



REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 17

AUGUST 2, 2025

*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5*

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MEDITATION

And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them. And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God. And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them. And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

—Exodus 24:12–17

From Seir to Sinai

The glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai. As before, God came to Sinai in cloud and fire. The cloud covered the upper part of the mountain and blocked the sky from view. In the midst of the cloud at the top of the mountain, the glory of Jehovah appeared as a consuming, leaping, devouring fire. Moses and Joshua could see the cloud and the fire from their place near the top of the mountain, where Moses waited six days for God to call him further up. The seventy elders could see the cloud and the fire as they descended from their place lower down the mountain, where they had eaten and drunk with God. The Israelites could see the cloud and the fire from their camp in the plain at the base of the mountain.

This time, however, God came to Sinai from a different direction than before. Previously, God had descended upon Sinai. He had come from above, from heaven, and had descended below, to the mountain (Ex. 19:18). This time God did not descend from above, but he traveled from the top of another distant mountain to abide on Mount Sinai. He came from Mount Paran in the range of mountains known as Mount Seir, more than one hundred miles to the north of Sinai (Deut. 33:2; Judges 5:4–5; Hab. 3:3–6).

The sight of Jehovah coming from Seir was beautiful and terrible. As the people of Israel

looked due north under their blue sky at Sinai, they would have seen a storm cloud on the distant horizon that appeared to grow as it came nearer. As the stormy thunderhead approached, it became evident that this was no ordinary cloud. It burned with a devouring fire (Ex. 24:17) and shone with the brightness of the dawning sun (Deut. 33:2). Rays of light from the cloud radiated out to cover the heaven and fill the earth (Hab. 3:3–4). Rain poured out of the cloud, as if the very heavens had caved in and were dropping (Judges 5:4). Thunder crashed so loudly that the earth trembled and the mountains melted (5:4–5). Within the cloud, hidden as it were, was something—Someone!—with immense power (Hab. 3:4). In fact, it was Jehovah! With him flew ten thousand and more angels (Deut. 33:2). In his right hand he carried his law, blazing with his fiery glory (33:2). Jehovah and his host came to Sinai and blotted out the sky. On the top of the mountain, Jehovah's glory shone and roared and burned as a devouring fire (Ex. 24:17).

What did it all mean? God's procession from Seir to Sinai was a promise to his covenant people of his complete victory over their mortal enemies. Seir was the abode of Edom, descendants of reprobate Esau (Gen. 36:8) and constant enemy of Israel. God came from Seir with his garments dyed red with the blood of Edom.

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save” (Isa. 63:1). God’s procession from Seir to Sinai was a victory march of the triumphant king!

God came from Seir to Sinai to teach us that Jehovah dwells with his covenant people, and he destroys all his and Israel’s enemies. We shall behold our salvation and the enemies’ destruction in the triumphant return of Jesus Christ. “And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God” (Rev. 19:13).

