

What Love Is This?
Calvin's Misrepresentation of God

A Review

By

Justin T. Alfred

Introduction

I want to say first of all that this review is not an apology for or against Calvinism, but rather an apology for the integrity of God's Word and the truth contained therein. Neither Calvinism, nor Arminianism, nor any other 'ism', nor any one man, nor group of men and their respective teaching is the standard or grid by which we judge the truth of God's Word. God's Word alone is our one and only standard as the Holy Spirit opens to us its "riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Romans 11:33). On the other hand, the writings of other men, church councils, synods, etc., can be of great assistance in helping us to understand the Scriptures, but their writings are merely just that, their writings, and not the inspired Word of God. Therefore, as significant as the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is as a systematic theology, neither that, nor any other systematic theology will be appealed to as the ultimate standard for this review. That which will be the ultimate standard of judgment will be the Word of God. On the other hand, where Mr. Hunt does make reference to the writings of other men, then those writings will be examined, as much as the space for this review will allow, in order to verify Mr. Hunt's accuracy in representing his sources. But, once again, that which will be the final arbiter in matters of doctrine will be the Word of God, not TULIP, or any other codified, theological system associated with a particular denominational group.

The approach for this review, therefore, will be to examine Mr. Hunt's book in three specific areas: the literary form and content; the historical analysis; and the biblical analysis (including linguistic and theological analysis). I will definitely draw some conclusions as a result of my reading and analysis, but you, the reader, will make your own judgment of his book as you too examine the various areas covered in this review through prayer, the Word and your own discernment.

Literary Form & Content

Mr. Hunt's Motive & Passion for Writing the Book

Mr. Hunt is in no way attempting to give an unbiased analysis of Calvinism, but rather his aim and purpose, from the very beginning, is to eviscerate Calvinism in every way he can. His motive and passion for writing this book is clearly described on the very last page in the last three paragraphs of his book:

My heart has been broken by Calvinism's misrepresentation of the God of the Bible whom I love, and for the excuse this has given to atheists not to believe in

Him. My sincere and earnest desire in writing this book has been to defend God's character against the libel that denies His love for all and insists that He does not make salvation available to all because he does not want all to be saved. It is my prayer that readers will recognize that Christian authors and leaders, ancient and modern and no matter how well respected, are fallible and that God's Word is our only authority. . . .

It is my prayer that Calvinist readers who may have gotten this far have been fully persuaded to misrepresent no longer the God of love as having predestined multitudes to eternal doom while withholding from them any opportunity to understand and believe the gospel. How many unbelievers have rejected God because of this deplorable distortion we do not know – but may that excuse be denied everyone from this time forth! And may believers, in confidence that the gospel is indeed glad tidings for *all* people, take God's good news to the whole world! (Hunt, 414)

His heart's concern is also clearly stated in chapter one of his book where he describes a conversation he had with some people after a speaking engagement, and in particular with a young woman who was a pastor's wife. Mr. Hunt graphically describes the pain and confusion brought to her life through her husband's pursuit of Calvinism. Her husband had been a pastor and had a fruitful ministry until he began to study and promote Calvinism. He ultimately was removed from his pastorate because of his teaching Calvinistic doctrine, and Mr. Hunt says, "The Calvinism which had once seemed so satisfying began to haunt him with uncertainty as to whether he was one of the elect" (Hunt, 17).

Beginning on page 382-411, Mr. Hunt weaves in the fashion of a novel a fictional account of a pastor and his wife, named Al and Jan, who become embroiled in Calvinism. He takes us through their happy days until Al, influenced by his pastor, begins to delve into Calvinism, which in turn leads to great turmoil, confusion and uncertainty even about his salvation. Then Mr. Hunt takes us through a systematic rebuttal of TULIP as Al begins to search the Scripture and comes to the truth, which is a denial of TULIP and of all that Calvinism stands for. As you read this narrative, all that Mr. Hunt has said in the previous pages in his denunciation of Calvinism is consolidated using Al and Jan as his examples of what he sees as the real life consequences of Calvinism in people's lives. Thus, what comes across in the beginning and end of Mr. Hunt's book is his heartfelt desire to see people delivered from what he considers to be an unbiblical (Hunt, 369), perhaps even cultic (Hunt, 395) religious system that actually believes in a different God than the God of the Bible (Hunt, 373).

Therefore, in attempting to put myself into Mr. Hunt's 'shoes' and see this issue from his perspective, I am certain, after reading his book, that Mr. Hunt believes in his heart that he was totally objective in his presentation. However, I was able to observe throughout his book that he was guilty of many of the things he accused Calvinists of doing. For example, Mr. Hunt accuses Calvinists of "unbiblical twisting of Scripture" (Hunt, 358), and he points out, in his opinion, that Calvin, "contradicted his own theories" (Hunt, 348). Interestingly enough, I found examples in Mr. Hunt's writing of the very same things. In addition, his narrative of Al and Jan reminded me of the stories I heard when I was a young man in a Baptist Seminary about people who experienced the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues'. Indeed, it is absolutely uncanny how identical the format is in Mr. Hunt's account of the horrible and detrimental things that

occurred to Al and Jan because of Calvinism as compared to the horrible and detrimental things that I was told occurred to people who received the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues'. The only things that have changed are the names of the couple and the reasons for the malevolent events that occurred in their lives (i.e., the reason being Calvinism vs. 'speaking in tongues'). On the other hand, were there people who misused and abused the 'gifts of the Spirit' in the early days of the Charismatic Movement, and even still today, and was some of their teaching, both then and now concerning the 'gifts and working of the Spirit', misdirected and imbalanced? Without question, yes, there was and still is abuse and bad teaching in this area. But does that abuse and misdirected teaching invalidate the biblical reality and validity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit ministering in the lives of believers today? No, it does not, anymore than any misdirected and imbalanced teaching related to Calvinism invalidates the biblical truths of man's corrupt nature; of God's unmerited grace, love and mercy toward fallen mankind, who come into a saving relationship with God based solely on His grace, not their works; of the fact that the blood of Jesus is applied only to those who receive Him as their Lord and Savior; of the fact that God, by His Holy Spirit, brings us to a place of conviction of sin, of conviction of the righteousness of Jesus and His love and forgiveness for us, and of conviction of the judgment that awaits us if we refuse Him, so that we become overwhelmed to the point that we no longer want to resist Him and say no, and we surrender to Him and say, 'Yes Lord, I repent and I receive you as my Lord and Savior'; and of the full assurance of salvation and everlasting life to those who are Jesus' 'sheep': "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand" (John 10:27-29).

Thus, that which truly grieves Mr. Hunt is the hurt done to people by what he sees as the imbalanced and misdirected teaching in Calvinism. And once again, the question may be asked, were their people in the early days of the Charismatic Movement, and even today, who have suffered spiritual, mental and emotional anguish because of imbalanced teaching and emphases? Yes, there were and are. But are there many others who have grown in the Lord and been blessed and are a blessing to others through a balanced and biblically centered ministry of the works and ministry of the gifts of the Holy Spirit? Yes, there were and are. And in the same way, have there been people who have suffered spiritual, mental and emotional anguish because of imbalanced teaching and emphases in Calvinistic doctrine? Yes, there have been and are. But on the other hand, are there others who have grown in the Lord and been blessed and are a blessing to others through a balanced and biblically centered ministry concerning those teachings typically associated with Calvinistic doctrine? Yes, there have been and are. And what is even more important, the same can be said of EVERY THEOLOGICAL EMPHASIS in the church today, from soteriology, to eschatology, to ecclesiology, etc. In every one of these areas, examples could be given of spiritual, mental and emotional pain that has resulted in the imbalanced and misdirected teaching in various aspects, but that imbalanced teaching does not abrogate the whole of the doctrinal view, but rather points even more clearly to the need for bringing the whole counsel of God's Word, linguistic analysis and historical research, where applicable, into the picture.

For example, when the six-day, Arab-Israeli war occurred in 1967, I was a junior in college, and the one and only eschatology that was being taught on our campus was the pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture view. Therefore, after Israel won, the proponents of the pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture view were teaching that Jesus would probably be returning within five years. These were primarily leaders who had been trained at Dallas Theological Seminary. The vast majority of the Christian students at that time didn't know enough to challenge that teaching, and this idea of Jesus returning in five years swept through the campus of Mississippi State, causing many students to consider dropping out of school and evangelizing the world in the short time left. I had one close friend who was supposed to graduate in June of 1968, with a BS in Aeronautical Engineering. However, in December of 1967, he was seriously thinking of dropping out of college because he thought it was a waste of time to graduate when Jesus was coming back in five years! After talking and reasoning with him from Scripture for many days, he finally decided not to drop out of school. Now, did the misdirected teaching of those who were leaders and supported a pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture view of eschatology invalidate that whole teaching because of their imbalance? No, it did not. And even though some other of my friends retained spiritual and emotional 'scars' for a long time after that fiasco, does their pain and anguish validate a complete repudiation of the pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture view of eschatology? No, it does not. What it does do, however, is cause all of us to take note of the fact that we must "let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar, . . ." (Romans 3:4).

I could go on and on, but I believe the point is made. That which must be uppermost in any of our studying and research is to take into account the whole counsel of God's Word as much as we are able and to the best of our understanding. Consequently, in viewing the experience of the young pastor's wife whose husband was summarily fired from his church for teaching Calvinism, as well as the fictional account of 'Al and Jan', we all grieve over tragic misdirection and imbalanced teaching, but their experience isn't the whole story. Equally valid accounts could also be given of young pastors and their wives who have been blessed and been a blessing to others through a biblically balanced and Christ-centered teaching that is Calvinistic in nature, as well as a fictional account of another 'Al and Jan' who, unlike their prototypes, have exposure to a positive, balanced and Christ-centered ministry that is also Calvinistic in nature.

Once again, however, I must reiterate that this review and critique is not focused on attempting either to advocate or repudiate TULIP, nor to try and fit in with a prescribed and acceptable, theological framework for those who would see themselves as pro-Calvinist or anti-Calvinist. But, as much as I am able, this review is aimed at looking at Scripture in as honest and open a manner as possible in order to see what the Bible is actually saying concerning some of the issues raised by Mr. Hunt in his book, versus attempting to put a 'twist' and 'garb' on the Scripture from either a pro-Calvinist or anti-Calvinist agenda.

Ad Hominem Attacks

Another very important aspect of the format of Mr. Hunt's book is that it is replete with *ad hominem* attacks against certain individuals whom he feels are key proponents of Calvinism, and his book is laden with biting sarcasm when dealing with many of their

writings and beliefs. In all fairness to Mr. Hunt, his level of criticism is measured at times, being far more gentle and respectful with some, and quite harsh and vitriolic with others. With regard to the latter, I also found it interesting that as he points out the harsh and vitriolic tones used by Luther against Erasmus, and used by Calvin against those with whom he disagreed, he apparently doesn't see himself being guilty of the same in his similar attacks against some of those with whom he disagrees. One example that stood out to me was his remark about Dr. D. James Kennedy. On pages 352-353, Mr. Hunt is pointing out what he feels is a contradiction of Calvinists, and in particular of Dr. Kennedy:

Yet Calvinists often contradict themselves because they slip into an evangelism mode. At times D. James Kennedy, founder of Evangelism Explosion, makes it sound not only as though salvation is available to all but even that faith precedes regeneration: . . . Kennedy trains others to evangelize and in the process contradicts Calvinism: "For if it is true that we must be born again, then it is also true that we may be born again That, my friends, is the *good news*." Does he seriously mean that salvation for the elect alone is *good news for everyone*? . . .

As for Kennedy's "*good*" news, are those who have been predestined to eternal torment expected to rejoice that their doom is sealed and there is nothing that can be done to change it? Can he and other evangelistically inclined Calvinists seriously think their practice matches their belief? (Hunt, 352-353)

Now for those who fully embrace Mr. Hunt's position, they may not see anything wrong with his reference to Dr. Kennedy because they may feel Mr. Hunt is doing what is necessary in order to expose and root out what they consider to be 'heresy' in the church. Thus, they may view Mr. Hunt's sarcasm as totally justified. On the other hand, although I do believe the gospel is for all men and that faith precedes regeneration, I do not consider Mr. Hunt's sarcastic slam against Dr. Kennedy as either appropriate or fitting for a man of Mr. Hunt's stature in the evangelical community today. Dr. Kennedy's Evangelism Explosion is responsible for leading hundreds of thousands, and perhaps even millions of people to a saving faith in Christ over the past almost forty years. All one needs to do is go to Evangelism Explosion's web site at www.eeinternational.org, and you will see their evangelistic heart for the lost around the world, and then you can go to Reclaiming America for Christ's web site at www.reclaimamerica.org and see their commitment to placing themselves on the frontline in the battle to reclaim the very soul of our nation for Christ. You know, with all the incredible evil that is emerging in our nation and the world, this is not the time to be shooting at other evangelicals who are orthodox, Christ-centered and Bible believing brothers and sisters in Christ who are aggressively and effectively sharing the Gospel with a lost and dying world. Thus, even though I might be in agreement more with Mr. Hunt on certain theological issues than I would with Dr. Kennedy, I am completely in opposition to Mr. Hunt's slamming of such men as Dr. Kennedy, while at the same time I completely support Dr. Kennedy's desire to share the Gospel with the whole world.

One more thing about EE, and that is it comprises evangelicals from across all denominational affiliations: Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Assembly of God, Nazarenes, etc. In addition, the Trainers who conduct EE clinics all around the world are from all these various denominations as well. Thus, regardless of whether one may

disagree with certain points of Dr. Kennedy's theology, it appears to me that he is a great example of a Christian leader in our world today who is carrying out II Timothy 4:5: "But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

Formatting in Book

The following area of review deals with spelling, footnotes, references and sources. These are areas in which all of us writers can and do make mistakes, and they can easily be corrected with good proof reading and astute editing. However, that being said, it is still important for you the reader to be aware of these errors so that you can adequately and accurately evaluate the material he presents.

There is only one spelling error I wanted to refer to and that was Mr. Hunt's transliteration into English of the Greek word for *foreknow* on page 227. It is a very slight error, but one that could be misleading for someone who is unfamiliar with the Koine Greek of the New Testament. The word in Greek is προγινώσκω, and the correct form of transliteration is *proginosko*. Mr. Hunt wrote it as *progonisko*. Again, this is not a major error, but one the reader should be aware of if he or she was trying to locate the correct word in a Greek lexicon, or in some other source that would have transliterated material.

