

WTFJ ~~XXXVI~~: 305-38
Spring '74

ELECTION AS GOSPEL

A Review Article

NORMAN SHEPHERD

JAMES DAANE: *The Freedom of God. A Study of Election and Pulpit*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973. 208. \$5.95.

The question which prompts James Daane to write is one which must be faced by the Reformed community. The doctrine of election is a central and indispensable element of the Reformed faith; yet, as Daane observes, the doctrine is not being preached from Reformed pulpits. Daane offers no statistical evidence to demonstrate the validity of his observation, but this reviewer's visceral reaction was one of agreement. There does seem to be a disproportion between the vigor with which the doctrine is stated in the confessional documents, particularly the Canons of Dort, and the infrequent attention accorded to it in the pulpit and on less formal occasions of Bible and doctrinal instruction. As long as the doctrine is not being attacked, it will naturally not receive any special accent. At the same time, the doctrine may be free from attack just because it is not being enthusiastically preached. Various reasons may be advanced to account for the neglect, or even the suppression of the doctrine, and among these we may not discount the possibility that the doctrine simply is not believed, or if believed, that it does not function in any significant way in a pastor's working theology.

The reason for the silence according to James Daane is simply that the doctrine of election as traditionally formulated and understood *cannot* be preached. Daane deplores the silence, but even more so, he deplores the traditional doctrine itself. In a brief opening chapter he suggests that the shape of a doctrine of election which can be preached will be after a neo-orthodox pattern: "Karl Barth was correct when he said that election is the sum and substance of the gospel, and that at the heart of the gospel stands Jesus as God's elect" (p. 13).

In general the first half of this 200-page book elaborates what the

author means by the deficiencies and untenability of the traditional doctrine, and the latter half develops his positive understanding. These themes are, however, intertwined throughout and each chapter has elements of both. There is a considerable amount of repetition which, coupled with rhetorical flourishes in modern "ecclesian," has its own persuasive effect in supplementing what is lacking in thoroughness of research and dispassionate use of sources. The minimal scholarly apparatus and indexing, as well as the absence of bibliography, confirms the impression that Daane's book can best be described as a tract designed to get a single practical point across by means of a selective use of sources and a discounting of what tends to negate the thesis.

Daane's criticisms are by and large directed against theologians in the continental Reformed tradition. Chief among these is Herman Hoeksema, who, as Daane is willing to grant, is not representative of the segment of the Reformed world he is called upon to represent. Nevertheless, he is treated as having the courage to say what men like Louis Berkhof and Cornelius Van Til should have said had they been as true to their basic positions as Hoeksema. Calvin, the Canons of Dort, and Herman Bavinck are delivered from criticism to the extent that they are understood as anticipating Daane's own position.

Among the older Reformed authors the chief opponent is Francis Turretin, probably because his work on predestination is now readily available in English. Unfortunately the use of Turretin did not suggest investigation of the *Systematic Theology* of Charles Hodge for whom Turretin is foundational. Hodge could have served to moderate some of the unfortunate generalizations concerning the teachings of "all standard Reformed texts."

Daane himself is probably much more indebted to Karl Barth and G. C. Berkouwer than the minimal references to these men suggest. His representation of his own view as "biblical," in distinction from the "scholastic view" of his opponents leads one to expect more by way of careful exegesis of all the relevant Scripture passages than the author provides. However, the exegetical suggestions offered from time to time make imperative a continual study of the biblical warrant for the doctrine of the divine decrees lest we seek to extract more from these texts than they actually provide. Cavalier exegesis is never effectively countered by more cavalier exegesis.

In chapters II and III, Daane undertakes to explore what he calls

the gap between election and preaching and to discover its source. The gap resides in the fact that there is a professed belief in election, but the doctrine is not preached. The source of the gap is discovered to be the doctrine of non-election or reprobation. Election and reprobation according to the formulations of traditional Reformed theology are but two sides of the same coin. The one necessarily involves the other. They are together the content of a single decree of election/reprobation. Reprobation is obviously good news for no one, least of all for the reprobate; therefore it cannot be preached. Since the traditional doctrine of election cannot be preached without reprobation, election itself is also not being preached.

Daane appears to see as necessarily involved in the traditional position, a supralapsarian understanding of the relation between election and reprobation (cf. p. 41) in terms of which the elect are predestined unto eternal life "in the same manner" that the reprobate are predestined unto damnation. This is inescapable, Daane holds, from the perspective of a single decree with its two sides of election and reprobation.

If the gap between election and pulpit is to be closed, the symmetry between election and reprobation must be destroyed. Daane maintains that the symmetry was in fact already destroyed by the Synod of Dort. "According to the Synod of Dort, it is not the case that God elects and reprobates 'in the same manner'; thus the rationale that God's decree equally accounts for and explains why some men believe and some do not is excluded" (p. 41). With somewhat less clarity and persuasiveness, Daane also appeals to Calvin whose perspective is then thought to be maintained by Dort, but lost in the years after 1618.

Without doubt, the Conclusion to the Canons of Dort rejects the doctrine "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." This rejection is essential to the integrity of the traditional Reformed position. Daane errs, however, in thinking that the Canons have thereby rejected the equal ultimacy of election and reprobation, or that they have in effect denied the single decree of God involving both election and reprobation.

This is evident from the language in Article 6 of the First Head of Doctrine: "That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree." On the grounds that the Conclusion rejects 'in the same way' Daane simply

argues that this language cannot say what it obviously does say. This argument merely begs the question. The fact is that Article 6 speaks both of a single decree (Article 8 has a decree of election, and Article 15, a decree of reprobation) and of a "not in the same way." As the article explains, "not in the same way" means that God softens the hearts of the elect inclining them to believe whereas he leaves the non-elect in their hardness and unbelief. If the Canons taught that election and reprobation were in the same way, they would have to say either that God leaves the elect in their belief as he leaves the reprobate in unbelief, or that he generates unbelief and impiety in the reprobate as he generates faith and obedience in the elect. The Canons repudiate both errors forthwith just in the context of an insistence upon a single decree including both reprobation and election.

Holding with the Canons that election and reprobation are not operative in the same way, Daane would seem to owe his readers an explanation of the way in which reprobation differs from election. How are we to understand the "decree of reprobation" in terms of which some do not receive the gift of faith? Unfortunately the explanation offered by the Canons in Article 6 is bypassed, and in the context of chapters II and III, no other explanation of the decree of reprobation is offered. The only conclusion to which the reader can come is that Daane interprets the rejection of "in the same manner" to be, in effect, a rejection of the decree of reprobation as such.

This conclusion is confirmed by the positive statement Daane does make with respect to reprobation toward the end of his book: "This means that any doctrine of reprobation is illegitimate by biblical standards *except that which biblical teaching sanctions*: that he who rejects God, God rejects" (p. 200). If Daane is contending that this is all that the Bible warrants, and, indeed there is no other way of understanding his expressed intention, he is in conflict with Paragraph 8 (Rejection of Errors) of the First Head of Doctrine where the Synod of Dort rejects the error of those 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."

