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Proceedings of the Synod.

According to the resolution of the previous year, the Synod continued with the discussion of the theses dealing with the topic:

"That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone, an incontrovertible proof that the doctrine of the same is the only true one."

Instead of point 10 of the Third Thesis, the same resolution was followed by point 12, which teaches:

"Also with its doctrine of the election of grace, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church gives all glory to God alone."

Since it had been recognized as very necessary that the doctrine of election by grace be thoroughly dealt with by the Synod, the speaker had drawn up such theses, the first five of which were discussed and adopted. These are as follows:

Thesis I.

It teaches, according to God's Word, "that God has made the conversion, righteousness and salvation of every Christian so highly important to him, and has meant it so faithfully, that before the foundation of the world was laid, he took counsel about it and decreed in his purpose how he would bring me to it and preserve me in it. Item, that he has so well and surely willed to preserve my salvation, because it could easily be lost from our hands through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh, or torn and taken from us by the cunning and violence of the devil and the world, that he has decreed it in his eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and has placed it in the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can snatch us". It also teaches that "in such His counsel, purpose and decree God has not only prepared salvation in general, but has also considered in grace all and every person of the elect who are to be saved through Christ, has chosen them for salvation, and has also decreed that He will bring, help, promote, strengthen and preserve them in the way now reported, by His grace, gifts and effects". (Concordienbuch. Müller's Ausg. p. 714. 708.) (FC SD XI 45-46; FC SD XI 23)

Matt. 22:14. Ephes. 1:4, 11. Rom. 8:28-30. 2 Thess. 2:13.

Thesis II.

It teaches: **<AGtG 162>** "The eternal election of God not only stands and knows beforehand the salvation of the elect, but is also a cause by the gracious will and good pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, so that our salvation, and that which belongs to it, creates, works, helps and promotes; on which also our salvation is founded, so that the gates of hell can do nothing against it; as it is written: "No one will snatch my sheep out of my hand"; and again: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."" (Concordb. p. 705. f.) (FC SD XI 8)

Matt. 24:24; Acts. 13:48; Rom. 8:33-39; Hos. 13:9.

Thesis III.

It teaches that "it is false and unjust to teach that not only the mercy of God and
the most holy merit of Christ alone, but

also in us is a cause of God's election, for which God has chosen us to eternal life (p. 723) (FC SC XI 88), Ephes. 1, 5. 6. Rom. 9, 15. 1 Cor. 4, 7. whether it be:

- a. man's work or sanctification, 2 Tim. 1, 9. Tit. 3, 5. Ephes. 2, 8, 9; Rom. 11, 5-7;
- b. man's right use of the means of grace, Acts 16:14.;
- c. man's self-decision, Phil. 2:13; Ephes. 2:1, 5;
- d. man's desire and prayer, Rom. 9:16;
- e. man's non-resistance, Jer 31:18; Isa 63:17;
- f. man's faith, Rom. 4:16.

Thesis IV.

It rejects the doctrine "that God does not will that any man should be saved, but, notwithstanding their sin, ordains them to damnation by the mere counsel, purpose, and will of God, that they cannot be saved; rather, it teaches that "not all those who have heard the Word believe and are therefore condemned all the more deeply is not because God has not granted them salvation, but because they themselves are guilty of not learning the Word in this way, but only of despising, blaspheming and profaning it, and of having resisted the Holy Spirit, who wanted to work in them through the Word"; It also teaches that "such contempt of the Word is not the cause of God's providence (*vel praescientia, vel praedestinatio Dei*), but of man's perverse will". (S. 557. 721. 713.) [[FC Ep XI 19](#), [FC SD XI 78, 41](#)]

Ezek. 33:11. 2 Pet. 3:9. 1 Tim. 2:4-6. Joh. 3:16. Rom. 11:32. Matt. 23:37. Acts 7:51. Prov. 1:

Thesis V.

It teaches that "concerning those things which are revealed in Christ, God still keeps much of this mystery secret and hidden, reserving it for His wisdom and knowledge alone, which we should not search out, nor follow our thoughts in this, nor conclude, nor ponder, but hold fast to the revealed Word; which remembrance is most necessary, for our ingenuity has **<AGtG 163>** always much more pleasure in troubling itself with these matters than with that which God has revealed to us in his Word, because we cannot reconcile it together; which we are not commanded to do". (S. 715.) [[FC SD XI 52-53](#)]

Rom. 11:33-36. 9:18-21.

Thesis VI.

It teaches, with regard to the use of the doctrine of election by grace, that in the question "how we may know, from what and by what means, who are the elect who can and should accept this doctrine for consolation, we are not to judge of this according to our reason, nor according to the law, nor from some outward appearance, nor are we to presume to search the secret hidden abyss of divine providence (*praedestinationis*), but to pay attention to the revealed will of God. — Accordingly, this eternal election of God is to be considered in Christ and not outside or without Christ; for in Christ, as the holy apostle Paul testifies, we were chosen before the foundation of the world was laid, as it is written: He loved us in the Beloved. But such a choice is revealed from heaven through the preached Word, when the Father says: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; him you shall hear" (p. 709. 717. f.) ([FC SC XI 25-26](#); [FC SD XI 65](#))

Ephes. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; — 2 Pet. 1:10; — 2 Tim. 4:7-8.

It has been remarked that we have probably never had more cause to approach our doctrinal negotiations with fear and trembling, and thereby to completely despair of our reason, of all our wisdom, than this time; for it is one of the greatest mysteries that God has revealed to us in His Word, which we are approaching in these days. The doctrine of the election of grace concerns, as it were, the very foundation of the great, unfathomable mystery of our salvation, into which even the angels long to look without being able to fathom it. Oh, what a terrible sin we would commit if we wanted to mix our own thoughts with God's thoughts, indeed, if we wanted to pass off our own thoughts as God's thoughts! How? What we miserable, sinful, short-sighted people think here in time, that we want to declare to be thoughts and counsel of the great God, which he conceived before the foundation of the world in endless eternity? Far be it from us! We truly could not commit a more terrible sin, for in doing so we would actually be trying to cast God off His throne and make ourselves God. Certainly we are all filled with these thoughts at the present moment; we are frightened by the possibility that we should falsify anything in this eternally sacred and important point. It could cost hundreds and thousands of immortal souls, dearly bought by Christ, not only in the present but also in the future. Therefore it is truly necessary for us to cry out to God that he would preserve us from error and open our eyes so that we may see in his light the light which he has also shed on this saving and yet so mysterious doctrine in his holy word.

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But because it is revealed openly and clearly in Holy Scripture, we can also confidently proceed to contemplate it in faith, even if we achieve no more than — to use Luther's words — just a little taste, a little sweet smell of it. If God gives us even this, the blessing will be overwhelming; for there is no more glorious, more comforting, more delicious doctrine than that of eternal election; it summarizes everything sweet, delicious and comforting that God's Word contains.

There are now three main questions that we must answer:

1. is there any doctrine at all in Holy Scripture of an election — and that of only a number of people — to eternal salvation?
2. what is the nature of this doctrine according to Scripture? and do we find it in our church, namely in its confession?
3. to what extent does this doctrine, as our church has drawn it from Scripture, give all glory to God alone?

For not only is it our original task to show the latter after the discussions of the last years; but if this is the case, it is quite certain that we have not misunderstood Scripture. For it tells us that everything created and revealed by God is created and revealed for his glory. Once we have convinced ourselves of these three things under God's grace, then we can go home again in good spirits, knowing that God has also given us poor sinners the grace of God: God has truly revealed and given us poor sinners even this most consoling doctrine, so that we may live all the more cheerfully and one day die all the more surely blessed.

So the first question is this: Is there a doctrine of the election of individual people to eternal salvation that was already given by God before the foundation of the world?

We answer: Yes, there is such a doctrine, even if almost all recent theologians who have written dogmatics deny it. Among these we find only one who admits an eternal election, that is Professor Philippi in Rostock; whereas all the other famous theologians of modern times, a von Hofmann in Erlangen, a Kohn in Leipzig, a Vilmar in Marburg, even a Thomasius, who had the mark of a godly Christian in his life, do not believe in the election of individuals to salvation. It is all the more necessary that in this terrible time of apostasy, when this doctrine is almost universally rejected, we strengthen our hearts in this aspect of our most holy faith. Yes, God has already chosen a number of people for salvation from eternity; he has decided that they should and must be saved; and as surely as God is God, so surely will they be saved, and no one else besides them; this is what Scripture teaches, and this is also our faith, our teaching, our confession. But where does Scripture teach this? In the passages quoted in our first thesis, which we shall briefly consider.

Matt. 22:14. Here the Lord Himself says at the close of His parable of the marriage which a king made to his son: "For many are called, but few are chosen." He does not say: a small number, but: "few", <AGtG 165> in order to indicate that really certain individuals are chosen; just as the word "choose", "elect" indicates that they are taken out of the others. The elect are thus taken out of humanity, indeed, out of the number of nominal Christians. How absurd it is, therefore, to speak of election and to refer it to the whole of humanity, as e.g. von Hofmann does!

Ephes. 1:3-6: "Praise be to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things through Christ. For as he hath chosen us through him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; And hath ordained us unto the adoption of children by himself through JESUM Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, by which he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

Here Paul names the goods with which believers are blessed through Christ, v. 3, and gives election as the very first of these, v. 4, just as it goes without saying that this must be, so to speak, the oldest, first and highest good. For even the Son of God only became a man in time and only redeemed us in time. In the same way, it is only in time that we are called, awakened and converted, justified, sanctified and finally raised to glory.

It should also be noted that the apostle expressly says that we are chosen through Christ; therefore it is an ungodly doctrine to say that the election was first made by God in eternity and only then was he able to enable his Son, so to speak, to carry out his counsel. Conversely, Christ is the eternal reason, and because and, to speak humanly, after God the Father wanted to give his dear Son for the lost world of sinners, therefore and only then could he, without ceasing to be God, choose all those who would believe in this his Son to the end.

When it then goes on to say, "before the foundation of the world was laid", a new aspect is thereby made known to us, namely that election is eternal. Whoever thinks that election consists in the fact that when a person converts, God now chooses him, is very much mistaken. Rather, this happened long before the world was.

If it then goes on to say: "that we should be holy and blameless before him in love", we are taught that holiness and blamelessness are not the reason but the purpose of our election; election, on the other hand, is the reason for our holiness and blamelessness. God

did not choose us because he foresaw that we would walk blamelessly; on the contrary, he chose us that we might become holy and blameless.

It goes on to say: "and has chosen us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ." This is to show us the full glory of election, namely that God has decided from eternity to make us poor sinners his children. Truly, nothing greater can be given to us, for it is said at the same time that we are also chosen from eternity to eternal life, to dwell in God's house and to partake of all his goods. It is not for nothing that the holy apostle repeats the words "through Christ"; he wants to remind us once again that all salvation, especially election and what belongs to it, is sought in the Lord Jesus, who is the very book of life.

The following expression: "according to the good pleasure of his will", is also extremely important. We should learn from this that we are not chosen according to the will of any creature or according to our will, but according to God's will. But this will of God is not itself determined by any other will; therefore the apostle says: "according to the good pleasure of his will." **<AGtG 166>** So if we were to say to God: why did you choose me? he would answer: because I so willed. If we were to ask further: why did you will this? he would answer: it was the good pleasure of my will. Yes, the good Lord does not allow himself to be tutored by us; we should know that we are in his hands. He alone has created us for this temporal life; he alone, according to his pure and simple good pleasure, also gives us eternal life.

Finally, the apostle comes to the cause of election, v. 6, and says: "to the praise of his glorious grace, by which he has made us accepted in the Beloved." So when we get to heaven, we will have no reason to praise ourselves. We will not be able to say: Well, now I am in heaven, but I also let it get to me; what have I prayed, how many tribulations have I patiently endured, how have I been so willing to serve my neighbor! No, this accursed praise will not resound in eternity; but all the elect and all the angels of heaven will have only God's grace to praise. It is all, all grace: that, dear brothers, must be our guiding star also in these negotiations of ours. We must be terrified at the thought of letting in any doctrine that would take the glory from God, that it is all, all vain grace and nothing more. And yet this danger is so close! The whole of modern Christianity is designed to make people think that they are great saints and that they are better than other people and will therefore go to heaven. No, I do not hope to be saved because I think

I am a hair's breadth better than the greatest sinners, but because God has revealed to me in his words that it is only once the good pleasure of his will to make of me poor, lost sinner a memorial of his eternal grace and to set it up for all eternity. Only he who thus applies the doctrine of the election of grace is on the right track; and if he only babbles about this doctrine, he will not blaspheme God, like all self-righteous Pelagians who ascribe anything to man in this respect.

Finally, the apostle adds the words: "Through whom he has made us accepted in the Beloved." So the dear God has not seen anything in me that would have made me pleasing to him; oh no, he has only seen something in me that makes me very displeasing to him; we are by nature an abomination and an abhorrence in his sight, but in his beloved Son he has looked upon us, in his Son he has been able to choose us, he has drawn us to his Son, and now we are pleasing in his sight.

Verse 11 reads: "By whom also we are made heirs, who were ordained beforehand, according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his will." So we have come to the inheritance because we have been predestined (for this means "predestined"). Indeed, before we were created, before we were born, God predestined us to salvation, and why? It says: "according to the counsel of his will." God does not need to ask a man, an angel, or even an archangel: he does everything according to the counsel of his will; he has counsel enough, and he has always followed this counsel; praise be to him for it!

Romans 8:28-30: "But we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And those whom he has ordained he has also called; those whom he has called he has also justified; and those whom he has justified he has also made glorious." **<AGtG 167>**

In this passage, too, we find the seat of the doctrine of election by grace. Paul had previously spoken of the cross of Christians. They could now say: "Yes, if it looks like this, if the apostle presents us with such a sad future, who will still consider themselves to be the elect? This is Paul's answer in v. 28: Whoever God needs as an elect person, everything must serve him for the best!