With regard to footnotes, on page 77 Mr. Hunt is giving a quote from Arminius concerning predestination. However, as you check out the reference, you find that the correct reference to footnote #22 is: Op. cit. 2:698, not 693. In addition, on the following page, I scoured the references that footnote #'s 26-29 pointed to on page 91 from *The Works of James Arminius*. However, I could not find anything in the references cited in *Arminius* that remotely resembled the quotes given on page 78 where footnotes #26-29 were listed. Now that could be because of my own lack of perception, or it could be that it was incorrectly entered and cited by Mr. Hunt. On pages 369, footnote # 65 is given in the text as though it was from Spurgeon, but on page 376, he cites it as being from Palmer. He then gives footnote #66 twice in the text, but the second usage of it is actually #67, which he correctly gives as coming from Spurgeon on page 376. On page 371, in the text, footnote #68 is attributed to Palmer, but on page 376 it is cited as coming from Spurgeon. Earlier in that same chapter on page 356, he partially cites footnote #25 correctly as Op. cit. IV:xvi, 18, (referring to Calvin's *Institutes*), when in actuality it is 18-19, and footnote #26 is actually IV:xv, 22, not IV:xvi, 18-21 (referring once again to Calvin's *Institutes*). On page 395, he cites footnote #47 as being Calvin op. cit., 71-73, which is apparently the page numbers, but what should have been given is, Calvin op. cit. I:vii, 4-5, which is what he consistently did throughout his book and is the correct form. These are only a few of the footnotes I checked where errors were found. And even though I did check a large number of his footnotes, I was not able to check as many as I would have liked because I didn't have access to all of his bibliographic sources. However, I would cautiously presume that if I found the number of errors I did in the limited sources I checked, there is a good chance that perhaps others also exist.

The other area I would now like to look at is the use of his sources and his utilization of ellipses. Mr. Hunt has a consistent pattern of eliminating important portions of material in his quotations that, if included in his quote in its proper context, would tend to

undermine the position he is trying to establish by the use of the material he is actually quoting. Now here too, all of us as writers can be guilty of this, and I know that at times, I have been guilty of the same thing. However, it behooves us to be as careful and thorough as possible in order to present accurately what our sources are actually saying. I am not saying that in all of his quotations and use of ellipses this is the case, but it is true in many of the ones I checked, and some of those are very crucial with regard to what he is attempting to affirm. Therefore, you, the reader, must make the effort to check out the material he quotes and refers to. In fact, Mr. Hunt says to do as much on the very last page of his book: “It is my prayer that readers will recognize that Christian authors and leaders, ancient or modern and no matter how well respected, are all fallible and that God’s Word is our only authority” (Hunt, 414). I greatly admire Mr. Hunt’s honesty and integrity in making such a statement, and that most certainly applies to checking out the full quotes from the sources he cites.

The first example I want to give you is found on page 36 and footnote # 14 where Mr. Hunt presents a quote from Calvin’s *Institutes* that he implies is from Calvin himself:

Much of his teaching is warmed-over Roman Catholicism. Let those evangelicals who praise Calvin as thoroughly biblical justify, for example, the following from his *Institutes*:

I believe in the Holy Catholic Church . . . whence flow perpetual remission of sins, and full restoration to eternal life.

Indeed, as one reads Mr. Hunt’s statement above about the quote he is going to give, the ordinary reader (and by ‘ordinary’ I mean that reader who is not familiar with Calvin’s writings, let alone anything else from the early church) would conclude that the quote Mr. Hunt is giving is from the original pen of Calvin himself. However, in this instance, the contrary is true. The fact is that what he is quoting is from the *Epitome of the Institutions*, by Gaspar Olevian, and this is contained in “Method and Arrangement” in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*.¹ What is equally important, is that not only is the quote given above by Mr. Hunt not from the pen of Calvin, the first phrase is from the *Apostles’ Creed*:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the
Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was
crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose
again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of
God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the
dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of
saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life
everlasting. AMEN.²

In large part this creed was a statement against Gnosticism, and it was a confession by professing believers as they were approaching the waters of baptism as a testimony of their commitment to the truth handed down by the Apostles. The earliest known version of this dates back to Hippolytus ca. 215 AD, and he used it for new believers who wanted to be baptized.³ This is not a confession of belief in the Roman Catholic Church of the

middle ages, replete with all kinds of corruption, but rather a confession of the ‘universal church’, of which all true believers are a part. Thus, in Latin, *catholic* means *universal*. Gaspar Olevian, therefore, is giving a summation of what is in the *Institutes*. In addition, here, as elsewhere throughout Mr. Hunt’s book, it is not so much what he includes in his quotes, but what he excludes that is of vital importance as well. I want to give you the entire quote from Mr. Olevian, not Calvin, and I believe it will be seen that what Mr. Olevian actually says is somewhat different from what Mr. Hunt portrays:

Since the Holy Spirit does not ingraft all men into Christ, or endue them with faith, and those whom he does so endue he does not ordinarily endue without means, but uses for that purpose the preaching of the Gospel and the dispensation of the Sacraments, together with the administration of all kinds of discipline, the Creed contains the following article, “I believe in the Holy Catholic Church”, namely, that Church which, when lying in eternal death, the Father, by gratuitous election, freely reconciled to himself in Christ, and endued with the Holy Spirit, that, being engrafted into Christ, it might have communion with him as its proper head; whence flow perpetual remission of sins, and full restoration to eternal life. Accordingly the Church is treated of in the first fourteen chapters of the Fourth Book, which thereafter treats of the means which the Holy Spirit employs in calling us effectually from spiritual death, and preserving the Church, in other words, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These means are, as it were, the royal scepter of Christ, by which, through the efficacy of his Spirit, he commences his spiritual reign in the Church, advances it from day to day, and after this life, without the use of means, finally perfects it. This subject is continued to the 20th chapter.⁴

In reading the full quote from which Mr. Hunt took a part (I underlined the portion that he took part of the quote from), I believe it is clear that Mr. Olevian is saying that it is from ‘Christ’, not the Roman Catholic Church mechanism, Who is “its proper head; whence flow perpetual remission of sins, and full restoration to eternal life.” Thus, as best as I can read from the above full quote of Olevian, Jesus is the ‘proper head’ of the Church, and it is from Christ “its proper head; whence flow perpetual remission of sins, and full restoration to eternal life” to those who are part of the ‘Church’, that is, the body of true believers grafted into Christ by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Now Mr. Hunt goes on to quote in footnote #15 an accurate presentation of what Calvin actually says. However, as you go on to read in IV:1, 5, you can see more clearly what Calvin means by saying that “beyond the pale of the Church no forgiveness of sins, no salvation, can be hoped for”⁵:

Paul says that our Savior “ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith; and of the knowledge of the Son of God, into a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:10-13). . . . Let us hold, agreeably to the passage we quoted from Paul, that the Church can only be edified by external preaching, and that there is no other bond by which the saints

can be kept together than by uniting with one consent to observe the order which God has appointed in his Church for learning and making progress.⁶

What is being presented, therefore, by Calvin, is that by the term ‘Church’, he is referring to the body of believers who are in Christ through the indwelling power of His Holy Spirit in their lives. Would I ever use the term ‘Mother’ to describe the church, or would I ever say that “beyond the pale of the Church no forgiveness of sins, no salvation can be hoped for, . . .”? No, I would not. What I would say is that beyond a personal relationship with Jesus, ‘no forgiveness of sins, no salvation can be hoped for’. But in essence, as I read the whole of chapter 1 in Book IV, that is what I see Calvin saying, and furthermore, I do not see Calvin saying in any way, that salvation is any other form but the person of Jesus. I do not see him attempting to resurrect Roman Catholicism, but rather point to the importance of believers functioning together as the body of Christ as described by Paul in the above passage in Ephesians, as well as the exhortation for us as believers in Hebrews 10:23-25:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

Once again, would I word things as Calvin does, or would I place the emphasis on certain things as he does? No, I would not. But Calvin was living in a different time with far different cultural, religious and social concepts than we as evangelicals have today. For one thing, there was no such thing as democracy, and the social legislation and laws of that day reflected that. The social environment and tradition of that day in turn impacted the life and construct of the incipient, evangelical church, in the same way our American lifestyle and traditions have impacted and affect how we interpret and apply biblical truth to our cultural setting. For example, many evangelicals in our country were slave owners at the beginning of our nation, as well as up to and through the Civil War. Culturally they saw absolutely nothing wrong with owning slaves from a biblical perspective because it was condoned and accepted as a part of the normal lifestyle in both the Old and New Testaments. In addition, many people have a very false view of the reason for the Civil War from the South’s perspective. Less than 6 % of whites and freed Blacks owned one or more slaves at the beginning of the Civil War. Thus, what the vast majority of Southerners were fighting for was States Rights, not the continuation of slavery. However, we look back on that time now and it is very hard to imagine how we, as a nation founded on the principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, that “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,” could have ever tolerated slavery. But we must remember that we are asking this question over two hundred years after the fact. How could we have done it? Evangelicals who supported slavery did so because it was a culturally approved part of society at that time, and, as previously stated, it had a biblical basis for its support. The same, therefore, can be said of Calvin with his approach to the Church and many other issues. However, as with slavery, so too with a number of

theological issues facing the Reformers, including the idea of the Church, we have biblically and culturally grown beyond some of their early ideas and beliefs. For one thing, we live under a democracy in the West, which was an unheard of thing at that time. In addition, the Catholic Church had a place of prominence and power that it no longer has today. And thirdly, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and other evangelicals were in the process of establishing a new order of Christianity that has come to be called Evangelicalism. Today, we enjoy the established fruits of Evangelicalism, but then, they were fighting, literally, to stay alive. Therefore, once again, I do not see in any way a desire on Calvin's part in chapter 1 of Book IV to resurrect a corrupt Roman Catholicism into the true Church of called out believers, whose faith is in Jesus for their salvation, not the church machine of Roman Catholicism. Calvin attempts to address this in particular in sections 2 & 3, chapter 1, Book 4, and especially chapter 6, Book 4.

There are two other references that I would like to refer to specifically before going on to another section of this review. The first is chapter 3 in Mr. Hunt's book concerning Calvin's conversion. On page 38, Mr. Hunt says in parentheses that Calvin was converted in the early part of 1533. He then goes on to say:

Moreover, the exact nature of Calvin's conversion, at least up to that point in time, is placed in further question by two known facts. As late as June of 1533 he helped a young woman to gain entrance to a nunnery,²¹ a rather odd thing for a convinced convert to Protestantism to do. Even more peculiar, instead of sending an immediate message withdrawing himself, Calvin kept himself on the payroll of the Roman Catholic Church until a year after he claimed to have been miraculously delivered from the "deep slough" of "obstinate addiction to the superstitions of the papacy." (Hunt, 38-39)

In the above quote, Mr. Hunt takes footnote #21 from *The History & Character of Calvinism*, by John T. McNeill. Mr. Hunt is using McNeill as a source to substantiate that "as late as June of 1533, he helped a young woman to gain entrance to a nunnery, . . .", and thereby bring into question the genuineness and depth of Calvin's commitment to Christ in early 1533, which is when Mr. Hunt asserts Calvin was converted. However, McNeill has an entire chapter dedicated to the discussion of Calvin's conversion, and it is from this chapter Mr. Hunt took his reference in footnote # 21 in the above quote. On the other hand, it appears that Mr. Hunt either completely disregarded everything else McNeill had to say about Calvin's conversion, or he only read the one, brief sentence at the beginning of the paragraph where mention of the nunnery is made. I would encourage you, the reader, to read McNeill's entire chapter on this subject, and you will see a completely different assessment from what Mr. Hunt gives (Chapter VII – *Calvin's Conversion*). The following are a series of sequential quotes from this chapter dealing with the very subject of the date of Calvin's Conversion:

A letter written by Calvin, after his conversion, to Bucer was formerly dated by editors September, 1532. It is now recognized to be of a later year, probably 1534. . . . On 1 November of that year [1533] Cop delivered a rectorial address that startled the old believers into vigorous reaction. The long accepted view,

first published by Beza in 1575, that Calvin was Cop's ghost writer for this discourse has been abandoned by most authorities. . . .

There is preserved in Geneva a copy in Calvin's hand of a part of this daring manifesto, but it is almost certainly not the original draft, nor is the complete copy that rests in Strasbourg the original. Calvin's having transcribed Cop's text need occasion no surprise, in view of the close friendship between them, and from the fact that Calvin shared the unhappy consequences. . . . The assumption of Calvin's authorship breaks down.

We may assume, however, that it substantially represents Calvin's views in the autumn of 1533. If so, had he, as many believe, already experienced the 'conversion'? Since, as we have seen, he refers prominently to his obstinate attachment to the Papacy prior to that event, we naturally look for a repudiation of the Papacy as a mark of its effect. The Papacy is, however, not in question either in this document or in any of Calvin's extant letters of 1533. . . . Cop had temporarily won a victory for Marguerite in the university: he was her champion here with reference to the broad religious policy of France. He avails himself of some Luther material, but the outlook is not that of Luther, or of the latter Calvin. If Calvin approved the utterance he was, we may say, ripe for conversion rather than fresh from it. The date of the *subita conversio* [sudden conversion] must be put later.

All we know of Calvin in 1533 bears testimony that he had not changed his religious allegiance. In June, with Nicholas Cop, he visited a nunnery and interviewed the abbess in order to arrange for the admission to it of a sister of his friend Francois Daniel. On 23 August he was in Noyon attending (though not a member) a session of the chapter, in which it was decided to hold a solemn procession to allay the plague. In October he presented to Daniel a book by Gerard Roussel, Lefevre's eloquent disciple, who had been imprisoned for a short time after Cop's address and who was also of the number of Calvin's friends and correspondents. Neither Roussel nor Daniel ever moved from the position of Lefevre to Protestantism.⁷

The point to be made here is that Mr. Hunt selectively takes what he wants to use from a source that will validate his position, but he will reject from that same source equally valid material that is contextually and intrinsically linked to the material he used, but the latter doesn't coincide with what he wants to substantiate. McNeill states quite clearly, therefore, that Calvin's conversion did not occur in 1533. Thus, on the one hand, Mr. Hunt uses McNeill to substantiate Calvin's help of the young lady to get into the nunnery in June, 1533, and he views that as one among other issues that bring into question both the validity of Calvin's conversion, as well as the depth of that conversion if he was truly saved. But on the other hand, he does not want to use McNeill's statement that Calvin was not converted in 1533 because that would tend to invalidate Mr. Hunt's portrayal of Calvin as an immature, compromising and mercenary type of a person after his conversion, if he was indeed converted at all. McNeill's presentation of all of the above is intrinsically linked together, but Mr. Hunt surgically excises those portions he doesn't like and creates his own picture. This is not an uncommon error to make for those of us who do research, and it is one that I have also committed. However, that is all the more reason for you, the reader, to read this reference, as well as the others of Mr. Hunt, in order for you to come to your own conclusion.