One of the strange features of Daane's book is the herculean effort made to rescue the Canons of Dort from the context of so-called

Protestant scholasticism in which they took shape. In paragraph after paragraph the Canons render poor service to Daane's main thrust; and the "not in the same way" is, as already demonstrated, too tenuous a thread on which to suspend an Arminian view of reprobation. Daane speaks of a "post-Dort" scholasticism" (p. 41) as though a non-scholastic view of election dominated up to the time of Dort, as though it was literally "canonized" by Dort, and then was completely overturned in a few years by a post-Dort scholasticism. This is an interesting reversal of the modern consensus that the scholastic orthodoxy of the seventeenth century simply reaffirmed what was given confessional standing by the 1618 Synod!

In point of fact, with respect to the "not in the same way," the Canons of Dort are not distinctive in the context of either the sixteenth or the seventeenth centuries when the clause is interpreted as the Canons themselves interpret it. Heinrich Heppe supplies the evidence, and mainly from sources after Dort.¹ The theologians distinguish between preterition and damnation. Preterition is absolute and depends solely on the will of God. The purpose to damn is on account of sins. "This act is not absolute, but involves respect to the state of sin." Election to salvation, on the other hand, has no respect to human goodness or worth. This is the "not in the same way" of the Canons. Daane is in error as often as he insists that the traditional view maintains reprobation with no reference to the sin of the reprobate.

The teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith (1648) does not differ on this point from the Canons. John Murray made this abundantly clear, and Cornelius Van Til heartily endorsed Murray's position in his book on the theology of Daane.² Daane has simply ignored not only Murray and Van Til, but also the theologians of the seventeenth century. He continues to say that Van Til, along with the traditional position, knows nothing of Dort's "not in the same way," and has chosen to give his thesis plausibility by ignoring the contrary evidence.

Daane also finds the symmetry of election and reprobation broken by the salutary fact that the Canons "explicitly reject the idea that God is in any sense the cause of sin and unbelief" (p. 41). The denial

¹ Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. by G. T. Thompson (London, 1950), pp. 178-181.

² Cornelius Van Til, *The Theology of James Daane* (Philadelphia, 1959), pp. 67-69.

that God is the cause of sin and unbelief is, of course, by no means a unique feature of the Canons. It is said in one way or other by most if not all Reformed theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is also expressly stated by the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter III, a document Daane classifies as representative of post-Dort scholasticism. Daane does not find the Westminster Confession's disavowal convincing, however, because the statement is made in the context of a decree which foreordains whatsoever comes to pass, including sin; and for Daane, a decree makes God the cause and author of, and therefore responsible for, what is ordained.

It is obvious that the Canons do not speak of "whatsoever comes to pass" because they are not a comprehensive confession. Their orbit of discourse is election and reprobation. However, just the inclusion of the decree of reprobation demonstrates that the Canons are in principle no less objectionable for Daane than is the Westminster Confession. A difference can be established only by insisting that the Canons have no decree of reprobation, and this, in effect, is what Daane does.

But not even this gambit will suffice to rescue the Canons. The Synod of Dort revised and adopted the Belgic Confession dating from 1561, which in Article XIII teaches that all things are created, ruled and governed according to God's holy will so that nothing happens without his appointment. The Confession immediately adds, "nevertheless, God neither is the author of, nor can be charged with, the sins which are committed." Both the content and structure of the Belgic Confession are identical with the Westminster Confession. Dort cannot be construed as saying anything less than the Westminster Assembly: all things come to pass by God's appointment, yet God is not the author of sin.

Just how these two truths are to be understood in relation to each other is a question the Bible does not answer, and Reformed theologians have by and large not sought to answer it. The question is brought to us in its sharpest form in Acts 2:23 and Acts 4:27, 28. The crucifixion of the Son of God, the arch-crime of human history, was ordained by God to take place; yet they are wicked hands which put him to death. Daane's own attempt to resolve the problem is trifling. He argues that God uses man's sin to effect man's salvation (pp. 183f.). While this observation is true in itself, it does not do justice to the language of the texts nor does it answer the question

posed to us by the text. It simply restates the question. How can God "use man's sin" without complicity? Does the end justify the means?

If the doctrine of a single decree including both election and reprobation is the source of a gap between election and pulpit, raising the question just how such a doctrine can be preached, it is a question which not only post-Dort Reformed theology faced, but also Calvin himself faced in terms of his own doctrine.

Daane's appeal to the fact that Calvin deals with predestination in the context of soteriology rather than in the context of the doctrine of God, is irrelevant. We may note in passing that no less a representative of Reformed orthodoxy than Charles Hodge, unlike Turretin, also expounds predestination in connection with soteriology rather than in connection with the decrees of God.

Just in the context of soteriology in the *Institutes*, Calvin states as his view that there is no discrepancy between the universal promises of salvation and the predestination of the reprobate. "God is said to have ordained from eternity those upon whom he wills to vent his wrath. Yet he announces salvation to all men indiscriminately. I maintain that these statements agree perfectly with each other."³ From this statement in its context it is perfectly apparent not only that Calvin held to a single decree including reprobation and election, but more important, that he saw no gap between election and pulpit.

In Chapters IV and V, Daane enters upon a more intense discussion of the problem as he sees it, probing in greater depth in order to lay bare the sources in Reformed theology and to trace the consequences on a broader scale. At the heart of the problem appears to be "The Single Decree" (the title of Chapter IV). Daane himself also holds to a single decree, but only in the limited sense that God has determined "to move out of himself" in the grace of creation and redemption (pp. 48f.). The single decree of orthodoxy, on the other hand, embraces all things: it determines whatsoever comes to pass. This decree includes both reprobation and election, and therefore undermines the "not in the same way" of the Canons of Dort. How could distinctions of manner be introduced into a single decree?

But the problem is even more serious, as Daane describes it, when one takes account of the reason for the singularity of decree. The

³ Trans. by F. L. Battles. *Library of Christian Classics* (London, 1960) XXI, 985.

decree is one because God is one. Reformed Orthodoxy has identified the decree with God himself so that the decree is indistinguishable from God. Daane outlines three steps or phases in the deification of the decree, or perhaps more accurately, three ways in which orthodoxy demonstrates its identification of the decree with God. First, the singularity of the decree is but an aspect of the simplicity of God. Men may make distinctions and speak of a plurality of decrees, but all differences are one in the mind of God. Second, and closely coupled with the first, God's way of knowing does not involve an accumulation of parts, but is a simple, single act. God's decretive act shares in this simplicity and singularity. Thirdly, "Reformed theologians have insisted that the decree is eternal, in the strict and absolute sense in which God is eternal" (p. 56).

