

Predestination/ Election

From articles by Georg Stoeckhardt translated by Rev. Erwin Koehlinger

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

While translating the articles contained in this publication it became obvious that Dr. Stoeckhardt wrote them for at least three major reasons.

First, a very painful controversy was raging within the Lutheran Church during the latter part of the last century over the doctrine of predestination and election. And our beloved doctor was anxious to refute the false doctrine and bring order again out of chaos.

Then, while engaged in this refutation it was deemed a most opportune time to make a formal statement on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the "Missourian" position on this doctrine.

And finally, Dr. Stoeckhardt expressed deep concern over the fact that those theologians who were teaching falsely were robbing Christians of the great consolation that the doctrine of God's eternal election contains. He sincerely wanted to restore that God-intentioned comfort.

In his translating the translator leaned very heavily towards the last two reasons and so completely omitted references to the controversy that was responsible for the articles.

The student of theology interested in the controversial aspects of this doctrine within the Lutheran church of the last century is referred to the source listings at the end of each article.

ERWIN KOEHLINGER

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Scripture Proof for the Doctrine of Predestination¹

The doctrine of predestination is revealed in Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture presents this inexplicable mystery in clear, precise words (Ephesians 1; Romans 8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:1,2). By means of this doctrine, Holy Scripture wishes to comfort and strengthen Christians. Holy Scripture expressly warns against going beyond God's revelation in trying to understand this great, blessed mystery with human reason (Romans 9:20, 21; 11:33-36).

We are arranging the relevant Scripture passages along the following lines and asking:

- I. How does Holy Scripture define predestination?
- II. What does Holy Scripture teach about the certainty of predestination?
- III. To what does Holy Scripture refer Christians so that they become sure of their election?

I. How does Holy Scripture define predestination?

1. Where Holy Scripture speaks of predestination, it refers with the words "election," "predestine" to an act of God according to which He has selected from the mass of fallen men definite persons. Accordingly, Holy Scripture confers the title "the elect" upon definite individuals (not upon all men, not upon all Christians either but upon those who continue in faith until the end and are finally saved) (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Peter 1:1; Romans 11:7; Matthew 22:14; Mark 13:20, 22; Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1).

2. Consequently, according to Scripture the election of God is not a mere knowing beforehand but an act of God's will. Holy Scripture describes this act of volition with the following terms: "foreknowledge," "election," "purpose," "predestination," "decree" (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11; Romans 9:11; Ephesians 1:5; Acts 13:48).

3. Holy Scripture teaches that God has chosen and predestined us "to salvation," "to eternal life," "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (2 Thessalonians 2:13; Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:6,12,13).

4. Holy Scripture teaches that God has chosen us to salvation "before the foundation of the world," "before the world began," "from the beginning," therefore, from eternity (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

5. Holy Scripture designates as the motive for election God's good pleasure and the merit of Christ. It says that we are chosen "according to the counsel and good pleasure of God" (Ephesians 1:5,11), and that we are chosen "through Christ," "in Christ Jesus," which means for Christ's sake (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9). Thus consideration of man's conduct is totally excluded (2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 9:11,12).

6. Holy Scripture teaches that God, since He predestined us to salvation, at the same time provided us with the ways and means to salvation, that He at the same time has resolved to sanctify us through Word and Spirit, to make us His children; that we are chosen "through sanctification of the Spirit," "through belief of the truth," "unto the adoption of children to

¹ Source: *Lehre und Wehre* XXVI [26] (June, 1880) 6:176-187; (July, 1880) 7:197-208; (August, 1880) 8:227-240; (September, 1880) 9:270-281; (October, 1880) 10:303-309.

himself,” “unto obedience (faith) and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:1,2).

7. And so Holy Scripture testifies that God in time then “calls,” “justifies,” and finally “glorifies those “whom He did foreknow”; that those who have been chosen from eternity will as a result of election come to faith and through faith be preserved to eternal life. According to Scripture, therefore, God’s eternal election is a cause for our call and conversion, for our faith and our salvation (Romans 8:28-30; Acts 13:48; 1 Peter 1:1,2,5; Ephesians 1:3,4).

II. What does Holy Scripture teach about the certainty of predestination?

8. Holy Scripture teaches that God’s eternal election is unchangeable and immutable (Romans 11:29; Matthew 24:24; John 10:28; Ephesians 1:11).

9. Holy Scripture teaches further that we can be absolutely sure of our election and salvation (Romans 8:31-39; Philippians 1:6).

III. To what does Holy Scripture refer Christians so that they become sure of their election?

10. So that we become sure of our election Holy Scripture refers us to the Gospel of redemption through Christ, which fact affects all sinners. From it we should perceive our election (2 Timothy 1:9,10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14; Ephesians 1:6-10,13).

11. As Holy Scripture refers the elect to the Gospel of salvation in Christ, so it also admonishes them to remain within the order of salvation, “to make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10).

Final Observations

a). This doctrine concerning predestination portrays God’s great, incomprehensible grace, which is glorified in the elect, and suggests nothing about a decree of reprobation for others. Rather in clear, distinct passages Holy Scripture testifies that all who are lost are damned because of their unbelief (Matthew 23:37).

b). The doctrine of Holy Scripture concerning the election of grace in no way sets aside or detracts from the other clear, comforting doctrine of Scripture about God’s universal gracious will (God will have all men to be saved, 1 Timothy 2:4). No way can we ever reconcile these two doctrines with our reason. However, we take reason captive in obedience to Christ, and [we] believe and maintain the one as well as the other to be divine doctrine in their entirety.

The above theses formed the basis for the deliberations of a southeast pastoral conference of the Western District. The conference unanimously declared itself to be in agreement with the content of these theses and charged the presenter to work up his report, as well as the discussion of these theses into an article for *Lehre und Wehre*. What follows is a free adaptation of the transcript of the deliberations of the conference. Scattered, related remarks are summed up, many passages shortened, others broadened, digressions, not directly serving the theme, left out.

Preface

The doctrine of predestination is revealed in Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture presents this inexplicable mystery in clear, precise words (Ephesians 1; Romans 8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:2). By means of this doctrine, Holy Scripture wishes to comfort and strengthen the Christians. Holy Scripture expressly warns against going beyond God's revelation in trying to understand this great, blessed mystery with the help of human reason (Romans 9:20, 21; 11:33-36).

The orthodox church, when it wants to prove the validity of a doctrine and defend it against the attacks of heretics, has, at all times, gone back to Holy Scripture. Scripture is the norm, the rule, but, at the same time, also the source of all doctrine.

Luther's statement with regard to Romans 15:4 ("For whatsoever things were written aforetime were," etc.) is worthy of consideration:

Notice what kind of book the apostle gives Christians to read and study, namely, nothing else but Holy Scripture, and he says that it contains our doctrines. So if Scripture contains our doctrines, then it is not proper for us to look elsewhere, and all Christians should make daily use of this book. But what has the devil done through the papists? It was not enough for him that they drove the book out of sight and made it so scarce that very few doctors of Holy Scripture have it, let alone read it: but in order to keep someone from dragging it out, they brand it with infamy, blaspheme God and say that it is obscure, that one must follow men's annotations and not the simple text. What else is this but giving the lie to Paul, who says that it is our textbook? And they say that it is a book that corrupts us and is obscure.²

Further, Luther makes protest against the flood of books that supplanted and obscured Scripture and concludes:

Let's return to Paul, who shows us what to read and where to look for our doctrine. Were there another book for us to read he would have apprised us of it.³

Our Confession, the Formula of Concord, points explicitly to Scripture as being the norm in matters of faith and doctrine. We read in the introduction:

We receive and embrace the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true standard by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged (FC SD Rule and Norm 3).⁴

If we wish to be clear and sure, acquire divine certainty with regard to the doctrine of predestination, we must step into and draw from this fountain of Israel. We must above all search Holy Scripture regarding this doctrine. In this article Scripture decides what is true doctrine and what is false. And the doctrine of predestination is doctrine revealed in Scripture. Here too we

² *Kirchenpostille*, Erlangen Ausgabe 7, 59.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 851.

are dealing with God's Word and revelation. The passages cited, which we shall consider in the discussion of the individual theses, have been considered and treated as the proof-passages for the doctrine of predestination.⁵ Therefore, it is not true if one says that in this article he can think and teach this or that without doing harm. Here, too, God's holy truth is at stake.

The doctrine of predestination is before other articles of the Christian faith a mystery which we shall never be able to fathom. Nevertheless, the generally accepted rule of old Lutheran teachers applies also to this mystery: "It is possible to explain inexplicable things in clear and intelligible words." Although unspeakably profound Holy Scripture is, nevertheless, clear and intelligible. It reveals to us inexplicable divine mysteries in understandable, clear language. The doctrine of predestination is also presented to us in Scripture in clear, unmistakable words. Scripture gives us the "what" even though it is silent about the "how" and "why." Wouldn't it be terrible were we of a mind to throw away the "what" because we are unable to understand the "how" and "why"? We hold fast to the "what" and believe it even though we are unable to make any sense out of it. The Bible is a bright sun. Except that it does not open up to us the depths that exist in God in such a way that we need expect no new disclosures in eternal life. So it is not right for one to say that, since the doctrine of predestination is so full of mystery, various interpretations are still tolerable. What concerns the substance of this doctrine is clearly revealed.

And these clear words of Scripture should comfort and strengthen the Christians. The present revelation has this purpose. This we glean the context of the relevant passages. Romans 8 is a chapter of comfort, Ephesians 1:3-14, a thanksgiving for God's grace. We would be robbing Christendom of a great comfort were we to repudiate or cast doubt upon or alter this doctrine. It is a blessed mystery—but given for the edification, for the strengthening of the believers, not for idle speculation: "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Romans 9:20, 21); "O the depth of the riches ..." (Romans 11:33 f.). Reason has all along been hypercritical of this mystery and cast suspicion on this doctrine through false conclusions. Therefore, we take to heart the warning of Scripture and stay within the limits of revelation. Also as concerns this article we avoid every kind of rational, antithetical input, this devilish artifice of modern theology.

It is known that even orthodox teachers of our church are at variance with one another regarding this article. We would never fare well here either were we to turn for help to tradition and to the consensus of the Fathers. But thanks be to God, we have a Holy Scripture, a clear, infallible light which leads us safely through the dark labyrinth of human opinion. Now then, if we go into our dear Bible, our hearts will be set at ease. Of course, in addition to Scripture we have our Confession. But at the moment we are not going to deal with it. After considering the Scripture passages concerning predestination, we'll become convinced that our Confession, Article XI of the Formula of Concord, in all points rests upon the Word of God.⁶

⁵ [Ed.:] The original identifies these passages as the "*sedes doctrinae*, i.e. 'seats of doctrine'" and "*Hauptfundorte*, i.e. 'chief loci'" of the doctrine of God's gracious election.

⁶ [Ed.:] Here Rev. Koehlinger breaks off his translation of the text from the bottom of page 181 to the middle of page 182 just before the first part of Dr. Stoeckhardt's paper. The translation is supplied here to clarify the point made on page 30 about perusing the Scripture passages. See footnote 16 below.

We now arrange the Scriptures belonging here under the following points of view, which are more or less clearly evident in every presentation of the doctrine of predestination. We ask:

- I. How does Scripture define predestination?
- II. What does Holy Scripture teach about the certainty of predestination?
- III. To what does Holy Scripture refer Christians so that they become sure of their election?

The first question is the most important. If we have rightly discerned that wonderful decision of election from what is in Scripture, we can easily understand what Scripture tells us about the certainty of predestination and how we can and should be certain of our election.

The Scripture proof can be presented in two ways, either by explaining one passage of Scripture after the other, each passage equally and fully according to all the individual elements and according to the context, or in the way that was done in the above theses, that one lift concept after concept out of the complex of the relevant Scripture sections. The latter method appears more advantageous and more appropriate for the reason that it is precisely in this teaching that we recognize the Scripture truth from the comparison and cohesion of different, parallel Scriptural statements. What is and remains desirable under all circumstances is that all individual passages should be fully considered in terms of their content and context and that the reader should then be aware of the result of our exposition. The whole thing appears clearer and more transparent if one has previously, carefully examined the individual parts.

I

How does Scripture define predestination?⁷

⁷ [Ed.:] Under the question Dr. Stoeckhardt gives a reference in parentheses: “*Der Lutheraner* of 1880, Statements on Predestination, 5,9,10,11.”

Thesis 1.

Where Holy Scripture speaks of predestination, it refers with the words “election,” “predestine” to an act of God according to which He has selected from the mass of fallen men definite persons. Accordingly, Holy Scripture confers the title “the elect” upon definite individuals (not upon all men, not upon all Christians either, but upon those who continue in faith until the end and are finally saved). Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:1; Romans 11:7; Matthew 22:14; Mark 13:20, 22; Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1.

The most common term applied to the doctrine under consideration is: the “Doctrine of Predestination.” For that reason we begin with the definition of the word “predestination.” The decree of God with which we are dealing is called in Scripture: “election,” “to select for oneself (ἐκλογή, ἐκλέγεσθαι).

Before we consider the individual Scripture passages which speak of God’s “election” we are going to inquire into the normal meaning of the verb ἐκλέγεσθαι, from which is formed the noun ἐκλογή. In itself the word ἐκλέγεσθαι is clear. It has the very same meaning as the Latin “*eligere*,” as the English “elect, choose, select.” It means: to take out of a mass some definite individuals, persons or things. The medial form “ἐκλέγεσθαι” has in addition the secondary meaning: “to choose for oneself.” This verb is found in the New Testament in various connections and deals with persons and things. For example, it is stated that Christ chose for Himself apostles from the number of His disciples, that Mary had chosen the good part, the heavenly part, while others were in quest of earthly treasures. There has never been any dispute over the actual meaning of this word. So it would be superfluous to cite more examples.

The question now concerns the linguistic usage of the word in those connections which describe that eternal act of God, the election to eternal life. When it says of God that He has “chosen” (ἐξελέξατο) in eternity, then according to the simple wording of the text nothing else can be meant than: God has taken definite persons out of the mass of humanity, out of the world with which the teaching of salvation, the Gospel, is on the whole concerned, out of the lost sinful world. This definition is given also by John Gerhard: “The word ‘choose’ includes in it a positive separation by which a person is removed from the association of others ... comprehends in itself spontaneous love from which election springs ... is used only in the good sense” (Loc. De elect., 26). Bengel says to Matthew 20:16: “*Electi = exquisiti prae aliis*,” those who are singled out before others.

Modern exegetes are also in agreement with the meaning of the word “ἐκλέγεσθαι,” to choose. Harless says in his *Commentary on Ephesians*, page 11, 12: “’Εκλέγεσθαι’ is an act of God by virtue of which certain individuals before others belong especially to God ’Εκλογή, the eternal decree of God’s holy will relative to certain individuals.” Meyer, *Commentary on Ephesians*, 3rd edition, page 31: “God has chosen us out of the whole of mankind.” Only Hofmann frees himself from the restraints of grammatical rules and declares (*Commentary on Ephesians*, page 90): “It is said of us that God has chosen us, not in contrast to such whom He has not chosen, but in contrast to what we would be had He not chosen us.” That is not only, as Meyer judges, an “illogical” but an absurd definition. The root-word “λέγεσθαι” as well as the preposition “ἐκ” of necessity demands the antithesis to others who are not chosen.

It is significant that modern theologians who know and wish to know nothing of the mystery of predestination have no choice but to acknowledge and endorse the essential, precise meaning of such words as “ἐκλέγεσθαι.” It is simply incredible that Harless (*ibid*, page 11) defines election as that act of God by virtue of which certain individuals belong to God, while farther on, 9:21 f., he understands the elect to include all the redeemed, that is all men! Only by an act of exegetical violence, as Hofmann and Harless commit, is it possible to refute the doctrine resulting from the understanding of the word “to choose for oneself” (ἐκλέγεσθαι) of a particular election which has to do with individual, definite persons.

After having determined the only linguistically possible meaning for the word “ἐκλέγεσθαι, ἐκλογή,” we now examine the principal passages in which this word describes that eternal act of God, the ordination to eternal life. We meet this word in the classic passage, Ephesians 1:4. The apostle Paul says: “Blessed be the God who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings ... according as He has chosen us in Him ‘before the foundation of the world’ (καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς).” For the present we shall disregard the context of the apostolic discourse.

Whom does the apostle mean by the “us” (ἡμᾶς)? He obviously includes himself with the Ephesian Christians. He regards himself and his fellow Christians as such whom God has chosen. As he believes and knows that God has chosen him from eternity, so also his fellow Christians, all Christians, who profess to believe in the Lord Christ, should regard themselves as chosen. Every Christian should believe that he is a chosen one. Guided by love the apostle assumes that all Christians with whom he is dealing in his letters are believing and chosen children of God. Where the apostles address true Christian congregations and remind them of the glory of their Christian estate, they envisage in the visible congregation the true church of the believers, the elect, and guided by love and hope regard all individual members of the congregation as members of the true church. And by now saying of himself and his fellow believers, his fellow Christians, that God has chosen them already from eternity, the apostle clearly contrasts himself and his fellow Christians to the children of unbelief, to the unbelieving heathen world. In v. 3 he mentions the blessings of Christianity, by which one is able to recognize Christians and distinguished them from the Gentiles. In other respects also Paul presents this contrast to the pagan world in this letter, e.g., Ephesians 2:1, 4:17. Therefore, out of the mass of blind heathen, out of fallen humanity, have been taken out, have been chosen from eternity, those who now believe.

At the close of the section dealing with predestination (Ephesians 1:3-14), namely, in vv. 12-14, the apostle names these particular persons of the elect, as far as they can be mentioned by name. They are the believers out of Israel, who first trusted in Christ (v. 12), and the believers out of the Gentiles (v. 13). And it was these particular believers who were sealed with the Holy Spirit, who have received the pledge of the inheritance, whose future salvation is not in doubt (vv. 13, 14). The apostle is speaking of and extolling all who have ever believed on earth, those who now believe and who will one day be saved and obtain the inheritance, that God has chosen them before the foundation of the world. He does not utter a single word that indicates that God chose them because of their faith, having foreseen their future faith and Christianity. He describes the Christians for what they now are, describes them as believers who have the sure hope of salvation, and emphasizes that God has chosen these very persons who now believe and one day will be saved, has chosen them out of fallen, rebellious humanity.

Because of similar content we now add 2 Thessalonians 2:13, where instead of “ἐκλέγεσθαι” the synonym “αἱρεῖσθαι” is found. “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to

salvation” (ὅτι εἴλατο ὑμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἀπαρχὴν εἰς σωτηρίαν). As “ἐκλέγεσθαι” corresponds closely to the word “select” so “αἱρεῖσθαι” to the word “choose.” The Thessalonian Christians should think of themselves as chosen and with the apostle thank God for their eternal election. In the preceding section (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12) the apostle had prophesied the appearance of Antichrist and the future “ἀποστασία,” the apostasy of many who, led astray by Antichrist, would believe the lie instead of the truth. And when he now continues: “But we are bound to give thanks to God for you because God has chosen you ... to salvation,” he is clearly contrasting the elect to the apostates. One time the elect are contrasted to the unbelievers, the blind heathen (Ephesians 1), then also, as the context indicates, to the apostates, or, as one is wont to call them, the temporary believers.

The same concept underlies the word “ἐκλεκτοῖς” in 1 Peter 1:1. “Peter, and apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς Πόντου).” Those Christians living scattered among the peoples of the Gentiles the apostle calls the “chosen ones” the elect. Long ago the Lord chose them out of the heathen world.

In Romans 11:5, 7 the discussion is about the elect out of Israel. Literally translated verse 5 reads: “So now also there remains a remnant according to the election of grace.” That at the time of Ahab and at all times there were in Israel some who remained faithful to God, that occurred according to the election of grace (κατ’ ἐκλογὴν χάριτος). Those who stood the test and did not turn apostate God has according to His grace chosen from eternity. Verse 7 reads: “What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” By “the election” (ἡ ἐκλογὴ) the apostle means the elect. They obtain the promised inheritance, which hardened Israel has forfeited. The elect are here contrasted to the obdurate mass of people.

That in Matthew 22:14, just as in Matthew 20:16, the few who are chosen are contrasted to the many who are called is evident from the sentence structure.

According to that eternal act of God Christians are called and referred to as “ἐκλεκτοί,” elect. “Elect” has become a technical term, a title of honor for all true Christians. However, they are called thus not according to what they are and have become as Christians, but according to what God determined about them in eternity, before they ever were and became Christians. As elect, chosen of God, highly beloved in eternity, they are distinguished from all other men, unbelievers and apostates.

For the sake of His elect God, according to Mark 13:20, 22 shortens the tribulation of the last days inasmuch as the elect cannot perish with the world and with the many whose love grows cold. Significant in this passage is the expression “for the elect’s sake, whom He hath chosen” (διὰ τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς οὓς ἐξελέξατο). The free act of God’s election, independent of any conduct of the creature’s part, is thus revealed. No one can and dare lay anything to the charge of “God’s chosen ones,” for it is God who justifies (Romans 8:33). For the sake of the elect, in order that they might come to faith and obtain salvation and eternal glory Paul performed the duties of his apostolic office, to which belonged also his sufferings as an apostle (2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1). The apostle took comfort in the fact that he succeeded and had to succeed in his labor among the elect, in his recall of the many who just because of his suffering had become unfaithful to him and the Gospel. As “the elect and beloved of God” Christians differ from unbelievers in their mode of life (Colossians 3:12).

Finally, one can with right bring to bear here Christ's statement in John 15:16, 19, which, in light of the context, clearly speaks not of the election to the apostolic office but of the election to eternal life. Jesus has chosen, selected His disciples out of the world.

So election, selection as an eternal act of God is, in agreement with Holy Scripture, an act of God according to which He has chosen for Himself definite individuals out of the mass of lost human beings. Christians, who believe and are saved, are according to that eternal, free act of God, which occurs before faith and salvation, before time, called elect. As elect, they differ from unbelievers and temporary believers, from the mass of those who go to their damnation.

When the Formula of Concord speaks of election in its strictest sense, of the elect, of "each and every person of the elect" (FC SD XI.23), it shows that it has grasped the scriptural meaning of the word(s) "ἐκλέγεσθαι, ἐκλογή, ἐκλεκτοί." Just as Scripture it wishes by this word to say nothing else but that God has taken out of the lost world definite, individual persons.

Thesis 2.

Consequently, according to Scripture the election of God is no mere knowing beforehand but an act of God's will. Holy Scripture describes this act of volition with the following terms: "foreknowledge," "election," "purpose," "predestination," "decree." Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11; Romans 9:11; Ephesians 1:5; Acts 13:48.

That the election of God is an act of God's will lies in the concept of the word "election" (ἐκλέγεσθαι). But all other expressions with which Scripture describes that mystery of eternity also are indicative of an activity on the part of God, of an act of divine will. Thus the word "προγινώσκειν," "πρόγνωσις," is accurately translated: "foreknowledge." This concept engages our attention next.

To begin with, we briefly call attention to the exegetical history of this meaningful word. Wherever in Scripture God's foreknowledge, dating back into eternity, is discussed, Luther has rendered it with the word "predestination." The Formula of Concord explains the word "προγινώσκειν" in the words: "Whom God predestined, elected, and foreordained, He also called." So Luther, the Formula of Concord, and the contemporaries of the Formula of Concord understand "πρόγνωσις τοῦ θεοῦ," foreknowledge of God, to be a decision of God's will, God's predestination.

Later dogmaticians support their statement that God hit upon election because of foreseen faith with the passages dealing with election which contain the word "προγινώσκειν," "πρόγνωσις." Without exception they understand the word as a "foreknowing of God" and add as factual object of the foreknowing the concept "faith." Many modern exegetes have followed in their footsteps, e.g., Meyer, Philippi. Nevertheless, the most recent and, by common consent, the foremost linguists have returned to the explanation of Luther and the Formula of Concord. Hofmann says in his *Commentary on Romans*, p. 347, 348: "If there is a perception on God's part that is something other than a mere knowing of the object involved of the becoming conscious of its state, since rightly knowing is an unvarying activity aiming at knowledge of a kindred activity, then that divine knowing called "προγινώσκειν," wherever this word is found used in its full meaning and said of God without objective predicate, must be meant in the same sense and so be an activity that focused on the object involved before it ever existed." Likewise

Cremer in his *Biblisch theologischen Wörterbuch der Neutestamentlichen Gräcität*, P. 161: “προγινώσκειν” (knowing beforehand) designates divine ‘γινώσκειν’ (knowledge) as existing already in the divine decree of salvation before its historical appearance (we say: the resolve to predestine). Accordingly, as far as fulfillment is concerned, it existed before God’s relationship with the objects of the same.”

It is of consequence that modern theologians even, who otherwise reject the doctrine of Scripture and the Confession relative to a particular election, have no choice but to acknowledge the clear literal sense of the individual words and sentences. Thus modern theology, justly challenged and opposed by us because of its doctrinal content, must in its attempt to do justice to the language of the Bible and the context of biblical discourse often against its will further the knowledge of divine truth and serve the glory of God.

It all boils down to the need to confirm from Scripture itself this understanding of ancient and modern exegetes, according to which “προγινώσκειν,” “πρόγνωσις” indicates an act of the will, a resolve of the will, an act of God.

The meaning of the compound “προγινώσκειν” (to foreknow) is dependent upon the meaning of the simple verb “γινώσκειν” (to know). No detailed proof is necessary to show that the verb “γινώσκειν” in many passages means an act of God that is concerned with specific objects, with certain persons. This is acknowledged by ancient and modern exegetes. The ancients often affix to the word “γινώσκειν” the annotation that here is meant a *nosse cum affectu*, a powerfully efficacious knowing, coupled with affection and love. When it is said in Scripture that God has known and knows us, this means that God has acknowledged, recognized, accepted us as His own, by such knowing had made us His own, adopted us as His own, has placed us into union, into fellowship with Himself and so, as though bound to Him, in unity and kindred with himself, loves us with whole heart. He has, as it were, planted His nature in us and sees and now loves in us His own image. Cremer remarks (*ibid.*, p. 155): “‘γινώσκειν’ in such context therefore means as much as to give attention to somebody, to establish a relationship with someone or to stand in such.”

The meaning of “γινώσκειν” is clear from the following passages. Matthew 7:23: “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew (ἐγνων) you.” John 10:14, 15: “I know (γινώσκω) my sheep, and am known (γινώσκουσί) of mine. As the Father knoweth (γινώσκει) me, even so know (γινώσκω) I the Father.” 1 Corinthians 8:3: “But if any man love God, the same is known (ἐγνώσται) of him.” Galatians 4:9: “Christians who love God are known of God, are received by God, are accepted into His fellowship, belong to Him (νῦν δὲ γνόντες θεόν, μάλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ). 2 Timothy 2:19: “The Lord knoweth (ἐγνων) them that are his,”—this is the firm, immovable foundation of God upon which rests our faith, that the Lord knows, acknowledges us to be His own, has made us His own. This definite and universally accepted linguistic usage of “γινώσκειν” strongly suggests to take the composite “προγινώσκειν” (to foreknow) in the same sense wherever God is the subject and persons are the objects. That is, as a prehistoric act on the part of God, by virtue of which God already in eternity, beforehand, has taken as, has made His own certain persons.

We now turn to the passages in which the composite “προγινώσκειν” (foreknow) is found and asserted as an attribute of God. We place at the head those particular passages which do not deal with God’s eternal election and predestination to eternal life but describe some other foreknowing of God. We find three passages of this nature in the New Testament; however, these are enough to substantiate the linguistic usage already implied.

Paul writes in Romans 11:2: “God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew (ὃν προέγνω).” The discussion here is only about Israel’s acceptance as the people of the covenant. What does the subordinate clause (ὃν προέγνω) wish to say? Does it say: “which He knew beforehand”? That’s the way Calov and other older exegetes take it, and among the more modern Meyer, Philippi. Or did Luther translate correctly: “Whom He has foreknown, therefore has predestined”?

The brief, precise statement “which He foreknew” (ὃν προέγνω) shows that an act of God’s will is being dealt with. This brief statement is an independent clause, “foreknew” (προέγνω) a concept complete in itself. “Foreknow, foresee,” however, is a relative concept that of necessity demands a complement. The exegetes named above complement in some such words: “Of which He foreknew that they would be and remain His people.” Only in this way does the sentence obtain meaning and character. The bare statement: “which He foreknew” makes no sense. One wants also to be told that God has foreknown. And “foreknowing” bound to a personal object, “God foreknew His people,” is an awkward way of speaking. Only when one makes an accusative with infinitive dependent on “προγινώσκειν” in the sense of “foreknowing,” as this occurs in the statement: “God foreknew that Israel would be and remain his people,” are linguistic requirements met.

But who gives those exegetes the right to complement that brief statement of Paul with the words “that they would be and remain His people” or even “that they would believe”? Permission is not granted to extract such an annotation from the mere object of the principal clause “God hath not cast away His people.” In order to express that thought the Greek would have had to say: ὃν προέγνω λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἔσεσθαι καὶ μένειν” or something similar. The “ὃν προέγνω” shows that “προγινώσκειν” here is a complete concept and does not demand a complement one has to force into the sentence structure.

A complete concept ensues when we take the “προγινώσκειν” within “προγινώσκειν” in the meaning: “take as, make one’s own.” The apostle says: “... His people which He beforehand, before the advent of time, had already made His own, had chosen and taken for himself.” Understood this way, the sentence makes sense. This interpretation is demanded also by the relationship of the subordinate clause “ὃν προέγνω” (which He foreknew) with the principal clause “οὐκ ἀπώσατο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ” (God hath not cast away His people). Without doubt the apostle added the words “which He foreknew” (ὃν προέγνω) in order to state why God did not, why God could not cast away His people. But this reason cannot possibly lie in a foreknowing but in an act of God which excludes that other act, “the casting away.” God’s eternal act, “that He makes His people His own,” makes impossible the action in time, “that He cast away His people.” God does not reject, God has not rejected, God cannot reject what He in eternity has already claimed as His own. To reject the elect would be a contradiction.

It reads in 1 Peter 1:18: “Know, that ye were not redeemed ... from your vain conversation. ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained (προεγνωσμένου) before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,” etc. We ask: Is the translation “who verily was foreordained” correct? Or is it said here of Christ, the Lamb of God, the Redeemer, that He was known beforehand of God? In this connection the concept “know beforehand” is totally unsuitable. One would then have to translate: “Christ is known of God beforehand,” something that “γινώσκειν” never means. Further, it would somehow have to be stated here what God knew of Christ beforehand, namely, “that He would die for the sinners.” In that case we expect a sentence like this: “ὃν ἀπόθηναι” or “ὃν ἁμὸν ἔσεθαι προέγω.” The brief passive statement

προεγνωσμένου μὲν πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου,” of which Christ is the subject, points to this that “προγιγνώσκειν” is an independent, complete concept and Christ object of an activity of God. That becomes altogether clear when we take along the parallel term: “φανερωθέντος δὲ” etc. God has revealed Christ in time. The “φανεροῦν” designates an act of God on Christ. And this act is by means of “δὲ” contrasted to the “προγιγνώσκειν” (προεγνωσμένου μὲν).

The apostle wants to say: In eternity God has done much and such with Christ, in time then He has done the other with Him. The contrast “μὲν - δὲ” shows that both thoughts should be kept closely together, that the one demands the other. Thus the context of “προεγνωσμένου” demands the indication of an act of God. But we saw earlier what sort of an act of God is often indicated by “γιγνώσκειν.” Accordingly, we translate: with the precious blood of Christ ..., He is ordained, appointed beforehand, ... but is now manifested.... Already before the foundation of the world God has chosen the Lamb that was to redeem the world, has predestined Christ to be the Redeemer; and in the last times God then revealed the decree of redemption and Christ the Redeemer. This interpretation is confirmed by the parallel passage in Rev. 13:8. There Christ is called “the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” This says that Christ is called “the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” This says that Christ was already slain, offered in God’s eternal decree, that is, that God already in eternity set and ordained Him to be the Redeemer.

