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Preaching Predestination—An Examination of Francis Turretin's Sermon

De l'affermissement de la vocation et de l'election du fidele[1]

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1. Introduction

The scholarship surrounding Reformed orthodoxy, that is, the Reformed scholastic or academic theology that blossomed in the latter part of the sixteenth century and lasted into the early part of the eighteenth century, has for the most part limited itself to dogmatical works, polemical treatises, and biblical commentary. A rich field awaiting further exploration, however, is how the Reformed orthodox engaged in the practical labor of ministry—especially catechesis and homilesis.[2] This practical question, that is the question regarding the interplay between theology and the church, focuses upon how academic theology was, perhaps, left in the classroom while the more simple labor of the gospel ministry was applied to the church for its nurture. Without question, this is a topic that can be examined in any era of the Christian tradition, including our contemporary setting, for the church has always labored theologically and performed the work of catechesis and sermon from the framework of theology's work. This question, however, gains importance in view of the scholastic or "school" theology that characterized the era of Reformed orthodoxy. How does a theology, so purposely academic and cautious, so philosophically grounded in the thought-patterns and nomenclature of a broad, Christianized Aristotelianism, so occupied with technical definitions, fixed distinctions,

[1] That is, "Strengthening the Believer's Call and Election"—a sermon from 2 Peter 1:10.

[2] See my article "Theology and Church," in *Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, edited by Herman J. Selderhuis (Brill, forthcoming).

honing polemical spear-points, engaging in intramural wrangling, and given to quite extended theological expositions, relate to the ministry of the gospel in the humble work of the sermon? How did this theology translate to the pew? Was there a divorcement between the academy and the church? Was the heavy-duty theological work of the classroom left at the door of the university when one entered upon labor among the common people of the church? Did the pastor in his study attempt to bring his dense Latin volumes of Voetius to the pulpit and, in the vernacular, instruct the people in the contents of the same? Or did such a pastor naturally down-shift and produce a sermon geared to the layperson's capacities?

In attempting an answer to such questions, we discover that the era of Reformed orthodoxy was a time not only of technical dogmatical theology, it was also rich in the production of simple catechisms.[3] Moreover, it was an era in which the sermon continued to form the center of a parishioner's spiritual nurture. However, in that light, did the sermons of the Reformed orthodox exhibit the same traits as the dogmatic textbook? Were printed sermons simply mini versions of subjects treated in the polemical treatises? Inasmuch as most professors in the academy engaged, to varying degrees, also in the work of ministry, would it be unexpected if such a professor-minister wore two very distinct hats: a professor's hat, wherein the technical formulations of theological propositions were debated in the classroom, and a preacher's hat, whereupon theology in this thick form was left behind for heartwarming meditations upon the Bible?

Given that technical theological formulations have rarely beckoned a large audience or proved popular among the pew, and given that the Reformed orthodox were not so imprudent or pastorally tactless as to foist, undiluted, their "school" theology upon the people in the pew, we wish to examine how the *content* of this theology was nonetheless, under a different guise, communicated to the church at large. Since Reformed orthodox theologians did not expect the laity to lift themselves up to the level of their academic work, we receive only a partial portrait of this movement if we fail to examine their work as geared for common consumption.

In order to do this, if only in a preliminary way, we will examine a sermon by a well-known Reformed orthodox theologian, Francis Turretin (1623-1687), as a sample of how the presentation of an intricate doctrinal topic—in this case, the doctrine of predestination—could be presented with pastoral sensitivity for the laity and without scholastic polemics. It is not our focus here to examine more broadly the theory and practice of homilesis or the academic discipline of homiletics as understood or debated by the Reformed orthodox. Rather we are considering how a highly regarded representative and practitioner of Reformed

[3] See especially Johann Christophorus Koecher's *Catechetische Historie der Gereformeerde Kerke, in Zwitzerland, Frankryk, Engeland enz. De Vereenigde Nederlanden, Duitschland, Hungarye, Zevenbergen, en Poolen. Waarin teffens De Opkomst, Voortgang en Lotgevallen van de Catechismus van Johannes Calvinus and den Heidelbergschen* (Amsterdam: Nicolaas Byl, 1763). This is a Dutch translation by E.W. Cramerus from the German original, which I was unable to obtain. As indicative from the title, this volume reviews the catechesis and catechisms in Switzerland, France, England, the United Netherlands, Germany, Hungary, Transylvania, and Poland. Also see, Alexander F. Mitchell's *Catechisms of the Second Reformation* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1886); especially noteworthy is the extensive bibliography in the prefatory appendix C (see pp. lxxii-xc).

scholastic methodology administered the Word of God in the pulpit. Naturally, given the limitations of this article, our discussion must be quite truncated. In examining one sample from Turretin's printed sermons—specifically, his sermon on 2 Peter 1:10—we have opportunity to compare how he treated the doctrine of divine predestination in the genre of theological disputation and of sermon.[4] Therefore we will first examine, by way of a brief overview, how he treats this doctrine in his *Institutio*, and then how he takes up this doctrine in sermonic form. This exercise will serve to show how different genres of theological writing produces different sorts of concerns—the one serving the classroom and the needs of polemics, the other serving ordinary believers and their personal struggles and burdens.

