make a particular argument you wish to make "easier."

But do you have the right to do so? Will your Muslim opponents let you get away with such an action? Surely not! And who would be so foolish as to think they can do so? So, in the same fashion, when you enter into this field and show not the first sign of *fair* interaction with the entire body of scholarship and the terminology used therein and seek to improperly and inaccurately identify historic Reformed theology as “hyper-Calvinism,” you are engaging in simple misrepresentation and are not honoring the truth. It can't really be said any more plainly than that.

I am sure we will do fine without your help for our “benefit.” I only offer this to you for your benefit, Dr. White. Anyone in the arena would be taken aback by such a shrill form of snobbery. Those that disagree with you will immediately sense this, and you will have lost credibility.

I will gladly allow anyone to determine, upon review of the entirety of our exchange, whether I have acted in good faith in seeking to exhort you to a high standard in the handling of truth, or whether I have engaged in “snobbery.” I trust the fair minded person will be able to see who has acted with integrity.

I have no idea what you are talking about, Dr. Caner. You have never been like me; and the list of Reformed scholarship is massive.

MY ANSWER: So too is the list of those who loathe your position.

How is this even slightly relevant to the topic at hand? Logically, it is not. Please note that once again you are the one using emotionally-laden terms (“loathe”). You presented a form of a parable that had nothing whatsoever to do with our current situation; I pointed out the inconsistencies, and made reference to an indisputable fact: the body of Reformed scholarship produced over the centuries by Calvin, Beza, the Westminster Divines, the Puritans, my Baptist forebears in England, Gill, Spurgeon, Bunyan, and great American divines such as Edwards, or Machen or Hodge or Warfield or Boice—likewise destroys the attempted parallel you had presented. So how is saying many men “loathe” my position in the least bit relevant on any logical or rational grounds, sir?

Whether both sides remain true to their principles and their promises should not be a deep dark secret unknowable to those interested. I had no interest in posting the correspondence; however, I do believe that there will be many questions if the debate is a maze of disjointed presentations, and I believe it would be quite appropriate for me to quote from our attempts to make sure the debate is done properly. And, I will admit, I believe the unbiased observer would be somewhat taken aback by today's exchanges for a number of reasons. Be that as it may, in reality, all those who are addressed in an e-mail exchange must agree to it being “private,” and that simply isn't the case.

MY ANSWER: Ashamed of my correspondence? Of course not. Surprised by something so juvenile as posting personal correspondence? Yes. However, Emir and I do understand your desire to do this. Your don't mind if we post your personal e-mail address, do you? Simply for clarity sake?

Dr. Caner, I have already made it abundantly plain, repeatedly, that 1) I have no problem with the posting of anything I have said in a public forum, and 2) if I post this correspondence it will be like the last time: en toto, complete, without editing, without anything to hide.

Possibly you listened too quickly? I avoid both extremes: I do not rob from God His freedom to deal with this issue in the same fashion He deals with all of human salvation. I do not deny to Him the freedom to bring any sinful son of Adam into His presence as He sees fit, but at the same time I refuse to go to your extreme, for this turns abortion into the greatest heaven-filling device ever created by the depraved mind of man. It was hard to tell, given how brief your comments were, but I truly wonder if you actually believe in a full doctrine of original sin, for you seemed to indicate that babies do not die because of sin—if they do not die because of sin, why do they die? In any case, what part of “I believe God has the freedom to extend or withhold His grace, since grace must be, by nature, free, in the matter of human salvation,” is not clear?

MY ANSWER: Is that a YES, all babies go to heaven, or a NO, not all babies who die go to heaven?

Surely, Dr. Caner, you cannot possibly miss so clear a statement. If I avoid both extremes then I do not say ALL who die in infancy go to hell, nor do I say ALL who die in infancy go to heaven: I leave it in the hands of the judge of all the earth to do right and to exercise the same freedom He has in the salvation of adults as to whether He will extend mercy to any individual fallen son or daughter of Adam. I refuse to limit God's freedom in the matter, nor will I make such horrific practices as abortion a great heaven-filling device (the logical outcome of your own position, it would seem—along with some pretty important questions as to your orthodoxy on the matter of original sin and the reasons for death—which you seemed to have avoided in the above paragraph I note).

It is about as clear as the Westminster Confession, and the citation of “elect babies.” OR, is your answer- God is fully within His nature to send a baby to hell? No need to answer- as you say, it was clear.

Well, the only reason I would not need to answer is if you are impervious to truth and reasoning. You do not seem to believe in original sin, nor that death comes from Adam's sin, and that all who are born are born in Adam and held federally guilty of his

transgression. I will gladly defend the orthodox and biblical doctrine against your sub-biblical denial of Romans 5, if need be. :-)
And if you think you can play the emotional trump card on this one, please be advised: your denial of federalism undercuts the very basis upon which righteousness is imputed to the believer, so if you go that direction, be prepared to answer a lot of questions.

Well, since I know Reformed writers clearly distinguish the terms, and I know that you made no reference to the difference between philosophical foreknowledge and the Biblical use of the verb “to foreknow” (which always has a personal object when God is the subject in the NT), then anyone who would profess to be addressing Reformed theology who inaccurately claims we jumble the two terms into one would “just be off base,” yes.

MY ANSWER: The Reformed writers do not “clearly distinguish the terms,” they invent new categories.

Document your charge, sir. Provide references. Demonstrate that you are doing more than merely bluffing with this kind of rhetoric. Can you do so? Who has done this? In what work? When? Where? Citations, please, sir, citations. Meaningful argumentation. *Something* other than your *ipse dixit*.

