



Illustrating and Recommending the Grace of Election – Dordt's Doctrine of Reprobation

Eene vergadering van de nationale Synode te Dordrecht.

Quote of Simon Episcopus:

“We are not so much troubled with election, but the show pinches us above all in respect to that doctrine of reprobation which says that God by an absolute and unconditional decree reprobated the majority of mankind to eternal destruction, for the glory of His severity and freedom. This vexes us. Therefore, we must refute it.”

Canons Head 1.15

What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election is the express testimony of sacred Scripture that not all, but some only, are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal election of God; whom God, out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but leaving them in His just judgment to follow their own ways, at last for the declaration of His justice, to condemn and punish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares Him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger thereof.

OTHER REFERENCES TO REPROBATION IN THE CANONS OF DORDT

Canons I.6 -That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree, "For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world," Acts 15:18."Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will," Ephesians 1:11. According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves **the non-elect** in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, and merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and **reprobation**, revealed in the Word of God, which though men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

Canons I.16 -Those who do not yet experience a lively faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, and glorying in God through Christ, efficaciously wrought in them, and do nevertheless persist in the use of the means which God hath appointed for working these graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of **reprobation**, nor to rank themselves among **the reprobate**, but diligently to persevere in the use of means, and with ardent desires, devoutly and humbly to wait for a season of richer grace. Much less cause have they to be terrified by the **doctrine of reprobation**, who, though they seriously desire to be turned to God, to please him only, and to be delivered from the body of death, cannot yet reach that measure of holiness and faith to which they aspire; since a merciful God has promised that he will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. But this doctrine is justly terrible to those, who, regardless of God and of the Savior Jesus Christ, have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh, so long as they are not seriously converted to God.

Canons I.18 -To those who murmur at the free grace of election, and just severity of **reprobation**...


REPROBATION IN THE CONCLUSION OF CANONS OF DORDT:

1. “that it [reprobation] makes God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical...”
2. “that the same doctrine teaches, that God, by a mere arbitrary act of his will, without the least respect or view to sin, has predestinated the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation; and, has created them for this very purpose...”
3. “that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety...”
4. “that many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from their mothers' breasts, and tyrannically plunged into hell; so that, neither baptism, nor the prayers of the church at their baptism, can at all profit them; and many other things of the same kind, which the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul.”

THE REMONSTRANCE OF 1610

“That God by an eternal and immutable decree has in Jesus Christ his Son determined before the foundation of the world to save out of the fallen sinful human race those in Christ, for Christ’s sake, and through Christ who by the grace of the Holy Spirit shall believe in this his Son Jesus Christ and persevere in this faith and obedience of faith to the end; and on the other hand to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath and condemn (them) as alienate from Christ...”


THE OPINIONS OF THE REMONSTRANTS

1. God has not decided to elect anyone to eternal life, or to reject anyone from the same, prior to the decree to create him, without any consideration of preceding obedience or disobedience, according to His good please, for the demonstration of the glory of His mercy and justice, or of His absolute power and dominion.
 4. God has not decreed to leave the greatest part of men in the fall, excluded from every hope of salvation, apart from intervening actual sins.
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Scripture Proof For Reprobation

- Proverbs 16:4 “The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.”
- Jeremiah 6:30 “Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.”
- John 10:26 “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”
- Romans 9:11-13 “(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, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”
- Romans 9:21-22 “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.”

SCRIPTURE PROOF FOR REPROBATION

- I Thessalonians 5:9 “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - I Peter 2:8 “And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”
 - Jude 4 “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”
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TEXTS THAT TEACH THAT ALL GOD'S WORKS IN TIME HAVE THEIR SOURCE IN HIS ETERNAL WILL

- Psalm 135:6 “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”
- Acts 15:18 “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”

TEXTS THAT SPEAK OF THE FRUITS AND CONSEQUENCES OF REPROBATION

- Romans 9:18 “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”
- Matthew 11: 25-26 “At that time Jesus answered and said, 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.”
- I Samuel 2:25b “Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.”
- II Thessalonians 2:11 “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.”

ELECTION AND REPROBATION IN THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM AND BELGIC CONFESSION


■ H. C., Q & A 54

- What believest thou concerning the “holy catholic church” of Christ?
- That the Son of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am, and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof.

■ Belgic Confession, Article 16

- We believe that, all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest Himself such as He is; that is to say, merciful and just: *merciful*, since He delivers and preserves from this perdition all whom He in His eternal and unchangeable counsel, of mere goodness, hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works: *just*, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves.

CHARACTERISTICS OF REPROBATION

1. Reprobation is a divine decree.
 2. Reprobation is an eternal decree of God.
 3. Reprobation is unto everlasting condemnation.
 4. Reprobation is particular, or definite.
 5. Reprobation is sovereign and unconditional.
 6. Reprobation is grounded in the good-pleasure of God.
 7. Reprobation is just.
 8. Reprobation serves election.
 9. Reprobation is unto the glory of God.
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**TO PIGHIUS
AND ALL
LIKE
BARKING,
UNCLEAN
DOGS**

“You dazzle the sight of the ignorant and the inexperienced by setting before their eyes as a shining cloud your doctrine that God will have all men to be saved. But if these words of the apostle are not in perfect harmony with that election whereby God predestinated his own children unto eternal life, let me ask you this question: How is it that if God willed all men to be saved, he did not show unto all nations and all men the way of salvation?”