2. Francis Turretin's on Predestination

2.1. Predestination in Turretin's *Institutio*

We begin, then, with a brief overview of Turretin's exposition of this doctrine, which is the fourth topic within his *Institutio* "The Decrees of God in General and Predestination in Particular."[5] Not surprisingly, given that Turretin writes an elenctic theology, his handling of this topic is fulsome. He begins with the *quæstio*, "Are decrees in God, and how?" In articulating an affirmative answer to that question Turretin marshals a host of biblical texts and shows how theological considerations require it as well. He distinguishes between three sorts of divine acts: (1) immanent and intrinsic acts that have no reference to things outside of God; (2) extrinsic and transient acts that are not in God but are from him as the one who effects them and that are in creatures subjectively; and (3) immanent and intrinsic acts in God that however connote a relation to something outside of God, which are what the divine decrees are, for the decrees are God's counsel concerning things out of himself.[6] These decrees, moreover, are in God "essentially," not merely "accidentally," otherwise God's simplicity would be overthrown, along with his infinity, perfection, and immutability. Thus the decrees do not differ from the divine essence, for the will of God is the essence of God willing.[7]

Here we see Turretin's scholastic methodology on full display, even as we see the technical definitions which in part define that methodology. Naturally, Turretin, in expositing this doctrine of the divine decrees, carries out a full

[4] It is noteworthy that Turretin, standing in line with the formulation of the doctrine of predestination as presented in the Canons of Dort, did not regard this doctrine as unpreachable, contrary to some contemporary critics of the classic, Dortian understanding of the doctrine. See James Daane, *The Freedom of God: A Study of Election and Pulpit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 14-33; 177-205; and Harry R. Boer in *DeKoster vs. Boer Debate,* a debate original given by Dr. Harry R. Boer and Dr. Lester DeKoster at the request of the Men's Christian Fellowship of Third Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan, March 7, 1979 (Blue Island, IL: Paracletos Press, 1979), 20-23.

[5] The fourth topic comprises more than one hundred pages in the Edinburgh edition of Turrretin's *Institutio theologiæ elencticæ* in *Francisci Turrettini Opera*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: 1847-1848). Also see Franciscus Turretinus, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, 3 vols. (Geneva, 1687-1689). Quotations are taken from the English translation, Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1992-1996).

[6] *Institutio* IV.i.4.

[7] *Institutio* IV.i.5–7.

statement of the doctrine and wages a detailed polemic against the views of opponents, which it is not our interest to explore at this time. But we note that Turretin is careful to explain the meaning of such things as immanent and intrinsic acts versus extrinsic and transient ones. He elaborates upon the nature of causality with respect to the decree of God, the difference between things possible and things future and God's liberty.[8] He argues for the eternality of the divine decrees as well, and opposes the notion that the divine decrees are conditional.[9] Turretin also defines and explains the nature of the necessity of future things in relation to God's decrees. This requires very careful definition of terms and concepts. Again, Turretin's scholastic methodology exhibits the depth with which difficult theological issues can be explored and clarified, a goal and characteristic of this methodology as employed by Reformed orthodoxy.[10]

From his discussion of God's decrees, Turretin next takes up the doctrine of predestination. He begins with the practical question as to whether this doctrine should be publicly taught and preached. In keeping with the Augustinian tradition in general, Turretin argues that this doctrine is not to be silenced. Like Augustine and Calvin, he is careful in expressing how this doctrine should be handled, stating that it "should be neither wholly suppressed from a preposterous modesty nor curiously pried into by a rash presumption."[11] It is to be taught soberly and prudently from the Word of God; and in doing so, it is to our profit.[12] Next Turretin carefully explains the meaning and significance of the key scriptural terms dealing with and surrounding the idea of predestination;[13] and then takes up the topic of the predestination of angels[14] before addressing the topic of the object of predestination. In that connection he treats the classic debate between infralapsarians and supralapsarians—specifically, whether the object of predestination are humans conceived as created and fallen or creatable and capable of falling. Turretin argues in favor of the infralapsarian scheme.[15] In treating this debate, he takes up at some length an intramural dispute among the Reformed orthodox. However, in continuing to expound upon the doctrine of predestination, Turretin finds himself considering a number of disputed points and controversies. In turn he addresses the question of "the cause of election," that is, whether Christ is the cause and foundation of election—a teaching that the Reformed orthodox deny against the Arminians and Lutherans;[16] even as the Reformed denied that election was made on the basis of foreseen faith or works versus being made on the basis of God's grace and good pleasure alone.[17]

Under the twelfth question, Turretin takes up the issue regarding the certainty of election, where he has in mind not (first of all) the subjective

[8] See *Institutio* IV.i.8–17.
[9] *Institutio* IV.ii–iii.
[10] *Institutio* IV.iv.
[11] *Institutio* IV.vi.3.
[12] *Institutio* IV.vi.3–11.
[13] *Institutio* IV.vii.
[14] *Institutio* IV.viii.
[15] *Institutio* IV.ix.
[16] *Institutio* IV.x.
[17] *Institutio* IV.xi.

