

Third "Round" of e-mails, 6/21/06 (with addition of Ergun Caner's response and my reply written after this initial posting, 6pm, 6/22/06, followed by the exchange from 6/23/06).

As these e-mails continue the previous, and include a great deal of important information relating to our continued quest to provide a meaningful debate on October 16th, they are provided here for all those interested in full disclosure, openness, and honesty. As you will see in this series, the importance of providing this documentation publicly is now becoming all the more clear.

June 21, 2006

James,

First, let me say that even in negotiating the debate rules for the Bush-Cheney campaign with the Kerry campaign never did I experience such unprofessional decorum. I am disappointed that Christians can't conduct negotiations for a theological debate in a less poisonous atmosphere than you have displayed than I have witnessed between any of the political campaigns for which I have worked. Publicly blogging on this issue is unnecessary and unprofessional. It has been the main reason I have been reticent to respond to your e-mails. You have differences with the Caners. They invited you to debate here. We should be able to civilly work out the details for such a debate without grandstanding and name-calling. It is extremely poor form.

Now as to the substance of your concerns. There is no rulebook for the format. I proposed a format traditionally known as "long-table parliamentary" debating that I believe fairly allows both sides to make arguments and respond to each others' positions. That format was supplied to you in detail from Ergun Caner. The format allows for formal cross-examination to take place, a series of speeches in which each side can make their own arguments and respond to those made by the other side. Additionally, the format allows for some of the speeches to be interrupted or suspended by the other side in order to flush out a particular idea or argument more fully when it is made. I think that allows for sufficient interaction. The debate you wanted was for three hours. I suggested a compromise since that is too long for most audiences to sustain (I believe either side would have a hard time convincing an audience anywhere to attend a three hour debate). The rulebook I will use is fairness. I will allow both sides equal time and make sure that both have a fair hearing before the audience. If you have specific questions about the format beyond that of a substantive nature than you should ask them, but ask them professionally. I won't respond to e-mails that have latent straw man, red herring or ad hominem attacks in them. (For example, the sarcasms below about why I haven't responded). The people I work with and against in the political work I do conduct themselves accordingly and I would expect nothing less from a Christian, even in negotiating the terms of a theological debate.

Second, the resolution. I think this is much ado about nothing. I think you and the Caners know the stasis points of your arguments so the resolution only serves as a starting point. The fact that the terms are ambiguous is exactly what debate is all about. Since you both disagree theologically, you will never agree on a terminology for a resolution. The debate can serve to allow both sides to have their chance at defining the terms, that is how it should play out. I would question whether or not either of your proposed resolutions has a clear defined scope so lets let the debate define the territory and I think everyone will benefit. Changing the resolution won't change what arguments either side wishes to advance and I think that the resolution Dr. Caner proposes is intriguing enough to draw an audience to the debate to hear what both sides have to say. That said, I am not a theologian and so I left that part of the controversy for you all to sort out.

I assure you I will be fair. I don't think how you have handled this situation to this point has been, that is why I have stayed out of the fray. I am not interested in my name showing up on a google search

in the content of a blog where my good name is being ripped to shreds over a debate of which I am not a party. Additionally, my time is extremely taxed. I am working on four political campaigns and most importantly, need to worry about my duties here at Liberty as the Director of Debate. I am happy to moderate and will be fair to both sides and advise both sides about how to handle the format of the debate, but am not interested in working with either party in an atmosphere where individuals won't conduct themselves professionally.

Brett O'Donnell
Director of Debate
Liberty University

Greetings Dr. O'Donnell:

It is good to finally hear from you. I confess it is hard to get started on good ground given that I have in essence had to beg to get a response, but there is nothing we can do about that now.

I would like to address a number of points.

First, I agree. I have never seen such unprofessionalism in my life. I have engaged in nearly sixty moderated, public debates on a tremendously wide range of theological issues. I have debated Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, a wide, wide range of garden-variety heretics, atheists, secularists---and never in sixteen years of that activity have I had anyone make setting up a single debate so difficult, so time-consuming, so rancorous. Never. We are currently scheduling debates with John Shelby Spong, the notorious heretical former bishop of Newark, and that has been *simple* in comparison to this. It has been easier to arrange debates for next year in another *country* with a Muslim at various venues coordinating Muslims and Christians than it has been to get Ergun and Emir Caner to communicate with us in a clear, timely fashion about basic issues. Never in all my years have I had people simply "go silent" and refuse to even have the common courtesy to answer an e-mail with, "I'm real busy, I'll get to you as soon as I can." Never. I will put my travel, teaching, debating, and publishing schedule up against anyone else's, and still, I have responded to the "other side" in a timely fashion each and every time.

I am further utterly amazed at the fact that I have even had to consider preparations for a debate some kind of super-secret "private" thing. This is a public debate. It was announced by Ergun Caner even before the invitation was provided to me. Once that announcement was made, it was a public event and if there are going to be problems in making it happen the same public that wants it to happen should know who has bent over backwards to make it happen and who has been doing just the opposite. I should never, ever have had to make these issues known in a public forum for there should never, ever have been "issues" to begin with. I can demonstrate my long history of arranging scholarly, edifying, respectful debates with a very wide variety of opponents. I have asked Ergun Caner for information on how I might obtain his debates, and was initially ignored, and eventually was told they were not in the "big time" anyway, whatever that was supposed to mean. The fact of the matter is I have absolutely nothing to hide, and I believe it is not "professionalism" of any sort to engage in the kind of behavior documented by the hard evidence and then seek to keep that hidden from the public eye.

Finally, Dr. O'Donnell, I would like to point out that what you evidently identified as sarcasm in my e-mail was the last vestiges of my hopes that you could function as a fair and unbiased moderator. There simply is no reason, sir, for making us wait thirty seven days for the kindness of a response. None. My schedule is just as busy as yours. You could have responded weeks ago. You chose not to. You forced me to write to you repeatedly. This is professionalism? We seem to differ on that definition of the term, just as we seem to differ on the definition of *ad-hominem*, of which you will be

hard pressed to document your allegation that I was engaging in it as well. You and I both know the formal definition of that phrase, sir, and hence you know it is unfair to accuse me of having engaged in it. And, if you wish to use a much looser definition of the term, I do hope you will apply that definition to both sides, and go back over Ergun Caner's e-mails as well in the process. Fair is fair, is it not?

And lastly before getting to the debate issues, you raised the fact that Christians should be able to arrange a debate in a much better atmosphere. I agree. But I remind you, Ergun Caner has yet to answer a simple question put to him repeatedly: am I a Christian? I accept his confession of faith. I call him a brother. He will not call me a brother. You tell me who has "poisoned" the atmosphere here, brother O'Donnell.

Now as to the substance of your concerns. There is no rulebook for the format. I proposed a format traditionally known as "long-table parliamentary" debating that I believe fairly allows both sides to make arguments and respond to each others' positions. That format was supplied to you in detail from Ergun Caner.