That is what is most vexing to your position, I assume. We do not buy into a philosophical system that invents its own prism through which it filters all Scripture..

Obviously, I believe the exact same about your own position.

I care not one whit what Edwards, the Puritans, or any system teaches. We are Biblicists. We take the text first. NOT an interpretation of the text that explains away the “world” citations, and the “for all” statements.

We both claim the text as our highest authority: but when I demonstrate contextually limited uses of *world* or *all*, you simply close your eyes as tightly as you can and ignore them as if by doing so they will go away, and, fully knowing you have failed to even begin to respond to this information, repeat your already refuted statements. You truly need to come up with *something* more than this, Dr. Caner. You really do.

Either Christ died for the world, and thus His death is offered for all who believe, or He created some for hell. That would be reprobation. That would be hyper Calvinism.

No sir, reprobation is not definitional of hyper-Calvinism, since non-hyper Calvinists have embraced the doctrine. I sent you documentation from scholarly sources on this earlier, and, as you have from the first time we have interacted, you ignored it as if it never appeared before your eyes.

ONE FINAL MEA CULPA- On John Gill—yes, this was wrong. As a historian, I claim a lapse in thinking here. I should have said Cotton Mather, though he might have just fired me, as they did Henry Dunster at Harvard. Perhaps I should have said Obadiah Holmes who was whipped by Puritans in 1651 for building a Baptist church. Or Thomas Painter of Hingham, who was tied and whipped by Puritan Calvinists. Take your pick. We could go on all night.

I am sure Dr. Gill will rest better tonight for having that blight against his name removed.

James>>>>

4/20/2006 10:24 AM

Brethren:

I have not received any response to this e-mail, so I am trying again. I have put in bold & blue a question that I would especially like a direct and clear answer to. Also, I read the following quote from Spurgeon just now, and wanted to include it, for as normal, the great preacher of London said it far better than I can:

Some preachers and professors affect to believe in a redemption which I must candidly confess I do not understand; it is so indistinct and indefinite — a redemption which does not redeem anybody in particular, though it is alleged to redeem everybody in general; a redemption insufficient to exempt thousands of unhappy souls from hell after they have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus; a redemption, indeed, which does not actually save anybody, because it is dependent for its efficacy upon the will of the creature; a redemption that lacks intrinsic virtue and inherent power to redeem anybody, but is entirely dependent upon an extraneous contingency to render it effectual. With such fickle theories I have no fellowship. That every soul for whom Christ shed his blood as a Substitute, he will claim as his own, and have as his right, I firmly hold. I love to hold and I delight to proclaim this precious truth. Not all the powers of earth or hell; not the obstinacy of the human will, nor the deep depravity of the human mind, can ever prevent Christ seeing of the travail of his soul and being satisfied. To the last jot and tittle of his reward shall he receive it at the Father’s hand. A redemption that does redeem, a redemption that redeems many, seems to me infinitely better than a redemption that does not actually redeem anybody, but is supposed to have some imaginary influence upon all the sons of men.

- C.H. Spurgeon

Amen and Amen. There you have the grounds upon which they stand before the throne and the Lamb and cry out day and night, "Blessing, honor, and glory!"

Dr. Caner:

I wanted to begin by noting I discussed on the DL today the issue of what makes a debate a debate, and I wondered aloud if the staff members and students at Liberty who are involved in the debate team know of your views of scholastic debate? Our first caller was a Liberty grad from May of '05, and he mentioned how mortified and shocked he was when he heard your statements about Romans 9 and Esau. I, too, am a bit surprised you did not even mention this in your e-mails yesterday, since it was such a momentously obvious mistake on your part to say God hated Esau because of what Esau did. We have had many people comment on that amazing statement, in light of the plain words of Scripture:

...for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." (Romans 9:11-13)

I really have no idea how you could possibly defend your statements in the pulpit on that text, Ergun. You did not mention my response to it. How do you, in fact, defend the idea that God's attitude toward Esau was based upon what Esau did, when Paul goes out of his way to say the exact opposite? What Esau "did" would be his works; you say "because of works" and the Bible says "not because of works." What kind of exegetical process can defend this viewpoint?

Finally, before turning to your e-mail, I have a direct question to ask. I hope you will answer it directly. As I have thought back over our correspondence (I searched the file of our February exchange), I do not recall you ever referring to me as a Christian brother. I have addressed you in those terms multiple times. Given that you have said Calvinists are worse than Muslims, I'm wondering: do you see this upcoming debate as one between brothers in Christ? Or do you view me as a non-Christian heretic?

Dr. Ergun Mehmet Caner wrote:

[Previous E-mail repeated verbatim]

4/20/2006 5:56 PM

Brethren:

I still have not heard back from the Brother Caner regarding my last message. I will be checking my mail on the web tomorrow if possible, so please feel free to write despite the fact that I will be flying to Sedalia, MO to debate on the same issues we will be debating in October. Lord willing, I will be home in 30 hours, door-to-door (a whirlwind debate to be sure). In any case, I reiterate my offer to send the audio of tomorrow evening's debate, and I am still hoping to find out soon if a Trinity confessing, sola scriptura preaching, inerrancy defending proponent of sola gratia and sola fide is to be denied entrance into heaven due to believing Ephesians 1 and Romans 8-9?

