

'Herald of Hope' and 'Election'

In a 2006 edition of the Australian *'Herald of Hope'* magazine, editor John Ecob wrote an article titled *'Who are The Elect?'*. His views in this article are indicative of the continuing misrepresentation by teachers today, concerning Church history, the doctrines of the sovereignty of God in the election of the saints, and so-called 'Calvinism'.

The *Herald of Hope* often publishes sound and interesting articles regarding Biblical prophecy and endtime events, but on the issue of the historic 'Doctrines of Grace' they now display a woeful ignorance of this teaching - and have turned Church history on its head in an effort to make a case for what is ultimately Arminianism.

In attempting to answer the question *'Who Are The Elect?'* Ecob errs greatly while attempting to solve the mystery between God's election and man's responsibility in salvation. God's choices were made *before* the foundation of the world and therefore solely according to His Sovereign Will...man was yet to be formed! ***'According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His Will***, (Eph.1:4,5).

This election is entirely of God and in no way involves man, (1Thess 1:4 ***'your election of God'***; Titus 1:1 ***'The Faith of God's elect'***; Col.3:12 ***'the elect of God'***...)

Ecob states: *'Arminianism was a reaction to Calvinism'*. Yet church history shows a situation that is diametrically opposed to such a notion! The 'five points' [later erroneously labelled 'Calvinism'] issued by the Synod of Dort in 1619 were made to REFUTE the five points making up the heretical doctrines of Arminius! Historically, *Arminianism predates so-called 'Calvinism'*!

And at the time of the Council of Dort *John Calvin had been dead for 146 years!*

It is astonishing that such a respected magazine as the *Herald of Hope* could print such a falsehood. Surely this shows a lack of scholarship? The tenets of historic 'Calvinism' actually can be found in the writings of the early church leaders and up to and beyond Augustine in the 3rd century! And the Synod of Dort is not the only council which condemned Arminianism. Throughout church history, at each Council, Synod or Diet, one can find that one of the Arminian doctrines or the whole system of Arminianism, was condemned at one time or another.

We wrote gently to John Ecob with suggestions to correct him on at least the history of these things. We have yet to receive a reply.

Ecob writes that *'Calvinistic theology'* is held by *'reformed theologians'*. However, the *'Reformed position'* often includes positions of eschatology other than 'Premillennial' - such as 'A-Millennialism'. Dictionaries define *'Reformed'* as: *'pertaining to or designating the body of Protestant churches originating in the Reformation'* (Websters New Collegiate Dictionary). Ecob has painted with a broad stroke of the brush here and doubtlessly thinks that 'Reformed' means being a 'Calvinist'?

The real term for historic 'Calvinism' is 'The Doctrines of Grace' and these were taught by *most of the greats*, including the Reformers down through the ages. It is sad that this 'nickname' of 'Calvinism', as Spurgeon put it, has been tagged to the doctrines that have been taught by the *majority* of leaders down the running centuries until the wholesale apostasy of the 19th and 20th!

The *Herald of Hope* has also furthered the confusion over 'Calvinism' by misrepresenting it as Hyper-Calvinism.

Ecob writes that *'the system of Calvinism'* is summarised by 'five points known as 'TULIP'. But he fails to mention that the 'TULIP' acronym came to be in existence hundreds of years *after* Calvin and came from a *refutation* of five points of known *heresy* adhered to by the followers of Arminius!

He misunderstands the doctrines of that 'acronym'. He says that before the Fall the angels, Adam and Eve had *'free will'* - but this fact historic 'Calvinism' *does not deny!* The writer confuses *pre*Fall with *post*Fall. After the Fall man's will was not entirely *'free'* in the true sense of the word and no scripture states that! The doctrine of original sin and the depravity of man teaches clearly that after the Fall, man's heart was captive to sin. Ecob further says *'unsaved man can do good works but these obtain no merit for salvation'*. Yet Scripture teaches that all our works are as *'filthy rags'*.

The doctrine of 'Free Will' is part of the *Pelagian heresy* of early centuries and continued to be viewed as such during the Reformation. It stated that man can, in and of himself, 'choose' Christ for salvation. This was, and still is, in utter contradiction to scripture which states man's will has been enslaved since the Fall of Adam and Eve and his will is not actually 'free' in the real sense of the word. *'Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, NEITHER INDEED CAN BE. So then they that are in the flesh CANNOT please God'*, (Rom.8:7,8) - Does that sound like a will that is 'free'? The ***'gospel is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not...'***, (2Cor.4:3,4). Does that sound like a will that is 'free'? Jesus Himself unequivocally said: ***'NO MAN CAN COME to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...'*** (Jn.6:44). The Scripture describes men as those who love darkness (Jn.3:19), are *in bondage* to sin (Gal.4:3; 6:17,20), and taken *captive* by Satan to do his will (2Tim.2:25), until the Son sets them free, (Jn.8:36). Does that sound like a will that is 'free'? Unbelievably, this heresy is now widely accepted and revived in the apostasy of the 19th and 20th centuries. It is the root of Arminian heresy and practise in the modern church.