I'm sorry, Dr. O'Donnell, Ergun Caner did not, in fact, provide anything near sufficient detail for proposing a format that, to my knowledge, is unheard of in theological debate. I have offered to provide examples of theological debate for review, and have been consistently ignored in the offer. We just did a tremendously useful debate at Biola University with one of the leading Islamic apologists, Shabir Ally, and I assure you, the format was not a parliamentary one. In fact, in listening to dozens of his debates, and in fact in considering all of the debates I have ever heard, going back to the classic Bahnsen/Stein debate---all the debates my opponents have done as well, which would push us to over two hundred debates over the past twenty years---I have never heard this format used. I initially provided a standard format, one reflective of the nearly sixty debates I have engaged in, reflective of those done by many others who are currently active in apologetic and theological debate, but at that point I was fighting the uphill battle of even getting *any* formal format with a thesis statement to be used.

Further, surely you use formal debate texts and rulebooks in your collegiate debate work that would define the proper limitations of inquiries, etc., in this format. It would be most unwise for us to engage in an unusual format in the current context without full knowledge of established rules regarding the procedure. Since you have evidently used this format in other contexts, I would appreciate your recommendations for standardized texts/rule books that will provide us with the necessary guidelines.

The debate you wanted was for three hours. I suggested a compromise since that is too long for most audiences to sustain (I believe either side would have a hard time convincing an audience anywhere to attend a three hour debate).

And once again, I disagree, heartily, and that on the basis of nearly sixty such debates. The majority of those debates have been *over* three hours in length. Every one of The Great Debate series on Long Island has been over three hours in length. Most people *don't want them to end when they do*. I do not know what theological debates you have been involved with, Dr. O'Donnell, but the ones we do attract people from all over. I have heard of folks who want to attend this debate who would be coming from California. You do not fly from California and then complain about the debate lasting three hours. You want a lot more than three hours. And may I point out that we have four people speaking. That automatically puts a great strain upon even a three hour format to allow for a meaningful presentation and cross-examination. I have only one other time done such a two-on-two format, at Boston College, and that debate was 3:20 in length. And...no one left.

The rulebook I will use is fairness.

That is great to know, but I'd like something a little more substantive which I can study beforehand.

Shall I simply assume that I will be able to make reference to those texts produced by John Meany on parliamentary debate as "standard" and the format to which you have pledged yourself to be fair and impartial?

I will allow both sides equal time and make sure that both have a fair hearing before the audience. If you have specific questions about the format beyond that of a substantive nature than you should ask them, but ask them professionally. I won't respond to e-mails that have latent straw man, red herring or ad hominem attacks in them. (For example, the sarcasms below about why I haven't responded). The people I work with and against in the political work I do conduct themselves accordingly and I would expect nothing less from a Christian, even in negotiating the terms of a theological debate

As noted above, I reject the false accusation of sarcasm (I honestly wished to hold out any and all possibilities to explain your unwillingness to answer simple questions---I could not believe anyone would act in such a fashion, so there had to be some reason) and I challenge you to document the presence of ad hominem. Thank you. I do hope that you, likewise, will respond in a timely fashion as well, sir.

I am certain that there will be a number of questions to be handled in reference to the proper format of the interrogatives.

Second, the resolution. I think this is much ado about nothing. I think you and the Caners know the stasis points of your arguments so the resolution only serves as a starting point. The fact that the terms are ambiguous is exactly what debate is all about. Since you both disagree theologically, you will never agree on a terminology for a resolution. The debate can serve to allow both sides to have their chance at defining the terms, that is how it should play out. I would question whether or not either of your proposed resolutions has a clear defined scope so lets let the debate define the territory and I think everyone will benefit. Changing the resolution won't change what arguments either side wishes to advance and I think that the resolution Dr. Caner proposes is intriguing enough to draw an audience to the debate to hear what both sides have to say. That said, I am not a theologian and so I left that part of the controversy for you all to sort out.

Once again, Dr. O'Donnell, I wish to make sure I properly understand what you are saying. It is your opinion that an ambiguous thesis statement that is not even grammatically sound is the best thing to have for a good debate? This is a completely new concept to me. Just today we were working with a well known scholar, an opponent of biblical Christianity, on making sure we have a clear, unambiguous thesis statement. It has always been a major part of setting up our debates to provide a clear, concise, understandable thesis statement, not only for the sake of the debaters, but those in attendance as well.

But if it is the intention of one side to force such an ambiguous thesis statement upon us, I will let everyone know right now that I will identify it for what it is, will note that it could be used by a unitarian universalist to defend his viewpoint, and will focus upon the real issue, that being whether God seeks to save each and every individual equally.

I assure you I will be fair. I don't think how you have handled this situation to this point has been, that is why I have stayed out of the fray. I am not interested in my name showing up on a google search in the content of a blog where my good name is being ripped to shreds over a debate of which I am not a party. Additionally, my time is extremely taxed. I am working on four political campaigns and most importantly, need to worry about my duties here at Liberty as the Director of Debate. I am happy to moderate and will be fair to both sides and advise both sides about how to handle the format of the debate, but am not

interested in working with either party in an atmosphere where individuals won't conduct themselves professionally.

All of us are quite busy, Dr. O'Donnell, and I, for one, do not wish to take any more of your time. I do not believe you should be forced to even be involved, as you do not seem to have any interest in doing so. I am certain other moderators could be obtained in the time frame we have if you do not wish to be involved. I have had moderators in past debates who seemed to want to be anywhere but there, and it did not help the debate at all. So I, for one, believe you should be given the clear freedom to focus upon your other duties and not take on this task should that be your desire.

James>>>

Dear James:

My goodness. It takes something for Emir to call me in the summer, just to draw my attention to an e-mail. I will do this quickly:

1. The debate which you demanded, and we agreed to, was settled in February.
2. We provided the format, the issue for resolution, and even the location.
3. All you have to do is show up.
4. The reason this has been so difficult is because you didn't like it, and could not manipulate it.
5. If you do not have the ability to prepare for this debate, fine. I care not how many debates you have had. This is a debate to which we agreed. Back out, and admit failure, or simply come to the debate. Neither Emir nor I have any plans to allow you to manipulate this debate to your advantage. This is level ground, so I assume this will be new for you.
6. Further, simply sending an e-mail does not require a response. I receive SPAM daily. Your voluminous e-mails do not demand response. I receive countless letters and e-mails every day. Whether I respond or not is entirely within my purview, and fitting the demands of my schedule. If you have the ability to respond to your e-mail list daily, wonderful. That is not my concern.
7. Finally, since you have chosen (ironically, by your own free will) to publish everything in this exchange, I treat your e-mails like a *Gossip Column*, only written to draw the attention of your cadre.
8. The debate is October 16. Not June. Not July. I have absolutely no reason to engage in your meanderings FOUR months prior to the debate. It is simply ONE item, on ONE date, on my calendar. This is not the Council of Constance. I will not be drawn into some delusional drama. It is just a debate. Come to it, or don't. I have a full time job, and a family. Liberty University has become the largest Christian university in the world. Under the direction of our Chancellor, we have much to do, and very little time. The important things shall be done first.

In any case, I assure you that Emir and I will go to a library, read up on this debate style, and shall be prepared.