Daane finds in mediaeval scholasticism those who viewed God as exhaustively rational, and those who thought of the essence of God as nothing but will (p. 154). Protestant scholasticism opts for the former. God is exhaustively rational, the cause of all particular realities, identical with his universal all-comprehensive plan that determines whatsoever comes to pass. There is no difference between Herman Hoeksema, Cornelius Van Til, Gordon Clark, and Loraine Boettner on this point.

Because God is exhaustively rational, the will of God can do nothing but execute the decree. The will of God cannot determine the decree, for the decree is determined by the essence of God. Since God is what he is and necessarily so, the decree also is what it is necessarily. Therefore, given the fact of sin, we must say that there is sin necessarily because of the being of God. This is why orthodoxy cannot seriously mean that God is not the author of sin. Similarly, given the fact of reprobation, there necessarily *had to be* reprobation as there *had to be* election; therefore in Daane's mind, orthodoxy must teach that God reprobates in the same manner that he elects.

In Chapter V, Daane seeks to draw out the consequences of holding to a single decree embracing all things. Specifically, "History, Eschatology, and God's Repentance" (the chapter title) cannot be maintained or expounded by decretal theology in any significant way. There can be no ups and downs, no goals to reach, no reaction of God against sin, or no rebellion of man against God. Of course, these things happen, but they lose their meaning because they are, as it were, programmed, predetermined by God—not by his will,

but by his essence. Daane simply equates the traditional Reformed view with Greek rationalistic determinism.

A gospel shaped in the context of a single decree in terms of which all things ultimately are determined for the glory of God, can be preached only half-heartedly to men, if it can be preached to them at all. Properly this gospel can, according to Daane, only be preached to God.

Daane's own answer to the determinism of orthodoxy is to insist on "The Freedom of God" as the title of his book indicates. God's counsel—one could even say, his decree—is expressive not of his essence, but of his freedom. The creation of the world is not grounded in God's essence but in his free and gracious decision to do what he was free not to do. God is also free to be gracious to that creature. He is free to respond to what is outside of himself, and that means God is free to respond to sin and evil in the world. If one cares to speak of reprobation at all, he can speak of it as the free response of divine justice to sin. But God is also free not to reprobate, and he is free to elect.

Precisely how election is to be understood and how it is to be preached is reserved for later chapters of the book. Before proceeding to these chapters, we must examine more carefully, first, Daane's assessment of the traditional Reformed position, and secondly, his own view of the freedom of God.

Daane's criticism of Reformed orthodoxy centers largely on the theology of Francis Turretin as representative of the tradition in which more recent representatives of "decretal theology" stand. The error of this portion of Daane's book lies in the fact that he has not allowed Turretin to say what he does say, and has forced him to say what he does not say.

Daane asserts that Reformed theologians attribute God's own kind of eternity to the decree maintaining that the decree is eternal in the strict and absolute sense in which God is eternal. He cites Turretin, "We, however, believe that all the decrees are absolutely and simply eternal" (p. 56). However, both in this passage and in another cited by Daane (p. 58), it is clear that Turretin is opposing the position of the Socinians who thought of God as establishing some of his decrees in response to a temporal succession of events. Turretin argues that the decrees (or decree) are eternal in the sense that they were established before the foundation of the world.

His purpose is not to identify the eternity of the decree with the eternity of God, but to affirm the eternity of the decree in opposition to the temporality or "relative eternity" of the decrees as taught by the Socinians. Therefore Turretin maintains that God is prior to his decrees as their principle,⁴ something he could not say if there were a simple and absolute identity between God and the decrees.

But Daane does not find in Turretin simply the identification of the eternity of the decree with the eternity of God. Identity at this point is just exemplary of identity at every point. "God's decree is as eternal, singular, and simple as God himself because, according to Turretin, the decree is a form of God's essence. The decree is God, and God is his decree. God could not be God without his decree, and the decree could not be other than it is because it is necessitated and determined by the very nature and essence of God's being" (p. 57).

Daane further says Turretin "asserts that an imminent act of God 'can be God absolutely', whereas such a divine work as creation 'can be called God relatively'" (p. 56). This representation must be compared with the complete sentence from which it is drawn as found in Turretin: "So it is well said, that no action proceeding from a free will can be God absolutely and in itself, but still can well be called God considered relatively, as a vital act determining itself spontaneously. In this sense the Decree is nothing else than God himself decreeing."⁵ Turretin, in fact, says the opposite of what he is represented as saying. Just because the decree proceeds from the free will of God, it cannot be identified with God absolutely. Turretin makes a distinction between the origin of the decree and the object of the decree. "Since God is the absolutely necessary being, the decree is necessary, considered intrinsically with regard to its origin, but this does not prevent it from being free extrinsically, considered with regard to its objects."⁶ Repeatedly Turretin makes the point that God is free to determine "either this or that" because there is no necessary connection between God and his creatures.⁷ This under-

⁴ Franciscus Turretinus, *Institutio Theologicae Elencticae*, IV, 2, 7 (New York, 1847) I, 282.

⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 1, 15 (I, 281). The translations of Turretin supplied by the reviewer are those of G. M. Giger, in *Selections from François Turretin's 'Theological Institutes'* (mimeographed).

⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 1, 16 (I, 281).

⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, IV, 1, 13 (I, 281) and IV, 2, 13 (I, 283).

standing of God's freedom hardly measures up to Daane's description of it as simply freedom to carry out what is necessarily decreed, or freedom from being affected by what is outside of God. In a footnote on p. 168, Daane takes cognizance of the fact that Turretin has not expressed himself as he should have — given the correctness of Daane's interpretation. He acknowledges as Turretin's view: "That is, God's *essence* is free as regards all creative things in a sense in which God's essence is not free as regards the Son." The sense in which God's essence is free as regards all creative things is, of course, the freedom to create or not to create, and the freedom to create this or that. This cannot be harmonized with Daane's earlier assertion that for Turretin, the decree could not be other than it is because it is determined by the essence of God's being.

Just in the passages of Locus IV, Questions 1 and 2 to which Daane appeals, Turretin has made it abundantly clear that he does not identify the decree with God's essence in such a way that the decree could not be other than it is. Turretin does full justice to the freedom of God just with respect to the single decree. Turretin holds a position which he could not hold if he were dedicated to upholding Greek rationalistic determinism. Rather, he maintains what must be upheld from a biblical perspective, namely, that the will of God is God because God is not compounded of attributes which have reality independent of himself; at the same time God freely wills and determines what comes to pass. As Turretin states it, the decree is necessary as to its origin and free as to its object.

