

## Book Review

### 'What Love Is This? Calvinism's Misrepresentation of God' by Dave Hunt

We have been supporters of Dave Hunt's ministry and read many of his books over the years. Hunt has written many exacting and timely works on Roman Catholicism, Islam and other extremes and excesses within the church, including false Pentecostal teaching.

Thus Hunt's latest publication *'What Love Is This'* is a surprise. This book is an all out attack on Calvinism, Calvin and other Reformers. Authors such as Jay Adams, John Armstrong, D.A. Carson, Horton, John Knox, Martin Luther, John MacArthur, John Piper, RC Sproul, James White and Robert Zins, to name a few, are quoted and exposed as Calvinists 'misrepresenting God'. Hunt says of Charles Spurgeon that he '*couldn't seem to make up his mind...Spurgeon should have stayed with Biblical exegesis...Spurgeon stooped to twisting Scripture to his own ends*', (P.177). Hunt calls one of Spurgeon's quotes '*nonsense*'. Although Hunt says '*care is being taken to be certain that Calvinism is fairly presented...*', leading Calvinists are currently hotly refuting that Hunt has represented Calvinism and the Reformers fairly. It is true that Hunt was advised by friends and advisors not to print the manuscript because many believed it was full of errors and not a fair representation of true Calvinism or the Reformers.

The book addresses the so called 'five points' (**TULIP**) of Calvinism: **T**otal Depravity; **U**nconditional Election; **L**imited Atonement; **I**rresistible Grace; and **P**erseverance of the saints.

Many Calvinists who have read this book say Hunt has described more Calvinistic extremes than true Calvinism. There are no doubt many readers who would call themselves Calvinists who do not believe the Bible explicitly teaches that God predestines people to Hell. Yet Hunt consistently and repeatedly makes this charge against Calvinists and Calvinism. In lurid language he says '*Calvinism presents a God who fills Hell with those whom he could save but instead damns them because He does not love them*', (P.116). However, Hunt's charge here is repulsive to Calvinists and it confuses love with justice. Throughout the entire book Hunt continually asks the question '*why did he [God] select them to salvation and damn all the rest?*' Yet in apparent contradiction Hunt follows this with: '*Biblically there is no question that God has the right to save whom He will and no one could complain*' (P.198); and later that '*God sets the rules to satisfy the rules for His justice*' (P.205); and salvation is '*on His terms*', (P.240). Yet Hunt throughout the entire book continues the line of questioning: '*The fact that the potter can do with the clay what he pleases does not excuse the potter from promising perfection to each lump of clay and then discarding many, if not most, onto the rubbish heap*', (P.209). But what does God say?: '***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 honor, and another unto dishonor?***', (Rom.9:20,21).

Hunt appears to confuse *desire* and *judgement*. Desire is a positive term. Judgement and wrath are negative. God does not 'desire' that billions perish and Calvinists do not generally take this position. God's judgment against sin is not a matter of desire, it is a matter of *law*. God's law demands punishment of sin. Any person outside of Christ is *already* under God's wrath. Hunt fails to acknowledge that without Christ's sacrifice, we were all *destined* to Hell! Yet Hunt says: '*there is no disputing that God would be just in damning the entire human race*'; but in other places he says the notion that God would predestine any to hell is '*unfair*'. We were left confused.

Hunt says that Calvinism lessens zeal to reach the lost, (P.30). But did Spurgeon and the great revivalists lack 'zeal'? Hunt says: '*why plead with or warn or preach to those whose response has been foreordained from eternity past?*', (P.194). The answer Calvinists (including Spurgeon) give to this is seemingly ignored by Hunt: Calvinists say they do not know who the 'elect' are and so they preach Christ to all as the Scripture commands!

Hunt associates Calvinism with '*intellectualism*' and describes it as '*legalistic*', (P.17). Hunt says that '*Calvinists insist that it requires special (and apparently lengthy) preparation for anyone to become qualified to examine that peculiar [Calvinist] doctrine...*' Hunt gives no examples here, and the word '*peculiar*' is again a strange description considering almost all the Reformers, revivalists and church leaders to the 19th Century were Calvinistic.