Emc

One Final Note, Dr. White;

I was amused by your statement that we have acted in an "unprofessional" manner.

I file that under the "pot calling the kettle" category.

Christian gentlemen do not publish private correspondence, or whine on their websites when they do not get their way.

emc

Dr. Ergun Mehmet Caner wrote:

Dear James:

My goodness. It takes something for Emir to call me in the summer, just to draw my attention to an e-mail. I will do this quickly:

1. The debate which you demanded, and we agreed to, was settled in February.

The debate you had declined many times, but finally accepted, was discussed, after a long period of silence on your part, in February. Many of the issues related thereto are still very much on the table, and only one side has shown any willingness to seek to make progress in that discussion. One side has simply demanded the adoption of a format that has not been used in theological debates (if it has, please point me to examples of it that I can listen to/and or watch). One side has offered, repeatedly, to provide examples of theological debate from a wealth of personal experience. One side has always responded promptly to correspondence. Let's let the facts speak for themselves, shall we, gentlemen? This is one of the reasons I have published our correspondence: when one side has been doing all it can to scuttle the debate, it is a certainty that they will likewise blame the other for any problems. As a Christian, seeking to engage in theological debate for the benefit of the people of God, I believe the people of God should have knowledge of what is going on. If this debate does not happen, or if it takes place in a format less usable to them, they need to know why, and they need to know who was responsible. Wouldn't you agree? Or do you think these things should be kept secret, out of the way, so that all the people can see is two sides blaming the other?

No, brothers, you represent a movement which seeks to rewrite history, avoid biblical exegesis (Esau--that's all I need to say), and, I firmly believe, rob God of His glory in the salvation of His people, and I have simply sought to invite you to stand before your own audience and engage these issues in a scholarly fashion on the basis of the inspired and inerrant Word of God. I am fully confident of the outcome if we are actually allowed to engage the text directly. I personally believe a tremendous amount of effort is being put forward to avoid allowing that to happen to any great degree, and I believe that the semi-impartial or even semi-fair minded observer will see the same things I am seeing.

2. We provided the format, the issue for resolution, and even the location.

Excuse me, but outside of the location, format and resolution is something both sides are supposed to agree to, sir. You have provided an incoherent resolution that while humorous to most who have tried to make heads or tails out of it, is simply useless; you have likewise demanded, not "provided," a format that is not used for theological debates. Why? I can provide you with nearly five dozen examples of theological debates I have done, and more from others in recent years. Why adopt a different format, Dr. Caner? Do you not wish to engage in direct, biblically based, scholarly cross-examination of me? Do you not wish to be able to demonstrate the consistency of your position as I question you on the basis of the inspired text itself? Why adopt a format different than what is being used commonly in these contexts today? It makes no sense *unless* you are seeking simply to have the ability to engage in a "sound-bite" exchange rather than a true debate that gets down to the revelation of God in Scripture.

As to location, yes, you "provided" that. I have offered to stand before your own students to engage the text of the Bible more than once.

3. All you have to do is show up.

We have to do much more than that, sir. We have to agree to the video taping of the debate and the distribution of the unedited masters. We have to address the issue of fair and impartial moderation and the proper format.

4. The reason this has been so difficult is because you didn't like it, and could not manipulate it.

Or, we have a different situation. We have one individual, yourself, who on his personal website promotes himself as one who has done more than sixty debates. Where are those sixty debates, Ergun? I have asked many times, you have avoided answering, many times. Let me take a wild guess: you are including as "debates" things like the Ankerberg show, or radio or television interviews, and the like. Those are not debates, and we both know that. If I included such things in my list of debates it would be *massive*. But I do not. I include only...debates. And when it comes to debates, Dr. Caner, I have twenty times your experience. I know what makes a debate useful to the audience: interaction. Cross-examination. Clear opening presentations, and then meaningful interaction. I can prove this. It isn't even up for discussion. You are seeking to avoid that. You do not want to be asked about Esau. You don't want to have to deal with the syntactical relationship of "gives" and "come" in John 6:37.

I do not need to manipulate the debate format. I want complete fairness and equality. I have sixty debates proving it. Where are yours? If you are going to accuse me of manipulation, sir, back that accusation up from the facts. You cannot do so. It is not manipulation to seek to have a debate of sufficient length to allow all four men to make their points with clarity. It is not manipulation to ask for cross-examination so that we do not simply have competing presentations. So please, bear witness to this "manipulation."

5. If you do not have the ability to prepare for this debate, fine. I care not how many debates you have had. This is a debate to which we agreed. Back out, and admit failure, or simply come to the debate. Neither Emir nor I have any plans to allow you to manipulate this debate to your advantage. This is level ground, so I assume this will be new for you.

What an incredible statement! Ability to prepare for the debate? Are you seriously suggesting that asking Dr. O'Donnell for rule books for an unusual format that you have *demand*ed to be used shows a lack of preparation on *my* part? You must be kidding!

Now you see why I am being completely transparent and public from now on. I knew it would not be long before you started talking about "backing out" or "admitting failure" in relationship to your own incredible behavior in this situation. That is why I will be responding to every single note regarding this debate from now on in public first. Let the readers see what you are saying and how you are behaving.

I challenge you, Ergun Caner, to document "manipulation" in this situation regarding the debate format, and I demand you document it in any debate I have done in the past. We both know you cannot do so and this challenge will, like so many in the past, go unanswered. In fact, I would be

willing to wager that you have never even *watched* any of my previous debates, including those I have done against Islamic apologists. Your accusation is nothing but slanderous, and it is false. Withdraw it, or document it.

6. Further, simply sending an e-mail does not require a response. I receive SPAM daily. Your voluminous e-mails do not demand response. I receive countless letters and e-mails every day. Whether I respond or not is entirely within my purview, and fitting the demands of my schedule. If you have the ability to respond to your e-mail list daily, wonderful. That is not my concern.

Yes, we have seen how much respect you have shown in this situation, Dr. Caner. You sent me a dozen e-mails in one day, if I may remind you. I replied to every single one. I do not liken your correspondence to spam. I allow the reader to determine what it says when you make this kind of statement. Besides, it is one thing to take a day or two to respond. You went silent for a month. Let's keep the facts in sight, shall we? Thankfully, those facts are in the public domain, where they belong.

7. Finally, since you have chosen (ironically, by your own free will) to publish everything in this exchange, I treat your e-mails like a *Gossip Column*, only written to draw the attention of your cadre.

Again, this speaks volumes, Dr. Caner, and it amazes me that you do not realize it.

8. The debate is October 16. Not June. Not July. I have absolutely no reason to engage in your meanderings FOUR months prior to the debate. It is simply ONE item, on ONE date, on my calendar. This is not the Council of Constance. I will not be drawn into some delusional drama. It is just a debate. Come to it, or don't. I have a full time job, and a family. Liberty University has become the largest Christian university in the world. Under the direction of our Chancellor, we have much to do, and very little time. The important things shall be done first.

I.e., "Show up on our grounds, with our rules, with our format, with our incoherent thesis statement, or don't. We will not reason with you, we will not respect you, we will not talk to you. Our ball, our playground, live with it."