James>>>

A wonderful thought from George Whitefield, that winner of souls here in America: "Come, ye dead, Christless, unconverted sinner, come and see the place where they laid the body of the deceased Lazarus; behold him laid out, bound hand and foot with graveclothes, locked up and stinking in a dark cave, with a great stone placed on top of it. View him again and again; go nearer to him; be not afraid; smell him, Ah! how he stinketh. Stop there now, pause a while; and whilst thou art gazing upon the corpse of Lazarus, give me leave to tell thee with great plainness, but greater love, that this dead, bound, entombed, stinking carcase, is but a faint representation of thy poor soul in its natural state;...thy spirit which thou bearest about with thee, sepulchered in flesh and blood, is literally dead to God, and as truly dead in trespasses and sins, as the body of Lazarus was in the cave. Was he bound hand and foot with graveclothes? So art thou bound hand and foot with thy corruptions; and as a stone was laid on the sepulchre, so there is a stone of unbelief upon thy stupid heart. Perhaps thou has lain in this estate, not only four days, but many years, stinking in God's nostrils. And, what is still more effecting, thou art as unable to raise thyself out of this loathsome, dead state, to a life of righteousness and true holiness, as ever Lazarus was to raise himself from the cave in which he lay so long. Thou mayest try the power of thy boasted free will, and the force and energy of moral persuasion and rational arguments (which, without doubt, have their proper place in religion); but all thy efforts, exerted with never so much vigor, will prove quite fruitless and abortive, till that same Jesus, who said 'take away the stone' and cried 'Lazarus, come forth,' also quicken you. This is grace, graciously offered, and grace graciously applied. Or as the Confession originally puts it, "grace offered and conveyed."

4/22/2006 8:56 AM

Brethren:

I just got back from the debate in Sedalia, and I'm quite surprised to find nothing in my e-mail box, especially after the volume and rapidity of replies earlier this week. I have a feeling I know why. I believe this question, however, could be answered with great simplicity and speed. I will ask it again.

Finally, before turning to your e-mail, I have a direct question to ask. I hope you will answer it directly. As I have thought back over our correspondence (I searched the file of our February exchange), I do not recall you ever referring to me as a Christian brother. I have addressed you in those terms multiple times. Given that you have said Calvinists are worse than Muslims, I'm wondering: do you see this upcoming debate as one between brothers in Christ? Or do you view me as a non-Christian heretic?

Could you be so kind as to provide a response, please? Thankfully, last evening, though my opponent provided the same straw-man argumentation found in Dave Hunt's works, at least he was kind enough to 1) not call me a hyper-Calvinist (as he knows such would be dishonest and untrue), and 2) we acknowledged each other as brothers in the faith. That went a long way in keeping the debate useful and beneficial to all in attendance. Will this be the case in October, Ergun? Emir? Tom has already let me know he thinks I'm his brother in Christ, for which I'm thankful! :-)) I look forward to a speedy response.

James>>>>

4/24/2006 6:28 PM

Gentlemen:

A week ago tomorrow evening I replied to Ergun Caner's last e-mail to me. Since that time, silence has descended upon Lynchburg, Virginia and Fort Worth, Texas. Despite repeated efforts, I have received not a word in response from either of the brothers Caner. Dr. Ascol has replied, so I know my e-mails have been sent properly.

Of course, I am immediately struck by the possibility that something has gone terribly wrong such as a family crisis that has caused both of you to completely lose your internet access and any time, or desire, to engage in correspondence. Outside of this terrible possibility (and I surely hope that is not the case!), I cannot imagine any eventuality which would preclude, upon the second or third receipt of the same e-mail with inquiry about your reply (and the request for a return receipt) even the most curt reply of "busy" or "I'll get to you later."

If you do not wish to engage any further theological issues, that is surely up to you. I have tried to be clear and accurate in what I have said, and I stand by all of what I have written or said in response to Dr. Caner's TRBC sermon. I would surely like to hear Ergun's explanation of turning Romans 9 upside down, for example. But I cannot force either of you to interact with anything right now. Only a meaningful cross-examination period can do that.

So if you wish to focus solely upon issues of moderation, format, etc., that is fine with me. I believe we have put forward a very cogent argument in that Liberty is known for its debating teams, and I would not wish to be the one having to explain to those students why I refused to follow a meaningful debate format because I felt it was too constricting or "boring." I have already laid out my arguments for having a focused thesis and format: I have seen no meaningful rebuttal.

But there is one issue that I simply have no intentions of dropping until it is answered. I have "taken heat" from true hyper-Calvinists in refusing to join the "Arminians are going to hell" bandwagon. While I think a knowing, consistent Arminian is surely in danger (historic Arminianism rejects substitutionary atonement and, I believe, logically gives rise to what we see today in the heresy of Open Theism), I have met very few consistent Arminians. I do not believe perfection of theological construction is the means of salvation. I did not experience salvation for the first time when I came to embrace the "doctrines of grace." So when I ask you if you accept my Christian profession and view me as a brother, I am being consistent. And only a hyper-Arminian, in essence, would take the position that I am not myself a believer, a fellow heir of grace. It would truly be ironic if, in fact, you were to take the position that I am not a Christian, because that would involve you in taking the same viewpoint of many hyper-Calvinists, only in reverse. Be that as it may, I would like to ask once again: do you (I ask this of both of you, not just of Ergun) view me as a fellow believer in Christ with whom you have serious disagreements, or, do you view me as a heretical false teacher, a non-Christian? Could you please answer this question for me? It would help me greatly to understand your motivations and your theological viewpoint. Thank you!