certainty of the believer regarding his or her election and salvation but the objective certainty of God's decree of predestination itself. In affirming the certainty of election, Turretin shows how this pertains not only to the outcome decreed but the means thereunto as well.[18] In this connection, however, he does briefly address the matter regarding the believers' certainty of election, for election can be made sure *a posteriori* as it pertains to certainty within one's heart. Here Turretin appeals to 2 Pet. 1:10 ("Therefore, my brothers, be diligent to make your calling and election sure") in order to show that the believer can be made certain of his or her election *a posteriori*—which is to say, the apostle Peter's words should be taken as supporting the simple point that assurance of one's election is not in the way of speculation concerning God's inscrutable counsel. Rather, in the performance of good works and seeking after sanctification, we become increasingly aware of "the truth of election" and that truth is sealed upon our hearts. This does not mean, then, that election ought to be confirmed to a believer *a priori* and in regard to God's unchangeable and unbreakable counsel itself.[19]

Turretin takes care to explain that "the certainty of the end does not exclude the necessity of means (but supposes it)," and consequently the "immutability of election" does not circumvent the importance and use of warnings and threatenings, urging believers on in the way of faith; on the contrary, it presupposes them. In fact, "the same saints who most certainly assure themselves of constancy in life and the enjoyment of heaven do not cease to be solicitous concerning their salvation because they know that this cannot be attained without the intermediate duties of holiness and the avoidance of the opposite course: 'every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself'."[20] Here Turretin cites 1 John 3:3, with further references to 1 Cor. 9:26 and Phil. 3:14. Thus the fulfillment of election may not be detached from the means God has ordained for the obtaining of salvation. The elect achieve their end along the path and according to the means that God has likewise ordained—which is the path of faith and holiness.[21] In order to elaborate upon and elucidate this point Turretin asserts the following (and this provides a good illustration of the scholastic method put to use in seeking to clarify an important doctrinal issue):

> It is one thing to be deprived of the right to a kingdom demeritoriously (*demeritoriei,* i.e., with respect to privilege); another, however, effectively (or actually). When they sin, believers lose their right to the kingdom as to demerit, but not equally in fact. That is, they deserve to be condemned, but yet they will be acquitted by the firm purpose of God. Hence these two propositions can stand together at the same time: it is impossible that elect David can perish; it is impossible that David, the adulterer (and continuing so) can be saved. However, the divine mercy and providence unties this knot by taking care that he shall not die in that state in which he would be excluded from eternal life. Before the end of life, he will be recalled to repentance, the way of salvation. Therefore, although in atrocious sins believers contract damnable guilt and lose their present fitness for the kingdom of heaven, yet because the act of man

[18] *Institutio* IV.xii.
[19] *Institutio* IV.xii.16.
[20] *Institutio* IV.xii.21.
[21] *Institutio* IV.xii.22.

> cannot rescind the divine acts, on that account the state of adoption cannot be broken up, nor the right to the kingdom of heaven taken away (which depends upon the gratuitous election of God and was obtained by the merit of Christ himself). Nor does the special love with which God follows them permit them to fall into hostile hatred (which is joined with the purpose of damnation), although it does not hinder God's paternal indignation against his rebellious children (that he may call them away from their sins).[22]

Next, in the thirteenth *quæstio*, Turretin formally addresses the topic of the believer's subjective certainty regarding his or her election. In opposing the views of Roman Catholic writers and Remonstrant theologians, Turretin first sets forth their stated views respectively, and then takes up, as he often does, the state of the question (*status quæstionis*). Election, he demonstrates, is perceptible only *a posteriori*, not *a priori*. No one can ascend into heaven and look into the book of life. Rather, by descending into ourselves we may consult the book of conscience and in observing the fruits of election in ourselves we may move from effects to cause. Thus we begin with the message of the divine Word ("Whoever truly believes and repents is elected"), and from there we turn to our hearts ("now I believe, therefore I am elected").[23]

In short, the question here likewise does not concern extraordinary revelation, nor does it involve certainty of every kind or a certainty that is perpetual in every state or condition. Rather, the question is whether the adult believer can be "certain (not as to a continuous and uninterrupted act, but as to the foundation and habit that can never be lost) not only of his present, but also of his future state." Can the believer have certainty of his or her election and salvation grounded in true faith? Turretin posits five reasons for answering this question in the affirmative, besides offering additional theological argumentation and explication.[24]

Turretin closes out his discussion of this fourth topic by devoting four distinct questions to the doctrine of reprobation, followed by one question devoted to the order of the divine decrees in predestination, which again takes up matters pertaining to infralapsarianism versus supralapsarianism.[25]

2.2. Turretin's Sermon on Predestination

We, of course, have merely sketched out Turretin's discussion of the divine decrees and of predestination. Nonetheless, from this succinct overview we are in a position to consider his sermon on 2 Peter 1:10, a passage we took care to note from Turretin's citation of it in treating the doctrine of predestination in his *Institutes*. Inasmuch as our topic is theology and church, we want to discover how Turretin, the Reformed scholastic theologian and polemicist compares with Turretin, the Reformed pastor and spiritual teacher, and how in this second role he handles the doctrine of election sermonically from a biblical text, imparting the same to a wider lay audience in the vernacular. Here we