This next example is the last that I want to give of missteps concerning sources and references, and, without question, it is one of the most unfortunate. It is found on page 368 where Mr. Hunt is quoting from a portion of the *Canons of Dort*. This is not an instance of exclusion of important material through the use of ellipses, nor is this an example of his taking a quote from a source to support a specific emphasis, and leaving other, contextually related material out because it would actually undermine his emphasis. This is an example of something that can easily happen to any of us when we are so driven by an agenda to find support for our position that we do not carefully examine a source that may initially appear to support our emphasis, but in reality it does not. Again, this is something that any of us can fall prey to, and, once again, I know I have, but it is also something that we need to encourage one another to avoid as much as possible.

Mr. Hunt is dealing with the whole idea presented by Reformed theology that because of man's 'total depravity', the Holy Spirit must first regenerate him before he can exercise faith to believe. He repeatedly challenges this doctrine throughout his book, referring to a multitude of Scriptures to support his contention. And in my opinion, I believe his arguments against this particular doctrine are some of his strongest, but not in this particular instance. Now although I agree with his position on this issue, his agenda that drives him to thoroughly eviscerate Calvinism in every area has produced on this occasion a rather serious error. I will present the quote as he gives it:

But as man by the fall did not cease to be a creature, endowed with understanding and will, nor did sin which pervaded the whole race of mankind, deprive him of the human nature, but brought upon him depravity and spiritual death; so also the grace of regeneration does not treat man as senseless stocks and blocks, nor takes away their will and its properties, neither does violence thereto; but spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully *ends* it; that where carnal rebellion and resistance formerly prevailed, a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign; in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist. (Hunt, 368)

I *italicized* and underlined the word in question, '*ends*'. If this is not a typo, and based on Mr. Hunt's discussion about this word and its implications in the paragraph following this quote, it doesn't appear that it is, then this is an unfortunate instance of incorrect data being presented as factual. It may be that the source he was using (Lawrence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* [Vance Publications, Pensacola, FL, rev. ed. 1999] 619) incorrectly printed the above quote, and, therefore, Mr. Hunt was simply using what he had. However, the truth of the matter is that the word in question is not '*ends*', but rather, '*bends*'. Mr. Hunt, in the paragraph that follows this quote, says:

The will is a knotty problem for Calvinists, which they massage around but don't solve. Dort offers a strange solution: "the grace of regeneration . . . spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully *ends* [the will] . . ." What an odd "healing" that puts an *end* to what it "heals"! Why wasn't this "ready and sincere spiritual obedience" implanted in Adam and Eve? And now that the elect have this new will through regeneration, why don't they always obey God perfectly? . . .

Even the regenerated have a fleshly will that, despite Dort, apparently wasn't ended at the new birth: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other . . ." (Galatians 5:17) (Hunt, 368)

Thus, regardless of whether one agrees with Dort, what is true is that the Synod never said 'ends', but rather, 'bends'. The actual translation from the Latin that contains this line is: ". . . ita etiam haec divina regenerationis gratia, non agit in hominibus tanquam truncis et stipitibus, nec voluntatem ejusque proprietates tollit, aut invitam violenter cogit, sed spiritualiter vivificat, sanat, corrigit, suaviter simul ac potenter flectit: . . ." ⁸ The translation in English is: ". . . so also this divine grace of regeneration, it does not perform in men as if [they are] lopped tree trunks and blockheads, neither does it take away [their] will and its properties, nor does it violently compel against one's will, but it spiritually gives life, heals, corrects, sweetly and at the same time efficaciously it bends; . . ."

Once again, I have made plenty of mistakes in writing, quoting, using ellipses, etc., and so I completely understand how these things can happen. I am assuming, therefore, that the source of the error in this instance must be Vance's book. If that is the case, how many other errors might be in Vance's book? Mr. Hunt uses Vance quite extensively as a source, and so, once again, the importance of checking out his sources and the accuracy of his quotes cannot be overstated.

There are two things that are significant about the above statement in Dort. The first is that Dort says quite clearly that the "divine grace of regeneration" does not "violently compel against one's will." This seems to be in contrast with what some try and portray Calvinists as saying. And secondly, the word '*flectit*' in Latin means 'bends', not 'ends'. It comes from *flectere*, which in this context means "to alter the direction of, to turn, wheel."⁹ Thus, according to Dort, the Holy Spirit causes our wills to be altered and turned toward Jesus wherein we must make the final step of saying, 'Yes, Jesus, I believe', or, 'Yes, Jesus, I will obey you in faith'. Now whereas I do not agree with the Reformed view that regeneration occurs before faith (I believe it occurs simultaneously with the exercise of our faith), I certainly do agree with the above description of how the Holy Spirit brings us to a saving faith in Christ, and I especially agree with the use of the Latin word *flectere* to describe that work of the Holy Spirit in 'bending' our will toward accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, versus 'ending' our will so that we have no choice (incidentally, from *flectere* we get the English word 'flex', which includes the idea of bending the arm to cause one's muscles to expand). Thus, Mr. Hunt's representation of Dort saying that our wills are 'ended' by God's grace is incorrect. Furthermore, the 'bending' of our wills toward Christ doesn't stop with our conversion, but it is carried on after we are saved as the Holy Spirit continues His work within us of conforming us 'to the image' of Christ. The work of regeneration, therefore, begins a lifelong process of the Holy Spirit 'bending' our wills to be in conformity with God's will, and that is what Dort is describing in the heart of a believer in the clause quoted by Mr. Hunt:

so also this grace of regeneration does not treat man as senseless stocks and blocks, nor take away their will and its properties, neither does violence thereto; but spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully bends it; that where carnal rebellion and resistance formerly

prevailed, a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign; in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist.¹⁰

There are a number of other instances of similar type errors, but I do not want to spend any more time in this arena of the review. You, the reader, can see in the examples I have given the nature of his errors and mistakes, and I hope this alerts you to the need of carefully examining all that Mr. Hunt says and gives as his sources and references. Again, some of the mistakes are minor and can be easily corrected with a thorough editing process. However, others are somewhat more serious in nature (e.g., the *Canons of Dort* reference), and these are the ones that you, the reader, need to be alerted to and scrutinize, as well as paying close attention to his use of ellipses.

Historical Analysis

In the area of history, I would encourage you, the reader, to find and read the material Mr. Hunt references so that you will know for yourself what is actually being said. With regard to Augustine, I have never read any evangelical author who writes with such animosity and vitriol against Augustine as does Mr. Hunt. I have read a great deal of Augustine's writings, and whereas there are a number of things that I do not agree with concerning certain beliefs and concepts he advocates, on the other hand I certainly do believe that I will spend eternity with him in heaven, and I, and evangelical Christianity at large, have also been greatly blessed by a host of things he wrote and did. For example, I do not agree with his view concerning baptism for infants, nor do I agree with the prevailing view of water baptism by the early church as a whole (i.e., that in the waters of baptism, one's sins were actually washed away). And neither do I agree with the later application of Augustine's position on the Church's use of force and persecution in order to bring heretics and schismatics back into the fold as was practiced by Rome through the use of the Inquisition. However, I am speaking from my 21st century perch, looking back 1800 years to a very different time, in which a very different cultural and theological milieu of Christianity was in vogue. Thus, for me or anyone else to sit in a self-righteous position of judging the actions of these early Christian leaders and congregations, without fully immersing myself as much as possible into their time and understanding of what it meant to follow Christ from their perspective, is foolhardy at best, and sheer, unadulterated arrogance at worst.

Therefore, without spending a great deal of time on this section concerning Augustine, I would like to say, concerning the Donatists, for example, that one would need to read as much as he or she can on the history of the early church from its inception, up to and through the middle of the fifth century, just after Augustine's death, in order to get a comprehensive grasp of the Donatist controversy. In doing so, you will get a much better picture of the issues involved in Augustine's support of force to squelch the Donatist schism and why. In addition, you will also discover some interesting aspects of the Donatists themselves. I was in a meeting once where Mr. Hunt made the comment that perhaps he would have been a supporter of the Donatists himself. I do not know if Mr. Hunt is aware of the fact that the Donatists had their own terrorist group called the *Circumcelliones*, which in Latin originally was applied to monks who had no specific abode, but would wander from one monastic cell to another. The Donatist terrorists adopted this name for themselves, their aim being to force believers into accepting their

‘rigorist’ view of exclusivism from those they considered *tradutios*. In Latin, *tradutios* means ‘to hand over’, and it was used in a deriding sense to describe those priests who ‘handed over’ Scripture to government authorities during the Diocletian persecution of 303-305. In turn, it came to be the idiom applied to those the Donatists considered to be ‘traitors’ to the true church, which the Donatists believed they constituted. The *Circumcelliones* resorted to violence and coercion against those whom they felt were not carrying out equity and fairness to all as they believed they should (their victims including laity as well as clergy). The upshot of this was that the church in turn resorted to coercion and persecution to bring these schismatics back into unity, and Augustine was a proponent of this policy. There were many other aspects of the Donatist controversy that included issues beyond doctrine, such as political, social, economic and geographical concerns.¹¹ The Donatists may even be compared in ways to the contemporary IRA in Northern Ireland in relation to the terrorism employed by both to achieve their stated goals. The point being, before one castigates Augustine for his approval of force and persecution to reinstate schismatics, one should find out as much of the facts as possible.

With reference to Calvin and his rule in Geneva, once again, one needs to carefully study the religious and cultural mindset of that time and period. From my 21st century position, would I want to live in a Geneva today under the same type of rule and authority as established by Calvin back then? Even though I am a very conservative person in every way, I can honestly say that today, not only would I choose not to live there, I would actively oppose some of the policies Calvin instituted. However, on the other hand, I am speaking comfortably from my protected, American lifestyle, which has a foundation rooted in the Bill of Rights, and a system of laws, that, until the last thirty years, was primarily rooted in our Judeo-Christian ethic. I believe that Calvin did the best he knew to do, grounded in what he understood to be a biblically based system of social justice and law, including his treatment of Servetus. I previously discussed the issue of American slavery alongside the Declaration of Independence in comparison to Calvin’s view of the Church. Once again, at the time of our country’s origin, a great host of Christians in this country saw no conflict between the continuation of slavery and the Declaration of Independence because of the cultural and biblical context slavery was couched in. However, today we wouldn’t even consider such an institution to remain in existence because of our cultural and biblical understanding concerning the freedom and dignity of all men. There are some today who want to disembowel the constitutional framework of our country because of the fact that some of the original framers of our Constitution were slave owners, and, because of that, these same people see our entire Constitution as invalid. Such reasoning is ludicrous at best, but this makes as much sense as those who would want to disavow everything Calvin wrote and did because of the system of social justice and law that was enacted in Geneva. The exact same thing could be said of Luther and his support of the nobles during the peasant uprising. If we are going to present the history of our forefathers correctly and draw proper conclusions from their history, then we must look at their contemporary setting through the eyes of their understanding of applied, biblical truth in order to get an accurate picture of why they believed, taught and did what they did.

Therefore, I would pray that God will give all of us just such a reasoned understanding of our forefathers and their times, culture and application of biblical truth as they understood it. I would be careful to warn all of us to not be so quick to judge, lest, “in the

way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you “ (Matthew 7:2). Over the years I have seen churches that have judged other churches and denominations for their lack of spirituality in certain areas. Typically, these churches have thought of themselves as far above the ‘carnal trappings of religion’ that they so disdained in other groups, but over time, they became and embraced the very things they once criticized and eschewed in others. Remember, “Pride *goes* before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling” Proverbs 16:18).

Biblical Analysis

There are six areas of specific, theological emphases that I chose to deal with, but these in no way exhaust the manifold areas of concern touched on in Mr. Hunt’s book. These are simply the ones I felt most impressed to analyze and provide a scriptural exegesis for in light of what appeared to me as an inaccurate analysis and exegesis by Mr. Hunt.

The Nature of Man & Regeneration - Genesis 6:5, Psalm 14:1-3; Matthew 19:16-17; Mark 10:17-18; Luke 18:18-19; John 3:19-2; Isaiah 64:6

Our analysis of Mr. Hunt’s biblical interpretation will begin by taking a look at chapter 8 in his book. In this chapter, Mr. Hunt wants to set what he sees as biblical truth over against Calvinistic teaching with respect to the ability of unregenerate man, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, to “make a genuine choice to repent and turn to God” (Hunt, 117) without first of all being regenerated and enabled by the Holy Spirit, unbeknownst to him, to exercise saving faith. The premise of his argument is clearly presented in the following statement: “Why create this elaborate fiction of mourning and weeping over multitudes who God knows will not only refuse to repent but who, unless He regenerates them, *cannot* repent because of their total inability to do so?” (Hunt, 109). He goes on to say: “As inspired by the Holy Spirit, however, the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation gives the clear impression that those with whom God pleads could of their own volition repent and turn to Him if they would” (Hunt, 109-110). Mr. Hunt also gives several quotes from different evangelical authors who are in line with his view, including Frederic Farrar: “Frederic Farrar has rightly said, what God commands ‘must be in the power of the will, since ability is the measurement of obligation’” (Hunt, 110). Later on in this same chapter under the section entitled, “When Is Depravity Not Total?,” Mr. Hunt purposes to demonstrate that “the most ungodly people are capable of some morally good thoughts and deeds” (Hunt, 116). He goes on to give examples of such deeds by pointing out the heroism on the battlefield of unsaved soldiers; he makes reference to Albert Schweitzer’s altruism in the face of his denial of Christianity (a reference from Palmer); he considers Nazi prison guards who would show kindness and tenderness toward their wives and children, while during the day they were murdering Jewish prisoners; and he acknowledges there are unsaved businessmen who can be trusted. Mr. Hunt then states: “The Bible clearly teaches that the natural, unregenerated man can do good, and it offers many examples. . . . We must take Scripture as a whole” (Hunt, 117).

As I shared earlier, I completely concur with Mr. Hunt's position that regeneration by the Spirit occurs simultaneously with faith and repentance, not prior to faith and unbeknownst to the sinner, according to some Calvinistic doctrine. I also completely agree with Mr. Hunt's statement, "We must take Scripture as a whole." However, I do have a serious problem with his statement, "The Bible clearly teaches that the natural, unregenerated man can do good, and it offers many examples." In my opinion, as I read through the whole of Mr. Hunt's book, I see this chapter, this section, and this statement, as being the fulcrum upon which everything else hinges in his view of man in relation to God and His holiness. Therefore, this view expressed by Mr. Hunt will be our starting point as we proceed with an analysis of his biblical interpretation.

The biblical passage that Mr. Hunt alludes to in the section "When Is Depravity Not Total?," is Genesis 6:5: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Of this passage, Mr. Hunt says:

. . . the declaration that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" describes the general attitude of the heart, not what it must produce at every minute of every day. . . . In the same fashion we must understand the statements about man's wickedness and sin as describing his general attitude but not his necessity" (Hunt, 117-118).

