

"COR ECCLESIAE—THE HEART OF THE CHURCH"

# THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

BY

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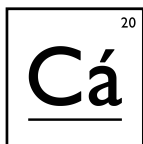
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Translated from His "E VOTO" By  
REV. G. M. VAN PERNIS

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THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

FOREWORD

In rewriting and enlarging my Handbook of General Knowledge, (Wm. B. Eerdman's Publ. Co.) aiming to make it a sort of "Vade mecum." I have also included among all the other major subjects, which should be taken up in such a work, the Heidelberg Catechism.

In the preparation of this particular part I have made liberal use of a source which is generally acknowledged to be the best, viz.: E. VOTO.

Up till the present time, there exists no translation of this substantial source. My humble efforts could not possibly be called a translation of the work of that master theologian and philosopher Dr. Abraham Kuyper.

However, an honest effort has been put forth to retain that with which our constituencies must be familiar if the peculiar Reformed character of our churches is to be maintained.

It seems somewhat preposterous on the part of one of such limited capacities, to dare to glean,—which also involves a culling out,—from such a work. For that the work of that giant among the heroes of faith has been impaired by my small, yet honest endeavor, I humbly confess, and that with a feeling of sadness bordering on despair. The undertaking is also so stupendous, as all familiar with the contents and voluminousness of E Voto must admit.

Spurred on by the longing to give to my young people in the catechetical classes, the very best I could give them, I have continued this laborious task, hoping that perhaps others, who lack the time and maybe do not read the Holland so readily, may also be benefitted by my endeavor.

There has been a silent hope, that in some way this work may contribute, be it in ever so small a degree, to the Return to things Reformed.

The moment we take from the shelves to which they had been relegated, our Standards, which some have dared to declare obsolete, we are confronted with that "rich heritage" our father have bequeathed us. One of these treasures is the Eternal Election.

Coming to this part of the Catechism, Lord's Day 21, which deals with the Church, its Fellowship and Life, we also are face to face with the Eternal Election. For it is said of the church that she is chosen "from before the foundation of the world." It is readily seen therefore why our forefathers called this Eternal Election the

"COR ECCLESIAE,"

that is: the heart of the church. Here we have:

- The Election proper
- The Election as being Scriptural
- The Election denied
- The Election defended
- Difficulties faced: Supra- and Infralapsarianism

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## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

The Election typified in Israel  
The Covenant and the Election  
The Redemption of the Cosmos ✓  
The Election of the Individual  
Election and Rejection

The effect of this in the life and consciousness of the individual Common grace

The Word of God on its certain mission  
The Immutability of God's counsel  
The perseverance of saints  
The hardness and impenitence of the unbeliever  
The Church and Election.

In reaching this part of E Voto, I was compelled to stop gleaning and culling. Here is a subject which must be brought to the attention of our people, in all its fulness.

"Decretum horrible" so it was called at one time; instead it is the foundation, the hope, the glory, the very heart of the church. Yes, and because it is solely out of and through and unto God, and that from all eternity, we may say it is the very center of the counsel of God. It is the pivot on which all else turns and swings and depends.

If this subject is studied in so far as it has been revealed unto us, we shall obtain a clear view of the insight into the Word of God and all its teachings. Then the veil shall be lifted. Such subjects as the proper place of Israel, the Kingship of Christ, the Covenant, the course of events throughout the ages, shall be definitely circumscribed and no room for any ism shall be left.

It is the glory of the Reformed Churches to have and to hold, but also her solemn duty, to pass on this precious jewel:

"COR ECCLESIAE"

It will be a long time before my Enlarged Handbook shall see the light. While whole sections are ready for the printer, with the Catechism I have just reached and finished the 21st Lord's Day.

Then comes: The Eternal Election.

The study of this subject in all its detail has meant so much for my own spiritual life, especially during these days of spiritual depression, that I cannot withhold from others, this imperfect and but partial translation of the work of him, who sought to give to the Reformed world, a Program. (Ons Program).

Thanking the publisher for his readiness to co-operate in this effort, Praying God for His blessing upon our endeavor, I am

yours for a Return to Things Reformed,

G. M. Van Pernis

Fulton, Illinois

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## "COR ECCLESIAE"

Lord's Day 21b.

Man's Deliverance

Art. IX

### "ETERNAL ELECTION"

In presenting that threefold subject: "The Holy Catholic Church: its Fellowship and Life" the 21st Lord's Day, quoting in part Art. 27 of the Belgic Confession, includes the Eternal Election.

That subject is in its proper place here. Speaking of the church confessionally, we must not only refer to its structure, but also to its foundation. That foundation is Jesus Christ. Before that foundation could be laid, there had to be a plan, according to which the church was to be built, from its foundation to its chief corner stone, with all the "lively stones" included.

The general plan of God with respect to the Universe we call God's Counsel; His specific plan of the church is called Election. Because this Election took place in eternity, before time began and before the making of the plan of the Universe, "before the foundation of the world", it is called Eternal Election.

In question 20 of the Heidelberg Catechism this Eternal Election is presupposed. In question 52 the word "chosen" is used as well as in question 54. It is the latter, however, which furnishes the starting-point for this doctrine.

As we discuss this most important dogma three things must necessarily be kept in mind.

First of all, not one Christian church denies or opposes the fact that the sacred scriptures reveal the existence of an election of God.

Secondly, we must remember that all discussion of the election is a penetrating to the very foundation of those elements, out of which God, according to His Own good pleasure, erects His great temple.

Thirdly, we dare not forget, that while God according to the secret of His counsel, elects those who are to be saved unto eternal life, that this same Omnipotent God has made us morally responsible, so that we are lost not because we could not be saved, but because we would not.