The doctrine of 'Total Depravity' does not teach that *'unconverted man has no freewill and cannot choose Christ'* as Ecob writes. Rather, mans heart is simply 'depraved' and *unable* to escape the enslavement from sin *to save himself*, (Jer.17:9; Is.64:6,7; Rom.8:6,7; 1Cor.2:14).

This does not mean man is just a 'puppet' or a 'robot' as some say. Rather, it is God Himself who sets us 'free' from sin's bondage and enables us to choose Him. And who would not be thrilled to be freed to do this! ***'If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed'***, (Jn.8:36).

Ecob in attempting to understand election writes: *'if God does not elect him, then God is appointing him to hell'*. Yet Historic Calvinism teaches no such extrapolated strawman logic. This is the stuff of 'double predestination' and aligns with Hyper-Calvinism.

Ecob then, as so many do, mistranslates 2Peter 3:9 - ***'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance'***. This verse is speaking to ***'USward'*** - the *saints*! The rules governing Greek grammar demand that the ***'any'*** and the ***'all'*** cannot refer to any other pronoun but to the previous ***'US'***. It is not, in this verse, saying God wants everyone to be saved. One of the first rules of interpretation is *who is it speaking to?* This Epistle is specifically written to the ***'BELOVED'!***: ***'beloved, I now write unto you'*** (vs.1); ***'beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing'*** (vs.8); ***'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless'*** (vs.14); ***'Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before'*** (vs.17)

The primary context here is about the end of this age and the sureness of the Lord's coming for his 'beloved'. It is a clear exhortation to the ***'beloved'*** to be patient and not to listen to the false teachers (from previous verses) who were 'scoffing' at the promise of His coming. The great commentator Matthew Henry saw the same context here: *'What men count slackness, is long-suffering, and that to us-ward; it is giving more time to his own people, to advance in knowledge and holiness, and in the exercise of faith and patience...'* (underlining ours)

This scripture was misused by Arminians in latercenturies and now sadly most of modern apostate Christendom! The context is, and historically has always been, to believers - the ***'beloved'*** who would be saved and come to repentance at some point in time.

The editor of *Herald of Hope* is here found denying the sovereignty of God in Predestination and Election. The word 'predestination' comes from the Greek word *'proorizo'* ('*pro*' - 'before' / '*orizo*' - 'to determine'). It clearly means to *determine* or *decree beforehand*. There is no escaping this conclusion! Examples of the word are in Acts 4:28; Rom.8:29,30; Eph.1:5,11; 1Cor.2:7; (The Greek word is also translated '*ordained*' in some passages).

The fact that our election and predestination were *from the foundation of the world* must worry those who attempt to add to such doctrines conditions such as the 'free will' of man *in this life*. Who can deny Predestination and Election is all of God and none of man, when it occurred *before we ever even had any 'will'* at all? ***'As many as WERE ordained to eternal life believed'***, (Acts 13:48).

Even our works are ordained *'before'*: ***'We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them'***, (Eph.2:10). 2Timothy 1:9 sums up the eternal counsel in God's calling and choosing and clearly refutes any attempt to put conditions on God's predestination: ***'Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN***.

The word 'election' (*'ekloge'*) means a choice or *special* selection done by the free will of God. This election is not in any way tied to any ability or will of man but rather in the will of God alone: Jn.5:21 ***'For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will***.' This is true 'grace' - unmerited by anything in man.

The *Herald of Hope* article also ignores a defining passage in Ephesians: ***'He chose [elected] us in Him before the foundation of the world'***, (Eph.1:4). This was no random selection but a *special selection* as the Greek word states. God did not here look down the corridors of time to see who might 'choose' him. The passage clearly says God chose us for Himself *independent* of any outside influence. It was His choice and apart from any human will. ***We 'were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, NOR OF THE WILL OF MAN, but of God'***, (Jn.1:12,13). Jesus said to His disciples, ***'You did not choose Me, but I chose you'***, (Jn.15:16). Paul said, ***'...God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth'***, (2 Thess.2:13).