No doubt, improvements can be made in the way in which Turretin brings the truth to expression, but it is not simply improvement for which Daane is striving. Not Turretin, but Daane holds a rationalistic perspective, and this perspective does not allow him to record for his reader the full thrust of Turretin's position. Since Turretin holds to a single decree, Daane, by force of logic, argues that he *must*, therefore, hold to a pure rationalist determinism, though Turretin himself makes a point of denying it.⁸

⁸ Since Daane argues that Turretin's view of the simplicity of God accounts for the identity of God with his decree, it is useful to observe what Turretin says of the decree (actually the decrees) under the rubric of the simplicity of God: "Ita Decreta Dei libera sunt, non absolute et a parte principii, sed relate et objective a parte termini; quia nullum obiectum externum esse potuit quod necessario terminaret volitionem divinam: . . . necessaria ergo sunt quoad existentiam internam, sed libera

It is now evident that one cannot charge Reformed orthodoxy with rationalistic determinism on the basis of the passages cited in Turretin. Moreover, Turretin's position does not appear to be distinctive. Heppie notes as characteristic of Reformed thought the same three-fold distinction signalized by Turretin: "(1) the *actus decernens*, which is the divine nature of God Himself; (a) the 'tendency and relation to the object to be secured in time', in which the difference is brought out between the *decretum* and the *essentia* of God; and (3) the *res decreta* which is distinguished from God *realiter*."⁹ Heppie gives a lengthy citation from Braun, concluding with: "In the former way [i.e., the act of the will] the decree of God was considered necessary, since knowledge and will are essential and so of course are the actual essence. In the second way [i.e., the thing actually decreed] it is free, since God might by the same will and the same decree not have decreed the thing or have decreed it otherwise."¹⁰ There is simply no way of construing this language to say that the decree could not be other than it is because of its identity with God's essence.

It is illuminating to compare Turretin with Charles Hodge on the doctrine of the decrees of God. Hodge devotes remarkably little space to the doctrine—some 15 pages out of 458 pages on Theology Proper. He does not speak directly to the question of the relation between the essence of God and the decree as did Turretin. He certainly does not identify the two. He teaches the eternity of the decrees, as did Turretin, not as identical with the eternity of God but in the sense that God's purpose does not take account of novelties which he could not foresee, or over which he had no control.

With Turretin, Hodge also insists that the decrees are free. In elaborating this point Hodge begins: "They are rational determinations, founded on sufficient reasons. This is opposed to the doctrine of necessity, which assumes that God acts by a mere necessity of nature, and that all that occurs is due to the law of development or of self-manifestation of the divine being. This reduces God to a mere *natura naturans*, or *vis formativa*, which acts without design."¹¹

quoad actum et habitudinem ad extra" Ibid., III, 7, 11 (I, 174). The point is identical with the one made in connection with the decrees of God.

⁹ Heppie, *Op. cit.*, p. 139.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 140.

¹¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, reprint ed. 1952), I, p. 539.

Here we have a specific denial of the precise view Daane attributes to Reformed theology in the tradition of Turretin. When Daane argues that the God of rationalistic determinism acts without purpose or goals, Hodge agrees. But Hodge does not think of the God of decretal theology in these terms. His "rational determinations" are not rationalistic determinism because his orientation is biblical: "In treating, therefore, of the decrees of God, all that is proposed is simply to state what the Spirit has seen fit to reveal on that subject."¹² Consequently the biblical basis for the doctrine is much broader than Daane is willing to credit Reformed theology with having proposed.

We may further note, interestingly enough, that Hodge does not speak of a "single decree," but of "decrees" in the plural. These are reducible to one purpose; Hodge uses a word which Daane prefers. Hodge writes, "The decrees of God, therefore, are not many, but one purpose. They are not successively formed as the emergency arises, but are all parts of one all-comprehending plan."¹³ In a characteristically rationalistic way Daane argues that since our knowledge of things and events is in terms of differentiation and diversity and the decree is one, we have only knowledge of apparent realities and no knowledge of a single decree. How, he asks, can such an unknown be so important for Reformed theology? Implied in this argumentation is the correlative thesis that to have knowledge of God's purpose or decree, our knowledge must be identical with God's. Man must become as God.

Hodge, on the other hand, speaks of God's purpose in biblical fashion. Our knowledge of God's decree as it unfolds in history is, indeed, not identical with God's knowledge, but only begins to appreciate something of the vast richness and diversity embraced within the decree itself. Therefore when Hodge says, "So the Bible speaks of the decrees of God as they appear to us in their successive revelation and in their mutual relations, and not as they exist from eternity in the divine mind,"¹⁴ he is not saying that we have knowledge only of apparent realities, but that our knowledge as creatures is not identical with that of the Creator. At the same time, the Creator has

¹² Ibid., I, p. 535.

¹³ Ibid., I, p. 537.

¹⁴ Ibid., I, p. 538.

in the Bible directed us to appreciate the richness and diversity of his will as it unfolds in history.

Having pressed Reformed theology into the mold of rationalistic determinism, Daane proceeds to draw the consequences in Chapter V for "History, Eschatology, and God's Repentance" in sound rationalistic, syllogistic fashion. "If Christianity is an historical religion, its truth is not *ontologically* necessary; if its truth is ontologically identical with God, its truth is not an historical truth and Christianity is not an historical religion" (p. 76). Since the logic is air-tight, Daane does not need to concern himself to any great extent with what decretal theologians have said and done, but only with what they would and could say and do. Daane tells us how a decretal theologian "would have to" respond to the assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy, and that a decretal theologian "could not have" written the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. This sort of hypothetical evidence is summarized in the rather astounding thesis, "Decretal theology has always had difficulty with the event-character of Christianity" (p. 75).

We need not argue that all "decretal theologians" have done adequate justice at every point to the reality of history, but we must insist that Daane take account of Reformed theology in its strength and grandeur as well as of factors influencing its development other than the doctrine of the decrees. The appreciation of the historical covenants arose in the context of decretal theology, not in the context of Lutheranism where in terms of Daane's logic it should have arisen. Genuine advance in the development of biblical theology, the study of the history of revelation was made by Geerhardus Vos, a decretal theologian of the old Princeton Seminary. In his doctoral dissertation, John Beardslee has pointed out how Hodge far excelled Turretin just in his development of the locus of eschatology.¹⁵ Hodge's postmillennialism was of a piece with that of other Reformed men whose eschatological outlook did so much to contribute to the modern mission movement, as demonstrated recently by Iain H. Murray.¹⁶ In the light of this development, Daane's charge that the doctrine of individual election "tends to kill the missionary impulse"

¹⁵ John W. Beardslee, III, *Theological Development at Geneva under Francis and Jean-Alphonse Turretin (1648-1737)* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1956), pp. 310ff.

¹⁶ Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope* (London, 1971).

(p. 176) rings rather hollow, especially so when we note further that just where Daane's view of the decrees and election has prevailed there has been a dramatic retreat in missionary effort.

Throughout the analysis of the traditional Reformed position, Daane has been developing his response to it in terms of an insistence upon "the freedom of God." This theme is especially in the foreground in Chapter IX on "The Freedom of God and the Logic of Election." Before we proceed to consider what is involved in Daane's view of election, it is useful to look first at his doctrine of the freedom of God.

