

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."



## *A Controversial Newsletter "The Printed Voice of Summit Theological Seminary"*

*~ All articles are written by George L. Faull, Rel. D. unless otherwise stated ~*

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George L. Faull, Editor

### **The Irrationality of Calvinism**

--By Terry Carter

The following quotes are from the book *The Five Points of Calvinism* by Edwin H. Palmer. Edwin Palmer was the Executive Secretary of the NIV and General Editor of the NIV Study Bible. He was a very strong Calvinist. The following quotes from his book demonstrate that as a strong defender of Calvinism, he was honest enough to admit that it is an irrational and contradictory belief system. His statements speak for themselves.

*"By way of anticipation, it should be pointed out that the Calvinist keeps both God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, even though he cannot rationally reconcile the two." (Page 35)*

*"Contrary to what most people think, the Calvinist teaches that man is free – one hundred percent free – free to do exactly what he wants...And just because man is free, man is a slave...In other words, the Christian does not have free will." (Pages 35-36)*

*"Here we stand before a fundamental mystery. On the one hand, the Bible teaches that God intends that salvation will be for only certain people. On the other hand, the Bible unequivocally declares that God freely and sincerely offers salvation to everyone...Peter writes with unmistakable clarity that the Lord is 'Longsuffering toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (II Peter 3:9)...Here we come again to that fundamental problem of God...To man it seems impossible to reconcile both truths. They seem to contradict each other." (Page 51)*

*"Although it is true that none would be saved were it not for the irresistible grace of God, no one may ever fall into the rationalistic trap of saying that he has nothing to do...The Bible never allows that. It comes with only one command: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ...So believe. God commands you to. But if you do, thank God for causing you to do so." (Page 66)*

*"It is even Biblical to say that God has foreordained sin. If sin was outside the plan of God, then not a single important affair of life would be ruled by God." (Page 82)*

*"In other words, God made it absolutely certain that Joseph's brothers would sin; yet He did it in such a way that the brothers and not God are to blame...In other words, sin is ordained by God." (Page 83)*

*"But if anyone has really been thinking, he has probably raised a serious objection many times...For, where is God's holiness? If He ordained the sin of Joseph's brothers and the sin of Judas, how can any rational person say that God is holy? Isn't God to blame?" (Pages 83-84)*

*"He correctly sees the problem: reconciling the two opposing forces of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility...He reasons that he cannot logically reconcile these two apparently contradictory facts. So he holds to one set of facts and denies the other. He holds to man's freedom and restricts God's sovereignty. In this way, he has no rational problem. The contradiction dissolves." (Page 84)*

*"...the Calvinists accept both sides of the antimony. He realizes that what he advocates is ridiculous. It is simply impossible for man to harmonize these two sets of data. To say on one hand that God has made certain all that ever happens, and yet to say that man is responsible for what he does? Nonsense! It must be one or the other, but not both. To say that God foreordains the sin of Judas, and yet Judas is to blame? Foolishness! Logically the author of *The Predestined Thief* was right. God cannot foreordain the theft and then blame the thief. And the Calvinist freely admits that his position is illogical, ridiculous, nonsensical, and foolish...The Calvinist holds to two apparently contradictory positions. He says on one hand, God has ordained all things. Then he turns around and says to every man, 'Your salvation is up to you. You must believe. It is your duty and responsibility. And if you don't, you cannot blame God. You must only blame yourself'. (Page 85)*

*"In the face of all logic, the Calvinist says that if a man does anything good, God gets all the glory; and if man does anything bad, man gets all the blame. Man can't win. To many people such a position seems foolish. It seems unreasonable...he [the Calvinist] accepts this paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.*

*He cannot reconcile the two; but...he accepts both.”* (Pages 85-86)

*“...although sanctification is a gift of God, and it is God who works in us to do good things, nevertheless, it is our responsibility to use the means of grace, and not wait for God to move us.”* (Page 87)

*“It’s up to you. But if you do believe, than (sic) thank God for making you want to believe.”* (Page 93)

*“Many Christians...cannot bear to think that God has ordained sin. It sounds nonsensical, especially... [since] ...God is holy and the antithesis of sin...This does not make sense...”* (Page 97)