These clear scriptures do not mean that man cannot make any decisions or is just a 'robot'. Election does not exclude *human responsibility* or the person responding to the gospel by faith. When the elect respond, *they do not respond against their wills*. The election actually frees our wills to accept a glorious salvation!

Numerous Scriptures speak of such Predestination and Election of individuals, (Eph.1:5,9,11; 1Thess.1:4; 1Pet.1:2,10; Tit.1:1; Rom.8:33; 11:5,7; Col.3:12; Rom.9:15-18; Gal.1:15,16; Jn.6:37; 5:21...)

There were other errors in the *Herald of Hope* article and many are evidence that the author is not aware of the true teachings of the Doctrines of Grace and the sovereign election of the saints.

Similar confusion was recently portrayed in an article by popular American speaker, Chuck Missler, (July 11, 2006 e-News issue): *'At the heart of the controversies between Calvinism and Arminianism is the emphasis on the sovereignty of God by the Calvinists and on the sovereignty (free will) of man - or human responsibility - by the Arminians. Calvinism emphasizes that God is in total control of everything and that nothing can happen that He does not plan and direct, including man's salvation. Arminianism teaches that man has free will and that God will never interrupt or take that free will away, and that God has obligated Himself to respect the free moral agency and capacity of free choice with which He created us...*

Certainly, the Bible does teach that God is sovereign, and that believers are predestined and elected by God to spend eternity with Him. Nowhere, however, does the Bible ever associate election with damnation...Scriptures teach that God elects for salvation, but that unbelievers are in hell by their own choice. Every passage of the Bible that deals with election deals with it in the context of salvation, not damnation. No one is elect for hell...The concept of total depravity is consistent with Scripture...Election and predestination are Biblical doctrines...God will not send anyone to hell, but many people will choose to go there by exercising their free will to reject Christ'.

Notice Missler has no scripture for his logic. He confuses the doctrine of Man's Responsibility to repent - with 'Free Will' to choose Christ. Yet Adam lost any 'freedom' in the garden - he was then only *'free'* in one way - to run, hide and sin! Missler also uses the usual strawman of 'election to damnation' which historic Calvinism does not do. He amazingly says that many unbelievers are in Hell *'by their own choice...exercising their free will to reject Christ'*. Nowhere in scripture is this taught. And what of the multitudes who have never heard the gospel or heard of Jesus Christ? Did they have such a 'choice' for Hell? Even in our western society we know of people who died never hearing the Gospel. In many countries there are Hindus dying every day who have never heard the Gospel! Did they 'choose' Hell? What of the ancient American Indians who for centuries never heard the Gospel - did they 'choose' Hell? How many really would consciously 'choose' Hell?

And what of Missler's doctrine of 'The sovereignty of man'? Where is this doctrine in scripture and would it not defy the doctrine of the 'sovereignty of God', even by name?

The points of the so called 'TULIP' are seen by many as having a *negative bias*. Yet they were historically taught as *positive*. For example, so called '*Irrestistable Grace*' is characterised as a negative term by Arminians, but historically it was taught by the great evangelists and Puritans as a positive '*Effectual Calling*'. Who can deny this in John 6:37-40?: '***ALL that the Father giveth me SHALL COME to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out...³⁹ And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day...***'

We admit to a dislike of the term '*Irrestistable Grace*' partly because of the way it is misunderstood today; but '*Effectual Calling*' as it was historically taught clearly defines Grace and is a positive truth taught in Scripture.

Similarly, so called '*Limited Atonement*' was taught as a positive '*Particular Redemption*' and this was *not* '*limited*'! John Ecob uses the scripture 1John 2:2 – that Christ was a '***propitiation...for the sins of the whole world***' - a fact that historic 'Calvinists' do not deny! '*Particular Redemption*' as taught by Charles Spurgeon and others, teaches that the *blood* of Jesus is *sufficient* for *all* humans to be saved. But it *will* in the end be *effective* for only some, (considering '*few*' will *ultimately* be saved). If Jesus died for *all* men, then how come *all* men aren't saved? Has He failed in some way? It is an unassailable fact that Jesus' death was not *effective* for all.

Jesus himself said '***I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep***', (Jn.10:11) and '***For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified***', (Heb.10:14). (See also Matt.20:28; 1Cor.15:22; Matt.1:21; Rev.5:9,10...)