[22] *Institutio* IV.xii.23.
[23] *Institutio* IV.xiii.4.
[24] See *Institutio* IV.xiii.5–27.
[25] See *Institutio* IV.xiv–xviii.

select the seventh sermon in the first volume of the two distinct volumes of his published sermons entitled "De l'affermissement de la vocation et de l'election du fidele" (On the strengthening of the believer's calling and election).[26]

Turretin begins this sermon by first noting that the doctrine of grace has often met with the objection that it leads to licentiousness and impious living.[27] The concern is a practical one, for sinners do indeed misuse the message of divine grace, of God's forgiveness and great mercy, of the security of election. Moreover, since salvation is unchangeable, and since God's grace bestowed to us can never be yielded or taken away, then it does seem to be the case that sinners might conclude that their salvation is certain no matter their manner of life on this earth. Turretin thus begins this sermon by introducing his audience to a problem, for he acknowledges that sinful people can misappropriate the doctrine of grace in ways noted above. "But," he observes, "the saints think differently." For "in the grace of God they see no greater motivation to live a holy life." Divine grace and the promise of forgiveness, far from leading to an exclusion of "the study of good works," "considers them necessary, as the fruits and effects of salvation."[28] Indeed, eternal life is not merited by our obedience, yet we possess eternal life in the way of obedience. The apostle does not say to us, as was the case in the first covenant in paradise, "Do these things and you will live," but he says to us, "because you live, do these things."[29]

The gospel teaches us that our election and calling are sure; yet it also declares to us that we need to confirm those sentiments in our hearts every day for our comfort. In fact, this is the lesson that comes to us from the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:10: "Study to make your calling and election sure."[30]

In moving to an exposition of this verse, Turretin first introduces his readers to the context in which Peter issues this imperative. In the preceding verses having exalted the marvelous grace of God that has come to these believers in the gospel (here Turretin quotes verses 3 and 4, which show that all blessings are grounded in Christ), Peter proceeds to show how God's grace does not banish the study of piety by exhorting them "to practice all the Christian virtues as the true fruits of faith and the infallible way of life." Thus

[26] François Turrettini, "Sermon septiéme: De l'affermissement de la vocation et de l'election du fidele," in *Sermons sur divers passages de l'Ecriture Sainte* (Geneva, 1676), 435–494. I wish to acknowledge my thanks to Elisabeth Folkerts for her assistance with Turretin's French text and translation of part of this sermon. All quotations and translations of this sermon, however, are my own. Besides the above cited volume of sermons, Turretin also published *Recueil de Sermons sur divers texts de l'Ecriture Sainte* (Geneva, 1686). On Turretin's preaching, see Eugene de Budé, *Vie de François Turrettini, théologien Genevois* (1623-1687) (Lausanne: George Bridel, 1871), 184-201; and Gerrit Kizer, *François Turrettini: Sa Vie et Ses Œuvres et Le Consensus* (Kampen: J. A. Bos Boekhandel, 1900), 254-259. For a fine exhibit of the theory of preaching, aptly reflected in Turretin's sermonic method, see Jean Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon, with Notes and Illustrations and One Hundred Sermon Skeletons* by Charles Simeon (London: James Cornish, 1844). Also see Alexandre Vinet, *Histoire de la Prédication parmi les Réformés de France au Dix-Septième Siècle*, (Paris, 1860). On French Reformed preaching in the seventeenth century, see also Françoise Chevalier, *Prêcher sous l'Édit de Nantes, la predication réformée au XVIIe siècle en France* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994) and Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church, vol. 4: The Age of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 251-329; 409-448; 449-473.

[27] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 435.

[28] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 436.

[29] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 436–437. *"Fay ces choses, et tu vivras;* Mais, *fay, parce que tu vis…."*

[30] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 437.

the words that follow in verses 5–9 (here Turretin quotes those verses, which in short form call us to proceed from faith, to virtue, to knowledge with self-control, to steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love). Thus, the knowledge he has of Christ is vain and deceptive if it is without life or virtue. And so, Turretin observes, the apostle "accentuates this more strongly in our text [verse 10]: 'Be even more diligent, my brothers, to make your calling and election sure,' as if he were saying: since God has given you such great and precious promises, and since you lack nothing from him to make you fulfilled, for your part work to be faithful to him and to do your duty."[31] Over against an alleged knowledge of Christ that proves to be sterile, as is true with hypocrites, believers are urged to bear the fruit of sanctification. In this way they will confirm more and more in their hearts a sense of their calling and election "by all kinds of good works."[32]

This, then, is the focus of the sermon on 2 Peter 1:10, which Turretin divides into two parts: (1) the nature of the two graces, "calling" and "election"; and (2) the duty of the believer to make these things sure.[33]