In any case, I assure you that Emir and I will go to a library, read up on this debate style, and shall be prepared.

Classic! You admit you have never used this format either! Amazing! And it truly seems that you have no idea how this demonstrates that *you are manipulating the format*, the very thing you have falsely accused me of doing!

One Final Note, Dr. White;

I was amused by your statement that we have acted in an "unprofessional" manner.

I file that under the "pot calling the kettle" category.

Christian gentlemen do not publish private correspondence, or whine on their websites when they do not get their way.

And our readers, sir, can now see the wisdom, and indeed, the necessity, of my having done so. Your false accusations, rewriting of history, and clear attempt to manipulate the facts, was a concern of mine. I truly hoped I was wrong. I truly hoped for better from someone in your position. But, I have been doing this longer than you have. And I've learned a few things over those years. I am very glad that not only is our past correspondence in the public eye, but this is as well. I will trust God's people to see who has done every single thing in his power to try to make 10/16 a day that is focused solely upon God's truth to the benefit of the church.

Well, Dr. Caner, though I had, in my worst moments, considered that this was indeed your mindset and your purpose, I had never expected to receive written confirmation of it. But you have provided it anyway. I am simply amazed.

OK, evidently, you are saying the following:

1. This is our house. We will do what we please.
2. We choose the format. Tough if you don't like it. Tough if nobody uses it in theological debates. Tough if it doesn't allow for meaningful and extensive cross-examination like you do with others. We don't want that anyway.
3. We choose the thesis statement. We will not answer your questions about it. We will not respond to the fact that it could just as easily be used by a universalist. Tough. We like ambiguity. Live with it.
4. We would rather behave like this in private, please.
5. If you don't like it, go away. Otherwise, show up. It's not important to us. We are part of the biggest university around and you are no more important than spam anyway.

Seems like a fairly good summary to me.

Well, nice to have that all out in the open. In some ways, the debate, for many, has already been decided. You just don't seem to see it. Not the first time, I assure you.

OK, given this, let me respond.

- 1) We will show up. But we will not be alone. We will have what I might call a "back up moderator" on the front row. He will have expertise in parliamentary debate. He will have a timer. He will make sure the time frames are being kept fairly for both sides. And if there are any questions concerning moderatorial action, I will call upon him for input. As long as fairness takes place, no one will even need to know he is there.
- 2) Rich Pierce will be forwarding to you information on a contract regarding the video taping of this debate. This material was drawn up by our attorneys after the Barry Lynn debate wherein he attempted to suppress the distribution of the video tape of our debate on homosexuality through legal means. It gives full and unhindered freedom to both sides to distribute the unedited video and audio of the debate as they see fit without any claims by the other side.
- 3) Rich Pierce and others will wish to speak to those at Liberty who will be involved in the audio and video production to ensure redundancy and back up measures to make sure the recording is not accidentally lost or erased or damaged or anything else. We may well need to arrange for a backup recording procedure using our own personnel, just to be sure.
- 4) Use whatever incoherent thesis statement you wish. I will be debating the topic, "God Seeks to Save Every Person Equally and Without Distinction." This is what you believe, this is where we differ, and unlike your proposed statement, *this one makes sense*. You may spend all the very brief time you have explaining your thesis statement. Knock yourself out. :-)

5) We will let anyone and everyone know, "We wanted cross-examination wherein the text of Scripture could be closely examined. The Caners did not. We wanted a minimum of three hours. The Caners wanted two, as they did not think you could sit still for three hours." This correspondence and accompanying documentation will remain available for any and all to read and judge for themselves.

I assure you, Dr. Caner, we will be more than ready for October 16th. But it seems we have a different reason for looking forward to that date. Brushing up on an obtuse and unusual debate format is not the issue. A good debater can adjust to a less than useful situation. The reason will be this: we will have the opportunity, as brief as it is (by your choice) to talk about the freedom of the King of the Universe to rule over His creation that night. We will be able to talk about a perfect Savior, a powerful Savior, who never fails, and who is worthy of our worship. We will get to contrast a presentation that is solidly rooted in the exegesis of the text of the inspired and inerrant Word of God with that which is based upon emotional appeals, straw-men, and the revision of history itself. And we will get to trust the Spirit of God to make His truth to come alive in the hearts of young men and women (and maybe a few old folks like us!) for we will challenge those folks to make that night a starting point, nothing more. A starting point from which they must move in their study of God's Word. We will challenge them not to be content with man's shallow traditions. We will challenge them to struggle hard with God's truth, trusting that the Holy Spirit did not reveal anything in the Word in vain. We will challenge them to not accept the whitewashing of entire texts, like Romans 8-9, or John 6. And we can trust God's Spirit to light a flame in the hearts of His people. That's why we will look forward to that evening.

So once again, I present this to the people of God. As a minister who stands before those people I have been open and honest in seeking to carry out my ministry to their benefit in this situation, and I will do so, despite the roadblocks you have forced upon us.

Please be looking for Mr. Pierce's correspondence on the video taping/recording issues. His e-mail will not be spam, and should not be treated as spam, and should be responded to in a timely fashion. Thank you, and we will see you on the 16th of October.

James>>>

James:

Dr. White, as one who debates so often, you should know- *attempting to change the topic of debate is a concession of defeat*. I am thrilled you have posted your response. We have apparently found one of the many topics that are the hyper Calvinist's weakness.

And thank you for proving my thesis concerning manipulation.

We shall be there, Oct 16, to debate the stated topic.

Emir, please make sure we post these interchanges as well. I keep getting e-mails from his own camp, confused by his stance.

emc

Dr. White, as one who debates so often, you should know- *attempting to change the topic of debate is a concession of defeat*. I am thrilled you have posted your response. We

have apparently found one of the many topics that are the hyper Calvinist's weakness.

Dear Dr. Caner:

Yes, changing the topic normally is such an indication. Of course, what confuses me, and anyone else, is how you could possibly read what I sent to you and think that I am changing the topic. Your thesis statement has been demonstrated to be incoherent. You have refused to respond to any of the criticisms I have offered of it. Given that you have had plenty of time to do so, I can only conclude that you do not, in fact, have the ability to respond to the questions asked of you regarding your statement.

Next, I have offered a plain, clear statement that directly addresses the difference between your synergistic system wherein God tries, but fails, to save each and every human being, and my monergistic stance wherein God "works all things in accordance with the counsel of His will" and saves every single one of those the Father gives to the Son through the perfect work of the Son on Calvary and the perfect work of the Spirit who brings spiritual life to those who are spiritually dead at the exact time the divine Trinity determines. Everyone knows this is the issue, and to say that focusing upon whether God seeks to save every individual equally or whether He has an elect people chosen solely by His good pleasure is *changing* the topic of a debate on Calvinism only shows, once again, sir, that you *have no idea what you've been preaching against all along*.

Finally, as it has been proven, repeatedly, your dishonest use of the term "hyper-Calvinism" is a canard, and to be honest, much more of an indication of "defeat" than an accurate representation of the difference between monergism and synergism. I am once again left simply speechless by such a retort. Given that you are the man who stood before thousands of people and television cameras and turned Romans 9:11-13 on its head, preaching the most incredible example of eisegesis I think I've ever heard, I truly wonder if you have applied the same kind of eisegetical reading skills on the e-mail you received (and to which, evidently, you have no meaningful response?).