James>>>>

4/25/2006 4:34 PM

Gentlemen:

May I ask how we are going to discuss details if you refuse to correspond with us?

Do I need to obtain office phone numbers and try to arrange conference calls?

The kindness of a response is requested.

James>>>

5/9/2006 10:23 AM

Dear Drs. Ergun and Emir Caner:

I will be calling your offices this week. Since you have chosen to stop corresponding with me concerning our debate on October 16th, and there are still issues to be discussed concerning format, thesis statement, moderation, etc., I will have to seek to speak to you directly. It will not be long till we need to make flight arrangements, lodging arrangements, etc., and this "silent treatment" cannot be allowed to interrupt preparations.

By the way...despite the fact that neither Ergun or Emir have shown the slightest interest in my engaging Shabir Ally in debate (something I have mentioned to a number of folks, and it even came up in conversation with students after the debate itself, who likewise found it amazing, and rather sad), I still wanted to offer you both a copy of the debate as soon as either the audio files or the DVDs are available (audios will be first, of course). We had at least 2,500 in attendance, and it was a wonderful evening. The New Testament was defended and the followers of Christ encouraged. Should you be interested in knowing more, the story is here.

James>>>

5/9/2006 10:28 AM

Dear Drs. White, Ascol and Pierce:

As we are in finals, followed by Bacc and Grad this weekend, and as we are both invested in said, it shall be difficult to be in contact. Emir, I am back online after the semester push / Dissertation defenses—I will e-mail later (prayerfully tonight) to catch up with the debate issues.

emc

5/11/2006 7:23 AM

Thursday, May 11, 2006

Dear Drs. White, Ascol and Pierce:

Exams are completed, and graduation looms before us. That would explain the 5am e-mail time...

Having gotten a few moments to contemplate the debate, and discuss it with Emir, we submit the following. It is fairly simple and to the point.

Blessings:

DATE:

Monday, October 16, 2006.

PLACE:

The new Thomas Road Baptist Church on Liberty Mountain. It seats 6400, so there will be plenty of room.

DEBATE STYLE:

Parliamentary. It is an accepted form of debate, that offers the formal rules you desired, and the freedom we desired.

LENGTH:

2 hours.

MODERATOR:

You have expressed an admiration for our Director of Debate, Brett M. O'Donnell. We concur. He has agreed to serve as Moderator.

TOPIC:

Resolved: That God is an Omnibenevolent God to all of humanity through salvation and opportunity.
We shall take the affirmative.

FORMAT:

Speeches start with the affirmative and alternate between the affirmative and negative throughout the debate. The first and last speech on each side of the question are uninterrupted. Any member of the opposing team may interrupt the speeches in the middle of the debate in order to ask the speaker to yield to a question. Speakers are not required to answer these questions.

1st Affirmative Speech: (10 minutes) uninterrupted

Cross-Examination: 4 minutes

1st Negative Speech: (10 minutes) uninterrupted

Cross Examination: 4 minutes

2nd Affirmative Speech: (10 minutes):

The first and last minute of the speech are uninterrupted.

In the 2nd-9th minutes of the speech any opposition debater may ask the speaker to yield to a question.

The speaker may accept, or decline the question.

Cross Examination: 4 minutes

2nd Negative Speech: (10 minutes):

The first and last minute of the speech are uninterrupted.

In the 2nd-9th minutes of the speech any opposition debater may ask the speaker to yield to a question.

The speaker may accept, or decline the question.

Cross Examination: 4 minutes

1st Affirmative Rebuttal: (6 minutes)

The first and last minute of the speech are uninterrupted.

In the 2nd-5th minutes of the speech any opposition debater may ask the speaker to yield to a question.

The speaker may accept, or decline the question.

Optional audience participation

Negative Rebuttal: (8 minutes): Uninterrupted

Affirmative Rebuttal: (6 minutes) Uninterrupted

5/11/2006 10:17 AM

Dr. Ergun Mehmet Caner wrote:

Resending because Drs. White and Pierce's server rejected (mailboxes were too full)

Thursday, May 11, 2006

Dear Drs. White, Ascol and Pierce:

Exams are completed, and graduation looms before us. That would explain the 5am e-mail time...

Having gotten a few moments to contemplate the debate, and discuss it with Emir, we submit the following. It is fairly simple and to the point.

Gentlemen:

Thank you for your e-mail. It is nice to hear from you again. :-)

The debate I just completed with Islamic apologist Shabir Ally was very short. It was two hours and 40 minutes in length. This was with just two men speaking and a very focused topic (inspiration of the New Testament and his normal synoptic problem attack upon it). We had more than 2500 people in attendance, mostly students from Biola, and 99% of them stayed for the full period of time.

I can honestly say I have only done three debates that were two hours or less in length...and that was because they were televised (against a Roman Catholic scholar in Austin, Texas). Consider well that a four-man debate at two hours means we will be doing all of this to speak for 3/4 the length of a normal sermon.

As you will recall, Ergun, you agreed that the topic demands sufficient time to be addressed meaningfully. I believe the students of Liberty and those traveling to see this encounter deserve more than 30 minutes per man. That isn't a debate. That's a sound-bite exchange.

Hence, I would like to request a time frame of three hours. That is still only forty-five minutes per man, but if we are going to invest our time and effort in coming together for this vital topic, our audience, and the topic, deserve at least that much.

MODERATOR:

You have expressed an admiration for our Director of Debate, Brett M. O'Donnell. We concur. He has agreed to serve as Moderator.