After a fairly extended exposition on the import and significance of the phrase "my brothers,"[34] Turretin proceeds to explore the two principal graces that God uses to bring sinners to salvation, namely "calling" and "election." The former, says Turretin, is a grace "in the dispensation of time," the latter in the dispensation "of eternity." Election is "the source," whereas calling is "the stream," election "the cause," calling "the effect," the one "the decree," the other "its execution." Turretin thus defines election as "none other than the eternal decree which God made in himself to separate us from the rest of humankind, to save us through Jesus Christ and to call us to communion with himself through the gospel."[35] As for calling: it is "the grace which he gives us in time, to call us to this happy communion, taking us from the powers of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved Son." We may say, then, that election is "an eternal calling" and calling is "a temporal election."[36]

At this point Turretin offers some parenthetical comments regarding the diverse usage of these words in Scripture. But in this text from 2 Peter 1, the import of each of these terms is eternal life and particular salvation. He also offers an explanation of why calling precedes election. Peter "begins with calling, not because it is the first in order, since on the contrary it always follows election as its fruit and effect, but because it comes to our knowledge first and since it leads us to election as the effect leads us to a cause and a stream leads us to the source."[37]

The apostle, therefore, follows the natural order of things at this point. But this brings Turretin to the question of whether we can endeavor to speak of so great a mystery, given that human words altogether fail in seeking to express it. Some err here in being too scrupulous, saying that we may not talk about such a mystery as election, but they do so from "wrong motives," that is, they

[31] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 438.
[32] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 439.
[33] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 439.
[34] See De l'affermissement de la vocation, 440–442.
[35] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 442–443.
[36] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 443.
[37] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 443–444.

plead for silence in order to hide theological error under that veil. Others plead for silence because they fear "scandals" in the church, for the difficult doctrine of election often divides Christians. But "the Lord's apostles were not so scrupulous, nor so timid." They taught the doctrine; and we must do the same. There are other difficult doctrines as well, the Trinity, Christ's incarnation, the creation of the world, and a host of others, which are subject to abuse. But that does not mean we should be silent about them. As Turretin further notes, some even liken election to an abyss that cannot be explored without getting lost. But he counters this remark by acknowledging that election is indeed an abyss—"of love," of God's love, "in which we lose ourselves with pleasure." Likewise, it is "an abyss of grace and blessing" where our sins are blotted out. Indeed, we leave the hidden things to God. Yet we may properly "meditate upon those things that have been revealed for our consolation." Moreover, "… when we stop within the limits of revelation, there is no thought so gentle, no doctrine more salutary for the believer."[38] It is "the foundation of faith and the source of all consolation." Turretin elaborates at length on this theme, explaining how election is for our comfort and rejoicing.[39] He also explores some of the features that comprise the doctrine of divine election, and in this connection Turretin's infralapsarian commitment comes to the fore. In view of God's eternal foreknowledge that all persons are fallen in Adam, guilty, and under the curse of death, God resolved, according to his good pleasure and mercy, "to choose a certain number from this corrupt mass, who were not better or more excellent than others, in order to save them through Jesus Christ and to make them eternally joyful in him."[40]

This is the mystery of election, concerning which the Scripture uses various terms in depicting, and which puts on exhibit both God's mercy and freedom, for some persons are made vessels of God's grace, while others are left in their sin and misery and suffer the just penalty of their sins. All are guilty; and God shows mercy freely to some. God reveals himself to us as a merciful Father, but also as a free Master. This is what Paul teaches us in Romans 9, and is most manifest in the case of Jacob and Esau.[41] One is elected and the other rejected by God. The motives or causes of this distinction can never be found in man, but only in God. There is nothing in us to distinguish us and render God favorable to us, not our works or faith or good use of his grace. "Let us therefore frankly admit, to God's glory, that if he elected us, it was an act of pure grace and not by our own merits, a fruit of mercy and not of our good dispositions."[42] In this connection Turretin quotes a number of biblical passages in support (cf. John 15:16; 1 John 4:10; Rom. 9:16; 2 Tim. 1:9).

The biblical understanding of election also does not allow any place for Pelagian notions, for election is not founded upon one's faith or good works. God does not elect because a person believes; rather, God elects in order that a person will believe. Faith is "a fruit and an effect that follows divine election, not a cause that precedes it."[43] All who believe do so because God

[38] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 446–447.

[39] See De l'affermissement de la vocation, 447–448.

[40] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 448.

[41] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 448–449.

[42] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 450–451.

