

# **A REVIEW OF DAVE HUNT'S *WHAT LOVE IS THIS? CALVINISM'S MISREPRESENTATION OF GOD***

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## **I. AN OVERVIEW**

One would think that the debate over the doctrines of Calvinism, which has gone on for four hundred years, would have subsided by now. Yet, books on the subject continue to appear. Most of them, however, are from the Presbyterian/Reformed or “Sovereign Grace Baptist” points of view. It was a pleasant surprise, therefore, to see that the well-known author and director of The Berean Call Ministry, Dave Hunt, has penned a reply to the doctrines of Calvinism.

*What Love is This?* has twenty-three short chapters (10–24 pages) with numerous headings within each chapter to further organize the material. There is an extremely detailed table of contents that gives the name and page number of the sections in each chapter. The book is well-documented, with endnotes. Although Calvinism, with its maze of theological jargon, can at times be a difficult subject to understand, *What Love is This?* is not overly technical. Hunt does a good job of explaining in layman’s terms what Calvinism actually teaches and how it contradicts the Bible. There is a Scripture Index, but no index of persons or topics. All Scripture is quoted from the King James Version, and, except for two references to “erroneous renderings” (pp. 54, 210), a reference to God as “Jahweh” (p. 291), and some scattered references to some Greek and Hebrew words, the King James Version is followed throughout. Although Hunt does occasionally quote other non-Calvinists for their explanation of a particular facet of Calvinism, he relies on Scripture to answer the claims of Calvinists. There are an abundance of quotes from Calvinists, including an assortment of Calvinism’s modern proponents

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like R. C. Sproul, John Piper, and James White. However, whether this means that Calvinists will not raise their perennial cry that they have been misrepresented is doubtful. When quoting Calvin himself, it is unfortunate, though, that Hunt uses the older English translation of Calvin's *Institutes* by Henry Beveridge instead of the newer one by Ford Lewis Battles (Westminster Press, 1960). He does, however, reference Calvin's *Institutes* by book, chapter, and paragraph, so at least Calvin's quotes can be looked up in either edition.

After two introductory chapters, there are four chapters centered on John Calvin, Augustine, and Arminius that provide some needed historical background information. This is followed by chapters on each of the five points of Calvinism, with additional chapters in between each point that relate to or expand on the point under discussion. One chapter in particular gathers together some pivotal Scriptures (Rom 9:13, 18, 22; John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:4, 4:10; Heb 2:9; 2 Pet 3:9) for a brief analysis. The longest chapter is on Calvinism's third point, Limited Atonement, a doctrine that even some Calvinists reject.

## II. STRENGTHS

Hunt rightly traces Calvinism, not back to the Bible, but back to Augustine, and shows the influence of Augustine on Calvin. He quickly points out in the first few chapters some of the standard tactics used by Calvinists to garner sympathy for their views: claiming that they are being misrepresented, appealing to the great Calvinistic Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and classifying all non-Calvinists as Arminians. Hunt also raises two issues that Calvinists would rather he didn't: the difficulty that the average person has in understanding the arcane maze of theology that is Calvinism, and the fact that even Calvinists don't agree among themselves (or with Calvin) on the finer points of their doctrine.

*What Love is This?* exposes the major errors of Calvinism and refutes them, albeit briefly, using Scripture instead of confusing theological jargon. Hunt takes on the Calvinistic notions that Calvinism is the gospel, foreknowledge really means foreordination, God has ordained everything which transpires in history, God knows only what He has decreed, faith is an irresistible gift, the depravity of man means that man has the inability to respond to the gospel, a man must be regenerated *before* exercising faith in Christ, Christ died only for the "elect,"

assurance of salvation is to be sought in persevering in good works, and that election and predestination refer to salvation itself. On this latter point, however, although Hunt connects election and predestination with things that accompany salvation, rather than with salvation itself, he still labors under the misconception that foreknowledge is the reason for election and predestination (pp. 197, 220, 225, 229, 231, 232, 234), instead of foreknowledge being in harmony with them, a point he raises only once (p. 225). Hunt also seems to concede that election and predestination took place before the foundation of the world.