I am sure he will uphold the high standards Liberty has demonstrated in its debate program.

TOPIC:

Resolved: That God is an Omnibenevolent God to all of humanity through salvation and opportunity.
We shall take the affirmative.

I honestly have no idea what this thesis statement means since it is ambiguous both on grammatical and lexical grounds. Surely this can be expressed with sufficient clarity to allow for honest discussion. This statement assumes, but does not define, a definition of omnibenevolence; it then turns a noun into a verb "through" demands a verbal concept in antecedence) and then uses "salvation" and "opportunity" in a fashion that again begs for clear definition.

Our counter-proposal would be:

Resolved: God Seeks to Save Every Person Equally and Without Distinction

This statement succinctly expresses the differences between us without using ambiguous terminology, grammar, or syntax.

1st Affirmative Speech: (10 minutes) uninterrupted

Cross-Examination: 4 minutes

1st Negative Speech: (10 minutes) uninterrupted

Cross Examination: 4 minutes

2nd Affirmative Speech: (10 minutes):

The first and last minute of the speech are uninterruptible.

In the 2nd-9th minutes of the speech any opposition debater may ask the speaker to yield to a question.

The speaker may accept, or decline the question.

Cross Examination: 4 minutes

2nd Negative Speech: (10 minutes):

The first and last minute of the speech are uninterruptible.

In the 2nd-9th minutes of the speech any opposition debater may ask the speaker to yield to a question.

The speaker may accept, or decline the question.

Cross Examination: 4 minutes

1st Affirmative Rebuttal: (6 minutes)

The first and last minute of the speech are uninterruptible.

In the 2nd-5th minutes of the speech any opposition debater may ask the speaker to yield to a question.

The speaker may accept, or decline the question.

Optional audience participation

Negative Rebuttal: (8 minutes): Uninterrupted

Affirmative Rebuttal: (6 minutes) Uninterrupted

Well, this would be a first for me, but as long as all time frames are equal, that's not a problem. May I first ask if Dr. O'Donnell suggested this format, or more, importantly, has had input on it?

I would like more cross-ex time, especially in light of my request for an extension of the time; and if we could get a meaningful length (three hours), this would allow for at least fifteen minute opening statements per person.

And now, at the risk of entering into another period of silence, I would like to ask the question I asked a few weeks ago now that has yet to receive an answer, though it has been asked many times.

Finally, before turning to your e-mail, I have a direct question to ask. I hope you will answer it directly. As I have thought back over our correspondence (I searched the file of our February exchange), I do not recall you ever referring to me as a Christian brother. I have addressed you in those terms multiple times. Given that you have said Calvinists are worse than Muslims, I'm wondering: do you see this upcoming debate as one between brothers in Christ? Or do you view me as a non-Christian heretic?

James>>>

Saturday, May 13, 2006

Dear Drs. White, Ascol and Pierce:

Emir and I discussed the issues at length, and then submitted them to Brett O'Donnell, for the purpose of seeing if the criticism Dr. White offered was valid, within the rules and protocols of Parliamentary debate. The result:

1. TIME: We are willing to meet halfway here. Two and one-half hours. Adjusted times are below.
2. TOPIC: The resolution we presented was, in fact, in proper format, and is perfectly acceptable for debate. Given the fact that we believe that the implications of this topic are far-reaching, we do not favor narrowing the topic. Since virtually every term used in the Calvinism debate demands definition, and that various groups interpret the classic five points differently, this is not a valid point. The topic is broad enough to be thorough, and narrow enough to limit the discussion. Will you debate or not?

Blessings:

5/13/2006 8:28 PM

Dr. Ergun Mehmet Caner wrote:

Saturday, May 13, 2006

Dear Drs. White, Ascol and Pierce:

Emir and I discussed the issues at length, and then submitted them to Brett O'Donnell, for the purpose of seeing if the criticism Dr. White offered was valid, within the rules and protocols of Parliamentary debate. The result:

1. TIME: We are willing to meet halfway here. Two and one-half hours. Adjusted times are below.

Greetings once again.

I am now cc'ing Dr. O'Donnell as he will be moderating.

In Ergun Caner's sermon at the Thomas Road Baptist Church just a few weeks ago he was heard to bemoan the brevity of time available to address such an important issue. I noted at the time my complete agreement. And in the following e-mails Dr. Caner agreed with me. No matter how much time is allotted, it will surely not be enough. But, sufficient time must be allotted to show respect for the topic, respect for the Word, respect for the audience, respect for the debaters.

The statement provided above tells me that in essence you are in control of the time allotment of the debate. By saying you will meet us "halfway" here, that means you want a short debate of two hours. We want three hours. Evidently, you could arrange for a three hour debate, but are unwilling to do so. Am I correct in reading your words in this fashion? If so, could you explain your unwillingness to allow for the length of debate I have had in debating Roman Catholics on purgatory, for example, or men like John Dominic Crossan on the reliability of the gospels? Do you feel the audience would not last through three hours, but would last through thirty minutes less? Do you feel the topic is too simple to require three hours? Do you feel all the biblical interaction that needs to be done on the doctrine of salvation itself can be done in that time frame? I just want to be able to explain, when people say, "There wasn't enough time to get into the meat of the matter!" just what your reasoning was, since honestly, I cannot begin to understand it. If your case is so strong and compelling, would you not wish to have enough time to not only enunciate it, but engage in meaningful interaction, showing from the biblical text the many errors of Calvinism? I know I personally could spend the majority of my time delving into the depths of John 6 and Ephesians 1 and Romans 9. If you feel you can explain to the students and others gathered why you want to allot less time for four men to speak to the subject of the gospel than Biola allotted for two men, one a Muslim, to address the inspiration of the New Testament, could you share that explanation with us now? I truly look forward to it.