—AL

THE CANONS OF DORDT

Translation Comparison: Head 1, Rejection of Errors

| Corrected Translation | Current Translation | Original Latin |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Rejection of the Errors by which the Dutch churches have been troubled for some time. The orthodox doctrine concerning <i>Election</i> and <i>Reprobation</i> having been explained, the synod rejects the errors of those:</p> <p>Error 1: Who teach that the will of God to save those who would believe and would persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in the word of God.</p> <p>Rejection: For these deceive the simple and plainly contradict the sacred scriptures, which declare not only that God wills to save those who would believe, but that he has also from eternity chosen certain particular persons to whom, rather than others, he in time will grant both faith in Christ and perseverance, as it is written: <i>I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world</i> (John 17:6).</p> | <p>The true doctrine concerning <i>Election</i> and <i>Rejection</i> having been explained, the Synod <i>rejects</i> the errors of those:</p> <p>Error 1: Who teach that the will of God to save those who would believe and would persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in God’s Word.</p> <p>Rejection: For these deceive the simple and plainly contradict the Scriptures, which declare that God will not only save those who will believe, but that He has also from eternity chosen certain particular persons to whom above others He in time will grant both faith in Christ and perseverance, as it is written: <i>I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world</i> (John 17:6). <i>And as many as were ordained to</i></p> | <p>Rejectio Errorum, <i>Quibus Ecclesiae Belgicae sunt aliquamdiu perturbatae. Exposita doctrina Orthodoxa de Electione et Reprobatione, Synodus rejicit Errores eorum:</i></p> <p>I. Qui docent, ‘Voluntatem Dei de servandis credituris, et in fide fideique obedientia perseveraturis, esse totum et integrum electionis ad salutem decretum; nec quicquam aliud de hoc decreto in verbo Dei esse revelatum.’ Hi enim simplicioribus imponunt, et Scripturae sacrae manifeste contradicunt, testanti Deum non tantum servare velle credituros, sed etiam certos quosdam homines ab aeterno elegisse, quos praeter aliis in tempore fide in Christum et perseverantia donaret; sicut scriptum est, <i>Manifestum feci nomen tuum hominibus, quos dedisti mihi.</i> John 17:6. Item, <i>Crediderunt quotquot ordinati erant ad vitam aeternam.</i> Acts 13:48. Et, <i>Elegit nos ante jacta mundi fundamenta, ut essemus sancti,</i> etc. Eph. 1:4.</p> |

Likewise: *As many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (Acts 13:48). And: *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy*, etc. (Eph. 1:4).

Error 2: Who teach that there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive, and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute. Likewise: that there is one election unto faith and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith without being a decisive election unto salvation.

Rejection: For this is a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the scriptures, whereby the doctrine of election is corrupted, and this golden chain of our salvation is broken: *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified* (Rom. 8:30).

Error 3: Who teach that the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain particular persons rather than others; but in this, that God chose out of all possible conditions (among which are also the works of the law), or out of the whole order of things, the act of faith, of no special worth in itself, as well as the imperfect obedience of faith, to be a condition unto salvation;

eternal life believed (Acts 13:48). And: *Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love* (Eph. 1:4).

Error 2: Who teach that there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive, and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute. Likewise: that there is one election unto faith and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith without being a decisive election unto salvation.

Rejection: For this is a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the Scriptures, whereby the doctrine of election is corrupted, and this golden chain of our salvation is broken: *And whom he foreordained, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified* (Rom. 8:30).

Error 3: Who teach that the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which Scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain persons rather than others, but in this, that He chose out of all possible conditions (among which are also the works of the law), or out of the whole order of things, the act of faith, which from its very nature is undeserving, as well as its incomplete obedience, as a condition of salvation, and that

II. Qui docent, 'Electionem Dei ad vitam æternam esse multiplicem; aliam generalem et indefinitam, aliam singularem et definitam; et hanc rursum vel incompletam, revocabilem, non peremptoriam, sive conditionatam: vel completam, irrevocabilem, peremptoriam, seu absolutam.' Item, 'Aliam electionem esse ad fidem, aliam ad salutem; ita ut electio ad fidem justificantem absque electione peremptoria ad salutem esse possit.' Hoc enim est humani cerebri commentum extra Scripturas excogitatum, doctrinam de electione corrumpens, et auream hanc salutis catenam dissolvens: *Quos prædestinavit, eos etiam vocavit: et quos vocavit, eos etiam justificavit: quos autem justificavit, eos etiam glorificavit.* Rom. 8:30.

III. Qui docent, 'Dei beneplacitum ac propositum, cujus Scriptura meminit in doctrina electionis, non consistere in eo, quod Deus certos quosdam homines præ aliis elegerit, sed in eo, quod Deus ex omnibus possibilibus conditionibus (inter quas etiam sunt opera legis) sive ex omnium rerum ordine actum fidei, in sese ignobilem, et obedientiam fidei imperfectam, in salutis conditionem elegerit; eamque gratiose pro perfecta

and that he would graciously consider this in itself as a perfect obedience and count it worthy of the reward of eternal life.

Rejection: For by this pernicious error the good pleasure of God and the merits of Christ are made of none effect, and men are drawn away by useless questions from the truth of gracious justification and from the simplicity of scripture; and this doctrine of the apostle is declared false: *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began* (II Tim. 1:9).

