

**Review of Amar Djaballah, “Controversy on Universal Grace: A Historical Survey of Moïse Amyraut’s *Brief Traitté de la Predestination*,” in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*.**

**BY David Allen.**

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Amar Djaballah’s chapter on Amyraut is one of the strongest chapters in the book. The author avoids the pitfalls of many who have read Amyraut through the filter of biased secondary sources. From well-documented primary sources, the author presents an accessible summary of Amyraut’s position.

No one who reads this chapter should ever again speak of Amyraut or his position with such disdain and condescension as one sometimes finds among high-Calvinists. Djaballah apparently is aware of the mistreatment Amyraut has sometimes received when he tells us Amyraut “should be studied as a member of the Reformed theological community, with whom one may differ, not as an adversary to reduce to silence” (167-168).

Djaballah rightly points out how Hypothetical Universalism antedates Amyraldianism and that the two, though related, should be distinguished from each other (197). He states, “a form of Amyraldianism (Hypothetical or Conditional Universalism) is sometimes the default position on the atonement for most evangelicals with Reformed leanings” (166). Better perhaps to reverse this and say “Amyraldianism, a form of Hypothetical Universalism, is sometimes the default position....”

In the introduction, Djaballah informs his readers his intent “is not to provide a comprehensive critique of Amyraut’s teaching on predestination and the atonement but rather to present a historical survey of Amyraut and his writings and the controversy that ensued as a result of their publication” (166-167). Djaballah attempts to avoid “hagiography on the one side and caricature and misrepresentation on the other” (167). He succeeds on both counts.

As to method, Djaballah proposes “to present the doctrine of ‘Hypothetical Universalism’ as expounded by Amyraut in the *Brief Traitté*” (1634; 2nd edition, 1658) under five headings: 1) Amyraut’s biography and background, 2) main tenets of the *Brief Traitté*, 3) synthesis of Amyraut’s basic theses on Predestination, 4) controversy over universal grace generated by his writings, and 5) Amyraldianism today (167).

In the biography section, Djaballah charts the influence of Amyraut's teacher John Cameron, who taught theology at the Reformed Academy of Saumur. There is a brief but helpful paragraph covering the circumstances leading up to the writing of the *Brief Traitté* from Amyraut himself (172). Of note is Djaballah's statement that Amyraut "gives the strong impression that he views the doctrines he expresses not only as consonant with Scripture but also as faithful to Calvin and the first generation of Reformers, and indeed as compatible with the Canons of Dort" (172).

The bulk of the chapter covers the main tenets of Amyraut's *Brief Traitté* (172-190). Djaballah summarizes each chapter in a clear, concise, manner. Of special interest for our purpose is the summary of Chapter 7, "What is the Nature of the Decree by Which God has Ordained to Accomplish This Purpose, Either for its Extent or for the Condition on Which it Depends" (179-183).

Several things become clear from this chapter. First, Amyraut distinguishes between the intent and extent of the atonement. Second, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for sins has been made "equally for all" with respect to the extent of the satisfaction. Third, salvation for anyone is conditioned on faith.

The basis of this is Amyraut's belief that 1) all are equal in creation and are equally sinners, 2) God's compassion to deliver mankind from sin is commensurate with the plight of mankind, and hence is universal, and 3) Christ took on human nature, hence the atonement was equally for all (180).

Amyraut affirms God's universal saving will. "This will to render the grace of salvation universal and common to all human beings is so conditional that without the fulfillment of the condition it is entirely inefficacious" (183).

In Amyraut's Chapter 9, Djaballah shows how Amyraut's view of predestination is in line with standard Reformed doctrine. As Djaballah notes, Amyraut is clear in his affirmation that, "out of his mercy, God elects some to believe. In them he vanquishes all resistance..., conquers the corruption of their will, and brings them to faith willingly, abandoning others to the corruption and their ensuing perdition" (184).

On what basis did God choose some to salvation and leave the rest to perish? Amyraut thinks Scripture does not answer this question. "God's decree and ensuing action are due solely to his will and good pleasure" (184). Amyraut also does not think God can be accused of partiality. As Djaballah summarizes, "God's granting faith to some does not put others in a position to complain about his decision" (185).

In section three, Djaballah provides a synthesis of Amyraut's basic position on predestination. He notes that the distinction between God's will as secret and revealed is the key to understanding Amyraut on predestination and atonement (190). "God's revealed will concerned a universal desire to save all men on the condition that they believe. God willed that his Son should make atonement for all on the condition that they believe" (190-91).

For Amyraut, there is no necessary cause and effect between salvation procured via the atonement and salvation applied. This is Amyraut's distinction between the extent and application of the atonement. Djaballah rightly notes that Amyraut's "Hypothetical Universalism" is hypothetical in the sense that salvation is effectual "only when and if the condition of faith is fulfilled" (191).

Section four addresses the controversy over Amyraut's theology in summary fashion. Three phases are traced, followed by the aftermath, covering the years 1634-1675 and beyond. Amyraut's adversaries attacked him at several levels: he did not fall within the boundaries of the Synod of Dort; his position constituted a return to Arminianism; his treatment of Calvin was mistaken; and he was not faithful to Scripture on the topic at hand (192-93). Amyraut was accused of heresy in 1637 and again in 1644-45, but was acquitted. The 1675 Helvetic Consensus, drawn up by theologians from Zurich and Geneva, chiefly to thwart the spread of Amyraldianism, excluded universal atonement.

Djaballah concludes his chapter with a brief mention of some today who could be considered Amyraldian in their views, such as Alan Clifford in England and Bruce Demarest in America.

Djaballah marvelously succeeds in his goal for this chapter. As he states in the conclusion: "My aim has been to inform more than to pursue an argument, since Amyraut's views are so rarely understood from the primary sources" (199).

I highly recommend this informative chapter.