Of these three points we now speak more in particular. First, the fact that no Christian church denies nor opposes the existence of the election, which God has revealed unto us.

Neither the Catholics, the Lutherans, nor the Remonstrants\* ever dared to deny this. All theologians, worthy that name, have admitted that the Scriptures teach the election. The teachings of the Scriptures con-

\*For position of Remonstrants see General Handbook, "Church History."

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Concerning this dogma are so certain and incontestable that in order to deny this, one must reject the Scriptures themselves. In the discussion of the eternal election we begin with this very fact, namely: the Scriptures teach Eternal Election.

Because the Scriptures teach it, we must read it in private and in public; we must deal with this subject in our catechetical classes and we must preach it from our pulpits. If we do not do this, we do not preach the "whole counsel of God."

Although it is true that no church, no theologian nor layman, expert in the Scriptures, shall deny the fact that the scriptures, God's revelation to man, teach an eternal election, the positions taken towards this election differ very widely.

These positions may be classified into two groups. On the one hand we have the group which is decidedly averse to the election. On the other hand we have the group, which confesses the teaching from the heart and that to God's honor and glory; and in it seek their comfort of soul.

To this last class belong not only the Reformed. Long before the "deformation of the church", and hence before the Reformation, during the 4th and 5th centuries, a controversy on this very point, arose in the church. It was Augustine who then set forth in a lucid manner the teachings of the Word of God respecting this doctrine. Three centuries after Augustine's appearance, Satan again wrested this comfortable truth from the church of Christ.

At last under the cover of a Semi-Palagianism the arch enemy of truth, veiled this truth entirely. Only here and there a few individuals and small faithful groups, attempted to lift this veil.

Thus it was until Luther made his appearance when God, through him wrought a mighty work for the church by causing His truth to shine forth, that also the eternal election was again brought to the fore and confessed.

The men who followed Luther and continued the task he had begun, were not homogeneous with their predecessor and leader, but attempted to escape this truth.

For John Calvin, the task had been laid away to remove all dust and debris from this teaching and to bring the same once more to the fore. This he did with his strong hand and in clearest consciousness, in such a way that a number of churches not only included this teaching, in their confessions, but caused it to govern these confessions. Under God, it is John Calvin who has made the dogma of God's Eternal Election, the "Cor Ecclesiae", that is: "the heart of the church". Where Augustine was satisfied by exhibiting also this teaching in the light of God's Word, Calvin, because of the experiences of the church during the middle ages, judged this to be insufficient. It was his conviction that the church had but one choice with respect to this teaching, namely to make it the very center of our confession. Unless this is done the church should be

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

prepared from the very start, to see this wonderful fact of the election buried forever.

Realizing this fact, Calvin placed the eternal election in the foreground. Those of today, who, although acknowledging the election, yet insist that it does not demand a place of first importance, act despite our Reformed principles.

The correctness of Calvin's view in this respect and the incorrectness of the view of his opponents, is evidenced by the fact, that among those groups, who did not dare to place the election in the foreground, it is lost out of the confessions without leaving a single trace. This is true of America, of Canada, England, Scotland and the Netherlands. Or, where it has been retained in the confession "pro memoria" it is not reckoned with, neither do they glory in it, as do those who still maintain this fundamental doctrine.

It would not be fair however to regard all opponents of the election in the same light. Among them we find at least four different classes: 1. the sophists; 2. those without spiritual depth; 3. the middle-in-the-roads; 4. the open enemies.

1. Sophists are they who are clever in their reasoning but unsound. To such the election is a matter pertaining to intellectual reasoning, but not for the heart. And further, that although the Scriptures may teach an election, in reality we do not have to act accordingly. These people are decidedly dangerous. In their reasoning we find what is to be found in Satan's address to Eve in Paradise: "yea hath God said?"

2. Those without any spiritual depth are quite different. The teaching of the election is a basic study. It touches the very root of the matter. Legion is the number of people, who are satisfied with the twigs and the leaves, but who have no interest whatsoever in the root. Thus it is with the doctrine of sin, in which they do not go back to Adam. Thus it is with the doctrine of redemption in which they do not penetrate into the depth of God's counsel. Thus it is with the doctrine of the church in which they never reckon with the Body of Christ. And thus it is also with the doctrine of personal grace, in which they do not even think of God's election.

This sort of people has a natural aversion of diving into any depth; they prefer to float along on the surface. They are superficial and have no depth. Their particular evil is no open opposition, but a spiritual sluggishness.

Very closely related to this class are the middle-in-the-roads; a sort of half-way friend. These folks have more or less of an esteem for the honor of God, but they have as much respect for man's own honor. They are a sort of spiritual compromiser. They love to walk neither upon this nor upon that road, but have a sort of middle path on which they much prefer to go. If they do come into contact with any one who is determined with respect to the election, they shun him immediately, since to them, that is the safer course.

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

And then we have the open enemies. What they have in common with us, is that they too believe in going to the root of things. They too detest the superficiality of class number two. They do not want twigs and leaves only but the very root. They have no love whatsoever for the middle in the road men. They want oneness of confession. Instead of using these good qualities in the right direction they cant them against God's honor. They do not believe in God; they believe in man. They believe in an election, however, an election in which not God elects, but man; not the Creator, but the creature.

Our forefathers in the course of the 16th and 17th centuries also had to battle against these half hearted friends and these indifferent ones and the out and out enemies. It remains the glory of the General Synod of 1618 and '19, to have broken the cobwebs of the sophists, to have stigmatized the superficiality of the "spiritual undeep", to have exposed the irresolution of the "middle-in-the-roaders", and denounced the enmity of the open enemies. And over against all these the Synod placed the Sovereignty of God and His Omnipotence also in the work of grace to the praise and glory of His Name.