Daane does not see how traditional Reformed theology can do justice to the freedom of God. He says explicitly that freedom is not an ingredient of the decree of decretal theology: "God does not determine in freedom whether or not to have a decree, nor decide in freedom what its content is to be. . . . In decretal theology God is a decreeing God in terms of his ontology, not in terms of his freedom" (p. 60). The picture which Daane paints of the God of orthodoxy is one of "essence" which determines all things thereby making historical differentiation or movement meaningless, if not impossible. From this perspective, argues Daane, it is but a short step to the declaration that all reality is divine (p. 164). Beginning with the identity of God and his decree, Daane argues quite logically and vigorously to what decretal theologians *must* say, and what they must say in pure rationalistic determinism.

Because of the rationalism inherent in his own position and exhibited in this methodology, Daane himself never really makes a clean break with this God of determinism. Instead of denying that this caricature is the God of orthodoxy, he simply seeks to supplement a deterministic view of God with an equally ultimate indeterministic view of God. Hence the title of the book: in addition to the essence of God, we must also take account of "the freedom of God."

The distinction between the freedom of God and the essence of God is made quite clear. Daane argues that the resolve of the divine will is an act of God's freedom, not an act of his essence (p. 164). Divine free will is set over against divine essence when Daane says that divine free will is something other than Turretin's "volitional action of the divine essence." Apparently, God is not free in essence, and freedom is not of the essence of God.

The way in which essence and will are separated from one another and played off against each other leads to the conclusion that Daane

is *ditheistic*. A God of pure determinism—essence—is set over against a God of pure indeterminism—freedom. To the extent that freedom is of the essence of God, a freely determined decree is also essentially determined. It is what it is because God is who he is. Such a decree is identical with God and is anathema to Daane. The freedom which Daane is ascribing to God must really be freedom. "God's will is no less definitive of God than is his essence, and is no less free than his essence is necessary" (p. 162). That is to say, God's freedom is no less absolutely indeterminate as his essence is absolutely determinate.

The toll Daane is compelled to pay for insisting on this kind of freedom will prove extremely high, and Daane will have to renege on his obligation. If there is any validity at all to Daane's argumentation that the God of decretal theology freezes all things in a distinctionless mass, then by parity of reasoning, the absolutely free God of Daane fragments all things into chaos.

Daane accents the freedom of God when he says that "the freedom of God means that God's decree is also an act of divine freedom. God is free to exist without a decree as well as without a world" (p. 162). But how, we may ask, can we speak of both absolute freedom and a decree? Freedom is hardly free if it is continually bumping into what is determined, especially if that determined something is the very essence of God himself. Daane speaks of the divine resolve, even of the divine decree, arising out of the freedom of God. But how can freedom give rise to a decree without denying itself? What will determine the character of such a decree? Not freedom, for freedom is by definition indeterminate. Not the essence of God, for this would be to deny the freedom being asserted. If freedom could give rise to a decree, it could also give rise to a change in the decree, and indeed must change the decree and change it constantly to maintain its character as freedom. The freedom to *do* must simultaneously be the freedom to *undo*, unless one is again to be made subject to determinism. In terms of Daane's logic, one cannot have freedom at one point without having it at every point. But such freedom destroys the essence of God.

Daane deplores the fact that assurance of faith is displaced by "wretched anxiety" concerning the nature of one's existence before God in the context of decretal theology (p. 180). Daane does not enter into the historical question why the doctrine of assurance has flourished in the context of decretal theology whereas the very pos-

sibility of assurance, except by special revelation, was anathematized by Rome in the broader context of its rejection of the Reformed doctrine of God's sovereignty. Beyond that, however, how is Daane to introduce a doctrine of assurance given his view of the absolute freedom of God? If God is free only if he is absolutely free, he is then free to be capricious. He is free to be the opposite of himself. He is free to save those who believe in his Son, and He is free to damn those who believe in his Son. How can Daane stop short of this given the fact that he objects to a decree of God which distinguishes between elect and non-elect? Having described God's freedom to become historical in Jesus Christ, and through involvement in sin and death, to eliminate them, Daane concludes, "Greater freedom cannot be imagined" (p. 171). In point of fact, it is not at all difficult to imagine greater freedom—the freedom of God to withdraw the Son whom he has given, and the freedom to undo the work he has done.

Obviously Daane stops short of ascribing this kind of freedom to God. It is not an absolute freedom in spite of the extravagant language used to describe it at various points. There are certain restrictions which must be introduced. Daane has taken the liberty to drive decretal theologians into the camp of rationalistic determinism against their protests. Repeatedly he makes his case in terms of what they *must* say, rather than in terms of what they have said. At the same time Daane would doubtless object to being driven into the camp of irrationalist indeterminism; and he would do so in terms of what he has said about the freedom of God over against what his reader might conclude he *must* say.

Although the accent is on the freedom of God in *distinction* from the essence of God, Daane knows that the freedom of God cannot really be absolute, and therefore he tempers the freedom by reference to the essence of God. In the footnote to which reference has already been made Daane acknowledges, "God's freedom, of course, is not wholly unrelated to his essence; God cannot will what is against his essence. But he can and does will what his essence does not demand" (p. 168, n. 6). In effect, it is the effort to moderate the indeterminism by the introduction of a measure of determinism.

The modification of the freedom of God by reference to the essence of God is apparent from the way in which Daane speaks of the immutability of the grace of God. "The Bible discusses God's immutability within the religious context of man's sin and God's judg-

ment and grace, and in full recognition of the freedom of God. . . . Where God is clearly immutable is in the area of grace. . . . Once God makes himself the husband of Israel and Israel his wife, he cannot abandon her. . . . God was not free to divorce an adulterous Israel" (p. 95). The "cannot" here is described in a note as "one that resides in God's free decision to remain the husband of Israel in spite of her desire for other gods" (p. 95, n. 9). But it is no less *cannot*, for that. It is *cannot* because of what God is, his essence, his immutable grace.

There is expressed here a determinism arising from the essence of God, from who he is as immutable grace, which in effect renders the unbelief of Israel rather harmless. "God's faithfulness is not in the least degree changed or mitigated by Israel's unbelief" (p. 95). Daane does not simply say that God *does not* abandon Israel, but He *cannot* abandon her.

In the context of the dialectical tension in terms of which Daane operates, this determinism must provoke an equally ultimate indeterminism, and so the "cannot" is described as "one that resides in God's free decision to remain the husband of Israel in spite of her desire for other gods." In language reminiscent of the United Presbyterian Confession of 1967, Daane notes that "the God who is unchangeably the God of love and grace when related to the persistent sinner is experienced by the sinner as divine anger, judgment, and rejection." As one who is sensitive to the empty verbalisms of decretal theology, he perhaps anticipated the perplexity of his reader with his own language by immediately adding, "This is an extremely difficult subject . . ." (p. 98). Indeed, it is extremely difficult to show how God's relationship to Israel can be a matter both of freedom and of decision on the background of the modern determinist-indeterminist dilemma.