2. TOPIC: The resolution we presented was, in fact, in proper format, and is perfectly acceptable for debate. Given the fact that we believe that the implications of this topic are far-reaching, we do not favor narrowing the topic. Since virtually every term used in the Calvinism debate demands definition, and that various groups interpret the classic five points differently, this is not a valid point. The topic is broad enough to be thorough, and narrow enough to limit the discussion. Will you debate or not?

The question, Dr. Caner, has never been our willingness to debate. I have approached you seeking just that for quite some time, as you will recall. The question is whether a meaningful and edifying debate is being sought by both sides. I am fully confident of the truth on these issues. I am not nearly as confident of the desire of all involved to allow for a full airing of the biblical and historical evidence.

Dr. Caner, could you please explain your proposed thesis statement to me? As I noted before, I do not understand it. I read it on The Dividing Line and my audience could not understand it, either. Perhaps we are just not as well trained in theology as you are, but I raised some particular questions about it, and you did not answer them. Let me try again.

Resolved: That God is an Omnibenevolent God to all of humanity through salvation and opportunity.
We shall take the affirmative.

I honestly have no idea what this thesis statement means since it is ambiguous both on grammatical and lexical grounds. Surely this can be expressed with sufficient clarity to allow for honest discussion. This statement assumes, but does not define, a definition of omnibenevolence; it then turns a noun into a verb (“through” demands a verbal concept in antecedence) and then uses “salvation” and “opportunity” in a fashion that again begs for clear definition.

Should that not be clear, I will expand. Please explain what you mean by “God is an Omnibenevolent God to all of humanity.” “To” all humanity involves verbal action. Saying God is an Omnibenevolent God is a statement of fact, not of action. You could say “God shows Himself to be omnibenevolent” through certain actions, for example, but once again, that is a different statement. Neither side questions God’s omnibenevolence. Both sides differ on how omnibenevolence manifests itself and how omnibenevolence is related to God’s holiness, justice, mercy, freedom, etc. But in any case, the statement is ambiguous and grammatically confusing. It only gets worse, however, when we continue. “. . .through salvation and opportunity” is once again utterly ambiguous. We already have only an assumed, not a stated, verbal concept in “to all of humanity,” and that ambiguity is only accentuated by the term “through.” Through what? Through salvation? How is an unstated verbal concept, expressed, evidently, “to all of humanity” done “through salvation”? Are you going to defend universalism? That all will be saved? Of course not, though, I would argue, your thesis statement would be significantly more relevant to a universalist. But it only gets worse. “Opportunity” is left hanging in mid-air. One cannot define it in light of salvation, one cannot define it in light of “through,” one cannot define it in light of an unstated verbal concept assumed in the first portion of the statement.

In sum, gentlemen, the thesis statement does not even look like it was written in English. It looks like it was written in another language and translated into English mechanically. It is ambiguous because it is not good English. It is unclear because it is poorly constructed. If I encountered this sentence in a paper submitted to me for grading it would mark it “awk” and ask for a re-write.

Once again, the thesis statement, “*God Seeks to Save Every Person Equally and Without Distinction*” is clear. It introduces no ambiguities. It is written in proper English. Do you not affirm this statement? I deny this statement. It can be affirmed, or denied, without special pleading or two paragraphs of definitional statements. If you insist upon your thesis statement, I cannot stop you, nor will I allow it to prevent our debate from taking place. But I will make it very plain to everyone who will listen that I did all I could to explain that the thesis being offered was untenable and unworkable, and I will make it clear that I offered this very clear thesis statement, one that sets out the issues with far more clarity without any undue limitations.

Now, evidently, the following question was missed in your reading of my response. I will repeat it again: May I first ask if Dr. O’Donnell suggested this [i.e., the Parliamentary] format, or more, importantly, has had input on it? As Dr. O’Donnell is now included in the cc list I will ask his input on this point. I wish to ask about the ability to engage in cross-examination and especially seek clarification regarding the asking of questions, the nature of said questions, time-frames, etc., in the proposed format. Could Dr. O’Donnell refer us to a text book/rule book that he will be using in moderating this format? I would like to be able to obtain such a resource. Thank you.

I look forward to hearing back from you all.

James>>>>

5/13/2006 8:40 PM

Gentlemen:

As you know (Dr. O'Donnell is new to our group) I have asked, repeatedly, a particular question, prompted by our interaction over the course of the past few months. I believe I have now asked it at least half a dozen times. I repeat it yet again:

As I have thought back over our correspondence (I searched the file of our February exchange), I do not recall you ever referring to me as a Christian brother. I have addressed you in those terms multiple times. Given that you have said Calvinists are worse than Muslims, I'm wondering: do you see this upcoming debate as one between brothers in Christ? Or do you view me as a non-Christian heretic?

There is no possibility, of course, that you have missed this question. It has been repeated in your sight over and over again. You have chosen to not answer it.

Now, as I have considered this, I have had to come to the conclusion that this can only mean that you do not, in fact, consider me as your brother in Christ. In fact, it seems painfully clear that you do, in fact, view me as a non-Christian heretic. While Ergun's "Calvinists are worse than Muslims" statement could be excused as a flash of anger said in haste, the repeated, willful, knowing refusal on the part of both of you to respond to this simple, honest question, can only mean one thing: you do not, in fact, view me as your brother in Christ. You reject my profession of faith and my Christian ministry, all on the basis of my being a vocal Calvinist who is willing to defend his beliefs and promote his faith in every context.