The theme of the book is its subtitle: Calvinism's misrepresentation of God. Hunt shows that Calvinism misrepresents God's love, decrees, sovereignty, will, grace, nature, character, knowledge, foreknowledge, gospel, and, of course, His Word.

### III. WEAKNESSES

Although the overall content of *What Love is This?* is accurate and helpful, the book is marred throughout by factual, stylistic, and typographical errors. The Calvinist Robert Morey is misquoted (p. 316). The theologian *Dabney* is misspelled "Dabny" (p. 374). The word *Baptist* is misspelled "Baptism" (p. 430). The endorsement by Tim LaHaye that appears at the beginning of the book is misquoted on the front cover. Calvin's protagonist *Servetus* is misspelled "Servitus" (p. 314). It is debatable whether Bishop Davenant was "one of the greatest experts on ecclesiastical history" (p. 19). The words *election* and *predestination* are not "used interchangeably in Scripture" (p. 219). Augustine did not join the Roman Catholic Church (p. 33). Erasmus did not publish a "translation of the New Testament in Greek" (p. 171). John Bunyan was not one who "opposed Calvinism" (p. 19). The title of Edward Gibbon's historical work is misstated (p. 73). Stefan Zweig's book *The Right to Heresy* does not contain the word *Erasmus* in the title, and the quote taken from Zweig comes from page 57 of his work rather than 207-208, as the endnote indicates (p. 73). The word *Berea* is misspelled "Berean" (p. 420). The Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon did not reject Limited Atonement (p. 19). The quote ascribed to John Wesley (p. 221) is actually from his mother, Susanna Wesley. The quote from Duncan (p. 25) is from page 10 of his book, not page 10.25 (p. 31). The word *Doctrines* in the titles of two books is printed as the singular "Doctrine" (pp. 422, 425). Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* were

adopted in 1541, not 1561 (obviously following a typo from the first printing of my book, *The Other Side of Calvinism*, which was corrected in the second printing). Calvin's *Institutes* first appeared in Latin in 1536, not 1586 (p. 419). The demonstrative pronoun *touto* from Ephesians 2:8 is wrongly transliterated *tauto* (p. 362). Additionally, the quote on the same page ascribed to F. F. Bruce not only doesn't appear on pp. 220-21 of Bruce's work, as related in Hunt's endnote (p. 376), it also doesn't appear under Bruce's discussion of Eph 2:8.

Besides these factual errors, the endnotes have assorted inconsistencies and formatting errors, in addition to using the archaic term *op cit*. The same is true of the Bibliography. There is too much use of ellipsis and brackets. For some unknown reason, an attempt was obviously made to capitalize the word *scripture* only when it occurred in the singular, but even this was not consistently followed (pp. 267, 280, 322). Books of the Bible are spelled out instead of abbreviated when Scripture quotations are cited.

Unfortunately, the book also suffers from numerous annoying typesetting flaws. The book abounds with unnecessary spaces before endnote numbers, between words, quotations, and bibliographical entries, and before and after dashes and slashes. This is augmented by the fact that no words are hyphenated at the end of lines. The bottom margin of each page varies greatly—but the text is generally way too close to the physical bottom of the page. To avoid beginning a new page at the end of a chapter, the font of the endnotes is sometimes noticeably reduced even though blank pages appear at the end of the book and between some chapters.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

It is high time that Calvinism is exposed for what it is: a theological aberration that has deceived many erstwhile and contemporary preachers and theologians. Will this book by Dave Hunt convert the Calvinist from the error of his way? Probably not. It should, however, help keep many from straying in that theological direction. Although Tim LaHaye is probably a little presumptuous in his claim that “this book could well be the most important book written in the twenty-first century for all evangelical Christians,” in spite of its deficiencies, *What Love is This?* is still an admirable introduction to the flaws in the doctrines of Calvinism.