(John Calvin, “Reply to the Scanderous Reports,” in *Calvin’s Calvinism*, p. 304)

QUOTES FROM JOHN CALVIN

Decretum guidem horrible, fateon

(Institutes 3.23.7;2:955)

“We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which he determined with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.”

(Institutes 3.21.5;2:926)

“As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive unto salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction.”

(Institutes 3.21.7;2:931)



QUOTES FROM JOHN CALVIN

(“God’s Eternal Predestination and Secret Providence,” in *Calvin’s Calvinism*, p. 112)

“Instead, what I have ever invariably taught, and still teach at this day, is that whenever election is the subject of discussion, the great point to be maintained from first to last is that all the reprobate are justly left under eternal death because they died and were eternally condemned in Adam; also, that those perish justly who are by nature the children of wrath; finally, that therefore no one can have cause to complain of the too great severity of God, seeing that all men bear in themselves and in their individual persons the guilt and just desert of death eternal.”

QUOTES FROM JOHN CALVIN

(“God’s Eternal Predestination and Secret Providence,” in *Calvin’s Calvinism*, pp. 20-1.)

“Let those roar at us who will. We will ever brighten forth with all our power of language the doctrine that we hold concerning the free election of God, since it is only by it that the faithful can understand how great that goodness of God is that effectually called them to salvation...Now if we are not really ashamed of the gospel, we must of necessity acknowledge what is therein openly declared: God by his eternal goodwill (for which there was no other cause than his own purpose) appointed those whom he pleased unto salvation, rejecting all the rest.”

(“God’s Eternal Predestination and Secret Providence,” in *Calvin’s Calvinism*, pp. 64-5)

“God, the maker of men, forms out of the same lump in his hands one vessel, or man, to honor and another to dishonor, according to his sovereign and absolute will [Rom. 9:21]. For he freely chooses some to life who are not yet born, leaving others to their own destruction, which destruction all men by nature equally deserve.”

ASSURANCE OF ELECTION AND THAT ONE IS NOT REPROBATE

Canons I.12 -The elect in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God - such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.

Canons I.16 - Those who do not yet experience a lively faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, and glorying in God through Christ, efficaciously wrought in them, and do nevertheless persist in the use of the means which God hath appointed for working these graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to rank themselves among the reprobate, but diligently to persevere in the use of means, and with ardent desires, devoutly and humbly to wait for a season of richer grace. Much less cause have they to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation, who, though they seriously desire to be turned to God, to please him only, and to be delivered from the body of death, cannot yet reach that measure of holiness and faith to which they aspire...


Canons V.10 - This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to, or independent of the Word of God; but springs from faith in God's promises, which he has most abundantly revealed in his Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit, that we are children and heirs of God, Romans 8:16; and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience, and to perform good works...

SCRIPTURE ON ASSURANCE OF ELECTION

Romans 8:14-16 “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

I Thessalonians 1:4-6 “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.”

I John 2:3-5 “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.”



CALVIN ON ASSURANCE OF ELECTION FROM THE FRUITS OF ELECTION

(Institutes 3.24.3;2:967-8)

“But here we must beware of two errors: for some make man God’s co-worker, to ratify election by his consent. Thus, according to them, man’s will is superior to God’s plan. As if Scripture taught that we are merely given the ability to believe, and not, rather, faith itself! Others, although they do not so weaken the grace of the Holy Spirit yet led by some reason or other, make election depend upon faith, as if it were doubtful and also ineffectual until confirmed by faith. Indeed, that it is confirmed, with respect to us, is utterly plain; we have also already seen that the secret plan of God, which lay hidden, is brought to light, provided you understand by this language merely that what was unknown is now verified – sealed, as it were, with a seal. But it is false to say that election takes effect only after we have embraced the gospel, and takes its validity from this. We should indeed seek assurance of it from this; for if we try to penetrate to God’s eternal ordination, that deep abyss will swallow us up. But when God has made plain his ordination to us, we must climb higher, lest the effect overwhelm the cause.”

(Institutes 3.24.4;2:968)

“Therefore, as it is wrong to make the force of election contingent upon faith in the gospel, by which we feel that it appertains to us, so we shall be following the best order if, in seeking the certainty of our election, we cling to those latter signs which are sure attestations of it. Satan has no more grievous or dangerous temptation to dishearten believers than when he unsettles them with doubt about their election, while at the same time he arouse them with a wicked desire to seek it outside the [proper] way.”

CALVIN ON ASSURANCE OF ELECTION FROM THE FRUITS OF ELECTION

(Calvin, Comments on I John 2:3)

“But we are not hence to conclude that faith recombs on works; for though every one receives a testimony to his faith from his works, yet it does not follow that it is founded on them, since they are added as an evidence. Then the certainty of faith depends on the grace of Christ alone; but piety and holiness of life distinguish true faith from that knowledge of God which is fictitious and dead...”

(Calvin, Comments on I Thessalonians 1:6)

“[I]nasmuch as God, as he begins our salvation by calling us, perfects it also by fashioning our hearts to obedience. The sum, therefore, is this - that an evidence of Divine election shewed itself not only in Paul’s ministry, in so far as it was furnished with the power of the Holy Spirit, but also in the faith of the Thessalonians, so that this conformity is a powerful attestation of it.”