With all due respect to Mr. Hunt and his very sincere and heart felt desire to correct a wrong that he believes is seriously damaging the body of Christ, I see his handling of this passage as being no less an attempt to alter the plain and simple meaning of Scripture and have it say something it is not saying in the same way he accuses Calvinists of "unbiblical twisting of Scripture" (Hunt, 358). I would like, therefore, to give as clear, simple and thorough an analysis of this verse in its context as space permits.

First of all, this passage is set against the impending flood that God said He was going to send in order to "blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; . . ." (Genesis 6:7). However, "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. . . . Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:8-9). Most importantly, how was Noah's righteousness determined? If it was by his works, then the death of Christ was completely superfluous. However, we read in Hebrews 11:7 wherein his righteousness was derived: "By faith Noah, being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." In addition, the word for 'blameless' in Hebrew is the adjective *tāmîm* (טָמִים), which means to be 'complete, sound, whole, unimpaired and innocent'. That brings up the next question, what does it mean, therefore, that Noah was "blameless (i.e., complete and innocent) in his time"? Does that mean that he was without sin? Once again, if that was true, then Jesus' death was superfluous because if Noah did it, then so can we, and furthermore, we should! However, in Genesis 6:12, we read: "And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh (including Noah and his family) had corrupted their way upon the earth." How do we know that Noah too was included in this 'all'? We know he was because Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and that 'all' certainly includes Noah and his family as well. Thus, just as his righteousness

was based on faith, so too his being 'blameless' was ascribed to him because of the fact that he was 'whole and innocent' through the righteousness of God imputed to him as a result of his faith in God.

With the basis for Noah's relationship with God being established, let us turn to Genesis 6:5. Mr. Hunt takes great pains in chapter 16 on "Limited Atonement" to stress the fact that the word 'all' in such passages as II Peter 3:9 means just that, versus the 'elect only' that many Calvinists insist the word 'all' means with regards to salvation: "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." Here too, I agree with Mr. Hunt in his view of how the word 'all' should be understood with regard to those passages concerning the offer of salvation in Christ. However, when Mr. Hunt turns to Genesis 6:5, he makes an 'about face', and there he says that 'every' does not mean 'every' as we would assume it means, but, like those Calvinists who say that 'all' in II Peter 3:9 for example is actually referring to the 'elect only' and not to the whole of mankind, so too does Mr. Hunt say that the 'every' in Genesis 6:5 is "the general attitude of the heart, not what it must produce at every moment of every day" (Hunt, 117-118). This, in my opinion, is a very incorrect view, and it is based on an incorrect understanding of the depth and permeation of sin throughout man's nature. Consequently, as I stated previously, this perspective affects many other areas of Mr. Hunt's beliefs and teaching.

The following is an amplified translation of Genesis 6:5 from the Hebrew:

And the Lord saw that the evil, misery, injury, distress and wrong of man was exceedingly and abundantly great on the earth, and the whole of each and every frame of the thoughts, plans, purposes, devices and inventions of his mind, will, soul and affections were only and altogether evil, wicked and bad the whole of each and every day.

The LXX, Vulgate, Peshitta and Targums¹² all say the same thing in equally as intense a fashion as does the Hebrew. Twice in Genesis 6:5 we see the Hebrew word *kol* (כָּל) used, and in both instances it clearly means 'the whole of, all, each & every'. Syntactically, therefore, there is no way one can legitimately say that here in Genesis 6:5 *kol* (כָּל) means the 'general attitude of the heart'. Quite the contrary, as you will note in my footnote # 12 above, with reference to the other versions, it means the 'whole of each and every frame of the thoughts' in its context.

There are over 5400 occurrences of the word 'all' and over 700 occurrences of the word 'every' in both the Old and New Testaments. Obviously I am not going to attempt to go over all of these occurrences to see if Mr. Hunt's reasoning is applicable and correct. However, I do want to look at a few to see if his explanation and definition appear to be valid, as well as the criterion or criteria that can legitimately be appealed to for altering the meaning of 'all' to something resembling Mr. Hunt's understanding of that word in Genesis 6:5. Our first four examples are dealing with creation. The first is in Genesis 1:21: "And God created the great sea monsters, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good." How should you interpret the two usages of 'every' in this passage? Both words are the Hebrew word *kol* (כָּל), which is interchangeably

translated as ‘all’ or ‘every’. Do these two occurrences here really mean ‘every’, or should you understand the meaning expressed here to be in ‘general’? If the latter is correct, according to Mr. Hunt’s logic and reasoning, then those who support a theistic, evolutionary process could very well be correct. If on the other hand, ‘every’ in this passage actually means ‘every’, then what you have is an all-inclusive statement about God’s creative act that would necessarily exclude theistic evolution. You then begin to see that if Mr. Hunt’s methodology of interpreting ‘all’ and ‘every’ is employed, then you are going to encounter some very interesting problems.

The next creation topic is in Genesis 1:26: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” In this instance, would you say that ‘all’ means in ‘general’, or would you say it actually means ‘all’? If you were to say it is the former, then what is the criterion or criteria you would use to make that determination? Would that in turn mean that before the fall, there were creatures that dominated man because the ‘all’ really means in ‘general’? Thus, is your criterion or criteria biblical, or is it something out of your own mind based on a preconceived agenda that is governing your interpretation?

In the third creation example in Genesis 1:29, God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you.” Would you consider ‘every’ and ‘all’ in this verse to mean in ‘general’? What basis would that be true, and is that judgment based on a biblical criterion or criteria, or is it a purely subjective one?

The final example with regard to creation is in Genesis 1:31: “And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” Once again, should ‘all’ here be interpreted as in ‘general’, or should it be understood to actually mean ‘all’ as in ‘everything’? If it is the former, then perhaps that would be reason to accept the Gnostic belief that all matter is evil and corrupt, and thus, some of God’s creation was actually corrupt and that is why ‘all’ in this instance should be translated to mean in ‘general’. Please understand, with regard to this last example, I am being utterly fallacious, but if you follow through with Mr. Hunt’s logic for his translation of ‘all’ in Genesis 6:5, then the above conclusion is something one could legitimately claim to be reasonable. However, in my opinion, neither Mr. Hunt’s logic, nor the above conclusion with regard to Genesis 1:31 are valid or reasonable.

There is one place in the Old Testament that has caused some genuine concern with reference to ‘all’ being understood as ‘all’, versus something less than ‘everything’, and that is in Exodus regarding the plagues. For example, concerning the gnats throughout the land of Egypt, which was the fourth sign and the third plague, we read:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become gnats through all the land of Egypt.'" ¹⁷
And they did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff, and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats through all the land of Egypt. (Exodus 8:16-17)

The one problematic phrase in the above passage is in verse 17, “All the dust of the earth became gnats through all the land of Egypt.” Are we to understand that “All the dust”

actually became gnats? And was it actually “through all the land of Egypt”? Could it be that there is some mistake in the author’s perception? Should we understand that the dust in ‘general’ became gnats, and that this plague was in ‘general’ throughout Egypt, but it certainly could not be “All the dust” throughout “all the land of Egypt”? What is helpful in this particular instance is that the Hebrew word for dust is *‘āphār* (עָפָר), which is speaking specifically of ‘loose dirt’. Thus, according to the Bible, “All of the *loose dirt* of the earth became gnats through all the land of Egypt.” The question before you, therefore, is do you want to adopt Mr. Hunt’s approach with the word ‘all’ in this passage, or would you rather believe the meaning that is obviously being expressed in these verses? I can only say that for me, I choose to go along with the obvious meaning of ‘all’ meaning ‘all’.

The other concern is with plagues 5-8. Plague # 5 was the “severe pestilence on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks” (Exodus 9:3). And then in 9:6 we read: “So the LORD did this thing on the morrow, and *all* the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the sons of Israel, not one died.” Now this would not be a problem except for the fact that in plague # 6, concerning the boils, mention is made in 9:10 of the “boils breaking out with sores on man and beast.” One important thing to take note of here is that it doesn’t say “every beast,” implying that not “every beast” was affected by these boils. On the other hand, the question looms before us, where did these beasts come from if “all the livestock of Egypt died”? If this is all we had to go on, this would, without question, be a very credible source to use in support of Mr. Hunt’s view of ‘all’ in Genesis 6:5 being ‘general’, but not ‘everything’, as we would normally think of ‘all’. However, there is an important qualifier in Exodus 9:3, and that is “your livestock which are *in the field*.” The Hebrew word for ‘field’ is שָׂדֶה (*sādeh*), and it is referring to an open field in the country that is used for a pasture-land, as well as an area that is also inhabited by wild beasts, and this area is outside of a walled city.¹³ That would clearly suggest that there were animals still around who were not “in the field,” but perhaps were in shelters, pens, etc. that were separated from the ‘field’ animals. Thus, whatever this plague was, it somehow affected specifically the animals “in the field,” versus the animals located elsewhere.

Plague # 7 was the plague of hail, and here too we read:

Behold, about this time tomorrow, I will send a very heavy hail, such as has not been *seen* in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.¹⁹ “Now therefore send, bring your livestock and whatever you have in the field to safety. Every man and beast that is found in the field and is not brought home, when the hail comes down on them, will die.”²⁰ The one among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses;²¹ but he who paid no regard to the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field. (Exodus 9:18-21)

Here too we see ‘livestock’ mentioned in verse 19, implying there were still some left to the Egyptians after plagues 5 and 6. Thus, those animals that were sheltered were not destroyed by the hail as is stated in 9:25: “And the hail struck all that was in the field through all the land of Egypt, both man and beast; the hail also struck every plant of the field and shattered every tree of the field.” Once again, we have the qualifier, “in the field” with regard to those animals that were killed. In addition, we also read in this same

verse that “the hail also stuck every plant of the field and shattered every tree of the field.” However, in plague # 8, which brought the locusts, we read:

And the locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled in all the territory of Egypt; *they were* very numerous. There had never been so *many* locusts, nor would there be so *many* again. ¹⁵ For they covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Thus nothing green was left on tree or plant of the field through all the land of Egypt. (Exodus 10:14-15)

In this passage we have a qualifier concerning those plants and trees that the locusts ate, and that is they were the plants and trees “that the hail left.” In 9:25 we read that the hail “shattered every tree of the field,” but the qualifier “in the field” is once again important to note. Perhaps some trees were in a protected area, and even though the hail “shattered every tree of the field,” that doesn’t mean that every tree was necessarily destroyed. Some may have survived, even though ‘shattered’, and were still able to bear some fruit. With regard to the ‘plants’ destroyed by the hail, we read in 9:31-32: “Now the flax and the barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they *ripen* late.” Thus, in all of these passages where questions may be brought to mind concerning the words ‘all’ and ‘every’, we see very clear explanations why some animals, plants and trees were left, and we also see that in the context where the words ‘all’ and ‘every’ were used, they indeed meant ‘all’ and ‘every’, versus in ‘general’ according to Mr. Hunt’s theory.

The last example concerning the use of the word ‘all’ has a specific reference to sin, and that is Romans 3:23: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” According to Mr. Hunt’s logic and reason, this passage could easily read, “for in general, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” This would, without question, fall into the camp of the Pelagians. Now I know that Mr. Hunt would in no way support such a reading of this verse, but his logic and reasoning cannot be divorced from such a possible application.

There is one other very important point to make with reference to Genesis 6:5, and that has to do with the Hebrew word translated ‘intent’, *yēšer* (יָשַׁר). This word is actually speaking of the ‘forming’ of the thought before it becomes a full-fledged, cognizant, expressible word in our mind that we utter with our mouth or think of in reflective terms. For example, when preparing to pour concrete, you must first of all set a ‘form’ in place, into which you will pour the concrete resulting in a specific configuration (e.g., a patio, a straight or curved side walk, etc.). The same idea is being conveyed here with reference to our thoughts. That is, the very ‘framing’ of our thoughts is “only evil continually.”

Therefore, with regard to his interpretation of ‘all’ in Genesis 6:5, I can understand Mr. Hunt’s attempt to try and soften it in a way that would perhaps make it more amenable to himself and others who have a difficult time accepting this rather literal statement. However, in doing so, it appears to me that he has undermined the very foundation of biblical truth with regard to man’s sinful nature and the effusiveness of sin throughout every fiber of our mental and emotional being. Thus, I find his analysis of Genesis 6:5 completely untenable and without any biblical mandate whatsoever. Indeed,

I see it as a very dangerous interpretation and one that could potentially cause great harm and misdirection to the Body of Christ.

Elsewhere, in chapter 12 on “The Bondage of the Will,” Mr. Hunt makes a reference to Luther’s use of Romans 3:10-12, concerning man’s sinful nature, and says: “Luther goes on to quote Paul’s quotation of Psalms 14:4: ‘There is none that doeth good, no, not one’ (Romans 3:10-12). Like Calvin ten years later, he makes this an absolute statement about man’s unchangeable state rather than about his usual practice” (Hunt, 185). In response to Mr. Hunt’s perspective, here too, Psalm 14:1-3 is rather clear about man’s nature:

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. ²The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. ³They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.

Interestingly enough, in the Hebrew, there are three words used to translate ‘no’, and the one in this passage, which is used four times, is *’ēn* (אֵין), and it is the most emphatic of all, meaning ‘non-existence’.¹⁴ Thus, as the “fool” says “God does not exist,” the Psalmist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, responds with, “There doesn’t exist any one doing good.” And again in verse 3, the inspired Psalmist says, “There doesn’t exist any one doing good, there doesn’t exist even one!” When reading what the Hebrew text is actually saying, there is no way that one can say syntactically, grammatically, or from a biblically based, theological perspective that these three verses are not speaking of the state of man, verses ‘his usual practice’.

It must be kept in mind that the reason Mr. Hunt is so insistent that man can do some good, is his attempt to refute the Calvinistic teaching that regeneration must precede faith because, according to some Calvinists, man’s depraved nature requires it so. That is, if man has no ability whatsoever to reach out to God on his own, then, according to some Calvinistic teaching, regeneration of the Spirit must occur first, enabling the individual to exercise faith in Christ for salvation. Once again, let me say that I am in agreement with Mr. Hunt in rejecting this particular doctrine of Calvinistic teaching, but I also reject his attempt to refute this doctrine by denying that which is abundantly clear in the Scripture concerning man’s utterly sinful and corrupt state. Now although Mr. Hunt clearly affirms man’s sinfulness, his inability to save himself and his absolute necessity of turning to Christ alone for salvation, his insistence on denying the Calvinistic doctrine of regeneration before faith, at the expense of the biblical truth concerning man’s utter, sinful corruption, can very easily obfuscate Romans 3:10-23, Galatians 2:20 and Ephesians 2:8-10. The consequence of that can be a slow, but perceptible move toward a ‘works and performance’ orientation within a veiled legalism. Such a veiled legalism in turn will misdirect and misguide, resulting in a legalistic and self-righteous bondage, versus leading people to true freedom in Christ.

