

Calvin's TULIP

An Analysis of John MacArthur's Calvinism

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"Ashamed of the Gospel" by John MacArthur

- Like most MacArthur material, very conservative approach to church and a very solid argument against pragmatism.
- One chapter, however, misses the mark: "The Sovereignty of God in Salvation."

How to deliver a flawed argument

- Tell a story to get you audience on your side.
- Draw the picture of the opponent and his ideas, whether he exists in reality or not.
- Attack the opponent.
 - Use logic
 - Use Scripture
- You audience will come away agreeing with you, and convinced your argument is accurate.

Examples of this flawed argumentation

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SR74P526YaM>
- Premise: "if the government defaults, the people who rely on Social security may end up being the first to get hurt."
- Story of hard-working Maddie Jones.
- Obama as the man working to solve Maddie Jones' fears, and 55 million others.
- Story of 4.4 million children like Anthony Hines.
- On August 3 (2011) these people may "find the system they paid into unable to pay them back" (i.e.: they've been robbed)
- Intended result: I need to call my congressman and tell him/her to resolve this issue so that Social Security checks continue. Whoever is blocking the bill is an enemy to women like Maddie and children like Anthony.

Examples of this flawed argumentation

- What the viewer should have be asking:
 - Is there a chance that Maddie Jones and Anthony Hines will be cut off from support on August 1?
 - If not, why was I given that impression?
 - Why didn't I hear from the person who believed that Maddie and Anthony should lose support?
 - Do they exist?
 - Is there an implied bad-guy in this story?
 - Do I know who it is?
- By painting an imaginary enemy and a catastrophic personal crisis, CBS was able to influence the thinking of its viewers.

MacArthur's "Sovereignty of God" argument

- Begins with the story of Jesus Dolls. (163-164)
- Premise: "To many think of Him as someone who can be manipulated any way they please, rather than the utterly sovereign Jehovah of the Bible." (164)
 - Implied question: which side are you on?
- Attack: "No doctrine is more despised by the natural man than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign... God orders everything, controls everything, rules over everything...nothing comes to pass except according to His eternal decrees." (164)
- Attack: if this is true, "...then believers deserve no credit for any aspect of their salvation." (164)

How to spot a flawed argument

- Ask: Is the attack against a real person who has really said that which is being attacked?
 - Names?
 - Quotes?
 - Evidence?
- Could it be that the presentation is designed to get me to adopt an argument against a straw man?
- If so, is the position presented really necessary?

MacArthur's "Sovereignty of God" argument

- Attack: if this is true, "...then believers deserve no credit for any aspect of their salvation."
- MacArthur then begins to build his argument against those who presumably believe that believers deserve credit for their salvation and thus they make Jesus into a doll or action figure who serves at their pleasure or command.

Jesus is not a doll

- "Divine election is explicitly taught throughout the Scripture." 164
 - Titus 1:1 - Paul's work is "for the faith of those chosen of God"
 - Ephesians 1:11 - "who works all things after the counsel of His will"
 - Ephesians 1:4-5 - "He chose us...He predestined us...according to the kind intention of His will."
 - Romans 8:28-30 -those who are foreknown are predestined.

The foreknowledge of God

- Who is foreknown?
 - Romans 8:29
 - Romans 11:2
 - 1 Peter 1:1-2
 - *diaspora* is used 12 times in the LXX, always in reference to the dispersion of Jews.
 - In John 7:35 it is used in this same sense
 - In James 1:1 and 1 Peter 1:1 there is no need to imagine an exception

The foreknowledge of God

- Who is foreknown?
- What does foreknowledge mean?
 - Peter "was not using the word 'foreknowledge' to mean that God was aware beforehand...It means He determined before time began to know and love and save them." (165)
 - Why does Acts 2:23 not agree with this assessment?
 - Why does the root not agree with this assessment? *prognosko*

MacArthur's Argument

- Churches have become apostate because they have rejected the Sovereignty of God in Salvation.
- The Sovereignty of God is the conviction that "God orders everything, controls everything, rules over everything." (164)
 - If you believe that God allows individuals to decide to receive, or not receive, the gift of salvation, then you do not believe in the Sovereignty of God.
- The Scripture explicitly teaches that God chooses who will be saved, thus God is sovereign. "He is not subject to others' decisions." (165)

MacArthur's Flaw

- "What about sin? God is not the author of sin, but He certainly allowed it; it is integral to His eternal decree...He certainly wasn't caught off-guard or standing helpless to stop it when sin entered the universe." (165)
 - My question: Why can God allow sin and yet still be sovereign, but if He allowed a sinner to choose to receive grace, He would no longer be sovereign?
- "He is utterly sovereign...God controls all things, right down to choosing who will be saved." (166)
- "Those who reject the Gospel do so voluntarily." (166)

The "inescapable terms" of Romans 9

“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,” (Romans 9:11, NASB95)

- What was Jacob chosen for?
- Where are the "inescapable terms" that show that God chooses some for salvation and anything less is an attack on His sovereignty?

MacArthur's Conclusion

- "The very reason many contemporary churches embrace pragmatic methodology is that they lack any understanding of God's sovereignty in the salvation of the elect. They lose confidence in the power of the preached gospel to reach hardened unbelievers. That's why they approach evangelism as a marketing problem." (167)
 - My question: Is "lack of any understanding of God's sovereignty" the issue or lost "confidence in the power of the preached gospel."

MacArthur's Conclusion

- "Is salvation wholly the Lord's work? Or has He already done all He can do and now awaits the sinner's decision?" (170)
 - My question: Is salvation not wholly the Lord's work if He has done all he *sovereignly decided to do* and now awaits the sinner's decision?
- "If we could generate faith on our own, we would certainly have something to boast about." (171)
 - My question: who says this?

MacArthur's Conclusion

- "Faith in God's absolute sovereignty would deliver the church from the down-grade of pragmatism and worldliness. It would drive us back to biblical preaching." (181)
 - My question: Have you heard of Platt, Keller, Piper, Driscoll, and Mahaney? Have you heard of the Presbyterian Church (USA)? Have you heard of the Acts 29 organization?

Some examples

- Of Mark Driscoll, Morris Chapman (not a Calvinist) says, "To hide the light of the Gospel under the bushel of cultural compromise is a grievous sin against the Holy Spirit,... The sacred desk is no place for the carnal, the sexual and the sensational."

Some examples

- "Acts 29 keeps coming up in discussions of the SBC, alcohol, and Calvinism. As a general rule, it seems that those who favor social drinking and ending Southern Baptist's long standing opposition to beverage alcohol are those who are connected with Calvinism, the Acts 29 organization, or both."
- http://peterlumpkins.typepad.com/peter_lumpkins/2011/06/acts-29-alcohol-and-the-southern-baptist-convention-by-david-brumbelow.html

Some examples

- There is one Gospel in many different forms. Tim Keller
 - Individual form
 - Corporate form
 - Circumcised form (religious)
 - Uncircumcised form (pagan)
 - "Sin is building your identity-your self-worth and happiness-on anything other than God."

Some examples

- David Platt - Compassion for the poor is uniquely tied to the gospel and unalterably linked to the Great Commission.

Conclusion

- I fully believe the sovereignty of God and I refuse to accept the accusation that only Calvinists honor God's sovereignty.
- I fully reject the idea that Calvinism is the only hope for a healthy church.
- My prediction: Calvinism is going to downgrade into a feeling-oriented social gospel that drifts into liberalism.

Questions?

- No Bible study next week
- randy@randywhiteministries.org
- Pray for us!
 - Traveling tomorrow
 - Preaching in Taos, NM
Wednesday