In Acts 2:23 Peter says in his Pentecostal sermon: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge (predestination - πρόγνωσις) of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (τοῦτον τῇ ὀρισμένη βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ ἔκδοτον λαβόντες, διὰ χειρῶν ἀνόμων προσπήξαντες ἀνείλατε).” Clearly “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” is one concept. The attributive adjective “determinate” at the same time modifies “foreknowledge” and the genitive “of God” modifies “counsel.” By means of both expressions one and the same decree of God is described. Were “πρόγνωσις” to mean “foreknowledge,” it would not be so closely joined to βουλή (counsel). And a determinate, premeditated foreknowledge (ὀρισμένη προγνώσει) is an absurdity. The supplement as to what God knew beforehand would also be far-fetched in this passage. Then too “προγνώσει” would have to precede “βουλῇ.” No, obviously with “ἡ ὀρισμένη βουλή καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ” is meant an act of the will, a decree of God’s will, a decree that stands firm and that cannot be altered, as indicated by the adjective “ὀρισμένη.”

Neither here nor in general dare one declare the word “πρόγνωσις” to be synonymous with election (ἐκλογή). The concept “choose, select out of a mass” is of itself far removed from the root “γιγνώσκειν, προγιγνώσκειν.” Πρόγνωσις as an act of God’s will is a powerful knowing, by virtue of which God makes someone His own, or selects, lays hold on for a definite purpose. In the passage before us, in which no personal object, no object at all is indicated for “πρόγνωσις,” the word generally has the meaning “predestination, predetermined resolve.” That with “πρόγνωσις” just as with “βουλή” merely an act of the will, a resolution can be meant follows from the relationship of this word with “delivered” (ἔκδοτον). The dative “τῇ ὀρισμένη βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει” (being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge) states the motive for Christ being delivered into the hands of the wicked. God has given Him into their hands because of preconceived counsel and foreknowledge. Never just a knowing beforehand but only a resolution on the part of God can be the motive for God having determined such a surrender of His Son.

We now have a sound basis for the understanding of the two passages in which “προγινώσκειν, πρόγνωσις” (know beforehand – foreknowledge) appear in relation to other verbs which describe God’s eternal election and predestination, namely, Romans 8:29 and 1 Peter 1:2. New Testament usage gives us the meaning for “προγινώσκειν”: “know beforehand; take, make to one’s own” or in a broader sense: “resolve something beforehand.”

This meaning agrees with the context of Romans 8:29: ὅτι οὓς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισε συμμόρφους, etc. If one translates: “whom He did foreknow, them He also ordained beforehand,” what results is a completely distorted, awkward way of speaking. “To know someone, persons beforehand” would be an unusual expression. Only then does the expression become suitable if the point at issue is supplemented, drawn from another sentence or from its own thought content. In determining such a supplement one has to rely entirely on conjecture. For that reason the exegetes in question have hit upon various ideas. Some supplement: “of whom He knew beforehand that they would love him” (ἀγαπώντας αὐτόν - Ebrard); others: “of whom He foreknew that they on the divine way of salvation would become like unto the image of His Son” (συμμόρφους ἔσεθαι τῆς εἰκόνης - Meyer); the majority: “of whom He foreknew that they would believe” (πιστεύειν – Philippi and the ancients). Such interpretation by which the main concept is arbitrarily recorded is baseless exegesis. Whoever agrees with this is not even in a position to keep the Romanists⁸ from inserting into the Biblical statement (that we are justified by faith) the concept “through faith that maintains its character through love” (*fides caritate formata*). In this way the door is opened to every exegetical whim.

Very naïvely Philippi remarks, “Nothing is specifically stated here as to what quality God foresaw in those who were predestined to life. Therefore, they are merely generally thought of as being suited to such purpose. However, this qualification according to Pauline doctrine may be found only in faith (πίστις), namely, in the faith (πίστις) that is steadfast” (*Commentary on Romans*, p. 377). However, Paul does not allude either to faith or to its qualification generally. As to what the apostle has not “specifically stated” one has to form his own opinion.

If we want to stand on firm ground, we must, first of all, acknowledge that “whom He did foreknow” (οὓς προέγνω) is a concept complete in itself. The parallelism with the following verbs “predestine, call, justify, glorify” (προορίζειν, κάλειν, δικαιοῦν, δοξάζειν) teaches further that with “foreknow” (προγινώσκειν) an act of God on definite persons is indicated, not God’s knowing about an act of man. But what kind of an act of God’s will is meant we see from the previously advanced meaning, which also in this passage most satisfactorily fits in with the matter under consideration and with the import of the subject matter. Paul wants to say: Those whom God has beforehand, already in eternity, claimed as His own, whom He has placed into relationship to Himself, into fellowship with himself, in a word, as Luther has translated: whom He did foreknow, them He also determined, ordained that they should be conformed to the image of His Son. This statement contains no tautology as those exegetes maintain. “Whom He foreknew” and “did predestine” (οὓς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους, etc.) are not identical statements. “Foreknowing” and “predestinating” are different concepts. The one designates the relationship to God, the other, the relationship to the future goal. Those persons whom God has beforehand made His own, has adjudged to be His own, them He also has designated and ordained one day to be conformed to the image of His Son. This clear, comforting meaning and thought are what leap to the eye. We shall not concede that Saint Paul is speaking vaguely and ambiguously.

⁸ [Ed.:] Römischen. Koehlinger renders it “Romans,” which is misleading. Stoeckhardt is speaking of Catholics, i.e. “Romanists” here.

Just as little can we upon a simple consideration of the words of Scripture remain uncertain as to the meaning of the apostle Saint Peter when he in 1 Peter 1:1,2 addresses Christians as elect strangers, who are elect (κατὰ πρόγνωσιν θεοῦ πατρὸς) according to the correct translation of Luther: “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” We can only regard it as a violation of the text when one translates and adds on” “according to the supposition of faith; according to this that God the Father foreknew our faith.” “Faith” as object of “foreknowledge” (πρόγνωσις) is not supported at all by the text, rather is excluded by the words that follow: “unto obedience.”

“According to the foreknowledge of God the Father” is obviously a modification of the concept “elect” (ἐκλεκτοῖς). The act of God expressed in that one word “elect” is explained by the closely related words “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (κατὰ πρόγνωσιν θεοῦ πατρὸς). The preposition “according to” (κατὰ) means here, as often: according to measure, according to proportion, in the manner of. Thus Ephesians 4:7: “according to the measure of the gift”; Romans 12:6: “differing according to the grace”; Matthew 25:15: “according to his several ability”; Luke 1:9: “according to the custom”; Romans 9:11: “the purpose according to election.”

Therefore: you are elect according to the measure of the foreknowledge of God the Father, in such a manner that God the Father has chosen you beforehand. In the phrase “πρόγνωσις θεοῦ πατρὸς” (foreknowledge of God the Father) the last two words have the emphasis. The apostle addresses the Christians as elect strangers and then adds that it was God the Father who already beforehand has chosen them for himself.

But since the apostle adds this modification, he substitutes for the concept “elect” (ἐκλεκτοῖς) the similar, but yet not quite identical, concept “πρόγνωσις” (foreknowledge). One time he stresses that they are chosen from out of humanity, out of the lost world; the next time that God has beforehand placed them into a personal relationship, has made them His own. He wishes to say: elect you are, namely, it was God the Father who already beforehand has made you His own.

Cremer understands “foreknowledge of God” (πρόγνωσις θεοῦ) as “a state of fellowship established beforehand” by God with the elect; Schott (*Commentary on First Peter*) as “predestination,” “creative foreknowledge,” “act of the free divine will of love.”

Luther explains the words “according to the foreknowledge of God”: “ ‘they are elect,’ says he. How? Not of themselves, but according to the ordination of God” (Erlangen Edition 51:329). “That you are elect did not occur as a result of your own powers, work, or merit For that reason you come to such unspeakable glory, namely, that God the Father foreordained you to this from eternity. This, therefore, makes the predestination of God quite lovely and comforting, as though he were saying: elect you are and that is the way you are going to remain, because God, who has foreknown you, is mighty and sure that His foreknowledge cannot fail” (Erlangen Edition 52:5).

We do not permit the comfort to be taken from us, the comfort that Scripture has opened up to us in and with the “foreknowledge” of God, that God already in eternity has said to us, to each and every one of us: you are mine. I have graven you in my hands.

The other words by which Scripture describes that eternal counsel and act of God will include other meanings and allied concepts. As “elect” (ἐκλέγεσθαι) refers to humanity from which we are chosen, “foreknowledge” (προγιγνώσκειν) to God, who has chosen us to himself, has made us His own, so “predestine” (προορίζειν) has in view the goal to which God has elected

us. Since He has elected us, has made us His own, by that act He has determined beforehand that we should be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). In Ephesians 1:5 Saint Paul defines “having predestined us” (προορίσας ἡμᾶς) more closely in the words “he has chosen us in that He predestined us unto the adoption of children” (προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν, etc.). In Ephesians 1:11,12 it reads “being predestined according to His purpose ... that we should be to the praise of His glory” (προορισθέντες ... εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ).

With the exact same meaning as “predestine” (προορίζειν), Acts 13:48 combines the verb “τάσσειν” with “εἰς”: ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον: “as many as were ordained to eternal life,” as many as were classed among those possessing eternal life.⁹ “Τάσσειν” is found in a similar combination in 1 Corinthians 16:15: καὶ εἰς διακονίαν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἔταξαν ἑαυτούς: “they have ordained themselves to the ministry of the saints.”

Finally, the election and predestination of God have been given the designation “purpose” (πρόθεσις). Said of man “πρόθεσις” designates a purpose, a resolve that has proceeded from man’s own will. For that reason one says “with purpose of heart” in Acts 11:23, a firm purpose and resolve in which man persists and to which he adheres. Hence the expressions: “that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord,” Acts 11:23 and Acts 27:13: “they had obtained their purpose.” And so according to this “a purpose of God” (πρόθεσις τοῦ θεοῦ) is an act of God’s will, a resolve of God that is based in His free will, and a resolve to which God holds firm, which He must of necessity fulfill. What God has resolved to do, what he has decided to do, one always sees from the context of the discourse.

“Πρόθεσις” by itself, without any qualification, means “purpose,” a free and firm purpose of God—nothing more. In four passages of Scripture, however, this word serves, as the context clearly indicates, to describe the eternal election of God. In Ephesians 1:11 we read: “in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose (πρόθεσιν) of Him who worketh all things.” Dealt with is the purpose of predestination. It is the purpose of God who effects and carries out all things, therefore, a purpose that stands firm. In Romans 8:28 the apostle says: “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose.” True Christians, who love God, should know that they are not called by accident but according to a purpose within God. This purpose is explained more fully in v. 29 by the words “foreknow,” “predestine” (προέγνω, προώρισε). This foreknowledge of God is therefore a definite, firm, deliberate purpose and resolve on God’s part. It reads in Romans 9:11: so that the purpose of God according to election might stand. Meant is a purpose that occurs by choice, in such a way that thereby a choice, an election occurs. The eternal election of God is a purpose that remains and endures. In 2 Timothy 1:9 the purpose of God is defined as the purpose of eternal election and predestination. God has chosen us beforehand, had made us His own, has foreordained us to eternal life. He has resolved to do it and has so established it with himself. This is the Christians’ comfort.

We see that the Holy Spirit takes great pains in presenting this wonderful mystery of predestination. He piles up the expressions and selects the most diverse of terms in order to place into its proper light that eternal act of God. In this way He makes us positively sure that there exists a definite, firm decree and act of God’s will in which believers should take comfort. God has chosen, discerned beforehand, predestined, resolved—upon what God has determined and done rests our salvation; what God has determined and done excludes any participation on man’s

⁹ [Ed.:] The original German has: “welche gesetzt, geordnet, verordnet waren zum ewigen Leben” (“which are set, ordered, ordained for eternal life”).

part, excludes all consideration of man's conduct. We see also that the Formula of Concord (FC SD XI.24) by repeating the expressions that explain that act of God's will places God's purpose, predestination, election, and ordination to salvation side by side, according to content and form it follows Scripture and is in agreement with the Word of God.

Thesis 3.

Holy Scripture teaches that God has chosen and predestined us “to salvation,” “to eternal life,” “to the praise of the glory of His grace,” 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:6,12,13.

We have already spoken about the “election to eternal life.” It is inconceivable to think and give account of the eternal act of God without this qualification. For the sake of clarity and completeness we call special attention to the final determination of purpose and goal. Saint Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:13: “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.” The word “salvation (ἡ σωτηρία) in the New Testament, when not limited by the context, consistently designates future salvation, future consummation. Acts 13:48 speaks of the ordination to eternal life: *τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*: “as many as were ordained to eternal life.” Even though not expressly stated that we already possess eternal life, this term refers to the future, blessed life. In Ephesians 1:6,12 the final goal of election and predestination is described thus: “To the praise of the glory of His grace”; “that we should be to the praise of His glory.” We must take these words here exactly as they read. The praise of the grace and glory of God is that which begins in time and continues into all eternity. That the apostle especially reflects also upon the praise of eternity is shown in the context of vv. 12,13. This is Saint Paul's train of thought: we have been predestined so that we should be to the praise of His glory; first of all, we believers out of Israel, who first trusted in Christ; but then also you Gentiles, you who have heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation. As you yourselves are predestined to the praise of glory, therefore to eternal glory, so also have you now in time heard the Gospel through which you will be saved. According to Scripture we are chosen, ordained from the beginning to eternal life and glory.

And so the Formula of Concord is right when it stresses repeatedly in Article XI that our salvation is so firmly founded upon this eternal plan of election that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. If we are chosen to salvation it follows, as the Formula says, that election is also a cause of our salvation.

Here is also in place to take a closer look at the application of the word “predestine (*προορίζειν*) in Romans 8:29: “he did predestine them to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Most older exegetes understand these words with Calov to speak of the communion of suffering and glory: “God predestined those to be conformed to the image of His Son, not only with regard to suffering but also with regard to glory.” Thereby they place the emphasis upon the latter term “glory.” Others and almost all the modern exegetes refer the sameness between the elect and the Son of God exclusively to future glory.

Carefully examining the words of Saint Paul, one cannot help but agree with the latter interpretation. The main thought of the entire section, vv. 18-30, is the *μέλλουσα δόξα*: “the glory which shall be revealed in us”; the *ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις*: “the redemption of our body,” v. 23. The apostle comforts suffering Christians with future glory. Then he says in v. 29 that Christians

have been predestined thereto. Further, it is to be noted that the glorification (the *δοξάζειν*) is the final element in God's activity in time, v. 30. This temporal activity is in harmony with God's eternal predestination. So one expects that the glory will in the same way be indicated as the purpose and goal of God's predestination, v. 29.

However, the above words are placed in their proper perspective by means of the following passages. In 1 Corinthians 15:49 Paul says that in the resurrection "we shall bear the image of the heavenly"; in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that we shall be "changed into the same image from glory to glory"; in Philippians 3:21 that our body will be "fashioned like unto His glorious body." In 1 John 3:2 it reads: "we shall be like him," namely, at that time in glory. Where Christ elsewhere is called the "firstborn," Colossians 1:18, Hebrews 1:6, there He appears as the resurrected, as the glorified Son of God. Parallel to "firstborn" is the word "firstfruits" in 1 Corinthians 15:20. Christ is the Firstborn, the Firstfruit of the dead, gloriously proven through the resurrection to be the Son of God. As newborn sons we shall share in His resurrection and divine glory.

We therefore move entirely within the thought limits of Holy Scripture when we in our passage, Romans 8:29, identify the likeness and sameness of elect Christians with Christ, the Son of God, with the future glory. Hofmann remarks correctly: "Since the apostle is speaking of the final goal of God's ways, that image of the Son of God, like unto which we shall be fashioned, is not that of the earthly ... but that of the consummated in heaven. But then not the image of his outer self or that of his inner self but both." According to body and soul we shall be formed like the Son of God. An essential part of the glory promised in vv. 18-30 is the *ἀπολύτρωσις τοῦ σώματος*: "the redemption of the body." We, therefore, according to Scripture say that we are predestined to glory, to the fellowship of the glory of Christ.

Thesis 4.

Holy Scripture teaches that God has chosen us to salvation "before the foundation of the world," "before the world began," "from the beginning"; therefore, from eternity, Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

That the election of God is an eternal act on the part of God has often been stated. It is the characteristic of this activity of God that it reaches back into eternity. We refer expressly to the passages of Scripture which clearly and distinctly testify that God has chosen us in eternity and predestined us to salvation. When the apostle says in Ephesians 1:4: God has chosen us "before the foundation of the world"; in 2 Timothy 1:9: God has called us according to His purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus "before the world began"; in 2 Thessalonians 2:13: God has chosen us to salvation "from the beginning," he teaches in unequivocal terms that it is an eternal act and resolution of God's will, upon which rests our salvation, and comforts Christians with this eternal, immovable foundation of their salvation.

Thesis 5.

Holy Scripture designates as the motive for election God's good pleasure and the merit of Christ. It says that we are chosen "according to the counsel and good pleasure of

God,” Ephesians 1:5,11, and that we are chosen “through Christ,” “in Christ Jesus,” which means for Christ’s sake, Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9. Thus all consideration of man’s conduct is excluded, 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 9:11,12.

God has from eternity chosen us to salvation. This election has its basis, on the one hand, in God’s good pleasure; on the other hand, in the merit of Christ. The former is, one may say, the motivating cause, the latter the meritorious cause. Scripture testifies that God has chosen and predestined us “according to the good pleasure of His will,” Ephesians 1:5, or, as it reads in Ephesians 1:11: “after the counsel of His own will.” “After (κατά), as often, the basis. “Counsel” (βουλή) and “good pleasure” (εὐδοκία) are synonyms. The first word is general; in “good pleasure” two concepts come face to face; it designates a firm resolve, at the same time a gracious resolve of God. It is the Latin *beneplacitum*. Pertinently Luther translates “good pleasure.” Harless explains correctly, “according to the benevolent resolve of His will.”

The apostle wishes to say that God, when He chose us, took counsel solely within Himself, determined Himself to save us, that it was a mysterious, but at the same time a good, gracious will of God. God has chosen us—according to the counsel and good pleasure of His will. That’s what Scripture says. By that, at the same time, it forbids further reflection and inquiry. This is the last step to which the Word of revelation leads us. When we ask why God has chosen us, precisely us who are no better than others, we should know: it so pleased God. All further questions and answers are harmful. This “good pleasure” of God is, as it were, a bottomless sea, the bottom of which we are unable to see, but an inexhaustible sea of grace and love on the part of God. When we sink ourselves into it, really take to heart the great mercy which we have come to experience, then all impertinent questions, such as whether it were not unjust that God has chosen us before others, etc., fade and die away.

At the same time, however, Scripture teaches that God has chosen us in Christ, Ephesians 1:4: “according as He hath chosen us in Him (in Christ) before the foundation of the world” (καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου). The meaning of the ἐν αὐτῷ (“in him,” “in Christ”) depends upon to what you connect it. Is it to be taken together with the word (ἡμᾶς) “us”? Does it say: He has chosen us, us who are in Christ? That is the way many dogmatists have taken it and with this explanation substantiated their contention that God has chosen in view of the faith He foresaw. It is linguistically impossible to connect “in him” (ἐν αὐτῷ) with “us” (ἡμᾶς). The Greek in this case would have had to be written: “ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ” or “ἐν αὐτῷ ὄντας.” No one would understand the words: “God has chosen us in Christ” in this way: “God has chosen us, us who are in Christ.”

How the apostle expresses himself when he wants to render the thought that we, that Christians are in Christ, he shows, for example, in Romans 8:1: Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, literally, “There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Since not a single word points to a relation of “in him” (ἐν αὐτῷ) to the object “us” (ἡμᾶς), so “in him” can only be considered as a modification of the statement made in the sentence, of the predicate, “ἐξελέξατο,” “has chosen.” Not “we are or were in Christ” but “God has chosen us in Christ”; the election has occurred in Christ. Then according to common Greek usage this says that the election is mediated through Christ. Luther has correctly explained as he translated: “as he has then chosen us through the same.”

All New Testament lexicographers¹⁰ show how the Greek particle ἐν is used in biblical, as well as in classical, Greek in the meaning of “through, by means of” in various connections. It is really unnecessary to draw attention to such modes of expression as : “He casteth out devils through (ἐν) the prince of the devils,” Matthew 9:34; Acts 17:31: “He will judge the world in righteousness by (ἐν) that man whom He hath ordained”; Colossians 1:16: “By (ἐν) Him (Christ) were all things created”; Galatians 3:8: “In (ἐν) thee shall all nations be blessed” can only mean: “in you, Abraham, that is, through you, through your intercession, inasmuch as Christ should come forth from your seed, all Gentiles will be blessed. In the same sentence immediately before the words “according as He hath chosen us in, through him” are found the words “in or through Christ” in the same sense: “who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings ... through Christ.” The election, however, is mediated through Christ inasmuch as Christ through His redemption, through His merit, has actually made it possible for God to chose sinful men. God could not have chosen and predestined in eternity a single sinner to salvation had He not already in eternity had His eyes upon Christ, the Redeemer.

The decree of redemption, of course, logically precedes the decree of election. Christ, the Redeemer, is the meritorious cause of God’s election. “God has chosen us in Christ, through Christ” means as much as: “God has chosen us in Christ, through Christ” means as much as: “God has chosen us for Christ’s sake.” So comment nearly all modern exegetes. Meyer says: “It has its basis in Christ that elective grace chose us.” Harless: “The basis of election lies not in us but in Christ.” We are chosen in Christ, through Christ, for the sake of Christ. That is what Saint Paul says and teaches nothing more.

When one adds to “in Christ” “insofar as the same is ours through faith, insofar as God has foreseen faith in Christ,” this addition is not well documented, just as little as is the exegesis: “us, us who are in Christ,” which adds a thought not revealed in Scripture. One violates the text and tempers the clear statements of the Holy Spirit with human opinion if he attempts to infer from Scripture and to substantiate this theory of the foreseeing of faith. Neither in the present passage nor elsewhere does Scripture say a word¹¹ about it.

Of course, according to Scripture, faith is included inside the ordering of election rightly understood.¹² In the discussion of the sixth and seventh theses we shall see that God has included faith in that eternal decree of election, that he, since He chose us to salvation, has determined at the same time to save us through faith, in no other way, to bring us to saving faith. Only after discussion of the latter theses shall we completely understand that blessed mystery of eternity, so far as Scripture records the same. We guard against the exclusion of faith from the eternal election and predestination of God, but we deny that Scripture conceives faith as having been foreseen and as a requirement before election. That is and remains a human thought against which the wording of Scripture militates. In the passage just discussed, Ephesians 1:4, only one thing and no other is said: we are chosen through Christ.

Nothing different is said by the identical passage, 2 Timothy 1:9: κατ’ ἰδίαν πρόθεσιν καὶ χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων, “according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Spoken of here is the grace of the resolve, of the election, that it was given us before the world began and that it was given us in Christ Jesus. As the second modification: “before the world began,” so the first “in Christ Jesus”

¹⁰ “See Grimm, p. 143, etc., Schierlitz, p. 100, also Winer, *Neutestamentl. Sprachidiom*, p. 347.

¹¹ [Ed.:] German: “Wörtlein.”

¹² [Ed.:] German: “Freilich gehört der Glaube nach der Schrift in die Wahlordnung—das Wort recht verstanden—hinein.”

belongs to the predicate “which was given us.” The awarding of this grace in eternity occurred in Christ, was mediated through Christ. When God awarded us this grace in eternity, He had set His eyes upon Christ, since otherwise His viewing of our sin and unworthiness would have prevented Him from granting us this grace.

When Scripture simply declares God’s good pleasure and Christ’s merit to be the motive for election, it thus excludes all consideration of man’s conduct. Moreover, that’s exactly what it does. In 2 Timothy 1:9 are the words “not according to our works,” the antithesis to purpose and to eternal grace. And when Saint Paul in Romans 9:11,12, obviously with emphasis, advances this negative note: “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to the election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth: it was said unto her, ‘The elder shall serve the younger,’ ” he wants to show in God’s attitude towards Jacob that all consideration of any conduct on man’s part is to be kept at a distance from the purpose of God’s election. Not only good works in the narrower, dogmatic sense of the word, the good works that flow out of the disposition, but every good thing that was to be found in Jacob, even the faith he evidenced in all his activity, the apostle excludes from the purpose that God conceived beforehand. It was an independent resolution of God, in no way determined by any conduct on man’s part, that the elder should serve the younger. It would be going too far were we to go deeper into this matter, in itself not vague but yet a passage obscured through much exposition and interpretation.

For our purpose we emphasize that God in the plan of election was not influenced by any conduct on man’s part nor did he allow it to have a voice in the matter. He desires all the glory. We should not rob Him of it nor detract from it by twisting and censuring His eternal truth and wisdom with our finite, foolish reasoning!

Thesis 6.

Holy Scripture teaches that God, since He predestined us to salvation, at the same time provided us with the ways and means to salvation, that He at the same time has resolved to sanctify us through Word and Spirit, to make us His children; that we are chosen “in¹³ sanctification of the Spirit,” “in belief of the truth,” “unto the adoption of children to himself,” unto obedience (faith) and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,” 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:1,2.

This thesis shows how Scripture settles the weighty, much-discussed question concerning the relationship of faith to election. We have seen that Scripture does not at all support the opinion that foreseen faith was a necessary condition and prerequisite of God’s act of election. Scripture rather, by describing the election or predestination of God as a free act of God’s will, based in God himself, in Christ, excludes all consideration of man’s conduct. Scripture, however, also contains positive statements (in the three passages quoted) concerning the place that man’s faith occupies in election.

We consider next 2 Thessalonians 2:13. We deal with the interpretation of the modification beginning with the word “in” (ἐν). The other parts of this sentence were clearly

¹³ Translator Koehlinger’s note: the author will show that “in” is a more accurate translation for the Greek “ἐν” than the “through” found in the King James Version.

presented in the preceding discussion. Saint Paul says: “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (εἰλετο ὑμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος καὶ πίστει ἀληθείας).

The first question to settle is this: what is meant by the expressions “sanctification of the Spirit” and “belief of the truth”? The context of the expression “sanctification of the Spirit,” its being combined with “belief” (πίστις), clearly prohibits the interpretation “sanctification in the narrower sense,” “sanctification of life,” sanctification in the dogmatic sense as result of faith.

What the expression means to say in such connection we glean from the usage of the word “ἅγιοι” (saints) in the sense of “Christians,” “believers.” Where the apostle addresses Christians as “saints and believers,” Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:2; as “called saints,” 1 Corinthians 1:2, Romans 1:7; where he otherwise simply calls them “saints,” Revelation 13:10: “Here is the patience and the faith of the saints”; Acts 9:13: “The saints of God”; Ephesians 2:19: “fellow citizens with the saints”; and in many other passages, there he by this term refers to the Christian estate as such. The “saints”—they are the Christians, the believers. That is, Christians go by this name as such who are selected out of the world and set apart for God, who belong to God.

Accordingly, “ἁγιασμὸς” (sanctification) signifies an activity of God by virtue of which He selects definite individuals from the world and places them into a relationship to himself, that is, makes them Christians, believers. In our passage this activity is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. And as in the combinations cited above “saints and believers,” “faith of the saints” (ἅγιοι καὶ πίστοι, πίστις τῶν ἁγίων), so here the concept “sanctification of the Spirit” (ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος), the sanctification which the Holy Spirit works, is modified by the concept “faith” or “belief” (πίστις or πίστις ἀληθείας) in the revealed truth, the Gospel.”

The meaning is this: it is the Holy Spirit who has set you apart from the world and has “consecrated” you to God—and this occurred by your believing the Gospel. Through faith the Holy Spirit has consecrated and sanctified you to God. “Sanctification of the Spirit” and “belief of the truth” both designated the relationship, the same disposition of man, the former as disposition wrought and established by the Holy Spirit, therefore according to its origin: the latter according to its essence and content, as acceptance of the Gospel. Thus, Chrysostom interpreted these words: “He mentions sanctification of the Spirit first in order to point out that we would not have believed had not the grace of the Holy Spirit sanctified us.”

The second question is: “What is the relationship of both expressions to the previous statement? What is the meaning of the preposition “in” (ἐν) and with what word is it connected?

Connecting “in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” with “salvation” contradicts all feel for the correct idiom. This would be a strange sentence and interpretation: God has chosen you to salvation which consists in the sanctification of the Spirit and in belief of the truth. Where in the context “salvation” (σωτηρίαν) is not expressly characterized as a temporal blessing, there it points to the future, consummate well-being which we call: “salvation,” “eternal salvation.” “To salvation” indicates purpose, modifying the predicate “hath chosen” (εἰλετο). And it is to this predicate as the main concept, to the concept “God hath chosen you to salvation” that the modification “in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” is undoubtedly affixed.

But what is the connection between this modification and the leading concept? One could be inclined to take the preposition “in” (ἐν) in the sense of “to” and appeal to the usage in classical and Biblical Greek, according to which the Greek uses the preposition with verbs

involving motion since it presents the subject matter already latent to the goal. Nevertheless, noted linguists, as Winer and Hofmann, dispute this usage of “in” in the New Testament Greek, especially with non-physical concepts and also do not allow 1 Thessalonians 4:7 (“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but in holiness,” οὐ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ ἀλλ’ ἐν ἁγιασμῷ) to serve as proof. But granted that in the latter passage “holiness” is being considered as the goal in which the “calling” came to rest, from this no firm conclusion can be drawn for the meaning “in” in our passage. For not once does “αἰρεῖσθαι” (choose), as perhaps does “κάλειν” (call), imply the concept of a movement, but then in 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14 the apostle expressly separates and makes distinction between the particles” εἰς-ἐν-εἰς: εἰς σωτηρίαν, ἐν ἁγιασμῷ, εἰς ὃ ἐκάλεσεν (to salvation – through salvation – whereunto He called, etc.). Therefore, we are on the safer side if we reject the interpretation “to sanctification of the Spirit and to belief of the truth.”

More decisively we repudiate the explanation offered by Luenemann and some older exegetes: “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” For it would be a very awkward thought to conceive of faith as being a subjective conduct of man, as a means of election, an act of God.

On the other hand, we have an appropriate modification of “hath chosen you to salvation” if we take “in sanctification of the Spirit” (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος) as designation of the manner in which God has chosen. The preposition “ἐν” very often points out the accompanying circumstances, the manner in which something occurs. Thus Saint Paul says in Romans 15:29: “I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing (ἐν πληρώματι εὐλογίας) of the Gospel of Christ”; I shall so come that I shall bring with me the full blessing of the Gospel. In 1 Corinthians 2:7 the apostle speaks of himself and of his co-workers in the Gospel: “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery (ἐν μυστηρίῳ),” that is: we speak the wisdom of God in that we proclaim to you mysteries; we preach God’s wisdom in the form of mysteries. In 1 Timothy 2:7 the apostle calls himself “a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity (ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀληθείᾳ),” that is: a teacher of the Gentiles who fulfills the duties of his teaching ministry in faithfulness and truth, faithfully and truly. In Acts 17:31 it reads that God will judge the world in righteousness (ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ), in a just way, Colossians 4:5: “Walk wisely (ἐν σοφίᾳ) toward them that are without.” Here belong the phrases: “in truth” (ἐν ἀληθείᾳ), that is, truthfully, Matthew 22:16; “by craft” (ἐν δόλῳ), that is, with craft, craftily, Mark 14:1; “in secret” (ἐν κρυπτῷ), secretly, not publicly, John 7:10; “in glory” (ἐν δόξῃ), gloriously, Philippians 4:19; “in figure” (ἐν παραβολῇ), symbolically, Hebrews 11:19, etc.

It is also to be noted that in the original Greek in all these phrases the article is lacking. Accordingly, we explain the articleless¹⁴ “in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” in our passage this way: God has chosen you to salvation in the way that He at the same time included sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Since the choosing to salvation dates back to “from the beginning,” to eternity, so also “sanctification of the Spirit” and “belief of the truth” are part of the eternal counsel of God. Sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, or in short: faith worked by the Holy Spirit is according to the clear teaching of Scripture the ways and means, the prerequisite of salvation. Therefore, in that God, this is what the apostle is saying, conceived the eternal decree of election to salvation, He did this by also including faith,

¹⁴ [Ed.:] The word in Stoeckhardt’s original text is “artikkellose” (*Lehre und Wehre* XXVI (1880), 234). A good English word that does not need to be coined as the word “articleless” is “anarthrous.” The latter word is often used in Greek lexica and grammars.

including therefore the way and means to salvation into that eternal act of His will. In that God predestined you to salvation, He at the same time resolved to sanctify you through the Holy Spirit and to lead you to faith in the Gospel. God has chosen the elect on the way of faith and sanctification of the Spirit, as it were, *via et ratione fidei*.¹⁵ He has resolved concerning you (for “hath chosen” - εἰλετο – designates a resolve on the part of God): you will one day be saved, namely, you will beforehand be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, will be set apart from the world, will be dedicated to God, will come to belief of the truth; or simply: you will be saved by the operation of the Holy Spirit and by faith.