V. 29. is often not interpreted correctly. For it is said: Here it says: those whom God "foreknew, he also predestined"; thus he looked into the future and recognized beforehand how people would

behave, and thought: those whom I see to be godly, I will save; those whom I see not to be godly, I will cast into hell. But that would be nothing other than a general conclusion about our salvation; then there would be no election at all. No, if we compare the biblical passages in which it is said that God knows and recognizes His own, we see that this expression means nothing other than: He loves them, He has chosen them, elected them, accepted them for His own and recognized them as His beloved. John 10:14, for example, the Lord says: "I know those who are mine and am known by those who are mine." By this He really does not merely mean that He knows where they come from, what they look like, what kind of work they do, etc.; with these words He rather wants to testify to His faithfulness as a shepherd and say that He has chosen His sheep to be His own and embraces them with eternal love. This recognition is therefore the recognition of love. Many other passages of Holy Scripture prove this. Acts. 2:23, for example, is the same word in Greek that is used here in Romans 8:29. Will anyone now claim that the dear God had no closer connection with his Son than that he knew beforehand that he would do this and that, suffer and die? No, but Christ's suffering and death was God's counsel, indeed, was at the same time the counsel of God the Son and the Holy Spirit; for what one Person of the Trinity does outwardly, the other two Persons also do. So if the Father has seen and recognized his Son beforehand as the Sufferer, this means that he has chosen him for his atoning suffering.

Compare also 1 Peter 1:2, Rom. 11:2 and 2 Tim. 2:19, where the word xxxxxxxxxx used in our passage is everywhere taken in the sense of election.

Christian Stock confirms what has been said with the following words: "The Greek word '*proginosco*' (previously provided) means, according to the figure of speech which is called metonymy, the effect which follows the foreknowledge. Hence it is just as much as decree beforehand, decree beforehand 1 Peter 1:20, where the Lamb is called God "provided beforehand" (*proegnosmenos*). In this passage is not understood a mere foreknowledge, but such as is connected with a counsel and with a decree, according to which God in his eternal counsel so decreed and ordained that the work of redemption should be accomplished through his only-begotten Son, as the appointed Mediator of the human race." (*Clavis N. T. p. 242.*)

Likewise the Rostock theologian Quistorp writes: **<AGtG 168>** "The words Rom. 8, 29: 'Which he foreknew,' must be understood of the special foreknowledge with which the approving will is connected, which is called by the scholastics the knowledge of approval and love." (*Annott. in omnes libros bibi. Ad I. c.*)

Furthermore, Polycarp Leyser writes in the Evangelical Harmony on John 10:14: "I am a good shepherd, and know my own", as follows: "He knows them in such a way that he knows that they are predestined by the Father from eternity, and by loving them he zealously cares for them." (*Ad I. c.*)

Bengel says in the *Gnomon* on 1 Peter 1:2: "according to the providence (xxxxxxx) of God" (according to which the strangers are "chosen"): "It also includes the will and love in itself." (*Ad I. c.*)

Luther explains the words: "According to the providence of God" as: "According to God's order." (*Ad I. c.*)

But, it is objected, if providence means election, the same thing would be said here twice; and this tempts Diele to believe that providence here means nothing more than foreknowledge. But the apostle does not merely say, "whom he has appointed, them he has also ordained," but he adds, "that they should be conformed to the image of his Son." So he wants to tell his readers: "You are in doubt about your sonship with God because you have to endure so many tribulations. You think you cannot be the elect. But this is no reason for doubt at all, for whom God has chosen for salvation he has also ordained to the cross. The election of grace is therefore not merely a choice to go to heaven, but a choice to go through the cross and tribulation.

When Paul continues in v. 30: "But those whom he has appointed, he has also called," etc., he goes on to say that election to grace includes everything that God wants to do for the poor sinner in order to bring him safely to heaven. The election of grace is also an election to a calling, to justification and to glory. The first link in the chain of our salvation is election, the second is redemption, the third is calling, the fourth is justification, and the fifth is glorification, which is all the way up in heaven. What fools, therefore, are those who think that the doctrine of election is a dangerous doctrine! It would only be so if God had revealed nothing more about it to us than that he had decided to take some people to heaven. But he has revealed much more to us, as we have just seen. Let no one say, "Oh, I am chosen; I may live as I please, but I am going to heaven." For by living ungodly, a man proves that God has been compelled to number him among the rejected. God was also pleased to choose him, for he wants to make the whole world blessed; but he who is such a wicked man that he asks nothing of the dear God should not be surprised if he once opens his eyes in hell after death; for God has chosen not only to salvation, but also to the whole Christian life. No one

goes to **<AGtG 169>** heaven except the one whom God leads in this way; but that we give this way is not our merit, but God's free grace.

2 Thess. 2:13: "But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and in the faith of the truth."

This passage is often held up to us as a proof that man is chosen for the sake of faith, because it says at the end: "in the faith of the truth." But everyone can see that it is preceded by "in the sanctification of the Spirit", so God must have chosen man for the sake of sanctification. Now all Christians admit that we are not chosen for the sake of sanctification, but that we are saved by grace alone; so the expression "in the faith of the truth" obviously has a different meaning than: for the sake of faith. For Paul wants to say: We are chosen for the sanctification of the Spirit and for the faith of the truth. This peculiar way of speaking occurs very often in Greek, that one says: this is in and for the cause, and one wants to say: this is for the cause. A parallel passage is, for example, 1 Thess. 4:7, which says: "For God has not called us to uncleanness, but to sanctification." The Greek actually says "in sanctification". Now no Christian would be foolish enough to think that we must first become holy and then God will call us, but rather the opposite: God calls us so that we can become holy. That is why Luther rightly translates it as "for sanctification." Our passage must be understood in the same way: We are chosen from the beginning for salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and in faith, that we may be in sanctification and in the faith of the truth, that is, in obedience to God's Word.

These cited passages show in an irrefutable way that the doctrine of the election of grace is revealed in Holy Scripture, just like the other saving doctrines of our faith, e.g. the doctrine of justification, of holy baptism and others, in sun-clear, bright and unambiguous words, so bright that even the simplest Christian can recognize and understand them.

The newer theologians, therefore, who deny this doctrine, only prove their unbelief. Let us listen to some of their testimonies.

Thus Dr. v. Hofmann writes: "According to Scripture, the object of this eternal will of God is not man as an individual, but it is man, or, to put it another way, mankind. . . It would now be decidedly wrong to say of 'being chosen' (xxxxxxxxxx) that it denotes the eternal destiny of certain individuals to salvation. . since it is rather first of all the church, and indeed the whole church of Christ or an individual as a member of it, of which it is said that God has chosen it.

It is said of the individual Christians because and in so far as they are members of the church." (Proof of Scripture, I, 193. 199. 201.)

The unfortunate man here virtually denies that individuals are chosen, invoking the fact that the apostle calls a church elect. But every Lutheran Christian knows that in Holy Scripture, by means of the synecdoche of whole visible communities, beautiful things are said which belong only to individuals among them. This is done for the comfort of the dear children of God who are among the **<AGtG 170>** hypocrites. It is just as when I say of a field of wheat that it is wheat, although I see that there are also tares among it; or as when I call a ring gold, although it is mixed with copper; yes, as when I call silver money silver, although there is often very little silver in it. The name is often given to the noble part of the whole thing: so also Paul does not mean to say that the visible church is the elect, but that there are elect in it.

The absurdity of von Hofmann's assertion is also evident from this: If the elect are the outward crowd of Christians in general, then I can be an elect and still go to hell; for many who outwardly consider themselves Christians and go to church go to hell. We do not want to be such chosen ones; we thank God for that.

Luthardt writes: "The basic error" (of the Lutheran doctrine of election by grace) "is from the beginning the too direct relationship to the individual, instead of to humanity as God wills it in Christ, into whose fellowship then only the individual enters through faith. These individual believers, however, are not the object of a special and particular predestination, but in them the one and general counsel of God's love is realized historically." (Compendium. Third ed. p. 95.)

Thus, according to Luthardt, God did not have individual persons in mind from eternity, but only the great human race; he sent his Son to redeem it, but it itself can now continue to see how it gets to heaven.

Vilmar writes: "More fruitfully ... the Lutheran dogmatists could unquestionably have developed the doctrine of the Formula Concordia if they had asked themselves whether there was not reason in the Apology to understand election as a representation of the foundation of the Christian church as an institution of salvation as a whole, i.e. to eliminate election as relating to individual persons altogether, i.e. to assert election for individuals only in so far as these individuals, in being separated from the world among the saints, are included. i.e. to assert election for individuals only insofar as these individuals are included in the separation of the Christian congregation from the world, among the saints." (Dogmatics 1874. p. 16. f.)

To him, then, election is the foundation of the Christian church as an institution of salvation. Truly, one can hardly believe one's eyes when one reads such words from men who want to be great theologians.

Thomasius writes: "In itself, the divine purpose has no relation to individuals (*personen*), there is no counsel concerning the election of individuals, *) [*] „Kein decretum de singulis eligendis." but ordered love. **) [**) *Voluntas ordinata*] In other words: God's love rests on Christ, the Beloved, and in him on all who unite themselves to him in faith, who become one person with him through faith. **<AGtG 171>** What these are, that is not the content, not the purpose of this counsel — it is therefore not complete on this side, and not because it is aimed at the behavior of men. . . . And so, if I may say so, it is only gradually fulfilled with the individual persons; who these are, of course, God knows in advance by virtue of his presence, but that is not the content, not the purpose of that general decision about the people who are to be saved." (Christ's Person and Work. 1853. I, 400. f.) "The eternal purpose ... is not an individual choice, but ... a universal will of grace, embracing the whole lost human race, not, however, a bad universal will, but a will decided and established in Christ, Ephes. 1:4; for it consists precisely in the fact that God wills to save mankind in Christ, the object of his love and the author of our salvation, and only in Christ, that is, insofar as they surrender to him in faith, not without and apart from him." (The Confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, etc. 1848. p. 219.)

Thus even Thomasius himself allows election to be based on God's general will of grace and calls it "ordered love"; for God has ordered that those who believe shall be saved, but those who do not believe shall be damned. But this is the order of redemption, not that of election. We Christians know that if we believe, we have God's grace and our sins are forgiven; and this is so certain to true Christians that they are ready at any moment to lay down their lives for it. But now we think: Yes, I have faith, I have forgiveness of sins, but will I also be saved? How many have already had faith, but have been "deceived" by their flesh and blood, blinded by the world and seduced by the devil, have fallen away and gone to hell! Now God knew this from eternity past, that his poor Christians would be tormented and frightened by such thoughts, and would be in such distress that they would not be able to keep themselves in the faith. Well, he thought (to speak humanly), I will remedy that. I will ordain from eternity that such and such shall be saved,

and all the devils in hell shall not snatch them out of my hand; I will not only bring them to faith, but also keep them in it and thus save them. Defiance be commanded to the creature that would put my counsel to shame! But the newer theologians want to deprive us of this sweet consolation. We should be allowed to believe that we are in grace, but we should think: I will probably be lost after all; for I know what an evil heart I have, what an impression the world makes on me, how cunning the devil is! is; how quickly I can fall away and be lost! — Oh, it is terrible! —

In contrast, Philippi writes: "Among the Lutheran confessional writings, the Formula of Concord was the first to establish a detailed and coherent doctrine of election. This is one of its merits, which alone secures it an imperishable importance among the confessional writings of the church." (Doctrine of the Faith. IV, 60. f.)

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How pleasant it is to hear such a voice among the newer theologians!

The Lutheran theologian Wandalinus, professor at Copenhagen, gives an excellent definition of election by grace in the following words: "Predestination or election is the eternal act of God, by which, according to the good pleasure of his will, and solely for the sake of the merit of Christ, he has chosen out of the whole mass of the fallen human race all those men to eternal life of whom he foreknew that through the means of salvation, which in time should be offered to all without distinction, they would truly and to the end believe in Christ, the Savior of all men, so that by virtue of this infallible and unchangeable counsel and action they might attain salvation to the praise of his glorious grace." (xxxxxxxxxx san. verb. Havniae 1703. p. 132.)

He calls election an act, so that we may know that it does not consist merely of thoughts which God receives because he stands afar off. Note also that Wandalinus does not say: "because", but: "of whom he foreknew". He only wants to describe the elect, but does not want to make faith the cause of salvation, which is only the means.

Our Dietrich Catechism also gives a good explanation of the election of grace. (Question 321.) It says: "It is that act of God which, according to the purpose of his will, he has determined by his grace and mercy in Christ alone to save all those who will persevere in believing in Christ to the praise of his glorious grace."

If we now go into the content of our first thesis in more detail, it should be noted in advance that the wording of this, as well as the other theses, is deliberately taken from the Formula of Concord, so that

everyone may know that no new teaching is to be given here, but only the teaching of our confessions is to be repeated.

Up to now, in the discussions of the last few years, we have only heard that God's glory shines forth from all those doctrines which apply to all men without exception, as from the doctrines of the Word of God, of providence, of justification, of the means of grace, etc. These are all teachings that are for all people. But now we come to a doctrine which relates only to the elect; not because the good Lord does not grant it to all men, but because there are certain persons who do not want it to the end; therefore it cannot benefit them.

It is now said in our **<AGtG 173>**

Thesis I.