Error 4: Who teach that in the election unto faith this condition is prerequisite, namely, that man should use the light of nature aright, be upright, meek, humble, and fit for eternal life, as though election were in some measure dependent on these things.

Rejection: For these savor of Pelagius, and make a thinly veiled charge of falsehood against the apostle when he writes: *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

He would graciously consider this in itself as a complete obedience and count it worthy of the reward of eternal life.

Rejection: For by this injurious error the pleasure of God and the merits of Christ are made of none effect, and men are drawn away by useless questions from the truth of gracious justification and from the simplicity of Scripture, and this declaration of the apostle is charged as untrue: *Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal* (2 Tim. 1:9).

Error 4: Who teach that in the election unto faith this condition is beforehand demanded, namely, that man should use the light of nature aright, be pious, humble, meek, and fit for eternal life, as if on these things election were in any way dependent.

Rejection: For this savors of the teaching of Pelagius, and is opposed to the doctrine of the apostle, when he writes: *Among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest; but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might*

obedientia reputare, et vitæ æternæ præmio dignam censere voluerit.' Hoc enim errore pernicioso beneplacitum Dei et meritum Christi enervatur, et homines inutilibus quæstionibus a veritate justificationis gratuitæ, et simplicitate Scripturarum avocantur; illudque Apostoli falsi arguitur; *Deus nos vocavit vocatione sancta; non ex operibus, sed ex suo proposito et gratia, quæ data est nobis in Christo Jesu ante tempora sæculorum.* II Tim. 1:9.

IV. Qui docent, 'In electione ad fidem hanc conditionem prærequiri, ut homo lumine naturæ recte utatur, sit probus, parvus, humilis, et ad vitam æternam dispositus, quasi ab ipsis electio aliquatenus pendeat.' Pelagium enim sapiunt, et minime obscure falsi insimulant Apostolum scribentem: *Versati sumus olim in cupiditatibus carnis nostræ, facientes quæ carni et cogitationibus libebant, eramusque natura filii iræ, ut et reliqui. Sed Deus, qui dives est misericordia, propter multam charitatem suam, qua dilexit nos, etiam nos cum in offensis mortui essemus, una vivificavit cum Christo, cujus gratia estis servati, unaque suscitavit, unaque collocavit in cælis in Christo Jesu; ut ostenderet in seculis supervenientibus supereminentes illas opes suæ gratiæ, pro sua erga nos benignitate in Christo Jesu.*

that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:3–9).

Error 5: Who teach that the incomplete and non-decisive election of particular persons to salvation occurred because of a foreseen faith, conversion, holiness, and godliness, whether just begun or continued for some time; but that the complete and decisive election occurred because of foreseen perseverance unto the end in faith, conversion, holiness, and godliness; and that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness on account of which he who is chosen is more worthy than he who is not chosen; and that therefore faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits or effects of the unchangeable election unto glory, but are conditions and causes without which election does not occur, being prerequisite for those who will be fully chosen, and foreseen as having been fulfilled by them.

Rejection: This is repugnant to the entire scripture, which everywhere impresses these and similar utterances upon our ears and hearts: Election is *not of works, but of him that calleth* (Rom. 9:11). *And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (Acts 13:48). *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy* (Eph. 1:4).

show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus; for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory (Eph. 2:3–9).

Error 5: Who teach that the incomplete and non-decisive election of particular persons to salvation occurred because of a foreseen faith, conversion, holiness, godliness, which either began or continued for some time; but that the complete and decisive election occurred because of foreseen perseverance unto the end in faith, conversion, holiness and godliness; and that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness for the sake of which he who is chosen is more worthy than he who is not chosen; and that therefore faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits of the unchangeable election unto glory, but are conditions which, being required beforehand, were foreseen as being met by those who will be fully elected, and are causes without which the unchangeable election to glory does not occur.

Rejection: This is repugnant to the entire Scripture, which constantly inculcates this and similar declarations: Election is *not out of works, but of him that calleth* (Rom. 9:11). *And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (Acts 13:48). *He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy* (Eph. 1:4). *Ye did not choose me, but I chose you* (John 15:16).