The meaning of our passage cannot be rendered more to the point and clearer than by means of the familiar words of the Formula of Concord (FC SD XI.23): “God has in grace considered and chosen to salvation each and every person of the elect who are to be saved through Christ, also ordained that in the way just mentioned He will, by his grace, gifts, and efficacy, bring them thereto (make them participants of eternal salvation), aid, promote, strengthen, and preserve them.”

It is in perfect harmony with Scripture when we say that God in and with election at the same time established the mode of election; He made an agreement with Himself: such and such persons will be saved, namely, by sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. It is all the same, only considered from another viewpoint, when faith is taken as the aim and purpose of God’s election and predestination. It is the same whether one says: God has resolved to save each and every person of the elect by faith, or: God has predestined each and every person of the elect to faith and to salvation. In this case faith appears as the intermediate end, salvation as the ultimate end of God’s election. The latter mode of expression we find in Ephesians 1:5 and 1 Peter 1:2.

The apostle says in Ephesians 1:5: “and has predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself (namely, to God).” This sentence is a modification of the preceding clause “according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.” As stated above the words “he hath chosen us” designate the same act of God’s will as do the words “having predestined us.” From v. 5 on details are given concerning the aim and purpose of God’s election or predestination. We are chosen to the adoption of children and then to the praise of God’s glorious grace. The latter concept was mentioned already in Thesis 3. What does the statement “God has predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself” mean? “Adoption of children” means: acceptance as children, filiation, and then the filial relationship established by adoption. This concept and none other lies in the word.

Only in one other passage of the New Testament, Romans 8:23: “We wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” does this noun acquire from the context and exclusively from the context, the meaning of “filial legacy.” In all other passages in which similar modifications are lacking, as in Romans 8:21-25, “adoption” designates the filial relationship in which the believers now stand with respect to God. In the words “to whom pertaineth the adoption,” Romans 9:4, the filial relationship of Israel to God is discussed. Romans 8:15 reads: “Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, ‘Abba Father.’ ” Here Saint Paul clearly describes the filial relationship of Christians to God occurring in conversion to Christ. Since the Holy Spirit, whom we have received, teaches us to pray, “Abba, Father,” for that reason He is called the Spirit of Adoption, who established this filial relationship by virtue of which we call God Father. Saint Paul expresses the same thoughts in Galatian 4:5,6. He says that God sent His Son into the world in order “that we might receive the

¹⁵ [Ed.:] “by way and reason of faith.”

adoption of sons.” And this adoption, which at the same time is designated to be the fruit of deliverance from the Law, he concludes from the fact that we, moved by the Spirit of God, cry, “Abba, Father.”

In Ephesians 1:5, wholly by means of the phrase “to himself,” the meaning “filial relationship towards God” is established without question. This is what the apostle means, interpreted by all modern exegetes and demanded by the text and the context: God has beforehand determined that we through Christ would be His children, and this adoption forms a part, just like the walking before Him blamelessly in love, v. 4b, of the spiritual blessings Saint Paul views in v. 3. God’s eternal counsel of love was that He Himself determined that we should thereafter in time become His children and in time and in eternity be to the praise of His grace and glory.

Upon these words of Saint Paul: “God has predestined us unto the adoption of children” the Formula of Concord also places great importance, e.g. in Formula of Concord, article XI (FC SD XI.5), and explains the same very correctly in FC SD XI.24 by stating that it is speaking of “the eternal election of God to adoption.”

Yes, by eternal election God has intended that the elect, that we should come to stand before Him as His dearly beloved children. And this intent of God’s love is now realized when we in spirit cry, “Abba, Father.” However, included in the concept “adoption of children by Jesus Christ to God” is the concept “faith.”

It is canon of Scripture: “You are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.” We become children of God in and by faith. It is therefore in accordance with Scripture to say: God has predestined us to faith. He has ordained it that we through faith in Christ become His children.

Further, a holy life in love is the necessary result of faith and the adoption of children. For that reason the apostle adds into the context of his discourse these words: “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,” v. 4b. God has chosen us to the goal that we should be holy and blameless before God in love. When He chose us, God at the same time determined to bring us to salvation through faith, through justification.

What we conclude from Ephesians 1:5, that God, while ordaining us to adoption, also ordained us to faith, we find clearly expressed in 1 Peter 1:1,2. In this passage the apostle addresses the Christians as elect strangers and completes the concept “elect” by means of three modifications: “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” “through sanctification of the Spirit,” “unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” The first of these modifications was mentioned in Thesis 2, the second clarified in the discussion to 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

The apostle wishes to say: since it was God who beforehand made you His own, you are chosen in this way that God through the Holy Spirit resolved to sanctify you—and now to that the apostle adds: “unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” To that you are chosen. That was what God intended by His election.

With the expression “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, with the blood of Jesus Christ” is meant “the bestowal of the atonement wrought by Christ” (Cremer) or justification. God justifies us in that He sprinkles us with the blood of His Son, dispenses to us His bloody merit.

However, it is impossible for “obedience” in this connection, placed ahead of “sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ,” to designate the obedience of life that is first result of justification. That the word “obedience” is in many passages of the New Testament used in the

pregnant sense of “faith,” “obedience of faith,” and that this meaning alone fits the context in our passage is now generally acknowledged. Thus we find expressly added to the word “obedience” the epexegetical genitive “of faith” (τῆς πίστεως) in Romans 1:5, 16:26, “obedience of faith.” Similarly Acts 6:7: “They were obedient to the faith.” In other passages the expression “obedience” or “to be obedient” appears in this sense in connection with the appropriate object. We read in Romans 6:17: “Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you,” that is, you have accepted this doctrine in faith. In Romans 10:16 the apostle reprimands the Jews because “they have not all obeyed (that is, have not all believed) the Gospel.” He strengthens this reproach with the quotation from the prophet Isaiah: “Lord, who hat believed our report?” Similarly we find joined to the verb “to obey” the object “the Gospel, the word, Christ”: 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 3:14, Hebrews 5:9. In 1 Peter 1:22 Saint Paul calls faith “obeying the truth.” We learn from these expressions that in these instances faith is thought of as a yielding, as submission to the Gospel of Christ, to the proclaimed Word. Further, however, the word “obedience,” similarly as the word “faith,” in connection with which an object was originally supplied, is used without the addition of an object, in the sense of “faith,” “obedience of faith.” In Romans 15:18 the apostle speaks of what Christ has wrought through him, through his ministry, that is, the obedience, the faith, the conversion of the Gentiles, so that He might move the Gentiles to the obedience of faith. Meyer: “namely, through acceptance of faith in him.” In Romans 16:19 Saint Paul commends the Roman Christians for “your obedience (that is, your obedience of faith) is come abroad unto all men.” Compare the parallel passage in 1 Thessalonians 1:8: “In every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.” Reliable exegetes take the word “obedience” also in 2 Corinthians 7:15, 10:6 as “obedience of faith.”

This well-substantiated meaning is, as we see, the only one that fits into the context of 1 Peter 1:1,2. Faith and justification are concepts that belong closely together. So the apostle teaches in clear distinct words that we are chosen to faith and to justification. Luther gives the same explanation in his exposition of 1 Peter. He says: “It is faith that makes us obedient and subject to Christ and His Word. Therefore, to be under the Word of God, under Christ, and to be sprinkled with His blood is the same as to believe” (Erlangen Ausgabe 51,331). “You are chosen by God ... that you should from now on be obedient to, and believe in, the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (Erlangen Ausgabe 52,7).

Scripture, therefore, defines and expresses in clear words the relationship of faith to election. Through the passages presented the canon that radiates throughout all of Scripture is not disputed but rather confirmed that God will save no one who does not have faith. That faith is in some way or other to be taken as the instrumental cause, or as the condition, as the requirement of election, is not implied by a single word of Scripture. It knows nothing of a foreseeing of faith as basis or foundation for the predestining will of God. The assumption that God at the very outset had foreseen faith and then predestined to salvation those very ones whom He had foreseen as believing rather contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture. Scripture places faith and salvation on the same level and makes both dependent upon election.

According to Scripture faith appears either as the essential object of election (God has in eternal election destined, intended faith for us, just as He did salvation; God has chosen us to salvation by including faith in this act of election); or, what amounts really to the same thing, as the aim and purpose of election (God has chosen us to the obedience of faith, to the adoption of children and justification). This determination of purpose is an integral part of the election and predestination of God. The determination of goal, “to faith, to adoption of children, to salvation,” completes the concept of election, makes out of the concept “to select,” “to predestine,” out of an

abstract a concrete concept. We could know or envisage nothing of the mystery of God's eternal election, of the election of definite persons, were we not to know whereto we are chosen, to know that God has determined about us. However, now that we know from God's Word that God has from eternity according to His incomprehensible good pleasure for Christ's sake chosen us to the adoption of children and to salvation, has resolved to make us believing, dearly beloved children and heirs of His eternal glory, we rejoice in this blessed mystery. So closely are the concepts "faith," "adoption," "salvation" linked together in the Scriptural presentation of the doctrine of predestination that they appear as the uniform goal of that wonderful will and pleasure of God.

According to and with Scripture the Formula of Concord in Article XI lays all emphasis upon this whole concept of election. It defines election as election to "adoption and to eternal life," (FC SD XI.24), and repeatedly stresses that God chose each and every person of the elect not just to salvation but also ordained them to the adoption, has predestined them to the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel (FC SD XI.5,23); that God in eternity deliberated concerning our conversion, righteousness, salvation, which, therefore, lie on the same plane and, so, in the same way are object and aim of God's decree of election (FC SD XI.45).

With Scripture and Confession, therefore, we include faith, conversion, righteousness as being ordained for us along with salvation, as included in the decree of election. We reject the statement that faith as being merely something foreknown precedes God's will and act of election.

Thesis 7.

And so Holy Scripture testifies that God in time then "calls," "justifies," and finally "glorifies" those "whom He did foreknow"; that those who have been chosen from eternity will as a result of election come to faith and through faith be preserved to eternal life. According to Scripture, therefore, God's eternal election is a cause for our call and conversion, for our faith and our salvation. Romans 8:28-30, 1 Peter 1:1,2,5, Ephesians 1:3,4.

In previous theses we have in agreement with the teaching of Scripture completely presented the wonderful decree of election according to all aspects. The present thesis, dealing with what God does in time to the elect, offers nothing new relative to that eternal counsel. But when we examine the passages in which predestination is taught we perceive that Scripture, since it presents the eternal counsel and purpose of God, at the same time makes mention of its realization in time. It points Christians to the comforting fact that God here in time unfailingly carries out in them and will in eternity accomplish completely what He in eternity determined with respect to them. It confirms that it cannot be otherwise than that God, since He has chosen us, must for that very reason accomplish His decree in us. It also pursues the thought within this mystery of election: His counsel is marvellous, and He accomplishes it in a glorious way. And we learn all the more to praise the eternal love, and grace that have chosen us when we realize how faithfully and carefully God here in time accomplishes His designs on the elect.

Thesis 6 showed that God has predestined us to faith, to adoption, to justification; that God, since He predestined us in eternity to eternal life, at the same time resolved to sanctify us in time through His Spirit and to bring us to faith and so through faith to lead us to salvation. From

that follows of itself that God, when He now in time sanctifies us, calls us, converts, that is, brings us to faith, justifies us through His Spirit, He thus carries out the decree of predestination; that our calling, conversion, justification, just as our salvation, are a necessary result of our election, are grounded in the latter.

Thesis 7 is the obvious result of Thesis 6. But Scripture also teaches in explicit terms what of itself follows from predestination to faith, to adoption, that our calling, conversion, justification, our salvation all follow and flow from eternal election. It saves us the trouble of making any conclusions on our own regarding this wonderful mystery. It draws these necessary conclusions itself. Already in the statement: “God has chosen you to salvation” is given, according to the analogy of Scripture, the other statement: “God has, therefore, also chosen us to faith.” For He refuses to save anyone without faith.

However, Scripture does not leave it to us to conclude and render this judgment on our own but declares so itself. From the statement: “God has chosen us to faith” once more of necessity follows the third statement: “therefore, the steadfast faith in which we stand is the result of election.” For it is precisely an election to faith. But here too Scripture renders contemplation on our part unnecessary and testifies, expressly and emphatically, that eternal election is the source from which flow the faith and salvation of the elect. In the passages quoted above we shall see these thoughts realized.

Holy Scripture, therefore, gives us—this remark by way of passing—a meaningful suggestion that in the exposition of the doctrine of election we should guard against drawing our own conclusions, even obviously correct conclusions, and hold simply and alone to the words and thoughts which the Holy Spirit has inspired.

The statements of the Formula of Concord that are relevant in this thesis are clear. The statement: “the eternal election ... is also, from the gracious will and pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause which procures, works, helps, and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto” (FC SD XI.38), in conjunction with the other: “thus, this doctrine affords also the excellent, glorious consolation that God was so greatly concerned about the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian, and so faithfully purposed it that before the foundation of the world was laid, He deliberated concerning it, and in His purpose ordained how He would bring me thereto, and preserve me therein” (FC SD XI.45), says exactly what our thesis says. We shall now come to see that this statement of our Lutheran Confessions is taken from the Word of eternal truth.

It was said above, prior to the consideration of the individual theses,¹⁶ that a complete clarification of the individual passages of Scripture dealing with the doctrine of predestination would according to its content and context result from our presentation. Now after the treatment of Thesis 7, where we have shown the relationship of God’s election to all that God in time does to the elect, we have reason to draw together into a nutshell, as it were, all the remarks scattered

¹⁶ [Ed.:] The page given was page 182 in the June, 1880 issue. See page 7 above. The relevant paragraph reads with emphasis added: “The Scripture proof can be presented in two ways, either by explaining one passage of Scripture after the other, each passage equally and fully according to all the individual elements and according to the context, or in the way that was done in the above theses, that one lift concept after concept out of the complex of the relevant Scripture sections. The latter method appears more advantageous and more appropriate for the reason that it is precisely in this teaching that we recognize the Scripture truth from the comparison and cohesion of different, parallel Scriptural statements. **What is and remains desirable under all circumstances is that all individual passages should be fully considered in terms of their content and context and that the reader should then be aware of the result of our exposition.** The whole thing appears clearer and more transparent if one has previously, carefully examined the individual parts.”

through the preceding theses relative to the individual expressions and statements and to assess the classic passages of this doctrine in context.

To begin with, we consider Romans 8:28-30 once more. In verse 29 Paul speaks of what God resolved in eternity concerning certain individuals: those whom He foreknew, whom He acknowledged as His own, them He also predestined to share in the glory of Jesus Christ—and in verse 30 of what God then in time has done to these very same individuals: He has called, justified, glorified them. First, we must explain the relationship of these two statements to each other.

The latter statement, verse 30, mentions deeds of God performed upon certain individuals who are closely associated with one another, as links in a chain. The essential form of the statement: οὓς δὲ προώρισε, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσε· καὶ οὓς ἐκάλεσε, τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν· οὓς δὲ ἐδικαίωσε, τούτους καὶ ἐδόξασε: “whom He did predestine, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified” shows that with the one act the other is at the same time also given and established. Those whom God calls, calls effectively, efficaciously through the Gospel, them He pronounces righteous and them He finally glorifies.

The way to salvation is presented here step by step. That God leads these individuals, whom He directs to take the first step, step by step until the very last one is also intimated by the same tense of the three verbs. The apostle says in the aorist tense: “He has called” (ἐκάλεσε), “He has justified” (ἐδικαίωσε), because these acts of God, “calling,” “justification” lie in the past for the Christians to whom he is writing. He reminds the readers of certain, concluded empirical facts. And for that reason he adds the final act, which lies still in the future, namely, that God glorifies the justified, likewise in the aorist tense (ἐδόξασε: “He glorified”) in order to stress the close, essential correlation of the three actions. “Whom He has justified, them He has also (by that He has as good as) glorified,” Meyer.¹⁷ The final consummation and glorification will just as certainly follow justification, as justification followed the calling. Yes, this activity and blessing of God coursing down through time, described in verse 30 reach their fruition and destination first in glory. Calling and justification are setting a course for this final stage: glorification.

And now the apostle takes this three-linked chain and suspends it by its first and topmost link which is, as it were, set into bedrock. He shows that they through God’s acts and blessings in eternity, which course through time and culminate in eternal salvation and glory, have a firm, immovable foundation in that one eternal decree of God. That is the context of verse 29 and verse 30. By means also of the particle “καὶ” (and), which joins together the verbs designating God’s activity in time, the entire concluding statement of verse 30 is connected to the preceding which describes the decree of predestination: οὓς δὲ προώρισε, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσε; “whom God ordained to glory, them He has also called, justified, glorified.” By connecting calling, justification, glorification the three acts are presented as obvious, necessary results of eternal predestination and ordination to eternal life. This is also how the newer exegetes, Meyer,

¹⁷ [Ed.:] Compare Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans*, translated by John C. Moore, Edwin Johnson, and William P. Dickson, in two volumes (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 2:97: “the analogy of the preceding aorists is decisive; but it represents the *de facto* certainly future glorification as so necessary and certain, that it appears as if already given and completed with the ἐδικαίωσεν. “Whom He *has justified*, them He has—viewing the relation from its final aim—therewith *also glorified*.” German edition, page 395: „Welche er *gerechtfertigt hat*, die hat er—das Verhältniss von seinem endlichen Ziel aus betrachtet—damit *auch verherrlicht*“ [“whom He *has justified*, them has He—the relationship considered from its eventual goal—therewith *also glorified*”].

Philippi, Hofmann, understand the conceptual connection. This relationship of cause and effect, indicated by the construction, is by the very nature of the matter with which we are dealing here evident from the course and design of what God resolved in eternity and does in time. God has ordained to glory those whom He foreknew as His own, whom He has chosen for Himself, so that they should be conformed to the image of His Son. And according to that God now also leads these very individuals, His elect, through calling, justification, to glory. God's saving acts with regard to the elect flow from the eternal love that has selected and chosen these persons; and through the ordination to eternal glory the success of this saving work, the final goal of the way to salvation, glorification, is vouchsafed. It is a consistent act on the part of God, which has the elect children as object. It begins in eternity, runs through the time of this world, and ends in eternity. With the beginning—*πρόγνωσις* ("foreknowledge"), *προορισμός εἰς δόξαν* ("predestination to glory")—the middle is also necessary—*καλεῖν* ("calling"), *δικαιοῦν* ("justifying")—and the end—*δοξάζειν* ("glorifying").¹⁸

That the calling, justifying, glorifying of the elect are the result and product of the eternal election and predestination of God we have seen from the relationship of verse 30 to verse 29. This turns out to be correct as we now consider further the entire context, verses 28-30. The statement of verses 29 and 30 proves the contention advanced in verse 28. This proof, however, is valid and effective only when we place verse 29 and verse 30, what is said of God's activities in eternity and of His activities in time, into that aforesaid relationship, into the relationship of cause and effect.

Verse 28 reads: *Οἶδαμεν δὲ, ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν*, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Those who love God are the true Christians. The designation "them that love God" agrees with that other on in Romans 8, conferred deliberately and emphatically upon believing Christians: "the children of God." The apostle considers adoption inseparably tied in with future inheritance, speaks only of such children of God who of a surety obtain future glory. Thus, in complete accord with Scripture the Formula of Concord uses the expressions "children of God" and "God's elect children." By means of future glory the apostle comforts the true children of God who persevere in temptation, under the cross, and who love God. In this context he pays no attention to such Christians who believe only for a time and then deny love to God and fall from adoption. We, we who believe and in faith appropriate to ourselves the comfort of Scripture should according to the desire of the apostle, according to the will of God, regard ourselves as God's elect children and not permit a pall of gloom to be cast over the glorious consolation that Scripture gives us by a side-glance to temporary believers. To the children of God, to those who love God, Saint Paul therefore gives the assurance that all things, therefore, also the sufferings of which he had previously spoken, must serve their best interests. If the expression "all things work together for good" only indicates that all things should turn out to the good, should be beneficial for them, in their present context these words still expressly refer also to the final change for the better, to the change from suffering to glory. We know, so says Paul, and in the name of all true children of God, we are positively convinced that all the misfortune which now plagues us will turn out well in the end, that out of the cross that now presses upon us will come forth a glorious fruit.

¹⁸ [Ed.:] "Along with the beginning the middle and the end are necessary also." „Mit dem Anfang, der *πρόγνωσις* und dem *προορισμός εἰς δόξαν*, ist auch Mitte, das *καλεῖν* und *δικαιοῦν*, und Ende, das *δοξάζειν*, nothwendig gesetzt.“ Rev. Koehlinger rendered it: "With the beginning, with the 'foreknowledge' and the 'predestination to glory' is established what is in the middle, the 'calling' and the 'justifying' and the end, the 'glorifying'."

And now the apostle substantiates what he has said by means of a brief modification, “to them that are called according to his purpose,” which he attaches to the expression “to them that love God.” This added remark only has meaning and purpose if one considers it as basis for the preceding statement. We translate: since they are called according to purpose. God’s true children, whom God lovingly sustains also in temptation, are called according to purpose. That the purpose of election is meant here was pointed out in the discussion to Thesis 2. Even the reference to the purpose of election, which cannot fail, by virtue of which God has firmly concluded their salvation, is able to reassure Christians that the cross will turn out well for them.

Now, however, the apostle expressly adds and emphasizes that they are called according to purpose. This brief remark, taken by itself, is convincing proof for the principal clause of our thesis “that election is cause for our call, conversion,” etc. The word “according” obviously states the basis. The purpose of election is the basis and cause for the calling of those who love God. They are the called according to this purpose, that is, as a result of this purpose. The eternal purpose of election is already, this is the meaning of the apostle, in the process of being realized. Those whom the apostle wishes to comfort are called, are efficaciously called through the Gospel. They indeed stand in faith and love God; and this occurred in them as a result of the eternal purpose whose fulfillment began just with this. The fulfillment of the purpose, as the word “call” attests, is being accomplished. And nothing can hinder this work, not even the cross. Purpose and calling, the eternal resolve of God and the realization of the same already begun in time, guarantee God’s children a blessed end. And from this they should conclude and develop the certainty that even that which appears to be something bad, cross and suffering, is really nothing bad but turns out to be something good, must be useful and beneficial to the already-guaranteed salvation since God’s purpose and call cannot be invalidated.

In that the apostle, beginning with the words “and we know that,” more explicitly confirms the comforting assurance that sufferings work together for good to them that love God, he does not introduce any new thoughts but merely explains and enlarges upon the brief, pregnant sentence: “who are called according to the purpose.” This relationship of the three sentences, verse 28a, verse 28b, verses 29, 30 (verse 28a=declaration; verse 28b=basis; verses 29, 30=explanation of the basis) modern exegetes also have clearly recognized. In verse 29 the apostle describes in detail the eternal purpose, and in verse 30 he completes the description of the realization of the purpose. The calling advances on to justification and glorification. The thought continuity in verses 28-30 is clearly and distinctly seen when we set forth the three parallel qualifications: all things work together for good to them that love God, that is, to salvation, to glory.¹⁹ For God has predestined those whom He foreknew to be in conformity with Christ, that is, has predestined them to glory, and now actually leads them through calling, justification into glory. For “working together for good,” “being conformed unto the image of his Son,” and “being glorified” are actually parallel concepts, one and all pointing to final glory, the main concept of this entire message of consolation. The suffering of the elect children of God serves to their glory. That will be proven. The fact that they are ordained to glory for eternity was already sufficient proof. For what God resolved and what he wishes to do, that must finally achieve its aim and purpose. No power of Satan and hell is able to thwart it.

But now presented also is the other fact that God’s eternal decree of predestination is in the process of being executed, that the calling and justification, which have already occurred, positively and necessarily draw along the glorification that still lies in the future. Everything that God does to the elect children in time, that he calls, justifies them, serves to lead them towards

¹⁹ [Ed.:] The emphasis in this sentence is added by Rev. Koehlinger.

the goal that is ordained for them. From that suffering Christians should conclude that their suffering, which glory seems to contradict, in no way deteriorates as far as they are concerned since God's design and work, which aim at their glorification, cannot be thwarted and impeded since God's eternal purpose stays its course all the way to glorification. Rather should we be certain that cross and suffering are beneficial to salvation, links, as it were, in the great chain of God's eternal and temporal deeds, whose first link is the foreknowledge, whose last link is future glorification. What God has resolved concerning us in eternity redounds to our welfare, to our salvation. What God does to us, the elect, in time for the very same reason also redounds to our welfare, to our salvation. And so also the suffering that deals us a blow here in time is beneficial to our salvation. Everything that God does in time to his children, even though at times it appears bad for us, is result and outflow of the eternal counsel of his love and should and must be conducive to its fulfillment. This is a summary of the thoughts contained in verses 28-30.

And from this we realize that the proof which Saint Paul furnishes for the statement that the suffering of God's children serves to their glorification is and remains valid only when we so understand the relationship of verse 30 to verse 29 as it is presented above, as the relationship of cause to effect. Only when calling, justification, etc., positively and necessarily follow and flow from eternal predestination does this "golden chain" remain a whole, an unbreakable whole, in which also cross and suffering are interwoven. The comfort of assailed Christians, the "δόξα," certain glorification, would collapse were God not to carry out what in eternity he resolved to do, namely, to glorify them, not just to call and justify but also to lead them through cross and trial.

Just as the calling, the justification, so also the faith of the elect (which indeed was already included in the "calling" in Romans 8:30), according to its inception and continuance, appears in Scripture as result and product of the eternal election and predestination of God. In Acts 13:48 it is said of the Gentiles in Antioch that they received the preaching of Paul and Barnabas with joy "and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." They of the number of the Gentiles ordained from eternity to eternal life, those very ones came to faith through the preaching of the apostles. This sentence considered by itself, this sentence structure shows an inner connection between ordination to eternal life and coming to faith. Had Saint Luke wanted to say that those who were ordained to eternal life accidentally came to believe through the Word of the apostles, yes, that as many accidentally came to believe as were ordained to eternal life, this would have been an altogether unfounded and purposeless remark. Faith and eternal life are correlative concepts. Faith is the means and way to eternal life. Saint Luke wants to say that God had begun to carry out his eternal counsel on the Gentiles, whom he had from eternity ordained to eternal life, just at the time when the apostles preached and turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, in that he brought them to faith through preaching, therefore set them on the way that led to eternal life. That the coming to faith of those Gentiles was the inner result of the ordination to eternal life, the latter therefore the basis of their faith, follows undeniably from the context.

In verses 45-49 Saint Luke wishes to shed light upon the great, decisive contrast between the unbelief of the Jews and the faith of the Gentiles. Concerning the Jews he says that they rejected the Word of God and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life. Therefore, their own evil will, their malicious unbelief was why the Jews lost eternal life.

And now what is the antithesis? Did the Gentiles consider themselves worthy of everlasting life? Is their good will, their willing acceptance of the Word the reverse of the evil will, of the obstinate opposition of the Jews? No, that they believed and became partakers of salvation in Christ (verse 47) did not depend upon their desire and choosing, but that came about because they were ordained before the beginning of time to everlasting life. Man's unbelief is the

basis for damnation, the eternal will, the election and predestination of God, on the other hand, the basis for faith and salvation. This is the Scriptural antithesis expressed in the passage before us.

The question that otherwise has been raised in opposition to our interpretation: whether among those Gentiles who came to faith at that time there were also such who later again fell away and so were not chosen is out of place and unwarranted. It is possible! But Saint Luke reports only about the Gentiles and wishes to report only about the Gentiles, in whom the Word of the prophets that Christ should be the Light and Salvation of the Gentiles was really fulfilled, who therefore also came to share in eternal salvation. And the faith of those who are actually saved has its final basis in their ordination to everlasting life. This is the clear, positive statement of our passage, which was understood in the same way by the writers of the Formula of Concord. For in Article XI.38 they cite Acts 13:48 as Scripture proof for the proposition that God's eternal election is the cause of salvation and of everything connected with it, therefore the cause of faith as well.

And as the coming to faith so also the growth and preservation of faith are according to Scripture the result and fruit of election. When Saint Peter says in his first letter (1:5): "You, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," he thus is looking back to verse 1 and 2, he thus is also addressing (verse 5) the elect strangers who are chosen to the obedience of faith and justification. Therefore, he is addressing those who according to, and as a result of, such election have experienced conversion (verse 3), and who for the sake of the election and predestination of God, since they were predestined to salvation, certainly will be preserved to salvation through faith.

Now we shall take another look at Ephesians 1:3-14 in context. In this passage the apostle speaks highly and with praise of Christianity's blessings and traces the same, which is the most characteristic part of this high praise, back to the eternal counsel and will of God. The recollection of the temporal and the recollection of the eternal blessings and kindnesses of God are closely interwoven with one another here. In verse 3 in the most general terms Saint Paul names the present blessings of Christianity, that is, all sorts of spiritual blessings. In verses 4-6a he speaks of the eternal election and decree of adoption. In verses 6b-10 he then discusses in detail the general concept "spiritual blessings." To this belong pardon, justification, endowment of wisdom and knowledge, by virtue of which we ever more deeply look into the mystery of redemption and atonement and the decree of the world's atonement (verses 9 and 10).

But now the apostle places the present blessings, to which he briefly points in verse 3 but which he describes in more detail in verses 6b-10, and God's eternal election and decree into relation with one another. He does this by means of the particle "καθὼς," "according as" (verse 4). "Καθὼς" here, as often in Biblical Greek, is "a dialectic particle." The parallelism of the thoughts demands this meaning. God has blessed us in Christ with all manner of spiritual blessing, has made us acceptable in the Beloved—according as He then, this is as much as: inasmuch as He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world and ordained us to the adoption of children. That we through Christ have become acceptable to God, that we are God's dear children and as such are richly blessed, has its final basis in our eternal election and ordination to the adoption of children. The thought should arouse us to laud and praise God, since all the blessings, all the grace, that have become our through Christ were already from eternity intended for us by God. Also at the basis of this relationship of the temporal to the eternal acts and blessings of God lie the statements of the final section, verses 11-14, the relationship of cause and effect.

In this section, after he has pursued the thought that God has chosen us in eternity and accordingly blessed us so richly in time, the apostle names the persons of the elect, as far as this is possible. The true believers out of Israel and out of the Gentiles—they are the elect. And here once more Saint Paul mentions the eternal predestination and then its fulfillment in time. The elect out of Israel have already beforehand, before the appearance of Christ, hoped in Christ, have believed in Him. And now, after Christ's appearance, in the New Testament, you also—with these words Paul turns to the Gentiles—you Gentiles also have heard and believed the Gospel of your salvation. Just as and while you too were predestined to salvation (προορισθέντες, “predestined,” verse 11, refers to all the elect, Jews and Gentiles); therefore, as a result of this you have heard and believed the Gospel of our salvation. These are the thoughts contained in verses 11-14. Calling and faith of the elect follow and flow according to Scripture from their eternal election and predestination.

This, as we have seen, is the clear doctrine of Scripture: the eternal election and predestination of God are a cause, namely, the ultimate cause of our salvation, as of everything that is a part of our salvation, our calling, or justification, our faith, our preservation. This comforting statement of faith, that we know that our salvation, as well as our faith, our standing in grace, is firmly grounded in that eternal action of God, is thwarted and in the end clearly annulled by the contention of older and newer theologians that God has elected on the assumption and in view of future faith. In a certain sense even those who teach that God had first foreseen who would believe and who would not and had then chosen the former and ordained them to salvation, could make these words their own: faith is the result of election. That would then mean as much as: faith, which occurs in time follows according to time what God in eternity has seen and conceived of Himself—that would obviously be too trivial to maintain. Or the meaning would be this: God foresees the faith of certain individuals, whereupon He chooses them. Would these persons thereafter in time not believe, God would then have foreseen this situation and so not have chosen them either.