It (namely, our Lutheran Church) teaches, according to God's Word, "that God is so concerned about the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian, and so faithfully meant it, that before the foundation of the world was laid, he took counsel about it and decreed in his purpose how he would bring me to it and keep me in it." (FC SD XI 45)

The Formula of Concord does not speak here of people in general, but of Christians; for election concerns only Christians. What a great love of God shines forth from this teaching! It is already an unspeakable love that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world and through him opened heaven to men, and that he calls all men to enter through the open gates of heaven. But what can we say to the fact that he also destined his elect for salvation from all eternity and therefore advised them, as it were, what he should do so that they would certainly enter heaven? He knew, when he had created men, that they would fall, that the devil would seek to disgrace his work; so now he took counsel what to do so that the work of redemption would not be disgraced. Well, he thought (to speak humanly): The devil shall not do with this work as he did with the work of creation; I will see to it that a great and immeasurable number of men shall certainly be saved; and that is election. Now the devil may come with his whole infernal army: these will be saved, for their salvation is based on God's counsel, which he has decreed from eternity. What love! But someone might say: "God is not only love, he is also holiness and justice! That would be a strange honor for God if only his love flowed out of this teaching." But holiness and righteousness also shine from it; for he has also decided from eternity not to choose

all those who would reject his Son. Thus he has testified before heaven and earth that he will only accept those who have the fulfillment of the law. Whoever does not have this will be cursed by the law, and God will not save him, for God will not cease to be holy and righteous in order to bring to heaven the ungodly wicked who do not want to know anything about him. The Reformed also teach that a number are saved by free grace, and that others are damned; but the latter, they say, is because "God does not want to save them, because he even created them for sin and hell." But it is not God who acts in this way, but the devil; for only the devil, if he could, would call someone into existence in order to determine and condemn him to sin. Therefore, however much the Reformed may cry out that they alone give glory to God, they are lying; for according to their teaching, God has not only chosen the elect by free grace, he has also made it so that those who are not chosen do not go to heaven. However, they do not go to heaven because of their sin, but before the good God had even thought about what should be done with the sinner, he made the following decision: "I will consign some to heaven and some to hell; but so that everyone may see that it is just that I condemn them, I will consign them to sin." If they have sinned, then, **<AGtG 174>** according to this terrible teaching, God says: "Look, it is right for them to go to hell, because they are sinners." But of course, he created them in the first place so that they should fall!

Our thesis goes on to say:

Again, that He has so well and surely willed to preserve my salvation, because it could easily be lost from our hands through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh, or torn and taken from us by the cunning and violence of the devil and the world, that He has decreed it in his eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and has placed it in the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can snatch us.

It is really hard to understand how a Christian can be completely calm who knows nothing of the election of grace, especially when he is young and does not yet appear to be about to die. One who is near death may well be confident, even if he does not have this teaching, because he says to himself: "I believe in my dear Savior and will be saved through this," and in such faith he also enters heaven. But he who is still in his full strength and bloom must always think: "What a wicked heart I have, how weak I am against all temptations; oh, will I be saved?" But it is just as difficult to understand how someone cannot be completely calm if he believes in the election of grace;

for he can say to his God: "My God, you do not forsake me; you have not only called me: it is also your grace that I am saved from my ruin. Now I am your dear child; it is impossible for you to abandon me." Yes, the fact that God has given us the doctrine of the election of grace is an immeasurable addition of His love to the gift that He has given us His only Son. It is a greater love when someone not only gives me a gift, but also ensures that I do not lose it again. For example, if someone gives me a golden staff and I still have a thousand miles to travel, the gift is already a great gift; but if I still have to travel the long way, perhaps even through a forest where robbers live, I may lose the staff again in the next hour. If the giver tells me: I will also send the gift safely through the forest to your home, this is obviously a greater love than if he had only given me the gift. In the same way, God has not only given us the faith that leads to salvation; he also ensures through the election of grace that we will not lose it again; and if we do lose it for a time, that we will certainly regain it. For an elect person can certainly lose faith, but he cannot die without first having been restored to it again; the election of grace does not suffer that. Of course, if I were to willfully, stubbornly, maliciously and stubbornly resist the Word of God, I would be lost; but that would only prove that I am not a Christian. For although a Christian can very easily lose grace, he does not willfully and stubbornly resist it; for how could he hate the God who has done such great things for him as he has experienced and still experiences daily? Therefore a Christian can always be joyful and confident, for he knows that the God who has chosen him will not abandon him in the weakness of his flesh, but will keep him in faith to the end.

Our thesis continues:

It also teaches that, **<AGtG 175>** "God in such His counsel, purpose and decree, not only prepares salvation in general, but also (has) considered in grace all and every person of the elect, who are to be saved through Christ, elected to salvation, also decreed that He would bring, help, promote, strengthen and preserve them in the way now reported, by His grace, gifts and effect."

How gloriously explicit it is here that God has chosen all and every person of the elect! It is precisely against this that the newer theologians argue; but that is our consolation. Let us therefore hold fast to both extremely comforting doctrines: not only that God has redeemed the world, but also that he preserves and saves every single person of the elect

in faith until the end! How many in our congregation find a testimony of God's gracious election! The devil once led their fathers, who immigrated here from Germany 40 years ago, astray; but God did not allow the gates of hell to swallow them up; close to the shipwreck of faith, they were saved, were strengthened and encouraged in their faith again and, with God's help, will also die blessed.

Each of us will already have recognized in the treatment of this first thesis that we also give all glory to God alone through the doctrine of the election of grace; this is now also testified to, among other things, by the

The Formula of Concord testifies to this in express words when it says: "By this doctrine and declaration of the eternal and saving election of the elect children of God, God is given his glory wholly and completely, that through sheer mercy in Christ, without any merit or good works on our part, he saves us according to the purpose of his will, as it is written in Ephes. 1: 'He hath made us meet for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glory and grace, by which he hath made us accepted in the Beloved'." (Again, [Art. XI. p. 723 \[§ 87\]](#))

We were, as it were, an abandoned infant, thrown into the wilderness immediately after birth and lying there naked and bare in its blood, a disgust to all who passed by. God saw us and said to us: You shall live! When all the others speak to him: How can you accept this man? He is worse than I am! then God says: This is according to the purpose of my will. How often do we see that when God's Word comes somewhere, the worst are often converted, while the best become God's enemies! How incomprehensible it is that grace is offered to certain people and they reject it! Then, of course, the Pelagian says: "Oh, I will explain that well; some accept grace because they are better than the others who reject it"; the Calvinist says: "That is simply because God has chosen some but rejected others." While these two rob God of his glory, the Lutheran says: "God gives his grace to some according to the purpose of his will, while others reject grace through their unbelief", thus giving God all the glory and man, as he should, all the shame.

For a proper understanding of Scripture, we must also consider and distinguish between the various expressions which it uses to designate our doctrine. There are three of them: 1. intention, **<AGtG 176>** 2. Election (*Wahl*) or election (*Erwählung*) or providence (*Versehung*), 3. Decree (*Verordnung*). Election and providence are one and the same. Election and decree differ from each other in that I speak of the same thing, but in different respects. If I say of someone that he is chosen,

I mean to say that he is chosen by God, set apart from others to be eternally saved. But if I say that he is ordained, I am not speaking of the act of God by which he took him out of the world, but of the fact that he ordained him to salvation. Finally, the purpose is the decree which had to precede, as it were, the taking out for salvation. This action is represented in a human way, for men, before they want to do something, first take counsel, so that we do not think that the matter is a matter of chance. So God first took counsel, then chose, and then decreed.

Thus Dannhauer writes: "Election and predestination (*praedestinatio*) do not differ according to the matter, but according to the relation; the former refers to persons (*objecta*), the latter to the ordering of means to an end." (*Hodos. Phaen.* 7. p. 572.)

Furthermore, Quenstädt writes: "The intention (*prothesis*) and the decision to elect, and election itself are not one and the same, as the Calvinists think; for the intention is one step higher than election, and is the norm and the governing principle of election." (*Th. did. — polem. III, 26.*)

The Methodists have not inserted a doctrine of "election by grace" in their confession, because it does not fit into their system. This is to show that man must do everything for his own conversion; he must "cast them out," as they express it. Even Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, separated from the strict Calvinist Whitefield after a fierce dispute and became a Pelagian and Arminian; he taught such an election of grace that gives man the honor.

How important, salutary and comforting the doctrine of the election of grace is, is shown in particular by John Gehard in excellent words. Studying such testimonies is all the more necessary in our time, however, as people are now truly afraid to even mention the word election by grace or predestination. People think that a preacher should not preach in the pulpit about things that are taught in Scripture, but which can easily lead a person into temptation. But those who speak in this way do not consider that they are attacking God Himself, for the whole Word of God is for all men, and to an even greater degree for all Christians. Should there be teachings in it that need to be veiled and covered up? No! What God has revealed, we must also preach for our salvation and the salvation of our listeners. We are to proclaim the whole counsel of God for salvation, Acts 20:27, and we are fools if we think there will be bad consequences if we do so. We can confidently leave the consequences to God, who has revealed

his word to us so that it may be preached; he will also see to it that it brings no harm but benefit to those who are of God. It is true that for many the doctrine of election, like the whole Word of God, is a stench of death unto death. But that is not God's fault, it is their own fault. Such are like spiders, of which it is said that they draw poison from a flower from which the bee sucks honey. So **<AGtG 177>** they, too, suck death from the living word of God instead of life. But this is their own fault. For there is no death in the word of God, but only life, just as there is no poison in the flowers which the spiders suck. Rather, just as they first put poison into the flowers, so these godless people also put death into the word of life.

Gerhard concludes the exposition of each doctrine in his Dogmatics with a chapter in which he shows its usefulness. Thus he also gives an eightfold benefit of our doctrine. He writes:

"A sober and scriptural treatment of this mystery (election of grace) shows us the abyss of divine mercy, to which alone our election to eternal life is wholly to be ascribed; it strikes down all boasting of our merits and all confidence in ourselves; it fortifies our certainty of our blessedness resting in the almighty and all-good hand of God; it incites us to sincere love of God, who loved us before the foundation of the world; it nourishes our universal and fraternal love for those whom we hope, by pure grace, to be our comrades in eternal life; it awakens us to a burning zeal for the divine word and to a diligent use of the sacraments, by which means the Holy Spirit wants to kindle, maintain and increase faith in us; it inflames us to prayer and to earnest zeal in godliness, for we are "chosen that we should be holy and blameless" (Ephes. 1, 4.); finally, it equips us to bear all adversity with equanimity, for "whom God hath before ordained, he hath also ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son; knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (*Loc. de elect. et reprob. § 216.*)

When Gerhard writes here that our election to eternal life is entirely due to divine mercy alone, we also learn how he wants to be understood when he speaks of election "in view of faith". Admittedly, the expression is not entirely to be approved, since it sounds as if our faith is the motive that determines God to choose us, for faith is not the motive in God to make us blessed, but the means by which he overcomes us in order to bring us to heaven. With this expression, however, Gerhard only

wants to say this: God did not choose anyone in eternity for salvation whom he did not know would come to faith; he did not want to save anyone except in Christ, and we certainly believe this too. It is also important that Gerhard also counts this as a benefit of the doctrine of eternal election, that it feeds our love for our fellow believers. For if I believe that God has chosen not only me but also my fellow Christians to eternal life, then I know that I will also live together with them eternally in heaven and praise God, while the unbelievers will be cast into hell. But then I must love my fellow believers all the more; then a king, for example, will also love the pious beggar who lies at his door full of sores as his brother from the bottom of his heart; for in heaven all distinctions of class, wealth, dignity, even of age and sex will fall away. But why is it that there is often so little love to be seen in churches, that church members are much more cordial with obvious worldlings than with their fellow believers? They lack faith. They believe neither that they themselves nor that others are chosen. This is a sign that they are also children of the world. **<AGtG 178>** For a Christian who believes that God has chosen him by free grace in Christ to eternal salvation also loves his brothers; he knows that there is a world of difference between Christians who love God and the children of the world who blaspheme and mock God. St. John expressly says: "We know that we have come from death to life, because we love our brothers", from which it follows that those who do not love their fellow believers, their fellow church members, are still in death. Such brotherly love, however, is greatly promoted by the doctrine of election by grace. To this end, everyone should allow it to serve them and ask God for faith in it, for this doctrine becomes all the more terrible for us if we know it but do not believe it. If someone knows that God has chosen millions of people from eternity and he is not sure that he is one of them, what a terrible state he is in! Remember this: only faith makes one blessed, in which the I and the We and the Me are added to the divine promises. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," says the prophet. — It is also very important that Gerhard says here: "The doctrine of the election of grace equips us to endure all adversity with equanimity." For he who believes with all his heart that he is chosen will no longer be particularly grieved by anything that happens to him in this world, for he will say of all this: "This is just what is necessary for God to save me; your God will see to it that you do not perish, therefore he is sending this to you. Therefore, if we lose our possessions, our honor, our health, if we have to leave our fatherland, our father's house, we should think: these are all precious means in the hand of God,

through which he carries out his counsel of your election to you. Therefore, as dear as our salvation is to us, we should esteem even the heaviest afflictions that God sends us.

Thesis II.

It teaches: "The eternal election of God not only sees and knows beforehand the salvation of the elect, but is also, by the gracious will and good pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause that creates, works, helps and promotes our salvation and that which belongs to it; on which also our salvation is founded, so that the gates of hell can do nothing against it; as it is written: 'No one will snatch my sheep out of my hand'; and again: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (FC SD XI 8)

Matt. 24:24. Acts. 13:48. Rom. 8:33-39. Hos. 13:9.