Gratia enim estis servati per fidem (et hoc non ex vobis, Dei donum est), non ex operibus, ut ne quis gloriatur. Eph. 2:3–9.

V. Qui docent, ‘Electionem singularium personarum ad salutem, incompletam et non peremptoriam, factam esse ex praevisa fide, resipiscentia, sanctitate et pietate inchoata, aut aliquamdiu continuata: completam vero et peremptoriam ex praevisæ fidei, resipiscentiæ, sanctitatis, et pietatis finali perseverantia: et hanc esse gratiosam et evangelicam dignitatem, propter quam qui eligitur dignior sit illo qui non eligitur: ac proinde fidem, fidei obedientiam, sanctitatem, pietatem, et perseverantiam non esse fructus sive effectus electionis immutabilis ad gloriam, sed conditiones, et causas sine quibus non, in eligendis complete prærequisitas, et praevisas, tanquam præstitas.’ Id quod toti Scripturæ repugnat, quæ hæc et alia dicta passim auribus et cordibus nostris ingerit: *Electio non est ex operibus, sed ex vocante. Rom. 9:11. Credebant quotquot ordinati erant ad vitam æternam. Acts 13:48. Elegit nos in semetipso ut sancti essemus. Eph. 1:4. Non vos me elegistis, sed ego elegi vos. John 15:16. Si ex gratia, non ex operibus. Rom. 11:6. In hoc est charitas, non quod nos dilexerimus Deum, sed quod ipse dilexit nos, et misit Filium suum. I John 4:10.*

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you (John 15:16). And if by grace, then is it no more of works (Rom. 11:6). Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son (I John 4:10).

Error 6: Who teach that not every election unto salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the elect, any decree of God notwithstanding, can yet perish and do indeed perish everlastingly.

Rejection: By which gross error they make God to be changeable, overthrow the comfort of the godly concerning the firmness of their election, and contradict the holy scripture, which teaches that it is not possible that the elect should be deceived (Matt. 24:24); that Christ loses not one given to him by the Father (John 6:39); and that those whom God predestinated, called, and justified, them he also glorifies (Rom. 8:30).

Error 7: Who teach that there is in this life no fruit of the unchangeable election to glory, nor any consciousness thereof, nor any certainty thereof, except that which comes from a changeable and contingent condition.

Rejection: For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain certainty, but this is also contrary to the experience of the saints, who with the apostle exult in the consciousness of their election and celebrate this benefit from God; who according to Christ's admonition *rejoice* with his disciples *because your names are written in heaven* (Luke 10:20);

But if it be of grace, it is no more of work, (Rom. 11:6). Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son (1 John 4:10).

Error 6: Who teach that not every election unto salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the elect, any decree of God notwithstanding, can yet perish and do indeed perish.

Rejection: By which gross error they make God to be changeable, and destroy the comfort which the godly obtain out of the firmness of their election, and contradict the Holy Scripture, which teaches that the elect cannot be led astray (Matt. 24:24); that Christ does not lose those whom the Father gave Him (John 6:39); and that God hath also glorified those whom He foreordained, called, and justified (Rom. 8:30).

Error 7: Who teach that there is in this life no fruit and no consciousness of the unchangeable election to glory, nor any certainty, except that which depends on a changeable and uncertain condition.

Rejection: For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain certainty, but also contrary to the experience of the saints, who by virtue of the consciousness of their election rejoice with the apostle and praise this favor of God (Eph. 1); who according to Christ's admonition rejoice with His disciples that their names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20);

VI. Qui docent, 'Non omnem electionem ad salutem immutabilem esse, sed quosdam electos, nullo Dei decreto obstante, perire posse et æternum perire.' Quo crasso errore et Deum mutabilem faciunt, et consolationem piorum de electionis suæ constantia subvertunt, et Scripturis sacris contradicunt docentibus, *Electos non posse seduci*: Matt. 24:24. Christum *datos sibi a Patre non perdere*: John 6:39. Deum quos *prædestinavit, vocavit et justificavit, eos etiam glorificare*. Rom. 8:30.