Secondly, we notice, that all discussion of the election, is a penetration to the foundation of the elements, out of which God is pleased to draw up His temple.

Coming to this question of eternal election we let the lead go to the very bottom. Here we are confronted by an incomprehensible mystery. Our finite conception contacts directly with that which is eternal and infinite in God and which is entirely beyond the grasp or conception of our finite minds and understandings. We cannot argue, reason, explain, comprehend nor look through the election. We can neither comprehend nor understand what and who God is in His eternal and blessed being. We can neither comprehend nor understand the existence of the Three Persons in One Holy Trinity. We can neither understand nor comprehend the creation of any creature by the will of the Creator. We can neither understand nor comprehend how the Son of God assumed human flesh and blood and at the same time was both God and man. We can neither understand nor comprehend our own birth, our existence in soul and body, and our continued existence after body and soul have been separated from each other. We can neither understand nor comprehend the origin of the thoughts in our own consciousness. We can neither understand nor comprehend the essence of love, of life or of death. Briefly, we are at a loss, the moment we attempt with our finite comprehension and understanding to penetrate into the very essence of things, and thus overstep the boundary of that which is finite.

"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out!" must also be our exclamation as we enter upon the meditation of this holy mystery.

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

And in the third place, we dare not forget, that while God according to the secret of His counsel, elects those who are to be saved unto eternal life, that this same Omnipotent God has made us morally responsible.

The Lord God has established a law and ordinance for our moral life, which we cannot trespass with our moral consciousness, without forfeiting at once every right to have anything to say in matters pertaining to this moral life.

The distinguishing mark of our moral life is the consciousness of our responsibility. Wherever this consciousness is inactive, moral life is either lacking, asleep or intentionally put to silence. On the other hand, in every instance in which our personal conviction is alive, awake and speaking, the consciousness of our responsibility comes immediately to the fore and refuses to be crowded out.

Had our moral consciousness been given us in order that we might build upon it our faith in God's existence, and by it to know the method of His work, it is readily understood we should never come to a confession of God's elective grace. Nor could we do so merely by means of this moral responsibility since moral consciousness only makes us personally responsible. Thus we could not climb to any higher cause.

Since however this moral law has been given us to govern our moral life and conduct, and the Lord God has given us a special revelation by means of which we may learn to know and penetrate into His grace, it is plain that the eternal election is not to be known out of our moral consciousness but out of His revelation. Consequently every attempt to harmonize our responsibility and God's election, is bound to meet with failure, and shall be fruitless.

This attempt not only clashes with our moral consciousness and the Word of God, but also with all utterances of that Word, which reveal the essence and the work of God and those utterances which address themselves to our moral consciousness, to purify and to stir up that consciousness.

It would be a waste of time to attempt to harmonize "repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" and "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." This "repent ye" is to stir up our moral consciousness. "The law of the Lord converts the soul" is the declaration as also the revelation of the manner in which the Lord works true conversion in our soul.

From this fact we conclude that both the church and the theologian, the preacher and the layman are devoid of any and all right, to take the least particle from God's revelation for the sake of our moral consciousness, that is our responsibility: or to take from our responsibility for the sake of God's revelation. Both must be maintained in all their completeness, and fulness and strength, and as such also confessed. And this not so as to demand the impossible of us, by saying yes and no at

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

the same time. This could not be and is forbidden by God. But that we may clearly see, acknowledge and confess that the sphere of our moral life is a separately created sphere for which God has ordained special laws. And while God's Being and work far exceed this moral sphere, in so much that it gave it being and determined the law for its life, no mortal has the right to compare God's Being and work by the Standard of our moral life.

This fact has been maintained at the Synod of Dort, where our Reformed character has been established. All the demands of our moral life have been maintained, while they refused to measure God's Being and work by any one of His creative acts, despite His revelation.

The term Election may be somewhat misleading. It seems to presuppose all men as standing before God and as if He after some deliberation had determined to save a certain percentage, and in order to execute this plan chooses a certain number arbitrarily. This number He gave and the others He passes by.

This process would be like unto some human action, say for instance, when we need a certain number of household articles and make choice of the storekeeper's exhibit.

So as to avoid this erroneous conception of the election we must look at the etymology of the word used in the original in the Word of God. That word used is BACHAR. In this word is not found that meaning of making choice out of a large number, but of having a delight in. It would mean then that the Lord first had a delight in His people and thus chose them. Not because of anything in or on them, but according to His good pleasure. Thus we read in Deut. 7:7 "The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers". Notice that it is God's good pleasure, His oath which precedes His choice or the making of that choice. There is in this term BACHAR the thought of testing, trying, judging as being a derivative from election. Compare Job 15:5 "Thou CHOOSEST the tongue of the crafty". Ps. 119:30 "I have CHOSEN the way of truth". Ps. 119:173 "I have CHOSEN thy precepts." Prov. 1:29 "They did not CHOOSE the fear of the Lord." Is. 56:4 "For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths and CHOOSE the things THAT PLEASE ME, and take hold of my covenant." Notice how in all these passages the thought is: "to have a desire in".

In the New Testament this is somewhat different due to the fact that the Greek has no word equivalent to the Hebrew BACHAR, but uses a word which means "to glean", (EKLEGOMAI) but has been translated as, to choose or to select. This gleaning has in it the thought of giving the preference to.

We must remember however that while there is a preference with

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

the Lord, this preference does not find its cause in us, but comes because He chooses. This we see verified in the Old Testament, where the election passes from Abraham to Isaac and Jacob; thus on Israel; in Israel to Judah and Levi; in Judah to the root Jesse; under David's rule to Jerusalem. The creative act by which the preference originates is to be found in these selections themselves; not in the objects which are chosen.