There are very many who admit that there is an election of grace, but they understand nothing more by it than that God foreknew what people would be like, and having foreseen this according to his omniscience, he said: whoever behaves in such and such a way shall, I decree, be so and so; whoever is godly shall be saved, whoever is ungodly shall go to hell. But this reduces the counsel of election to nothing more than the mere foreknowledge of God. **<AGtG 179>** But there is a vast difference between mere foreknowledge and predestination. For the fact that I foreknow something is not the reason why it happens; but the other way round: I can only foreknow something because it happens that way. So the fact that something once happens is the reason that God foreknows it, but something never happens merely because God foreknows it: for He also foreknows evil; then evil would have to happen because God foreknows it. Friday is not followed by Saturday merely because I foreknow it; nor does anyone go to heaven merely because God foreknows it. Therefore, because it is already certain through election that someone will go to heaven, God knows it in advance, so it must be something quite different from mere foreknowledge; it is a counsel, an act of God, the reason and the cause why it happens that I am saved. I may well know that someone will be executed tomorrow; but this knowledge of mine is not the cause of the execution. The criminal judge, on the other hand, who sits in judgment over the criminal, does not merely know in advance, but decides on the execution. His decision, his judgment is the cause that this person must die tomorrow. There are therefore two things in the judge: predestination and foreknowledge; the former is conditioned by the latter. In the same way,

with God there is not only foreknowledge but also predestination with regard to the salvation of the elect; the former is dependent on the latter. The fact that God has decided to save a number of people is the cause of their salvation; if this were not so, no one would be saved except the little children. May God always have revealed that he who believes to the end shall be saved, but if he does not keep us, all is lost. Whoever thinks: O you believe, you have the Word and the sacraments, now you cannot lack your salvation, — does not know himself, for he does not know that there is nothing good in him, and therefore also not the retention of God's grace. So also the Augsburg Confession says in its 19th article that when God had withdrawn his hand from Adam and Eve, they lay there, overcome by the devil. Therefore, if he did not hold his hand over us, no believer would remain in faith and enter heaven, for he could not stand against the terrible onslaught of the devil, the world and his own flesh. Therefore God has decreed: I will provide, I will help and promote, so that those whom I have foreseen will certainly go to heaven. The consequence of this is that whoever is chosen cannot perish, even if all the gates of hell are shut against him. God is greater than all. If he has decided to save me, he will also carry out his counsel.

From the doctrine of the election of grace thus shines not only God's love and justice, but also his omnipotence; for the greatest powers fight against our salvation: the devil and his infernal army, the countless multitude of the children of the world, all the objects of the visible world have now become a tree of temptation for us after the fall, our own flesh is our greatest enemy, — and God defeats all these terribly armed enemies of our salvation, for he is the Lord.

But just as God's omnipotence shines through our teaching, so does God's wisdom. Men live through one another like an inextricable bondage, so that the fate of one person always depends on that of another, on whole communities, on the nation in which he finds himself, **<AGtG 180>** on the friends he has, on his parents and brothers and sisters, and not only with regard to his outward fate, but also with regard to the attitude that is created in him. What unspeakable wisdom it takes to take all this into account in the decision of election, however it may go! for "all things must serve the elect for the best". What a terrible obstacle to blessedness it is, for example, when someone has godless parents who bring him up from childhood only for wickedness, who do not let him go to a Christian school, who call out to him again and again: do not associate with the pious and the muckrakers; who not only do not buy him a Bible,

but, if he brings one, throw it into the fire and blaspheme God! And yet, if such a child belongs to the elect, God knows how to govern all these terrible circumstances in such a way that they must serve the child only for the best.

Yet, all the attributes of God, his omniscience, his faithfulness, his omnipresence, in short, the whole glory of God is reflected in this teaching.

Let us now look at the biblical passages cited:

Matthew 24:24: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

In the last days, therefore, the most seductive false prophets are to appear, who have such an appearance that even the elect will be deceived "if it were possible". Note well: it is not where they would not be on their guard that they should be deceived, but "if it were possible", says the Lord. He clearly says that it is not possible. There is of course reason enough to be deceived, namely the seduction and deception and blindness on the part of those people; but election puts down all fear and apprehension. God himself ensures that the elect are not deceived. Truly, we should leap and jump when we read this, for what blessed people we are after these words! We have a God in Christ who sees to it that we are not deceived in this shameful time; who opens our eyes when any false spirit appears, so that we either recognize it clearly or that it does not bring its soul-destroying lies into our hearts. These words also show us that God's providence is not mere foreknowledge, but a provision for salvation. We see a clear example of this in Peter, among others. He had a living faith in his Savior, but his flesh and blood deceived him so that he became too bold and said to the Lord, "Even if they are all angry with you, I will never be angry with them again. Then the Savior had to let him know that he had now relied on himself for once, and that if He did not hold him, he would fall down; and beg of him: a few hours later Peter not only denied the Lord, but also cursed himself and swore falsely! But the merciful Savior had said to him: "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail." By this he meant that you are an elect person; even if you should now lose your faith, you should not lose it to the end, but should and must regain it. And so Christ says to all the elect: I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; but my prayer has been heard, so it is certain that you cannot perish.

Acts. 13:48: "And when the Gentiles heard it, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord, and believed, as many of them as were ordained to eternal life."

Paul had first preached the gospel to the Jews, but they rejected it, all the more so because they saw that he was also preaching to the Gentiles. Therefore the apostle turns to them, and the Gentiles, **<AGtG 181>** as they see that Paul is not deterred from preaching to them, receive the word with joy. But where this came from, Lucas says: for "they were ordained to eternal life", xxxx xxxxxxxx. Many translate this word thus: they had entered into the right order; but, first, neither the Scriptures, nor any other Greek writer ever speaks thus; secondly, the *plus quamperfectum*, which stands here, always denotes a past more remote than the recent past. They had therefore already been decreed when they received God's Word in faith, so they had obviously already been chosen from eternity into the number of the elect and that is why they now come to faith.

This interpretation is also confirmed by Arcularius, professor in Giessen, who writes the following about our passage: "Acts. 13:48. it is said that at that time they believed 'as many of them as were ordained to eternal life', which indicates the cause of what Luke had said immediately before about the joy and praise of the word of the Lord, namely faith, which flowed from the eternal predestination of God, as from His source." *Acta app. triumvirati comment. illustr. ed. Fecht. p. 319...*) From this passage, therefore, Arcularius draws the *locus communis* or doctrine "Of predestination or election, as the source and cause of our faith and salvation." (L. o. c. 321.)

Thus Peter also says that we are preserved to salvation by the power of God through faith.

Consider also: what would become of the dear children if God had not ordained them to eternal life and had not chosen to preserve them in faith? As good Lutherans, we believe that baptized children are in the faith, for the Lord once expressly said that we should not vex the little ones who believe in him. How could they remain in the faith if God did not keep them in the faith? They are persecuted by the devil incessantly, just as we are; but they cannot yet hear God's word, read the Bible or decide to pray for themselves. But they may die, they will not perish. They let God take care of them, and he also makes sure that they remain in the faith.

Romans 8:33-39: "Who will blame God's elect? God is here who justifies. Who will condemn? Christ is here, who died; yea, rather, who was raised again, who is at the right hand of God, and standeth for us. Who will separate us from the love of God? Tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake

we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But in all these things we overcome because of him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor things high nor things low, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So it is not because we fought bravely that we far overcame, but "for the sake of Him who loved us". Here again we see what keeps the elect, namely grace, which ensures that nothing can rob them of God's grace. They can therefore triumph at any time, as Paul does in our passage. For he begins his song of rejoicing after he has written the words which we considered in our first thesis: "But we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." **<AGtG 182>**

Hosea 13:9: "O Israel, thou bringest thyself to destruction: for thy salvation is with me alone."

Let this be noted: man brings all destruction upon himself, but our salvation comes from the Lord alone, and not only in so far as he has sent us a Savior, but also in so far as he gives us faith and keeps it until the end; for God must do all this, for it all belongs to our salvation.

This saying shows most clearly how we also give all glory to God alone with our second thesis. If we were to understand the election of grace differently than we have done, we would cut off all glory from God, for that is what it means to give God all glory when we say that all good comes from him, and all evil comes from man and the devil, whose servants men have become.

Our second thesis, which according to its wording is already the confession of our church, is confirmed by the following further words of the Formula of Concord:

"First of all, the difference between the eternal providence (*praescientia*) of God and the eternal election of his children to eternal salvation must be carefully noted. For *praescientia vel praevisio*, that is, that God pleads and knows everything before it happens, which is called the providence of God, passes over all creatures, good and evil; namely, that he pleads and knows everything beforehand, what is or will be, what is happening or will happen, whether good or evil, because before God all things, past or future, are hidden or present. As it is written... Ps. 139:16: "Your eyes saw me when I was yet unprepared" etc. Isaiah 37:28: 'I know thy going out and thy coming in and thy dying against me.' But the eternal election of God *vel praedestinatio*, that is, God's decree of salvation, is not especially for the pious and the wicked, but only for the children of God, who were chosen and ordained to eternal

life before the foundation of the world was laid, as Paul says in Ephesians 1: 'He hath chosen us in Christ Jesus, and ordained us to be children? God's providence (*praescientia*.) stands and knows evil beforehand, but not in such a way that it is God's gracious will that it should happen. . . . The beginning and cause of evil is not God's providence (for God neither creates nor works evil, nor helps or promotes it), but the devil's and man's evil, perverse will." (FC Art. 11, 7-11 Repetition. p. 704 f.) Here, too, we read: The foreknowledge of God is about both evil and good; but the predestination or ordinance not only foreknows our salvation, but also works and creates it. Whoever does not say this, no matter how many beautiful things he may say about the election of grace, still takes the kernel out of the shell, throws it away and keeps nothing but the shell. It must always **<AGtG 183>** be noted, however, that election or predestination refers only to the elect and by no means to the reprobate; for God has not predestined anyone to damnation. God predestines only to life, to happiness. Of course, our reason always wants to conclude: If man can do nothing for his salvation, but God alone must do everything, then God must also have predestined the one who is lost to damnation; but a Christian is accustomed to take his reason captive under the obedience of faith, and this is what he does with this doctrine, and thus he victoriously overcomes all objections and temptations of his reason; he humbly awaits eternity, when God will solve the riddle for him in the most beautiful and clearest way. It is true that the two revealed teachings of Holy Scripture seem to contradict each other: that God has chosen individuals for eternal salvation by mere grace, and that man alone is to blame if he is lost; but it is the rule of faith of the Lutheran Church that when Scripture clearly reveals to us two truths that seem to contradict each other, we believe both. Do the same here, and you will surely be comforted and strengthened. We know that the unity between the two doctrines is there, for God has revealed both doctrines to us, and there is no contradiction in him, nor is there a double will in him that contradicts itself; we just do not yet see the unity. However, we are accused of inconsistency here. For we say that one must not only believe what is revealed in Scripture in expressed words, but must also accept as divine truth what necessarily follows from literal revelation. Nowhere in Scripture, for example, is it said in explicit words that God is triune, but it does teach literally that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Spirit is God; it also teaches just as literally that these three are one. Therefore we say: from these "explicit" revelations it follows

of necessity that the true God is a single divine being consisting of three persons, that therefore God is triune, as the Church has always taught. Now they say: Well, if you draw this conclusion, you must also draw the conclusion that God predestines some to salvation and others to damnation, or that God has chosen some because of their decision for grace and rejected others because of their decision against grace. But we do not draw this conclusion; and why not? Because God has forbidden us to do so. And where has he forbidden us to do so? In the whole of Holy Scripture, where He teaches that election is indeed a choice of grace, but that men alone are to blame for their damnation; as, for example, in our passage from Hosea. So we are not inconsistent at all, but we only find obedience to God and his word, and that is our duty and obligation if we want to be Christians. Of course, anyone who does not want to be obedient to God and his holy word can still make that forbidden conclusion, but do not be surprised if this disobedience leads him to despair and hell. Calvin has already made this conclusion, but in doing so he has also become a heretic who turns God into the devil. He thought it was easy to solve the problem that God alone saves us by grace and yet so many are damned: God predestines not only to salvation, but also to damnation. But how terrible! God has created for us humans the law of love and justice, and punishes us temporally and eternally if we transgress it, and He Himself should be so unloving and unjust that He first predestines an immeasurable number of people to sin and then throws them into hell because of it? St. Paul says: "Be ye therefore followers of God"; from this we see: **<AGtG 184>** God is a holy example to us in all good things, even in love and justice; indeed, the same apostle expressly asks when dealing with the doctrine of election of grace Rom. 9:14: "Is God unjust then?" and answers, "Far be it from him!" But more about this in the fourth thesis.

Our noble doctrinal fathers also confirm our thesis.

Heerbrand writes: "There is a great difference between the foreknowledge of God and predestination. The former refers to all creatures, both the ungodly and the pious; the latter, however, to the chosen children of God. Then God's foreknowledge observes a secret order in the wicked and sets a goal for them as to how far he will allow them to go and when and where he will restrain them. But of all this evil, foreknowledge is not the cause, but the evil will of devils and men. But divine election and predestination is the cause of our salvation, in which it is also founded. As the apostle says: "He has chosen us in him (Christ) that we should be holy and blameless before him". (Ephes. 1:4.) And Christ:

"No one will snatch my sheep out of my hand? Joh. 10, 28. And: 'As many of them as were ordained to eternal life believed. Apost. 13, 48.'" (*Compend. theol.* 1582. p. 519.)

Thus, while election is the cause of our salvation, God's foreknowledge of evil extends only so far as to observe a secret order in it and to set its goal. For example, God allowed the miser Judas to sell and betray the Lord, and for the Lord to be crucified by the Gentiles. The wickedness that was in Judas and Christ's murderers was in God's hands, so that they could do nothing but what God willed. But he did not want the wickedness, because it was already there; but what the people did, he wanted. If the devil had known that he was crucifying the Son of God, he would certainly not have done it, for then he would also have known that he would be overcome by him; but he had not understood the prophets correctly, and so he thought: I once spoiled God's game at creation, and now I want to do it again. But behold! God is wiser than his creature, and so Satan had to enter into God's counsel. Luther compares the government of evil on God's part to the riding of a lame horse. The rider rides such a horse badly; but it is not the rider who is to blame for the bad riding, but the horse. So God also orders evil and sets a goal for it, without being to blame for the evil happening. In God we live, we are and are; he drives us to think, speak and act; but depending on whether we carry good or evil in our hearts, our actions are good or evil; God himself has nothing to do with evil.