And thank you for proving my thesis concerning manipulation.

Given that you do not offer any foundation for your statement, I will have to take this as an indication that you cannot provide evidence of "manipulation," and admit such.

We shall be there, Oct 16, to debate the stated topic.

Whatever it means. :-) I.e., "We demand this thesis statement. We will not explain it. We will not defend its awkward phrasing, its ambiguity, the fact that it could actually be used by heretics. It is our thesis statement. We demand you use it, or we will claim you lose!" Sorry, I can do nothing more at this point but smile. What else can be said?

Emir, please make sure we post these interchanges as well. I keep getting e-mails from his own camp, confused by his stance.

Yes, please do post them. All of them. In completeness, as you yourself requested, Dr. Caner, initially. And please send me the URLs. I'd like to have reference to them. All of mine can be found listed on my blog at www.aomin.org.

James>>>

23 June 2006

Dear Dr White:

Once again, for those who are not revising history, I have decided to respond. As a Christian and a gentleman, I do want all to know that I shall copy this e-mail to others, and will more than likely post it on all websites, as soon as I get time. Unlike others, I do not have time to spend every waking moment cyberstalking.

Emir, I will handle this one, and then I shall leave this alone. October is the time for this- not four months prior. If Dr White wants to actually debate on level ground without stomping his feet and whining, then we shall have a debate, on the topic to which we all agreed.

1. You stated that the topic has been “demonstrated to be incoherent.” Actually, the moderator, who has won almost twenty national debate championships, has noted the topic was valid. The large number of encouraging e-mails we have received have seen this as coherent. Apparently the only people who imagine the topic as incoherent are those who simply do not want to debate God’s omnibenevolence. So, if you and your people do not want to debate, simply say so. We want to debate the topic. Just because you do not LIKE the topic does not mean it is invalid. You want us to define our terms before the debate, which is illogical. Defining terms is part of the purpose of debate. I see no reason to play my cards now. The debate is in October. Not now.

2. You continue to use man-made terms that you and those of your ilk want to revise (monergism and synergism, hyper Calvinism, etc.). You continue to prove our point- MOST evangelicals, including the millions who support Dr. Falwell, do not adhere to a 16th century movement , or 17th century Dortian parameters. We use biblical terms, in the biblical context.

3. As for your continued reference to my Esau statement, *please* continue to do so. The full biblical context of Esau, and others that you can cite, is clearly in OUR court.

4. As a matter of fact, this is a perfect illustration of the debate. In our brief history:

- A. You called for the debate, speaking to your minions on your internet show.
- B. We had no desire to debate you, since Dr Geisler had already adequately answered you.
- C. You e-mailed that Dr. Geisler had NOT adequately answered you, which either illustrates your lack of clarity or blind adherence to your philosophical system of Augustinian predeterminism.
- D. Finally, I agreed, but only if you were not allowed to narrow the debate. That is your manipulation of which we are all so fond.
- E. The topic was resolved.
- F. Then you whined about the time. Even though presidential debates are shorter, you somehow believed you deserve a bigger stage.
- G. We offered the site. LU shall swallow the costs of taping. You are still not satisfied.
- H. You want to narrow the topic, to fit your liking, and lengthen the time. That is not going to happen. Debate on a level surface.

Let me quickly add that I have not seen Dr. Ascol in this same light. Even though he and I would disagree vehemently on the topic, I have found him a calm Christian gentleman. I do believe we will be able to debate fairly, across the spectrum of Calvinism and Baptist theology.

Dr. White, in Oct 1960, Nikita Khrushchev banged his shoe on the desk of the UN. He screamed “we will bury you!” His boorish behavior was followed by interrupting speakers, and loudly proclaiming his victory. I see parallels. Apparently, you believe this is all for show. That would be backed up by the fact that you cannot sneeze without posting it on your site.

James, you claim that we do not understand doctrines? Well, if that is the case, we stand in the stream of the vast majority of evangelicals who will not accept your doctrines of reprobation. In truth, we clearly understand, and we do not buy into it. We refuse to be categorized as Calvinism or Arminianism, Augustinianism or Pelagianism. I am a biblicist and a Baptist.

And neither will we be manipulated (my students call it being "punked") into a limited debate topic, or a protracted debate time.

Either come, or don't. Either debate the topic or admit you do not want to. In either case, Emir and I, and our respective schools, shall be there, on Monday, October 16, 2006, to debate the Omnibenevolence of God.

Until then, I shall just smile, every time I receive some e-mail. Every single e-mail proves our point. Neo-Calvinists cannot answer our points, so you attack us. Classic *ad hominem*. If our system of theology has brought disrepute to Christian theology, because we do not believe in neo-Calvinism, then we will gladly stand in that stream. From Norman Geisler and C.S. Lewis all the way back, we have church history, and logical biblical thought on our side.

I hope to see you October 16, 2006. And please, find your own URLs. You seem to have much more time than I do to do these things.

emc

23 June 2006

Dear Dr White:

Once again, for those who are not revising history, I have decided to respond. As a Christian and a gentleman, I do want all to know that I shall copy this e-mail to others, and will more than likely post it on all websites, as soon as I get time. Unlike others, I do not have time to spend every waking moment cyberstalking.

Dear Dr. Caner:

I confess that once again I am at a loss as to how to respond to the incredible e-mail you have just sent to me, and, since you know anything you write to me at this point on this topic will be made available to all, even to those you show such disrespect to by referring to them as "minions" or my "cadre," I must conclude that you actually believe that being dismissive and unkind toward those who teach as Spurgeon did, or as Boyce did, or as Bunyan did, is a sign of "strength" or "spirituality." You seem proud of your ability to ignore every rebuttal offered to you while dismissively accusing others falsely. I confess I do not understand the mentality, and it grieves me deeply. I am truly tired of this entire exchange, and if I were not committed to the fact that I believe God's people are blessed when His truth is proclaimed, I would have nothing further whatsoever to do with you, sir. I have sought, from the start, to engage you as a brother. You have thrown every attempt back in my face. I sought to find common ground in your work regarding Islam and my own passion for seeing the glory of Christ proclaimed to Muslims. You rejected even that. If it were not for the opportunity represented in speaking from God's Word on October 16th in Lynchburg, I would wish you well but would avoid any further contact with you, for obviously, we do what we do for very different reasons and motivations.

As those who have suffered through this saga know, you have always been very, very particular as to what portions of what is sent to you you respond to, and what you simply ignore. If it is inconvenient for you to respond to a challenge, you just ignore that the challenge was made and talk louder about

something else. Evidently this is your way of engaging in "debate." I admit that in our culture today, it is a highly effective avenue, but only if you are seeking to play to the crowd and ignore consistency and truth itself. One of us has responded fully, not because we are guilty of "cyberstalking" as you have so unkindly said, but because we happen to feel these issues demand full interaction. Unless I've missed a few items, Dr. Caner, I have written many more books than you have, and published many more articles than you have, though I am only three years older than you are. You speak about how busy you are, and I am sure you are. I am just as busy. I will be preaching this coming Lord's Day, and I surely would rather be enjoying that work of preparation right now than writing to you in response to such a disrespectful, dismissive, and non-responsive e-mail. I am speaking at the School of Theology at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London in a few weeks as well, and the task of once again demonstrating that you are seeking to do the very things you falsely accuse me of is indeed most distasteful at this time.