However, before I publicly announce that this is how you are viewing the upcoming debate (over against my acceptance of your profession of faith, and how, in point of fact, this would mean you are taking the very position hyper-Calvinists take, only in reverse!), I give you one last opportunity to respond to this honest question. I can't believe any Christian would continuously ignore my question. I have never been treated in such a manner in all of my encounters prior to my fifty-nine other moderated, public debates. If I am wrong in coming to this conclusion, now is your opportunity to not only say so, but to offer an explanation of why my question has been willfully and, it seems, spitefully, ignored for many weeks now. I await your reply.

James>>>

14 May 2006

Dear Dr. White, Ascol, Pierce and O'Donnell:

1. **TIME:** You wanted three hours and we wanted two hours. We *compromised* on two and one-half hours. Perhaps it will force you to prepare better, and make the discussion more focused. It will certainly make a better debate. Brett O'Donnell was asked about this, and he concurred.

2. **DEBATE:** Dr. O'Donnell has noted, this is called *Long Table Parliamentary Debating*, and it is an accepted practice in academic debate. Again, as we asked Dr. O'Donnell, and he concluded that the form, time and resolution were well within the standards of academic debate, I believe we should leave it to him. After all, both sides agree that the Liberty University Director of Debate is acceptable as a moderator, and as he has won 18 national academic debate championships.

3. **TOPIC:** Emir and I have submitted the resolution to the Moderator, who found it both grammatically correct and an accepted topic. Resolutions do not define themselves, and every term can be counter-defined. That is the main issue here. Both sides may use the same terms, but vary in their definitions. We now have an independent expert source that states the topic is fair, grammatically correct and academically acceptable.

Dr. White, you stated that the topic would not be a reason to back out of the debate. So I ask again- will you debate the resolution? This is sounding more like a delaying tactic, or that you truly do not want to debate on October 16. Do you want to debate, or simply cause conflict? We met you halfway on the format. As previous emails have shown, we agree that Dr. O'Donnell, who worked on the President's preparation for the Presidential debates, is an expert source. Emir and I are willing to submit to his wisdom in these matters.

We look forward to debating you both on October 16, 2006.

Ergan

Dear Dr. Caner:

A delaying tactic? Surely you jest! Let's submit all of our correspondence on this issue to disinterested third parties and ask them for an assessment. There will no doubt be the recognition of delaying tactics, but I would be stunned if those charges were made against us. Dr. White has represented our perspective from the beginning by trying to establish a responsible format through interaction with you in a timely manner. At times it has appeared to be an exercise in futility.

Now you raising the specter that we are engaging in delaying tactics or not truly wanting to debate? This is simply laughable and leaves me wondering what your agenda is.

If you are so sold on what appears to us to be an extremely problematic thesis statement—the one that you proposed—then at least have the courtesy of explaining its meaning to us. Consider me ignorant and without ability to comprehend simple speech, if you must, but please explain your meaning. As it now stands, the most simple reading strikes me as an affirmation of universalism.

Dr. O'Donnel, since you have agreed that the thesis statement is acceptable, would you please offer me an explanation of its meaning? I am the neophyte in this group, merely a simple preacher. I have never once engaged in a formal debate. I simply preach sermons. But from my vantage point it certainly seems that an explanation of the proposed thesis is not too much to ask. Perhaps my experienced brothers have no need of this, but I assure you that I do. Surely the canons of academic debate would encourage that all participants have a clear understanding of exactly what is being debated. Since Drs. Caner are not willing to explain their meaning, and have now said that you have agreed that this is a worthy thesis to be defended, would you please help me to understand exactly what it is that I am expected to oppose?

Sincerely,

Tom

14 May 2006

Dear Dr Ascol:

Well, I am just a simple prof, but I believe the Omnibenevolence of God refers to His attribute of being "All-Loving," just as Omnipotence refers to His attribute of being "all powerful."

So, do I take it that you will debate, or not? As for a citation of universalism, perhaps you can explain that to us when we debate.

Getting into that now, of course, would negate the need for a debate, wouldn't it?

Hopefully, we will see you October 16.

Until then—

ergun

Greetings:

Once again I sit down at the keyboard in utter amazement at the twists and turns this correspondence has taken. I can honestly say in all of my years of engaging in public debate I have never encountered any future opponent who engaged in the kind of behavior one will find in reviewing the past few months of communications going back to the appearance of the Caners on the Founders blog. I cannot do anything else but shake my head in wonderment.

Delaying tactics, Dr. Caner? Delaying tactics? You go silent, rudely ignoring every e-mail sent to you, not showing the kindness or maturity to even write back, "Busy, will get to you later," and you have the temerity to say we are engaging in delaying tactics? From April 18th to May 9th you were silent. You received and ignored e-mail after e-mail. And now, only after I said I was going to start *calling your offices* do you respond. And when we ask legitimate questions about a thesis statement that is not even written in proper English grammar you say we are engaging in delaying tactics? *You cannot possibly be serious.* No rational person could examine our correspondence and come to such a conclusion. It simply is not possible. May I remind you that you are the folks who have had to be prodded along the path constantly? That we have had to take the initiative at almost every point, asking for information, asking for progress? And now that we dare ask you to provide a thesis statement in English (you didn't even care about a thesis statement last month!) that actually makes sense we are delaying something? The debate is more than five months in the future! What "delay" is going to come about by asking you to be reasonable?