VII. Qui docent, 'Electionis immutabilis ad gloriam nullum in hac vita esse fructum, nullum sensum, nullam certitudinem, nisi ex conditione mutabili et contingente.' Præterquam enim quod absurdum sit ponere certitudinem incertam, adversantur hæc experientiæ sanctorum, qui cum Apostolo ex sensu electionis sui exultant, Deique hoc beneficium celebrant, qui *gaudent* cum discipulis, secundum Christi admonitionem, *quod nomina sua scripta sunt in cœlis*: Luke 10:20; qui sensum denique electionis ignitis tentationum diabolicarum telis opponunt, quærentes, *Quis intentabit*

and finally who also set the consciousness of their election over against the fiery darts of devilish assaults, asking: *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?* (Rom. 8:33).

Error 8: Who teach that God, merely of his own righteous will, has not decreed to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the communication of grace necessary for faith and conversion.

Rejection: For this word standeth firm: *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth* (Rom. 9:18). And also this: *Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given* (Matt. 13:11). Likewise: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight* (Matt. 11:25–26).

Error 9: Who teach that the reason why God sends the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely the good pleasure of God, but rather the fact that one people is better and worthier than another to whom the gospel is not communicated.

Rejection: For Moses cries out against this, addressing the people of Israel thus: *Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.*

who also place the consciousness of their election over against the fiery darts of the devil, asking: *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* (Rom. 8:33).

Error 8: Who teach that God, simply by virtue of His righteous will, did not decide either to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the communication of grace which is necessary for faith and conversion.

Rejection: For this is firmly decreed: *He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth* (Rom. 9:18). And also this: *Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given* (Matt. 13:11). Likewise: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight* (Matt. 11:25, 26).

Error 9: Who teach that the reason why God sends the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely the good pleasure of God, but rather the fact that one people is better and worthier than another to whom the gospel is not communicated.

Rejection: For this Moses denies, addressing the people of Israel as follows: *Behold, unto Jehovah thy God belongeth heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that therein.*

crimina adversus electos Dei?
Rom. 8:33.

VIII. Qui docent, 'Deum neminem ex mera justa sua voluntate decrevisse in lapsu Adæ et in communi peccati et damnationis statu relinquere, aut in gratiæ ad fidem et conversionem necessariæ communicatione præterire.' Stat enim illud, *Quorum vult, miseretur; quos vult, indurat*. Rom. 9:18. Et illud, *Vobis datum est nosse mysteria regni cælorum, illis autem non est datum*. Matt. 13:11. Item, *Glorifico te, Pater, Domine cæli et terræ, quod hæc occultaveris sapientibus et intelligentibus, et ea detexeris infantibus: etiam, Pater, quia ita placuit tibi*. Matt. 11:25, 26.

IX. Qui docent, 'Causam cur Deus ad hanc potius, quam ad aliam gentem Evangelium mittat, non esse merum et solum Dei beneplacitum, sed quod hæc gens melior et dignior sit ea, cui Evangelium non communicator.' Reclamat enim Moses, populum Israeliticum sic alloquens, *En Jehovah Dei tui sunt cæli, et cæli cælorum, terra, et quicquid est in ea: Tantum in majores tuos propensus fuit amore Jehova diligendo eos; unde selegit semen eorum post eos,*

Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day (Deut. 10:14–15). And Christ said: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Matt. 11:21).

Only Jehovah had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all peoples, as at this day (Deut. 10:14, 15). And Christ said: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Matt. 11:21).

vos inquam, præ omnibus populis, sicut est hodie. Deut. 10:14, 15. Et Christus: Væ tibi Chorazin, væ tibi Bethsaida, quia si in Tyro et Sidone factæ essent virtutes illæ quæ in vobis factæ sunt, in sacco et cinere olim pœnitentiam egissent. Matt. 11:21.



First Head of Doctrine, Rejection of Errors

Rejection of the Errors by which the Dutch churches have been troubled for some time. The orthodox doctrine concerning *Election* and *Reprobation* having been explained, the synod rejects the errors of those:

Error 1: Who teach that the will of God to save those who would believe and would persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in the word of God.