One very important verse that Mr. Hunt did not refer to is Isaiah 64:6, which says: “For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.” The phrase ‘filthy garment’ comes from the Hebrew words *בְּגָד עֲרִימ* (*beḡed*

'iddîm), which mean 'garment of menstruations'. In Hebrew law, when a woman was in her period, that was the apex of uncleanness for her. Therefore, this verse is saying that the very best we can do before God is comparable to a used menstrual cloth, which means that at our best, we are considered by God to be at the apex of uncleanness as compared to His holiness and righteousness. I know Mr. Hunt firmly believes this, but I do believe his effort to establish man's ability to do 'good at times' is quite misleading, because we are obviously talking about two different standards of goodness; a humanistic standard, in contrast to a divine standard that far transcends anything the humanistic can even remotely approach.

In spite of the above witnesses to the clear fact of man's utter, sinful state, Mr. Hunt attempts to support his premise that the "ungodly can do good at times" (Hunt, 185) by citing numerous verses where good is "done even by the heathen and the exhortations even to the ungodly to do good" (Ibid.) are evidenced. He even gives one example of Jesus counseling "the Jews to 'do good to them that hate you' (Matthew 5:44)" (Ibid.). However, there is one account contained in all three Synoptic Gospels that Mr. Hunt doesn't deal with concerning man's 'goodness' versus God's 'goodness', and that is the account of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23):

And behold, one came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"¹⁷ And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is *only* One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. (Matthew 19:16-17)

And as He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and *began* asking Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. (Mark 10:17-18)

And a certain ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"¹⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. (Luke 18:18-19)

In Matthew, Jesus makes an interesting statement, which in essence answers the question as to whether or not we can 'do good' based on God's definition of 'good'. Jesus says, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is *only* One who is good; . . ." Paul makes it quite clear "that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith'" (Galatians 3:11). If the rich young ruler in Matthew's account could have really kept the law and done 'good' so as to gain God's approval, then the distinct possibility exists that perhaps Pelagius was correct, and we can live a sinless life whereby we are accepted by God in some way for our own 'goodness'. If indeed Mr. Hunt is correct in his exegesis of Genesis 6:5 et al, then logically, the above possibility exists. However, based on what Jesus said in Matthew's account of the rich young ruler, coupled with the whole counsel of God's Word, the young man was simply blind to the depth of his sin and corruption, and his haunting lack of assurance that drove him to Jesus in the first place indicates he was very well aware that something was seriously lacking in his life.

Mark's and Luke's accounts are identical. The rich young ruler approaches Jesus and says, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him,

‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.’” Is this passage to be taken literally, or are we to look for some other, more surreptitious meaning behind Jesus’ statement? As for me, it is very clear, taking into account the whole counsel of God’s Word, that Jesus means exactly what He says, in the same way that Genesis 6:5, Psalm 14:1-3 and Isaiah 64:6 mean exactly what they say. Jesus was and is the God-Man, and as a man, He was unambiguously saying “No one is good except God alone”! Can we as human beings do ‘good’ things according to a worldly standard and measure? Without question we can. However, it is quite clear from the totality of Scripture that our human measure of ‘goodness’ versus the biblical measure are light years apart, and that is due to the fact of sin permeating every fiber of our being.

Being Drawn to Jesus - John 6:37-39, 44; Acts 16:14; Luke 24:32, 45; Deuteronomy 29:2-4

The next area I want to deal with concerns Mr. Hunt’s perspective on our being *drawn to Jesus*, which is found in John 6:

All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.³⁸ "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.³⁹ "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. . . . No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:37-39, 44)

Prior to looking at this section of Scripture in John, Mr. Hunt makes this statement: “Christ’s words are so simple and straightforward” (Hunt, 332). I completely agree with him. The first thing I want to point out is that the phrase in verse 37, “I will certainly not cast out,” is the most emphatic statement, grammatically, that can be made in the Greek.¹⁵ In other words, those who come to Jesus, by way of the Father giving them to Him, will NEVER BE SEPARATED FROM HIM!

Verse 44, on the other hand, as simply stated as it is, has generated a great deal of debate and disagreement. The first thing to be observed is the phrase, “No one *can* come to Me, unless . . .” The word *can* literally means “to be able, capable, or have the power” to do something. Thus, in this simple, unqualified statement, Jesus is saying that “No one is able, capable or has the power to come to Me, *unless* . . .” The *unless* gives us the essential means by which we, as human beings, “are able, capable and have the power” to come to Christ. Jesus says that means is “unless the Father who sent me *draws* him; . . .” The word *draws* is the key word in this passage that has ‘drawn’ so much controversy. The word in the Greek is *helko* (ἔλκω), and it means to ‘draw by inward power, lead, impel, drag’. The last meaning for this word is the one that gives people a lot of trouble. However, the context is what helps considerably in determining which meaning is best applicable. The meaning ‘drag’ is used in Acts 21:30 concerning Paul where “they dragged him out of the temple; . . .” This was an obvious coercion of Paul against his desire. On the other hand, although ‘drag’ doesn’t appear to fit the context in John 6:44, the idea of ‘leading and impelling’ certainly does. In addition, the tense of the word ‘draws’ in this instance emphasizes the beginning¹⁶ of the drawing process in light of the fact that “No one *has the power, ability, or capability* to come to Me unless, the Father

who sent Me draws him; . . .” Therefore, no human has the capability within himself of coming to the Son unless the Father should ‘draw, lead and impel’ him to come. In addition, every person whom the Father gives to Jesus will come to Him, and Jesus will never at any time ‘cast out’ that believer. Exegetically, however, Mr. Hunt is correct in saying “Christ does *not* say that everyone who is drawn will actually come to Him and be saved. . . . but all whom He *gives* to the Son, will come to Him, and He will lose none of them whom the Father gives Him; . . .” (Hunt, 334). On the other hand, the ONLY reason anyone CAN come to Jesus and be saved eternally is because the Father has given that person to Jesus, and He, the Father, ‘draws/leads/impels’ him to Christ by the power of His Holy Spirit.

Thus, to sum up this passage, we can say that, based on the simple and straightforward reading of the text, all that the Father gives to His Son shall come to His Son, and He will never at any time cast them out. In addition, those whom the Father gives to the Son, He ‘leads, impels and draws’ them to His Son by the convicting power of His Holy Spirit. Otherwise, if He didn’t draw them, no one has the ‘capability, ability or power’ within himself to come to Christ apart from the Holy Spirit convicting and drawing him to the place of making that final decision to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Now on the one hand, Mr. Hunt agrees with the above, biblical scenario, but on the other hand, he will make statements like the following one based on Deuteronomy 6:5 that “This is proof enough that all men have the power of choice necessary to love God and to receive His love, though all fail to keep this commandment just as they fail to keep the others” (Hunt, 288). Deuteronomy 6:5 reads: “And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Now if Mr. Hunt thinks this passage implies that I “have the power of choice necessary to love God and receive His love,” then I must also have the power to keep not only this commandment, but all the others as well, even though he says “though all fail to keep this commandment just as they fail to keep the others.” However, if Mr. Hunt is correct about me having “the power of choice necessary to love God,” then in spite of my failure to not keep this particular commandment as I should, based on his logic, the possibility does exist that I can keep this commandment, as well as all the others, and in turn I can establish my own righteousness through keeping the Law. The problem with this logic is that it runs contrary to what Paul says in Galatians:

I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly. . . . For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." ¹¹ Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith." ¹² However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them." ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." (Galatians 2:21; 3:10-13)

Once again, I know that Mr. Hunt doesn’t believe that we can establish our own righteousness through keeping the Law and thereby gain entry into heaven, but if you follow the logic of his above statement, that is exactly where it can lead, and that was the type of argument that Pelagius and his followers pursued.

In chapter 20, Mr. Hunt says, with reference to John 6:44, that: “The element of the Father ‘drawing’ is mentioned by Christ only in this one passage” (Hunt, 334). That statement is both accurate and inaccurate. While it is true that this is the only place where the word ‘draw’ is used in this context, it is not the only place where it is implied that apart from God working to bring someone to a point of belief, they will not come to believe and trust in Him.

In Acts 16:14 we read: “And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.” This is a rather factual statement, and if this was the only verse in the entire Bible expressing such an action by God, then perhaps one could legitimately say that this in no way implies that Lydia could not have opened her heart herself. However, this verse does not stand alone, and taken in its context, it is clearly stating that had the Lord not “opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul,” then her heart would not have been opened.

The structure of this verse is quite interesting. First of all, it says she “was listening” to what Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke were saying to the women at the riverside outside the gate at Philippi. In other words, she was exercising her natural ability to hear and absorb the words being spoken by these men. However, these were not the words of some new, Greek, philosophical concept, nor were they words of some religious palaver concerning Jewish mysticism, etc., but rather they were the very words of Life in Christ, about which “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (II Corinthians 4:4). Thus, her ability to understand the Word of God was to come from a totally different dimension that far transcended the different levels of natural, comprehensive ability her mind may have had in understanding other disciplines of learning.

Then, as she “was listening” with her natural ear, “the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.” The Greek word for ‘opened’ is *dianoigo* (διανοίγω), and from this is derived the English word *diagnose*. The basic meaning for this word in the Greek is:

to open by dividing or drawing asunder (διὰ), to open thoroughly (what has been closed); . . . to open the sense of the Scriptures, explain them, Lk. xxiv. 32; τὸν νοῦν τίνος open the mind of one, i.e. cause him to understand a thing, Lk. xxiv. 45; τὴν καρδίαν to open one’s soul, i.e. to rouse in one the faculty of understanding or the desire of learning, Acts xvi. 14, . . .¹⁷

As the above quote indicates, this word is also used in Luke 24:32 where Jesus “was *explaining* the Scriptures” to two of the disciples who were on the road to Emmaus, and then in Luke 24:45, “He *opened* their minds to understand the Scriptures,” referring to “the eleven and those who were with them” (Luke 24:33). Clearly, in both these instances, the understanding of Scripture was dependent upon Jesus *opening* the minds of the listeners (i.e., His disciples), and the exact same thing is stated in Acts 16:14. However, after the opening, then the choice is there for the person to either say, ‘yes, Lord, I believe and follow you’, or ‘no, Lord, I will not follow you’. But the Scripture is abundantly clear that had the Lord not *explained* the Scripture or *opened* the ‘minds’ and ‘heart’ of His disciples and Lydia, then they would have never understood the Scripture,

let alone been moved to make a decision to follow Jesus. And why is this so? It is because of the fact that sin had so blinded their hearts and minds that they COULD NOT begin to understand the things of God unless the Holy Spirit opened their minds to do so, and they COULD NOT come to Christ on their own initiative apart from the Holy Spirit *drawing* them to Him in order to make that decision.

The last Scripture I want to look at with regard to God needing to bring a man to a place of making a decision to believe in Him is in Deuteronomy 29. In the beginning of this chapter Moses is giving his final exhortation and blessing to the Israelites. In Deuteronomy 29:2-4, we read:

And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land; ³ the great trials which your eyes have seen, those great signs and wonders. ⁴ "Yet to this day *the LORD has not given you* a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.

The phrase in verse 4 is set forth quite simply and clearly. According to Moses, the ability of the people to 'know, here and see' the things of God was not within themselves to do so (John 6:44; Acts 16:14; Luke 24:32, 45), but rather it must come from God. On the other hand, we read in Romans 1:18ff that God has made himself known to the world of humanity as a whole:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. (Romans 1:18-23)

How can it be, concerning the Israelites, that Moses could say, "the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear," and then Paul could say something like the above in Romans? Well, it appears that the type of knowledge being described in Romans 1 is called General Revelation. That is, revelation that is given to every man concerning the reality of God and a sense of moral accountability. On the other hand, the knowledge described in Deuteronomy 29:4 appears to be of an intimate type, leading to a personal relationship with God that comes through repentance and faith in Him, which is what is described in John 6:37-39 & 44. In addition, later on in chapter 30 of Deuteronomy, Moses calls on the people to "choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Thus, here too, the people are given the command to choose, and that is based on God having opened their spiritual heart, eyes and ears to know, see and hear, thereby they became fully responsible for their decision either to accept or reject God's offer.

Thus, it is not an ‘either or’, but rather a ‘both and’ when it comes to man’s corrupt sinful nature and his inability to save himself, and God’s intervening grace through the power of the Holy Spirit to draw men to that place of repentance and faith in Christ. Thus, while at the same time we are called on to “choose life” when the Word is set before us, it is God who must open our hearts, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to enable us to understand, see and hear, and it has always been that way. In fact, this is what we see stated in Deuteronomy 30:11-14, and is also quoted by Paul in Romans 10:8-13:

For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.¹² "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'¹³ "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'¹⁴ "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it. (Deuteronomy 30:11-14)

But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart "-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved;¹⁰ for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him;¹³ for "Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved." (Romans 10:8-13)

From a metaphorical perspective, it is as though God places faith in our mouths as a morsel of food, but we must make the decision to either chew and swallow it, or spit it out. This coincides with the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, described by Jesus in John 16:8-11, in which a person is brought face to face with the truth of his sin; with the truth that only through Jesus is their any hope of forgiveness for his sin and eternal life; and with the truth of the eternal judgment that awaits him if he rejects Christ. However, according to Scripture, if God doesn’t open a person’s heart and mind to see these truths, that person will not open them himself through his own initiative.

Ordained or Disposed to Eternal Life? - Acts 13:48

We will now look at Mr. Hunt’s interpretation of Acts 13:48: “And when the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” In his book, Mr. Hunt deals with this verse in chapter 14 entitled, “Is Salvation Available To All?” Mr. Hunt opts for the meaning *disposed* versus *appointed*. It is a disputed meaning among different schools of thought, but Mr. Hunt quite honestly shares with his readers why he chose the former meaning instead of the latter: “The meaning is at least *allowable* from the word *tasso* and it seems to be demanded by the context. Why not accept it? Because to do so would undermine Calvinism. We find no other reason” (Hunt, 211). Mr. Hunt certainly has the right and privilege to choose any meaning for a word that he wants and for any reason he wants.

However, with all due respect to him, I don't know if that is the best of reasons for making that choice here.