Consider Daane's proposition, "If God *must* love me because he is God, his love for me would lose its meaning" (p. 169). This formulation does not arise out of a biblical way of speaking but accommodates biblical truth to the determinist-indeterminist dilemma and therefore leads to unbearable consequences. The "must" of the formulation is the abstract "must" of rationalistic determinism. It is the "must" which Daane finds implied in decretal theology, which, for him, is identical with rationalistic determinism. As such it differs radically from the "must" employed by Reformed theology in the development of the doctrine of decrees on the basis of Scripture.

Over against his "must" and correlative to it Daane sets an equally abstract and absolute notion of freedom. The formulation implies that God does not *have* to love me tomorrow. If he *must* love me tomorrow, his love is not free; and therefore in terms of the proposition itself, it is meaningless. Either he must love me, and we are caught on the horn of determinism; or he is perpetually changing his attitude in freedom, and we are caught on the horn of indeterminism.

How basic the determinist-indeterminist dilemma is to Daane is clear not only with respect to the doctrine of God (essence—freedom) but also with respect to the doctrine of God in relation to the cosmos. For example, Daane argues that the traditional view can make no room for meaningful history. "In decretal theology this determination [of whatever comes to pass] means that whatever happens is *ipso facto* what God wills. No purpose runs through the stream of events. God is not progressively achieving his purpose through what happens" (p. 169). Daane is opposed to a decree which embraces whatsoever comes to pass, and more vehemently so as that decree is thought to embrace what is evil and sinful. He cannot grant that the decree of God can embrace sin and evil without making God the author of sin and responsible for it. "Why the ultimate cause and source is not its ultimate author or even its secondary author, and how there can be ultimate causation of sin without any responsibility, are not explained" (p. 80). Decretal theology cannot maintain the gravity of sin, and therefore God's triumph over sin is rendered suspect.

From this line of reasoning it is abundantly clear that the only way for Daane to save the integrity of God and the meaning of historical process is to locate the freedom of God in the midst of cosmic chance to which both God and man are subject. Anything less than this will render God's triumph suspect. Triumph can be triumph only in the face of an absolutely open future.

One may, therefore, find great cause for joy in the victory of the cross, but who can tell—perhaps it is just the prelude to a more profound defeat of which neither God, nor the Bible, nor Daane know anything. It is not decretal theology, but Daane's "liberal" theology that has really rendered the triumph suspect. Indeed, whether from the perspective of determinism or of indeterminism, the gospel is not only rendered suspect, it is completely rejected.

The only genuine exit from the dilemma is to reject it for the

sake of the biblical doctrine of God and his decrees. Because God rules over all, the cosmic conflict between God and Satan is real; nevertheless God has triumphed and he will gain the ultimate victory. If Daane had developed his book in terms of the biblical motifs which do indeed more than occasionally appear, he would have recognized his kinship with Turretin and the main stream of Reformed theology. However, Daane has chosen to join with Barth, Torrance, and Berkouwer who in turn have joined with the natural, unregenerate man in looking upon the covenant logic of the doctrine of the decrees in the only way unregenerate man can look upon it—as rationalistic determinism. It is altogether understandable that a deterministic view of the decree of God has called forth as its correlate this indeterminist view of "the freedom of God."

Daane's view of the freedom of God requires a thorough revision of the doctrine of election, and in the second half of his book he proceeds to formulate the new doctrine. Election is the election of Israel, of Jesus Christ, and of the Church (Chapters VI, VII, and VIII, respectively). All three themes are dealt with in each of the three chapters and may therefore be considered together. In Chapter I Daane had already told us that "the sum and substance of the gospel" is election, and election is Jesus Christ as God's elect. "The New Testament, in short, knows nothing of a Christ who is the elect of God apart from a church that shares in all that he is and will be" (p. 109).

Indeed, the inseparability of Christ and his people is a necessary doctrine in the light of Scripture. However, it does not exceed the conception of this interrelatedness described by Daane to say that in his view Christ, Israel, and Church are interchangeable (see pp. 132 and 147) and it is certainly in line with the teaching of Karl Barth to say so.

In his treatment of the election of Israel, Christ, and the Church, it is unfortunate that Daane has failed to bring to the attention of his readers what Reformed theologians have had to say on these themes. Of course, an author must select his materials and cannot be held responsible for omitting matters that another author would consider essential. But in this case the omission is unfortunate because there seems to be a calculated attempt to convey the impression that only recently, under the influence of men like Barth, has Reformed theology known anything about the election of Christ, or Israel, or the Church.

For example, Daane writes, "it remains strange that Christian theology has shown so little interest in the election of Jesus" (p. 118). In the next paragraph, however, he says, "The neglect of Jesus' election is strange for still another reason. The election of Jesus is, after all, theological shorthand for the truth that Jesus is the Christ—the central affirmation of the New Testament, the core of the early church's proclamation, the theme of Peter's Pentecost sermon." If we place these two statements together, we come up with the astounding thesis that Christian theology has shown little interest in Jesus as the Christ. The thesis is so absurd that it merits no refutation.

Beyond general concern with Jesus as the Christ, however, Reformed theology did concern itself specifically with the theme of the election of Jesus Christ. Even Turretin, for example, repeatedly refers to the election of Christ in Locus IV, Question 10, of his *Institutes*. "Although we are not elected on account of Christ, yet we are not elected without and out of him; because by the very decree which destined salvation to us, Christ also was destined to acquire it for us, nor was it otherwise destined, than as to be acquired by Christ. Election, therefore, does not exclude but includes Christ, not as already given, but as to be given, nor should these two ever be separated from each other; which nevertheless the Sophisms of our Adversaries effect" (Paragraph 14); "the Election of Christ as Mediator should not be extended more widely than the Election of men who are to be saved, so that he was not destined and sent for more than the elect, the contrary of which the patrons of universal grace hold" (Paragraph 19). Additional references to the theme of the election of Christ in classic Reformed theology are furnished by Heppe.¹⁷

The election of Christ is an essential element of the doctrine of the inter-trinitarian counsel of redemption, or the covenant of redemption, as Hodge calls it, and is elaborated in connection with that theme. This doctrine is a central feature of covenant theology and is the common possession of Reformed theology.

Daane's thesis that Reformed theology knows nothing of the election of Christ can only be made plausible to the extent that he has identified his own view with that of Karl Barth. For Barth the election of Christ and the election of all men are interchangeable.

¹⁷ Heppe, *Op. cit.*, pp. 168f.

Christ is every man. Of this doctrine of the election of Christ, historic Reformed theology does, indeed, know nothing.