I have had many people tell me that they do not believe this debate will ever happen, and that you are doing all in your power to be so completely outside the bounds of basic civil behavior as to cause Dr. Ascol and I to throw up our hands and say "forget it! This is ridiculous." I am coming to accept their thesis more and more. It makes perfect sense. If either of you actually believed you could win a truly scholarly debate wherein we together would engage the text of the Bible directly on these matters, you would not be

seeking to have the shortest debate possible with the most obtuse, ambiguous thesis statement possible. In fact, you wouldn't even have suggested the two-man format to begin with. Ergun would have challenged me to a one-on-one, 3+ hour debate with lots and lots of time to get right into the text right in front of the largest audience of Liberty students you could find. But we didn't get that, did we? I know I would be happy to do that. I would be happy to walk into every single one of your classes at Liberty, Ergun, with nothing but my Greek New Testament, and defend my position against you and all comers. There is no way on earth you would return the favor (if you say otherwise, I'll have you on the *Dividing Line* this week with equal time to go toe-to-toe on every issue you raised in your sermon. We can start with your turning the Bible upside down on Esau and work our way to your denial of original sin). One of us is confident, one of us is not. That much is painfully clear.

Let me summarize the current situation.

- 1) I have asked you question after question after question in these e-mails and you have chosen to show me the constant disrespect of ignoring them. You cannot have a meaningful conversation with someone who will not show you sufficient respect as a fellow human being to even *answer your questions*.
- 2) You clearly view me as a non-Christian heretic, which would explain at least some of your behavior (though, I must confess, I am significantly more kind to the non-Christian heretics I debate than you have ever been to me).
- 3) I have provided an in-depth critique of your non-English thesis statement. You have not provided the first bit of defense of it. I do not believe you can do so. You are insisting upon using a thesis statement that can only make any person with meaningful English grammar and syntax skills chuckle. *I will not allow that to derail the debate*. But I will expose it for all to see starting this week on my programs and blog, and make sure everyone knows that one side has offered a plain, clear, unambiguous thesis statement, and one side insists upon using one that would make better grammatical sense in Tongan. I will allow you to explain that to folks. Since the statement makes no sense, and can be interpreted in any number of ways, I will just say, "I think it means that God seeks to save every person equally, and here is what the Bible says about that." Feel free to invest all the time you want explaining the unexplainable to folks. You wrote it, you can live with it. I wouldn't want my name attached to such a theological and grammatical monstrosity, but as they say, to each his own.
- 4) You refuse to allow for a full-length debate. Just admit it. You cannot give the slightest defense of keeping the debate as short as possible. We are not asking for an all-night marathon. But you are asking people to travel to hear sound bites when they want to hear both sides engaging the text of the Word of God. Once again, one side wants the issues fully addressed, one side does not. If you are willing to say, "The Caners do not believe there is sufficient material to warrant a three hour debate" then fine, just say it. But admit that the only impediment to a full debate is your refusal to allow it, nothing more. *We want it*. You do not. Let's be honest.

Now, I have asked Dr. O'Donnell for clarification and information. I assume he has not had opportunity to keep up with e-mails over the weekend. I will await his responses. This is not called delaying, Ergun. It is called asking for necessary information.

Next, I renew my request for a three hour debate. If you refuse, fine: it will be your call, and I am going to be making *everything* known to any and all who wish to know who has acted in fairness and uprightness in this matter and who has not. That is the Christian way. Open and above board. Nothing secret. Let the broad body of believers judge between us.

Next, as I noted above, I renew all the preceding questions I have asked that you have chosen to ignore regarding the grammar and syntax of your proposed thesis statement. Since it sounds like a defense of universalism, you might start by explaining how it isn't. Then you can get to each of the specific issues I have enumerated and which you have ignored. If you continue to ignore them, this will simply be your admission that you cannot answer the questions. This will be proof that you are insisting upon an ambiguous, confusing thesis statement *on purpose*. Once again, I will allow the broad body of believers to judge what your motivations for such an action would be.

It is time to put all of this out in the light, gentlemen. This conversation should be taking place before all those who are so desirous of seeing this debate take place. If you were having to act this way before a watching world...well, that might provide some semblance of restraint. I am going to be discussing all of this on my blog and the *Dividing Line*. My phone is open. If you can point to anything I have done wrong in our correspondence, you can call toll free, 877-753-3341 and address my entire listening audience. We will gladly give you all the opportunity to make your case. But you won't call, because you know I have been up front from the start.

I look forward to hearing from Dr. O'Donnell.

James>>>>

Dr. Ergun Mehmet Caner wrote:

15 May 2006

Drs. White, Ascol and Pierce:

Reading your response to our e-mail, Emir and I do not see you offering any objection to the debate under the stated stipulations. We are pleased that the debate shall continue as scheduled. We look forward to seeing and speaking to you on the evening of October 16, 2006.

I.e., "We refuse to reason with you, answer your questions, or act like adults in this matter."

I do hope Dr. O'Donnell will be kind enough to respond to the direct questions sent to him.

A contract providing full distribution rights of the video tapes needs to be forwarded to Richard Pierce asap.

The entirety of this correspondence, documenting your behavior and your unwillingness to answer direct questions, etc., will be posted on the web as soon as possible. Let the truth be known. It is striking.

James>>>