The two words translated for “had been appointed” are *ēsan tetagmenoi* (ἦσαν τεταγμένοι), and they are written together for added emphasis. *Tetagmenoi* emphasizes an act that was completed some time in the past, and in this instance it has an ongoing, continuous affect in the past because *esan* is attached to it, which makes that meaning even more emphatic.¹⁸ In addition, the word *tassō* (τάσσω), which is the root form of the verb *tetagmenoi*, means ‘to put in place, to station, to assign, to appoint, to ordain, to order, to arrange, to settle and to agree upon’. Mr. Hunt uses a source entitled *The Bible Commentary*, by Frederic C. Cook, in which Mr. Cook makes reference to the Syriac supporting the translation being *disposed*, versus *ordained*. The word in Syriac is *som* (ܫܘܡܐ), and it too means ‘to set up, to constitute, to determine, to appoint, to ordain, to affirm, to declare, to set the heart and to turn the mind’. On the one hand, Mr. Hunt doesn't feel that ‘ordained’ fits in with the total picture of biblical redemption, but on the other hand, what we clearly have in this passage is not an ‘either or’, but rather a ‘both and’. The problem for Mr. Hunt with taking the definition ‘disposed’ is that syntactically, the correct meaning of the passive voice used with this verb indicates someone or something acted upon the subjects to cause them to become ‘disposed’, with the result being they ‘believed’. The same is true for the definition ‘ordained’, in that the passive voice indicates an action being done to the subjects by someone or something beyond themselves, with the result being they also ‘believed’.¹⁹ However, whichever definition you may feel inclined toward accepting, the syntax of the verb indicates someone or something acted upon them and spawned their response. This action in turn brought them to the point where they ‘believed’, and this belief had an effect for a long time in the past, that is, up to the end of their lives on this earth, and then into eternity.

Thus, if they were ‘disposed’, someone or something caused them to become ‘disposed’. Based on the what we have looked at up to this point, that someone was the Holy Spirit, bringing them to a place of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ after opening up their hearts to understand the Gospel. If it is ‘ordained’, then here too it was the Holy Spirit, based on God's predetermined plan, bringing them to a place of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ after opening up their hearts to understand the Gospel, the same as He did for those who were ‘disposed’.

Is Faith a Gift? - Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 12:2; Galatians 2:20; Acts3:16

The idea of “faith” being a gift from God appears to be quite intensely opposed by Mr. Hunt. In particular, he focuses on Ephesians 2:8-9 where we read: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.” In chapter 21 entitled, “Persuasion, The Gospel And God,” Mr. Hunt asserts rather forcefully that ‘faith’ is not a gift from God. He says, “Furthermore, the construction of the Greek in Ephesians 2:8-10 makes it impossible for faith to be the gift” (Hunt, 361). The section in chapter 21 in which he covers this passage is called, “Is Faith, Or Salvation, The Gift of God?,” and he finishes up this section with a very strong declaration:

Furthermore, even if saving faith were the gift (which it could not be), there is nothing in Ephesians 2 (or anywhere else) to indicate that it is irresistibly given by God only after He has sovereignly regenerated the totally depraved sinner and not before. Indeed, that very passage says we are “saved, through faith”; i.e., faith is the means of our salvation/regeneration, not something which follows it. (Hunt, 362)

I do agree with Mr. Hunt in his last statement, “faith is the means of our salvation/regeneration, not something which follows it.” However, in a similar fashion to his handling the subject of man’s sinfulness, so too here, Mr. Hunt, in his sincere desire to expunge what he sees as doctrine that ‘mocks God’, makes some statements that may be seen not to be entirely correct after a more careful examination. Once again, however, I want to point out that it is irrelevant whether or not the following analysis of this passage supports or abrogates Calvinism or any other ‘ism’, but what is quite relevant is whether or not it supports biblical truth. And if the following analysis is a presentation of biblical truth, then we certainly need to embrace it, regardless of who accepts or rejects it.

Mr. Hunt is correct in his statement that the demonstrative pronoun, *touto* (τοῦτο), which is ‘that’, is neuter and ‘faith’, *pistis* (πίστις), is a feminine noun. Indeed, that which *touto* is modifying is the word ‘gift’, or *dōron* (δῶρον), which is a neuter noun. The question before us is, what is ‘gift’ referring to? Is it talking about salvation as a whole, and would it then include ‘faith’, or is it talking about ‘faith’, since the word ‘grace’, *charis* (χάρις), is already understood to be a ‘gift’? I don’t think anyone would deny the fact that ‘gift’ is clearly referring to salvation as a whole. However, are there instances where *touto* might be referring to something other than a neuter noun?

In Matthew 6:25, Jesus says: “For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, *as to* what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?” The word ‘reason’ is *touto* (τοῦτο), and what is *touto* referring to? Is it referring to EVERYTHING Jesus was talking about in the verses before, which included many nouns of all three genders (the word ‘treasure’ is a masculine noun, ‘heart’ is a feminine noun and ‘body’ is a neuter noun)? Someone might suggest that *touto* is referring to the exhortation Jesus is giving in verse 25 about not being ‘anxious’. However, the Greek word used here is the imperative form of the verb *merimnaō* (μεριμνάω), and its nominal form, which means ‘anxiety’, is a feminine noun, *merimna* (μέριμνα). It would appear fairly obvious, therefore, that *touto* is referring to the whole of what Jesus was saying, both before and after verse 25.

Another example of the neuter, demonstrative pronoun referring to something other than a neuter noun is in Matthew 4:8-9: “Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; and he said to Him, ‘All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me.’” In this passage, we have the nominative, neuter, plural, demonstrative pronoun, *tauta* (ταῦτά), versus the nominative, neuter, singular demonstrative pronoun, *touto* (τοῦτο). As you look at the passage, therefore, you will discover that it contains one neuter noun, ‘mountain’, one masculine noun, ‘world’ and two feminine nouns, ‘kingdoms’ and ‘glory’. If we include all of these nouns in the ‘these things’, then we certainly have more than neuters. On the other hand, if one were to insist that the ‘these things’ only refers to ‘mountain’, then why didn’t Satan say, “all this (τοῦτο-referring to the singular, neuter word for “mountain”) will I give You, if You fall down and worship me”? It is

fairly clear, therefore, that Satan was referring to all of the ‘things’ he was talking about in verse 8, including the two feminine nouns as well. The upshot of all this, therefore, is that *touto*, in Ephesians 2:8-9, is being used in an inclusive manner so as to embrace the whole of salvation as the ‘gift of God’, and that certainly includes ‘faith’ as integral and essential to our salvation.

The next passage dealing with ‘faith’ as a gift from God is in Romans 10:17: “So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” Clearly this verse is stating that divine, saving ‘faith’ is not something we generate on our own, but rather it is something that is given to us by God through His Word. The exact phrase in an amplified setting is, “So faith comes out of hearing, and hearing *out offrom/by means of* the Word of God.”²⁰ Thus, the Word of God is the source of our saving and living faith, and hearing is the channel through which that faith is appropriated in our hearts and minds. The hearing, of course, is not simply a literal ‘hearing’ with the natural ear, but rather a hearing with the heart and mind whereby the Holy Spirit opens up our understanding, through the power of his conviction, to see we are sinners, that Jesus is the only way and that judgment awaits us if we refuse Him (John 16:8-11). This applies to salvation first of all, and then to our daily growth and walk of faith as a believer in Christ.

Next, in Hebrews 12:2 we are told that Jesus is both the ‘originator’ and ‘developer’ of our faith: “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” However, the first emphasis is that of “fixing our eyes on Jesus.” The word ‘fixing’, *aphorōntes* (ἀφορῶντες), is emphasizing an ongoing, continuous action.²¹ The implication being that if I, as a believer, do not ‘continually fix’ my eyes (i.e., my mind and spirit) on Jesus, I will not grow in faith, and thus, I will have no personal victory over sin. Thus, my growth in faith is directly proportional to my abiding in Christ through abiding in His Word, prayer, trusting and surrendering to Him.

All of this is possible because Jesus is both the “author and perfecter of faith, . . .” The word for ‘author’ is *archēgos* (ἀρχηγός), and it means both originator (i.e., the One who founded and began my faith within me – Romans 10:17) and example (i.e., the One who set forth the example of faith and trust in God for me to follow – Luke 9:23-24).²² The word for ‘perfecter’ is *teleiōtēs* (τελειότης), and it comes from the verb *teleiōō* (τελειόω), which means ‘to complete, finish and bring to an end an activity’ in a very assured and certain manner.²³ In Jesus, therefore, our ‘faith’ as believers will be fully consummated, and the work He is doing in our lives is to bring us to that final consummation in heaven.

The next passage concerning ‘faith’ as a gift is Galatians 2:20, wherein we are told that the faith we live by is also from Jesus: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.” The phrase “by faith in the Son of God” may also be read, “by faith from the Son of God.”²⁴ That is, this ‘faith’ that Paul lived by had its origin in Christ, which is what we have seen in Romans 10:17 and in Hebrews 12:2. It is also placed in Christ, who alone is our source and strength! Thus, both readings may be viewed as expressing two truths in one phrase. Our faith is both from Christ, as well as placed in Him, trusting Him to live His life in and through us, while walking and living in the promises of His Word.

And finally, in Acts 3:16, we discover that divine faith, in all aspects, comes through Jesus: “And on the basis of faith in His name, *it* is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.” Here, Peter is explaining to the people who have run to see the miracle of healing that just took place with the lame man, how this healing occurred. Peter is saying that it is not only “on the basis of faith in His name (i.e., the name of Jesus),” but also it is by “the faith which *comes* through Him (i.e., Jesus)” that this lame man has been healed.

However, there are those who would see the ‘through Him’ as not necessarily referring to Jesus. They see it as perhaps an allusion to Peter, or maybe even the lame man. If Peter is somehow referring to himself, then that would seem to be a contradiction of Acts 3:12, in which Peter is attempting to turn the attention away from himself and John and to the Lord. In addition, that would have been a very awkward way for Peter to refer to himself, ‘through him’, versus, ‘through me’, which would seem more reasonable since Peter was the one doing the talking.

Others see ‘through him’ as referring to the lame man himself, but there are two distinct views regarding this position. One is that it is the lame man’s own faith, which came “through him [*and*] has given him this perfect health . . .” But if that is the case, then why the emphasis in the ‘name’ of Jesus as being the source of his healing? If the faith to be healed came in and through this man alone, then he really doesn’t need Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or anything else, but all he needs is his own faith to believe for whatever he wants. If that is the case, then here again, perhaps Pelagius was right! But Pelagius wasn’t right, and neither can this view be correct in the light of the whole counsel of God’s Word.

The other similar view is that ‘through him’ is referring to the lame man, but the faith is from Jesus and has worked in and ‘through him’, that is, the lame man, resulting in his “perfect health in the presence of you all.” This is quite similar to the position that the ‘Him’ is Jesus, but in this latter view, the faith is actually seen as flowing in and through the man from Jesus, culminating in his complete healing.

Now although divine, saving faith may clearly be seen in the above passages as a ‘gift of God’, we are not automatons, but rather we are individuals who must say, once our eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit to see the truth, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe and trust You as my Lord and Savior’, otherwise, we have no salvation! And, subsequent to salvation, we have both the responsibility and the freedom from the Lord to either say, ‘Yes, Lord, I will obey and follow you in the faith that you have given and are perfecting within Me through Your Word, by the power of your indwelling Holy Spirit’, or ‘No, Lord, I will not obey you in faith in this particular matter because I am afraid You won’t keep Your Word’. That choice is ours to make, and He enables and allows us to do either.

Predestination, Election & Foreknowledge – Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28

Mr. Hunt’s view of ‘predestination/election/foreknowledge’ is quite interesting, and if he is correct in what he says, he, along with others who hold this view, will have unraveled one of the most difficult issues in biblical theology. On the other hand, if he is incorrect, then the theological damage done to those who would embrace this view of

predestination would be equal to the damage caused by his incorrect view of man's sin nature in such passages as Genesis 6:5, Psalm 14:1-3, et al. Therefore, what is at stake is not Calvinism, Arminianism, or any other 'ism', but the very heart of biblical truth.

Mr. Hunt states his position on predestination quite clearly and unambiguously in the following quote:

What about the statements in the Bible that certain ones have been predestined, or elected? We will examine those scriptures and in the process we will see that in the Bible predestination/election is *never* unto salvation. To the Calvinist, however, predestination/election is *always* and *only* unto salvation – a view which is imposed wrongly upon Scripture. In fact, election/predestination is always unto specific blessings that *accompany* salvation, but not to salvation itself. (Hunt, 211)

According to Mr. Hunt, at *no time* is predestination/election *ever* unto salvation, but rather always unto some spiritual blessing for God's children subsequent to salvation. Mr. Hunt reinforces this belief in the following quote where he emphasizes what he sees as the order of salvation:

Surely the most obvious possibility would be that God foreknew who would repent and believe the gospel and on that basis He predestined them to something unique: "to be conformed to the image of his Son" and "unto obedience". . . . The most straightforward interpretation of these scriptures is that knowing in advance who would believe the gospel, God made certain that those individuals heard the gospel, and He predestined them to partake of the many blessings He planned to bestow on the redeemed throughout eternity. (Hunt, 225 & 229)

Thus, according to Mr. Hunt, foreknowledge always precedes predestination, and foreknowledge is simply God seeing ahead of time what man will do (e.g., seeing those men who will accept Jesus as Savior, etc.) and then predetermining or 'arranging' that event based on what he saw in advance. Thus, the determining factor in predestination, according to Mr. Hunt, is man's action, and then God follows along and predetermines or 'arranges' what He sees man will already do in order to accomplish His will:

This inspired statement by Peter on the Day Pentecost concerning Christ's betrayal and crucifixion (Mr. Hunt is referring to Acts 2:23) provides important insight into God's outworking of His eternal plan. It clearly reveals that even in declaring future events through His prophets and accomplishing them in history according to His will, God takes into account what He by foreknowledge knows will be the actions and reactions of men. He did not *cause* Judas to betray Christ, nor did He *cause* the Jews to reject Him or the Romans to crucify Him. However, He did arrange that these particular individuals who would act in that manner were on the scene at the right time to fulfill His will through their willing ignorance and/or evil. (Hunt, 226)

This position is not unique to Mr. Hunt, but he states this belief with such a dogmatic certitude that he leaves no room for any other consideration.

In Acts 2:22-23, we read:

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--²³ this *Man*, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.

The phrase “the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God” is what Mr. Hunt is referring to in the above quote when he speaks of “This inspired statement by Peter.” The word for ‘predetermined’ is *horidzō* (ὁρίζω), and its basic meaning is that of ‘setting limits in order to define and explain something in a more delineated and specific fashion’. Consequently, when applied to people or events, it means ‘to determine, appoint, fix or set something or someone in a very specific and established manner’. What is even more interesting is that the form for *horidzō* in this instance is a perfect, passive participle, which is modifying ‘plan’. Thus, the literal rendering of this phrase would be ‘the having been determined/appointed/fix/set plan’. The perfect tense indicates a completed action with an ongoing and continuous result. Therefore, this was something that was determined from eternity in a fixed and set plan, as far as the time, place and persons involved.

The word for ‘plan’ in the Greek is *boulē* (βουλή), and its basic meaning is ‘plan, purpose, intention, resolution & decision’. This noun comes from the Greek verb *boulomai* (βούλομαι), and its primary meaning is ‘to desire to have or experience something, with the implication of planning in order to fulfill that desire’. What is interesting in this verb, from which the noun *boulē* is derived, is that the decision to act is not based on foreseen events that will occur, and then the action is planned, but rather the decision is based on the desire for something to occur, and then the action is planned in order to bring it to pass. The noun in turn contains that same inference.