Emir, I will handle this one, and then I shall leave this alone. October is the time for this—not four months prior. If Dr White wants to actually debate on level ground without stomping his feet and whining, then we shall have a debate, on the topic to which we all agreed.

Dr. Caner, it would be very easy for me to drop down to this level of insulting rhetoric. I have done all in my power to avoid such mud-throwing. It is not "whining" to seek a proper and full debate. It is not "whining" to point out that you cannot answer basic questions about a thesis statement that is not even grammatically correct. It is not "whining" to point out that when you first wrote to me, after declining (I can document this, as Michael O'Fallon has kindly sent me the e-mails) four invitations from him to debate the thesis "Does God Unconditionally Elect Some Unto Salvation?" (first sent to you 10/24/05) saying you would debate, you yourself provided no thesis statement, and, in fact, *did not seem to care what statement was chosen*. On 3/22/06 you wrote, "Once confirmed by you, we can begin announcing the debate, calling it "Baptists and Calvinism," or something of the sort." Please note, Dr. Caner, the term "omnibenevolence" does not appear in this sentence, does it? In my timely and immediate response I wrote, "We will still need a specific enough thesis statement to define who is for and who is against." (All of this can be confirmed by looking at the pdf of our correspondence, www.aomin.org/Caner2.pdf). Then, in my very next e-mail, aside from addressing the issue of the length of the debate, I wrote:

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.

Finally, weeks after raising these issues, you wrote,

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?

Most folks can see immediately the straw-man nature of your reply. In any case, until you respond to the initial questions regarding your proposed thesis, it stands convicted of ambiguity and incoherence. Since it can be used to defend heresy it is clearly useless in seeking to promote clarity and focus. You cannot refute this, or you would have by now. We did not "all agree" on anything, but you now claim we did, which, of course, is a documented falsehood. That's why I have posted all the correspondence. The truth needs to be known.

1. You stated that the topic has been "demonstrated to be incoherent." Actually, the moderator, who has won almost twenty national debate championships, has noted the topic was valid.

Yes, Dr. O'Donnell has in essence said that ambiguity is good for debate. I have pointed out that when it comes to theological debate, that is simply not a defensible statement. Yes, both sides must define their positions. But you do not start out with a thesis statement that makes no sense and expect both sides to waste their time trying to force it into some paradigm. Everyone knows what the issues are. You are a synergist. You believe God's grace is offered to all, but, outside of the cooperation of the human will, salvation is not possible. It is a gift, "but a gift must be received." Evidently you do not believe in an all-encompassing eternal decree of God, perhaps confusing Christian theism with Islamic fatalism. You evidently believe God somehow "foresees" who will freely believe, and "chooses" on the basis of their choice. We reject this as incoherent and unbiblical. In other words, you believe God seeks to save each person equally, and we say no, He is under no such obligation, but instead He has an elect people, given by the Father to the Son, who are saved perfectly by the Son. Why not just get to the Word of God and let it speak to this issue? Monergism vs. synergism, God's grace + nothing vs. God's grace + man's free will? Why draw the topic off into obscurity, unless, as I have alleged, you realize that a focused debate based upon the text of Scripture would not be in your best interests?

The large number of encouraging e-mails we have received have seen this as coherent. Apparently the only people who imagine the topic as incoherent are those who simply do not want to debate God's omnibenevolence.

How odd, as someone pointed out to me this morning, that one who complains that we are using unbiblical terms, would be so concerned about such an...unbiblical term. :-) My e-mail has fully confirmed the fact that the thesis statement is incoherent. When you can answer the questions I originally asked of your proposed statement, then we can get this behind us. For your assistance, I repeat my original questions about the statement. You have had plenty of time to consider these things, it is time you stepped up and answered them:

Resolved: That God is an Omnibenevolent God to all of humanity through salvation and opportunity.

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 midair. 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.

Now, it seems from your e-mail that you intend to force this statement upon us. Since it is clearly possible to read the statement as a defense of universalism, we could, if we were so inclined, claim "victory" if you do not defend universalism. We will not do so. At the same time, if you demand that the topic be changed from election to some obtuse theory of omnibenevolence you might have, and on that basis claim victory---well, I would like to think better of your motivations, but after the past two e-mails from your hand, I can no longer bring myself to be that hopeful.

So, if you and your people do not want to debate, simply say so. We want to debate the topic. Just because you do not LIKE the topic does not mean it is invalid. You want us to define our terms before the debate, which is illogical. Defining terms is part of the purpose of debate. I see no reason to play my cards now. The debate is in October. Not now.

As long as all are aware of the fact that 1) you originally spoke of "Baptists and Election" and said nothing about omnibenevolence; 2) you crafted the thesis statement unilaterally, and 3) you refused any compromise on the thesis statement, then I see no use for further discussion. I will simply state, "Given the purposeful ambiguity of the thesis statement, I interpret it to mean that the Caners are defending the idea that God has no particular form of love, redemptive love, expressed toward an elect people, and hence tries to save all equally. The Bible proves this to be in error in the following ways...."

2. You continue to use man-made terms that you and those of your ilk want to revise (monergism and synergism, hyper Calvinism, etc.). You continue to prove our point---MOST evangelicals, including the millions who support Dr. Falwell, do not adhere to a 16th century movement, or 17th century Dortian parameters. We use biblical terms, in the biblical context.

As the President of a theological seminary, sir, I am simply left speechless as your words. Monergism and synergism are time-honored terms *describing doctrinal positions*. How is God's truth aided by refusing to place current discussions in their historical context? You use non-biblical terms all the time (like "omnibenevolence" or "biblicist"). And you are the only one speaking of hyper-Calvinism. It is a canard, and a dishonest one, of your own use in this conversation. I happen to believe the students at Liberty are significantly sharper than you seem to believe: not only do I think they can listen to a three hour debate, but I bet they can fully understand the difference between monergism and synergism, and they can even realize that you are defending the position Rome took against the Reformers at the time of the Reformation. In fact, many of them, if they have had meaningful instruction in church history, would know that you are taking Erasmus' position against Luther.

Now, the use of such terms is meant to allow us to get past the kind of basic impasse your current behavior is exhibiting in this situation. The terms allow us to get to the text with two competing ideas in mind and test those viewpoints in light of sound, God-honoring exegesis. That is why I to this day would still like to sit down in front of every single one of your classes, Ergun---just you and me, no one else---with nothing but two copies of the Nestle-Aland Greek text, nothing else---and get into the text.