[43] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 451–452.

ordained them to eternal life. Thus the elect are not elected because they are worthy of compassion; likewise the non-elect are not rejected because they were more vicious and mean, more deserving of God's condemnation. For all are equally guilty. Says Turretin, "Let reason, then, humble itself here and be silent." Instead, may reason adore in silence the dispensation of God and may it confess that if God gives grace to some, he does no wrong in condemning others. As sinners they deserve his displeasure and judgment only too well. Therefore, the elect have much cause to thank God for his grace, of which they were wholly undeserving. But the others have no reason to complain about justice since they are getting what they deserve.[44]

This concludes Turretin's exposition of the doctrine of election. He next turns to exposit briefly the idea of calling, which puts election into action within time. Calling, in the saving sense, means that God "effectively removes us from a corrupt world," and thereby he also places us in blessed communion with himself 'through the voice of the gospel and by the power of his Spirit." More specifically, Turretin states that through calling God "works faith in our hearts, converts us, and transports from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his Son …." Turretin is concerned, however, that his readers understand that the Bible speaks of calling in a twofold manner: "one comes without, through the Word; the other comes from within, by the Word and the Spirit."[45] By the former we are called to the outward and visible communion of the church; by the latter to inward and mystical communion with Jesus Christ. The first sort of calling is without effect for unbelievers and hypocrites who are in the church but unsaved. This is what Christ means when he says that "Many are called but few are chosen" (cf. Matt. 22:14). But the second sort of calling is always "efficacious because it is the fruit of election."[46] Turretin quotes here Rom. 8:28 and 11:29.

In that light, according to Turretin, when Peter speaks of making our calling sure, he is speaking of the second sort of calling, not the first. It is a saving or salvific calling by which he infallibly ushers us into the kingdom of God. This word "calling" is most important in this text, and requires that we meditate upon it. For calling reminds us of the misery of our condition as sinners, that we are separated from God; and God must call us back to himself, otherwise we would never return to him.[47] In addition, calling teaches us about the dignity and glory to which God aims to exalt us, for we are called to the elevated position of being God's children; we are called to be a chosen generation, a holy nation, a royal priesthood (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9). To be called in this way wonderfully exhibits honor God bestows on us.[48] Still further, calling shows us the means that the Holy Spirit uses to bring us to salvation, namely the Word—"efficacious, all-powerful, which is never without effect because it works within what it commands from without." Calling, in this sense, by the Word alludes to creation by the powerful Word of God and resurrection from the dead by divine command. God's voice calls into being that which isn't and

[44] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 453.
[45] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 453–454.
[46] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 454–455.
[47] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 455–456.
[48] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 456.

makes it to be. That same creative and omnipotent word of God is at work in calling sinners from the void of sin to new life through the gospel. In this connection Turretin appeals to 2 Cor. 4:6 and John 5:25; 11:43.[49]

Calling, then, is a resurrection to newness of life. How this takes place involves, typically, a coming together of two things: an invisible force and a great tenderness; an almighty power which the sinner cannot resist and a loving violence by which we easily let ourselves be conquered. Augustine, notes Turretin, called this "victorious pleasure," because it triumphs over our lusts and makes us captive to the obedience of Christ. This calling is effectuated in us powerfully yet agreeably to us; it is invincible yet without constraint, so that we cannot say that it is more gentle than powerful, nor can we say it is more powerful than gentle.[50] For this reason, the Holy Spirit employs both ideas in Scripture: the irresistible and invincible power of God in calling is seen in connecting it to the ideas of creation, regeneration or rebirth, and resurrection, and human will is powerless to prevent this divine work; yet we also see that Scripture connects calling to the ideas of illumination, persuasion, and attraction in order to show us that God does not save us against our will (rather, he changes our will). God's grace does not force or constrain us; instead, divine grace draws us with cords of love and places us under the yoke of Christ. It makes us submissive to Christ, but this submission procures our true liberty. God's gracious work of calling engages our will so that we respond to him from our will.[51]

All of this plays into and helps explain the apostle's exhortation in urging believers to make their calling and election sure, for the grace that God gives us does not release us from applying ourselves to piety and sanctification. On the contrary, being the recipients of God's saving actions should spur us to greater ardor, that we may know and sense in our hearts, indeed, be assured, that we really possess the blessings of the divine call to salvation according to his electing grace.[52]

But how, asks Turretin, do we make our calling and election sure? Before answering that question he takes a brief detour to treat a possible misconstrual of this text, namely, to take the apostle's words to mean that calling and election are unstable and inconstant, mutable so that the idea of the perseverance of the saints is a mistake. Turretin introduces a large number of texts that support the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, besides articulating a number of other theological and biblical arguments.[53]

It is intriguing to see that in waging this sidebar polemic Turretin uses an argument formulated in his *Institutio* as well. Inasmuch as calling and election are immutable and certain, what does Peter mean when he tells us to make sure that which already is certain and sure? Turretin explains that the resolution to this difficulty is found when we remember that divine calling and divine election can be considered in two ways: (1) how they are in the counsel of God, in and of themselves; (2) how they are in us, according to our viewpoint.

[49] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 457.
[50] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 458.
[51] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 459–460.
[52] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 460.
[53] See De l'affermissement de la vocation, 460–462.