The word for ‘foreknowledge’ is *prognōsis* (πρόγνωσις), and its basic meaning is ‘forethought, prearrangement or predetermination’. The verb from which this noun is derived is *proginōskō* (προγινώσκω), and its basic meaning is ‘to know beforehand, or to choose beforehand’.

The question before us, therefore, is, does ‘knowing beforehand’, with reference to God, mean that God knows what we will do, and, therefore, He makes his predetermined plan based on what we are going to do? Or does ‘knowing beforehand’, with reference to God, mean that He knows us, and all that is going to happen, because of His predetermined plan? The former is Mr. Hunt’s position, but is that the correct one? If God, according to Mr. Hunt, makes his plans based on what He sees we are going to do, then who is actually in control? Is God in control, or are we, as created, sinful and fallen human beings in control? It would seem that if God’s ‘predetermination’ is based on those decisions the we first make, then we are the ones who are actually predetermining what God is going to do. Consequently, that would appear that we, who are finite human beings, are in control of God and the universe, and not the other way around.

However, Mr. Hunt’s main objection to the idea of foreknowledge being God’s choosing beforehand is that it would be redundantly repeating ‘predestined’. For example, in Romans 8:29, if foreknowledge were the same as predestination, it would read, “whom he did predestinate he *also* did predestinate” (Hunt, 226). To hopefully give a bit more clarity to this dilemma, an amplified translation of Acts 2:23, based on the expanded meanings above, would, therefore, read as follows: “this *Man*, having been

delivered up according to God's desired plan and fulfilled decision to do so through His predetermination, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death." As you can see in the above, amplified translation, there doesn't appear to be any redundancy, or confusion as to God's purpose and plan in His fulfilled decision.

Another important text in this same venue is Acts 4:27-28 where we read:

For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,²⁸ to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.

Peter is leading the disciples in a prayer of thanksgiving after he and John had been arrested and commanded to no longer teach or preach in Jesus' name after the healing of the lame man at the temple. In this passage, 'foreknowledge' doesn't appear in conjunction with 'predestined', but 'purpose' does, and the word for 'purpose' is the exact same word for 'plan' in Acts 2:23, *boule* (βουλή). In addition, the word for 'predestined' in Greek is *prooridzō* (προορίζω), and its basic meaning is 'to decide upon beforehand'. Thus, an amplified reading of Acts 4:28 would be as follows: "to do whatever Thy hand and Thy fulfilled decision determined to do beforehand." Now even though 'foreknowledge' doesn't occur in this verse, the meaning expressed in this passage is identical in scope and content as that expressed in Acts 2:23.

The question needing to be asked, therefore, is regardless of and in spite of any 'isms' that people try and cloak the Scripture with in order to support their preferred beliefs, or to reject beliefs that don't fit in with their particular, sanctioned theology, is the Scripture true, or is it not in what it is declaring? That is the question that you the reader must ask yourself in your decision making.

As quoted earlier, Mr. Hunt doesn't believe that 'predestination/election' is ever unto salvation, but rather unto blessing for those who are saved. He says: "Before proceeding further, it is vital to realize that neither in these passages nor anywhere else does election or predestination refer to salvation but always and only to particular benefits" (Hunt, 219). Now granted, the above two passages we looked at in Acts do not have anything to do with 'salvation' as far as being directly related to individuals, but they most definitely have everything to do with God's overall sovereignty and how that sovereignty affects us in our daily lives, which would certainly include our salvation.

Individual Salvation & Predestination - Ephesians 1:3-12; I Peter 1:2; Romans 8:28-30; Romans 9:6-13

This next and last topic follows right on the heels of the previous subject of *Predestination, Election & Foreknowledge*, and that is *Individual Salvation & Predestination*. As I pointed out in the previous discussion, Mr. Hunt adamantly denies any relation, whatsoever, between predestination/election and salvation. Therefore, in this final section of our biblical analysis, I want to look at the above passages to see if there is any connection between salvation and *Predestination, Election & Foreknowledge*. The first one I would like to examine is Ephesians 1:3-12:

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, ⁸ which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight ⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

As you read the above passage, it doesn't take a knowledge of Greek to be able to read in these verses the clear and simple message of salvation in Christ and all that means to us in our life on this earth, as well as our going home to be in glory. Verses 4 & 5 are rather straightforward in their statement of our salvation in Christ, which includes our sanctification in Christ as we grow in Him. In verse 4, the word "chose" is an aorist middle, *exelexato* (ἐξελέξατο), and that means that God Himself chose us specifically in Christ for salvation, as well as for the totality of all the blessings that accompany that salvation.²⁵ The statement in verse 5 that "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself" is about as plain and simple as it gets. What does "adoption as sons through Jesus Christ" actually mean? The word for adoption in Greek is *huiiothesia* (υιοθεσία), and it comes from two Greek words: *huios* (υἱός), which means, 'son', and *thesis* (θέσις), which means, 'position'. Thus, combined, they mean 'sonposition', which means we are put in a position as His sons, or 'adoption/sonship', through Jesus' death and sacrifice on the Cross. That means we were saved, forgiven and placed in Christ by the Holy Spirit and now BELONG TO HIM! Once again, in as plain and simple terms as can be stated for me, a believer, I have become a child of God; I am saved; I am redeemed through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; and I have eternal life in Him! This appears to me to be pointing quite clearly, specifically and unambiguously to salvation in Christ, and to deny such is tantamount to denying the obvious for the sake of some personal agenda that contravenes the clear teaching of Scripture. In addition, in verse 12 Paul says that he and others of his time were the "first to hope in Christ," and what does that mean if it is not referring to salvation? The word for 'hope' here in the Greek is a *hapax legomenon*, meaning it is used only once in the New Testament. In Greek it is pronounced, *proelpidzō* (προελπίζω), which means, 'to be the first to hope'. In addition, it is a perfect, active participle, and, therefore, it is emphasizing a completed act that has an ongoing, continuous affect. Thus, at some time in the past, Paul and others placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and, as a result of that act of repentance and faith in Christ, they are now saved and will remain so throughout eternity! Once again, this certainly appears to about salvation, as well as all the other blessings that attend our salvation in Christ.

There are some other very interesting syntactical matters in this passage that are essential to our understanding of the relationship between predestination, election,

foreknowledge and salvation that I want to examine. These points will in turn be linked with the other passages we will explore in this section.

In Ephesians 1:3-12, there are six participles, four aorist, one perfect, and one present tense verb. The perfect participle is used substantivally in verse 6 when referring to Jesus as the “Beloved.” The present participle is used in verse 11 in referring to God “*who works* all things after the counsel of His will.” The four aorist participles, however, are quite significant in their usage with regard to predestination, election, foreknowledge and salvation.

The aorist participle is significant in that it primarily indicates action that has occurred before the action (i.e., antecedent to) indicated by the main verb in the clause. However, the aorist participle can also indicate action that is simultaneous with, as well as subsequent to the action of the main verb. The first use of an aorist participle in this passage is in verse 3, “who has blessed” (ὁ εὐλογήσας - *eulogēsas*), and it is antecedent to the action of the main verb, which in this instance is the adjective, “Blessed” (εὐλογητός *eulogētos*). The emphasis being that we as believers declare God to be “Blessed” because He first “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.”

The second use of an aorist participle is in verse 5, “He predestined” (προορίσας - *proorisas*), and this usage here is key to the order of our salvation in Christ. It is used in relation to the main verb, “He chose” (ἐξελέξατο - *exelexato*) in verse 4, and its usage here can either be antecedent to, or simultaneous with “He chose.” If it is viewed in an antecedent manner, it means that we who are believers ‘were preordained’ to eternal life before ‘we were chosen’ by the Lord. On the other hand, if it is viewed as a simultaneous act, then the choosing and predestinating are one and the selfsame act in God’s economy. In either case, what is clearly being described is our salvation in Christ, not merely the blessings that attend our salvation as Mr. Hunt asserts. In addition, I see the verb “He chose” as a constative aorist, viewing the whole of our relationship with the Lord as one entity, from our being chosen in Christ “before the foundation of the world,” up to and through our going home to be with Him for all eternity.

The third use of an aorist participle is in verse 9, “He made known” (γνωρίσας - *gnōrisas*), and the main verb it is governed by is “He lavished” (ἐπερίσσευσεν - *eperisseusen*) in verse 8. Clearly, in this instance, the aorist participle is to be understood as simultaneous with the action of “He lavished.” That is, as “He lavished” upon us the “riches of His grace,” He in turn made and is making known to us “the mystery of His will” through His “wisdom and insight.” The verb “He lavished” is an aorist, active indicative, and I see this as a constative aorist in the same way as “He chose” in verse 5 above. Consequently, this ‘lavishing’ began when we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and continues throughout our life. Thus, here again, we are not simply talking about the blessings that follow our salvation, but we are talking about the very act of our coming into Christ through the re-birth and all that accompanies and follows that re-birth.

The fourth and final use of an aorist participle in this passage is in verse 11, “having been predestined” (προορισθέντες - *prooristhentes*). The main verb with which it is aligned is “we have obtained an inheritance” (ἐκληρώθημεν - *eklērōthēmen*), and it comes from the verb *kleroō* (κληρώω), whose basic meaning is ‘to appoint by lot, or choose’. In this instance, the aorist participle, “having been predestined,” is antecedent to the action

of this main verb, which is an aorist, passive indicative, and that means that someone other than ourselves ‘appointed or chose us’. And here too, I see “we have obtained an inheritance/we were appointed/we were chosen” as a constative aorist in the same way as the above examples of “He chose” in verse 4 and “He lavished” in verse 8. However, what is most significant here in verse 11 is that the aorist, passive participle, “having been predestined,” is quite clearly antecedent to the action of “we have obtained an inheritance/we were appointed/we were chosen,” and that means that the predestinating occurred prior to our ‘obtaining an inheritance/being appointed/being chosen’. In addition, the verbs “He choose” in verse 4 and “we have obtained an inheritance/we were appointed/we were chosen” here in verse 11 are both in tandem with the aorist participle “predestined,” which comes from the Greek verb *prooridzō* (προορίζω). In the first instance in verse 4, *prooridzō* is in the active voice, and thus the primary reason why it may be seen as either antecedent to or simultaneous with the action of the verb, “He chose.” On the other hand, in verse 11, *prooridzō* is in the passive voice, and syntactically the clear meaning of that is that the ‘predestinating’ occurred before the ‘having obtained an inheritance/having been appointed/having been chosen’. That being the case, it would seem a bit strange to have the first example be simultaneous and the second obviously antecedent. Therefore, for consistency’s sake, it would seem that in both instances, the aorist participles are antecedent to the action of the main verbs, and that would mean that the predestinating of believers in Christ occurred prior to choosing those who would be believers.

Mr. Hunt also made reference to I Peter 1:2, which in order to understand, needs to be read with verse 1:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. (I Peter 1:1-2)

The literal reading of the above passage is as follows:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the refuges of the dispersion throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia who are the elect, according to the foreknowledge and predetermination of God the Father by sanctification through the Spirit into obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; may grace and peace be multiplied to you.

As has already been pointed out, the word for ‘foreknowledge’ in Greek is *prognōsis* (πρόγνωσις), and it means ‘foreknowledge, forethought, prearrangement & predetermination’. Therefore, when reading I Peter 1:2, one needs to include both aspects of the meaning, ‘foreknowledge and predetermination’, in order to present as accurate as possible the thought being expressed. This brings into question once again, does ‘foreknowledge’ mean God sees what man is going to do, and then makes his predetermination based on man’s actions, or does it simply mean God foreknows all things that are going to happen because He has prearranged events, while at the same time giving mankind the final step of choosing his direction? Based on our analysis of

the previous sections, it would seem that the concept of ‘foreknowledge’ leans more toward the latter than the former.

One other very important passage that ties in with Ephesians 1:3-12 is Romans 8:28-30:

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;³⁰ and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

The key area of discussion is in verse 29 where ‘foreknew’ precedes ‘predestined’. As we have already discussed, the Greek word for ‘foreknew’ comes from *proginōskō* (προγινώσκω), and it means ‘to know beforehand or in advance, to choose beforehand’, and the Greek word for ‘predestined’ comes from *prooidzō* (προορίζω), its basic meaning being ‘to decide upon beforehand, to appoint beforehand’. Therefore, we see that the meaning of ‘choose beforehand’ is a legitimate and real meaning of the verb ‘foreknew’ (*proginōskō* - προγινώσκω), and not only that, but this corresponds to the order presented to us in Ephesians 1:4-5 & 11 above. In Ephesians 1:4-5 we read: “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, . . .” We saw in verses 4 & 5 that “predestined” could either be antecedent or simultaneous with “chose.” In Ephesians 1:11 we read: “also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose . . .” We saw here, however, that “having been predestined” clearly is antecedent to “we have obtained and inheritance/we were appointed/we were chosen.” That being the case, God’s predestinating occurred before we were chosen, and this would obviously be true for verses 4-5 as well. What we have in Romans 8:29 is the very same order: “For whom He foreknew and chose beforehand, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, . . .” Even more importantly, verse 30 makes it very clear that “predestination” has everything to do with salvation, as well as with our growth in Christ: “and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Calling and justification are certainly related to our salvation, and predestination precedes both of these works of God, which is all part of our salvation, as well as our growth in Him.

The last passage I want to look at is Romans 9:6-13:

But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel;⁷ neither are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants, but: “through Isaac your descendants will be named.”⁸ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.⁹ For this is a word of promise: “At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son.”¹⁰ And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac;¹¹ for though *the twins* were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God’s purpose according to *His* choice might stand, not

because of works, but because of Him who calls,¹² it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."¹³ Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Concerning this portion of Romans 9, Mr. Hunt says, "Paul is not at all dealing with the eternal destiny of Esau, Jacob and Pharaoh" (Hunt, 270), but rather "God is ultimately referring to nations within which not every individual is either saved or lost" (Hunt, 263-264). And again, "Nor does Paul, in the context of his quotation in Romans, even hint any more than does Malachi at the individual salvation of Esau, Jacob or Pharaoh" (Hunt, 262). It is very clear, therefore, that Mr. Hunt does not in any way see the above quoted passage in Romans as remotely referring to the salvation of anyone, but rather to two nations within the womb of Sarah, based on the scriptures Paul uses from Genesis and Malachi:

Since he is quoting Malachi and Genesis, it must follow that Paul likewise is not referring to the individuals named but to the nations descended from them. In fact, that the election and prophecy referred to nations rather than individuals was clear from the very start. . . .

The prophecy was, however, perfectly fulfilled in the nations descended from Esau and Jacob. "Two nations" were unquestionably the subject of God's declaration. . . . (Hunt, 263)

The question before us, therefore, is whether or not Mr. Hunt is correct in his assertion about Paul. If he is, then once again, this will be a major breakthrough in understanding one of the most difficult passages in Scripture. But let's look at this passage and see what it is saying.