That God in eternity foresees faith presumes obviously that these persons actually believe in time. And since God now has foreseen it and thereupon has chosen, and God according to His omniscience only foresees what actually occurs thereafter, faith obviously follows the foreseeing and the resolve upon which it is based. Would such and such an one not believe, God would thus have foreseen things differently and would have resolved differently.

However, this is clearly an obvious, rational, mathematical requisite of effect. There the emphasis lies upon the faith that occurs in time. Upon it depend foreknowledge and election. On the other hand, according to Scripture the emphasis lies on eternal election, on the design of God's pleasure. Upon that depends the faith that occurs in time. And this result is not a matter of mere chronology, no pure logical result, but an outflow of a resolution and pleasure of God, gracious and rich in love beyond all measure and human concept.

This is comfort for a Christian who is concerned about his salvation: God has from eternity chosen me to salvation. And since it once so pleased Him according to His incomprehensible mercy, for that reason He called me into the fellowship of His Son. He worked in me the blessed knowledge of Jesus Christ, justified me through faith. And He will certainly preserve me in faith until my blessed end and lead me finally into the glory prepared for me. This “golden chain” would, however, be torn in two, this comfort would disappear, if one had to calculate like this: If I believe, I shall be saved. Whether I shall endure in faith God alone knows, for He has foreseen it. It depends upon my faith, my steadfastness in faith whether I am numbered among the elect.

II

What does Holy Scripture teach about the certainty of predestination?

Thesis 8.

Holy Scripture teaches that God's eternal election is unchangeable and immutable. Romans 11:29; Matthew 24:24; John 10:28; Ephesians 1:11.

Thesis 9.

Holy Scripture teaches further that we can be absolutely sure of our election and salvation. Romans 8:31-39; Philippians 1:6.

What God has determined in the eternal counsel for election and how He carries out such resolve we have seen from the Word of God. There still remain several questions which in a discussion of the doctrine of predestination need to be considered, the answers to which are essentially contained in the above quotations from Scripture. The orthodox teachers of our church have emphatically testified to the certainty of election. Among other things the Formula of Concord says in Article XI.45: "This doctrine affords the excellent, glorious consolation ... that God wished to secure my salvation so well and certainly that He ordained it in His eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and placed it for preservation in the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can pluck it." This is in accord with Scripture. We have already remarked that God's purpose is a free and firm resolve on the part of God, a decree that cannot fail; further that God inevitably and positively carries out what He had determined in His eternal counsel. We shall quote several passages that in particular testify to the certainty of election. Thesis 8 deals with the objective certainty. Thesis 9 with the subjective.

When the Lord says [in] Matthew 24:24: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect"; and Mark 13:20: "And except that the Lord had shortened these days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom He has chosen, He has shortened the days": thus He expressly testifies that it is quite impossible for the chosen to be turned away from the ordained goal by seduction or great tribulation, for them to lose the eternal salvation to which they have been elected. The love, the faith of many will in the last days grow cold; the elect, however cannot forever stray from the right way and goal. Moreover, from the fact that God for the sake of the elect has shortened the tribulation of the last days, the other is also apparent that God does not by force and coercion preserve the latter in faith. He controls the temptation that lies in the assault to which all believers are open.

In John 10:28 the Lord promises His true disciples, His sheep: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." For the true believers, whom the Father has given the Son, therefore, for the elect, eternal life is as sure and certain, as certain as Christ is Christ, as certain as His all powerful hand is stronger than all the might of earth and hell.

In Ephesians 1:11 the apostle emphasizes: "Being predestined according to the purpose of Him Who works all things after the counsel of His own will" (*κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ*). The meaning is: God, Who has ordained us to salvation, is He Who works all things according to the counsel of His will (*ὁ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργῶν κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ*). It lies within God's nature that God of necessity also brings about, carries out, succeeds in accomplishing, despite all hindrances, what He has

resolved and has firmly determined according to His well-conceived counsel. As certain as God is God, that certain will also the purpose of or election be realized. God would cease to be God should it be or were it possible for this purpose to be overthrown.

Very generally it is said in Romans 11:29: “For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” (ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλήσις τοῦ θεοῦ). But the context, the immediately preceding sentence: “as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes” (κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν ἀγαπητοὶ διὰ τοὺς πατέρας) shows that the apostle has in mind the grace of election, according to which Israel is called. And what is true of Israel’s election is a surer conclusion when applied to the election of all who are chosen to salvation because the statement concerning the immutability of grace, concerning predestination, speaks in general terms.

If the purpose of predestination stands immutable, if predestination is in itself certain, then we also should be subjectively certain of it. The principal passage, which the Formula of Concord, XI.47-49, cites as proof for the subjective certainty of election and salvation, namely Romans 8:31-39, is clear and impossible to misunderstand. The desperate interpretation and subterfuge that the apostle Paul is speaking here of a special revelation which God had given him about His own person requires no serious refutation. What the apostle says about Himself, about His own person: “I am persuaded” (verse 38) is nothing else than what he affirms as belonging to all of “us,” to all children of God (verses 31-37). The inner connection of thoughts (verses 28-39), is correctly reproduced by the Formula of Concord: “Because we are called according to the purpose of God, Who shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord?” (article XI.47). In verses 28-30 the apostle has comforted suffering Christians by saying that God has ordained His elect children to glory; that for that reason He also called, justified, glorified the same; and that therefore their sufferings would redound to their glory. And now from this he draws the conclusion that no might of earth nor of hell is able to separate the elect of God from the glorious goal to which they are ordained, towards which they obviously are being led. He wishes to make assailed Christians positively certain that nothing, nothing is able to separate them from the love of God in Christ. Thus for his part he utters the positive conviction that no hostile power, not even death and hell, will and can separate him from the love of God. However, this is a certainty that belongs to all the elect children of God. All who read these words should say with the apostle: “I am persuaded,” etc. In these words speaks the comfort which Saint Paul gives to suffering Christians. Had he wanted to limit this certainty to his own person, he would take away from them all comfort.

In Philippians 1:6 the same apostle utters the confidence, not the “wholesome human hope” but the “bold confidence” (πεποιθώς) that God will fulfill the good work which He began in the Philippians until the day of Jesus Christ. In accordance with love he regards all Christians, to whom he is writing, as true children of God, as elect. And for that reason he does not have the least doubt that God will consummate their faith. And to this very end he openly declares to his readers what he is feeling and thinking in order that they would acquire the same certainty about their own salvation.

Such are the words and the conviction of the true children of God: we are positively sure that we are chosen to salvation; that nothing is able to separate us from the love of God; that we shall obtain the end of faith, the salvation of souls.

III.

To what does Holy Scripture refer Christians so that they become sure of their election?

Thesis 10.

So that we become sure of our election Holy Scripture refers us to the Gospel of redemption through Christ, which fact affects all sinners. From it we should perceive our election. 2 Timothy 1:9-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; Ephesians 1:6-10, 13.

Thesis 11.

As Holy Scripture refers the elect to the Gospel of the salvation in Christ, so it also admonishes them to remain within the order of salvation, “to make your calling and election sure.” 2 Peter 1:10.

That God has chosen and ordained from eternity definite persons according to the good pleasure of his will for Christ's sake to adoption and eternal salvation, then also calls them in time, justifies them, and finally glorifies them, this is in Scripture the clear doctrine of predestination.

We have often remarked that following the wish of the apostles all Christians who are brought face to face with this doctrine should regard themselves as elect. But yet every serious Christian who is concerned about his salvation asks the question when he considers this article: just how can I tell whether I am chosen? How can I become certain of my election and salvation? And Scripture does not leave these questions unanswered. It directs Christians to the very passages that deal with predestination, at the same time to the Gospel of Christ as a whole. It states that the grace of election, of the purpose (πρόθεσις καὶ χάρις), “which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel” (2 Timothy 1:9,10).

After the apostle in 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14 has reminded the Thessalonian Christians “that God, brethren beloved of the Lord, has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,” he continues: “whereunto He called you by our Gospel (εἰς ὃ ἐκάλεσεν ὑμᾶς διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἡμῶν),” etc. The word “whereunto” points back to the entire previous statement, that God has chosen to salvation the people to whom he is speaking, namely, in this way that they should be led by the Holy Spirit and through faith to salvation; to such a state of well-being he had then called them through the Gospel.

In Ephesians 1 Paul reckons the revelation (γνωρίσας) of the redemption of the whole world (verses 9,10), the preaching of the Gospel (verse 13), among the present blessings that flow from the eternal election and predestination of God. And when he says in Romans 8:30: “whom He did predestine, them he also called,” he means the calling through the Gospel of Christ.

God has, therefore,—that is clearly attested in the passages referred to—revealed the grace of election through the Gospel of Christ and his redemption, which affects all sinners; has, so to speak, enclosed, included the decree of predestination in the Gospel, through the preaching of the Gospel leads elect towards the goal ordained. And so from the Gospel we should be cognizant of our election. To be sure, the non-elect, the temporary believers hear the same Gospel. But we reject as idle speculation of human reason the inference that because unbelievers, persistent opponents, and temporary believers also hear this Gospel, one cannot with certainty

make positive conclusions concerning election. Reason must remain silent where God reveals to us his mysteries. And it is a conclusion so full of mystery, yet willed by God, cherished by God, a conclusion to which Scripture gives us a right and compels us: God reveals the grace of election through the Gospel. Those whom He has ordained, them He calls as a result through the Gospel; He wants to make believers out of them and save them through the whole Gospel of Christ, the Savior of the world. Therefore, when I hear the Gospel, I conclude from it: God surely wants to save me too. God was aiming at me also. God has chosen me.

In a special section, article XI.25-33, the Formula of Concord deals with this very question: how can one become certain who the elect are and answers it in this way that we should not concern ourselves with the hidden will of God but hold on to the universal promises of the Gospel.

Accordingly, Holy Scripture points the elect also to the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel and exhorts them to persevere in this order and in sanctification. Since God has chosen us to be holy and without blame before Him in love, we should give diligence to making our calling and election sure through good works (2 Peter 1:10), should, as the Formula of Concord says in XI.73: “Exercise ourselves in all Christian virtues, in all godliness, modesty, temperance, patience, brotherly love, in order that we may doubt the less that we are elected, so that we may the more experience the power and strength of the Spirit within us.”

Final Observations.

a. This doctrine concerning predestination portrays God’s great, incomprehensible grace, which is glorified in the elect, and suggests absolutely nothing about a decree of reprobation for others. Rather in clear, distinct passages Holy Scripture testifies that all who are lost are damned because of their unbelief (Matthew 23:37).

b. The doctrine of Holy Scripture concerning the election of grace in no way sets aside or detracts from the other clear, comforting doctrine of Scripture about God’s universal gracious will (“God will have all men to be saved,” 1 Timothy 2:4). No way can we ever reconcile these two doctrines of Scripture with our reason. However, we take our reason captive in obedience to Christ and believe and maintain the one, as well as the other, to be divine doctrine in their entirety.

These two remarks should ward off a double misconception of the true doctrine of predestination. If one logically concludes more from the doctrine than as presented, he, of course, happens upon the horrible heresy of Calvinism: that God according to his pure pleasure has given others over to unbelief and ordained them to damnation. But we condemn this conclusion because it is contrary to the clear words of Scripture. With Scripture we teach that the basis for damnation lies solely and alone in man, in man’s unbelief. What we commonly call the decree of reprobation is not the reverse of the decree of predestination. The two just are not parallel. God has decreed to damn because of their unbelief those whose unbelief he foresaw. This is, of course, a “consequent will.” The objection that this is illogical speaks against the foolishness of Scripture. The Scriptural doctrine of predestination is a pure, unclouded, brightly

shining light. Whoever in faith becomes absorbed in this bottomless abyss of grace and mercy of God, for him the desire to find fault with God's wonderful logic disappears.

Finally, we guard against the misunderstanding as though by holding firmly to the doctrine of predestination we were detracting from the other doctrine of Scripture, from the doctrine of the universality of grace. We believe and confess with all the orthodox fathers that God is serious about wanting to save all men, that Christ has really redeemed the entire sinful world, that the Holy Spirit earnestly offers grace to all sinners, through the Gospel earnestly calls all sinners. Of course, we recognize from the conclusions that have been drawn from these statements that God foresaw who would accept universal grace and who not and thereupon (as though God determined the cause) is to have chosen the former to salvation, to have ordained the latter to damnation. This is the identical rationalizing that motivated Calvin to conclude his fateful syllogisms from the Scriptural statements concerning predestination. No, reason must keep silent here!

It is impossible for us to reconcile and bring into harmony with our reason both Scriptural doctrines concerning particular election and universal grace. Not even the light of grace but the light of glory only will compose this disharmony. The doctrine of predestination is a touchstone by which God tests the hearts. He wishes to find out whether we are really serious about the assurance that God's Word is above human opinion, that God's Word should in every respect determine doctrine and confession; whether we really are determined to take our reason captive in obedience to Christ.

The Mystery in Predestination²⁰

Ever since the controversy relative to the doctrine of predestination began, many articles have been written in our publications concerning the “Mystery of Predestination.” It has always been clearly and firmly stated as to what constitutes this “mystery.” It is perhaps worth the effort, since this matter has been treated so far but briefly and incidentally, to go into greater detail and to present our position and that of the Missouri Synod relative to that mystery, which our reason is unable to solve, upon which God’s Word also does not shed any light. We shall show that we speak with Scripture and the Confessions and that we are representing the opinion of the orthodox church.

We speak of divine “mysteries” in a twofold sense. In the first place. Scripture often calls all religious dogmas secrets, mysteries, namely, insofar as human reason is unable thoroughly to delve into them and absolutely incapable of reconciling and settling various, apparently contradictory doctrines with one another. Nevertheless, these same divine mysteries are so clearly and intelligibly revealed in Scripture that we are able to form clear ideas about them and to speak about them in positive terms. God’s entire counsel relative to our salvation, which, of course, is and remains foolishness to our reason, is revealed to us, lies clear and bright for us to see. The doctrine of predestination is also one of these divine mysteries, is a divine truth, which God has given to us clearly and distinctly in his Word for our comfort and salvation. What God has revealed to us about this article, what there is to know about it to our salvation, we sum up for the sake of brevity and achieve proper perspective by placing this doctrine into proper context with the doctrine of salvation.

God wants all men, all sinners to be saved. And since this is His sincere will, He determined already in eternity to redeem the sinful world. Christ carried out this decree of salvation and died for the wicked. Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. And since now in Christ, in Christ alone, salvation is to be found, it thus is God’s sincere will that all sinners believe in Christ. For that reason the Holy Spirit offers all sinners the grace of Jesus Christ in the Gospel. And it is offered in all seriousness so that no one will have excuses should he reject the same. On the other hand, it is solely the work and grace of God when a sinner is converted, when he comes to faith and is saved. We Christians ascribe the mercy that we come to experience, our conversion, our faith, our sanctification, and salvation, of which we already are certain through faith, solely and alone to the undeserved grace of God. God for Christ’s sake has had compassion on our misery; God has called and drawn us to Himself and has kindled in us the light of saving faith. Yes, from the Word of God we know that God has so earnestly planned our calling, our conversion, our salvation that he took counsel and made resolve in eternity concerning each and every one of us, also concerning my calling, conversion, salvation. And this eternal counsel and resolve about our calling, conversion, justification, preservation, salvation, by virtue of which we have come to faith and are preserved in faith and will receive the end of faith, we call the decree of election or predestination.

When now, on the other hand, so many others, unfortunately most men, do not obtain the salvation designed and offered by God but are lost, we realize that it is their own fault. Their unbelief, their persistent unbelief, which until the very end resists the grace of God, resists the alluring, the urging, the inviting of the Holy Spirit, is the sole cause of their damnation. And since God according to His righteousness has established the rule that whoever does not believe

²⁰ *Lehre und Wehre* XXVII [27] (August, 1881) 8:364-376.

will be damned, he certainly has also determined from eternity that all who will not believe in Christ are to be rejected and damned because of their unbelief. Their unbelief is the reason God does not save them, even though he gladly wants to, but damns them instead. And since non-election is used identically with rejection, with Chemnitz we can say that they are not chosen because they persist in resisting the Holy Spirit.

This is the will of God revealed in the Word. This is briefly the mystery of predestination revealed in the Word. It is in this way, in these and similar words, in this kind of thought context that we should speak of and teach predestination. In this way the doctrine of predestination redounds to our comfort and the assurance of salvation and at the same time guards against overconfidence and presumption.

However, in theology the word “mystery” is used in a special, strict sense. When we consider and treat any Christian doctrine, we finally arrive at boundaries and limits beyond which we cannot go in our own thinking, beyond which the Word of God does not lead us. God has revealed his divine thoughts only so far as they serve to our salvation. In His revelation he did not answer all the questions that arise in our minds. It was not His intent to satisfy the inquisitive. Thus also when we consider the doctrine of predestination, we finally get to the point where we have to come to a screeching halt, at which point God’s Word calls out to us in a commanding voice: “Thus far and no farther.” What lies beyond this point is and remains a “mystery” in the true sense of the word, hidden to us and in accordance with God’s Word is to remain hidden.

Now when we talk about this “mystery,” the intent is not that we would like to say at least a few words about what we cannot and should not say anything but to spell out exactly where obscurity begins. Our intent is to define the question which God’s Word does not answer, for which we should desire no answer, which question, as often as it enters our mind, we should stifle and suppress. Thus, we differ from our opponents on either side of the question. We are willing to resign ourselves and to keep a tight rein on our curiosity; while Calvinists, on the other hand, just like all gross and fine synergists, attempt by means of their blind, foolish reason to clear up what is obscure.

And now what is that mystery that lies hidden within the doctrine of predestination? What is the point beyond which we cannot go? What question remains unanswered? When we for any length of time reflect upon the revealed truth that God according to the good pleasure of His will, out of pure grace and mercy, for the sake of Christ’s merit, has chosen us before the foundation of the world, the thought, the question arises: Yes, exactly why has God chosen us, we who are not one bit better than others?

“To select, to choose” is in the strictest sense of the word a relative concept. Selecting means separating. God selected certain persons out of the mass and separates them from the rest. Thus, the question really is: Why has God chosen me before others, I who am just as guilty as the rest of the children of men? Why has God chosen me and not others? However, what God has done and does to us in time is but the reflex, the execution of his eternal counsel and resolve. And so the question takes on this form: Why exactly has God converted me and drawn me to Himself? Just why has God kindled in me the light of faith? By nature they are no more wicked than I. And I by nature am no better than they. Why does God raise up the one who has fallen from faith, and not the other? Why did He forgive Peter and not Judas?

Everything rests solely on His mercy. Indeed, all who are lost go to their destruction through their own fault. They have resisted the Spirit and grace. By their opposition they have hindered the effectiveness of the grace that wanted to save them also. This is and remains beyond

all doubt in accord with the revealed Word. The one who is damned has damned himself by his own unbelief, by his own opposition, and has wrested the judgment of condemnation from God.

However, our inquisitive reason is not satisfied with this answer from divine Word. It asks and concludes further: I am in the same state of corruption as other sinners. In me there is the same enmity towards God as dwells in all men, the same opposition. God, God's grace alone has removed this opposition from me and prevented my opposition from becoming permanent. Had I been left to my own devices I would have resisted and hardened my heart as did Pharaoh. Why did God stop the enmity and resistance in me, and not in others? Why didn't He from the very start pull the thorn out of the heart of the unbelievers and the impenitent? Why did He permit their wickedness and enmity to develop fully? Why, asks reason, does God make such a distinction among men? Isn't this dealing with bias, with partiality? Isn't this dealing unjustly?

Here's exactly where God cuts us short and tells us to shut up and answers our question with a question: Who are you that you enter into judgment with God? We are not to be asking these kinds of questions. God has kept in reserve for His wisdom something that He has not shared with us. Here lies what is secret, hidden. The *discretio personarum*,²¹ that as concerns conversion and election God in time and eternity appears to differentiate among sinners, who all lie under the same condemnation and in like manner resist, is the real "mystery of predestination." Why God deals with one person in this way, in that way with another, we are not able and should not try to comprehend. The rule according to which God chose and selected in eternity is unknown to us. Only so much do we know from the revealed Word, namely, that God is just and impartial since His thoughts of righteousness are much higher than our thoughts; and that in no case was a Calvinistic decree, that is, the will and good pleasure of God the determining factor for God to glorify himself in a part of mankind through penal jurisdiction and not through grace. Rack our brains all we want, if we stay within the limits of the revealed will of God, we positively are unable to find any basis for such a *discretio personarum*. For the very reason that we are incapable of putting any thoughts together here we speak of a "mystery," which according to its very nature is inscrutable as far as we are concerned.

We emphasize that this "mystery" is not the primary one within the doctrine of predestination. We do not place this mystery at the head and draw all sorts of conclusions from it. Doing this we would really come off badly. The doctrine of predestination, as Scripture presents it for the comfort of Christians (Romans 8, Ephesians 1, 2 Thessalonians 2, 1 Peter 1:1) as it is threatened in our Confession,²² removes this "mystery" completely. God has revealed to us and impresses upon us that we Christians, who believe in His Son, are from eternity chosen and ordained to what we have now in time become; chosen and ordained to faith, to Christianity; chosen and ordained to what we shall become, to life everlasting. We Christians should take comfort in eternal election, build our salvation upon God's Word, grace, and election and with joy and gratitude because of such great grace completely forget about everything else, in particular about all other human beings. And when we think of the many who perish, we should above all else heed the warning not to fall into the same pattern of unbelief. Only at the very end, when such questions arise upon our consideration of this doctrine, questions like those formulated a few moments ago, do we become aware of the fact that we are faced here with an abyss whose magnitude is too great for us to assess, with an abyss we cannot cross. However, what is revealed to us about our eternal election is so inviting, so rich and comforting that we gladly turn our eyes away from that "mystery" and look longingly into the soft light of grace that

²¹ [Ed.:] "distinguishing of persons"

²² [Ed.:] a document from the Book of Concord, the Lutheran Confessions

shines upon us from out of the Gospel. It is essential to give this mystery its proper place and to place it not at the beginning but at the end of our study.

The grace of God in Christ, revealed to us in the Gospel, is the same for all sinners, save that most hinder the efficacy and effect of grace. We do not introduce an absolute decree of reprobation into God's grace. The mystery of the distinction does not consist in this that grace is manifested only on some, while God's justice is manifested exclusively on others. Even when we think of election as predestination, we simply take comfort in the eternal grace that is given us in Christ Jesus and do not permit our consolation to be shattered by any reflections on the fate of temporary believers and unbelievers. Holy Scripture entitles and encourages us to such abstraction.

If we, on the other hand, reflect upon election, upon the separating, upon the *discretio personarum*, our thoughts are dallying in the area of the wonderful, all-powerful, all-knowing rule and governance of God, in the realm of the majesty of the Creator and Lord and Ruler of all things. That "mystery" finally comes to a head in the question: Why doesn't God stop all sinners from resisting grace? Why doesn't He prevent unbelief? That leads us to the question that has from ages past been reckoned among the "secrets of God"; why does God generally permit evil? Why does He so often permit the wicked to give full scope to their inclinations and wickedness? And what is more He often takes wickedness into His service. This belongs among the wonders of His governance of the world.

The question relative to the *discretio personarum* breaks up further into the following questions: why does God deal with men in such different ways? Why does He by means of His goodness lead some to repentance, while we see others lost in misery and doubt? Why does He bring some through cross and tribulation to knowledge and reflection, while He indulges others with good fortune that makes them overconfident and arrogant? Why does He so obviously intervene in the lives of some and contrary to their plans lead them to places where they hear the Word of their salvation, while others he allows to go their own way? Why does He take some through an early death to Himself in heaven, before they fall from faith, while He does not prevent others from drifting from the truth and dying in their sins? Why does God permit so many infants to die in the grace of Baptism, while permitting to live millions of others who have been baptized, who then sooner or later lose the grace of Baptism? Why in one place does God give upright teachers, who lead many to righteousness, and not in other places? Why does God permit His Gospel to resound pure and undefiled in one country and in this or that period, while in other countries generations one after the other are not touched by the voice of the Gospel?

To these questions that arise in our minds during a consideration of the handling of individuals and nations we receive no answer in this life. These are God's unsearchable judgments and ways that are past finding out. The one who searches too long into such thoughts and questions is attempting to explore Supreme Majesty. The one who wishes to dispute with God concerning this is censuring the majesty of God. And that is impudence.

We worship Majesty and keep our thoughts trained upon the bright sure course that is revealed in the Word of God. We hear the Gospel, perceive from the Gospel God's will towards us, our gracious election, rely on God's grace in times of sorrow and joy and guard against overconfidence. And we proclaim to others, to friend and foe, the same Gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ and exhort them to believe and to accept it and testify to them: it is your own fault if you reject grace and perish. It is revealed to us, it is entrusted to us, this is helpful to our salvation and to the salvation of others. What there is besides this we leave to God and gladly abstain from governing the world with Him.

How it is a matter of substantiating from Scripture and of verifying from our Confession what has been said.

In Romans 9, in fact, in the entire section, chapters 9-11, St. Paul talks about that mystery. What he says in the context concerning election is not primarily what he tells the Roman Christians about that eternal ordination of God. In chapter 8 he comforted them by stating that God in eternity had chosen, had elected, had ordained them to be conformed to the image of His Son, and accordingly had called, justified them in time, and certainly would glorify them, yes, that sufferings also had to serve and be beneficial to their glorification. This is the clear, revealed doctrine of predestination, which he unfolds to the consolation of suffering Christians. In chapter 9 he comes to speak of historical facts whose final elements should remain hidden also to enlightened Christians and inspired apostles. In that he refers to the fact that God at all times had His elect in Israel and that not all the Israelites according to the flesh belonged to true Israel, that God, for instance, had chosen Isaac before Ishmael. Jacob before Esau, he anticipates the objections of that arrogant reason which charges God with partiality and injustice. With the words: “is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid” (verse 14) he angrily rejects this accusation. Nor does he regard it as necessary to vindicate the righteousness of the Creator before His creature. God is and remains just since His divine righteousness surpasses the weak human concepts of righteousness.

Rather, the apostle is content to mention certain facts about, which man need not further rack his brains, let alone enter into judgment with God. He appeals to a word of the Lord from the Old Testament: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (verse 15). From God’s conduct towards Pharaoh he draws the conclusion: “therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens” (verse 18). With this the apostle is far removed from teaching a Calvinistic absolute decree of reprobation as is possible. For what does “to harden” really mean? God hardens, confirms them in the frame of mind, in the disposition in which he finds them, in the wickedness that has developed in the sinner himself, in the unbelief wherein the sinner without any assistance from God, indeed, against God’s will, has confirmed and hardened himself. God hardens only the unbelieving and those who defiantly resist.

Hardening is a just judgment upon those who have hardened themselves. Evidence the example of Pharaoh. Scripture reports for the third time that Pharaoh had hardened His heart himself; only then does it say that God had hardened him. In the concept “hardness of heart” is latent man’s guilt. Also, it is to be noted that obduracy is not something brought about by God but that God through a just judgment ceases to work in those who have hardened themselves.

Paul would then have us consider further that God “endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction” (verse 22). Therefore, God has attempted by every possible means to save even those who finally fall under wrath. They have despised the riches of His patience, goodness, and longsuffering, have hardened their hearts against grace, and for that reason they are hardened and damned by God.

In the entire context, chapter 9-11, the clear, revealed norm and rule according to which God saves and damns, namely: “he that believes shall be saved; but he that does not believe shall be damned” is not denied but explicitly affirmed. The apostle is speaking of the contrasting fate of Israel and the Gentiles and shows that the Gentiles have believed the Gospel and have been saved by faith. On the other hand, Israel has persistently been at variance with the Gospel and was rejected because of unbelief. First, we should contemplate and marvel at the goodness of God, then contemplate and marvel at the earnestness of God.

However, this presentation does not, of course, eliminate all difficulties, on which an inquisitive intellect stumbles. Since with some everything, faith and salvation, is dependent upon God's free mercy, we cannot understand why God, Who is so rich in mercy and Whose might towers above all things, has in this way shown mercy only to some, as He did to Isaac and Jacob, why He has chosen, converted, and saved only some and, on the other hand has allowed others, upon whom He likewise has bestowed His full grace and mercy, to resist, to harden themselves in unbelief and through unbelief to bring upon themselves the judgment of obduracy and damnation. The apostle does not solve this riddle. He permits the facts, as stated in chapters 9 and 14:18 to stand without criticism and forbids man to enter into judgment with God the Creator. He is also well aware that He has not laid bare all the fine threads of God's teaching about the faith of the Gentiles and the unbelief of the Jews. Therefore, He calls out at the close of this section: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). Once long ago it did not please God to put us next to Himself on the throne of majesty and to make us advisers of His. Once long ago it did not please the Holy Spirit to share with us all the norms and designs by which God guides and rules world nations, and individuals. We should remain within our own areas of concern and be content with what God has revealed to us, that whoever believes with his whole heart and confesses with his mouth will be saved, and that faith and salvation are not dependent upon any activity on our part; that, on the other hand, all who chance upon wrath and damnation have themselves only to blame because they resisted and did not believe.

Those passages in which the Formula of Concord deals with the real "mystery" of predestination are well-known. We call attention only to FC SD XI.52-64. There it is emphasized that "God has still kept secret and concealed much concerning this mystery, and reserved it for His wisdom and knowledge alone." And to what is "concealed" belongs that "God gives His Word at one place, but not at another; removes it from one place, and allows it to remain at another; also, that one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind (naturally because of his wickedness, his unbelief, but why does God not prevent unbelief?), while another, who is, indeed, in the same guilt, is converted again, etc." However, while the Formula of Concord acknowledges this mystery and defines its limits, it forbids, at the same time, "curious inquiry" and draws our thoughts time and again back into the area of revelation and the revealed canon: "Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help."

Let it be said once more, this "mystery" is not the primary nor the consoling feature of the doctrine of predestination. How one must comfort Christians with predestination according to the revealed Word is indicated above. Nevertheless, it is necessary and essential at the right time and place to touch upon this "mystery." God's Word reveals so little about this "mystery," but yet it states that there is such a mystery. And that statement is beneficial to us so that we may better and better learn to crucify our presumptuous, speculating reason. At the same time, this "mystery" serves as a test to determine whether one correctly understands the doctrines of predestination and conversion.

The Mystery and Fact of Predestination Mirrored in the Election of Israel²³

The entire Old Testament is a type of the New. Thus, in particular, the sacrifices, the temple, the Sabbath, circumcision, and the like are “shadows of future blessings” that became current at the beginning of the New Testament. However, the significance and history of Israel itself especially typify the Christian Church. When in the following the mystery and fact of predestination mirrored in the election of Israel is discussed, a new controversy is not being introduced nor is there any need to reiterate what up till now has been said carefully and well. But with the help of the original language of the Old Testament, with appeal to the simple intelligence of believing readers versed in the Bible we wish to obtain a clear understanding in order to affect and stir many pious hearts as they read the Old Testament. If it is God’s wish, perhaps many a misgiving can be cleared away, many a doubt overcome, many an adverse objection refuted—of course, only by submitting oneself to the Word—by considering how the mystery and fact of predestination were and are mirrored in the election of Israel in the Old Testament.

To substantiate this hundreds of passages in various contexts out of the various periods from Moses to Malachi serve this purpose. However, I wish to advance only one passage, namely, Deuteronomy 7:6-8a: “For you are a holy people unto the LORD, your God: the LORD your God has chosen you to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people. But because the LORD loved you, and because He would keep the oath, which He had sworn to your fathers.” Literally the passage reads like this: “For you [are] a people holy to Yahweh [the LORD], your God; Yahweh, your God, has chosen you to be to Him the people of the acquisition, preceding [in contrast to] all peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD became devoted to you [had pleasure in you, loved you] and chose you not because you were greater in number in comparison to other peoples, but the LORD has done this because of His love for you and because He wanted to keep the oath, which He had sworn to your fathers,” etc.

The words and concepts used here are extremely significant. The connection with the preceding is that in verses 1-3 the relationship enjoined upon Israel towards the Canaanite nations (“greater and mightier” than Israel) and their idolatry (verses 4, 5) are established. For that reason verse 6 begins with “for.”

