

FALSE OBJECTIONS TO UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

The doctrine of unconditional election says that God chooses some people for eternal salvation and not others who must suffer from death in Hell for all eternity. It denies that there is anything you can do about God's decree. The argument is that God is sovereign and is under no obligation to save anyone for all deserve Hell. There is a version of unconditional election that argues that God has a plan to do what is best and as evil exists he has to make some terrible decisions. The casualties are those who are damned forever. That contradicts the notion of a truly sovereign God. God is forced to make do with saving some so he is not sovereign.

Those who oppose the doctrine of unconditional election argue that if it is true then whatever will be will be and there is no point in preaching the gospel to others. They see the commands in the Bible that we must spread the good news as proof of its falsity. But if those who are predestined to salvation are those who trust in the gospel then it follows that the word had to be preached to all so that the elect will be reached.

The Bible tells us to pray for the world. Many say that Calvinism must be false because it would be a sin to pray to God for the salvation of the souls he has not chosen for salvation. But the Bible may mean that you just pray for those who are now lost and who are destined to get saved later. It seems absurd to pray when prayer makes no difference and does not influence God concerning who to save. But God-religion teaches that God only answers a prayer because it fits in his plan so God was planning to do what you asked anyway even if you had never asked. So an answer to prayer is a coincidence and not God having being influenced by it. The Bible taught predestination and unconditional election but it never denied that God could at times decide to predestine the whole world and do so.

The fate of dead babies, baptised and unbaptised, is another problem for the doctrine.

Calvin believed that all these babies who die go to Heaven.

Augustine who developed the theology of unconditional election centuries before him confirmed that they all go to Hell. Augustine taught that God wants to save all in accordance with their free will (Question 709, Radio Replies Volume 2). But these statements are not necessarily anti-predestination. God might want to save all but he does not save all. God could force salvation on you and then you could be freely accepting of it a moment later and forever.

The Dominicans believed that some dead babies were destined for salvation and the others were not. The latter went either to Hell or Limbo. Morally speaking, life is the absolute value. Therefore if God is right to visit the death penalty on babies for Adam's sin as the Bible says he must have the right to send babies to Hell forever for that is not destroying their lives and not doing the worst evil to them.

When the Bible says that all begin to exist in a state of estrangement from God it is most likely that the babies go to Hell. Christianity says that sin is worse than even everlasting suffering therefore nobody can dare to say that God is too nice to do that to a baby for when he maintains it in sin he does worse to it than damning it.

If God did not intend to damn babies he had predestined to die in infancy he would have kept them free from original sin from their conception.

We can be elect according to the foreknowledge of God (1 Peter 1:2) in Calvin's theology. A predestined person can be chosen for Heaven according to the foreknowledge of God who sees that he or she will get there. It is the problem with everything having two or three different senses that confuses theology students and proves that the Bible theology is not divinely inspired for God would be aware of the care needed to avert confusion. So a hardcore Calvinist can say that God predestines on the basis of foreknowledge of the person's goodness for he sees the person will be saved and causes that salvation by keeping the person in existence though he will deny that God fixes the person's fate on the basis of the person's good works in the sense that the person deserves to be chosen.

When the Bible says Jesus died for all it means he died for all the chosen. We see Paul claiming that Jesus redeemed all from sin and got all forgiven in Romans (5) though we know he did not mean all in the sense of all people on earth. The New Testament Church meant all who are chosen to be saved by all.

Unconditional election does not deny that God invites all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-6; 2 Peter 3:9). According to it the

sinner is so bad that they won't respond until God influences the will so the invitation is sincere but the sinner won't take it. A man who hates you will not accept your invitation to the party. If you show him proof that he should not hate you he changes his mind and accepts. It is exactly the same thing with God. Before, the man was in prison of his own free will and you used his free will to get him out. And when you invited him in his former state of mind your invitation was sincere even if you know he won't accept.

The God of unconditional election wants to save all but he will not. Perhaps he cannot save all for if he did it would be a sin for him for he has a mysterious purpose to fulfil? But this denies that the election is unconditional. The purpose must have something to do with us for God is all-powerful. And if it has something to do with us then it is something to do with our morals because God is interested only in our spirits.

Jesus said that many are called but less than that are chosen (Matthew 22:14). He wept because Jerusalem would not accept the salvation he offered (Matthew 23:37). The sinner has the power to turn to God but won't use it unless God helps him to use it. Therefore God can sincerely call people who won't be saved to salvation. This is not a denial of total depravity and total inability for you are only unable in the sense that you won't turn to God. You make yourself unable. The faculty to turn to God is used and twisted by you to keep yourself evil so it is really evil. It is only potentially good and not actually good. So, total depravity and inability are safe.

Romans 8:28-31 speaks of those who are called for the divine purpose. It says that God foreknew them and also predestined them to be right with him. This is supposed to say that God foresaw who would choose him of their own free will and predestined them for salvation. But this fails for it is not said what choices God foresaw but who he foresaw. God foresees the chosen and predestines them to salvation. This passage does indeed affirm the doctrine of unconditional election. A person who God sees will choose him is not predestined for predestination means causing a person to do something. Calvinists take the order in Romans 8 as being of great significance. It says foreknowledge then predestination and calling and then justification. This order could be literal for God would have to know you and see you in the future before he could destine and call you and calling and predestination would cause justification.