In Abraham was no prophecy of a glorious seed to be found; much rather would he and Sarah have died childless. Isaac is the wondrous product of God's election. Jacob and Esau entwine each other in birth; Jacob is chosen before the children had done good or evil. Judah was not as mighty as was Ephraim. Jesse's generation was out of Bethlehem one of the smaller towns of Judah. In brief, the election is not because of that which is, but in order that there may be, or so as to bring about. Election is not out of the desire to have or to enrich one's self, but as an act found in God's majesty in order that He may bestow upon the objects of His choice, the very best He has to give. This is the very reason why the Election is invariably linked up with the Promise of the Covenant. The election does not take place after the object of the choice is there, but before it is there and ere it can have anything, that should make it to be desirable. The Election becomes effective BECAUSE God has thus ANNOUNCED and PROMISED it thus and SO THAT His promise shall not fail.

The thought, as if the world had first been created, and man had fallen in sin, and after that God, seeing the millions of human beings in ruin, had now for some reason or other chosen a certain number and past by others, must be avoided. In fact, since the Bible knows of no such election, this thought must be uprooted, root and branch.

When God called Israel out of Egypt and chose them above the surrounding nations, this choice did not take place because of a comparison made between Israel and Hittites, Perizzites, Amorites, etc., but exclusively and solely because of the PROMISE made unto Abraham four centuries before.

Election does not come after creation, but lies far back of the same. The Lord says to the elect: "I have loved thee from everlasting". The apostle says: "Elect from before the foundation of the world." It is because of this that our forefathers always spoke of an Eternal Election.

At this point we must refer to and briefly explain two positions which are held by those who believe in Election.

These two positions are called Supralapsarianism and Infralapsarianism. The meaning of these terms is this: Supra, that is above, or as in this instance before, and lapsarianism from that which pertains to a "lapsus" or fall. In other words: Supralapsarianism means: those who hold to the belief that God chose the elect from before the fall. Infra-

Supersarianism means below or after the fall and thus refers to those who believe that election is since or after the fall.

Believing, however, that God's plan as well as His law is perfect, complete and without a pause, absolutely independent of man's action and the result of such action, we cannot but endorse the supralapsarian thesis.

In the election of Jacob and the rejection of Esau we find no trace or indication in the Scripture which refers to a foreseen faith of Jacob or of unbelief on the part of Esau. We read in Rom. 9:11, 12 "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, it was said unto her (Rebecca) the elder shall serve the younger". When the apostle explains this mystery, he uses the illustration of the potter, by saying: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" The potter did not choose the one lump because it was better than the one he rejected, but because he so chose. We further refer to Mal. 1:2, 3 "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say: Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? With the Lord: yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."

The apostles and the prophets, or let us say the Scriptures are Supralapsarian.

Here however we are face to face with two very grave dangers. The first of these is, that we thus include sin as a link in the plan of God. And secondly also the ruin of the lost must be sought directly in the plan of God. Both of these suppositions are untenable. To say that God determined that sin must come is to make God the author of sin. So also the thought that God has made men expressly to destroy them militates with every conception of God's love and grace.

These questions however rest upon a different basis. We have to distinguish here between that which for us is explicable because it has been revealed and that which is inexplicable because it has not been revealed and which is far beyond our comprehension. For all the believers it is a fixed truth that the connection between God's counsel and the fall is unsearchable and incomprehensible.

To approach the fall by way of God's counsel removes all guilt. To approach God's counsel by way of the fall destroys that counsel and that will lead to the denial of God.

Every attempt to solve this mystery results in a loss of consciousness of guilt, or of a weakening of God's Omnipotence and Self-sufficiency. The Scriptures do not permit us to minimize God's Omnipotence nor the extent of our guilt. Therefore it behooves us to solemnly bow before this mystery and confess whole heartedly both God's Omnipotence and

our guilt, since the Scriptures do not reveal the connection between the two: God's counsel and our sin.

Of one thing we may be certain: the salvation of the elect is the direct result of God's eternal love, Who because of that election formed them, and because of that election shall bring them to salvation. In this we must go back of creation: Who chose us from before the foundation of the world.

How we are to link into this plan of God the fall of man, will forever remain a mystery since it has not been revealed unto us. Our finite mind shall never be able to penetrate the Infinite.

Much of misunderstanding respecting the Eternal Election would have been avoided if a more serious account had been taken of the important fact, that the Lord does not elect some individuals, independent persons, but a people, a generation, a BODY under one Head, a spiritual organism.

This is evident from three facts.

First of all FROM THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL.

That Israel's national election foreshadowed and typified the Eternal Election is obvious throughout the entire Old Testament. Again and again the election of Israel is alluded to in the Sacred Scriptures as being not the election of certain individuals, but as concerning the election of the entire people. Not of this people in the distant future, but of the people in its entire existence, throughout all ages, up to the moment of its temporary rejection. The nation as such was elected, not as individuals but as a national entity.

The antithesis is never: I have chosen thee and not Socrates or Plato, but thou o people of Israel and not the heathen nations. The nation is contrasted with the nations. Israel over against the heathen nations. Ever the SEED OF JACOB over against the nations round about.

This election of Israel as nation is not an election unto salvation. If this were so, then every Jew, up to the coming of the Lord, should have an "inheritance among the saints."

As often as Israel's election is spoken of, eternal salvation is not the purpose. The people is chosen to be the possession of the Lord, to bear His Name, to be enriched with His law and ordinances, but also further to see her blessings culminate in temporal and earthly benefits. She receives a land "overflowing with milk and honey"; "the borders of her enemies shall be given her for an heritage"; she can depend upon "the outstretched arm of the Lord", and behind the shield of His Almighty power she shall dwell in safety.