Regarding the context special attention is called

- 1) to the concept “choose”: as what and to what was Israel chosen?
 - a. As “a holy people” (verse 6a), as it reads in 2:14a: “you are a holy people to the LORD your God.”
 - b. “A special people to Himself out of all peoples” (verse 6b), as it reads in 14:2b: “and the LORD has chosen you to be a peculiar people to Himself out of all peoples,” and in contrast to “strangers,” 14:21: “You are a holy people to the LORD, your God.” The New Testament echo reads in 1st Peter 2:9: “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar

²³ Source: *Lehre und Wehre* XXVIII [28] (April, 1882) 4:160-167.

people; that you should show forth the praises of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.”

- 2) The second salient concept in our verses is what prompted God to such election, namely,
 - a. In the negative sense, what the motive was not: bodily, earthly superiority resting upon “numbers” and the like. Verse 7: “the LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose You, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people.” Luther says to this: “Since you are such a holy, great, and mighty people (e.g., under David and Solomon) you could, indeed, give rise to idolatry, as though God must needs look at you because of your power and strength and chooses you to be His people. But God alone desires to have the honor and does not want you to look upon your numbers and your might Therefore, says Moses: ‘God has not set His love on you because you are greater in number. Yes, be careful. He has not taken your numbers into account So, do not build on it! Had He taken that into consideration He would have chosen a much more numerous people’ ”²⁴ Further, the motive is not some kind of spiritual quality, disposition, achievement, virtue, work, merit, or whatever you choose to call it; for the likes of this is not mentioned in Deuteronomy 7:6-8a nor anywhere else. Here, if anywhere, was the place to insert this concept. But from this silence in the context not only may but must the conclusion be drawn: in a spiritual sense there also was no particular quality in Israel that motivated God to choose Israel. The one who teaches otherwise concerning Israel earns, adds to, and receives his judgment in Deuteronomy 12:32 and Revelation 22:18—this is taken to be the New Testament counterpart of the Old Testament type. Luther draws this conclusion: “God did not lead them into the land because of any godliness.” On the contrary, “Moses drummed it into them and threw a spoke into their pride as he continues by describing their record ... and they see everything they experienced while they were in the wilderness in order that they should realize that God gave them nothing because of any merit on their part ... that should He deal according to their merit, he would long ago have destroyed them.” So you “must strike down the peacock’s tail and say: Lord, I wish to step thinking about works and merit in order that I may obtain grace!” “For this reason the Lord deals with His saints in such a way that they always carry the weight of sin about their necks, yes, have such coarse knots tied around their necks that they live in fear and humility.” For that reason we “should not forget past transgressions but remember them to our mortification.”²⁵ However, what holds true of the gift of earthly Canaan is truer still of the heavenly. “Understand, therefore, that the LORD, your God, gives you not this good land to possess it for your righteousness; for you are a stiff-necked people” (Deuteronomy 9:6).
 - b. In the positive sense, God’s motive in Israel’s election was first: “because the LORD loved you” (verse 8a). Thus it reads in 10:15, in contrast to “heaven”

²⁴ *Erlangen Ausgabe* 36:331, 334, 337: Auslegung über etliche Kapitel des fünften Buches Mosis [Interpretation of Several Chapters of the Fifth Book of Moses] (1529)

²⁵ *Erlangen Ausgabe* 36:401, 403 f., 407.

and “earth” and “all that therein is” (verse 14): “only the LORD had a delight in your fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.” The LORD says in Malachi 1:2a: “I have loved you,” and asks the people as though it were unable to recognize such love: “was not Esau Jacob’s brother? ... Yet I loved Jacob” (verse 2b). Secondly, in the positive sense God’s motive was (verse 8b): “because He would keep the oath, which He had sworn to your fathers.” And Zechariah,²⁶ filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied: “and remembered His holy covenant, and the oath, which He swore to our father Abraham” (Luke 1:72b, 73). (See Deuteronomy 7:6-8a; further: 4:37; 10:15; 14:2; Psalm 135:4; Acts 13:17.)

Before an application can be made and a conclusion drawn from the Old Testament type to the New Testament antitype, we must take a look at the various passages in which the concept “choose” is found.

- 1) Regards the “choosing” of the future king “from among your brethren” (Deuteronomy 17:15), out of the tribe of Levi to serve “out of all your tribes” (Deuteronomy 18:5; 21:5; 1st Samuel 2:28; 1 Chronicles 15:2; 2nd Chronicles 29:11, and many other passages), where always occurs some taking out of a unit or a minority, out of a whole or a majority, the word “bachar,” בָּחַר , is used, meaning: select, choose, single out; be more fond of a thing (or person) than of another; have a liking for it; examine; predestine. From this is derived the concept “the chosen (bachir). (Isaiah 42:1, 43:20, 45:4; Psalm 106:23: “Moses his chosen” and the ordained, the picked [mibchar]).
- 2) Out of the concept “cut” (barah, barar), “separate” (badal), “single cut” (palah) evolves likewise a “knowing,” “separating,” “discerning,” “choosing,” “separating from,” and “destining for,” something (Song of Solomon 6:9: bar=“chosen”).
- 3) In like manner out of the concepts: “perceive” (chasah) and “see” (raa); Genesis 22:8, 41:33; Deuteronomy 12:13, 33:21; Esther 2:9: to view with pleasure, delight, single out; choose for oneself.
- 4) Out of the concept “call” (kara): “appoint,” “ordain to something,” “elect.”

This obvious digression helps to understand the New Testament expressions used in the doctrine of predestination (they are actual reproductions, in part translations of the Hebrew).

The Formula of Concord names God’s immeasurable mercy and Christ’s most holy merit as the sole causes of “election” and rejects “works and merits in us” as a possible cause. What is called “love” in the Mosaic passages is the “mercy” of God and God’s truthfulness in keeping His oath, established through the merit of Christ, prophesied and hoped for in the Old Testament, achieved and fulfilled in the New. Where is there room here for “works and merits in us,” for a consideration or evaluation or foreseeing of faith (*intuitu fidei*)? With Moses no more than with Malachi. The language of the Formula of Concord is Biblical, prophetic, and apostolic.

That, out of the mass and clouds of witnesses in the New Testament quoting only 1st Peter 2:9: “You are a chosen generation,” etc., Peter agrees with Moses a child, who hears and compares both passages can readily recognize. But if Peter, enlightened and moved by the Holy

²⁶ [Ed.:] the father of John the Baptist (see Luke 1).

Spirit, is reproducing the Mosaic passage, if he is referring Deuteronomy 7:6-8ff., which speaks of the people of Israel and Canaan, to the totality of believers and eternal life, he is thus giving us an example meaningful, simple, and clear about the fact that and how the mystery and fact of predestination are mirrored in the election of Israel. That the “chosen generation” signifies the totality of the “elect” is like trying to substantiate the need for walking about the streets during the daytime with a Diogenes lantern. We leave this to people with overtaxed brains. Obviously, however, the people whom Peter calls “chosen” should regard themselves as the “elect,” that is, should be sure of their election and salvation. But how could it have occurred to the Israelites to dispute the fact that they belonged to the seed of Abraham? To rob a Christian of the certainty of his election and salvation is to teach him to doubt the faithfulness of the One Who is calling.

If Peter now by borrowing from, making use of, and transcribing that passage from Moses is treating Israel as the Old Testament type, the New Testament “chosen generation” as the counterpart, then we are permitted—in the footsteps of “the partakers of Christ’s sufferings”—to search out and to exhibit the individual points of comparison between “shadow” and “body,” between image and counterpart.

- 1) As the people of Israel relate to all nations and their totality “world,” so the “elect” relate to “world” and “temporary believers.” (Keep in mind that Israel was an infinitesimal part of the nations, was but a drop in the bucket!) And yet God, Who earnestly desires the salvation of all men, Who for that reason also redeemed the entire world through Christ’s death, justified and absolved it through Christ’s resurrection, chose only this one people, permitting the Gentiles to go their own way, “if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him!” At that time to Israel alone “pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promise” (Romans 9:4). “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children” (verse 7), and He has “called not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles” (verse 24) so that where it was said they were “not my people” (one word in the Hebrew), “there shall they be called the children of the living God” (verse 26). Isaiah (chapter 10:22, 23) knows of a “selection” or “election” just as well as does St. Paul (verse 27 and chapter 11:5): “a remnant shall be saved.” Whoever takes offense at our doctrine of predestination let him consider that we have on our side next to the apostolic also the prophetic witness; yes, he logically must take offense also at the election of the people of Israel—in contrast to all peoples! And in context Paul says: “Nay, but, O man, who are you who replies against God?” This “taking offense” does not begin with “Missouri”²⁷ but with Israel.
- 2) Just as Israel did not by itself become what it was, “people of the covenant,” “elect people” but was “chosen” by God without any works and merits on their part, the “elect” are what they are by the grace of the ONE Who is calling. Above the gateway to Israel’s history in golden letters stands the divine inscription: “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help!” (Hosea 13:9). Yes, this word is the Old Testament key to the understanding of Israel’s history, just as the key to the New Testament, next to Romans 9 and 11, is the Epistle to the Hebrews.
- 3) As Israel in that one Abraham, so the “elect” are called and chosen solely “in Christ.” “According as He has chosen us in Him—see verse 30 ... “and has predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ ... wherein He has made us acceptable in

²⁷ [Ed.:] The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, “the Missouri Synod.”

- the Beloved.” Galatians 3:16: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He says not (Genesis 22:18), ‘and to seeds,’ a of many; but as of one, ‘and to your seed,’ which is Christ.”
- 4) The time Israel spent in bondage in Egypt is typical of the “elect” in the bondage of the world that hates them (see John 15:18, 19; 16:33b).
 - 5) As Israel’s journey out of Egypt through the Red Sea, so the way of the elect heads towards the heavenly Canaan through cross and tribulation of every kind, to which also the Formula of Concord points so comfortingly.
 - 6) As Israel finally received the promised and proffered earthly Canaan—despite its sins—so the elect receive the heavenly Canaan “by the grace of Him Who calls” through Christ’s merit.
 - 7) Just as Israel is called and is chosen in Abraham, the “father of believers,” not because of any particular achievement and merit on its part or in consideration of its faith in the future Messiah, in the same way it is impossible for faith or anything else in us to be a cause of election. Just as Israel was separated from all peoples and was designated as beneficiary of “grace” and “gift,” so the faith of the elect is not a cause but a result and effect of their “election.”
 - 8) Just as Israel’s Messianic promises, despite the countless sins of the people, were in time fulfilled, so the salvation of the elect, despite the possibility of temporary apostasy, remains secure in the hands of the Lord.
 - 9) Just as God will never repent of Israel’s calling (Romans 11:1,2, 4-7, 11a, 12, 14, 22, 23, 26)—where “all Israel” (verse 29) is to be understood in the sense of “election” (verse 7) but until judgment day leads individuals out of Israel to Christ: in the same way the Lord has His elect (“the Lord knows them who are His”) among all peoples.

No doubt the points of comparison can be dealt with at greater length. But these few will suffice to show how mystery and fact of predestination are mirrored in the election of Israel.

Universal Gracious Will and Predestination²⁸

“God will have all men to be saved” (1st Timothy 2:4). This general axiom is an essential part of the Gospel. God desires that all lost, damned men be saved (σωθῆναι). “The Lord is not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9). The salvation of all men without exception is His sincere wish and desire. “For God so loved the world” (John 3:16). The entire world, the world lost in sins God loved, really loved, fervently loved. He earnestly desires the salvation of all men. For that reason He gave expression to this His saving will, His love, in actual deeds. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Greater love is inconceivable. Yes, this love transcends all human thinking and understanding, that God, as it were, tore His only, beloved Son out of His heart and gave Him for the world and into the world.

For no other reason did the one and only Son of God come into the world, appear in the flesh, than to save the world. “For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17). And so Christ became the Lamb of God, “which takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). “Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). “Christ is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

Thus was the actual saving act accomplished. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). God has in Christ absolved the entire world of its sins. “By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon men to justification of life” (Romans 5:18). Through Christ’s obedience and righteousness all men have been pronounced righteous. Yes, to the justification of life. Life has been granted to all men. Salvation is prepared for all. Heaven stands open to all. Thus God in Christ looks upon all men with the eyes of His good pleasure. Already when Christ was born, the angels sang: “Good will towards men” (Luke 2:14).

When God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and absolved it from its sins, the world knew nothing about this. So He had to make this fact known. Christ’s benefit stands only those in good stead who come to know it and make it their own through faith. In the counsel of our salvation was adopted also the order, the way of salvation. He has ordained for men the way of faith. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The righteousness that avails before God, which has been won and prepared through Christ for all men, is a righteousness which becomes man’s as a result of faith and which is ordained and designed for faith (Romans 1:17). “Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). That faith alone justifies and saves is everywhere testified in Scripture. And now God’s universal gracious will includes also that all men come to faith, to the saving knowledge of Christ. “God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). And this will of God became fact too. The God who in Christ has reconciled the world to Himself and has absolved it of its sins has also established “the ministry of reconciliation” so that men would become reconciled to God, would receive reconciliation in faith (2 Corinthians 5:19, 20). Christ commanded his disciples: “Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The preaching of the Gospel, however, is not just mere empty sound. “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” (Isaiah 53:1). Wherever the preaching of Christ resounds, there too the arm of the

²⁸ Source: *Lehre und Wehre* L [50] (February, 1904) 2:61-69.

Lord, the might of the Lord, is active. The words of Christ are always “spirit and live” (John 6:63).

Jesus said to Jerusalem, the murderess of prophets, which then also slew Christ on the cross and persecuted the apostles: “How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathered her chicks under her wings” (Matthew 23:37). How often Jesus had preached in Jerusalem, through how many miracles had He there confirmed His preaching: His preaching had begun in Jerusalem. Starting from Galilee He repeatedly appeared at the great festivals in Jerusalem; in Jerusalem His prophetic career ended. Very urgently in the final days of His earthly sojourn He still urged His people to faith: “I am come as a light into the world, that whosoever believes on me should not abide in darkness. “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (John 12:46, 47). So earnestly did He desire and attempt to draw the children of Jerusalem to Himself and to gather them under His wings. “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” (Isaiah 5:4). Even those who finally perish the Lord admonishes, warns, urges often, so often in all sincerity, in great love and patience, leaves no stone unturned, leaves nothing undone in order to save them.

In this connection, however, the Lord declares why it is that many are lost, despite the fact that God wants to save them all. “And you would not” (Matthew 23:37). I wanted to, but you would not. With their hardhearted unwillingness most men bring to naught the Lord’s loving efforts and make of none effect the counsel of God for their salvation (Luke 7:30). Their evil counsel and will thwart and break God’s good and gracious will. Paul and Barnabas testified to the unbelieving Jews in Antioch: “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). Also, to those who are finally lost the Word of God is spoken and everlasting life offered in the Word. However, they gather together all the powers of their being and, as if by force, reject God’s Word and consider themselves unworthy of life. Stephen pronounced upon his people, upon Israel of all ages, the judgment: “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do you” (Acts 7:51). In all men who hear the Word of God, also in those who perish in the end, the Holy Spirit works and testifies mightily to their heart and conscience, earnestly wishes to convert them. Always, stubbornly, however, the latter resist the Spirit, hurl themselves against Him and so obstruct His way.

Scripture is clear concerning the universal gracious will and the cause of damnation. This is how far Scripture goes in this matter, and not one step farther. But now here is where human reason steps into the picture and spins its own threads. It infers and concludes: God will have all men to be saved. That God’s saving will does not affect most men is because they resist. That God’s saving will affects others is basically because they do not resist. This God’s saving will affects others is basically because they do not resist. This is nothing else but human supplement to God’s Word. In the passages introduced above Scripture does not utter one syllable about this. It speaks only of those person who do not believe and are lost and does not even from afar point to the others who believe and are saved. This concluding from one to the other is a frantic game played by reason that is emancipated from the Word. That conclusion leads also to an indictment. For in those passages where Scripture really speaks of those who believe and are saved and how they come to this, it says the exact opposite.

Relative to the origin of faith, Scripture teaches in general: “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3); that “no man can come to Christ, except it were given to Him by the Father” (John 6:65); that, therefore, each one who comes to Christ or

believes, has this from the Father; that the Father draws to the Son; that God works and grants faith. But usually when Scripture comes to speak of this matter, it gives the discussion this twist by speaking specifically about believing Christians and giving them to ponder the fact that they owe their faith to God alone. Jesus testified to Peter after the latter had confessed his faith: “Flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17). Paul writes to the Christians at Ephesus: “That you may know ..., what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us, according to the working of His mighty power” (Ephesians 1:19). And to the Christians in Colosse: “having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12). It reads there: “διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ.” Faith is spoken of as the direct operation of God. And to the Christians at Philippi: “it is given to you (ἐχαρίσθη) out of grace, “in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him,” etc. (Philippians 1:29). These passages state clearly and positively that faith is wrought by God through His might and power, is given by God out of grace, and that absolutely every participation, also every omission or failure, on man’s part is excluded. At the same time, Scripture gives us believing Christians the assurance that “we are kept by the power of God through faith to salvation” (1 Peter 1:5), that God upholds our faith according to His power and so also preserves us through faith to salvation.

Also on this Scriptural truth human reason hangs itself and draws the conclusion: if God alone works faith without any cooperation on man’s part, then God has failed to do something to the others who do not believe and will be damned. This is again a human invention. In the passages quoted Scripture speaks only of those who believe and will be saved and shows how they have come to faith but says not one word about others who are finally lost because of their unbelief. Where the latter are spoken of, as in the first group of passages, it is rather said in all seriousness that it is their own fault that they do not come to faith and are not saved.

That God has worked in us Christians faith according to His might and grace and preserves us in it did not occur by accident but according to God’s well-conceived counsel and purpose. Our faith and our salvation have their final cause in eternity. Here is where the doctrine of predestination enters the picture.

From beginning to end Scripture, where it comes to speak of eternal election, talks specifically about the persons who are chosen, and holds before believing Christians that they owe their faith, their entire Christianity, their salvation to God’s eternal election. We read in Acts 13:48: “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” The Gentiles, who had heard the Word of the apostles, were glad and extolled the Word of the Lord and believed, namely, they and as many of them as came to faith who were ordained to eternal life. Their ordination to eternal life brought along, had this result and effect that they came to faith and thus walked the way that leads to eternal life. The apostle considers and designates believing Christians to be “the elect of God, holy and beloved” (Colossians 3:12). Paul writes to the Christians in Thessalonica: “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

God has from the beginning chosen us to salvation, we who are now Christians and stand in faith, and He did it by taking along in this decree of election our faith and our salvation. From the beginning He established that and how He was going to take us out of the world and bring us to faith, sanctify us through His Spirit, separate us from the world, and in this way save us. The letter to the Ephesians begins with the words: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:3, 4). Here the apostle attributes the rich spiritual blessings that have fallen to the Christians’ lot, which we now possess and enjoy as Christians, to God’s eternal election, as the source of blessing. We have through faith in Christ become children of God. And to this very thing God has chosen and ordained us through Christ before the foundation of the world; He has “predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself” and that as His dear children “we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4, 5). How firm and irrevocable this ordination is and the adoption resting upon it, Paul shows in the words: “Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who works all things after the counsel of His own will.” So, it is impossible for the inheritance to escape us.

In his letter Peter reminds Christians, the scattered strangers, of their great glory, that they are “elect,” chosen “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (*κατὰ πρόγνωσιν θεοῦ πατρός*), in that God beforehand chose them unto Himself. He chose them to be His own, “through sanctification of the Spirit,” in that God had intended His Holy Spirit for them, who should separate them from the world and from the corruption of the world, “to obedience” (*εἰς ὑπακοήν*), to the obedience of faith (wherever in the New Testament the characteristic conduct of the Christians is designated by “*ὑπακοή*,” there faith, obedience to the Gospel, is always meant), “and unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,” therefore, chosen to faith and to justification (1 Peter 1:1, 2). Also in Romans 8:29, 30 where Paul speaks not with “we” or “you” but objectively with “*οὓς, τούτους*” of the persons who are elected and ordained, He has in mind Christians, those who love God (verse 28). For it reads there that God “predestinated those whom He did foreknow (*οὓς προέγνω*—chose for himself beforehand) to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren,” that they should become partakers of Christ’s glory and that God then led these very ones onto the way that leads to glory, called them, justified them and by that already glorified them since calling justification guarantee future glory. Thus our calling, justification, what God does to us in time in order to save us, is nothing else than the execution of His eternal decree of election.

In all these passage dealing with predestination reference is expressly made to definite persons, to the elect of God, the believing children of God, and to them applied the comfort of eternal grace. God has already, before I came into being, before the foundation of the world, directed His attention towards me, thought directly about me, chosen and selected me for Himself and written my name in the book of life. God has taken counsel in eternity as to how He had a mind to bring me to the saving knowledge of Christ, ordained the hour of my conversion and arranged all my destinies and so ordered them that all things must serve my welfare, the salvation of my soul. And that I now have been led into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, know Jesus my Savior and that I have extricated my faith from so many, great difficulties and temptations, this has occurred because God from eternity has taken my salvation and everything that it entails into His all-powerful hand. Truly, my faith, my salvation rests upon an immovable foundation, upon God’s eternal election, predestination, ordination, upon the purpose of Him Who does all things according to the counsel of His will.

Scripture is clear concerning predestination and the cause of our faith. Yes, what Scripture teaches about this is as clear as John 3:16. Only he who intermingles his own wisdom with Scripture sees darkness here; he creates for himself darkness out of light. Human reason and wisdom conclude: if some believe and are saved, then others are lost because God does not want to save them. But such conclusion has no support in the text of Scripture, in the passages relating

to predestination. For there the talk is only about the person of the elect and not about those who are lost. On the other hand, by means of such a conclusion the clear teaching of Scripture about the universal gracious will is invalidated.

The doctrine of the universal gracious will and the doctrine of predestination do not contradict one another. That God leads me and my fellow believers on the way of faith to salvation and has determined to do so already from eternity, this agrees very well with the other that God will have all men to be saved. It is the elect that the universal gracious will has in view. That God has so firmly established my own faith and salvation and that of my fellow believers, that He has chosen me in eternity to faith and salvation and in time works faith in me and through faith preserves me to salvation, does not contradict those other statements that God will have all men to be saved, that Christ has died for all men, that the Holy Spirit earnestly desires to convert all who come to hear the Word, and that the majority of men is lost for the reason that they with their own will resist that gracious will of God, that they reject Christ's merit, that they bring to naught the loving efforts of the Holy Spirit. There is no *contradictio in adjecto* here; for the two doctrines are simply dealing with different matters. These are simply different truths which we are unable to reconcile with our reason, that we cannot harmonize with our understanding. Nor has God commanded us to build bridges from one truth to the other. The one who does this is at his own risk building on air and breaking his own neck. By means of the Scripture statements concerning the universal gracious will and by means of the Scripture statements concerning predestination the same sun is shedding light upon the same grace only by way of separate rays and a different luster. And are we the worse for it if we cannot look into heaven, into God's heart, and observe how these various rays emerge from one and the same Source? We walk here upon earth in the light of the manifold (πολυποίκιλος, Ephesians 3:10) wisdom and grace of God joyfully as in the day.

We leave these two doctrines each in its own place and do not mutilate them by pressing them against and into one another. However, in their application we separate them and apply each in its time and in its proper place. And Scripture gives us direction as to the application of both truths.

Jesus held out to Nicodemus the words of John 3:16 and thus won him over and made a disciple out of a Pharisee. If we wish to win, convert sinners, engage in mission work, we select 1 Timothy 2:4, John 3:16 and similar passages as texts for our sermons and instruction courses and remain completely silent about predestination. Such words of God as "For God so loved the world," etc. are suited to kindle saving faith in men's hearts. The one who has taken a deep plunge we remind, after we have conveyed to him his guilt and transgression, that Christ died for the wicked, that Christ is the reconciliation for the sins of the whole world. But we tell those who oppose the preaching of the Gospel or become weary of the Word what a terrible thing it is for a person not to consider himself worthy of eternal life, for a person to resist God's Holy Spirit, so that they might perhaps become terrified and have a change of heart. Before it is too late.

Before believing Christians we place God's boundless power and grace to which they owe their faith, their Christian estate, so that they come to recognize it better and better and become ever more firmly rooted in the same. We comfort believing Christians with predestination. We urge our Christians to be grateful. With Paul we teach them: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." We show them what special reason they have to thank God for having chosen them through Christ before the foundation of the world, for the blessings in which

they as Christians delight, blessings that are not some kind of fleeting, unstable treasure but a lasting benefit because it is anchored in eternity.

2 Thessalonians 2 the apostle has spoken of the great apostasy of the last times and then continues: “We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation.” We appeal to our Christians in order to encourage and strengthen them: though many on all sides become unfaithful and forsake their faith, you, you God has chosen from the beginning to salvation in belief of the truth. Your faith is included in eternal election, therefore, it will endure. In Romans 8 Paul and in 1 Peter 1 the apostle Peter fill suffering, persecuted, fearful Christians with courage and comfort and comfort them also with their eternal election, predestination, and ordination, which will help them to see beyond the sufferings and anxieties of this present time and lead them safely to the blessed goal. We should be guided by this example.

However, if a Christian is fearful and worried about whether he will be saved, whether he also belongs among the elect, if he is doubtful about his Christian estate and begins to falter, we in that instance take recourse to the general promises of God’s grace. It is a sure conclusion which only faith understands and validation: For God so loved the world. There is no question but that I do belong to the world, that I am a part of the lost world. But now has God loved the world. Therefore, me also, me also will he save; therefore, I am one of the elect. In this way those two distinct doctrines, each in its own way, serve the same purpose: the salvation of souls.

How and Whereby Can and Should a Christian Become Sure of His Eternal Election?²⁹

The question is not how and with what can and should Christians comfort themselves when they are faced with the great danger that threatens their faith, brought on by world and devil, when they become conscious of their own weakness and so are fearful as to whether their faith will endure. The answer to this, of course, is that the doctrine of predestination gives Christians the beautiful consolation and assurance that God will preserve them in faith until the end. Our faith, our salvation is in the safe-keeping of God's eternal counsel which can never fail or be overthrown. Those who are called according to God's purpose can never separated from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8).

The question with which we are dealing here is whether a Christian is able for his own person to become sure whether he belongs within the number of the elect whom God from eternity has ordained to the adoption of children and life everlasting and whom he then in time brings to faith, upholds in faith and finally saves, and by what he is able to know this.

Scripture often speaks of the elect, and in this connection that the elect alone will be saved. Then a Christian, who is worried about his salvation, begins to think, and he asks: What's my situation? Do I belong among the elect? Has God inscribed my name also in the book of life?

Many sincere Christians have become disturbed when dwelling upon God's eternal predestination. No believing Christian is completely spared this encounter.

What is the situation? Is there an answer to this question? Or do I have to suffer until Judgment Day, when before all the world it will be revealed who the elect of God are? Or do I wait until the hour of my death, until that moment when I arrive at the goal of faith, when my faith changes into seeing? I would very much now, amid all the temptations and encounters of this life, like to know just how matters stand with me, to know whether I can console myself with ultimate salvation. I need a firm stay like this so that I can hold my own in the hour temptation. It's for certain I cannot peer into God's secret counsel, into God's council chamber. Nor do I want to do that. God has given me no special revelation as to whether he has written my name into the book of life. Nor do I demand that of him. I'm not a fanatic. I cling simply to the written Word. But doesn't Scripture give me some information concerning this question that plagues me and takes away my peace of mind? It's sure, my name isn't recorded in Scripture. But doesn't Scripture at least speak of election and salvation in some such way that I can see and must see that I too am meant and included? Surely Scripture is not going to leave me in the lurch relative to this important question, relative to this distressing anxiety. I find in Scripture words of God that make me sure of my election, my salvation. Of course, this certainty now is a certainty that does not rest on conclusive facts, nor on reason and feeling, a certainty that cannot be demonstrated mathematically but that relies solely on the Word that stands written there. Yet such certainty of faith that relies on the firm, prophetic Word is stronger, more certain than anything I see, grasp, think, comprehend, feel, and experience.

And just what are these words of God? We let our Confessions supply them. Article XI of the Formula of Concord concerns itself explicitly with the question we have before us. The question is repeated in the following words: "This also belongs to the further explanation and salutary use of the doctrine concerning God's foreknowledge (predestination) to salvation: Since

²⁹ Source: *Lehre und Wehre* L [50] (June, 1904) 6:241-252, (July and August, 1904), 7/8:297-308. [Ed.:] Rev. Koehlinger begins his translation on page 246 since pages 241-246 deal with material on the Election Controversy.

only the elect, whose names are written in the book of life, are saved, *how we can know, whence and whereby we can perceive who are the elect* that can and should receive this doctrine for comfort.”³⁰

It is naturally presumed here that a Christian can know and perceive whether he is elect. The only question is how he is able to know this, from what and whereby he is able to perceive this. And this question is answered in the following. It reads further: “And of this we should not judge according to our reason, nor according to the Law or from any external appearance. Neither should we attempt to investigate the secret, concealed abyss of divine predestination, but should *give heed to the revealed will of God*.”³¹ Therefore, from God’s will, openly revealed in the Word of God, in Scripture, I should form opinion as to whether I also am elect.

And now the Formula of Concord next quotes such passages that explicitly deal with predestination (Ephesians 1; 2 Timothy 1; Romans 8; John 10). These words of Scripture speak of the eternal predestination, that in itself is an unfathomable mystery, but speak of it in such a way that they at the same time show that and how this secret counsel of God has been revealed. Not as though God had made public the register wherein were recorded the names of the elect. That is and remains hidden. And a genuine Christian has no desire to look at the list. But God has “made manifest [φανερωθεῖσαν] his own purpose and grace ... by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ ... through the Gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10), through the Word of truth, through the preaching of the Gospel and its effect (Ephesians 1:13), through the calling (Romans 8:28). In other words, God has revealed and made known to men the way upon which He has determined to lead His elect to salvation and actually does lead to salvation. And from this revealed will of God each Christian is able to perceive whether he too belongs to the elect.

How that is meant the Formula of Concord declares in the following passage: “For this reason the elect are described thus, John 10:27-28a: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give to them eternal life*. And Ephesians 1:11, 13: *Those who according to the purpose are predestinated to an inheritance* hear the Gospel, believe in Christ, pray and give thanks, are sanctified in love, have hope, patience, and comfort under the cross (Romans 8:25); and although all this is very weak in them, yet they hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6).”³²

The one who reads and reflects carefully and in context upon the Scripture passages quoted here must confess: Certainly, exactly as our Confessions state, the elect are described in Scripture as people who hear the voice of Christ, who have heard and received the Gospel, who believe in Christ, are sanctified in love, pray, praise, and give thanks, etc. And correctly our Confessions judge that now every Christian can see from this description of the elect, if he applies the same to himself, if he tests himself accordingly, whether he belongs within the number of the elect.

Let’s once more briefly consider the content of Ephesians 1:3-14. There the apostle describes the rich spiritual blessings that have devolved upon Christians in Christ. There he describes the people who have heard and believed the Word of truth, the Gospel of their salvation, who have come to share in that good work, the redemption of Christ, who have forgiveness of sins in Christ, who have through Christ become children of God and as such also walk holy, in love, who are sealed with the Holy Spirit, the Pledge of the heavenly inheritance.

³⁰ [Ed.:] This is taken from FC SD XI.25 with the emphasis supplied from *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 1071.

³¹ [Ed.:] This is taken from FC SD XI.26 with the emphasis supplied from *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 1071.

³² [Ed.:] This is taken from FC SD XI.30 with the emphasis supplied from *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 1073. The italicized words are direct quotations from the Scriptures.

As to the source of this blessing, which Christians now have in hand, he explicitly refers back (verses 4-6, 11) to the eternal election and ordination of God. Christians, then, are chosen and ordained exactly to what they now are and have. What they now have received and experienced, that they have come to possess as a result of their eternal election. The blessings of Christianity enumerated here are the effects and results of eternal election. Thus Christians can and should gather from these effects that God has chosen them from eternity.

The description of the Christians in verses 3-14 is the description of the elect. The marks of Christianity are of themselves also the marks of the elect. Thus, a Christian, in whom these marks of Christianity are found, can and should conclude that he belongs within the number of the elect. Yes, since the apostle throughout the section uses the pronouns “we,” “us,” “you,” he applies what he says about the blessing of Christianity and eternal election directly to his Christian readers, compels, as it were, all Christians who hear these words to consider themselves saints, beloved and elect of God.