The 20th Century has seen a massive and wholesale departure from the Doctrines of Grace that were once taught by *most*. Church history is being misrepresented. Many of the denominations need to go back and look at their roots! The Baptists would find that their roots were in the Doctrines of Grace! Baptists would simply call their predecessors 'Calvinists' because the early Baptist Confessions were 'Calvinistic' as is seen in the most early *London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*. *The Baptists held to this system quite consistently until about 1800!* At this point there was a compromise on the issue of Predestination and the atonement - toward more Arminian thinking. This was partly due to the Wesleyan influence and the movement of Finney, Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell.

Some Baptist publications have consistently misrepresented church history and attempted to convince readers that 'Calvinism' was a new heresy and a departure from the normal and early Baptist beliefs. This is simply untrue and even a shallow reading of the early Baptist history and their Confessions will dispel this myth.

We in this ministry do not teach a 'TULIP' or any other system named 'Calvinism', since these are mostly so badly misrepresented and are only man's explanations of a refutation issued at the Synod of Dort. But the following are what we have held to for many years and we have had no one as yet refute these 'points':

1. God chooses man in salvation. Man does not choose God. (Eph.1:4,5; Jn.15:16; Rom.3:11).
2. Man is unable to come to God of himself for salvation unless the Holy Spirit draws him first (Rom.8:6,7; Rom.3:10- 11; Jer.17:9; Is.64:6,7). Only by the drawing of the Holy Spirit will the '*all*' that the father has given, come (Jn.6:37).
3. God elects, chooses His people of His own determination (Eph.1:5,9,11; 1Thess.1:4; 1Pet.1:2,10; Tit.1:1; Rom.8:33; 11:5,7; Col.3:12; Rom.9:15-18; Gal.1:15,16; Jn.6:37; 5:21...etc)
4. The blood of Jesus is *sufficient* for *all* humans to be saved. But it will in the end be *effective* for only *some*, considering '*few*' will ultimately be saved. (Jn.10:11-15; Heb. 10:14; Matt.20:28; 1Cor.15:22; Matt.1:21; Rev.5:9,10)

The majority of historic preachers, evangelists, revivalists, theologians were all 'Calvinistic' in that *they taught these same doctrines* - John Newton, John Wycliffe, Martyn Luther, John Knox, John Owen, John Bunyan, William Carey, Murray McCheyne, John Bradford, William Tyndale, Jonathan Edwards, Spurgeon, Whitefield, David Brainerd, John Eliot, John Paton, Augustus Strong, Charles Hodge, BB Warfield, James Boyce, Matthew Henry, John Gill; Robert Haldane, JC Ryle, DL Moody, Martyn Lloyd Jones...It has been said that every martyr held to the Doctrines of Grace: John Huss, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, John Hooper, John Foxe (wrote the Foxe's book of martyrs), etc.

Where did Spurgeon the Baptist ‘Prince of Preachers’ stand when he preached: *‘There is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called ‘Calvinism’. It is a nickname to call it ‘Calvinism’; ‘Calvinism’ is the Gospel. If we do not preach Justification by Faith, without works; nor unless we preach the Sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the Cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel that lets saints ‘fall away’ after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus - such a gospel I abhor.’* (Sermon on The Doctrines of Grace)

Where did George Mueller stand on ‘election’: *‘Before this period I had been much opposed to the doctrine of election, particular redemption and final persevering grace; so much so that, a few days after my arrival at Teignmouth, I called election a devilish doctrine. I did not believe I had brought myself to the Lord, for that was too manifestly false; but yet I held that I might have finally resisted. And further, I knew nothing about the choice of God’s people; and did not believe that the child of God, when once made so, was safe for ever. In my fleshly mind I had repeatedly said, ‘If once safe I could prove that I am a child of God for ever, I might go back into the world for a year or two, and then return to the Lord, and at last be saved.’*

*‘I was brought to examine these precious truths by the Word of God. Being made willing to have no glory of my own in the conversion of sinners...I went to the Word, reading the New Testament from the beginning with a particular reference to these truths. To my great astonishment I found that the passages which speak decidedly for election and persevering grace were about four times as many as those which speak apparently against these truths; and even those few, shortly after, when I examined them, served to confirm me in the above doctrines.’**

Author and lecturer, R.C. Sproul, confirms the tension between thinking as a human or trusting a divine antimony: *‘Everybody knows that the Bible speaks of predestination, that the word wasn’t invented by Calvin or Edwards or Luther or Augustine. And so if a Christian wants to be biblical, that person must have some doctrine of predestination. It’s unavoidable. It’s part of the text. It’s part of the content of the Scriptures. It’s a doctrine, by the way, that I fought against more strenuously than any other doctrine of the Bible for the first five years of my Christian life...it was finally Paul’s letter to the Romans that not only convinced me of my errors with respect to this doctrine, but also dusted off the spot where I had previously stood...*