No matter how copiously the blessing flows, or in the event of apostacy and unfaithfulness the curse may threaten, both blessing and curse, are entirely confined to the temporal; but the eternal condemnation or eternal salvation are not mentioned.

This election of the nation was therefore not unto salvation, but

foreshadowed the election unto salvation. This it did in such a manner, that the election unto salvation was operative long before Israel appeared. After her appearance the election unto salvation flowed almost exclusively through her bedding. And when Israel rejected her national honor upon Golgotha, this election unto salvation spread among all nations.

Out of and among those nations, the eternal election creates a new and peculiar people unto God, which people exists from Paradise on, not in a figurative but in a real sense, as people of the Lord. This people of the Lord had been typified in Israel's national existence.

The second fact to which we point is THE COVENANT.

The Scriptures nowhere present the Covenant as a sort of friendly relationship between two individuals. A real covenant can be made only by some mighty one who by his authority, can compel others. Thus rulers make a covenant to protect their subjects. So also the noblemen, during the Eighty Year War, to oppose Spain.

Thus the Scriptures present the Covenant of God with His elect, not as a covenant with a few individuals, but with Abraham and his seed. It is a covenant with Israel and all his generations. It is a covenant with David and his descendants upon the throne after him and in his capacity of king. This covenant is unimaginable, as long as we think of the elect as separate individuals and becomes of force first then, when we include them under one covenant head and Lord. They are to be included not after their conversion, but long before there is any thought of conversion. This is evidenced by the young children; that is what Baptism preaches. That is shown in the tie of the generations. That is the concept of a "seed of the church", and this is because of the irrevocable fact that we have been elected from eternity in Christ.

Thirdly we must take notice of: THE REDEMPTION OF THE COSMOS. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The Mediator is called: "The Light of the World." The Lamb of God "bears the sin of the world". Christ is called: "the Savior of the world". He shall give His flesh and blood for the "life of the world". Paul declares "the fall of Israel" is the "riches of the world". The rejection of Israel is "the reconciliation of the world." "God was in Christ reconciling the WORLD unto Himself". Accordingly "Christ is the propitiation not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world". And at last, at the return of the Lord the pean of triumph shall be: "the kingdoms OF THE WORLD are become the Lord's and His Christ."

To conclude from this with the Arminians of all shades, that grace is not particular, but meant for all men is absolutely wrong.

The Scriptures know of a twofold meaning of the word "world". On the one hand world means: the Universe, God's entire creation. This world God loves even now after the fall. That world He will never de-

stroy but renew in new splendor and glory. On the other hand "world" stands for that which is hostile towards God. It stands for that force which would rob God of His creation, and as such the world is the object, not of God's love, but of His anger and wrath.

Thus we have over against: "God so loved the world", "love not the world". So also: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" and "the whole world lieth in wickedness." And again: "Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world" and "I pray not for the world".

To reject this antithesis is the work of a blind man. That is to array the Scriptures against themselves. No one who bows before the Word of God, will do that, only those who do not tremble before His Word.

This pregnant expression "God so loved the world" may not be regarded by us as being identical with "the elect". To understand this fully we must realize that the elect are brought into direct connection with the "Creation". So also does Paul connect the first and the second Adam. And by and by also the "earthly" and the "spiritual".

God created a wonderful universe, with this little world as its center. Upon this little world He created the human race, not as a strange inhabitant but as a race which contained, bore and manifested that world in his body and nature. That race God created as a rich and glorious organism, and in it He laid all the treasures of His image and with that image all the glories of the home-life, a civic—and moral—as also a thinking life. A life sensitive to the aesthetic. Thus the world belongs to man, fits him. This world, the work of God's own hand, God will not forsake. Nay rather, this world He loved so much that He gave His only begotten Son for it, in order that through all that bitter struggle, He might save the world.

Thus, if we compare the human race, as sprouted forth out of Adam, to a tree, then the elect are not the leaves which are plucked off to make a laurel for our God, while the tree itself is cut down, its root pulled up, and doomed to the fire, but quite the opposite. The lost are the leaves which fall off and the twigs that are broken off while the tree itself, the elect, remains. Whatever is lost loses its organic union with the tree. Did not Paul say: "all things are yours"? The elect are saved and they shall inherit the earth.

Adding these three facts together: 1. the election unto salvation was typified and foreshadowed in the national election of Israel; 2. all election takes place in a covenant which is not made with the individual but with all the members included in the Head; 3. that God does not create a new world for the elect, but because of this election re-creates the world, loving His original world, bringing it back, maintains and redeems it. Out of all of which it is evident that the election is not the election of independent individuals, but the election of a people of



## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

od, a royal priesthood, a holy generation; in brief of His church,  
ought of as one throughout all ages.

Of course, and this must be understood, there is a gathering together  
the individuals into one. Just as we see in spring time one blossom  
ter another unfold its petals. But these all were in the stem and in  
e root. Thus we see one child of God after another come to take  
eir places in the church; they were however already included thereby  
the election and in the plan of God. They were in the root of Jesse  
nd came forth out of that one Body.

It is in this very Body that the Scriptures show us so clearly, the  
radual unfolding and development as it were as also the mutual con-  
nection between the members as one organic whole. That oneness which  
comes manifest in the course of time lay hidden in the Christ from  
efore the foundation of the world.