In similar fashion Paul in Romans 8 treats calling, conversion, justification as the result and fulfillment of God’s decree of election and so describes the elect as people whom God has called, converted, justified. In this way he tells us to reason our calling, conversion, justification back to our eternal election.

Yes, the believing Christian who looks closely at these words of Scripture concerning predestination concludes: God has received me in grace. The Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. I hear Christ speaking to me; I know my Shepherd, and He knows me, and I follow Him. I do not maintain that I have already achieved all this; but I do press on, hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me. Though I am still so very weak and frail, I still everyday work hard at godliness. The Holy Spirit dwells in my heart through faith. He bears witness to me that I am a child of God. He leads me on an even course. He guarantees me a child’s inheritance. For that reason I do not doubt but am sure that I also am an elect sheep of Christ, an elect child of God.

And that’s exactly the way Scripture characterizes the elect. This is exactly the way God leads His elect to salvation. This is a conclusion and confession of faith. And this conclusion in no way goes beyond what Scripture reveals to us concerning this matter. This conclusion takes from these Scripture passages concerning predestination only what is comprehended in them, is nothing but the application of Scripture to my own person.

But wait a minute! Doesn’t this deduction, this reflecting on the part of the believer require a supplement or, more correctly, a limitation? Scripture teaches and experience confirms that many who are called and come to faith and have believed for a time again fall away and then persist in unbelief and in the end perish. They obviously do not belong to the elect. Must I not for that reason rather conclude: that I am called and have come to faith and now stand in faith is proof that I “can be” an elect person, that I perhaps “am” an elect person, who now believes, but in a conditional way, only in case, under the condition that I remain in faith and will not give Christ up again—and that only time will tell? Our Confessions do not contain a single syllable about such reservations and conditions. It excludes them. Such reservations and conditions have no place in those passages of Scripture dealing with predestination. Rather they contradict Scripture. For according to this testimony of Scripture even the first step of becoming a Christian, calling, conversion, and what I have so far lived in the faith is product and effect of election and should serve as proof for my eternal election. These reservations also have no basis in the words of Scripture that deal with temporary believers, with apostates and their fate. These words speak only of the apostates and not of the elect and are meant as a warning for Christians

insofar as they are still flesh and wish to gain certainty. These words are not to taint the consolation offered frightened, assailed hearts and consciences and to make salvation unsure. All such reservations and conditions are made up by men and slyly introduced into Scripture. They originate from reason, from the flesh, from doubt and unbelief, yes, are a malicious deceit of the devil, who is an old hand at distorting Scripture and is seriously intent on robbing Christians of the certainty of salvation and thereby of salvation itself.

However, we still are not at the end of our consideration. We stand in need of one more element in order in all instances to be sure of our election and salvation. The marks of the elect mentioned before are subjective experiences of the believers. They are the workings of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men and so are something real, are not imaginary feelings and experiences and thus misleading but are trustworthy marks of election. Nevertheless, every Christian has periods when he will question what he has previously experienced as a Christian, what the Holy Spirit has previously worked in him, his faith and his entire walk in faith. There come periods of severe trial in which no consolation of God will cling to him since he appears to be completely disconcerted, since he feels and thinks he is altogether poor, empty, destitute, and miserable, since it appears that the last spark of faith and spiritual life has expired in him. At such times this question comes alive: do I really belong to the elect? The one who is assailed thinks and concludes: yes, indeed, the believing children of God, they are the elect. And that is precisely now the question as it relates to me: am I a believing child of God; have I true faith? Who knows but my entire previous Christianity was perhaps pretense and self-deception?

This is the particular question with which the conclusion of the previous article dealt. And there it was briefly stated that one must in such cases come to the aid of a Christian with God's promise of universal grace and from the same convince him that he is chosen and that he may and should be sure of his salvation.

Where the Formula of Concord deals expressly with the question as to how one is able to know who the elect are, it quotes not only the words of Scripture concerning predestination but also the words of Scripture concerning universal grace. It says in this connection: "Therefore, if we wish to consider our eternal election to salvation with profit, we must in every way hold sturdily and firmly to this, that, as the preaching of repentance, so also the promise of the Gospel is universal, that is, it pertains to all men (Luke 24:47). For this reason Christ has commanded *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among ALL nations*. For *God loved the WORLD and gave His Son* (John 3:16). *Christ bore the sins of the WORLD* (John 1:29), *gave His flesh for the life of the WORLD* (John 6:51). *His blood is the propitiation for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD* (1 John 1:7, 2:2)." ³³

Here our Confessions summarize the Scripture passages in which the word "world" stands out and it is attested that God has loved the entire world, that Christ has atoned and given Himself for the entire world so that the world might have life. And it impresses upon us that we must hold firmly and resolutely to these promises of universal grace if we wish to consider our eternal election profitable to salvation and to answer correctly that question how it is possible to know who the elect are. ³⁴

We shall take a good look at the comforting truth which we have drawn from John 3:16. We shall at the same time determine whether there is any fanaticism contained in our evaluation of this passage.

³³ [Ed.:] This is taken from FC SD XI.28 with emphasis added in *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 1071.

³⁴ [Ed.:] This ends the first installment of the article: *Lehre und Wehre* L [50] (June, 1904) 6:241-252.

Our basis is Luther's interpretation. The conclusion of Luther's classic sermon on Pentecost, which at the same time is a storehouse of true theology, reads as follows:

Perhaps you will object and say: yes, if I were as pious and holy as Peter, Paul, or the holy Virgin, then would I dare to believe and be comforted with this gift. They were saints, and no doubt for them this gift was intended, but I, a poor sinner, have no right to appropriate it to myself, for I have so often and in such manifold ways offended and opposed God. Such thoughts cannot be avoided when we hear this Gospel, and then think of our condition and great transgressions. But we must watch that these thoughts do not gain such power over us that we lose sight of the Gospel; to this we must speedily return and in this find comfort. Such thoughts are really nothing but unbelief, which would keep us from this gift and its comfortable assurance of the forgiveness of our sins through faith in Christ.

Unbelief, however, can be successfully combatted only with the Word of God. Christ our Savior gives to us this Word, so that we dare not doubt its truthfulness. He tells us that His Father in heaven, the everlasting God, so loved "the world," that He even gave for it His only begotten Son. Now it is evident that the expression "the world" does not mean Mary, Peter, Paul, et al., but that it includes the whole human race, one and all, without any exception. Or have you any doubt that you are a human being? If so, feel your chest or your nose, and you will find out whether you are different from other people. Why then will you persistently exclude yourself from the application of this expression "world," when Christ so plainly includes in it all men, and does not apply it merely to the Virgin Mary, to St. Peter, or to St. Paul? If you and I refuse to accept Christ, because we think that we have no part in Him, we make Him a liar, for He said that He was given for the whole world. No, we must rather come to the opposite conclusion, that we have as good a right to this gift as Peter or Paul, or any one else has, simply because we are men, and as such a part of the world. Let us therefore beware and not doubt God's words by thinking that we cannot be sure whether we belong to those, to whom and for whom He gave His Son that they might have everlasting life. With such thoughts we deny that God speaks the truth.

Let us, therefore, shun such doubts, and the thoughts producing them, as we would shun the very devil himself. Let us be firm in faith and say: we know that God gave His gift no only to Peter and Paul, for if He had desired to bestow it only upon those perfectly worthy of it, He would have given it to the holy angels, who are pure, undefiled spirits, or to the sun and moon, which obey perfectly the law of God by continuing in their prescribed course; but we read otherwise, namely, that "God gave His Son to the world." Therefore, we all have a part in this glorious gift, just as well as David or any apostle. Who was David? Did he not commit gross sins? Who were the apostles? Were they not all sinners and unworthy of this gift?

Let no one, therefore, reason thus: I am a sinner, and am not as holy as St. Peter, consequently I dare not appropriate this gift to my consolation. Far be it from us to harbor such thoughts. Let us believe in God's Word implicitly; and because He says that He gave this gift to the world, let us all, since we belong to the world, no matter who we are, lay hold of it in faith; for if we do not, we deny the truthfulness of God, and thereby commit a great and damnable sin.

Some perhaps might think: if God had told this to me especially, I would believe it and be assured that it also applies to me. In this you err, my friend; God intentionally speaks in a general way, and says that he gave His Son to the whole world, that all may be saved and none be excluded. If there are any who are not benefited by this gift, they are themselves to blame; they exclude themselves, through wicked unbelief, from the blessing of the gift of God, and will have to render an account for their faithlessness; yes, their own words will condemn, them. Besides, we have the holy sacraments, instituted of Christ Himself, to be employed by us as means of grace, by which we are to obtain and to appropriate to ourselves this gift (Saint Louis edition XIIIa, columns 662.27-664.31).³⁵

Here Luther sums up briefly his precious interpretation. The Father in heaven, the true eternal God, loved the world, the undeserving world, so much that He gave His only begotten Son. And what was the purpose of this gift? Concerning this Luther said in the same sermon:

Now follows what purpose God has in view in the bestowal of this gift. It contains no outward advantages for us; we are neither clothed by it, nor fed, nor sheltered: much less is it injurious to our bodies; it contains no poison. Thus He gives His Word, Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar, not to our injury but to our salvation. This gift of the only begotten Son is granted to us to this end, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. From this declaration we learn that this gift does not bring us money, goods, honor or power in this world, for all such benefits would be but transitory. Yes, if we had all these things we would nevertheless still be under the dominion of the devil. But now even the Son of God is given us, through the Father's love toward us, it follows that we are freed from sin, death and hell, if we believe in the Savior; for He crushed the head of the serpent and despoiled it of its power; He slew sin and devoured death and extinguished the fire of hell, so that they are all vanquished for evermore and deprived of their supremacy over us. So great and glorious was this gift. Honor, praise and glory be to God, the merciful Giver of this blessing, for ever and forever, Amen.³⁶

Luther sums this all up when he says that this Son and eternal life are promised and given to the whole world.

God has given the world His only begotten Son and with Him everlasting life. This is good exegesis. For Christ immediately continues: "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). And in John 6:51 He says that He would give His flesh for the life of the world so that the world might have life. And after Christ gave His life into death Paul writes that "by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men to justification of life" (Romans 5:18). In Christ eternal life has been promised to all men. Yes, Scripture attests, wherever it speaks of redemption, that the world has been reconciled to God through Christ's death and blood, that through Christ eternal life has been won, heaven opened, salvation prepared for it. This briefly is the great, rich gift that God out of pure love has given the evil, ungrateful world: the only begotten Son of God and eternal life. And this gift is comprehended in the Word and is offered to the world in the Word. Christ

³⁵ [Ed.:] See also: Eugene F.A. Klug, ed., *Sermons of Martin Luther: the House Postils*, 3 volumes, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996, 2:203.27—205.31.

³⁶ Saint Louis edition, XIIIa, 659.19-20; Klug, 2:201.19-20.

had just finished talking to Nicodemus about this, and this message now goes through all the world that God has given His Son and eternal life to the world.

The statement in John 3:16 is one of God's most precious promises. Here God has "promised," "pledged" His Son to the world and, in addition, eternal life. The one who accepts and believes such promise possesses all that he needs. The one who believes in the only begotten Son of God, who in such message and promise offers Himself along with all His merit, that one has everlasting life.

The salient point at issue in Luther's sermon is stated in the words: "Perhaps you will object and say: yes, if I were as pious and holy as Peter, Paul, or the holy Virgin, then would I dare to believe and be comforted with this gift. They were saints, and no doubt for them this gift was intended, but I, a poor sinner, have no right to appropriate it for myself, for I have so often and in such manifold ways offended and opposed God." And that is the very point with which we are concerned here.

"Such thoughts cannot be avoided when we hear this Gospel, and then think of our condition and great transgressions." However, one should not belabor such thoughts for long, but one must "speedily return to the Word and in this find comfort." And now in order to assure this individual who feels his unworthiness that the gift of God is meant for him too, Luther concerns himself with that one word "world." "Now it is evident that the expression 'the world' does not mean Mary, Peter, Paul, et al., but that it includes the whole human race, one and all, without any exception. Or have you any doubt that ye are a human being? If so, feel your chest or your nose, and you will find out whether you are different from other people. Why then will you persistently exclude yourself from the application of this expression 'world.' For Christ says so clearly that God did not give His Son merely to the Virgin Mary, or to St. Peter, or to St. Paul but to the whole world." "We must rather come to the opposite conclusion, that we have as good a right to this gift as Peter or Paul, or anyone else has, simply because we are men, and as such a part of the world. Let us, therefore, beware and not doubt God's words by thinking that we cannot be sure whether we belong to those, to whom and for whom He gave His Son that they might have everlasting life." "Some perhaps might think: if God had told this to me especially, I would believe it and be assured that it also applies to me. In this you err, my friend; God intentionally speaks in a general way, and says that He gave His Son to the whole world, that all may be saved and none be excluded."

This is irrefutable argumentation. The conclusion is indisputable: I belong to the world; I am a part of the world; I also am a human being. But now God has promised and given His Son and everlasting life to the whole world. Also to me. And so I can and should be altogether sure of everlasting life. This conclusion does not add any new element, not one iota more, to the words of Christ but merely takes out of the word "world" what is comprehended in it. Just as a time when a Christian thinks of his misdeeds, feels his unworthiness, is put out about his piety, about his faith and begins to doubt whether he one day will be saved, he should simply take a look at God's Word. He should rightly consider this word "world," not speculate about it. He should merely reflect upon and consider well all this word that Christ used includes. Then he should think and say to himself: whether I really am just and holy, whether I have true faith, I don't know. I have grave doubts about that. But yet there is no doubt about the fact that I belong to the world, that I am a part of the world, that I am a human being. All I have to do is touch my chest or my nose. I don't doubt at all that I belong to the wicked, evil world; I feel my sins, my complete unworthiness. But if I belong to the world, then everlasting life also belongs to me. For

God didn't give His Son and promise eternal life just to St. Peter, St. Paul, to the Virgin Mary but to the entire world.

On the basis of John 3:16 and similar passages we say to one who is disturbed about his faith and salvation: Yes, perhaps were God to give me a special revelation, were he to say to my face that I have eternal life, then I would believe it, and I could be sure that it holds true for me; then the matter would at least be sure and settled. The assurance you seek is provided by all the gracious promises of Scripture. The general revelation of God's universal love for the whole world, that God has in Christ promised the entire world eternal life can, will, and should make you sure for your own person simply because the revelation is general and excludes no one. In and with the world God has also promised you that, in the words of Luther, Christ "slew sin, devoured death, and extinguished the fire of hell, so that they are all vanquished for evermore and deprived of their supremacy over us"; they will not frighten you, will not strangle you and damn you. In other words, he one day will take us out of this life into everlasting life, out of this earth to himself in heaven. And should others despise this promise of God, censure God for lying in His Word, and exclude themselves from the salvation in Christ, don't let this bother you. This doesn't make God's promise unsure. Just be sure you don't censure God yourself! Yes, the great, living, and true God has promised life and salvation not only to the whole world but also to you. And there is nothing surer and more reliable than God's Word and promise.

However, if it's certain that passages such as John 3:16 can make a Christian sure of his salvation, then it's also true that a Christian out of all the general promises can become sure of His eternal election. For these statements are identical. To be sure, John 3:16 does not say a single word, not a single syllable about eternal election. And it would be an absurd inference were one to conclude thus: God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, etc.; therefore, he has also chosen the world, save that this latter statement contains a *contradictio in adjecto*.³⁷ And so it is also nonsense if one from John 3:16 and similar passages construes the *intuitu fidei*³⁸ into election.

The doctrine of election stands written on another page of the Bible. But repeatedly Scripture speaks of "the elect" apart from the classic passage that details God's eternal election. The elect are all those whom God has from the beginning chosen to salvation. The elect are those who are finally saved; only the elect will be saved. Mark 13:27. The elect are not all men, are not the world, but those whom God has chosen from the world. This is implied in the concept, "ἐκλεκτοί" (elect). The elect are, as the Lord says, few in number compared to the great mass of those who perish in the end. Nevertheless, these few will surely be saved (Mark 13:20). And since Scripture designates as the elect those who will finally be saved, the question whether I also belong to those who will finally be saved, the question whether I also belong to those who are finally saved thus factually coincides with that other question whether I belong to the elect. Passages, such as John 3:16, as already stated, in themselves give us no occasion to speak of the elect give us the right and demand us to use the expressions being saved and elect indiscriminately. The mere word "elect" calls attention to the fact that God's eternal counsel is secret inasmuch as the names of the elect are not revealed. And this recall is in itself apt to frighten a Christian who realizes and feels his own unworthiness, is apt to awaken the anxious question: who knows whether my name is written in the "book of life"? Nevertheless, when a Christian searches Scripture thoroughly and takes note of how Scripture details eternal election and the elect, fright disappears. And it disappears completely, changing into joyful certainty

³⁷ [Ed.:] "contradiction in terms"

³⁸ [Ed.:] "in view of faith"

when he opens the other page of the Bible where are written the universal promises of grace, and he accepts these promises as they are and understands them as they read.

This latter formulation of the present question may also be illustrated with a quote from Luther. He writes in his interpretation of 1 Peter 1: 2:³⁹

Therefore, your sin and unworthiness convict you, and it occurs to you that you may not be provided for by God, that the number of the elect is small, the crowd of the wicked is great, and you are terrified at the horrible examples of divine wrath and judgment, etc., so do not dispute for long why God does this or that, and not otherwise, if he could, etc. Also, do not venture to explore the abyss of divine providence with reason, otherwise you will certainly be mistaken and despair. If you find yourself in [God's] free grace, just as if you are going to the promise of the Gospel, it will teach you that Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to bless all the peoples of the earth, that is, to redeem them from sin and death, to make them righteous and saved, and to have done these things at the command and gracious will of God the heavenly Father, "who so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that all who believe in him are not lost, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). If you follow the counsel, you recognize beforehand that you are a child of wrath by nature, guilty of eternal death and damnation, from which no creature, neither human nor angelic, can save you, and then grasp God's promise, believe that he is a merciful, true God, who faithfully keeps (from sheer grace, without all our doing and merit) what he said, and therefore sent Christ, his only Son, that he should do enough for your sins, and give you his innocence and righteousness, and finally redeem you from all sorts of hardship and death: so do not doubt it: you belong among the little group of the elect etc. If one treats the provision in such a way (as St. Paul also maintains), it is exceedingly comforting. If you do it differently, it is terrible, etc.⁴⁰

Luther advises a Christian, who is troubled about his predestination, not to explore the abyss of divine predestination with his reason but to hold fast to the promises of the Gospel, namely, to those promises that concern the whole world, that teach that Christ, God's Son, came into the world in order to redeem all people from sin and death, to justify and save them. From this he should conclude and firmly believe that Christ has done all that needed to be done about his sins and will finally deliver him from all care and from death. This will alleviate his doubts about his belonging to the small host of the elect. Thus Luther testifies that a Christian can and should from the general promises of the Gospel become sure of his election.

We recall how Luther, who during this days as a monk had similar encounters, later made repeated reference to the words with which Staupitz once comforted him: "Dear friend, why torment yourself with these speculations and noble thoughts? Look at the wounds of Christ and the blood that He shed for you; predestination will shine forth from this." Then in his interpretation of Genesis 26:9 Luther explains those words of Staupitz in the following way: "God holds out His will and counsel to us and says, 'Behold, O man, I want to reveal predestination to you in a glorious way but not by following the way of reason or carnal wisdom as you are dreaming and thinking. I shall do it in this way: from a God who has not been revealed I shall become a revealed God and shall remain the same God still. I shall become man,

³⁹ [Ed.:] Rev. Koehlinger omitted the paragraph of Luther on 1 Peter 1:2 that Dr. Stoeckhardt quoted in his article. This is reinserted here along with a translation of Stoeckhardt's introductory words.

⁴⁰ [Ed.:] St. Louis edition IX.1115.

or send My Son, Who will die for your sins and then rise again from the dead, and thus shall I satisfy your desires and you will know whether you are predestined or not. ‘Behold, this is my Son; hear ye Him’ (Matthew 17:5). See Him as He lies there in the manger and upon His mother’s breast; see Him as He hangs on the cross; look what He is doing; listen to what He is saying. There you will certainly lay hold on Me. For ‘he that has seen me,’ says Christ, ‘has seen the Father.’ When you hear this and are baptized in His name, as well as come to love His Word, then you are sure that you are predestined and sure of your salvation.” “For that is the book of life into which you have been written.” “For that reason the godly should beware (that means, they should not ascend up into heaven with their thoughts) and strive only to learn how to cling to the Infant and to the Son of God, Jesus, Who is your God and Who for your sake became Man: the same is He Whom you should come to know and to Whom you should listen, as well as delight in Him and thank Him too for everything. When you possess Him, then you also possess the hidden along with the revealed God.”

Yes, that’s the way it is. Christ, God’s Son, Who was born of the Virgin Mary and Who died on the cross and shed His blood, is the Redeemer of the whole human race. To Him all men should listen, and Him all men should receive. And the one who now listens and looks to and receives Christ sees in Christ the Father, in the revealed God possesses also the hidden God; now he is completely sure of his predestination and salvation.⁴¹

Chemnitz agrees with Luther. A passage of one of his sermons on Matthew 22:1-14 so reads:

Thirdly, in the doctrine of God’s providence it must also be indicated what glorious, beautiful, constant consolation poor, sad, and fearful consciences have to take from this doctrine of God and how they may seek and find it in this article. Although this parable is primarily directed to punish, warn, and admonish the Pharisees, it is nonetheless set so that the foundations of consolation are also quite nicely and beautifully grasped in it, as they are conveyed more extensively and clearer in other passages of Scripture. For the sake of brevity, so that the sermon does not run too long, we want to indicate the most noble main parts. That is the reason we want to begin, as the parable says, with the Lord letting those whom He wants to be guests at this wedding be called through his servants; that is when I think about it and worry whether I too have made provisions for bliss, whether I belong to the number of the elect, and whether my name is also written in the book of life, because no one else will be saved, but only the elect, that I must not float between heaven and earth with uncertain, dubious thoughts or, as Paul says in Romans 10, go up to heaven or down into the depths; for with such thoughts it all says in Romans 11: “Who has known the Lord’s mind, or who has been his counselor?” That I should and can find such things in the vocation or word of God, which through a man’s mouth resounds in my ears and heart. As Paul says in Romans 10: “The word is near you in your mouth and in your heart,” and Ephesians 1: “He has let us know the secret of his will, that it should be preached”; Romans 8: “Those whom He foreknew or chosen, them He also called.” And that is a beautiful, wonderful consolation that I can know and experience from the call of the preached word what God decided about me and my bliss before the foundation of the world was laid. Hence, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2: “We have and know the mind of Christ, for God has revealed it to us through his Spirit, that we can know how abundantly we are graced by God.” Because when God calls us

⁴¹ [Ed.:] Rev. Koehlinger omits the following quotation from Martin Chemnitz that is supplied here from the original text. Dr. Stoeckhardt provides no specific printed source for his quotation.

through the word, we should not think: “He certainly calls me through the word, but who knows whether he means it in his heart too?” That he would like to have me happy when he calls me through the word this parable proves with this: “And the king was angry because the invited guests did not want to come.” By the common proclamation He also means my person in particular. I know that from this and from the fact that in Absolution and the Sacrament the common promise is made, yes, sealed and assured to me in particular for my person.

From the call or Word of God a Christian can and should perceive, as Chemnitz explains in this passage, that he also belongs among the number of the elect, that his name also is written in the book of life. In this sermon, Chemnitz also summarizes his statements in two sentences, the first of which is: “First of all, that I can be assured and assured from my profession that I am also endowed and chosen for bliss.” The call is “universal,” the promise is “universal.” God through universal promises of grace calls all who will listen, and He calls to salvation in all seriousness. And so with the “universal call,” just because it is universal, He also has me in view. And so through this call I am made sure that I too have been elected and predestined to salvation.

This is an argumentation, as Chemnitz shows here, used in Scripture itself. It is irrefutable. It is not a mental process but a conclusion of faith that, without speculating with reason, knows that it must apply the universal promises to its own person, as if God had especially promised me grace, life and salvation to my face.

We have proven sufficiently that it is scriptural that it is the correct understanding and the correct application of the universal promises of grace when we from them seek to become sure of our election and salvation. And we stand here in full accord with our Confession, with the most distinguished theologians of our church, with Luther for one.

However, some think that all that follows from Scripture’s universal promises of grace is that it is *possible* for me to be elect, not that I really am.⁴² They speak of a conditional certainty of salvation and urge that the possibility of later backsliding has to be considered an established fact. So the meaning is: only in case, only under the condition that he remains in faith until the end can a Christian be sure of his election and salvation. Of course, Scripture testifies that only he who perseveres until the end will be saved. It admonishes Christians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, exhorts one to be steadfast, warns against backsliding, gives solemn examples of backsliding for Christians to view.

These words of Scripture prove their point in their place, in their context. They should keep Christians, when fickle flesh stirs within them, from over-confidence and indifference. However, it is a perversion of Scripture, it is throwing words of Scripture into wild confusion if one tears exhortations and warnings of this nature and their intent out of context and introduces them as conditions in God’s promises, if one impresses upon a fearful Christian, troubled about his election and salvation, the possibility that he could fall from faith and so perish.

Luther came to grips with such impudent thoughts and objections. In the explanation of Genesis 26:9 he summons Christians to recognize and to grasp the hidden God in the revealed God, writing: “God says to you: ‘Look, you have my Son, hear Him and receive Him; if you do that, then you are sure of your faith and salvation.’ Perhaps you say, ‘I don’t know whether I am capable of holding on to faith.’ Ah, then just accept the present promise and predestination and do not impertinently or too minutely search into God’s secret counsel.”

⁴² [Ed.:] emphasis is added.

With Luther we console assailed Christians in accordance with Scripture: you are doubtful about your election and salvation. Perhaps, you say, I do not know whether I am capable of holding on to faith. Such a statement is not in place here. Simply accept the present promise and predestination. God has given and promised the whole world, and consequently also you, his Son and eternal life. You have eyes to see and ears to hear this Word. God right now, as you are hearing and reading this Word, is promising you eternal life. In this Word you have your predestination. God promises you now, freely, gratis, without further ado, without giving you some condition to meet, without any need for you to reciprocate, that he wants to save you. Accept that and place unconditional confidence in that unconditional divine promise. Do not look over there towards unbelievers and temporary believers who sooner or later give the lie to God's promise, who make a liar out of God; do not be intimidated by them; take no thought about the future; do not plant in front of your soul every likely possibility; but turn your eyes solely, directly to, set your heart upon, the present promise. What God promises you here, now in the Word, that God promises you will be saved, he means it seriously. When God says something to you he is downright earnest about it. And God will never change His mind. Luther: "on the other hand, our consolation is this: that, unless we change our minds, we have recourse to him who never changes but remains constant. For He says of Himself in Malachi 3:6: "for I am the Lord, I change not." And St. Paul says in Romans 11:29: "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Chemnitz: "thus I know from this that God will never change his feeling towards me: for St. Paul says in Romans 11:[29:] "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." So be convinced, dear Christian, for God assures you in His Word that He positively will give your eternal life, that you most assuredly belong within the host of the elect.

This is divine consolation that stands firm during times of trial. Such certainty, and it is divine certainty accomplished by God through the Word, such certain, joyful, comforting faith in the victory that overcomes all the enemies of our salvation, devil, world, and flesh.

How deplorable, on the other hand, if one attempts to console an assailed Christian in the following way: you are in doubt as to whether you will finally obtain salvation. You ask: right, I am not sure; shall I continue in faith? Yes, it is very commendable of you and necessary to ask this. For only he who continues in faith until the end will be saved. And whether you will continue in faith until the end, that remains to be seen. Just make sure you continue in faith. Perhaps with God's grace and help you will succeed. Certainly the possibility is ever present that you may fall from faith and perish. Still the opposite is also possible, that you will persevere in faith and be saved. You have the Gospel of Christ that saves all men who persevere in faith until the end. You believe it as well. And God's Word and the faith you presently have reassure you that you can be one of the elect, that you possibly do belong among those who will be saved in the end. At least as far as a beginning is concerned you have fulfilled the prerequisite of your election and salvation. Therefore, for the present be at peace, knowing that you may be an elect person, that when you die you may be saved and enter heaven.

Now, you can speak comfort in whatever way you want, if you somehow separate in the same area of possibilities and conditions, you will have provided a staff of reeds, which in the hour of trial collapses completely and never gives the Christian the strength he needs for the conflict with the devil, the world, and his own flesh. This simply is not God's consolation. This is nothing but empty talk, idle human delusion. Yes, it is possible for a person by a bad combination of simple Bible passages, which taken by themselves are all true, to transform God's Word into pure lies.

One would think that theologians who, it appears, by introducing “foreseen faith” (*intuitu fidei*) into universal grace, are impairing and lessening or rather voiding the doctrine of the election of grace and the comfort of predestination, would really get serious about universal grace. But no, our opponents by the conditions they introduce drain and weaken the universal promises of grace. Conditional certainty of salvation is no certainty at all, but uncertainty. Our opponents factually deny that a person is able in this life positively to be sure of his election and salvation and, therefore, concur with Canon 12 of the Council of Trent where it reads: “no one, so long as he lives this mortal life, ought in regard to the sacred mystery of divine predestination, so far presume as to state with absolute certainty that he is among the number of the predestined, as if it were true that the one justified either cannot sin any more, or, if he does sin, that he ought to promise himself an assured repentance. For except by special revelation, it cannot be known whom God has chosen to himself.”

The way opponents speak of “being able” to be saved, of the possibility of falling away and being lost, fits into the system of modern theology, which reduces Christ’s entire work of redemption and the gracious work of the Holy Spirit to a possibility of redemption and salvation. For it is now the general opinion that Christ by his death on the cross, by his redemption created the possibility for the forgiveness of sins and salvation, that justification will first enter the picture, become a reality, when man takes hold of Christ in faith; that the Holy Spirit by communicating spiritual powers to man merely renders faith possible; and that man then, if he believes, changes this possibility into reality. One sees how deep the abyss is that separates us from other church bodies of this country which also lay claim to the name of Luther.

Are There Elect Who Will Not Be Saved According to the Scriptures and the Confessions?⁴³

It is unerring to maintain that according to the Scriptures and the Confessions the elect are shown to be children of God and that all believers are elect.⁴⁴ At the very beginning of its discussion concerning God's eternal foreknowledge and election the Formula of Concord states: "the predestination or eternal election of God extends only over the godly, beloved children of God." And in the Solid Declaration the words "elect" and "children of God" are used interchangeably and the one is substituted for the other. For example: "thus the Spirit of God gives to the elect the testimony that they are children of God" (FC SD XI.31), etc.⁴⁵ Immediately before this it reads: "for this reason the elect are described thus, John 10:27 f.: "my sheep hear my voice ... hear the Gospel, believe in Christ, pray and give thanks, are sanctified in love, have hope, patience, and comfort under the cross" (FC SD XI.30), etc.⁴⁶ And so those who hear the Gospel, those who believe in Christ, pray, give thanks, pursue sanctification, they are the believing Christians and so are the elect. Yes, all Christians are the elect. The Confessions testify: "thus this doctrine affords also the excellent, glorious consolation that God was so greatly concerned about the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian, and so faithfully purposed it that before the foundation of the world was laid, he deliberated concerning it" (FC SD XI.45), etc.⁴⁷

In his eternal decree of election God took into account the salvation of every individual Christian, thus the salvation of all Christians. This matter is so evident that it is unnecessary to cite similar testimony from other writings of the authors of the Formula of Concord.

And just as the Confessions, so the Scriptures speak and teach. In the letters of the apostles the words "believers," "saints," "beloved," and "elect" are used interchangeably. We read, for example, in Colossians 3:12: "put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering," etc. Romans 8:31,32: "if God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" In the "us," "us" the apostle identifies himself with all believing Christians. Then he continues: "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (v. 33). The elect of God are the same persons who were previously designated by the word "us," therefore, the Christians. In the classic passages dealing with predestination, such as Ephesians 1:3 ff., Romans 8:28-30, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, the apostle reminds his readers, whom he addresses with "you," or with whom he identifies himself when he writes "we," hence, believing Christians of their eternal election.

However, what about the consequent, hence, temporary believers also, so long as they believe, are elect? What about the reasoning: all believers are elect? Then all who presently

⁴³ Source: *Lehre und Wehre* LI [51] (May, 1905) 5:193-202, (June, 1905), 6:245-253. [Ed.:] Koehlinger's translation of the title: "Are there according to Scripture and Confession elect who will not be saved?" is a bit unclear.