*“To say it another way, God willingly permits sin...In the final analysis, we cannot really understand...We may not be able to reconcile these two theses.”* (Page 99)

*“Although all things – unbelief and sin included – proceed from God’s eternal decree, man is still to blame for his sins. He is guilty; it is his fault, not God’s.”* (Page 106)

*“As Calvin said, ‘Although God and the devil will the same thing, they do so in an entirely different manner.’”* (Page 106)

*“How [says the non-Calvinist] can you read it other than as a total contradiction, a yes and no on the same point? The question that is being asked is not: What does the Bible say? But rather: What can my finite reason understand? What is contradictory and what is not?”* (Page 107)

*“John Murray takes the same humble [I, Terry, say irrational] attitude...even though to his mind there is a contradiction...it cannot be gainsaid that God decretively [ultimately] forbids what he perceptively [directly] commands...If I am not mistaken, it is at this point that the sovereignty of God makes the human mind reel as it does nowhere else in connection with this topic.”* (Pages 108-109)

Now consider some statements by Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams from their book, “Why I am not an Arminian”.

*“Notice that sovereignty and freedom don’t cancel each other out...Rather, in a way that we cannot fully comprehend, God is absolutely in control, and we are genuinely responsible.”* (Page 64)

*“God does not save all sinners, for ultimately he does not intend to save all of them. The gift of faith is necessary for salvation, yet for reasons beyond our ken, the gift of faith has not been given to all.”* (Page 128)

*“Yet people cannot be saved without God’s powerful work in them. God wants all to hear the gospel, but he*

*intends to save only some. Why that is the case, we do not know.”* (Page 129)

*“Scripture constrains us to say that God is not the cause of sin, yet somehow, in ways we cannot fathom, His sovereign plan includes the sinful acts of human beings. ‘To put it bluntly,’ writes Carson, ‘God stands behind evil in such a way that not even evil takes place outside the bounds of his sovereignty, yet evil is not morally chargeable to him.’ Exactly how God relates to the sinful behaviors of human beings we do not know...We do not know how it is that God sovereignly directs and ordains our freely chosen paths and, yes, our sinful acts as well as the good that we do.”* (Pages 160-161)

*“For reasons known only to God, He has not chosen to save all human beings.”* (Page 190)

*“But **John 3:16-17** teaches that God loves all sinners, a truth unfortunately not endorsed by all Calvinists...When asked how we reconcile these passages with those that teach God’s special love for the elect, we admit that our theology contains rough edges. But we would rather have an imperfect theology and be faithful to the whole witness of Scripture than to mute the voice of some texts as Calvinists have sometimes done...Furthermore, we do not regard this problem as insoluble for the mind of God...But we admit that our present state of knowledge prohibits us from explaining how God can love all persons savingly in the one sense and only love some savingly in another sense.”* (Pages 211-213)

*“We also affirmed that the Bible teaches two seemingly contradictory, but ultimately complementary truths (1) God loves a sinful world, and (2) he has a special effective love only for the elect. Only by affirming these two truths simultaneously do we do justice to scriptural teaching.”* (Page 214)

Interestingly, Palmer has the following, somewhat inconsistent, things to say about logic and the Bible.

*“And sometimes logic – to the dismay of some Biblicists - has to be used. But there is nothing wrong with using logic if we do it properly.”* (Page 109)

*“The temptation is to accept only what our logic approves rather than what the Bible teaches.”* (Page 111)

Palmer repeatedly presents a false dichotomy as though we must choose between what is logical and rational or what the Bible teaches. This, in reality, is a claim that the Bible is irrational, illogical, and contradictory. At the same time it is an admission that Calvinism is illogical, irrational, and contradictory. Yet, Peterson and Williams admit that a doctrine needs to pass the logic test as well as the Biblical test.

*“To be true, a doctrine must pass not only a test of logical coherence but also a test of empirical fit with the Bible’s data.”* (Page 202)

The real choice is not between logic and Scripture, but between an irrational theology and the truth of what the Bible teaches.

God is not irrational, illogical, or contradictory, nor is He the author of confusion.

“For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.”  
--**I Corinthians 14:33**