This definite teaching of the Scriptures, that all election is in Christ,  
as ever been emphasized by our forefathers. "We are blessed with  
l spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus". "He has  
osen us IN HIM from before the foundation of the world". He has  
efore predestinated us to the adoption of children by Christ Jesus.  
Ve are risen with and in Christ". "With Christ we have been set in  
eavenly places". "Our life is hid with Christ in God". We have neither  
ur own wisdom, neither righteousness, nor holiness, but "Christ is  
ven us of God for wisdom, righteousness and sanctification and com-  
ete redemption."

Thus the adorable work of election enters into the glorious work  
f creation. In His Omnipotence God elects a generation, a people, a  
ody, a church, in which some day His glory shall shine forth, and this  
eople, this body, this church, He elects in Christ.

In that sense Christ is also called: the Elect One. This is not to be  
nderstood in the present day sense, as if a certain man, named  
esus, is to be included with the elect, he possibly being the first and  
remost among them. The Scriptures do not teach that the Son of  
od took unto Himself a certain "man Jesus". But these Scriptures  
each that the Son of God took our human nature out of the flesh and  
lood of the Virgin Mary. Christ is the elect one because He has  
een set as our Head, the Head of this generation, this people, this  
ody of elect. Elect is all that which is on that body, the entire body  
elect and therefore also its Head.

Here we come to the election of the individual. While God has  
hosen the body we must not now suppose that it is for us to decide,  
or man to choose as to who shall belong to that body. That would  
e a robbing of God and a diminishing of His Omnipotence. That would  
e ascribing a free will unto man and were a denial of the very essence  
f election. Then the glory of God's Kingdom was dependent upon man  
nd not on God Himself.

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

The Scriptures teach and thus also our church, that the election of  
the people, generation, Body is at the same time an election of the  
individual; a personal election. "The Lord knoweth those that are His".  
"Their names are written in the Book of Life". Theirs is a fixed number.  
When that number is full, eternal glory shall dawn.

The perfection of the Eternal One demands, that there be no un-  
certainty about His people, or that this chosen generation, the Body  
created by Him, shall be a quantity but half revealed. He knows this  
His people and every member in particular. Every member belonging  
to that body is there in its place, because of His election also of  
the individual.

This is all according to God's counsel and election. So we have  
an election of the people and an election of the individual. We must  
take care however to regard these two in their proper relation. Not:  
because there is an election of individuals and these individuals grow  
together into one body, there is an election of the body. But, we must  
see this as follows: there is an election of the people, of a generation,  
of the Body of the Lord, in one Head Christ; and in this election of this  
people, is the election of the individual.

Everything on that body is the fruit of the election. Elect is the  
Head, elect is the body, elect are the members.

How are we to explain that this ever insoluble mystery, which ever  
remains in the doctrine of predestination, shocks the conscience so  
little? We believe this to be largely due to the fact that the repro-  
bate do not believe it and the elect do not cling to it, until they lie  
in the midst of the consciousness of their lost estate.

Let us look first of all at the experience of the soul of God's  
elect. These do not begin with a philosophic argument, or with pro-  
found calculations, but with a trembling of soul, which rocks and  
brakes up the foundation of their innermost being. Something takes  
place with them. Something which does not overtake them from with-  
out like a thunderclap, but which arises from the hidden depth of  
their innermost being. Passing by the question whether this experi-  
ence was not preceded by some work of grace, we only notice that  
they are horrified. It may seem strange that as the work of grace be-  
gins in them they do not immediately shout in songs of praise and  
ecstasy, but instead lament and weep, and in deep contrition of heart  
fall before God. Ps. 116 "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the  
pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then  
called I upon the Name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my  
soul". The first working of faith is not praise and adoration, but pen-  
itence and a broken spirit. This indeed is a sacrifice which is brought  
unto the Lord, for "the sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite  
spirit", but the soul does not know nor realize that at the time. Our  
spiritual life's first consciousness is grief and pain and not joy.

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

As the Scriptures teach us, thus the cloud of witnesses of all ages witness. Thus the church of Christ teaches it.

The sects which make themselves guilty of superficiality pave a wider and easier road. They herald the message: "Come; all that need be done is to believe in Jesus". Many heed this call saying: "We will believe", and then immediately are ready to shout and sing with the multitude of so-called converts. This is not possible. Contrition and a broken spirit come first, since grace comes to us as sinners.

Do not think now that this contrition is the condition because of which faith breaks through. Nothing of the kind. Faith is and remains the gift of God. Contrition without faith is of no avail. A contrition in which there is a godly sorrow, never comes up out of self, but is the work of grace.

There can be a bitter sorrow, resentment because of evil and a passionate dissatisfaction with self; but that is therefore no contrite heart and a broken spirit, which are well pleasing unto God. The difference between these two is, that this sorrow of the world departs as soon as there is diversion, even though that diversion consists of the doing of something morally good, probably, while the "godly sorrow" weeps until the soul is comforted by the Holy Spirit.

For this reason contrition itself is a working within us, which comes up out of faith, and therefore this sorrow shall be changed into joy. Before that stage is reached there is weeping and pain and sorrow of heart, a crying for God's mercy as the heart is overwhelmed by the consciousness of its lost and undone condition. Figuring also here with the election, we notice that God's grace is seen by us first through the prism of the fall. We may have had a theoretical knowledge of these things, but now we experience it. A child of God does not climb up first to the Eternal One to see how these things are from God's viewpoint, then to reach over the fall to himself. Instead, he realizes that he is in the deep and sinks deeper and deeper into the abyss and out of that depth he cries unto God. Staring into the depth of his soul, he finds trouble and grief. Then it is not only the evil of the hour, but the sins of his whole life, as also of his youth, yea the very fact that he was born and even conceived in sin, which loom up before him. And from his own sin, he goes to the sins of his parents and his forebears until he arrives via the sin of the human race at the root or original sin of Adam. In view of all that he realizes what the psalmist sung: "Iniquities prevail against me". No excuse for sin can be brought in against this "conviction of sin" by the Holy Spirit. He realizes he is the guilty, the rebellious one, who has dared to oppose God so brazenly.