No hop-skip-jump. You want to do 2 Peter 3:9? Great. I want to do John 6:37-45. Or most definitely, let's do Romans 9, for you stated:

3. As for your continued reference to my Esau statement, *please* continue to do so. The full biblical context of Esau, and others that you can cite, is clearly in OUR court.

I have had a number of your own students, sir, contact me in abject shock at your statements on this topic. The "full biblical context of Esau" sir? Let's make sure everyone can see, clearly, your unwillingness to be corrected by God's Word:

Statement: Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.

Biblical context: "Romans 9:10-13 10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 11 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, 12 it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." 13 Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."

Ergun Caner's statement: Why did God hate Esau? Because of what Esau *did*.

Now sir, your statement is false. It is as false in this context, or any context, as any statement can be. The Bible says X, you say non-X. It is just that plain. The Spirit expressly, through the Apostle, says that these statements were made *before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad*. The point is God's purpose according to His choice, *not because of works*. The Bible says "not because of works" and you say "because of works." X and not-X. And your gross eisegesis makes the following statement of Paul about an objector saying there is injustice with God groundless as well. On any grounds your statements from the pulpit were false. Completely.

If you seriously believed what you say, you would love to have me in front of your classes with nothing but the text. I'm willing to come. How about you, sir? Don't you think, after the insulting language you have used repeatedly and falsely, you owe it to your students to let them see just how you own the discussion based upon the text? I have fought for enough time to do meaningful cross-examination in the debate. You have fought to keep it out. Facts are facts, documentation is documentation.

4. As a matter of fact, this is a perfect illustration of the debate. In our brief history:

A. You called for the debate, speaking to your minions on your internet show.

I do not have "minions," sir, and I will thank you to behave in a fashion befitting a seminary president in speaking of others.

I contacted you to challenge your false, misleading statements about Calvinism, and to debate. More than once. Mike O'Fallon did as well. More than once. It was not until you and Emir jumped onto the Founder's blog (you seemed to have plenty of time for that, which makes one wonder a bit about your complaints about being too busy to respond to e-mails for a month's time) and you and I exchanged a number of e-mails that all of a sudden you decided to do a debate, but on your grounds, by your rules.

B. We had no desire to debate you, since Dr Geisler had already adequately answered you.

And anyone who has read *The Potter's Freedom* (I continue to believe to this day you have not) and

Geisler's reply, along with my response, knows otherwise. You have been sent that information multiple times and continue to ignore it. You have not responded to a single documentation of Geisler's errors. Your statements on the issue stand completely refuted in the eyes of any serious minded reviewer.

C. You e-mailed that Dr. Geisler had NOT adequately answered you, which either illustrates your lack of clarity or blind adherence to your philosophical system of Augustinian predeterminism.

I have provided you with the relevant documentation. It is available on our website for all to see. The appendix in the second edition of *Chosen but Free* is so error-riddled it is on the level of Gail Riplinger's writings. My refutation of it has been unchallenged since its publication. You have refused to answer a single element of that documentation, hence, you stand refuted.

D. Finally, I agreed, but only if you were not allowed to narrow the debate. That is your manipulation of which we are all so fond.

And the documentation cited above, and found at www.aomin.org/Caner2.pdf shows you are changing history once again. See why we must post this stuff? If I had not put it out there when it was first written, you might well be accusing me of editing it! But since it has been in the public eye for many weeks, you cannot go that direction. Instead, evidently, you think your readers will not check your sources.

Now what is truly ironic is that while we asked for a thesis statement that would define the debate, you are the ones now trying to shift the topic to omnibenevolence. Is this not a tremendous "narrowing" of the debate, which you originally titled "Baptists and Election"? How is my asking for a clear thesis statement "narrowing" the debate while your shift to "omnibenevolence" is perfectly acceptable? Once again, you are caught by the documentation accusing me of what you yourself are doing.

E. The topic was resolved.

Excuse me? Try documenting *that* from the written correspondence! The thesis statement you are demanding has been questioned, without substantive response on your part, from day one! Once again, one side can speak in accordance with truth and the documents, one has to make things up as they go along.

F. Then you whined about the time. Even though presidential debates are shorter, you somehow believed you deserve a bigger stage.

Aside from your mean-spirited language, sir, I have pointed out that with four men speaking you have to have enough time to actually *say something*. Let's face it, sir, you have done very little meaningful theological debating. I have done nearly five dozen such debates. You have no ground upon which to speak. And anyone who thinks a presidential debate is much of a debate at all is obviously missing the point. This has nothing to do with me believing I deserve a bigger stage. It has everything to do with my believing the doctrine of God's freedom in salvation deserves a whole lot more than a few sound bites. I evidently take this topic a lot more seriously than you do.

G. We offered the site. LU shall swallow the costs of taping. You are still not satisfied.

Please, sir, you started out saying I wanted a neutral site. I said I had never made such a demand. You said Liberty or Southwestern. I said fine. If you wish, *Alpha and Omega Ministries* will video tape the event with two video cameras and provide you with an unedited master. That's what we do all the time. You are doing us no favors to use pre-existing facilities and video equipment. The fact is that this is to take place in a context that already has video facilities installed. So why even raise the issue?

H. You want to narrow the topic, to fit your liking, and lengthen the time. That is not going to happen. Debate on a level surface.

I'm sorry, Ergun, but you are simply being dishonest. The documentation is plain. We challenged you to debate Calvinism. You are the one who has come up with a thesis statement that is incoherent, yet you will not even explain it; from the very first e-mail you sent about the debate I have asked for a full three hours. It is untrue, sir, to say otherwise. Facts are facts. I request you to cease and desist from repeating this falsehood in the future. Thank you.

Let me quickly add that I have not seen Dr. Ascol in this same light. Even though he and I would disagree vehemently on the topic, I have found him a calm Christian gentleman. I do believe we will be able to debate fairly, across the spectrum of Calvinism and Baptist theology.

Tom is indeed a calm, kind Christian gentleman. Why you wish to keep his speaking time to an absolute minimum is therefore difficult to understand. :-) But please do not be misled. He is just as amazed as I am at your words in this exchange.

Dr. White, in Oct 1960, Nikita Khrushchev banged his shoe on the desk of the UN. He screamed "we will bury you!" His boorish behavior was followed by interrupting speakers, and loudly proclaiming his victory. I see parallels. Apparently, you believe this is all for show. That would be backed up by the fact that you cannot sneeze without posting it on your site.

Again, Ergun, I will allow the reader to carefully examine the correspondence that has passed between us and judge for themselves who has bent over backwards to provide full and meaningful responses, who has sought to arrange a full debate that will honor the topic and the audience, and who has sought to be restrained and respectful in the conversation. I will likewise let them judge for themselves who has not behaved in this fashion.

James, you claim that we do not understand doctrines? Well, if that is the case, we stand in the stream of the vast majority of evangelicals who will not accept your doctrines of reprobation. In truth, we clearly understand, and we do not buy into it. We refuse to be categorized as Calvinism or Arminianism, Augustinianism or Pelagianism. I am a biblicist and a Baptist.