First of all, like Ephesians 1:3-12, Romans 9:6-13 has very clear language that certainly gives the distinct impression that Paul is discussing salvation. In Romans 9:8, for example, Paul says: "That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants." That which Paul is talking about in this verse in its context is the same as Galatians 4:21-31:

Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.²³ But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.²⁴ This is allegorically speaking: for these *women* are two covenants, one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.²⁵ Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.²⁶ But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.²⁷ For it is written, "Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; For more are the children of the desolate Than of the one who has a husband."²⁸ And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.²⁹ But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, so it is now also.³⁰ But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman."³¹ So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

If you take this passage in Galatians in its total context, you will see clearly that Paul is unequivocally talking about our salvation in Christ through faith, versus through the Law, or through the physical lineage of Abraham. Thus, Paul's reference to the "children of the flesh" in Romans 9:8 is the same as his reference to "the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh" in Galatians 4:23, in that both are referring to those who think they are "children of God" because they are physical descendants of Abraham, as well as because they believe they are justifying themselves through keeping the Law. The whole epistle to the Galatians may be wrapped up in Galatians 3:11: "Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for 'THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.'" Therefore, Paul's reference to "the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise" in Galatians 4:23 is a statement about our salvation by "grace through faith" ("the son by the free woman"), versus salvation by the works of the Law ("the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh"). In addition, the statement in Galatians 4:28, "And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise," is clearly reiterating the truth that those who by faith have received Jesus and been born again by the Spirit are like Isaac, who was the child 'of promise'. On the other hand, Ishmael, who was 'born according to the flesh', represents those who are trying to justify themselves through the Law. I honestly don't know of any evangelical scholar, teacher or pastor who would deny this truth.

Secondly, with reference to the term 'children of God' in New Testament terms, the evidence seems rather clear that it is a term used to describe the salvation of those who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and, therefore, have become and are 'children of God'. For example, in John 1:11-13, we read: "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The reference to "His own" is obviously referring to the Jews. But then John goes on, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to describe who the "children of God" are, "those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." How much clearer could John be, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in his delineation that "children of God" is a reference describing the salvation of those who believe in Jesus, are saved, and are now "children of God" through being "born . . . of God"? I see no confusion, ambiguity or misunderstanding in John's statement at all.

Another very important passage concerning 'children of God' referring to salvation is found in Romans 8:15-17:

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* in order that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

This passage is so unambiguously clear about our salvation in Christ for those of us who have been born again, that the two terms found in this passage, "adoption as sons" and "children of God," can't possibly be misunderstood to be referring to anything else but our salvation. In fact, we have the very same term, "adoption as sons" *huiiothesias* (υιοθεσία), in Romans 8:15, as we have in Ephesians 1:5, "adoption as sons" *huiiothesian*

(υιοθεσίαν). There is no ambiguity at all that *huiiothesias* in Romans 8:15 is referring to our salvation in Christ, and the exact same thing is true in Ephesians 1:5. Likewise, just as “children of God” in Romans 8:16 is clearly talking about our salvation in Christ, as also in John 1:11-13, so too is “children of God” in Romans 9:8 clearly and unambiguously referring to our salvation in Christ.

There are ten passages in the New Testament where the ‘children of God’ are referred to, including Romans 9:8, and, without any equivocation, they are all referring to a salvation relationship with God through the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. In addition, as John 1:11-13 speaks with reference to individuals receiving Christ in order to become ‘children of God’, so too elsewhere, even though individuals may or may not be mentioned specifically, ‘children of God’ as a group is made up of individuals who have received Christ and been born again.

Therefore, having looked at Ephesians 1:3-12, I Peter 1:1-2, Romans 8:28-30 and Romans 9:6-13, where predestination and election are used in a very clear and obvious connection with salvation, we see that, with all due respect to Mr. Hunt and his claim that such does not occur, the relationship between election and salvation is a clearly revealed biblical truth.

Mr. Hunt, however, in his very sincere desire to protect the body of Christ from what he sees as very damaging and unbiblical teaching on the subject of election and salvation from a Calvinistic perspective, makes a very interesting statement about this subject that is worthy of our attention:

The blessings that God has eternally purposed to bestow upon the redeemed have nothing to do with how they are saved but follow their salvation. And what blessings they are! We could have been given eternal life, and even a place in heaven like angels, without being made God’s children and joint heirs with Christ of all the inheritance He has in the Father. But God in His infinite love and grace predestined believers to be part of His family, His very own children who are called “unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (I Peter 5:10). As John Wesley said, “God decrees, from everlasting to everlasting, that all who believe in the Son of his love, shall be conformed to his image” (Hunt, 233)

Ladies and gentlemen, such a statement as the above, is very misdirected, misguided and misleading. By Mr. Hunt saying that “We could have been given eternal life, and even a place in heaven like angels, without being made God’s children and joint heirs with Christ of all the inheritance He has in the Father,” is to completely redefine what salvation is. We have just finished going over the fact that to be saved, which is to have ‘eternal life’, is to be a ‘child of God’ on an individual basis, and when grouped together, people who have ‘eternal life’ and are saved are called ‘children of God’. Now Mr. Hunt does go on to say, “But God in His infinite love and grace predestined believers to be part of His family, His very own children who are called ‘unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus’ (I Peter 5:10).” However, the very fact that he presents such a proposal to believers in order to substantiate his position that predestination and election are not at all connected with salvation, but are connected only with the blessings that follow one who has already been born again, is setting an incredibly dangerous precedent. I am sure he doesn’t see it that way, and I know this was not his intention, but the upshot of such a proposal opens the door to unbridled, theological propositions, whereby one can hope to

substantiate anything he or she chooses to put forth as ‘biblical teaching’ by appending, ‘what if God . . .’, versus, ‘God has said . . .’, to any theological doctrine one might wish to promulgate.

Conclusion

As I shared in the beginning of this review, Mr. Hunt is driven by his agenda to destroy Calvinism, and in his drive to do so, he has unfortunately eschewed a number of biblical truths that Calvin himself embraced and emphasized, but which transcend Calvinism. As a result of that direction by Mr. Hunt, he has in turn fallen prey to the very things he accuses Luther and Calvin of doing. For example, Mr. Hunt says, “It is disappointing that Luther so often forces Scripture to prove his point, instead of allowing it to speak for itself” (Hunt, 184). As we looked at the passages concerning Mr. Hunt’s approach toward man’s sinful nature in Genesis 6:5 et al, as well as the passages in Romans and Ephesians concerning election and salvation, unfortunately, I believe we have seen some fairly clear examples of Mr. Hunt doing the same thing he accused Luther of doing.

Mr. Hunt makes reference to the vitriolic attacks Luther and Calvin aimed at their opponents, and without question they did:

One of the sad features of Calvin’s Institutes is the demeaning language he continually employs (much like Luther) to vilify all who disagree with him: . . .
Beneath Calvin’s own bluster there is often little substance to his arguments, which in the end can be supported only by abusing Scripture. (Hunt, 233-234)

After reading through every page of Mr. Hunt’s book, I must say that I see him equally as guilty of the same vitriol at times against his opponents as were Luther and Calvin against theirs. As I shared earlier, he is much more respectful to some than to others, but nonetheless his “demeaning language” that he continually employs against those whom he would consider his opponents is replete throughout his book. And although I would in no way describe Mr. Hunt’s arguments as “his own bluster” wherein “there is often little substance to his arguments,” which is the language he uses to describe Calvin’s writings, I would have to say that on numerous occasions (some of which I gave examples), he too is guilty of “abusing Scripture.”

There were a number of areas in his book that I did not broach in this review because I wanted to focus on those I felt were the most serious. Mr. Hunt does present some well thought out and reasonable arguments with regard to Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement and Irresistible Grace, but I didn’t feel his section on the Perseverance of the Saints was too well done as compared to the sections leading up to that. In my opinion, his strongest and most biblically based argument is against the belief espoused by some Calvinists that regeneration precedes saving faith. This argument runs throughout his book, and he continues to return to it regardless of the particular section of Calvinism he is dealing with. It is an argument that those who hold to this particular, Calvinistic belief need to seriously consider and provide a thorough, biblically based response to.

On the other hand, I felt unequivocally that his weakest and least biblically based argument dealt with the sin nature of man and his handling of Genesis 6:5 et al. In fact,

his perspective concerning man's sin nature permeates and affects all of his other perspectives in varying degrees. The second area where I felt he was very weak and lacked a solid, biblically based perspective was his argument against election in any way being related to salvation. Although I wouldn't say his approach to this section lacks as much biblical credibility as does his handling of man's sin nature, I would have to say that he was certainly 'twisting Scripture' concerning this subject matter in the same way he accuses Calvinists of doing in similar areas.

However, I believe the most profound weakness of his book is his unabashed bias against Calvinism. He has every right to reject Calvinism and all it stands for, but unfortunately, at times, his extreme bias seriously and adversely affects his presentation and evaluation of biblical and historical material. This is something that none of us are immune to, and we must be very careful to guard against it in order that our views do not become equally as clouded.

The one thing I feel more than anything else after reading Mr. Hunt's book is grief. Mr. Hunt expressed his grief at the end of his book over what he believes to be great distortions by Calvinism of the true picture of God, and how those distortions have turned so many away from Christ. My grief is over the picture given to the unbelieving world from his book of a not so disguised hatred, animosity and vitriol aimed at other believers, with whom he disagrees, in such a way that there is little difference between the animosities he expresses and the animosity of a like kind that the unbelieving world aims at its opponents. Mr. Hunt repeatedly speaks of how God is libeled by Calvinism in that it "denies His love for all" (Hunt, 414), and I know, after reading his book, this is indeed a very sincere and driving passion for him. However, I must say that I did not see the love of God that he so passionately wants the world to know about channeled toward a number of those with whom he disagrees.

And finally, with all due respect to Mr. Hunt, I must say that this book is an example of how not to write a critique of fellow believers with whom we disagree. Rather than bringing about healing, restoration and unity in the Body of Christ, I see this book bringing even greater division, animosity and bitterness. Therefore, notwithstanding Mr. Hunt's passion for writing this book, I would not call this a great book with regard to the method and manner he dealt with Calvinism, let alone should it be considered the standard for an objective and critical evaluation of the history and teachings of Calvinism. The main reason I say this is that his deep hatred and loathing for Calvinism warped his objectivity so that his accuracy at times in handling Scripture and historical concerns was seriously marred.

May the Lord cause us to walk in grace and mercy toward those with whom we disagree in the Body of Christ, and may He continually bring us back to the following passage in our treatment and attitude toward one another before the world: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

they were either “appointed” by God, or they were “disposed” as a result of the Lord opening up their hearts by the conviction of the Holy Spirit to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

²⁰ The phrase in Greek is ἄρα ἢ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς, ἢ δὲ ἀκοὴ διὰ ῥήματος Χριστοῦ. I view the word ἀκοῆς (hearing) as an ablative of means, and ῥήματος Χριστοῦ (word of Christ) as an ablative of source. Thus, the source of faith is the “Word of Christ,” and the means by which that faith is received and Embraced in a person’s heart is through “hearing.” Of course, this doesn’t necessarily mean literal hearing with the natural ear because some people may be deaf. But it comes through the “hearing” of understanding whereby the Holy Spirit opens up the heart through his conviction, enabling someone to understand.

²¹ This is a present active participle from ἀφοράω, and its emphasis is that of a continuous, ongoing action.

²² a. The “hero” of a city, who founded it, often gave it his name and became its guardian, as, e.g., Athens for Athens . . . (ἀρχηγέτις). This gives us already b. the “originator” or “author” . . . In Philo the term ἀρχηγέτης is mostly used for the patriarchs or Adam or Noah (a.). With special pride he calls Abraham the ἀρχηγέτης of the Jews (Abr., 9, 276; Vit. Mos., I, 7). On one occasion, however, he uses the word in a bold metaphor for God as the Creator and Father of all things (Ebr., 42).

In the LXX the ἀρχηγός is usually the political or military “leader” of the whole people, or of a part of it. It is usually the equivalent of שׂאֵר, רֶשֶׁת, or אִישׁ־אֵל; or of the יִצְיָק elected in time of emergency. In the Chronicler it is also used for שׂאֵר as the “head” of the clan. . . .

The concept is more deeply rooted in the circle of specific Christian thinking at Hb. 2:10. Christ is the ἀρχηγός τῆς σωτηρίας. He leads many brethren to the honour or glory, which is the end of σωτηρία. By His suffering He accomplishes His work as the “Author” of salvation. In 12:2 He is similarly called the “Author” and “Founder” of Christian faith (ἀρχηγός τῆς πίστεως), and more particularly, according to the context, of the resultant moral consequences. Yet Jesus is also ἀρχηγός τῆς πίστεως in the sense that as the first man He gave an example of faith in God, that by His death He “fulfilled” this faith in God’s unconditional love and its overcoming of the barrier of sin, and that He thereby gave this love concrete and once-for-all actualization in the history of salvation. (Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol 1 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964], 487-8). These are, therefore, two very important appellations to be affixed to Jesus, and they are also a source of incredible comfort and encouragement to us, His children, to know that He is working in and through us to conform us to His image (Romans 8:29; Philippians 2:12-13; Hebrews 13:20-21).

²³ The verbs τελέω and τελειώω coincide in the NT especially in the sense “to carry through,” “to complete” . . . Whereas this is the chief meaning of τελέω, the thought of totality is stronger in the case of τελειώω, . . . The findings suggest for τελέω the meanings of τέλος, “goal,” “issue,” “end” . . . and for τελειώω those of τέλειος, “whole,” “complete,” “perfect” . . . (Kittel, vol. 8, 84). Thus, here too it is quite clear that the plan and manifest purpose of God for His children is to bring us to completion in Jesus. Paul says as much in Philippians 1:6: “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

²⁴ The phrase in Greek is ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, and this may be seen as either a subjective genitive (i.e., producing the action being described), or an objective genitive (i.e., receiving the action being described). If it is the subjective genitive, then the translation would be “the faith from the Son of God,” in which Jesus is generating the faith. On the other hand, if it is the objective genitive, then the translation would be “faith in the Son of God,” wherein Jesus is now the object of where I am placing my faith. Grammatically and syntactically this can be either. Therefore, I see it as a “both, and,” versus an “either, or.” That is, both aspects of faith are represented because both are true. In addition, the definite article τῇ is modifying “faith,” both being in the dative case. Thus, the reading could be, “I live by faith, which in itself is from the Son of God,” or, “I live by faith, which finds its source and power in the Son of God.”

²⁵ This is clearly a constative aorist, in which the whole of one’s life in Christ is viewed as a single unit, including being brought to Christ and born again, all the way through one’s life on this earth as a believer in Christ, and finally to be taken home to be with the Lord for all eternity.