The other verses which have a different order are not to be taken as giving a strict order that must be adhered to. They are not on about what leads to what. But this one could be and so should be taken to be.

Jude 1:1 has sanctification preceding the divine calling but the order is not intended to mean anything. Besides, God can't make you holy to call you to be holy! Maybe Jude just means that God makes us holy before he calls us in the sense that he keeps us saved and has already saved us though this salvation hasn't been activated yet. It doesn't activate until the person gains faith. If I am saved once for all, God can still be said to be calling me to salvation now, the present moment whether I am saved yet or not.

1 Timothy 4:10 says that God is the saviour of all and especially those who believe. But saviour is meant loosely for it cannot mean that God saves unrepentant unbelievers from Hell.

2 Timothy 1:9 says that God saved Christians with a holy calling not because of works but because of his purpose. This says that goodness isn't even considered when God chooses you for salvation. That is exactly what unconditional election says.

Opponents of unconditional election maintain the following. "We believe that God chooses people for his purpose and because of their works. God saves such not to reward their works or to treat their works as earnings but simply because he chooses to. It would be the same as picking people with blonde hair for your football team. So this verse does not disprove our position".

This is dubious. If Paul had meant God saves for we will do good and not because we have earned this salvation he would not have written the way he did. He would not have written, "We are not saved in virtue of works." He would have written, "We are not saved in virtue of earnings", which would be clearer.

If you are saved because of your future good deeds not your past ones then you are earning salvation. It would be ridiculous for the Bible to stress that salvation is a gift that God is plotting to be paid back for. To choose a person for salvation because of their goodness would be wrong when it could be intended as a reward and you won't let it be for if it could be it should be.

2 Peter 1:10 makes the order to be salvation, election, God knowing your fate, and then making you holy. But this order means nothing and is just a list without regard to what causes what. God can't save you before he does the other things. But if you interpret saved to mean to make salvation possible then God can elect after he saves in that sense. You can't elect until you make salvation possible first. If the order is that God doesn't know your fate until you choose salvation then that is absurd. God knows the future according to the Bible. This proves the order is just ignored here.

We see then that the order the anti-Calvinists hope to find in the Bible that contradicts that of Romans 8 does not exist. This makes Calvinism the at least the probable teaching of the Bible.

BEWARE THE VANCE BOOK

Laurence M. Vance wrote and published his *The Other Side of Calvinism*.

This book is devoted to the demolition of Calvinism which is accused of blasphemy and of being a perversion of the teaching of the Bible.

But there are dreadful errors in this book so the book fails to dispose of Calvinism.

John Calvin is said to have taught that Jesus was spiritually present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion and that this was a hangover from Catholicism (page 36). Calvin taught that Jesus was spiritually eaten by faith in Holy Communion. That means, faith alone gives us Jesus' saving presence and if we communicate in faith we are fed by him because of our faith. In reality, faith is Jesus working in us so that faith feeds us with Jesus and Jesus feeds us by faith. So, communion in Calvin was not something that gives you grace but is a sign of the grace that is already yours. You are receiving Jesus all the time anyway. Calvin should have realised that any food and drink we take would be the same as the communion – but, it is certain he would have. Vance declares that Calvin's doctrine of communion was not far from Rome's cannibalism! There is a big gulf between bread becoming flesh and Jesus spiritually being inside bread. And Roman Catholicism does not teach cannibalism for you cannot get at Jesus in communion but only the aspects of the wafer and chalice that are sensed. To taste the wafer is to taste the veil of bread not the body of Jesus.

The anti-Calvinist, James Arminius, taught that God only chooses those who believe (predestinates) for salvation and does not pick people for salvation first regardless of their qualities like Calvinists say (page 51). In other words, the divine choice does not cause one's genuine decision to go to Heaven in Arminianism but does in Calvinism. Vance approves of Arminius's doctrine. But how can you choose not to believe in the gospel unless you already believe? Such a choice would be rejecting your perception of the real gospel. Calvin was right to say that predestination causes the faith that makes you justified before God for all eternity and which is your free ticket into Heaven. So if faith which is God's supernatural gift saves as the Bible says, then you cannot choose God unless he enables you to. This means that the five points of Calvinism must be right.

Page 67 says that there is a difference between the doctrine of total sinfulness and total inability to accept God's salvation. The first says that we can turn to God freely but prefer to sin. The second says we sin and cannot turn to God in repentance. There is no difference for the second simply means that we shut God out by self-deception and depravity so that though we have the power to change we will not use it and cannot even see it any more. In that sense, we have suppressed our free will so as to stay away from God. Even Calvinism says that we freely refuse to repent until God does something to make some of us change our minds. Because we suppress and abandon our will to do good, we are said to have no free will practically speaking. We just have it potentially.

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BIBLE TRANSLATION USED

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