⁴⁴ [Ed.:] Koehlinger's translation begins with the paragraph beginning on page 197 (*LuW* 51:197): „Was ist zunächst von der ersten Behauptung zu halten, daß das Bekenntniß, wie die Schrift die Auserwählten als die Kinder Gottes bezeichnet und beschreibt, und daß alle Gläubigen Auserwählte sind? Nun, diese Behauptung ist ganz richtig.“ A more literal translation of this would be: "First of all, what is to be made of the first claim that the Confessions as do the Scriptures designate and describe the elect as "the children of God," and that all believers are elected? Well, that claim is quite correct.

⁴⁵ *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 1073.31.

⁴⁶ *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 1073.30.

⁴⁷ *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 1079.45.

believe and later deny their faith and perish, consequently temporary believers also fall, so long as they believe, into the rubric “believers,” “all believers.” Ergo, are there elect who do not go to heaven? This line of reasoning is absolutely false.

We shall bring several passage to bear on this canon that in the concept “the believers,” “all believers” the temporary believers are essentially always included. In accordance with this the following exegesis would be logical, in fact, the only legitimate one: Christ says in Mark 16:16: “he who believes and is baptized shall be saved” (ὁ πιστεύσας καὶ βαπτισθεὶς σωθήσεται). This means literally: he that has come to faith and has been baptized will be saved, will most surely go to heaven. The future tense (σωθήσεται) indicates a definite fact of the future. But now temporary believers also have come to faith and been baptized. Ergo, it applies to them also: they will be saved (σωθήσεται). It reads in John 3:16: “that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This says: that all who believe in Him, consequently also temporary believers, will not perish but have everlasting life. We read in Romans 10:11: “whosoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed.” And in verse 13: “for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Therefore, everyone who believes, no one excepted; therefore, everyone who believes but for a time will not perish but will also be saved.

One must then interpret similar statements of the Confessions in the same way in article 11 of the Formula of Concord the following passage is found: “even as God has ordained in his counsel that the Holy Ghost should call, enlighten, and convert the elect through the Word, and that He will justify and save all those who by true faith receive Christ, so He also determined in His counsel” (FC SD XI.40), etc.⁴⁸ This means: God has ordained that He wants to justify and save all, yes, all those who receive Christ in true faith, hence, all believers, including temporary believers. In the Third Article of our Christian faith we confess: “and will give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.” This means: God the Holy Spirit will give eternal life in Christ to me along with all believers, yes, to all believers, also to temporary believers. This is most certainly true.

It is impossible to evade such exegesis so long as one holds to the canon that the word “believers,” “all believers” always includes temporary believers. “There is no truth to it,” so say our opponents, “that all the elect will be saved.” For all believers are according to Scripture and the Confessions elect. And one cannot say that all believers will be saved. Yet certainly one may and has to speak this way. Thus says Scripture, thus says our Confessions, thus from the very beginning Christians have said: all believers will be saved. Everyone who believes receives eternal life. Christians are saved human beings, saved here and there.

And yet it is clear who is meant by those people designated by the word “believers,” “all believers” in the passages quoted and from many others in Scripture and the Confessions. Namely, those whose permanent characteristic is faith, those who now stand in faith and will believe until the end, the steadfast believers. Those who fall from faith for a time, then return to faith are not especially considered. To them also, if one considers their entire life from the hour of conversion until the hour of death, must be predicated the word “believing.” For since they are again converted, no attention is paid to the byway they travelled. When it says in Scripture: “he who believes [πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων] shall be saved,” it is obvious that what is meant by the “πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων” is the abiding relationship and conduct to Christ in which man is just at the time when final judgment is pronounced, when the decision will be made as to salvation or damnation. When we confess that God on Judgment Day will awaken me and all the dead and will give to

⁴⁸ *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 1077.40.

me and all believers in Christ eternal life, we are thinking of all who live in faith and all who die as believers. Yes, according to Scripture and the Confessions the believers are simply the believers to the very end.⁴⁹

This kind of linguistic usage not only is found in the aforementioned passages, where the believers are succinctly and directly promised eternal life but runs through all of Scripture. Where Scripture describes believing Christians, it characterizes them as such who live and die in faith. In the introduction of his first letter Peter includes himself with all believing Christians when he writes: “blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope,” and then characterizes the born-again, the believers, as such who will be preserved in faith by God’s power, whose faith will be tried with the fire of tribulation and preserved, and who then finally receive the end of [their] faith, the salvation of their souls. According to Romans 8:15,16 the believing Christians are children of God who cry, “Abba, Father,” to whom the Spirit of God bears witness that they are the children of God. Yes, “you are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 3:26). But it is also true of these children of God, of all children of God: “and if children, then heirs” (Romans 8:17); “according to promise” (Galatians 3:29). According to Scripture the children of God are simply all those who stand in a relationship of sonship to God and who one day receive their filial inheritance.

The abstract “faith” is used in the same sense as the concrete “believers.” Wherever Scripture extols faith, wherever it testifies that we are justified and saved by faith, there it comprehends faith as the righteousness of faith as an issue that continues until believing changes into seeing, until salvation follows righteousness.

This linguistic usage has passed over into the language of the Church. The above-quoted passage from the Formula of Concord, wherein it is stated that God “was so greatly concerned about the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian, and so purposed it,” defines the Christian as a man who is converted, is justified, and saved in the sight of God. In the Third Article of our Christian faith we confess that the Church is the congregation of saints or believers. According to Luther’s explanation this means: the whole Christian Church on earth, which the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and keeps with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. Yes, preservation in faith also belongs to the concept of faith, Christianity, and church.

Certainly, Scripture speaks also of temporary believers, who for a time believe and then fall away, fall away in the end and perish (Luke 8:13). And we do not allow ourselves to be influenced by some resultant bungling to call the faith of temporary believers mock faith. Temporary believers really believe, have inner contact with the Lord as long as they believe. Yes, there are men who have tasted the gracious Word of God and the powers of the future world, and yet fall away (Hebrews 6:5). Scripture firmly attests to that. but it is contrary to Scripture if one now divides “the believers” into two classes: such who believe until the end and are saved, and such who believe only for a time and then fall away and are damned; if one adds thus: 1) those who believe until the end, 2) the temporary believers. Sum: all believers. It is nothing but rationalization and an awful way of resolving differences if one simply lumps the children of God and the temporary believers all into one category, into one concept, and infers faith from temporary believers and from the very start sows in them the possibility of falling away.

Every believing Christian still has flesh and blood and must, therefore, be on guard not to give way to the flesh and lose the Spirit. But the believer who is a believer known no defection.

⁴⁹ [Ed.:] the original text has in Latin: *finaliter credentes*

It is unthinkable for faith that it could ever cease to exist. True faith is certainty, certainty of present and future salvation, a certainty that never misleads. We well take to heart the Scripture passages concerning temporary believers. We let them serve as warning examples. But never do we allow temporary believers to teach and dictate to us what faith really is, how we should believe. These theologians who, when the discussion concerns faith and salvation, always operate with temporary believers should take heed lest they destroy in those whom they are teaching the correct understanding of saving faith.

No, there's no truth to it that in the concept "all believers" temporary believers are also necessarily included. And so temporary believers do not belong to the elect. To support that the elect can also fall away and be lost direct proof from Article XI of the Formula of Concord has been cited. But these proofs are not valid. Reference is made to paragraph 75: "therefore, when his children depart from obedience and stumble, he has them called again to repentance through the Word, and the Holy Ghost wishes thereby to be efficacious in them for conversion; and when they turn to him again in true repentance by a right faith, he will always manifest the old paternal heart to all those who tremble at His Word and from their heart turn again to Him."⁵⁰ However, spoken of here are not temporary believers but those who for a time walk away from obedience and stumble and then turn again to the Lord. And these, of course, belong to the children of God and the elect and are saved. Reference is made to paragraph 54: "Also which of the converted will persevere in faith and which will not persevere; which will return after a fall, and which will fall into obduracy."⁵¹ Treated here, of course, are the converted who fall away in the end. But these converts are simply temporary believers, and we do not read a single syllable as to whether they are counted among the elect. In the section where the Formula of Concord interprets: "Many are called, but few are chosen, where it points out that the cause of damnation lies exclusively in the corrupt will of man it speaks strictly of temporary believers who "willfully turn away again from the holy commandment" (FC SD XI.42).⁵² However, it reckons these to the many who are called but not to the chosen. And so in the parable of the four kinds of soil those who do not believe the Word (Luke 8:12), together with the two kinds of temporary believers (vv. 13,14), are contrasted to the true hearers of the Word, to those who hear and keep the Word (v. 15). Basically, only two kinds of men are distinguished: those of whom it is said: "unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God," and these are the elect; "the others," of whom it is said: "but to others in parables": these are the obdurate (v. 10).

*There are elect who will not be saved. There are elect who cease to be elect and perish in the end. Election is unchangeable. This is the position which the opponents of the so-called Missourian doctrine of predestination favor and defend.*⁵³ We wish now from the clear words of the Confessions to present the reverse and to show that all the elect will really be saved, that the election of God is immutable and unchangeable.

We call to mind first the significant expressions with which the Formula of Concord in Article XI defines and in detail describes the eternal election of God. It describes the same as "election to salvation" (§28), as "election to eternal life" (§75), as "purpose, predestination, election, and ordination to salvation" (§24), and then more fully as "the eternal election of his

⁵⁰ *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 1087.75.

⁵¹ *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 1081.54.

⁵² *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 1077.42.

⁵³ [Ed.:] The emphasis is added here to set off these statements as propositions the author indicates he will refute.

children to eternal salvation” (§4), as “ordination of the children of God to eternal life” (§24). In the concept “adoption” are comprehended those eight points listed in (§§15-22).⁵⁴

God in His eternal counsel not only secured the salvation of those who are His but determined to lead each and every person of the elect on the way of salvation to the blessed goal, through the Word to bring them to repentance and faith, to receive them into the adoption and preserve them in faith until the end. And this election to adoption and to eternal life is characterized explicitly as foreknowledge or predestination, counsel, purpose, ordination. These statements concerning election the Confession has drawn right out of Scripture. In the classic passages on predestination, such as Acts 13:48, Ephesians 1:3 ff., 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Romans 8:28-30, 1 Peter 1:1,2 the Scriptures equally designate as the goal of the election of adoption, respectively: “faith,” “obedience,” “sanctification”; as the ultimate end of salvation: glory, eternal life; and qualify God’s eternal election as βουλή, πρόγνωσις, πρόθεσις, προορισμός. These latter words characterize the election to adoption and to salvation as a firm decree of God that cannot be overthrown, that will surely succeed.

Wherever in the Confessions, as in the Scriptures, there is talk of the universal gracious will, a divine “volition” is mentioned. The Formula of Concord states: “Christ testifies to all men without distinction that it is God’s will that all men should come to Him who labor and are heavy laden with sin, in order that He may give them rest and save them” (FC SD XI.70).⁵⁵ The Scriptures testify: “God ... desires (θέλει) that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

The will of God is often obstructed and thwarted by men. Most men set themselves against God’s demanding will in the Law so that they never get to the point where they fulfill the Law. Most men resist the universal gracious will revealed in the Gospel with hard hearts and persistently resist the Holy Spirit, Who earnestly seeks to convert them, and so are themselves the cause of their destruction, while God would like to save them. Christ holds up to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: I wanted to save you, but you were not willing.⁵⁶

On the other hand, there is another peculiarity with the divine “counsel” and “purpose,” with divine “ordination” and “predestination.” The Scriptures say not a thing about a counsel and resolve of God that failed. What God in His counsel has resolved, predestined, and ordained, that He always fulfills. That is true, for example, of the decree of redemption. From the beginning of the world Christ was predestined to be the Lamb of God, the Redeemer of the world (1 Peter 1:19,20). By virtue of “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (τῇ ὀρισμένη βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ) He then at the predetermined time gave Himself into death (Acts 2:23). Christ had to suffer and die since that was prophesied in the Scriptures and, therefore, ordained in the eternal counsel of God, so the entire human race has actually been redeemed.

Of course, concerning the scribes and Pharisees the Scriptures state that for their own persons they invalidated this counsel of God (τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θεοῦ ἠθέτησαν εἰς ἑαυτούς) (Luke 7:30). Unbelievers destroy for themselves the benefit and fruit of redemption, but they are all redeemed. Christ has died for all men. One more example. God has firmly established the order of salvation, has ordained, as the Formula of Concord states, that all those who accept His Word, repent, believe in Christ and persevere in faith until the end, they will be saved. And this order is always being accomplished. This arrangement, of course, includes a condition, binds salvation to

⁵⁴ *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 1071.28, 1087.75, 1069.24, 1063.4, 1067.24, 1069.15-22.

⁵⁵ *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 1085.70.

⁵⁶ [Ed.:] Matthew 23:37.

faith. It reads: whoever believes will be saved. “For with the heart man believes to righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made to salvation” (Romans 10:10). However, wherever this condition is fulfilled, wherever a person believes in Christ, there without fail follows salvation. There has never been a believer who has lost salvation. It is the same with the reverse. The Formula of Concord states: “God has ordained in His counsel that those who are called through the Word, if they reject the Word and resist the Holy Ghost, Who wishes to be efficacious and to work in them through the Word, and persist therein, He will harden, reprobate, and condemn” (FC SD XI.40).⁵⁷ That is happening all the time. There has never been an unbeliever, who, having hardened himself in unbelief, has escaped damnation. The prophet Isaiah proclaims to unbelieving, obdurate Israel: “Consumption (destruction) is decreed” (Isaiah 10:22). Verse 23 continues: “for the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.” What God has firmly decreed, that He will also carry out, for He is the Almighty.

And so God’s decree of election is an unchangeable decree. God’s eternal election concerns individual, definite persons, each and every person of the elect. These very persons God did not simply predestine to salvation from the beginning, but, since no one according to God’s order will be saved without faith, God was from the very start concerned about fulfilling this condition and, at the same time, resolved in His eternal counsel how He would bring to faith and preserve in faith each individual person of the elect. This counsel and resolve of God, however, will never fail. Never yet has an elect person died in unbelief. Never yet has an elect person been damned.

What is implicitly contained in the words “counsel,” “purpose,” “predestination,” “ordination” the Formula of Concord teaches and shows clearly also in a longer exposition. We point in particular to the familiar passage of FC SD XI.45-47: “Thus this doctrine affords also the excellent, glorious consolation that God was so greatly concerned about the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian, and so faithfully purposed it that before the foundation of the world was laid, He deliberated concerning it, and in His purpose ordained how He would bring me thereto, and preserve me therein. Also, that He wished to secure my salvation so well and certainly that, since through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh it could easily be lost from our hands, or through craft and might of the devil and the world be snatched and taken from us, He ordained it in His eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and placed it for preservation in the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can pluck us (John 10:28). Hence, Paul also says (Romans 8:28, 39): ‘because we have been called according to the purpose of God, who will separate us from the love of God in Christ?’ ”⁵⁸ Clearer could the Confessions not speak out about this pending question. God has so well secured my, our salvation, this is what is being inculcated here, that He has ordained the same in His eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown. God’s eternal purpose is irrevocable, immutable. It cannot fail; its fulfillment is guaranteed.

For that reason, our salvation, the salvation of the elect rests secure in God’s purpose. For that reason, it is impossible for our salvation to be snatched from us by the devil or by the devil’s cunning and might or by the weakness of our own flesh. Those who are called according to God’s purpose can never be separated from the love of God in Christ. In that God has secured our salvation in His eternal counsel, He at the same time placed it into the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, out of which no one, no enemy can tear it. Thus, it is explicitly taught here

⁵⁷ *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 1077.40.

⁵⁸ *Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, ed., (Saint Louis: CPH, 1921), 1079.45-47.

that the elect will without fail be saved, and it will be all the elect. In this section the Formula of Concord does not speak of a particular class of the elect but of “every one of the elect”; therefore, of the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of all the elect it has been taken into account by God in His eternal counsel.

Chemnitz, the principal author of the Formula of Concord, agrees verbatim with these statements from it: “On the basis of the Scriptures it is clear and sure that those who have been chosen to eternal life will all be saved, for God’s foreknowledge cannot fail, and eternal predestination is unchangeable, cannot be changed or be overthrown as that fact can sufficiently be proven from the Scriptures” (Frank, *Theologie der Concordienformel*,⁵⁹ IV, pp. 163-164).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ [Ed.:] *Theology of the Formula of Concord*.

⁶⁰ [Ed.:] Rev. Koehlinger does not translate the rest of the article (pp. 248-253), which contains other supporting material from Frank’s *Theology of the Formula of Concord*, the Baier-Walther *Compendium*, and the theological journal *Lehre und Wehre* to name a few. This material may have been deemed repetitious and a distraction to the modern reader interested in the basic presentation of the topic.

What Does Saint Paul Teach in Ephesians 1:3-14 Concerning Predestination?⁶¹

Nowhere in the Scriptures do we find such a thorough and detailed presentation of eternal election as in the first part of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. We shall treat it sentence by sentence.

Paul begins in verse 3 with a thanksgiving: "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The entire passage up to verse 14 is a doxology. Since the apostle speaks in the first person plural "our," "us," he includes himself with the readers of this letter, with all Christians, and summons all Christians with him to praise God. And to do so because of the rich blessings which we are Christians possess and enjoy.

It is not an earthly, perishable blessing but a spiritual one that has its seat and origin in heaven. "Τὰ ἐπουράνια" is the standard designation for the heavenly regions, for heaven. See Ephesians 1:20, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12. Harless writes, "the blessings we are receiving are those of a higher world."

God has blessed us "ἐν Χριστῷ." It is not superfluous to state here that the Greek preposition "ἐν" has a broader connotation than does the English or Latin "in." "Ἐν" means: "in," "on," "at," "with," "by," "among." Then: "by means of," "through," and often designates "the outer or inner motive," "the motivating cause." It is simple linguistic nonsense if one attempts to reduce that "ἐν" in the New Testament to the meaning of "in," "within," to a "being within," to "the sphere in which something lies." The primary meaning of the English "in" is excluded in our passage. Then Christ would appear as the first one blessed, in and with whom we too are blessed. To the blessing of God, for which we are to thank God, belongs also according to verse 7, the redemption through Christ's blood, namely, the forgiveness of sins. And the forgiveness of sins is not something that Christ first had to receive and then passed on. If one wants to translate "ἐν Χριστῷ" with "in Christ," he has to understand the words to mean that it is causatively in Christ that we are blessed. We translate in a primary sense: "through Christ." Christ is the Mediator of salvation. He has obtained for us all of God's blessings. And since this procuring consists in Christ by His suffering and death winning and meriting God's blessing for us who were not worthy of any grace, this "through Christ" really amounts to "by reason of Christ." Meyer notes on ἐν Χριστῷ: "in Christ that completed 'εὐλογεῖν' (blessing) was realized. Not outside of but in Christ it rested causatively that God blessed us with that spiritual blessing since his act of redemption is the meritorious cause of the dispensation of divine blessing." In just this sense, in the sense of meritorious cause Paul uses the "ἐν Χριστῷ" often in this letter, namely, wherever God appears as Benefactor, wherever it is said that God has and will demonstrate His grace and kindness (Ephesians 1:6, 2:7, 4:32).

In that the apostle continues "καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου" (according as He has chosen us through Him before the foundation of the world). Verse 4a, he, in Hoffmann's words, "traces this act of God in time back to an act of God that occurred before time, before the creation of the world." "Καθὼς," as Harless says, is "an argumentative particle." Nevertheless, we can leave undebated the close relationship between the dispensation of the blessing, which has become ours in time, and our eternal election and translate with Luther: "as

⁶¹ Source: *Lehre und Wehre* LI [51] (October, 1905) 10:433-447, (November, 1905), 11:481-490. The original German title is „Was lehrt St. Paulus Epheser 1,3—14 von der Gnadenwahl?"

He then has chosen us.” In what respect the former squares with the latter will become evident after we have understood the application of election and the further description of the divine blessing.

First, we wish to determine the meaning of “ἐξελέξατο.” This word is not responsible for the difficulties that have been found in election. It is clear “ἐκλέγειν” according to its etymology and composition means and can mean nothing else than: pick out, single out, pick out of, what amounts to the same, chose, lift or take out of a mass. “Ἐκλέγεσθαι” means: choose for oneself; take out of a quantity and seize for oneself; set, place into relationship to oneself. It will serve our purpose here to examine these passages in which this verb is used and where God is named as subject, Christians as object of the choosing. Those passages relate back to the Old Testament where the divine election of Israel is treated as Israel’s preferential selection out of all nations so that in distinction to them Israel had a special relationship with God. Deuteronomy 14:2: “The Lord has chosen (the Septuagint has “ἐξελέξατο”) you to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.” This preferential treatment or selection of Israel to a special relationship of belonging to God is an act of voluntary love, unconditionally free in itself and of its object. Deuteronomy 4:37: “Because He loved your fathers; therefore, He chose (ἐξελέξατο) their seed after them.” This same thing pertains to the election of Christendom out of the world. Christ says to his disciples in John 15:19: “I have chosen (ἐξελεξάμην) you out of the world” and thus made you my disciples. We read in First Corinthians 1:27, 28: “God has chosen (ἐξελέξατο) the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen (ἐξελέξατο) the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen (ἐξελέξατο), yes, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are.” What in the world is foolish, weak, ignoble, despised, what is of no value, that has God chosen out of the world, has made his own, in order to bring to naught the wise, the strong, the things that are of value. It reads similarly in James 2:5: “Has God not chosen (ἐξελέξατο) the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?”

In these passages is treated the historical election, which is identical to calling or conversion. See First Corinthians 1:26: “Look at your calling.” God has through Word and Spirit chosen out of the world those who are now Christians, has set them apart from the world and out of pure love drawn them to Himself, made them his possession. Thus they have become Christians, believers, heirs of the kingdom.

In our passage, Ephesians 1:4, divine election, however, dates back to eternity. See Second Thessalonians 2:13: God has chosen us before the foundation of the world. The Lord Himself coined this expression. Where Christ is talking about the same subject, he says, “Then shall the King say to them on His right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’ ” (Matthew 25:34). Such a prehistoric act of God relating to people who do not as yet exist is nothing else but an act of the will, a deliberation and resolve of God concerning those very persons who were already existing in spirit before God. God has chosen us, these persons who are now Christians, before the foundation of the world. This means: God had in all eternity given thought to them in grace, had in his thoughts, in his counsel and resolve taken them out of the world and determined that they should belong to him.

Divine choosing, divine election is according to concept particular. A selection of the whole world, of all men, is a *contradictio in adjecto*.⁶² The eternal election of God is correlative to the world from which we have been chosen. In no way, however, is there an eternal decree of reprobation with respect to others who are not chosen, a correlative of the eternal decree of election. When God chose us before the foundation of the world, the world, humanity was in His sight a lost world, a lost and condemned mankind,⁶³ and it was a mankind condemned through its own fault. This world, this humanity, is, as it were, the focus of election. Nevertheless, the object of God's divine resolution is exclusively the elect, each and every person of the elect. The (ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς) "has chosen us" does not indicate that God had made a resolve, had resolved the opposite in respect to others. That God has chosen us out of the world before the foundation of the world is a thought completely different from this that God had from all eternity, as it were, split the world into two different parts, receiving some, rejecting others, had determined some to salvation, others to damnation. To set side by side a decree of eternal reprobation and a decree of eternal election goes beyond the text of Paul and is contrary to Scripture generally.

To "has chosen us" are added the words "ἐν αὐτῷ." Into this harmless "ἐν αὐτῷ," which simply refers to Christ, one has, as we know, been read out since the 17th century and also more recently the theory of an election that is supposed to have taken place *intuitu fidei*, "in view of faith." We refer you to the article, "Scripture Proof for the Doctrine of Predestination" for an explanation of this phrase. We emphasize once more that to combine "ἐν αὐτῷ" with "ἡμᾶς" is a linguistic impossibility.

Paul does not say God has chosen us as those who are in Christ. It makes no sense to say that Christ would only be of value to us were we to accept Him in faith and that in such modes of expression as "ἐν Χριστῷ" we always have to supply the faith in Christ. We read in Colossians 1:16 that all things were created by Christ (ἐν αὐτῷ); in Ephesians 1:19, 20 that we believe as a result of the working of His mighty power which he wrought through Christ, "ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ." What does this mean? Has God created the world, worked faith in us through Christ, the Christ laid hold of in faith? No, that God has chosen us in view of faith does not lie in the text, neither according to sentence structure, nor according to the subject being discussed. Such an idea rather alters and destroys what Paul has said about election. The ἐκλέγεσθαι ("has chosen") is a spontaneous, decisive, efficacious act of God. And this act of God is totally discredited, even annulled, if one attributes it to God's foreknowledge of man's conduct. The term "election" has absolutely no place in the *Syllogismus praedestinatorius*.⁶⁴ One is playing with words and concepts when one says, "God 'has chosen' to salvation those, whose steadfast faith He foresaw, in view of this faith." This then means as much as: God has taken out of the world such who were previously set apart from the world through faith. From a rational point of view one might simply say that God had decided concerning those whose faith He foresaw that they would also obtain salvation. That, of course, is a completely worthless calculation. For since God from the

⁶² [Ed.:] A logical inconsistency between a noun and its modifying adjective. A favorite example is the phrase "round square." In this case the concept "election" modified by an adjective that would encompass everyone or everything.

⁶³ [Ed.:] The original has a Latin phrase: *massa perditā*, "lost mass."

⁶⁴ [Ed.:] "syllogism of predestination": as briefly defined by Dr. Stoeckhardt: a logical argument formulated by 17th century Lutheran dogmaticians "according to which election proceeds logically from the general, gracious will [of God] and foreknowledge of faith" [Georg Stoeckhardt, "Si duo faciunt idem, non est idem," *Lehre und Wehre* 28 (1882): 158, Dr. Benjamin T.G. Mayes's translation in Johann Gerhard's *Theological Commonplaces, VIII-XI: On Creation and Angels, On Providence, On Election and Reprobation, On the Image of God in Man before the Fall* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), p. xv].

beginning established the order of salvation for all time, that he who believes and only he who believes should be saved, it is obvious that God, after He in His omniscience had counted and added up all those who in the course of time believe, believe until the end, is now of the mind to save just those men and no others.

The ἐν αὐτῷ in Ephesians 1:4 is similar to the ἐν Χριστῷ in verse 3. God has blessed us through Christ, just as He has then chosen us through Him before the foundation of the world. Christ is the meritorious cause of our eternal election, just as He is the meritorious cause of the blessing that we have received in time. Meyer: "In Christ, whose redemptive work God had known and decided upon from eternity, lay the reason for electing grace choosing us." Harless: "The basis of election lies not in us but in Christ." We, we Christians, are by nature sinful and unclean, totally underserving in God's sight. Nevertheless, that God already in eternity looked at us, chose us out of the world, chose us to be His own, that all Christ made possible, won and merited for us with His blood. The decree of redemption logically precedes the decree of election. God has chosen us out of mankind, lost and condemned but redeemed through Christ.

Belonging to God, that relationship into which our election has placed us, is now defined more closely. In the infinitive and participle clause follows Paul states the aim and goal of election. God has elected us "εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ" ("that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love," verse 4b). We combine, as Luther does, ἐν ἀγάπῃ ("in love") with the preceding. This is the simplest construction. If one draws these words into the following, "προορίσας" ("having predestined") has a double, closer determination, which makes the flow of words very ponderous. In the entire section, verses 3-14, the individual parts of the sentence begin with relative pronouns or participles. However, by taking "ἐν ἀγάπῃ" as part of the infinitive clause, we have at the same time formed an opinion as to the meaning of the words "ἁγίους" ("holy") and "ἀμώμους" ("without blame"), namely, that we take them with sanctification and not with justification. This does not contradict biblical usage. In First Thessalonians 5:23 "ἀμέμπτως" ("without blame") has reference to the ethical constitution and conduct of Christians. Holiness, moral integrity, and love appear elsewhere in this letter also (Ephesians 4:22 ff., 5:1 ff.) as in other apostolic letters as characteristics of the Christian life.

Thus, Paul is asserting here that God wanted to have a holy seed upon earth, a generation that would serve Him in holiness and righteousness, which is pleasing to Him, and in love. The first application, however, must be considered closely with the second, verse 5a: "προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν" ("having predestinated us to the adoption as sons to Himself through Jesus Christ"). "Προορίζειν" ("to predestine") designates the same eternal divine act of volition as "ἐκλέγεσθαι" ("to choose"), except that it points especially to the aim and goal of the act, while "ἐκλέγεσθαι" indicates the relationship to the world and to God. Υἰοθεσία means adoption and filial relationship established through adoption, specially emphasized by the words "εἰς αὐτόν" ("over against Him"), God.

Filial relationship is identical with the filial estate. "Adoption" is the main concept in the entire application. This was God's eternal determination and ordination: we should, taken out of the world, belong to Him, namely, we should be His children, should come to stand before Him as children to their father, should be as close to Him as children are to their parents. God wanted to have upon earth children upon whom He could shower all His fatherly love, but who then as His children should walk holy and without blame before Him in love. "Adoption" does not imply only the inheritance due a child but the filial relationship, the filial estate. In this relationship, in

this position are found only the believers. Here it applies: “you are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 3:26). If we are predestined to the filial estate, then, *eo ipso*, also to faith. According to God’s intent the filial relationship is a lasting one and brings with it in the end the inheritance due a child. “And if children, then heirs” (Romans 8:17). If so we are ordained to adoption, then also to the inheritance, to future glory, to eternal life, as the inheritance is then explicitly mentioned at the end of the section. Thus, it is entirely scriptural when our Confessions define eternal election as an election to adoption and to eternal life.

Added to “προορίσας ἡμᾶς” (“having predestinated us”) is another modification (verse 5b): “κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ” (“according to the good pleasure of His will”). Polycarp Leyser notes that: “The initial basis is the eternal good pleasure of God the Father by means of which He has out of His fatherly affection chosen us in Christ Jesus, His beloved Son, before the foundation of the world and ordained us to adoption, as Paul says in Ephesians 1:4. This endures and has this seal: the Lord knows those, who are His (Second Timothy 2:19). And it is so firm that ten myriads of devils and all the gates of hell cannot prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). ‘For the counsel of the Lord remains forever; the thoughts of His heart for ever and ever,’ as David sings in Psalm 33:11. And Isaiah says in 14:27: ‘the LORD has decided; who can annul it? His hand is stretched out; who shall turn it back?’ For this reason, it is of the greatest comfort for us and for all members of the Church that our salvation has its basis not in our worthiness or unworthiness, not in our own merits and works, but in the free and gracious will of God.” This is an interpretation that is to the point. Only that we take “εὐδοκίαν” (“good pleasure”) not so much as God’s fatherly affection itself but as the result of the same, “the gracious effect of His love” (Harless) as well as the Latin “*placitum, beneplacitum*” and also the German “*Wohlgefallen*” used in this sense. For in Ephesians 1:9 “τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ” (“His good pleasure”) is more likely determined by “ἣν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ” (“the good pleasure God has purposed in Himself”). This can only mean a resolution of the divine will.

The description of the divine ordination concludes in verse 6a with the words: εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ (“to the praise of the glory of His grace”). The ultimate purpose of our eternal election is God’s glory. And, of course, it was just in this way that God wished to glorify His grace. God’s grace and mercy are the motivating cause of divine election. Even here every consideration of man’s merit and conduct relative to election is excluded. For grace belongs to the unworthy and the undeserving.

In the following the apostle gives a little more detail about the blessing we Christians have received in time: “wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved” (verse 6b). He attributes to grace as the motivation in God and to Christ as the meritorious cause everything that God has done, has given to us in time and in eternity. “By virtue of His grace God has favored us through the Beloved,” for the sake of Christ, His beloved Son, “through whom” or “in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (verse 7). Redemption through His blood appears here as a lasting benefit and so is identical with the forgiveness of sins. We have forgiveness of sins “according to the riches of His grace,” since God daily and richly forgives us all our sins. He has further demonstrated His grace in that “He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” (verse 8). These are not just intellectual gifts and abilities but gifts of grace intended for a practical Christian life. Thus, Paul exhorts in Ephesians 5:15: “so see that you walk carefully, not as the unwise, but as the wise men.” Wisdom knows what is pleasing to God and beneficial to men, and finds, chooses, and uses the right means to the goal. Prudence or insight under all circumstances, in all relationships, always seeks and hits upon the right thing. And so God’s grace through these charisms enables us to lead a holy, godly life.