It is this conviction, wrought by the Holy Spirit, which prevents the child of God from being entangled in the mysteries of the election. That happens only to those who are spiritually ill, who in their curi-

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

osity desire to look into the hidden depths of God's counsel. But when the Holy Spirit works in our heart, we do not walk that road.

Quite to the contrary, knowledge of sin and of misery is then, the first fruit of God's grace. And when the Holy Spirit comes to comfort us, and he grants us an insight into the eternal love of the Mediator, then all and every desire to add anything to our salvation leaves us. We then realize that all these gifts of grace come to us out of the Fountain of all good and perfect gifts. We cannot rest then until we have gone back of the fall and back of creation until we have looked into the depth of the riches of grace and divine compassion, in which God chose us unto eternal salvation.

Our spiritual experience does not begin with the election, but rather the predestination is the final goal in which we find our rest. Because of this, the fearful difficulty of harmonizing the fall with God's eternal counsel, never enters the mind of God's child. He knows the fall took place, and the root of that fall he finds in his own perverse will.

The experience of the reprobate is somewhat similar. The fact that predestination includes not only an election but also reprobation, no one, who is upright in heart, can deny. The Scriptures reveal this in a most certain way. Before the children had done good or evil, it was said: "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated". Of Pharaoh we read that the Lord declared: "For this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power". Therefore has He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth". Judas went unto "his own place". "Even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: Whereunto also they were appointed". I Pet. 2:8. According to Jude:3 "there are certain men . . . who were before of old ordained to this condemnation". There are those who are included as sheep belonging to the flock; there are others who are excluded, not belonging to this flock. There is a Book of Life in which the names of the elect are written; there are persons whose names do not appear in this book.

No matter how terrible this may sound to our human ears, nevertheless the fact remains, that there is also a rejection as well as an election. This rejection is not because the corruption found in the reprobate is greater than that found in the elect, but is entirely dependent upon God's counsel. He determined or predestinated that it should be so. These reprobate do not share in the special grace which after the fall is essential for the sinner, to come to eternal life.

While the light of Life is there, and even surrounds them, they do not walk in the same. They do not want to come to the light. These are not all murderers, robbers or drunkards. They may be morally respectable people, who because of their civil righteousness would put others to shame. They lack the one thing necessary, however. The light of life they fail to see. It is even possible that they con-

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

sider it, regard it as valuable, and "to taste the heavenly gift" (Heb. 6:4, 5) and still do not come to the birthery: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

To this they cannot come because their throat is stopped with the pride of self-righteousness. The sinner is lost and undone. Instead of Christ being unto such for the rising again He is unto them for a fall. He is their rock of offense. The savor which for them should be unto life is unto death.

We must realize that this is the case in which all are, reprobate and elect alike. By nature we all are the children of wrath. There is this difference however, that while the reprobate are left to themselves, God has mercy upon those whom He chose unto eternal life. Unto such He gives a new heart, changes their will, enlightens the eyes of their understanding, and causes them to turn to the Christ in order that they may be washed in His blood.

No one can accuse God of injustice when He passes by some, for God was under no obligation to save any. Where He visits the elect with His mercy it is out of free grace.

The reprobate do not believe in a predestination and thus are not concerned about it either. All he believes is that he himself has the right to choose. He laughs and scorns at the elect when they rejoice in the grace bestowed upon them. He is not envious of them, neither begrudges them their hope of salvation. He does not ask, that he too may become a partaker of this grace.

In cases where sorrow for sin is found as with Esau and Judas, it is not this true sorrow after God, is therefore not unto repentance and hence is vain. Neither can we make a comparison between the experiences upon the deathbeds of the lost and the saved. It is possible that the saved have a struggle with the last enemy; death, while the lost may die with a song upon his lips. This is not the rule, but we say it is very well possible as experience and observation has proven.

Due to God's common grace, we do not always have the absolute proof of the rejection in individual cases. No sooner is the veil of this earthly life removed, but what the reprobate is fully aware of his lost estate; witness the rich man of whom Jesus spoke. Then he falls into the hands of the living God and experiences that our God is a consuming fire. And then even those lost will have to admit God's justice. This he will do not because he regards God's plan, but because his own heart condemns him. The lost will have to confess throughout eternity: I have rejected God and therefore He rejects me!

Last of all we want to emphasize the immutability of the predestination. Because the election is a work of God's good pleasure, of His Omnipotent Majesty and of His unsearchable Wisdom, no creature can frustrate or defeat the working thereof. It works in spite of all opposi-

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

tion and efforts to halt it. There where it once did its work, that work can never be undone.

In this fact two matters are included: 1. predestination determines not only the final result, but includes also the means to bring about that result; 2. the gifts of God (election) are without repentance (Rom. 9:29). We all are familiar with the common objection to the doctrine of election and man's responsibility: "If one is chosen unto eternal salvation, there is no need of admonition, preaching, calling. Whether one attends to these or neglects the same, that makes no difference, for if predestinated one will be saved anyway". This is a wicked passiveness which kills all zeal, is silent where one ought to speak and waits until conversion will overtake the sinner. The false teaching must be opposed and uprooted, not by the Arminian who favors action on the part of the sinner, declaring that man has a free will, but by us as Reformed people. Our God is not the Mohammedan Allah, but is the living, ever working God. We are not Deists believing that God has made a decree long ago, and now suffers the world and our race to take their own course, neither are we fatalists as are the Mohammedans. We believe that the same God Who chose us unto eternal salvation, has also determined the means that are to be used, and applies these means, by His Word and Spirit. The Arminian who favors man's free will makes the final outcome of God's plan to rest with man and not with God Himself. Instead of man being dependent upon God, in this doctrine, God is dependent upon man. This is insulting God as God. As Reformed people we desire to maintain God's honor.