Meelführer writes: **<AGtG 185>** "The eternal counsel concerning those who are to be saved, the apostle Ephes. 1. not as a stumbling block, which should not be touched by cautious hearts, but as the source of all comfort and all the benefits of divine grace, which should be well known to every Christian." (*Elenchi ex 1. cap. ep. ad Ephes.* 1612. p. 1.)

Here the counsel of grace is aptly called the source of all consolation and all the benefits of divine grace.

The doctrine of our second thesis is of course not held by the newer theologians. For since they do not believe in election by grace in relation to individuals, it goes without saying that they also do not believe that election by grace is the cause of the salvation of the elect. We therefore do not need to cite any evidence for this.

The Arminians also deny our thesis. Although Calvinists by birth, they are known to reject their master's doctrine of predestination. At first they were quite Lutheran, but because they were not pure in the doctrine of justification, they fell into a Pelagian doctrine of election of grace and ascribed to man a participation in salvation. They say in their confession:

"It is obviously false that election happened from eternity. There is only one passage in Scripture which seems to affirm this, before the general error arose, namely the passage Ephes. 1, 4." (*Apolog. c. 18. f. 190*)

The Arminians are joined by the rationalistic Socinians who teach that God did not actually know in eternity how people would behave in time, and that he then makes their fate in eternity dependent on this behavior; this is predestination. For example, we read in their catechism:

"In Scripture, God's predestination means nothing other than God's decree, made before the foundation of the world, that he would give eternal life to those who would believe in him and obey him, but punish those who would refuse to believe in him and obey him with eternal damnation. Election, when speaking of our salvation, has a double meaning; for sometimes those who assent to the preaching of the Gospel are called elect by God, and sometimes those who not only assent to the preaching of the Gospel, but also "substitute their lives according to its precepts" are called elect." (*Catechesis Racoviensis. Ed. Oederus. Q. 440. s. p. 913. s.*)

Finally, we must point out that the Formula of Concord uses the word providence in a twofold sense: once as mere foreknowledge, the other time as predestination. As a rule, it takes providence or foreknowledge in the sense of election and usually adds the word *praescientia* where it wants the word to be understood as foreknowledge. It is important to note this difference carefully so that one does not go astray. Soon after it was written, the Calvinists reproached it for understanding only foreknowledge by the word prophecy; but this is already rejected in its defense. It says in the Apologia of the Christian Book of Concord: **<AGtG 186>** "Among other things they (the Calvinists) blame the Book of Concord for not sufficiently agreeing with Luther's doctrine, in that it holds that God's providence (*providentia Dei*) is nothing other than his foreknowledge or providence (*praescientia*); whereas the Book of Concord in the Artikulo von der ewigen Vorsehung und Wahl Gottes p. 318 (Müller's edition p. 708.) does not remember the word "providence" (*proviäentis.*) of God at all, but the German word Vorsehung, and puts the Latin word *praescientia*, that is, providence or foreknowledge, so that no one would be mistaken in the same words." (*Apologia* etc., written by Chemnitz, Selnecker and Kirchner. Heidelberg, 1583. K1. 205.)

Thesis III.

It teaches that "it is false and unjust to teach that not only the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ alone, but also in us is a cause of God's election, for which God has chosen us to eternal life," Ephes. 1:5-6; Rom. 9:15; 1 Cor. 4:7. whether it be: (FC SC XI 88)

- a. man's work or sanctification, 2 Tim. 1:9. Tit. 3:5. Ephes. 2:8-9. Rom. 11:5-7;
- b. man's right use of the means of grace, Acts 16:14.;
- c. man's self-decision, Phil. 2:13; Ephes. 2:1, 5.;
- d. Man's desire and prayer, Rom. 9; 16;
- e. man's non-resistance, Jer 31:18; Isa 63:17;
- f. man's faith, Rom 4:16.

As a rule, it is taken for granted that God was not moved to create man by something he foresaw in him from eternity. Who wanted to claim that God had to create man because he foresaw the benefits he would bring him and the like; he would simply be making a fool of himself. No, everyone admits that it was an act of free love when God decided to create man. Most people also take it for granted that God was not moved to send his only-begotten Son into the world and have him carry out the work of redemption by something he foresaw in man from eternity. Everyone who still believes in God's Word admits what the Lord says: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son", etc., that the sending of the Son was therefore an act of God's free grace and mercy. But strangely enough, a different view is taken of the gift of salvation through election. It is said that the fact that God has decided to make a number of people blessed, while He has decided to reject others, must necessarily have a reason in man; God cannot, it is thought, act arbitrarily; only a creature without reason or a very frivolous man would do that; who would therefore think that of God? So something must have been seen in man by God that moved him to decide to save some while rejecting others. But first of all one does not consider that there is a huge difference between election and condemnation on the part of God. Indeed, God could not have decided to condemn a man if he had not previously seen that he was worthy **<AGtG 187>** of it; and of course he saw such a cause

in those whom he decided to condemn, namely their stubborn resistance, their impenitence, their unbelief even unto death; this, and nothing else, moved him to decide that they should be condemned. Then one does not consider that the bestowal of salvation is as much a free act of God's love as the creation and redemption of salvation. God foresaw nothing, absolutely nothing, worthy of salvation in those whom he decided to save, and even if he admitted that he foresaw something good in them, this could not have determined him to choose them for that reason; for all good in man comes first from him, as Scripture teaches.

That is why Gerhard says, among other things: "The Calvinists object: If the cause of reprobation is in man, then without doubt the cause of election will also be in him. Answer: 1. There is an unequal relationship between what is being compared here. Unbelief and impenitence unto death, for the sake of which men are rejected by God, are deserving, proper, and complete causes of that reprobation and damnation; they arise from the guilt of our corrupt nature and from the impulse of the devil; there the Father works nothing, the Son nothing, the Holy Spirit nothing. But salutary conversion to God and faith, through which we become partakers of Christ's merit for eternal life, . . . are not a meritorious cause of either election or eternal salvation, nor do they arise from the powers of free will, but they are a work of God."

Gerhard calls conversion and faith a work, i.e. a gift, of God. If I have a poor person in front of me and I give him a hundred thalers, will I say: because he has a hundred thalers, now I love him too? No, I will say the opposite: because I love him, that is why I gave him a hundred thalers. Even if my gift were the reason why I love him, the reason would not lie in the poor man, but in me, who gave him the gift. So man's faith is not the cause of God's love, but the consequence of it, and therefore not the cause of election, but the consequence of it. No matter how much good God may foresee in the chosen one, this can never be the reason why he saves him, for he gives it to him in the first place. But what I give to another, I give to him, if I give it to him rightly, out of love; and if he now has it, this does not double my love for him, but this possession is only a continual proof that I love him. It would be something else if someone had acquired a hundred thalers with great diligence, great effort and sacrifice in order to do good to others; that could of course move me to love him all the more. For example, someone has enough to live on for himself and therefore

does not need to work for

himself; but he has read in Scripture that one should work in order to give to the poor, and he now works in the sweat of his brow, despite being a wealthy man, to help the poor: that would indeed be something that should move me to love him dearly. But where is it the case with a man that he could say: the good that I have, I have from myself? The Christian, too, can only say: God alone has worked all this in me; I have done nothing more of myself than resist, if not willfully, yet according to the weakness of my flesh, and where I have not resisted, God has had to take it away. Then I must confess that in all my goodness my flesh's inclination has been **<AGtG 188>** mixed; for if, for example, God drives me to give something, my flesh immediately joins in, thinking: but you are a good man, or: well, God will bless you again. But that is nothing but dung, with which I stain the good work; for only such masters as we are can do that. Therefore, as certain as God works all good things in his children all by himself, it is equally certain that this cannot be a reason for God to choose us. But this is the miracle: the Christian religion is the religion of grace. While every other religion is the religion of piety and so-called good works, the Christian religion, which comes from above, teaches that God says to poor people: I will give you everything, everything, accept it only in faith; and if we say: Yes, we cannot take it, he says: Well, then, I will give you my hand.

Gerhard continues: "2. Therefore Scripture ascribes the election of men to life to God alone; for this supreme work of divine grace depends on no other cause (*principio*) than on God and the eternal counsel of God, which is founded on Christ and ordered by the establishment of certain means; but the same sacred Scripture places the cause of reprobation in men themselves." (*L. de electione. § 188.*)

Note: He says: thus teaches the Scripture, now reason may say what it will, God has spoken, and I adhere to it.

Now compare with this what the newer theologians say.

We are saddened to see that even a man like Philippi, who otherwise wrote so many excellent things and was never ashamed of pure doctrine, despite being an extraordinarily learned man, is not entirely pure in the doctrine of eternal election. He writes in his Dogmatics: "We will not be able to base both the sole efficacy of divine grace in the work of conversion, and rather, looking at the possibility founded in human freedom, that grace, precisely because it is not compelling grace, can reach its goal, both the predestination to life and to death, on the divine

foresight of human behavior." (Ecclesiastical Faith IV, 15. f.)

He teaches that it is not only the predestination to death that rests on the divine foreknowledge of human behavior, but also the predestination to life; thus God has provided a number for salvation because he foresaw that they would behave rightly. Oh, it is sad! If it were so, no man would be truly humble; and yet it is right what Augustine says, when he was asked what, above all, belongs to Christianity? and answered: Humility, and when he was further asked, what then? again answered: Humility, and for the third time: Humility. But of course Augustine does not mean the kind of humility that even a very cheerful hypocrite has who declares himself to be a sinner, but the kind of humility that says with a heart trembling with joy: "It is God's free, eternally undeserved grace that I am chosen to eternal life, while I belong to hell. But do not think: Well, if it all depends on the grace of God and nothing on the behavior of man, then I need not do anything, but **<AGtG 189>** wait quietly until God prompts me to do this or that! No! Whoever makes the grace of God a bed of laziness should know that even in the days of the apostles there were people who drew the salutary teaching on courageous knowledge and said: "Let us do evil so that good may come of it." But what does Paul say about them? He says briefly, "Which condemnation is quite right." He does not say that one must try to persuade such people with philosophical reasons, but he says of them that they are children of hell and damnation rejected by God. For he who is truly of God does not use divine truths in this way, but when he hears the word of the free grace of God in Christ, it brings tears of joy to his eyes, and now he begins to do good with a rejoicing heart. For as soon as we think that God must look upon the good that we do, then it becomes bad, we become servants of rewards; but when we have become quite firm in our hearts that God does not ask anything about the good works that deserve heaven, but that this alone should be his glory, that he makes us blessed by grace, just then we burn with zeal for good works. Then we bring forth good works like an apple tree brings forth apples. No one needs to call out to it: Bring apples! Nor does he answer: Yes, if I get this and that in return, then I will bring forth apples. No, the sap rises in him to the highest branches, to the outermost tips, and sprouts an abundance of red buds and green leaves and sweet, delicious fruit. This is precisely how the Christian does good works, out of free love and not out of a desire for reward.

The same Philippi writes: "Just as a certain synergism of man in the use of the means of grace cannot be excluded even before the beginning

of the inner, divine efficacy of grace, so also a synergism of the human will to divine grace takes place not only after conversion has been completed, but also during the act of conversion itself". (Doctrine of the Faith. IV, 75.)

Both sentences are false, both the first and the last. There is no human participation in the use of the means of grace before conversion. The good Lord had already given me the Bible, had already built the church and had already appointed the preacher before I heard God's Word. So he comes before me with his means of grace. I do not come to the Word, but the Word comes to me. I can certainly cooperate in the use of the means of grace, but only to hell, for if I push the means of grace away from me. I do nothing more than accept the gift of grace, and God also works this acceptance. — But this is also wrong when Philippi says that there is a cooperation on our part in conversion. No, Holy Scripture compares conversion to revival from death. But what can a dead person do to be raised from the dead? What did Lazarus and the young man of Nain do, and what could they do to come to life? What will we do on the last day to rise from the grave? Nothing, nothing at all. Indeed, Scripture even compares conversion with creation; we are "created for good works". Did we help God a little when he created us so that we would be finished? No, he had to do everything. Only when the work of creation was finished could we move, and God gave us this along the way, we did not get it from ourselves. <AGtG 190>

Kahnis writes: "It depends essentially on man whether he remains in the state of salvation until the end. . . If, therefore, only he is saved who perseveres to the end, but perseverance depends on the will of man, it follows irrefutably that salvation has its foundation not only in grace, but also in the will of man." (Die luth. Dogmatik. Leipzig 1875. II, 254.)

Against this our holy Church teaches: In a certain sense, however, one cause of our justification and salvation is in us, namely, that we are poor sinners and cannot help ourselves. For if we were not poor, lost sinners, God would not have needed to give us his grace in Christ. But that is only the motivating cause. The inward moving cause is God's mercy, the outward moving cause Christ's merit.

The Apology says: "Paul writes in Romans 4:13: 'Therefore righteousness must come by faith, that it may be by grace, and that the promise may be sure. As if to say: if our salvation and righteousness were based on our merit, the promise of

not up to anyone's willing or running, but to God's mercy." So here there is no wanting and running, no working, running, working and doing; with this you cannot draw God's grace and mercy down to you, all this is completely lost; but God is gracious to you because of the grace he has.

1 Cor 4:7: "For who has preferred you? but what do you have that you did not receive? But if you have received it, what do you boast about if you have not received it?"

The apostle is saying, "Have you by your own deeds obtained for yourself a place in heaven for those who cannot enter? indeed, have you worked for yourself even the smallest gift that you possess as a Christian? No, if you have something that others do not have, God has given it to you; therefore you must not boast about yourself. Remember that! If we are Christians by God's grace and we see unbelievers around us, we should not compare ourselves with them and say: "Yes, we find godly, and they find ungodly"; but we should say: "God has had mercy on me; oh, that he would also have mercy on these poor blind people!" Nothing, nothing must we ascribe to ourselves, or we fight against God and take from him what is due to him.

These passages sufficiently show that there is nothing in us for the sake of which we deserve eternal life, and that therefore there is nothing in us that could have moved God to choose us for eternal life.