Yet Hunt says: *'Calvinism and the controversies surrounding it have confronted Protestants for more than four hundred years.'* But was not Calvinism the *norm* for the Reformation and hundreds of years beyond? The 'five points' of Calvinism were actually formulated not by Calvin but by European Protestant reformers *in response* to the 'five points' of Arminianism. After 154 sessions over 7 months they concluded the new 'five points of Arminianism' to be 'heretical' and so drew up 'five points' to refute the followers of the deceased Arminius. It is therefore not a doctrine in and of itself, but a refutation of a doctrinal heresy!

Hunt relentlessly attacks and quotes Arthur Pink and others whose works not all 'Calvinists' would agree with entirely. Yet *all* are lumped into the same box and Calvinism is blamed for causing *'many to turn away from the God of the Bible as from a monster'*, (P.287).

Spurgeon is quoted throughout the book as not believing in 'Limited Atonement'. Unfortunately the quotes used are not referring to 'Limited Atonement' at all but to the fact that the blood of Jesus merits (and is totally adequate for) the salvation of all. On page 241 Hunt says *'Certainly Spurgeon rejected it [Limited Atonement] as a heresy'*. However, Hunt fails to continue the quote to the next page of Spurgeon's work where he refers to Hunt's position as *'a thousand times more repulsive than any of those consequences which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of special and particular redemption'*! Despite what this author or the readers might think of 'Calvinism', Spurgeon was unequivocally a 'Calvinist' and often mentioned the *'five points of Calvinism' as the 'strong old doctrines'*. A quick scan of the relevant materials at <http://www.spurgeon.org/> reveals how wrong Hunt is on Spurgeon. One clear example of Spurgeon's belief in 'particular redemption' is found at [www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0181.htm](http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0181.htm)

Of most alarm in this book are the *contradictions*. Hunt says that Calvinists are saved but that Calvinism presents a *'different God'* and a *'different gospel'*. One wonders how Calvinists could then be saved according to 2Corinthians 11:4 and Galatians 1:6 which speak of the 'curse' of 'another Gospel'?

Hunt repeatedly states that Calvinism and Calvin make God the author of every event including sin and that *'God imposes His will upon'* those who would be saved, (P.373). He says: *'Most Calvinists teach that in his sovereignty God gave the ten commandments, caused men to break them, then damn him for doing what God caused him to do'*, (P.338). Again, this is not a fair representation of Calvinism.

Hunt's attacks on Calvin's life and character are vehement. Calvin is called *'immature'* and *'the Protestant Pope'*, (P.118,313). However, it is what is not said about Calvin that shows Hunt's book to be unbalanced. Any fair, accurate and scholarly work on Calvin's life, such as John T. McNeill's *'The History and Character of Calvinism'* (Oxford, 1967), will fill in the gaps that Hunt leaves vacant. Dr. James White, who Hunt attacks in almost every chapter, has responded to the book: *'You continue your tirade against Calvin, seemingly thinking, for some reason, that this is relevant to the issue at hand - the exegesis of John 6...to create in the mind of your reader such a level of prejudice as to guarantee their acceptance of your conclusions without any fair consideration of the facts at hand. Such is, as I noted above, reprehensible on any level. Christian authors are to be men of truth, and are to eschew such dishonest methodologies'*. Hunt debated James White on radio in 2000, (the tapes of this are available from *Alpha & Omega Ministries* in the U.S.), during which Dave debated from an emotional and logical view of the love of God. He often extrapolates from a *logical* point derived from Calvinism. For example: since man is incapable of saving himself therefore God, who caused all to sin but allows some men to believe, does not love all men and God is, quote; *'pleased to damn billions'*, (P.42). Such logic goes beyond Scripture and beyond what Calvinists actually believe.

In castigating Calvin and his character for his involvement in the trial of heretics, Hunt fails to inform readers that the death penalty for heresy was common place at that time. Hunt makes Calvin personally responsible for the death of an anti-trinitarian heretic Michael Servetus. However, it was the Geneva Town Council who sentenced Servetus. Calvin was not a member of the Council at the time and some of its leading members were actually opposed to Calvin's influence in Council affairs!

Other statements attributed to Calvin are exaggerated. Hunt claims that Calvin attempted to establish 'a beachhead for Christ's kingdom on earth in Geneva in the absence of Christ', (P.62). Unfortunately Calvin is not here to answer this charge but we think the reader will see it as unwarranted and highly speculative. Hunt says that *'Calvinists have hijacked the Reformation'*. But how can this be when the Reformers were overwhelmingly Calvinistic? Hunt quotes Calvin as being a 'Roman Catholic' who believed in the

‘Holy Catholic Church’, (P.36). But Hunt does not tell his readers that the phrase ‘Holy Catholic church’ here does not mean the Roman Catholic religion but was a common expression referring to the universal church (Catholic means ‘universal’ as we all know).