With respect to the nation of Israel, Daane offers the following: "Serious theological concern with Israel as a nation has been largely the province of premillennial thinkers. . . . Mainstream theological traditions, particularly the Reformed, have dissolved the corporate feature of Israel's election in their doctrine of individual election. . . . Most Reformed theologians — and Reformed Christians generally — do not believe that the Jews as a nation have a religious future" (p. 111). Readers who are familiar with the rich stream (perhaps "flood" would be more appropriate) of postmillennial sentiment in Reformed theology will be amazed by these propositions. The exegesis of Romans 11 which finds prophesied there a conversion of national Israel goes back to the generation of the Reformers, and may be found in Bucer and Martyr. Recent studies by Iain H. Murray and Peter Toon show the significance of the conversion of Israel in British theology.¹⁸ Turretin sees the conversion of Israel as a demonstration of the latter-day glory of the church,¹⁹ and Hodge expounds in detail the conversion of the Jews as the second great event which "according to the common faith of the Church" (1) must precede the second advent of Christ.²⁰ More recently, the commentary on Romans by John Murray presents a future national conversion of Israel as involved in the proper understanding of Romans 11.²¹ It is not, of course, the case that an anticipated conversion of Israel has been the *uniform* view of Reformed theology, but the evidence hardly warrants saying that the traditional doctrine of election *excludes* any significant concern with Israel as a nation.

Similarly, Reformed theology has concerned itself with the election of the Church, though indeed, largely in terms of elect persons who together are the Church. The Heidelberg Catechism, for example, in Question 52, speaks of elect or chosen individuals, but in Question 54, of an elect Church, or chosen congregation.

It is doubtful, however, that what has been said by Reformed theologians concerning the election of Israel and the Church would

¹⁸ Murray, *Op. cit.*; Peter Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium, and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660* (London, n.d.).

¹⁹ Turretin, *Op. cit.*, XVIII, 9, 18 (III, 47f.).

²⁰ Hodge, *Op. cit.*, III, 805ff.

²¹ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, 1965), II, esp. pp. 75ff.

prove of much help to Daane or relieve his problem with the traditional view. The point is that in the traditional view, the election of Israel and the Church are bound up with the election of individuals. The national conversion of Israel is the conversion of Jews; and the Church is elect men and women bound together by the Spirit of God to be the people of God. Daane, on the other hand, appeals to the election of Israel and the Church just to renounce any concern with individuals or with numbers. The only elect individual is Jesus Christ (p. 175); but his election is the election of Israel, that is, the election of the Church.

Daane's position is by no means peripheral or obscure. He has made it perfectly clear in the following theses: "The Bible knows nothing of an individual election with a direct reference to eternity; it knows only of a divine election that is historical, one that moves and is actualized in the continuity of father and son, family and nation" (pp. 14, 115). In a related note, with an appeal to G. C. Berkouwer's *Divine Election*, Daane further rejects not only an individualistic, but also a collectivistic understanding of election. Both operate with the concept of number and therefore election of some implies the rejection of others. "The nature of election, thus, is not exclusive of others, and to think that it is Berkouwer calls 'the great misconception,' which turns individual election into proud self-esteem" (p. 114, n. 3). At a later point in the book, Daane repeats his thesis showing clearly his reasons for the positive accent on the election of Christ, Israel, and the Church: "If the view developed in these pages is correct, if God's one decree is Christ and the heart of the decree is an election that in its unity embraces Christ and in terms of him Israel and the Church, the idea of number as definitive of election is improper and unnecessary. For a view of election defined by number is an individualistic one" (p. 174).

Similarly, Daane reflects negatively on the doctrine of limited or particular atonement. "Out of this matrix soon comes the definition of other Christian doctrines in terms of limitation, for example, the atonement" (p. 174). "Along the same route, the infinite nature of Christ's atoning death turned into a doctrine of limited atonement, with few questions asked and none permitted" (p. 138).

Daane's opposition to "the logic of Election" is also best understood in the context of the rejection of election having reference to individuals. Daane illustrates the logic of election: "Lorraine [sic] Boettner says that if election is true, 'reprobation will follow of

logical necessity'. Berkhof urged that 'reprobation naturally follows from the logic of the situation' (pp. 172f.). The logic is faulty, says Daane, because it does not reckon with the freedom of God. "If election is an act of divine freedom, there is nothing in its nature that necessarily posits reprobation, and to draw such deductions from it imposes on the nature of grace" (p. 173). At a later point in the book we read, "Election no more logically implies and necessitates reprobation, than the existence of God logically implies and necessitates the devil" (p. 200).

Daane calls his appeal to the freedom of God his "basic objection" to the logic of election. Indeed, given Daane's conception of freedom, one could not infer reprobation, or for that matter, non-reprobation either. But at least as basic an objection to the logic of election from Daane's perspective is his conception of the nature of election. It is not that the freedom of God explains how election can involve some without by-passing the rest. The point is, "Number has nothing to do with the nature of election" (p. 173, n. 7).

Daane's thesis that election has nothing to do with particular persons predestinated unto eternal life will doubtless resonate among contemporary theologians. It lacks compelling force, however, because it has omitted serious consideration of many relevant biblical passages, and has not taken into account the relevance of these for the passages with which he has dealt. However, an adequate presentation of the biblical doctrine in order to demonstrate this point would take us beyond a book review into a new book on election.

It must also be observed that there is simply no way of reconciling the rejection of election as pertaining to individuals, or the contempt for the doctrine of particular atonement with the language and teaching of the Canons of Dort. It is simply the way of integrity and candor to acknowledge this point.

Within the context of his own book Daane has failed to achieve his announced goal, to present a doctrine of election which can be preached, as an alternative to a doctrine which he feels cannot be preached. The failure may be signalized in two ways.

First, Daane's doctrine of election is not good news for sinners. Early in his book Daane had pointed out that the traditional doctrine can be preached only to God for whom alone it is good news since supposedly his glory is advanced by the salvation of some and the reprobation of others. Men are left to speculate concerning their election, and the possibility of reprobation comforts no one.

Daane's view, on the other hand may be good news for Christ, and good news for Israel and the Church, but it is no news at all for sinners. In the words of our author: "Seen thus, this divine decree carries along a summons to the church to share with all men the long-hidden mystery of Christ, God's eternal purpose in him, and the gracious character of the divine decree. It is a call to make known the mystery of Israel's election and creation, the mystery of the church's election and creation, the mystery disclosed in God's election and creation of Jesus Christ" (p. 172). The men with whom this knowledge is shared may find it interesting, even inspiring, but also irrelevant, because it says nothing to them in particular. The vigor with which Daane has insisted that election has nothing to do with numbers or with individuals forbids him to draw any conclusions with respect to them. To the extent that Daane really believes that election of individual men does not provide us with a *community* of elect (p. 175), he is also compelled to say that a community of elect does not provide for the election of sinners, and if election is not election of individual sinners, it is not *for them*, good news.