Rejection: For these deceive the simple and plainly contradict the sacred scriptures, which declare not only that God wills to save those who would believe, but that he has also from eternity chosen certain particular persons to whom, rather than others, he in time will grant both faith in Christ and perseverance, as it is written: *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world* (John 17:6). Likewise: *As many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (Acts 13:48). And: *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy*, etc. (Eph. 1:4).

Error 2: Who teach that there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive, and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute. Likewise: that there is one election unto faith and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith without being a decisive election unto salvation.

Rejection: For this is a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the scriptures, whereby the doctrine of election is corrupted, and this golden chain of our salvation is broken: *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified* (Rom. 8:30).

Error 3: Who teach that the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain particular persons rather than others; but in this, that God chose out of all possible conditions (among which are also the works of the law), or out of the whole order of things, the act of faith, of no special worth in itself, as well as the imperfect obedience of faith, to be a condition unto salvation; and that he would graciously consider this in itself as a perfect obedience and count it worthy of the reward of eternal life.

Rejection: For by this pernicious error the good pleasure of God and the merits of Christ are made of none effect, and men are drawn away by useless questions from the truth of gracious justification and from the simplicity of scripture; and this doctrine of the apostle is declared false: *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began* (II Tim. 1:9).

Error 4: Who teach that in the election unto faith this condition is prerequisite, namely, that man should use the light of nature aright, be upright, meek, humble, and fit for eternal life, as though election were in some measure dependent on these things.

Rejection: For these savor of Pelagius, and make a thinly veiled charge of falsehood against the apostle when he writes: *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his*

kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:3–9).

Error 5: Who teach that the incomplete and non-decisive election of particular persons to salvation occurred because of a foreseen faith, conversion, holiness, and godliness, whether just begun or continued for some time; but that the complete and decisive election occurred because of foreseen perseverance unto the end in faith, conversion, holiness, and godliness; and that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness on account of which he who is chosen is more worthy than he who is not chosen; and that therefore faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits or effects of the unchangeable election unto glory, but are conditions and causes without which election does not occur, being prerequisite for those who will be fully chosen, and foreseen as having been fulfilled by them.

Rejection: This is repugnant to the entire scripture, which everywhere impresses these and similar utterances upon our ears and hearts: Election is *not of works, but of him that calleth* (Rom. 9:11). *And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (Acts 13:48). *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy* (Eph. 1:4). *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you* (John 15:16). *And if by grace, then is it no more of works* (Rom. 11:6). *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son* (I John 4:10).

Error 6: Who teach that not every election unto salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the elect, any decree of God notwithstanding, can yet perish and do indeed perish everlastingly.

Rejection: By which gross error they make God to be changeable, overthrow the comfort of the godly concerning the firmness of their election, and contradict the holy scripture, which teaches that it is not possible that the elect should be deceived (Matt. 24:24); that Christ loses not one given to him by the Father (John 6:39); and

that those whom God predestinated, called, and justified, them he also glorifies (Rom. 8:30).

Error 7: Who teach that there is in this life no fruit of the unchangeable election to glory, nor any consciousness thereof, nor any certainty thereof, except that which comes from a changeable and contingent condition.

Rejection: For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain certainty, but this is also contrary to the experience of the saints, who with the apostle exult in the consciousness of their election and celebrate this benefit from God; who according to Christ's admonition *rejoice* with his disciples *because your names are written in heaven* (Luke 10:20); and finally who also set the consciousness of their election over against the fiery darts of devilish assaults, asking: *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?* (Rom. 8:33).

Error 8: Who teach that God, merely of his own righteous will, has not decreed to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the communication of grace necessary for faith and conversion.

Rejection: For this word standeth firm: *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth* (Rom. 9:18). And also this: *Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given* (Matt. 13:11). Likewise: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight* (Matt. 11:25–26).

Error 9: Who teach that the reason why God sends the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely the good pleasure of God, but rather the fact that one people is better and worthier than another to whom the gospel is not communicated.

Rejection: For Moses cries out against this, addressing the people of Israel thus: *Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the*

LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day (Deut. 10:14–15). And Christ said: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto

thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Matt. 11:21).

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

The Banner

June 23, 1921

(pp. 390–91)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article CXXI: The New King and His Kingdom: In the Line of Generations

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations. —Gen. 17:7

The covenant, so we found, which God established with Abraham is the gracious relation between God and Abraham in which God is Abraham's friend, and Abraham is the friend of God.