Our fathers also confirm this thesis.

John Adam Osiander writes: "Predestination is an act on the part of God, which is not produced from us, as from us; and the predestined person does not have of himself that by which he differs from the rejected. The opposite doctrine is that of the Pelagians and Pelagianists. See 1 Cor 4:7: 'Who has preferred you? But what do you have that you did not receive? But if you have received it, what do you boast about if you have not received it?' (*Colleg. th. VI, p. 134.*)

What distinguishes the elect from the reprobate, he has not of himself; therefore he must not say: I am better than this or that; otherwise he is immediately included in the class of the reprobate. It is a choice of grace; therefore, whoever does not want to be chosen for this reason until the end is not chosen.

The same Osiander writes: "'The Gentiles who have not pursued righteousness have attained righteousness. Rom. 10, 30. The pursuit of the greatest zeal is (therefore) excluded from the attainment of salvation in time; so, of course, every zeal which is much less will also be excluded from the consideration taken in predestination." (*Colleg. th. VI, p. 136.*) **<AGtG 192>**

The Jews had sought righteousness with the greatest zeal,

the Gentiles not at all. The latter received it, the former lost it: truly a clear proof that there is no cause of election in us.

John Musaeus writes: "Do the Lutherans hold that the cause of the difference, why some are converted and others not converted, has its reason solely in man (*unice penes hominem esse*)? — Answer: "Our people are not wont to say that the cause of the difference, why some are converted and others are not converted, has its reason solely in man, but they all say with one mouth that the cause why those are converted who are ever converted has its reason not in man, but solely in God; but that the cause why those are not converted who persist in ungodliness has its reason not in God, but solely in man." (*Colleg. controvers. Jenae 1701. p. 390*)

Note: Musaeus could say of all Lutheran theologians that they teach with one mouth that etc. But how is it now with the newer theologians? Almost no one says that anymore. A reformed theologian named Krummacher wrote in 1863 in his book "Warum find wir reformirt und nicht lutherisch?": "The Lutherans believed that man comes to meet God in conversion, and that this is the reason why believers are chosen." In this the man was right that the newer so-called Lutheran theologians believe and teach this; but our church does not believe this, nor did our fathers. We do confess that a thousand and one thousand sighs arise in a man at his conversion; but these are the work of God, not of man. They are all the work of God; no man can be truly grieved over his sins even a little by his own strength; God must work even the smallest sigh.

If someone were to say to us here: "But in this you agree with Calvin, that you say: God has chosen a number of people for salvation, and this election is a cause of their salvation," we would reply: Calvin certainly speaks in the same way, but our doctrine is nevertheless very different from Calvin's. For he teaches, as we know: God had first determined from eternity to save certain men at any cost by an irresistible grace, but to pass by others and condemn them; the second determination was that he would create men to fall; the third, that he would now send a Savior into the world, who alone would be the Savior of the elect; then that he would give the gospel to all the world, but that he would not call those who are not elect in earnest, but only in pretense. Calvin goes on to say that if God works faith in

an	elect	person,	he	cannot
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lose it again, for he has been converted by irresistible grace; even if he does not feel faith, it has merely withdrawn. Of David, for example, he says that he did not lose his faith through adultery, but merely dampened it, so that it continued to glow like a spark under the ashes; the Holy Spirit then, so to speak, only blew into the ashes so that it became a flame again. Calvin therefore cannot actually say in truth: we are chosen "in Christ", because according to his teaching this is not true. With these words he does not mean: God has chosen us because we **<AGtG 193>** have a Savior in Christ, but rather: he has made Christ our Savior because he has chosen us. So it is not Christ but election that is made the basis of all salvation. Rather, he is merely reduced to an instrument, so that through him this eternal counsel of God may be carried out. We will see this in more detail in the fourth thesis.

It is true that the Scriptures often contain such expressions as: turn, repent, work for your salvation, strive to enter through the narrow gate; but these do not contradict the fact that God alone works all good in us, and that man can do nothing good by himself. For if God demands something of us, it does not follow that we can fulfill this demand. Rather, God makes this demand of us precisely in order to show us: Look, poor man, you can do nothing, not even the slightest thing I command you to do. But when God asks us to accept his grace, he also works acceptance on our part; when he asks us to repent, he gives it to us; when he asks us to be converted, he works it in us; when he calls out to us: struggle! create! he gives us the struggle and the creation. We also say of a ship that takes a different course: it has turned, and yet it has not turned itself, but the helmsman. In the same way, we also say: man has converted, and yet God has converted him. But the power for repentance, for conversion, for struggling and working lies in his dear Word; this is power, spirit and life. Just as the word of the Lord: "Lazarus, come out!" brought Lazarus out of the grave, so also the word of God awakens us from spiritual death.

One whole sum of salutary, life-giving teachings is contained in one short word. That the expressions just mentioned: Repent, create, etc., exclude all of man's own work, as can be seen, among other things, from this: "Create, that ye may be saved with fear and trembling." How the Holy Spirit wants this passage to be understood with regard to the work of man can be seen from what follows: "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure." So God gives creation. This passage wants to say this: **Consider well, you can**

neither convert yourselves nor keep yourselves in the faith. Now God gives you grace, therefore use it well! Do not let the golden time pass, otherwise you will have yourselves to blame if you are lost! Therefore, for God's sake, let no one think: "Oh, when it comes to death, then it is still time for me to repent; therefore I will wait and enjoy the world. Such a delusion is inspired by the devil. No, you cannot be converted when you want, but only when God wants and where God wants. Therefore, since you cannot be converted and cannot determine the hour of your conversion, do it now, when the word comes to you, and do not harden your heart! Do not wait willfully and maliciously until death! That is why it is no joke to stay out of church for once without need. Many think: Oh, it won't matter that I miss church just once. Oh, poor man, do you know for sure whether a sermon will not be preached today that is specially intended and made for you? through which God wants to save you from a great spiritual danger, to rekindle your dying faith, to give you strength for a great trial? Boil, you have shut the door at which <AGtG 194> your God stood and knocked; you have missed the hour of grace, it may never return.

Yes, indeed, the doctrine of election is exceedingly warning, and may well startle a man out of his security; for the dear God is not to be trifled with; He is kind, patient, long-suffering, but he is also holy and just, and his wrath burns to the lowest hell. Therefore it may well be that he pursues one person for a long, long time until he has won him over, while with another he only knocks a few times and then goes away. God does not allow the measure of his grace to be dictated to him; he gives everyone enough grace to be saved, but he does not give everyone the same measure. This is what God says when he says through the mouth of the apostle: "To whom I am gracious, I am gracious." Of course, the Word of God always has its power where it is preached, and it also has the power to give life, to save; but man is in such a state of ruin that God still has to press on. This lies in the words: "Now is the acceptable time of the Lord, etc. Today, if you hear my voice, do not harden your hearts." But God does not always do this, he does not allow himself to be dictated to. How often do we experience that God gives us a special grace through a certain passage! How often do we read in the Bible, where everything seems so dry to us; then we read again, and behold, everything appears to us like a paradise, everything is full of light, full of life, everything grips us powerfully, either comforting us or smashing us down; these are special hours of grace. That is why the evangelist also tells us about the apostles: "And they went out and preached in every place, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed

the Word by accompanying signs." Likewise it is written: "To everything there is a season," and again: "Seek the Lord, because he is to be found; call upon him, because he is near." The first chapter of Solomon's Proverbs presents wisdom to us in such a way that it comes to people, and if they do not hear it, it turns away from them again. Thus we also read in the 5th article of the Augsburg Confession that the Holy Spirit works faith "where and when he wills". He has therefore not only determined the time, but also the place of his special effect of grace. Let this be noted! Where did it come from that the thief on the cross, who had a very shameful life behind him, came to the knowledge of his guilt and was saved? After his conversion he could do no other good work than to confess his Lord. Others, on the other hand, find faithful children of God for perhaps forty or fifty years, then they allow themselves to be deceived by the devil, fall away and go to hell. Saul persecutes the Christians, has them stoned and murdered in other ways, forces them to blaspheme, and in the midst of his devilish craft he is converted. The one comes to faith, lives a short time and dies blessed; the other is converted, lives many years, falls away again and loses everything. Then our reason says: Why did the good Lord not let the man die while he was still in the faith, since he would have been in heaven by now, but now he is languishing in hell? We have no answer, we do not know why God does this; we only know this much, that we have nothing to reproach him with, for he is infallible, and that we have no right to call him to account for it; he is the Lord, that is enough. But the apostle says: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: the severity in those who have fallen, but the goodness in you, as far as you continue in goodness; otherwise you also **<AGtG 195>** will be cut off." Romans 11:22 The doctrine of conversion is also one of the mysteries of Scripture.

So far in our thesis we have generally seen that it is wrong to teach that there is also a cause of God's election in us, and to be convinced of this from God's Word. But now there are many things of which one might think that man must do so if he wants to be saved, and which would therefore have moved God to choose those whom he has chosen. These are the six things mentioned here:

a. Man's work or sanctification.

But that this could not have been a reason for which God chose certain people, we see from the following passages:

2 Tim. 1:9: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Here the "good" works are virtually opposed to grace and the eternal purpose. Whoever claims, as the papists do, that good works are the cause of our election, contradicts the clear Word of God.

Titus 3:5: "Not for works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

We are indeed saved for the sake of certain works, but not for the sake of our own, but for the sake of those which Christ has done for us, which is nothing but mercy.

Ephes. 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

The train of thought is this: "By grace you have been saved," says the apostle. "But how?" someone might say, "does not grace shine upon all men, and yet not all are saved?" To answer this, the apostle says: "Through faith." Most people reject grace through unbelief. If someone should reply: "Then we must give ourselves to faith, so salvation is our work?" Paul continues in reply: "And this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast." It seems superfluous, since the apostle says: "not of yourselves", to add: "not of works"; but the Holy Spirit, in his eternal grace and wisdom, also has the simple in mind, which is why he speaks so clearly that even the most simple-minded can understand him. How shameful, therefore, that often great theologians do not want to understand him! Because our salvation is not of ourselves, we have nothing to boast about, says the apostle conclusively. Whoever has such a teaching, on the basis of which man is given the opportunity to boast about himself, has a false teaching, while the teaching that really and truly gives all glory to God is most certainly divine teaching; no matter how much self-righteous man may take offense at it, God must retain his glory. It is of course true that it is quite unbearable for a self-righteous man to hear that he should not be a hair's breadth more worthy than another who is wallowing in the dunghill of sin; that is a quite shameful teaching for him. He says: "What? We moral men are no better than those who make themselves into beasts?" But it remains: "lest anyone should boast." It is only God's merit <AGtG 196> if a man keeps himself moral; for if God were to remove his hand from him, he would make himself just as much a beast as that man. But how much more is it God's grace when someone stands in true faith and pursues sanctification!

Romans 11:5-7: "So also at this time it is with those who remain according to the election of grace. But if it is by grace, it is not by merit of works; otherwise grace would not be grace. But if it is from the merit of works, then grace is nothing; otherwise merit would not be merit. How then? Israel seeks, but does not obtain. But election obtains it; the rest are hardened."

Paul compares his time with that of Elijah. He thought that the kingdom of God had come to an end on earth, so he asked God to let him die. But he told him that he had kept seven thousand faithful witnesses, so he had already made sure that his word would remain true, namely that his church would stand until the last day. So the fact that there are children of God is attributed to grace, namely the grace of election. Of course, this is a great, incomprehensible mystery, but the words are too clear to be debated. Even if it is a mystery, it is still a blessed mystery for Christians, for they are supposed to count themselves among the remnant. It is the same in our time as it was then, especially in Germany. There, too, the people have by and large fallen away from the faith, but here and there God has kept a few thousand who will be saved. Admittedly, according to God's own words, these are only remnants with whom He must be content, while the devil receives the lion's share; but they are nevertheless precious remnants, for they are children of God and citizens of heaven, while the great multitude is the mass of the damned.

Let us now listen to a few more testimonies.

Gerhard writes: "Augustine opposes the Pelagian opinion of the foreknowledge of the merits for the sake of which election took place with great seriousness in very many passages. . . . From the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, which is the proper seat of this article, many proofs may be added: 1. the word election itself denotes a love of grace. 2. God has chosen us 'in Christ'. Ephes. 1:4 So he found nothing in us for which he chose us. If we could have been chosen for the sake of our worthiness, why would Christ have been necessary? 3. the final end of an act does not belong to the act; but the good works are in part the final end of election. Ephes. 1-4.: "He chose us to be holy and blameless." 4. God chose us "before the foundation of the world was laid," Ephesians 1:4. So our works did not move him to predestine us. 5. God predestined us 'against himself' (for himself). So he found nothing in us for the sake of which he predestined us. 6. He has predestined us 'according to the good pleasure of his will' Ephesians 1:5. So this is the cause of predestination,

not the purpose of our will. 7. God has chosen us 'to the praise of his glorious grace' Ephesians <AGtG 197> 1:6.. therefore not for our works' sake, for 'if by grace, it is not for the merit of works', Rom. 11:6. 8. that grace of God is the cause of our election; for it says: 'by which (grace) God has made us acceptable in the Beloved', his Son, Ephes. 1-6 But this favor is based entirely on grace. 9. God has so chosen us from eternity as to bless us in time in Christ, Ephesians 1:4. Now we are blessed in time by mere and free grace. Justification does not depend on the merit of works, therefore neither does election. Neither works before justification nor works after justification can be the cause of election; the former not because works do not please God before God pleases the person; the latter also not because those works are gifts of grace, not merits of grace." (*Loc. de elect. § 193.*)

Gerhard rightly calls the first chapter of the letter to the Ephesians the seat of the doctrine of election. There is no doctrine belonging to it that is not expressed here. Whereas elsewhere in Scripture we only find individual parts of it, here the whole doctrine is dealt with. Gerhard also states the important proposition that we are chosen just as God blesses us in time. He also rightly concludes that since good works are wrought by God, they cannot be a cause in man that moved God to choose us. We can speak of two kinds of works of man, namely those which he does before his conversion and those which he does after it. Now one might think that these are indeed dead works, for they do not come from faith, they are like water flowing from a poisonous spring; but those which come from faith and are done in love may well be meritorious! But no, even these do not include merit in themselves, and not because God must create them in man by grace. It is true that the good God rewards them, and if we only give a drink of cold water to a thirsty person, it should not remain unrewarded; but it is a reward of grace. The good Lord treats us human beings like a kind father treats his little child, whom he wishes to learn to write beautifully, but who has no desire to do so and keeps throwing away the pen to get rid of the plague. He takes the child on his lap, takes his hand in his own and writes. Then he says to the child, "How beautifully you have written, and you have five cents for it. The child is quite happy, partly about the reward, partly about the beautiful writing he has done, and is now learning to write diligently. Hasn't the father paid for what he himself has done? This is exactly what the good Lord does with us poor people. He leads us by the hand, makes beautiful writing, and pays us for it. Oh, what love, what fatherly kindness!