Second, Daane's doctrine of election does not provide for the transition from wrath to grace in the experience of individual sinners. One of the major arguments raised against the traditional Reformed doctrine of the decrees is that in a universe where all things, both good and evil, are determined by God, there cannot be a meaningful response by God to sin. This is the argument that God's decree *must* be abstract determinism. Predictably, therefore, Daane observes, "he [God] is not free to respond freely in grace to a sinful world; he is not free to respond in Christ with a purpose that is essentially gracious" (p. 160).

Yet Daane, himself, has failed to give us a God who responds to sin, or a God who saves sinners. Daane vigorously rejects a doctrine of election which is "inherently exclusive of others" (p. 114, n. 3). "Election in biblical thought is never a selection, a taking of this and a rejection of that out of multiple realities" (p. 150). In order to escape the notion of choosing, Daane has defined election as creation. "Election is always a creative act. In biblical thought, Israel, Christ, and the church are not existing realities that God selectively chooses out of a number of extant Israels, Christs, or churches. Israel, Christ, and the church exist only because each is elected by God" (p. 150).

It is true, but not very profound, to observe that God does not

select one or two of the existing denominations to be his church. It would have been more to the point for Daane to have given serious attention to the language of Deuteronomy 7:6, "the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

If, indeed, election means that God is creating what is elect, God is not responding to sin by saving sinners from sin; He is simply bypassing both sin and sinner, and is creating what does not need to be saved. The creation of a saved people bears no relation to human need. The fact that God does such a thing may be interesting historical information for the created community, but it is not a doctrine which can be preached to sinners lying under the wrath of God.

Incidentally, Daane criticizes the traditional view of election as relating God to the world causally and as having non-existing entities for its object. It is difficult, to say the least, to see how these criticisms are alleviated by interpreting election as creation.

Daane is not unaware of the impasse into which his rejection of individual election has brought him. Toward the beginning of the final chapter on "Election and Preaching", Daane asks, "But can individual election be preached? Now the problem is a bit more difficult" (p. 177). The answer to his question, in terms of his view of election, is, as we have seen, "No"; individual election cannot be preached. It is only because his doctrine has nothing to say to individual sinners, and yet election must be capable of being preached if it is gospel, that Daane speaks of a "difficult problem," and begins to retreat from the vigorous anti-individualism of his argument. The compromise is evident, for example, when Daane says that "election in biblical thought is never a *purely* individual matter (p. 199, reviewer's italics). Previously, it had nothing at all to do with individuals or numbers (cf. p. 114). At the end of the book we hear of "the election of an individual" within the boundaries of the election of Israel, Christ, and the Church (p. 200).

The obscurity and confusion which a reader may sense in the final pages is due to the dilemma in terms of which Daane must somehow try to preach to particular men. In view of the accent of the book on the freedom of God, the author could hardly say that all men are elect and saved. That would deprive God of his freedom to be gracious as he wills; he does not *have* to save every man. Therefore Daane allows for a doctrine of reprobation within biblical bounds in the sense "that he who rejects God, God rejects" (p. 200), and

specifically denies universalism. "This does not mean that every Israelite displaced by Jesus Christ is a saved individual" (p. 108); "This does not indeed mean that all men will be saved" (p. 96). These protestations are sincerely meant, and are essential to the author's position.

At the same time Daane cannot say that no men are elect. That view would not only deprive God of his freedom to save, but would deny his grace and mercy.

Moreover, it certainly cannot be said that some men are elect without reintroducing the very individualism and non-election which Daane anathematizes from the beginning.

It is now clear that the "difficult problem" Daane faces of stating the doctrine of election in such a way that it is gospel, good news, for sinners, is but an aspect, or a particular case, of the determinist-indeterminist dilemma in terms of which Daane argues for the freedom of God over against the traditional view of the decrees. Daane finds that his view "liberates us from the insoluble problem that a merely individual election raises for the proclamation of the gospel" (p. 199). In point of fact the situation is precisely the reverse. Daane's "difficult problem" is in fact an "insoluble problem." There is no solution to it except the biblical solution which rejects the dilemma and frankly states that God has brought his Church into being by electing and saving sinners: "the Lord adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47); "as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

The practical demands of the pulpit finally force a break-through in terms of an arbitrary, dogmatic, and unwarranted deduction from what is true of the Church to what is true of the particular man. Daane summarizes his conception of the Church's proclamation:

"Let the church preach election, and let it center its proclamation of election on God's election of Jesus to be the Christ. Let it show how Christ's election is related to the election of Israel and of the church. Let it proclaim that to believe in Jesus as the Christ is to believe in his election, and in this belief to discover that one shares in Christ's election as one also in faith discovers that he shares in Christ's death and resurrection and, indeed, in Christ's past and unending future" (p. 201).

Daane says that the Church's proclamation centers on Christ; but in point of fact, what is true of Christ is relevant for man and is gospel for him only to the extent that he is identical with Christ (cf.

"shares in Christ's election"). Therefore the proclamation does not really center on Jesus Christ, as it does in the New Testament, but it centers on man and what is true of him, namely, that he, together with all men, is elect. The proclamation of Jesus Christ is a revelation of election (p. 179) because it is a statement of what is inherently true of all men.

Proclamation for Daane, therefore, is not the word concerning Jesus Christ, the information we must have about him (see Romans 10:14; 15), together with an appeal to repent of sin and believe in him for salvation. Rather, it is the announcement of what is true all along, that the listener is already saved. The appeal can therefore be nothing more than an invitation to "discover" and accept as true the information being conveyed. To believe is to discover what has always been true. There is here no transition from wrath to grace in history, but only comforting assurance, the "good news" that God does not condemn sinners after all.

The orthodox Reformed doctrine of election, on the other hand, is not only capable of being proclaimed, but must be proclaimed as an essential element of the whole counsel of God. The failure to proclaim it not only contributes to pulpit impotence, but is an affront to the wisdom of God. The special prudence and care commended by the Westminster Confession has too frequently been understood as warrant for total silence on the subject of predestination. In this respect Daane has not put his finger on an imaginary problem.

The gospel of sovereign election focuses on the total and exclusive sufficiency of Christ to save men from sin. It points to the utter lostness and the utter impotency of man. It does not shrink back from saying to men that apart from God's choice of them and the death of the Savior in their place, there is no hope. Nor does it withhold the solemn truth that God has not elected all men and Christ has not died for all men.

Can such a gospel be good news? The problem here is that Daane thinks of good news as information which the preacher can give to men about themselves. The biblical gospel, however, centers on Jesus Christ who by his death and resurrection saved men chosen in him from eternity. The biblical gospel of election and reprobation is good news because it is the one message which completely deprives man of every resource in himself and drives him to the sheer mercy of God. It is this good news, this gospel, which is the wisdom of God.

Precisely and only in conjunction with this gospel of God's grace, the Spirit brings conviction of sin, repentance, and faith in Christ unto salvation. When the Spirit of God convinces a man of the truth of election, this man does not speculate as to his status, but cries out to God, "Be merciful to me, a sinner." Apart from the power of the Spirit, the gospel is neither good news nor bad news; it is simply foolishness.