In the establishment of that covenant God is naturally first. It finds its origin in God. And Abraham becomes the friend of God only through God's grace.

Nevertheless, the covenant having been established, it contains, as all covenants, two parts. And Abraham's part in the covenant is that he walk in the world as God's party by faith.

Clearly this is expressed in our Baptism Form. There we read as follows:

"Holy baptism witnesseth and sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and, therefore, will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us that he doth wash us in his blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death

and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins and accounted righteous before God. In like manner when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us by this holy sacrament that he will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

In the above paragraph you have a description of what God does in his covenant. He is first. He establishes the covenant. It is he that makes an eternal covenant of grace with us. He adopts us for his children and heirs. As our covenant God he will provide us with every good thing and avert all evil or turn it to our profit.

And this must not be understood in a Pelagian or Semi-pelagian sense of the word, as if it depended upon the free will of the sinner ultimately whether God's covenant with his people is actually to be realized or not. On the contrary, to God's side of the covenant also belongs that he makes us fit to be his party and to assume our covenant obligations. The God of our salvation washes us from all our sins in the blood of his beloved Son. It is he who incorporates us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection. He is the author of our justification, so that we are free from all our sins and accounted righteous before him. It is he, too, who by his indwelling Spirit sanctifies us and applies to us all the

blessings of salvation, as they are in Christ Jesus, daily renewing us, till we shall enter into the eternal inheritance of glory.

But this is not all. When God established his covenant with us, and by his grace made us fit to be his party in that covenant, it follows that as such we must manifest ourselves in the world. And the Baptism Form continues to express this as follows:

“Whereas in all covenants there are contained two parts, therefore are we by God through baptism admonished of and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; that we trust in him and love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.”

Thus it is with the covenant God established with Abraham. God is Abraham’s God and blesses him. He takes Abraham’s side at all times, is his shield and great reward. He will bless them that bless Abraham and curse those that curse him. He calls Abraham, he gives him faith and accounts it to him for righteousness. He makes Abraham a fit person to be his party in the covenant. All this is God’s work. He walks and talks with Abraham as a friend with his friend and hides nothing from him. But to Abraham he comes with the demand that he shall believe in him, trust in him, obey him, walk before him, and be perfect. And this Abraham does. He believes in the God of his salvation, looks forward to the day of Christ with great longing, and in faith beholds that day. He sees the promise afar off and expects the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And thus trusting and believing that he who promised is faithful and true, he calls upon the name of Jehovah in the midst of heathen tribes, blindly obeys, and confesses that he is a stranger and sojourner in the world.

But if this is the idea of God’s eternal covenant with Abraham, we must now have our attention

called to the historical manifestation of this covenant and its organic development in the world. For it is the peculiar character of this historical development of God’s covenant in the world that constitutes the basis for circumcision of the eight day old child in the old dispensation, and for infant baptism in the new dispensation.

The truth, namely, in this connection is that God in the development of his covenant in the world follows the line of generations. His people, the people of his covenant, as they exist in the world, are not a few branches sporadically severed from the human organism. On the contrary, the covenant of God develops organically following the line of generations. Of course, from the point of view of God’s counsel this would have to be stated in just the opposite way. The generations of men, the organic development of the human race, is subservient to the historic realization of God’s covenant and kingdom. But historically expressed the fact is that the covenant people of God must be looked for in the continuous line of successive generations.

This truth is basic in Scripture. It is expressed not for the first time in connection with the establishment of the covenant with Abraham. In very general terms we already find this truth expressed in the mother promise in paradise: “I will put enmity between thee and this woman and between thy seed and her seed.” We find the same truth expressed in connection with the covenant of grace as established with Noah. Also there the rule is: You and your seed (Gen. 9:9). But most clearly this is expressed in the well known passage (Gen. 17:7): “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee throughout their generations, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.”

It is this truth, this peculiar development of the covenant of God in history, which assures us that the holy seed is found **in the generations of God’s people successively**, that constitutes the basis for the baptism of the children of believers.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.