For this same reason, we oppose those who make themselves guilty of this sinful passiveness, freeing man from all moral responsibility.

It is an indisputable truth, that man is absolutely passive in the rebirth. Furthermore every action of faith is worked in us of God. We reject any and every claim of those who would contribute the smallest part to their own salvation or sanctity by any endeavor on their part. But if because of this any one would reject the use of those means which God has ordained in order that the rebirth and the implanted faith may be brought into action, we oppose this with all our might. Why? Because that would be a denial of the command and the providential working of the living God. If it pleased the Lord, He could supply us daily with manna from heaven. However, He has ordained that the seed shall be cast into the furrows and that it then should sprout, not of itself, but through the combined working of rain and sunshine. Further, that after the grain has ripened it shall be ground to flour and that this flour kneaded to dough and then be baked into bread. The Lord not only gave the seed, but also sunshine and rain and growth. He made it possible for both miller and baker to do their work; He too gave the fire over which the bread is baked. All

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

these things are included in His providence in order that He may sustain us.

Thus it is with predestination: God casts the seed of our rebirth into the soul, not to leave it to itself, but He also ordained all the means to bring this seed to fruition. And we have to obey His commandment to make diligent use of all these "means of grace". Here it is that His Word and Spirit work together. The preaching proceeds from the Word, the calling is received through the opened ear, and the Holy Spirit applies this work inwardly, and thus God works out His plan according to His Own good pleasure.

We must call, preach and admonish, not as if by so doing, we could change the seed into bread, but in obedience to Him, Who has commanded to preach the gospel unto all nations. In this way the ungodly has the judgement brought to him, and the righteous eternal life. He tells us to admonish one another, as the day approaches. Shall we believe the Word when it tells us of this election, and disobey it when the same God commands us to use the means He has ordained to obtain that result His election has determined? In this way we do not divide the work of grace between God and man, but we honor God in the use of the means which He has appointed.

No matter how terrible it may sound, it is according to the Scriptures, that also in the case of the reprobate, God has predestinated the means to their end. "The Lord has made all things for Himself: Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil". Prov. 16:4. "(The) everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels". Matt. 25:41.

Rom. 9:22b speaks of "the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction". Jude:4 tells of "certain men . . . who were before of old ordained to this condemnation". 1 Pet. 2:8 "Whereunto they also were appointed." Rom. 9:18b "And whom He will He hardeneth". According to Matt. 11:25, 26 it has seemed good in the Father's sight to reveal unto babes, that which He has hidden from the wise and prudent. At times God uses one and the same means to bring the elect to a knowledge of the truth and to harden the hearts of the reprobate. One and the same Word is a savor of life unto life unto those who believe, and a savor of death unto death unto those that are lost. The one Christ for a "fall and rising" of many.

In the second place, and this for the same reason, the Catechism confesses: That I am and remain forever a living member of this true church. This fact is included in the predestination. The means as well as the end are included. Hence the gifts of God are not to be repented of. That is it what Jesus affirmed when He said: "No one can pluck (the elect) out of my Father's hand".

This presupposes the assurance of faith. It may be that having experienced the grace of God in one's heart, doubts arise. Such a one will ask himself, has it been a true work in my soul? It is then that

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

the Scriptures give us the assurance of faith, implying that God does not forsake the work of His Own hands.

Let us cling to these facts: 1. that the true faith gives us the assurance, that not only unto others but also unto me His grace has been given. Of his God will assure us in His Own good time; 2. that where the Holy Ghost has been given, He has been given to abide with us forever. Thus it is that our faith does not rest upon our emotions, convictions, or varied experiences, but in spite of all doubt, unbelief, littleness of faith, upon God Himself, Who wrought all this work in our soul.

Here we also think of the grace of the Covenant which supports our spiritual life. Not as if the election rested upon the Covenant, rather, the covenant is the summing up of all the means of grace in covenant form. "I will be thy God and the God of thy seed".

Upon that covenant we base our claims, our prayers, the baptism of our infants, the training in the home, in the school, the catechetical classes; and upon the basis of that covenant we proceed from the first to the second sacrament, from baptism to the Lord's Supper.

Since God is reliable, absolutely dependable, His Word being the truth, we know that nothing can separate us from Him.

And finally: Shall we preach this doctrine of the eternal election? Where the Scriptures teach the same (Romans and Ephesians) we, who have been told, to teach all nations, all things which He has commanded us, and since "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) we cannot do otherwise but obey.

The eternal election belongs to the gospel. It is the center of the Divine root of that gospel.

Who would dare to hide this: COR ECCLESIAE?

This we may not do.

Because the predestination is not preached, either as it should be done or as often as it should be done, all sorts of Arminian and other errors have crept into the life of our churches. In many instances the preaching loses itself in generalities. Where and when this dogma of the election is preached and also the predestination of the means which God has ordained to that end, will God's entire revelation in all its detail loom up in fullest glory.

The church needs this full gospel, rather than a few cherished subject which only serve to satisfy our curiosity, or stir our emotions, or please the ear. The correct preaching of eternal election, will once more show us the Sovereignty of God, the fulness the Christ, the efficaci-

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

ousness of the means of grace, our good works as the fruit of the work of grace within us, and our sanctification as the completion of that work on us.

According to this view, nay rather, according to the Scriptures, the doctrine of eternal election is the

“COR ECCLESIAE”.