Yes sir, you do not understand what you deny. I have documented this, you have ignored those challenges. I do not need to repeat them. I am a biblicist which is why I am Reformed; I am a Baptist as well. You may refuse to recognize your category errors. That is your choice. Others, thankfully, including students at Liberty, can see who is being obtuse and who is reasoning logically. And when majority rule becomes the standard of doctrinal truth, Ergun, you and I will both be in trouble. Thankfully, that will never happen.

And neither will we be manipulated (my students call it being "punked") into a limited debate topic, or a protracted debate time.

Yes, it is plain to see: you will not be limited to a thesis statement that is clear and concise, nor will you debate long enough to allow four scholars to have more than a *total* of forty minutes to speak. To identify our request for a meaningful thesis statement and sufficient time to actually get into the text of the Word of God as "manipulation" is once again false at its best, and delusional at its worst.

Either come, or don't. Either debate the topic or admit you do not want to. In either case, Emir and I, and our respective schools, shall be there, on Monday, October 16, 2006, to

debate the Omnibenevolence of God.

Again, I allow the reader to read these words and their clear attitude and judge for themselves your motivations versus my own. Baptists and Calvinism has become the Omnibenevolence of God. Given that you have already changed your mind once, can I hope by the time October 16th arrives this won't have changed to something else, like, "Resolved: Hyper-Neo-Calvinists Are Manipulators Who, If They Disagree, Are Mean as Well"?

Until then, I shall just smile, every time I receive some e-mail. Every single e-mail proves our point.

And I gladly allow the reader to ponder just what that could possibly mean in light of the documentation itself.

Neo-Calvinists cannot answer our points, so you attack us.

I'm sorry, but the only possible way I can identify this kind of statement, in light of the dozens and dozens of paragraphs I have sent you that have been completely ignored as if they never existed, all of which are found in the relevant documents posted on line, is simple self-deception. You cannot possibly believe such a self-evidently false statement. I have answered all of your points, fully. When I do, you complain about my "voluminous" e-mails. And yet, you say I cannot answer your points, but attack you? I'm sorry, sir, but the documentation demonstrates that once again, this statement is dishonest.

Classic *ad hominem*. If our system of theology has brought disrepute to Christian theology, because we do not believe in neo-Calvinism, then we will gladly stand in that stream.
>From Norman Geisler and C.S. Lewis all the way back, we have church history, and logical biblical thought on our side.

You are grand-standing, sir. Yes, there is a long history of man-centered synergism. Rome and her children have clawed at God's glory in salvation for a long, long time. But far more glorious than this man-centered aspect of history have been those who have stood for God's freedom and glory in salvation. But once again, I have sent you numerous quotes from the likes of Spurgeon that you have never so much as acknowledged. I have pointed out that you are misleading your students to call Spurgeon an Amyraldian or a "four-pointer" (your words, not mine). These are facts, but you do not seem to be overly impacted by facts. In fact, one wonders if you even bother reading most of what is sent to you? For surely, as the documentation proves, you almost never attempt a full response.

I hope to see you October 16, 2006. And please, find your own URLs. You seem to have much more time than I do to do these things.

Again, your unkindness is sad to see, sir. I simply asked that if you are going to post this correspondence, you provide me with the URL so that I can verify you have posted it fully. You requested, back in February, that if your e-mails were to be posted, that they would be posted fully. I have complied with your wishes. I simply asked the same in return. Your curt response is unwarranted, but likewise, from what we have seen over the past two days, not out of character.

James>>>

6/24/06

Brothers:

I find Ergun's characterization of this whole issue to be far different from my own. I have read every single email that has been exchanged and would do so again except that I don't think I have sinned

sufficiently to warrant such a sentence. It is enough to know that the record contained in those emails is clear enough to show anyone who wants to know about this pseudo-debate exactly what has transpired and how it has transpired.

Ergun, I do not know how or why you think that we have all agreed on the thesis or format. You have tried to dictate what they will be but there has been no negotiated agreement. Furthermore, Dr. O'Donnell's only email leads me to doubt the sincerity of his assurances to be an impartial moderator who will operate from the the rulebook of "fairness." His offer to entertain "specific questions about the format" as long as they are asked "professionally" rings hollow in light of my May 16 email to him. I did not copy it to anyone else because I was simply seeking to learn from him the best way to get information about the format.

Here is that email in its totality:

Dear Dr. O'Donnell:

I have been told that you have agreed to moderate a debate on October 16, 2006 at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, VA. I am supposed to participate in that debate and have some questions about it that I would like to ask you. Would it be possible for me to address them to you via email, or would a phone conversation be better?

Thank you for your consideration.

*Sincerely,
Tom Ascol*

I sent it to directly to him. Yet, I still have not received even the courtesy of an acknowledgment, much less an offer to entertain my questions. As the written record demonstrates conclusively, this kind of treatment is typical of the lack of respect that has been afforded James and me in this whole process.

No amount of posturing or posing can change the fact that you have attempted to throw numerous roadblocks in the way of this debate. Virtually any prospect of having a fair exchange of ideas in a setting where our differences can be clearly expressed has been undermined by your unwillingness to discuss questions that must be settled before such an exchange can take place. I suppose that this sounds like whining to you. To me, it is an honest attempt to dialogue.

Ergun, when you told me and others in Greensboro about Dr. Falwell's plans to "pimp" this debate all over the world I was caught off guard. At first I thought I had misunderstood you but your repeated declarations that he was going to "pimp" it on TV and "pimp" it to "little old ladies" quickly disabused me of that notion. Your emails of the last two days have only confirmed my worst fears that your chosen vocabulary to describe this "debate" is all-too-accurate.

Well, I am no one's prostitute. And I refuse to be "pimped." If you are comfortable letting Dr. Falwell "pimp" you then that is surely your prerogative. I would love to pursue a genuine, theological debate. If that is what the Drs. Caner want, then let's work it out and get it done. If, however, all you want to do is put on a Fundamentalist burlesque show, then go ahead with the plans that you are making but find yourself someone more suited than I to join you on stage.

Sincerely,
Tom

26 June 2006

Dear Dr Ascol:

Well, for the first time in this discussion, I have come to the conclusion that posting private correspondence, which usually takes place between Christian gentlemen behind the scenes, might be helpful if posted. This is one e-mail that I believe should be posted, but I doubt if you will do it. This will stay private, or scrubbed, much like Brad Reynolds exchanges:

1. For the record, your quote of my words at the SBC was correct. I did use the word "pimped."
2. I do love the fact that Dr. Falwell is willing to give this debate as big a stage as possible.
3. He believes, as we do, that this is a vital issue in the SBC, and MUST be confronted to as large a

crowd as possible.

4. Of course, since no one is making any money on this debate (as Emir and I stipulated- no tickets and no "entry fees") your concern over being "prostituted" is not really valid.

5. HOWEVER, before you storm off...please do not feel too superior. Would it change the equation if we were offering to pay you for doing a CRUISE to teach?

6. Yes, Dr. Ascol, we understand your desire not to be pimped. Does that extend to traveling on a cruise with Dr. White...along with others...for free...as the advertised speaker? Apparently I am not as accomplished at this "pimping" thing...

I am sorry you feel the way you do, Dr. Ascol.

emc