In the former regard, it is certain that they are firm and have no need of being made sure, for they rest on the unshakable pillar of God's immutability and his faithfulness to his promises (cf. Rom. 9:11). In the latter regard, however, these blessings must be confirmed, not in heaven or for God but in our own hearts, for ourselves. This is what Peter has in mind. "For even though divine election and calling are always firm in and of themselves, they are far too often doubtful and uncertain within us because of our distrust and unbelief."[54] No doubt, David contended with uncertainty when he cries out that God has left him (cf. Ps. 77:10; 51:12). Similarly Paul would likely have been attacked with this temptation inasmuch as the wrong he would not do he does and the right he would do he does not do (cf. Rom. 7:[19], 23). Peter denied Christ three times, and he too needed reassurance. Every time believers are exposed to great temptations or fall into sin, they are tempted to doubt the certainty of their calling and election, for our faith is yet imperfect and not without worries. We therefore need it to be confirmed and strengthened.[55]

But this brings Turretin to raise a very practical question. If we need to be diligent to make our calling and election sure for our comfort and assurance, and if we are prone to succumb to doubt in the face of sin and temptation, who can carry out the apostle's exhortation in his own strength or will? Is anyone capable of doing this? Turretin's reply demonstrates his concern to handle the biblical text with integrity according to the analogy of faith and a consistent theological analysis.[56] Thus he writes: "I realize, my brothers, that we are not the principal cause of it. It must be the Holy Spirit who first works it within us. He alone can apply the promises of grace and confirm the certainty of them in our hearts. That is why he is called 'the earnest,' 'the seal,' 'the witness,' and 'the pledge.' … This same Spirit causes us to cry out, 'Abba, Father,' and he bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, which is to say, the elect and the called."[57]

Indeed, our election, which God has decreed in heaven, is also written upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit, assuring us that we are children of God and that our sins are forgiven. In calling us to salvation he calls us also to respond to him in faith. The Holy Spirit, then, is properly the agent who confirms us in our calling and election. But this does not leave us passive and indifferent, for the Holy Spirit moves us to cooperation. He works in us, but in doing so desires to accomplish his work of salvation by our working with him. This working with the Spirit is what applying ourselves to holiness and piety entails, something confirmed by 2 Peter 1:5, 6. Our exercise of piety, in fact, is our only contribution. But this in no way implies that our good works or piety makes us acceptable to God.[58] Turretin is careful to elaborate upon this point.

However, our exercise of piety does have its place, for in this way the truth about our calling and election is confirmed in our hearts, even as our neighbors are convinced of the sincerity of our faith when we walk in the way of faith rather than in the way of unbelief or disobedience. We observe that

[54] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 463.
[55] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 464.
[56] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 465.
[57] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 465.
[58] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 466–467.

there is a two-sided focus here. First, we bless our neighbors when we practice good works and we give them reason to believe that we do not falsely carry the title of the elect and the called. In seeing professed believers walk in faith, they glorify our Father in heaven, even as those who profess to be religious but live hypocritically and follow a wicked life give religion a bad name and God is dishonored. The gospel is confirmed in its truth when believers walk in its ways. God is shown to be true. Second, our works serve to confirm our election and calling within ourselves, establishing us in certainty in the face of doubts and the failings of our flesh (cf. 1 John 3:19; James 2:4).[59]

This brings Turretin to explore this question with more focus and depth, that is, how our works contribute to confirming us in our calling and election. They can do this in a twofold way: either as seals, images, and fruits, or as means to an end. For if the seal confirms the authenticity of the letters of the Prince, if the fruits allow us to recognize the tree, if the means can never be separated from the end, likewise good works are the seal of our election, the fruit of grace, the means of salvation. Where you find good works, you invariably find election and calling, for the Holy Spirit produces good works in God's elect, a confirmation of the grace of God at work in the elect sinner (cf. 2 Tim. 2:19; Eph. 1:13).[60]

> In election God shows us mercy as sovereign and he writes the decree. Calling is like the letters of grace which give us knowledge of it. But neither the decree nor the letters can be certain in regards to us if the seal of the Spirit of sanctification is not applied to it. When one is in sin, carrying the imprints of the devil, there is no reason to hope for God's love. But where there is holiness, there also is the seal of God and consequently the certainty of his grace.[61]

Similarly, our good works confirm the grace of God at work in us as images and copies representing the original inasmuch as they are to reflect the divine image, God's holy traits. It is obvious that we are his children, called as his elect, when we practice such holiness. This is the meaning that we are partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), which does not refer to a communication of the divine essence to us but to our conforming to God's righteousness and goodness. To make our calling sure, then, requires that we examine whether we choose God in faith, that we love him, for that is a sign that he first loved us[62]

Third, good works confirm calling and election as effects that lead us to the cause and as fruits that cause us to recognize the tree from which they come. For good works are the fruits of God's celestial tree, a tree grafted into Jesus Christ. We know a tree by its fruits, and so we look for the fruits of faith and repentance, of piety and love, in our own lives—that we are branches in Christ the true vine. As the rays of light lead us back to the sun, so our good works, produced in us by the Holy Spirit, lead us by to the sun of righteousness.

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[59] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 468–470.

[60] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 470–471.

[61] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 471.

[62] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 472–473. For Turretin's continued remarks along these lines, see also p. 474.