Out of all this we see how the blessing that we Christians possess and our eternal election are related to one another. Grace, the granting of grace, the remission of sins occurs at the same time with adoption (verse 5), and the wisdom and prudence granted by God make us fit to lead a holy, blameless life in love (verse 4). The present blessing is, therefore, that very benefit which God has granted us already before the foundation of the world, is the carrying out of God's eternal decree of election, the result and effect of our election.

The apostolic instruction takes a new turn in verses 9 and 10: "having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He has purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." God has revealed to us the mystery of His will, which without revelation would have remained hidden to us. According to the context this mystery of the divine will means nothing else than God's eternal decree of election, which the apostle in all respects previously described and to which he has traced back all the blessings of Christianity. To this points also God's good pleasure, the resolve that God Himself had intended to execute. This good pleasure then impelled God to reveal what was at first hidden to us.

God's good pleasure aimed at the "dispensation of the fullness of times." The "times" ("καιροι") are the various periods in the history of salvation. Πλήρωμα means "id, quo quid impletur,"⁶⁵ "fullness," "full measure." The full measure of the times, with which the times come to a close, is the final, New Testament era. Οἰκονομία, actually, "household," connected with the genitive of the object, means "administration" or, as we translate with Hofmann: "use." God with His good pleasure was aiming at that dispensation of the New Testament era. How and whereto He wanted to utilize the same, what divine good pleasure included, is stated in the words: "ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ," etc. ("to gather together all things in Christ").

The verb "κεφαλαιοῦν" ("to sum up") is not derived from "κεφαλῇ" ("head") but from "κεφάλαιον," which is the "main point" or "summary," the word used to translate ψᾠ in the Septuagint (Leviticus 5:24, Numbers 5:7). In additions the sum was written at the top of the series of individual posts. Accordingly "κεφαλαιοῦν" or also its middle form "κεφαλαιοῦσθαι: sum, bring to a summation or unity, summarize. Cremer has proven this meaning through examples from the Koine Greek. Of the Sixth, Fifth, Seventh, Eighth and other Commandments in Romans 13:9 it is said: "ἐν τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ ἀνακεφαλαιοῦται ἐν τῷ Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς ἑαυτόν" ("in this word they are summed up: 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself'), that they are summed up in the commandment concerning the love of neighbor. The composite "κεφαλαιοῦσθαι" does not necessarily mean "to summarize again." In such compounds the "ἀνα" designates the direction upwards, to the top, to the end and goal. "Ἀναπληροῦν" does not mean "to refill" but simply "to fill," "to fill up," "to fill to the brim." In our passage the apostle is emphasizing that God wanted to comprehend everything in Christ. Christ appears as the sum or the entirety in which the objects, "all things," are comprehended.

And now what is meant by "τὰ πάντα" ("all things")? To refer these words to the universe is farfetched. "Τὰ πάντα," "πάντα" often refers to a definite genus of things or persons and then comprises everything that belongs to this genus. What genus Paul has in mind cannot be in doubt when you look at the context. Everything that there is in the world of the elect, all the elect children, God wanted to bring together, to unite in Christ. That "τὰ πάντα" in the neuter gender is not strange. The use of the neuter gender fits the total picture, the presentation of a sum

⁶⁵ [Ed.:] "that by which it is filled"

that includes all individual elements. God's eternal love-design and love-counsel was: one homogeneous family of God's children, united in Christ, that already on earth is basking and delighting in God's fatherly love and that one day, when all members have been gathered together, are assembled about Christ, the Firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29), and are viewing God's glory. And to this very purpose, to the preparing of this entirety, God wanted to make use of the fullness of the times, of the New Testament era. Through the preaching of the Gospel, which is continuing throughout the entire New Testament era, the elect children are being gathered, are being brought to Christ; that great family of God, all of Christendom on earth is being assembled upon earth and united in Christ. In and with this fulfillment of God's eternal counsel is at the same time revealed the mystery of the divine will.

The words (verse 10b): "τὰ τε ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς" ("those things which are in heaven and upon the earth") are an additional modification of "all things." The expression "which are in heaven," just as "the whole family in heaven" (Ephesians 3:15), is a reference to the angel world. God has children also in heaven, children of a pure heavenly nature, of a pure spirit essence. These are the elect angels. And they to belong into that entirety, within the great family of God's children united in Christ. They also have their place in the house of God. Of course, the holy angels do not have Christ as their brother, as their Savior, for they need no Savior, but do have Christ also as their Lord and King. They are His angels. The Son of man will send "His angels," etc. (Mark 13:27). And the angels also bear a certain relationship to the economy of salvation. They are sent out to minister to those who are heirs of salvation, that is, to minister to the elect children among men (Hebrews 1:14). They remove from the way all sorts of hindrances that obstruct access to the Word. They lead the elect to such places where they are able to hear the Gospel of their salvation. The preachers of the Gospel, who carry out God's eternal counsel upon earth, stand under the special protection and escort of angels. There is joy before the angels of God when one sinner repents, when a lost child finds his way into the Father's house. God's wonderful, manifold wisdom, evident in the gathering of Christ's Church upon earth, is also made known "to the principalities and powers in heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:10), so that they get new incentive to praise God. The work of the holy angels is to extol and praise God. The principal content of the angels' song of praise is the salvation that has befallen their brethren from the human race.

When the apostle continues in verse 11: "ἐν αὐτῷ ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐκληρώθημεν" ("in Him, in connection with whom we have also obtained our portion") the next question that presents itself is what is meant by these words? "Κληῖρος" means "lot" and then in a figurative sense "allotted portion," "inheritance." In the Septuagint it is similar to "κληρονομία," translation of the Hebrew "נַחֲלָה." Accordingly, many exegetes translate: "through whom we come by the inheritance" or "are made an inheritance." This figurative meaning, however, cannot be authenticated for the verb "κληροῦν." In Koine Greek "κληροῦν" means only "cast lots," "obtain by lot," "choose by lot," and then, in general, "select." So also in the only other passage outside of Ephesians 1:11 where it is found, namely, in First Samuel 14:42, according to the Septuagint: "Cast lots between me and Jonathan." Otherwise the composite "προσκληροῦν" is found only once, meaning: "assign by lot," "administer by drawing lots," namely, in Acts 17:4: "τινες ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐπείσθησαν καὶ προσεκληρώθησαν τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ τῷ Σιλᾷ" ("some of them were persuaded and were joined to Paul and Silas"). The several, who became believers, became thereby joined with Paul and Silas as disciples of God. And so we are not entitled to take "κληροῦν" in our passage in a sense in which it is not used elsewhere, neither in nor outside of the Scriptures. So we translate: "through

whom we also are chosen.” The incidental things that occur in choosing by lot are left out of consideration here as elsewhere.

“Κληροῦν” is simply synonymous with “ἐκλέγεσθαι.” “Choose” and “predestine” describe the same eternal act of God’s will, only in a different connection. And we are predestined, as it reads further: “κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ” (“according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will”). “Πρόθεσις” means purpose and nothing else. And what God purposed to do must be drawn from the context.

In our passage it reads: “προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν,” etc. So the “προορισμός” of God, our predestination and election, appear here as the content of the divine purpose. And God carries out this purpose. It is a characteristic of God that He is “ὁ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργῶν” (“the Worker of all things”). A man resolves to do a lot of things and by no means does he accomplish everything he sets out to do. What God has resolved to do that He does, that He accomplishes despite all obstacles. God’s purpose cannot fail, cannot be overthrown. And that is also true of the purpose of our election and decree. The way Paul writes he characterizes divine purpose as a well-conceived counsel of God, from which all chance and arbitrariness are excluded. The statement of purpose, “that we should be to the praise of His glory” (verse 12a), again names the ultimate purpose of election, God’s glory. We are destined to the praise of His glory. God wanted to glorify Himself in us as His children. As God’s true children we should here praise God before the world and then there extol God before and with the angels.

It could appear as though what we are reading in verse 11 is a mere repetition of what the apostle has said in verses 4-6 about election. But what is being alluded to now is indicated by the apposition to the word “we,” namely, the words “who first trusted in Christ” and the following “in Whom you also” (verse 13). Here the believers out of the Gentiles and the believers out of Israel, with whom Paul as an Israelite includes himself in the word “we,” are placed side by side. What Paul has previously said about God’s eternal counsel and its execution in time he now directs to Jews and Gentiles. Thus the discussion moves forward.

They who first trusted in Christ are those who before Christ’s appearance had hoped for Christ, for the future Christ, namely, the believers of the Old Covenant. They belonged to the chosen and the predestined. Though God also wanted to assign and did assign the New Testament era for the gathering of the elect children, He still maintained His elect during the various periods of the Old Testament era. And these then as a result of their eternal election came to faith in Christ, became God’s children through faith in Christ, through the promise of Christ given to Israel, and died also in such faith.

And now with the words (verse 13): “ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς” (“in whom you also”), Paul turns to the Christians out of the Gentiles. The same thing applies to “καὶ ὑμεῖς” (“you also”) as applied to the believers out of Israel. God has also chosen them from the beginning and then in time brought to faith and to adoption. Nevertheless, in what he is saying about them the apostle comes at once to speak about the execution of God’s eternal counsel in time, inserts these final remarks which point back to the mystery of election.

Next, it reads in verse 13: “ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ” (“in whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”). This last statement of the section is connected to the preceding “ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ” by

means of “ἐν ᾧ.” The “ἐν ᾧ” in verse 13 corresponds to the “ἐν ᾧ” in verse 11. All the good that God has done to us in time and eternity, such as eternal decree, including the present blessing, has been mediated, won, and merited through Christ. To Christ also the Gentile Christians owe their sealing with the Holy Spirit. The “ἐν ᾧ” at the beginning of the sentence is then resumed in the “ἐν ᾧ” before the “καὶ πιστεύσαντες.” The predicate of “ὕμεῖς” is “ἐσφραγίσθητε,” which is preceded by the participants “ἀκούσαντες” (“hearing”), etc. and “πιστεύσαντες” (“believing”). So the meaning is this: “through whom you too, after hearing the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, by whom, after having also believed, received the Gospel by faith, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. What is first given to the Gentiles, whom the apostle is addressing, is that they have heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of their salvation, and have thus come to believe and have become children of God through faith. Thus, God’s counsel, the ordination to adoption was directed to them also.

And this applies to all believing Christians. The Holy Spirit lives within the hearts of God’s believing children, and He is the seal that God has pressed upon them. An owner presses his seal upon something that is costly and that he does not wish to lose in order to secure it against any foreign claim to it. By this he declares: “This is mine; no one is to take it from me.” We Christians are God’s possession, chosen by God already before the foundation of the world. And upon this His possession God has placed the seal of the Spirit and thus ensured that no one can and will be able to pluck them out of His hand. God’s Holy Spirit keeps us firm in His Word and in faith. He is, as the apostle testifies in verse 14, “ἄρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν” (“the earnest of our inheritance”), of the heavenly inheritance. And so He preserves us for the future inheritance.

We are sealed to “the redemption of the purchased possession (“εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως”). Περιποίησις is meant here concretely and designates God’s possession. As Israel was in the old covenant, so now believing Christendom is the people of God’s possession. And this His peculiar people God will one day—this is what the Holy Spirit is taking care of—deliver us from all evil, will remove us completely from this wicked world and bring us to His heavenly kingdom, give us the inheritance of children. And all this “to the praise of His glory.” God glorifies Himself by executing His eternal counsel and purpose on His elect children until the very end.

Finally, we must make the observation that verses 11-14 by means of the words “even in Him, in whom also” are closely attached to verses 9 and 10. Through that Christ, in whom God wanted to gather all things, it happened that God from the beginning chose a people out of the Jews and Gentiles and then in time brought it to faith and to adoption and sealed it with His Spirit until the day of redemption. The uniform context of the paragraph, verses 9-14 are clearly evident. And also we can now clearly see the difference between the two halves of the section, verses 3-8 and verses 9-14. In both the apostle deals with the eternal will of election and its execution in time. In the latter, however, all emphasis is placed on the “τὰ πάντα,” there it is emphasized that it is a whole, a great people that God has chosen from eternity, a great family of God’s children, who are then gathered and brought together in time through the preaching of the Word, from Israel and all the peoples of the earth. Certainly also through the layout and structure of the whole section of Ephesians 1:3-14 the old Lutheran doctrine of the gracious election, natural to us, is confirmed.

The [foregoing,] individual explanation has already set forward the doctrinal content of Ephesians 1:1-14. Let us now briefly recall the main points of the apostolic teaching presented

here by classifying them into certain rubrics and putting together the similar expressions and sentences. For the sake of clarity, we number the *capita doctrinae*.⁶⁶

1. First of all, a number of introductory points. The doctrine of predestination is one of the clear doctrines of Scripture. The first and foremost *sedes doctrinae*, Ephesians 1:3-14, sheds abundant light. The elements that constitute the essence of eternal election stand out sharply and clearly. The eternal decree of election is, as far as God wanted to reveal it to us, presented in simple, positive words. Even though here and there a few expressions are found concerning which there is some dispute, no harm is done to the complete understanding of the entire section if these expressions are interpreted this way or that. That the doctrine of predestination has been so much disputed does not indicate that we are dealing with an obscure or semi-obscure doctrinal matter, with a theological problem. In that case we would also have to include the doctrines of the Lord's Supper and the deity of Christ into the number of theological problems. For these too have from ages past been disputed doctrines. That theologians have not kept their reason within the confines of Scripture and are doctoring up divine mysteries, inserting something here, nipping off something there, does not make the Scripture passages we are dealing with obscure. This fact does not distort the simple meaning and understanding of Scripture for the ordinary person but only confuses the issue for the unsure and the unduly curious.

2. The doctrine of predestination is a doctrine for Christians. In Ephesians 1 Paul is talking to and with Christians, including himself with all Christians in the words "we," "us." Only repentant, believing Christians sanctified by the Spirit of God, who earnestly aspire to what is above, are able to comprehend and understand this doctrine. So in the letter to the Romans, this compendium of Pauline doctrine, the instruction concerning predestination, chapter 8:28 and following; chapter 9 is preceded by the primary doctrinal articles of sin and wrath, justification by grace through faith for Christ's sake, sanctification. And in the letter to the Ephesians, which is addressed to well-trying Christians, to whom Paul for three years had proclaimed the entire counsel of God, Paul presumes that his readers have the knowledge and wholesome perception of the chief articles of Christian doctrine. When we are dealing with human beings whom we wish to Christianize, we talk to them about other matters, not about predestination. The doctrine of predestination is intended for Christians, and its purpose is to further and strengthen Christians in their faith. It is a most comforting doctrine. All of Ephesians 1:3-14 is a doxology, a praise of God's good deeds. Everything we read there is sweet Gospel. Elsewhere, as in Romans 8, Second Thessalonians 2, and First Peter 1, the doctrine of eternal election is presented as comfort under cross, suffering, trial. In Ephesians the sufferings of Christians are not mentioned. At all times, in good as well as in evil days, Christians are in need of the comfort, of the strengthening afforded by this doctrine.

3. In Ephesians 1 the apostle reminds his Christian readers of the blessings which they presently have and then turns their glance back to the prehistoric source of their blessing. He identifies himself and his fellow Christians with the elect. Thus he teaches us to consider God's eternal election *a posteriori*. The Scriptures speak

⁶⁶ [Ed.:] Rev. Koehlinger has only this sentence in translation of this paragraph: "Now the chief points of the apostle's teaching." *Capita doctrinae* mean "the points of doctrine."

elsewhere briefly and objectively of the elect of God, of the elect whose number is small in comparison to the many who are called. However, where the apostles go into greater detail about the mystery of eternity, they apply what they are saying about it to those whom they are teaching, the Christians. Such direct practical methods of instruction guard against unnecessary and harmful speculations. If one wants to think and speak correctly about predestination and to remain within prescribed limits, he must learn something about the Scriptures' *modus loquendi*.⁶⁷ It has a somewhat different ring and produces a different impression if one says that God has chosen us to faith, to adoption, to salvation before the foundation of the world, or if one points to certain vague persons whom God in eternity resolved to bring to faith and to save them. This in general is the character of the doctrine with which we have been dealing here. And now in Ephesians 1 Paul, for our comfort and the edification of our faith, has us consider the following with regard to election:

4. God has chosen us before the foundation of the world. God is here the subject, and we, those very persons who are now Christians, we are the objects of divine election. Paul knows only of an election of persons, no election of the means. The ordination of the means of salvation, of the means of grace is something altogether different from the choosing of the elect. Predestination is an election of people and individuals. A good portion of modern theologians denies individual election and applies divine election only to the Church in general. But what else is the Christian Church than all Christendom on earth, the totality of all believing Christians? And what is true of the whole is true also of all individuals who make up the whole. God has elected us, “ἡμεῖς.” In that word the apostle includes himself and his Christian readers, all his fellow Christians, and wishes each individual Christian to include himself in this “ἡμεῖς.” Election is something individual. By that God has in mind me, me also, me individually, me concretely, me personally. God has chosen us before the foundation of the world. Ultimately,⁶⁸ election is a pre-worldly, eternal act of God, thus an act of the will, God's counsel and decree. God, the great, eternal God, the Lord of heaven and earth, already before the world was created, before we ever were, directed His attention to usward, to me, to this insignificant, poor creature, had in His thoughts, in His eternal counsel and decree taken us, me, out of the world, out of the lost world and resolved that we should belong to Him and be His own. What great consolation this is for us Christians, who are strangers in the world and who imagine so often that we are but insignificant nothingness in the world!

5. Details are given concerning the content and aim of election. That relationship of ours through eternal election is called adoption. God has preordained us to adoption, has preordained that we should become His children through Christ. We should come to stand before God not just in the relationship of creatures to God, not just in the relationship of servants and slaves, or of friends and associates, but in the relationship of children—He our Father, we His dear children. And as His children we should also walk holy and without blame before Him in love. Already here in time God wanted to glorify Himself in us as His children before the world, who proclaim the virtues of God to the world. The ordination to adoption includes also the ordination to the inheritance of children. Before the foundation of the world

⁶⁷ [Ed.:] “mode of speaking”

⁶⁸ [Ed.:] “κατ' ἐξοχήν”

the heavenly Father has granted and decreed to us something that is His own, heavenly salvation and glory. And with the predestination to adoption and to eternal life God, at the same time, has firmly established from the beginning how He wanted to bring and preserve us, me in faith, He the One who justifies and saves. And every destiny of our lives He has ordered and prepared in advance so that each must serve the highest aim in life, faith, adoption, salvation. What love, what glory the Father in heaven has thus shown to us, that He already before we came into being chose us to be His children and has provided beforehand everything that adoption entails.

6. We are not deserving of such love and honor. Truly, we have nothing inviting and amiable in us that could have and were to have moved God to choose us. By nature we belong to the degenerate, corrupt human race, an abomination to God. That God by means of His eternal election has removed us from the same and chosen us to be His own is, however, in no way based in our nature and state, in any of our doing and conduct. Ephesians 1:3-14 does not yield the slightest support for the assumption that God in His election were to have taken into consideration any conduct whatsoever on our part. The expressions “has chosen us,” “have obtained inheritance,” “good pleasure,” “purpose” rather exclude each and every such consideration. For they characterize that act of God’s will as a free act that has its motive entirely in God. We have been preordained to adoption and to the inheritance of eternal life according to the good pleasure of His will because it once so pleased God. We are predestined to the praise of His glorious grace because God wished to glorify His grace in us. What determined and motivated God to choose us, me, is His grace and mercy. And it was His grace in Christ. God has chosen us through Christ, whom He also ordained before the foundation of the world to be the Redeemer of sinful mankind. From the beginning Christ’s merit has covered up our unworthiness before God and directed to us undeserving ones God’s attention and pleasure. The two single causes of our eternal election are God’s mercy and Christ’s merit, the former the motivating cause, the latter the meritorious cause. Truly, our eternal election rests upon a firm, immovable foundation. A glance at one’s own unworthiness should not cause us to waver in the least.

7. Out of grace for Christ’s sake God has chosen us, me, every last one of us to adoption and to eternal life before the foundation of the world. Predestination is particular election. However, the individuals whom God has chosen for Himself form a whole (τὰ πάντα), a people of His possession (περιποίησις). Compared to the lost world, from which we have been chosen, the elect are few in number. Yet we should not view eternal election as being a process by which God has selected out of the shipwreck and ruin of the world some who are saved but rather in spirit hold before ourselves the great “noble host” of the elect children. Everything that is and ever was of elect in the world comes out, when one views it as a whole as does God, as a great, stately people. God’s eternal loving counsel and plan was this: a great family made up of God’s children from the human race united in Christ, through whom they are chosen. Upon this family rests as much pleasure of the heavenly Father as rests upon the eternal Son of love; many generations of children (Ephesians 3:15), out of all the nations of the earth, who together with all the various generations of God’s children in heaven, the holy angels, in all eternity proclaim the glory of God. Yes, according to Ephesians 3:9, 10: an everlasting Church, God’s world and humanity, in which

finally, after the destruction of the fallen world that had no desire for salvation, is realized the creative purpose of God, the design and pleasure of Him who has created all things. What honor it is for us to be members of this great family of God! In the fellowship of the elect we find rich consolation and compensation even though the world does not consider us deserving of it and rejects it.

8. God's eternal election is described in Ephesians 1 by other significant expressions, and just by such expressions that establish the immutability of election. God has predestined us to adoption just as He has predestined us to the inheritance of children. God's ordination, however, is irrevocable, more irrevocable than the law of the Medes and the Persians.⁶⁹ We are predestined "according to the purpose of His will." God has in eternity taken counsel with Himself. He has considered and carefully weighed the matter and has come to the resolve that we, I and my fellow Christians, should become His children and heirs of eternal life. Concerning the Lord's counsel it is said: "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Psalm 33:11). We are predestined "according to the good pleasure of His will." And God's good pleasure is such that even the gates of hell and the myriads of devils cannot overthrow it. We are predestined "according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will." Man does not and cannot accomplish all the things He has planned to do. It is God's exclusive right to accomplish all that He has resolved to do. Thus, also the purpose of election cannot fail. And what great comfort it is for us Christians to know that our adoption and salvation have not been placed into our own hands "since through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh it could easily be lost or through craft and cunning of the devil and the world it could be snatched and taken from us" but that God has taken our adoption and salvation into His almighty hand, "ordained it in His eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown." God has beforehand established the number, the fullness of the elect (Ephesians 1:23). And so not a single one can fall out of this number. Thus, a Christian can and has to be sure of his salvation. And the certainty of salvation is a characteristic of Christian faith. Thus the comfort of election serves to the edification of our most holy faith.

9. And God has already carried out a good part of His eternal purpose. In Ephesians 1 the apostle expressly points to the execution of God's eternal counsel. God started to do this at the very beginning of the world. He gave the promise already to Adam, then to Abraham and Israel and through the promise awakened the elect out of Adam's and Abraham's generation to faith, to the hope of the future Christ. Above all, however, He is making use of the present era, the time of the New Testament, for the gathering of the elect children. He has sent out the Gospel of Christ, and already many Gentiles have heard and believed the Gospel of their salvation and have become God's children. The Church's work, the preaching of the Gospel, serves this purpose, and the result is that the elect are being gathered from all the ends of the earth. We too have heard and have believed the Gospel of our salvation and have received the adoption. The whole of our former life was divine pedagogy, which aimed at faith and adoption. We have come to know Christ and have in Christ redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins; we possess a reconciled God and have God as our Father. And God has bestowed upon us all manner of

⁶⁹ [Ed.:] See Esther 1:19, Daniel 6:8, 12, 15.

wisdom and prudence and so made us fit to lead a blessed life. This is the blessing He prepared for us from eternity.

10. And more than that, God will carry out to the end His eternal counsel and purpose in us and in our fellow-elect brethren, so that we attain the final goal of our calling. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, the Earnest of the future inheritance. The Holy Spirit safeguards God's possession which He chose from the beginning, preserves our souls and keeps them in His Word and in faith until the day of redemption. The inheritance of children cannot and will not escape us. The Lord will indeed redeem us from all evil, take us completely out of this world and help us obtain His heavenly kingdom. There shall we with all the elect of God, with the entire congregation of the righteous see God's glory and praise God into all eternity for having so gloriously fulfilled all that He in eternity had determined to do.

When a Christian has read Ephesians 1:3-14, when he has evaluated it and taken to heart its comforting contents, he with the apostle gives thanks to the God and Father of Jesus Christ for His temporal and eternal deeds of kindness, of which he has been reminded here, and experiences no desire and inclination curiously to inquire into, and to speculate concerning, the mystery of eternity. But he still is plagued with this or that question which he cannot completely shake off. When he hears about eternal election, which in concept and essence is particular, the question arises: What is my situation? Do I belong among the elect? And by what am I able to know and how can I be sure that I too am elect? These are questions of a soul that is fearful of its salvation, questions that arise out of the desire for salvation. And we anticipate that Scripture, which teaches and offers all that is necessary for our salvation, will answer these questions.

We find those answers in Ephesians 1. In this passage the apostle does not speak in general terms of the elect whom God has chosen, but he uses the words "we," "us," "you," marks and considers Christians as elect. Thus, if one is able to say to himself: "I am a Christian," he should know and believe that he is a chosen one. But Paul in Ephesians 1 now analyses in detail wherein Christianity consists, what we as Christians are and have. And these characteristics of Christianity are accordingly also characteristics and marks of election. In an extended section Article XI of the Formula of Concord deals with the question how individuals are able to know and become sure whether they belong to the elect, and there makes reference to Ephesians 1. The article shows that God has resolved to lead and leads His elect on the one and only way to salvation. He has the Word, the Gospel, preached to those whom He has elected from eternity. Then he brings to faith. Then He blesses and justifies through Christ. Then He sanctifies through faith, makes them wise and equips them to good works of every kind. Then He upholds in faith, just as they are also ordained to adoption and to a holy and blameless life in love.

Consequently, every Christian may and should say and conclude: "It's true, I am a poor sinner, deserving of no grace, but I believe in Jesus Christ, who has redeemed me with His blood, in whom I have grace and the forgiveness of sins Through Christ I am a child of God, and now, even though in great weakness, I pursue sanctification. I shall make sincere effort to live to please God, my heavenly father. This is why I belong to the elect, for these very things are the marks of the elect. The entire Christian estate is execution of God's eternal decree of election, is the result and effect of election. This thought runs through all of Ephesians 1:3-14. Thus, I am able rightly to conclude from the effect to the cause.

The evidences of Christianity, repentance, faith, sanctification, lie in the subjective area. And in times of severe temptation the entire life of faith begins to reel. And then often the inner

marks of election are unrecognizable. Spiritual temptation, as sincere Christians come to know it, consists in this that they get to the point of doubting their faith, that they begin to doubt the genuineness of their faith, that consciousness of their adoption grows dim, that they fear their obedience, their piety might be nothing but mere sham. But when the distinctive marks of eternal election will no longer stand the test: the apostle then in Ephesians 1 draws attention to an external mark, to the Word of truth, to the Gospel of their salvation which is exalted sky high above all the ups and downs and dispositions of the human heart, above all the subjective feelings and experiences of the Christian. Those whom God has chosen from eternity consequently get to hear the Gospel.

“In whom you trusted, after that you heard the word of truth” is a special act of God that flows from the eternal ordination. I may and should, therefore, according to the apostle’s instruction conclude thus: Here is the Gospel of Christ with its precious promises, the universal promises of grace that apply to everyone who hears them, also to me. This is also the Gospel of my salvation, which says to me too that I shall go to heaven. And what it promises, that is most certainly true. The Gospel is the Word of truth. I hear with my ears the Gospel, the Word of truth. Here I am able also to see with my eyes that God will have me to be saved. And so beyond doubt I also am a chosen one.

Another kind of question comes to mind in a consideration of God’s eternal election: But what about the others? We are no better than they; they are no worse than we. Why has God chosen us, me, before others? This question springs not out of a desire for salvation but out of curiosity. This is an impertinent question. And to such impertinent questions the Scriptures, which only reveal to us what serves to our salvation, gives no answer. The apostolic instruction in Ephesians 1:3-14 deals entirely with Christians, deals only with the elect and the salvation of the elect and says not a word about others and the fate of others. And in one other passage, Romans 9-11, the apostle directly forbids Christians to investigate the cause of the *discretio personarum*⁷⁰ and ranks the *causa discriminis*⁷¹ among those things which God intentionally had kept hidden from us. And humble Christians at once heed the advice and suppress impertinent questions as soon as they arise.

The question “Why are some converted, others not?” gives rise to all kinds of reflections and conclusions. Those who give free course to their own thoughts at this point reason something like this: that we Christians believe the Gospel, have through faith become God’s children and then have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, who preserves us from backsliding, this is, as some will have us believe, the result and effect of eternal election. From this follows: when others do not believe the Gospel or again fall away from faith and finally perish, the reason for this is that the eternal background is lacking, that God has passed them by in His election process. Had God chosen them, they would have come to faith and been saved. It is coarse, carnal reason that concludes thus, that with soiled hands treats so badly and abuses divine mysteries.

The passages that deal with predestination, such as Ephesians 1, give us no grounds for such reflections. They speak only of the election of grace, of the eternal divine decree that has as object God’s elect children. They do not even remotely point to some kind of a decree of God or to a failure on the part of God as the effectual cause of unbelief and the damnation of the many. And in other passages the Scriptures explicitly teach that the cause of unbelief, apostasy, damnation lie in man himself, that man himself is to blame, and that God has not failed and left anything undone in His efforts to save those who do not want to be saved.

⁷⁰ [Ed.:] Latin: “distinguishing of persons,” which is considered a factor in election and predestination.

⁷¹ [Ed.:] Latin: “reason for distinguishing,” an issue in the doctrine of election and predestination.

A Christian, who has received God's grace and who properly meditates upon eternal grace, does not permit his glance into the abyss of divine mercy to be dulled and wrapped up in gloom by unnecessary questions and reflections that aid neither him nor others. He thanks God for the salvation that has fallen to his lot and leaves to God how He wishes to deal with others.

Of course, there is a legitimate question relative to the weal and woe of others. There is a legitimate concern over the fate of our fellowmen. The first and foremost question is that concerning the salvation of our own soul, how we stand to God and God to us; and when we are dealing with God, we do not inquire what the situation is with others. However, the one who is really concerned about the salvation of his own soul, concerns himself, if he is in the clear with God, also with the soul's salvation of his fellowmen. And when we deal with men who as yet do not know the way of peace, we do not talk to them about predestination, and we do not speculate then and there about election or non-election. Missionaries, and all Christians have the calling to be missionaries, have better things to do than to split hairs over unproductive questions, which they personally cannot answer. We speak to the lost whom we wish to salvage of Jesus Christ, the Savior of all men, the Savior even of the worst sinner. We assure them in God's name: God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.⁷² God does not want the sinner to die, but that he should be converted and live.⁷³ Therefore, repent and believe the Gospel! We know too that such words have the power to convert sinners and to soften hard hearts. And if one simply does not want to listen, then we testify to him: the fault is yours should you perish. You do not consider yourself worthy of eternal life. This earnest warning and chastisement might bring him to his senses before it is too late. And those who are affected by such coaxing, exhorting, warning and are won, we welcome as our co-elect brethren and rejoice in the growth of God's family.

Predestination, faith in our eternal election does not keep us from fulfilling our duty to neighbor, on accomplishing our Christian calling upon earth. The comfort of predestination, the certainty of salvation is no occasion for inactivity and idleness. The one who is sure of his salvation, the one who believes with his whole heart that God has made sure his salvation before ever the world was formed, he makes the best possible use of each day and all the energies of his body in order to help others to salvation. Predestination teaches us to recognize what the grace of God is all about. And the deeper we become rooted in God's grace and in the knowledge of grace, all the more adept, competent, and willing will we be in commending God's grace to others and in proclaiming to our fellowmen God's universal gracious will.

⁷² [Ed.:] First Timothy 2:3, 4.

⁷³ [Ed.:] in place of this sentence Rev. Koehlinger supplies Second Peter 3:9b: God is not willing that any should perish but that all should turn from their way and live.