Let’s close our eyes for a minute and blot out my voice, the voice of Calvin, the voice of Edwards, the voice of Arminius and everybody else. Listen to the Apostle Paul. Imagine if you would that the Apostle Paul is in here speaking right now and you’ve invited him to unpack this difficult doctrine of election. And you heard him saying it’s not of works, but of God who calls according to His purpose (Rom.9:11-13). And now you hear the Apostle Paul asking you a rhetorical question...‘What then, is there unrighteousness in God?’ (Rom.9:14a)...

I’ve never spoken on the issue without someone coming up to me and saying, ‘It just doesn’t seem right. It doesn’t seem fair that before all eternity - before anybody’s done any good or evil - that God determines sovereignly that some of these people are going to be saved, and others are not going to be saved. That’s not fair’. It certainly would seem that the doctrine of election would indicate that there is some kind of unrighteousness in God. Now let me say this: no advocate of the Arminian view of predestination and election has ever had anyone come up to them after they have given their view and said to them, ‘Hey that’s not fair. That doesn’t seem right’. Because it seems eminently fair, doesn’t it? If God’s election is based upon our choice, right or wrong, who’s going to quarrel with that? But the very fact that the apostle raises this hypothetical objection says to me...that Paul was anticipating certain objections from his readers. And he pulls the plug on the objection. Before they can raise it, he raises it for them: ‘What then, is there unrighteousness in God? It sure seems like it’. What does he say? ‘Well, maybe a little bit’? That’s not what he says!...One translation says, ‘By no means!’. I like the stronger version: ‘God forbid that there’s any unrighteousness in God!’

...Election from all eternity is election that takes place prior to the fall, but in light of the fall. God is selecting His people from a mass of fallen humanity. And He says, ‘From that mass of fallen people, I am going to exercise My saving grace that the purpose of My election might stand, and I’m going to save some of

them...Again if God elected to save everybody, nobody would murmur, nobody would complain...But for reasons we don't know, God chooses to limit salvation to the elect. So some people get this magnificent grace about which we're speaking, and the others get injustice at the hands of God? No. Again, you have a whole universe filled with guilty people - God gives some grace, and the rest He gives justice. Nobody gets injustice!' (R.C. Sproul, 2002 Conference, Master's College. Underlining ours)

Spurgeon spoke of the folly of attempting to reconcile two 'friends' - the doctrine of the responsibility of man to repent; and the sovereign calling, election and predestination by God. This is the heart of the debate and this is where man is found attempting to reconcile with logic and emotion that which cannot be fully comprehended by man!

To all those who oppose Election, Predestination and the historic and scriptural Doctrines of Grace, let one of the greatest soul winning evangelists in history speak – Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *'Men hate election just as thieves hate Chubb's patent locks; because they cannot get at the treasure themselves, they therefore hate the guard which protects it. Now election shuts up the precious treasure for God's covenant blessings for his children - for penitents, for the seeking sinners. These men will not repent, will not believe; they will not go God's way, and then they grumble and growl, and fret, and fume, because God has locked the treasure up against them. Let a man once believe that all the treasure within is his, and then the stouter the bolt, and the surer the lock, the better for him.*

Oh, how sweet it is to believe our names were on Jehovah's heart and graven on Jesus hands before the universe had a being! May not this electrify a man of joy and make him dance for very mirth? Chosen of God ere time began.

Come on, slanderers! Rail on as pleases you. Come on thou world in arms! Cataracts of trouble descend if you will, and you, ye floods of affliction, roll if so it be ordained, for God has written my name in the book of life. Firm as this rock I stand, though nature reels and all things pass away. What consolation then to be called; for if I am called, then I am predestined.' ('Predestination and Calling' by Charles Spurgeon)

Most importantly, where does God stand in all this? We dare not argue about God's choosing in Election and Predestination or we will be found arguing with God. His reply will be thus: *'What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid...I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth...Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?'* (Rom.9:14-21)

Terry Arnold & Mike Claydon

(For more on the Doctrines of Grace, election, predestination, etc, this ministry has available a series of five short studies by Terry Arnold - free by e-mail; or by hardcopy (Postage/photocopy \$9)

* 'The George Muller Treasury' edited by Roger Steer, P.33; 'A Narrative of some of the Lord's Dealings with George Muller' by Muller, Nisbet Volume 1, 1869