Let us now listen to a few more passages that contain the antithesis:

Thus speaks the Council of Trent in its resolutions, to which every Roman priest is bound, and from which he may not depart under the pope's ban and curse:

"If anyone says ... that the justified man by the good works done by him through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, of whom he is a living member, does not truly merit ... eternal life and, provided he passes away in grace, the attainment of the same eternal life ... let him be accursed!" (Sess. VI.)

Truly, only the Antichrist could have written such terrible things. Just listen: Whoever does not teach that eternal life is earned through good works is to be accursed! One would almost think that the pope understands something else by the word merit than is usually understood by it; but that the word should be taken in its proper sense and not in another, he himself thought he had to see to that, for he says: "truly merited", and also adds the word **<AGtG 198>** "attainment". Who does not shudder to think that a man dares to pronounce a curse on those who reject this accursed and damned doctrine, which overthrows the whole Gospel? The Council adds the words "grace of God" and "merit of Christ", but why? To maintain the appearance of Christianity. But this means nothing other than: Christ must help us a little, so that we may be a little better off. Consider also the good works which the Pope demands of all: chiefly St. Peter's penny, ample payment of the sacrifice of the Mass, building churches, bringing money to the priests, etc. That one loves his brother, fulfills his calling faithfully, etc., these good works are not taught by the papists, no one asks them about them; but how much have you had Masses said? how much have you given to St. Peter's penny? these are the important questions of the soul, and according to them it is judged whether one goes to heaven or not.

The scholastic Gabriel Biel had already written earlier: "Some are predestined because God foresees in them the good use of their free will and their merits; the predestination of others has no cause or no complete reason, because some are ordained to eternal life by a special grace, so that they are not left to themselves, but by virtue of the grace that precedes them cannot put a stop to it and cannot sin or remain in sin, like the Blessed Virgin, Paul; in these it is not due to the good use of free will, because grace has preceded the use of free will." (*1 Sent. dist. 41. q. un. urt. 2.* cited by Gerhard in *Conf. cath. fol. 1421.*)

Much therefore means: The ordinary Christian is saved because the

dear God has foreseen the good use of his free will from eternity. Only that God has also chosen certain persons for a special glory is said to have happened at best by free grace. Mary, for example, certainly could not have earned it with her good works that she became the Mother of God; nor did Paul earn it with his works that he became such a great apostle; these are cases where one must admit that the good Lord did something else. Finally he writes

Bellarmin: "Eternal election can be considered in two ways: first, insofar as it is the intention to give salvation; second, insofar as it is the mode of execution of the intention and, as it were, the consummation in God's heart. In the first way, election is a matter of mere grace and does not require the foreknowledge of works; in the other way, it requires the foreknowledge of works in advance, for God did not arrange it so that he would give eternal life as a reward, except to those of whom he foreknew that they would do good." (*De gratia et lib. arb. L. 2. c. 14. col. 627.*)

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b. Man's right use of the means of grace.

It is strange that man does not wish to accept the doctrine that he is saved by grace alone. When he hears this, he should rejoice and say: Oh yes, it cannot be otherwise; how could I be saved if it were not by grace? But Satan has so blinded poor fallen man that when God holds out the hand of salvation to him, he does not want to take it, but says: "Oh no, eternal life is something far too great, far too glorious for us not to have to do very much to attain it. Yes, how often has it sounded in our hearts: How? are you to be saved, eternally saved, while others perish? what have you done to deserve this? are you not just as great a sinner as others, indeed even greater? No, you cannot get heaven and its salvation, for you have absolutely nothing to show for it. But what satanic delusion this is! For the greater the good that God wants to give us, the more certain it is that we cannot earn it; precisely because we are dealing here with a good that cannot be comprehended in its greatness and glory, it cannot be otherwise: it must be given to us by free grace. Suppose a beggar comes to me and tells me that a rich, benevolent gentleman has given him a large farm worth many thousands of thalers. I say to him: I can hardly believe that he has given you this great gift. He replies: "Indeed, he didn't give it to me for nothing: I had an old, worn-out, dirty coat, which he asked us to give him in return. But the prophet expressly says that all our righteousness is like a filthy garment, and for this filthy

garment should God give us the great, blessed heaven? Does no man believe that that gracious Lord sold his great farm for a few rags, and do we want to believe that God would sell us the glorious farm of heavenly paradise for the filthy skirt of our righteousness? No, the good Lord is not a miserable shopkeeper who pays cash for rags, and what kind of cash? — Eternal life, the eternal blessed beholding of His glory in the fellowship of all angels and the elect! Oh, it is a crazy thought, which only the devil can put into a man's heart, that man can acquire salvation by his own works.

Therefore, the right use of the means of grace cannot possibly be a reason for man's election. Even the ungodly use them; then they too, when they go to church, read the Bible, pray their morning and evening blessings, would have to go to heaven because of this. A godless person can perhaps read God's Word more diligently than a Christian. How many hypocrites there are who study the Scriptures diligently solely to satisfy their pride, to boast of their great knowledge of the Scriptures, or perhaps to base their sectarian opinions on them, while perhaps a good Christian, who is overburdened with earthly business when he comes home tired and weary in the evening, can only read a little in God's Word to strengthen his poor soul! Even the wicked Herod liked to listen to John the Baptist, whom he had executed, so he was a diligent and willing hearer of the divine word, and yet he went to hell. But if anyone should say, "Yes, but the wicked do not use the means of grace properly, for they lack faith; but the pious use them properly," we would answer: True, but where does it come from that the pious do this? it is only because God has given them faith; therefore it is God alone who gives them the right use of the means of grace. Read the passage we have quoted:

Acts. 16:14: "And a godly woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, was listening; to whom the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul." **<AGtG 200>**

The Holy Spirit Himself testifies that if He had not opened Lydia's heart, it would have helped her as little as the others to hear God's word. Hence Heb. 4:2: "The word of preaching did not help those who did not believe when they heard it." The salutary hearing of the Word of God is hearing in faith; but only God can give this; therefore the use of the means of grace on my part cannot be a cause for the dear God to save me or to choose me for salvation. As soon as a person goes to church with the intention of hearing God's Word for his salvation,

he is already converted. No unconverted person does that. Rather, he thinks: It is Sunday, I must go to church, otherwise people will not consider me a Christian, otherwise God will not take me to heaven. But he doesn't go in with the thought: I want to hear my God speak so that I can receive the answer to the question: What must I do to be saved? Oh, if people all went to church with a real desire to be saved, what fruit we preachers would see! We would be amazed that soon not a single one of our listeners would be an unchristian. Many say it with their mouths and think it with their minds that what is preached to them is God's word, but the thought does not live in their hearts: Now I want to receive what God says to me with a fine good heart. That is why many people often say after the sermon that they did not like it, even though they cannot say that it was not God's word. Yes, the fact that you did not like it is not because there was nothing in it, but because you took nothing out of it! God's word remains God's word, and therefore always has its saving power, even if it had been spoken to you with a stammering mouth and slurred lips. He who comes to the table hungry will be refreshed by a little food, if only it satisfies him. But he will always receive the bread of life who has a believing preacher, especially an orthodox one. How wonderful it is that David cries out so imploringly to God: "Open my eyes that I may see the wonders of your law"! This old hero of God, who was himself the most glorious channel through which God revealed his precious word to the poor world, is on his knees pleading like this; what can be said of an unconverted man? Paul says: "The natural man hears nothing of the Spirit of God" etc.; as long as the Holy Spirit has not yet worked on a person and he listens to the Word of God, he thinks: what the preacher is saying cannot be true. Only when God opens his eyes, only then does everything appear to him as divine wisdom, as divine power. Even an unconverted person can dissect the doctrine of faith with his mind, but he talks about it like a blind man talks about color; he has tightly closed eyes and does not understand a word of what he says. The blind can also describe a color, and can even distinguish one from another by their feelings; but they know nothing of it, for color is not a matter of feeling, but of sight. In the same way, for example, the love of God is nothing more to the unconverted than a benevolence towards men. But once he has experienced it in his heart, once it has dawned on him in a blessed hour of grace that he is a completely lost and damned man, but that God has also looked down on him with eternal mercy, only then does he

know what this means: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" and so on. Ah, he then thinks, is it possible that God loved the world and therefore also me, <AGtG 201> the most wretched, the most unworthy, the most rejected of all men? Now he understands the word love, of which he had previously spoken like a star.

In addition, there are other important reasons that our theologians cite. Thus writes

Joh. Olearius: "Is the doctrine of the Lutherans related to Pelagianism? — This is denied (in the Formula of Concord), because it ascribes everything to God and nothing to man, since He alone gives the willing and accomplishing, Phil. 2, 14. This is not opposed by: 1. the external hearing of the Word, because the acts of external tugging (*paedagogicae*) are quite different from conversion and salutary hearing." (*Carpzovii Isag. in libb. symb. a J. Oleario contin. Lips. 1675. p. 1684. sq.*)

From the beginning the Calvinists reproached the Lutherans with Pelagianism, because they teach that man is rejected by God solely because of his sin and persistent impenitence, but not because of an eternal decree. They said: "There you stand, the Lutherans ascribe the power to convert oneself to man." But there is no need to prove how wrong they are.

John Gerard also writes: "Although God, according to his ordinary way of working, does not convert those who do not hear the Word, who despise and persecute the preachers of the Word, and who blaspheme the Word and resist the Holy Spirit, it does not follow from this that it depends on man that he is converted, since it is the work of the Holy Spirit, not of human powers, that man is converted by hearing the Word. What removes an obstacle is not the same as an active cause." (*Loc. de elect. § 188.*)

e. Man's own decision.

Many say that man is saved because he chooses salvation. Therefore God also chose him, because he foresaw from eternity that he would choose salvation. In all the books of the newer so-called believing theologians this doctrine is expressed or at least spouted. They say: It goes without saying that if a person does not choose heaven, he cannot enter it. If he chooses it, then God says to him, as it were: That is right, my son; now I will also take you into my heaven. They refer to such passages where it is written: I set before you death and life, choose! From this one can see, they say, that one must choose among the ways; whoever chooses the right way will be saved; whoever

chooses the wrong way will be damned; it is therefore up to the individual to decide for himself. Man should be the architect of his own happiness. They mainly refer to the example of Adam and Eve; they should have made their own decision: if they had chosen good, they would have been eternally saved; but they chose evil, and so they plunged into damnation. But did not the good Lord give the first human beings a free will that was not hindered by anything? They were therefore able to decide for themselves. But now it is different. **<AGtG 202>** We have fallen and are by nature in the power of the devil, bound hand and foot. We can choose nothing for ourselves but evil, and therefore only the wrong way, which leads to damnation. We must first become new men again in order to acquire a liberated will; a self-decision on our part is therefore out of the question. Note once again that Holy Scripture portrays the unconverted as dead in sin, Ephesians 2:1 and 5. Is it not ridiculous to say: "If a dead person is to become alive, he must first decide whether he wants to become alive or not"? Did the Lord call out to Lazarus: "Lazarus, I will make you alive; decide whether you want to become alive or whether you want to remain in the grave!"; No; Lazarus could not even hear such a call before his awakening, how could he decide for himself? Rather, the Savior decided for himself by calling out to him: "Lazarus, come out!" It is the same with conversion. If a person is to come from death to life, someone else, namely his Creator, must come to him and decide for him; he cannot do it himself. The newer theologians who want to be believers also see this; that is why they have invented another theory, which is just as contradictory. They say: It is true that man cannot decide by his own powers; but God gives him these powers, and now he can decide with the powers given to him by God. Many who do not see clearly allow themselves to be seduced by this new appearance. But just think what foolishness it is to say that God gives a dead person the powers of life so that he can resurrect himself! As soon as a person has vital powers, he is already alive; he would therefore have to be converted so that he could be converted; he would have to be awakened so that he could be awakened. Just imagine that dead people receive powers with which they now walk around as dead people. If one calls out to such living dead people: Are you not dead? how can you walk around? they answer: Of course I am dead, but I have received powers which I should use to choose life for myself, then I will become alive. And how? If such a person dies before the supposed self-decision, where does he

end up? He is not dead, he is not alive either; so he seems to have to hover between heaven and hell; or does he end up in the place of the middle state, in a "Hades"? — Alas, if reason thinks it has produced a high wisdom, and has not drawn it from the Scriptures, it must at last see how its wisdom is vain foolishness. The powers of life are not in man like undigested food, which only gives man strength and blood after it has been digested; but if he has vitality, he is also alive; and if he is alive, he is also converted. It is wrong to make such a distinction between being converted and being awakened. It is indeed possible that the good God may so beat a man by the law that he can no longer sin quietly, but is punished continually by his accuser, who dwells in him as often as he sins; who gets up with him and goes to bed with him, whose punishment he may even seek to escape by going to the drinking house and trying to drown his restlessness; but such a man is not awakened, he is merely startled. He who is truly awakened has come from death to life; Christ has become his life. <AGtG 203>

The passage quoted here in Phil. 2:13: "It is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure" also destroys the doctrine of man's self-decision. The decision for what is right is nothing other than that I will what is right. If God creates the will, this means nothing other than that He decides for us and not we. But did God decide to make me blessed because He foresaw that He wanted to work a will in me? No, the opposite is true: because God has decided to save me, He works the will, i.e. the decision, in me. The Scripture says: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature." But has any creature decided to be created? No, for it was not in its power to will anything until it was created. In the new birth God gives us a new heart, a new mind, not in number (for he does not take out my mind and put in another mind, as the dentist puts in a new tooth, but leaves the same mind, the same will in man), but he gives the mind, the will new qualities and powers. That God gives a different mind, a different heart, that was the fallacy of the Lacanians. Since our conversion is really a creation, a birth, a begetting on the part of God, it is clear that man cannot decide for himself.