Concerning doctrinal issues, Hunt has difficulty with Acts 13:48 ‘**...and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed**’. He says ‘*many Greek scholars call it a wrong translation*’, yet he does not reveal who these Greek scholars are. He re-translates this verse to ‘*as many as were disposed toward eternal life*’. Interestingly nearly all versions have the word ‘*ordained*’ or ‘*appointed*’ and some ‘*destined*’ or ‘*chosen*’. Beginning with the King James version Hunt has rejected all of the published translations. The only version we could find that reflects Hunt’s translation is the *Jehovah Witness New World Translation!* Which has ‘*and all those who were rightly disposed for everlasting life became believers.*’

In support of his translation, he quotes *Liddell and Scott* which is not a Koine Greek or New Testament Lexicon. Hunt has also failed to acknowledge that *Liddell and Scott* do give ‘*ordain*’ as the meaning of the applicable ‘*τασσο*’, (section III, number 2: ‘*appoint, ordain, order, prescribe*’).

One of the most confusing points is Hunt’s view that man can seek God for salvation. This would defy Scripture. Romans 3:11 says: ‘**There is none...that seeks after God**’. It was God who *chose* us (Jn.15:16; 2Thess.2:13) and *sought* us...‘**For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost**’, (Lk.19:10). The Scriptures Hunt uses are practically all from the Old Testament and mostly from Psalms and Chronicles where *believers* and *Jews* are being spoken to, (P.347,348). Seldom does Hunt use a New Testament Scripture. Acts 17:24-27 and Hebrews 11:6 are mentioned briefly but the first of these passages portrays a hypothetical wishing that man ‘*would*’ seek God, and the Hebrews text is addressed to believers. Yet further into the book Hunt makes the statement: ‘*No one naturally seeks the Lord*’, (P.339). Again, contradictory and confusing.

The most baffling part of these writings is Hunt’s exegesis of John 6:37,40,44. Hunt says ‘*All that the Father giveth me*’ does not say that ‘*all that the father draws shall come to me.*’ Nor does ‘*No man can come to me, except the father...draw him*’ say that *all that the father draws come to Christ...*’ However, this is really a mere play on words. These passages speak for themselves. No amount of redefining can change the Sovereignty of God in that *noone can come unless drawn*. Yet Hunt continues for many pages trying with misapplied logic to change what is the obvious meaning of the text.

The book boasts of an array of ‘*exceptional endorsements*’ including Charismatics and Pentecostals such as Chuck Smith and Joseph Chambers. Hunt says he does not consider ‘*divergent views*’ to be ‘*normal or acceptable*’, (P.28). Yet Hunt’s agent in Australia distributing his books is a Pentecostal and a ‘*moderate*’ Calvinist by his own admission!

The *Christian Research Network* in England wrote of the confusion now surrounding Hunt’s ministry: ‘*...the latest conference ‘hook up’ - between Dave Hunt and Jacob Prasch...confusion and compromise seem to be the hallmark of this strange tie-up which has upset supporters of both camps. In addition, Philip Powell’s Victoria state based Christian Witness Ministries (CWM) has been appointed sole agent for the sale of Hunt’s materials in Australia...unlike Hunt, Powell describes himself as a ‘moderate Calvinist’...yet Powell is selling Hunt’s book!...no wonder some supporters of their ministries are bemused...Powell even claims to believe in the historic evangelical doctrine of Sola Scriptura, a doctrine emptied of any real meaning of course, when one believes God is still giving new revelation through contemporary prophetic utterance....*’ (CRN News No.15, 2002).

Unfortunately, too many followers of Hunt and this book will now be fired up to attack Calvin, Calvinism and the Reformers. As one writer recently opined: ‘*[Hunt] has handed them rifles filled with blanks*’. We in this ministry believe this book will divide Christians unnecessarily and do much damage to the pillars of the Reformation. Far from the book being about ‘*Calvinism’s Misrepresentation of God*’ it may well be Hunt’s misrepresentation of Calvinism, Calvin and the Reformation.

**Mike Claydon**