Those who apply themselves to piety and sanctification are, without a doubt, among the elect; they are the called of God. Indeed, without faith, without the desire for piety, without any of the actions of faith, we are dead.[63]

Finally, our election and calling are confirmed by good works like a means is dependent upon a cause that leads to an end. "For where there are means inseparable from the end, it is obvious that the end must follow the means." Faith and holiness are such means; and when believers walk on that path, they can be assured that they belong to God, that they are God's elect, called through the gospel. Good works, therefore, are not only the means to an end, but they are themselves the end to which God aims to bring us according to his grace.[64]

Assurance, then, follows the path that leads to the goal for which God gives us his grace, namely that we may be holy and blameless in his sight. This is why Peter calls believers to study to affirm these things; and it is to be pursued with diligence. It not a single act; it is not achieved in a day. This is the pursuit of the Christian his or her life long. And this is what it means to work out your salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:13). We are afflicted on all sides by our sins, by our flesh, and by the devil. Many things make us doubt our calling and election so that we also distrust God's grace and lose the consolation he promises to his children. Thus, in the face of so many temptations, we have all the more reason that we should heed the apostle's exhortation.[65]

From here, Turretin uses the concluding pages of this sermon (about a quarter of its length) to urge his hearers to put these words into practice, explaining the advantages and blessings of doing so, and pointing out the multifaceted nature of God's grace and blessing in their lives which ought to move them to love and gratitude to him. Grace is never separated from holiness; and believers reach the goal of salvation according to the means that God has established.[66] In this connection Turretin also addresses the practical matter of the doubting Christian, who is greatly burdened by his or her perpetual failures at living a holy life. Turretin turns to a variety of biblical texts, or alludes to them, which focus upon God's love and mercy, upon divine patience and forbearance, in order to console this sort of believer. Turretin also cautions and warns complacent and spiritually lazy believers to heed the apostle's words. Indeed, this complacency, Turretin notes, is what Peter wishes to overthrow in this text.[67]

2.3. Analytical Comments

From the above we can discern how the doctrine of election is treated by Turretin in two distinct genres of theological writing—an elenctic theology in Latin, a textbook for the academy; and a sermon in the vernacular, composed for the pew and a reading lay audience. First, Turretin's sermon shows that the topic of predestination can be presented to the laity in a way that stays close to

[63] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 474–476.
[64] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 477.
[65] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 478–480.
[66] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 480–490.
[67] De l'affermissement de la vocation, 490–494.

the text of Scripture while anticipating the sort of questions that emerge and require a response. An illustration of this can be seen in that Turretin begins the sermon with the observation that the doctrine of election is subject to abuse by sinful people; consequently, the sermon commences by taking up a practical problem. Second, Turretin's sermon shows that the heart of this doctrine can be presented to the pew while leaving behind the thick and heavy polemics that tilt toward philosophical categories and subtleties. Although this is not a superficial sermon, it is significantly removed from the technical polemics that surrounds this doctrine in the *Institutio.* Indeed, the sermon is careful to delineate the meaning of terms like "election" and "calling," but this is done following the "analogy of faith," and, accordingly, a variety of supplemental biblical texts are cited to support what is taught. Moreover, Turretin begins the sermon by placing the verses to be exposited within the context of the chapter.

Third, this is not to deny that Turretin uses theological analysis as well, but this is done in order to bring clarity not clutter to the sermon. For example, Turretin explains why calling is listed before election in the biblical text, even as he is careful to explain why we need an exhortation like the one given, not because divine election is in doubt but because believers doubt their election due to their sins. Fourth, Turretin's sermon reflects his pastoral side as a theologian, for this sermon is concerned to spur believers on in the way of piety and devotion. Turretin reveals that he is sensitive to the kinds of problems or doubts or concerns ordinary believers might have regarding assurance or God's favor toward them. It is therefore not surprising that the call to piety, which is indicative in the biblical text of the sermon, is not shortchanged or ignored but robustly explored and amply treated. We see this, for example, in that the comforting aspects of the doctrine of election are celebrated; and more, a large portion of the sermon is devoted to exhortation and dealing with practical issues of faith, such as assurance and the doubting Christian.

Finally, this case study demonstrates, if nothing else, that the sermons of the Reformed orthodox are a fruitful, but unplowed, field for scholarship on Reformed orthodoxy. Just as one does not fully access Calvin's theology, for example, merely by an examination of his *Institutes*, so Reformed orthodoxy cannot be accurately understood or assessed merely by an analysis of the disputative literature it produced or the compendia it penned, or the massive dogmatical works for which it is best known. Catechetical literature and sermons are integral to that theological project. Scholars, if they are to grasp who and what these Protestants were and what they thought Christianity required and offered to humanity, must also turn their attention to this genre of writing for an accurate depiction of Reformed orthodoxy.

3. Conclusion

From our short presentation and analysis of a sample sermon from a prominent representative of the Reformed scholastic tradition, we may conclude that Reformed orthodoxy was aware of and receptive to the interchange between theology and the church. Theology was done as a labor of ministry to the church, and in fact the academic theology of polemical disputation and dogmatic textbooks was not delivered to the laity in an undiluted form. The

Reformed orthodox, if Turretin may serve as an example through his sermon on divine election, exhibit pastoral insight and sensitivity toward the needs of the common believer and aspire to honor Scripture as the means of grace by which the church is edified so that theology serves the church.