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Suzanne McDonald, *Re-Imagining Election: Divine Election as Representing God to Others and Others to God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. v+213. \$26.00 (pbk).

In this work, Suzanne McDonald tackles the controversial doctrine of election in the Reformed tradition with the aim of developing a trinitarian, pneumatological and scriptural understanding for the church today. Through exploring the idiom of representation, McDonald argues that the elect are chosen by God to represent God to others and others to God. Election, then, is not meant to exclude others but rather 'to hold the alienated and apparently rejected "other" before God, and so within the sphere of God's promised covenant blessings' (p. xvi). Key to her argument is the traditional Reformed emphasis on the Holy Spirit, coupled with some insights from Karl Barth and recent biblical scholarship, for a contemporary theology of election 'in Christ' and 'by the Spirit'.

She begins by posing a pneumatological problem through a careful analysis of the 'forgotten man' of English theology, John Owen. Although a representative of the Reformed tradition of double predestination and limited atonement, McDonald praises Owen's ability to integrate the Holy Spirit's role in election and in forming the *imago Dei* in Christ and in us for a theology in which the work of God *ad extra* is grounded in the being of God *ad intra* and the *filioque*. She then turns to Karl Barth's earlier doctrine of election in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* and CD I/1 and I/2, which preserves the traditional pneumatology within a developing actualistic understanding of revelation, but like Owen falls into the trap of double predestination. Barth's later christological revision of election is then criticised for several problems which push his account 'to the point of collapse' (p. 70, n. 44). In particular, she notes that contemporary scholarship on Paul's pneumatology identifies election exclusively in Christ through the Spirit and thus repudiates the notion that all people are 'willy-nilly' in Christ (p. 68). For McDonald, Barth is caught in an irreconcilable contradiction. On the one hand, he wants to affirm that all are elect in Christ, as God elects his own being for the covenant from all eternity. On the other, Barth wants to affirm the Holy Spirit in the decision of faith to accept or reject that election. Yet, if Barth's election Christology holds sway, then this means that Christ takes the rejection of the reprobate upon himself, which nullifies the individual's rejection. But if final reprobation is a real possibility, this means that those individuals have not received the gift of the Spirit, which throws him back to double predestination. The remainder of the book is an attempt to move beyond this impasse.

However, while McDonald has identified a crucial issue in Barth's presentation, her criticism does not acknowledge that scripture itself keeps open the possibility of *apokatastasis* and final reprobation. She also seems to prize rational coherence over dialectical interplay. Indeed, she falsely assumes that Barth's refusal to maintain or deny the *apokatastasis* is based on an abstract concept of divine freedom. 'Barth's election Christology', she writes, 'insists that God is not radically free in relation to the world' (p. 71), since God has already united himself with humanity in the eternal decision of election. But if Barth is faithful to scripture, while humbly recognising that we cannot 'arrogate to ourselves that which can be given and received only as a free gift' (p. 71), then is he not correct to leave the matter open and rely on the Spirit to unite us with Christ without limiting the divine freedom and forcing us to choose between universalism or double predestination? As T. F. Torrance argued, the choice between universalism and conditional salvation is a form of rationalism which refuses to rely on the grace of Christ and the Spirit.

Her own attempt to move beyond the impasse of universalism and particularism comes from her use of the notion of representation in recent biblical theology. Israel's election represents God to the world by manifesting the love and justice of God (Brueggemann) and fulfilling its covenant purpose simply through living out its mission in service to others (Seitz). But Israel also participates in sinful humanity and so represents the world to God in its sin and through intercessory prayer. Following N. T. Wright on Paul, election reaches its climax on the cross of Christ who bears the sin of all humanity. Election to representation thus offers an important contribution to our understanding of election through one elect community in a way which upholds the particularity of the Spirit's work in the church for God's universal plan of salvation.

McDonald then explores what it means to be transformed in the image of Christ by the Spirit through what she calls the 'perichoretic personhood' of God. But if God is at work in Christ and the Spirit *only* in the one elect community, as McDonald argues, it remains unclear how she can avoid the conclusion that there is no activity of the Spirit outside of the church or that the work of Christ is conditioned by the church. Despite her great effort to recast the doctrine in a biblical and contemporary light, McDonald has not resolved all the tensions in a way which fully preserves the mystery and freedom of God. She has, however, offered one of the most original and daring interpretations of election in recent memory and for that deserves the attention of serious scholars.

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