Our fathers also testify to this.

Thus Dannhauer writes: "Even the decision of our will in the first act of conversion has always been attributed by orthodox believers not to the power and cooperation of man, but to the Holy Spirit, who works on the will through the Word, which

behaves inactively in the process. And yet this decision is not a matter of necessity and an irresistible force, although it is infallible, assuming divine order. For God has bound Himself by the most certain and holy promises that He will Himself decide the man to conversion, if he is in the workshop of the Holy Spirit and does not maliciously resist the means of salvation." (Cited in Calov's *Systema X*, 50.)

With clear words Dannhauer here attributes the decision to the Holy Spirit and expressly describes the will of man as an inactive one, only as the object of the Spirit's activity. He is therefore only acting in a spiritual way. But Dannhauer also rejects the error of the Calvinists. They also say that the Holy Spirit decides man, but they add: "By an irresistible power." When grace comes, they teach, a person cannot resist it, he cannot resist it, God compels him to believe. But this is a dangerous teaching, for we read many times in Holy Scripture that people have resisted when grace was offered to them. We are even worse than a stone or a block, teaches the Formula of Concord. For if a stonemason strikes the marble with a good instrument, he can hew as much of it as he likes; the marble does nothing to help, but also nothing against it when it is hewn. But not only can man do nothing to teach himself, he also has the terrible power to resist, and we all do this when God wants to convert us. But we must distinguish between **<AGtG 204>** natural and willful, malicious, stubborn resistance. God "takes away" the latter; but as long as we remain in the latter, we will not be converted.

When the syncretists of Helmstadt had once put forward the doctrine of man's self-determination by means of certain powers given to him, the

Theological Faculty of Jena, among other things: "If one wanted to say that man is converted by the powers of grace, this is also not a sufficiently convenient way of speaking. For since conversion in this sense means nothing other than to be endowed with new powers, which happens through enlightenment of the mind and conversion of the will, it cannot be said that man is converted through the powers he has already received. For these powers are not given beforehand so that man may be converted afterwards through them, but the gift of spiritual powers is in fact the conversion itself." (Citirt von Quenstedt in his *Theologia* II, 727.)

Let us now hear how the newer theologians make the election of man dependent on his own decision.

Thus Kahnis writes: "Accordingly, predestination is conditioned by prescience (foreknowledge), prescience by man's decision." (op. cit. p. 256.)

Dr. Frank writes: "On the basis of the call given to him, man is able to cooperate with grace" (mitzuwirken) "and to decide for it personally out of himself (*ex se ipso*), so that he himself is the agent and no other, but not as out of himself (*tamquam ex semet ipso*), as if he had this self-acting out of and through himself." (The Theology of the Formula of Concord. IV, 164.)

Luthardt writes: "Man himself must open the door for Jesus to enter him. Ultimately it depends on our own free self-determination, i.e. our own self-determination, whether we want to be determined by the impulses or not." (The doctrine of free will. p. 427. 428.)

If we also examine these words using the example of Lazarus, then we will see how foolish they are. According to Luthardt, the Savior would have said to Lazarus: Lazarus, if you throw off the lid, I will make you alive. If he had been able to speak, he would have said: I cannot throw off the lid, for I am dead! Of course, the Lord says in Rev. 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and take communion with him, and he with me"; but he does not mean that we can open the door ourselves. The Scriptures say again and again that we should "be converted, that we should believe, that we should walk in newness of life". But by this it does not at all say that we men can do this ourselves, but it only says that this is necessary; and now a poor sinner should despair of himself and learn to recognize that he cannot do what he ought, and when such a man reads the Gospel, he finds that God wants to give him all this. **<AGtG 205>** Thus the Lord had already spoken in the same chapter, v. 7: "Thus says the Holy One, the True One, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shuts, who shuts and no one opens." So God alone can open the door of our heart; if He does not do so, He can knock for all eternity, we do not open it; if we could speak as spiritually dead, we would only keep saying: Lord, I cannot open it for you. But as soon as we believe through God's gift, the Lord opens the door of our heart and comes to us with his heavenly splendor and takes communion with us. By nature we are all imprisoned as in a terrible castle dungeon, where our feet are bound in sticks and iron and our hands are bound with heavy chains, and the heavy dungeon door is locked with a huge lock and bolt.

Then a dear friend comes to visit me in my misery, and says: Open up, I want to see you! I have to answer him: Oh, great as my joy would be to see you, I cannot open the door; go to the doorkeeper, he has the key; if he does not open it, I can never see you. How terrible, therefore, are such doctrines as Luthardt here sets forth! Suppose a poor, afflicted man were to come to such a professor and complain to him of his distress, that he felt nothing of the grace of God in his heart: what answer would he receive? This: Yes, my dear man, you must open the door of your heart to the Lord Jesus! And what would be the result? The troubled person would only leave his teacher in all the greater sorrow, for he would think: "That is precisely my need, that my heart is closed! How differently, on the other hand, will a true Lutheran theologian treat him! He will say to him: Oh, my dear fellow, the Lord Jesus has long been in you, you just do not feel him; for how would it be possible for you to long for him so much, to sigh and cry out for him so much, if you did not love him! But you cannot love him if you do not have him. Therefore be of good cheer, the door of your heart has long since been opened wide for him, the Lord has long since entered your heart; only recognize that he is with you.

d. Man's desire and prayer.

Many also consider this to be the reason for which God has chosen man. The sects in particular say that only those are converted who awaken a strong desire for it in themselves and earnestly seek it in their prayers. As is well known, this is the Alpha and Omega of all their doctrinal presentations. If you ask them: What must I do to be saved? they answer: "You must pray until you hear a voice in your heart that says to you: Now you have grace, now you have forgiveness of sins, because you now feel Jesus living in you." But a very sad teaching! For now a person may well be struggling in earnest prayer and have the feeling that Jesus dwells in him, that he is pardoned, and tomorrow all this may be over; then he feels nothing but darkness and death. Once he has received this teaching, he must think: I have fallen away again. As proof of this, one of those present [at the conference] told the following example from his life:

When I was a student, I read almost nothing but Methodist writings, and I struggled miserably for more than two years to be sure of my salvation. I always did not fully feel what those writings demanded. Once <AGtG 206> I read in a book by [Bogatzky](#), entitled "Die geistlichen Friedensstörer" (The spiritual disturbers of peace), a lengthy passage written in true evangelical style, which enticed the poor sinner to go to Jesus as he is and removed all his reservations about doing so. Then I was really filled with an exuberant

feeling of joy, so that I thought: Praise God, now you have come through, now you have grace, now God himself has spoken in you, he has accepted you, your sins are forgiven, you are saved! In this great joy I immediately wrote to my brother and told him what the Lord had done for me. It was Pentecost time. He soon replied and congratulated me on the rich Pentecostal blessing I had received. But when I received the letter, lo and behold, the feeling of grace had long since vanished again; the next day I had already lost it again. The next day I had read the book again. But after Bogatzky had spoken so comfortingly, he continued: "But, dear reader, be careful! One can easily deceive oneself and think it is the voice of grace, and yet it is not." I felt as if I had a light in my hand and someone came and blew it out for me. I felt as if I had fallen from a dreamed-of heaven and plunged into hell. This was the result of the false teaching that man's desire, prayer, feelings, sensations and the like are what the certainty of his salvation rests on.

No human being can generate the right desire for salvation in himself, only God can do that. This is what the passage teaches:

Romans 9:16: "So then it does not depend on anyone's willing or running, but on God's mercy."

It is true: all people want to be blessed by nature; but what kind of bliss do they want? One that does not exist. An unconverted person does not want to be truly saved, for he does not want to be free from his sin, from his enmity against God, he does not want to come into fellowship with God, he does not long to see God face to face; he just does not want to go to hell, but to a place where he has no punishment to suffer and where all his natural inclinations are satisfied. Only when the Holy Spirit works in us the desire for salvation, only then do we have it; we see this from Romans 8:26: the longing, the desire, the sighing and the prayer that follows must all be worked in us by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this cannot be the cause that would have moved God to determine us to salvation, for He did it Himself.

The Formula of Concord says about this longing: "Paul (writes) Phil. 2: 'It is God who works in you both to will and to do according to his good pleasure'. This sweet saying is very comforting to all pious Christians who feel and sense a little spark and longing for God's grace and eternal salvation in their hearts, that they may know that God has kindled this beginning of true godliness in their hearts, and may continue to strengthen them **<AGtG 207>** in their great weakness and help them to persevere in true faith to the end." (Repetition. Art. 2. p. 591 [**FC SD II, 14**])

A true masterpiece of right, evangelical consolation, which every preacher should take as a model! It is not uncommon for such afflicted people to come to us complaining that they must be lost because they cannot believe. They say: The Bible says: "He who does not believe shall be condemned"; and no matter how earnestly we try to persuade these poor people to believe with confidence, they keep saying: I can't believe, I can't believe. So you have to ask them: Don't you long to be able to believe? They will answer: Oh of course I long for it! That is precisely my need, that is why I have no rest day and night, that is why I come to you, so that you can help me out of this need. Then we should say to them: Well, my dear fellow, be of good cheer, you are already in the faith; for it is impossible for me to long for the faith without already believing. Who on earth would want to believe something to be true that he believes to be a lie? So whoever desires to believe must already have faith in his heart, he must already be convinced that the gospel is truth, which is what faith is. Oh, how faithfully God has cared for his children! No matter how badly they are afflicted, there is always comfort for them. According to God's Word, I should not think: May I also accept the comfort of the gospel, unfaithful man that I am? Oh, who would the good Lord want to take to heaven if he only wanted to accept the faithful into it? Then heaven should remain completely empty, for we all should and must say: We are useless servants. It is just God's good pleasure to populate heaven with sinners, and yet the holy angels need not be ashamed to associate with us unclean ones, for God adorns us with the white robe of the righteousness of his dear Son, which shines brighter than the righteousness of the angels. How wrong it is, therefore, when legalistic preachers say: "If you want to come to faith, you must wrestle for it in prayer until you have it", since the unbeliever is not yet able to wrestle at all! No, we should indeed wrestle, struggle, groan and pray, but not so that we may receive faith, but when we have believed, so that we may not lose the faith we have received. So we must not think that this teaching, that God alone must kindle faith in us, will make people indifferent to prayer; oh no! whoever is seized by God's word and then does not want to pray will soon lose everything again. When faith is born in the heart, it is still such a small, tender, weak child that it needs the most careful care; it is like a tiny light that must be protected from the stormy wind so that it does not go out. Therefore, as soon as a person has heard God's Word and he decides to convert because God has worked this decision in him,

such a convert must of course immediately fall to his knees and pray and fight and struggle until his blessed death. Whoever does not struggle and pray for just one day will come back. We have to deal with our wretched flesh and blood again and again and must lament to God with shame and remorse that we are still such wretched creatures after He has shown us such unspeakable mercy. That is why our sermons often have so little effect, not because they do not reach many people — oh no! if we preach rightly, then there will usually be a whole crowd of listeners who receive a blow to the heart, as we see in the people in the Gospels; — but most of them, as soon as they have left the church, then talk again about things of this world, and **<AGtG 208>** when they come home, there is no more talk of the sermon; at most, they say: that was a beautiful sermon, and that is all the fruit. But why is it that all impressions of the divine word vanish so quickly? It is because everything we receive must be preserved by praying, sighing and crying out to God. "Blessed are those," says the Lord, "who hear the word of God and keep it." As terrible as it is when a preacher says: You must first soften the dear God through your weeping, praying and wrestling so that he forgives your sins — for God has long since been softened through the weeping, crying and bloodshed of his Son — it is just as important that we exhort those who have received the first beginnings of faith to pray and wrestle so that they do not lose grace again. The younger and newer the faith is, the more anxiously the tender little plant must be watered. When the Lord wanted to convince Ananias that Saul had really converted, he called out to the former: "For behold, he is praying." Acts 9, 11.

Let us now listen to another testimony from John Olearius on this part of our thesis. He writes: "The doctrine of the Lutherans... ascribes everything to God, nothing to man. This is not contradicted by: . . 3. the desire for salvation, because this too is not a natural, but a supernatural one, given by the Holy Spirit and arising from the Word.... . Nor 5. prayer, and perseverance therein in the agony of death; for this also the Holy Spirit awakens in us, Rom. 8." (*L. c. p. 1684. sq.*)

*) e. The non-resistance of man.

*) Here follows the minutes of Mr. Pastor Hein of the 8th session, which concludes the proceedings on this Thesis III. D. S.

We now come to the 5th part, which some explain as the reason why one part of mankind is chosen to eternal salvation, while the other part is rejected. Those who place very little emphasis

on man say that the real cause is that there are a number of people who do not resist maliciously, and because they do not resist maliciously, God has chosen them. This indeed sounds as if it were an excellent solution to the question. Unfortunately, however, it is not. In this way, the reason for blessedness would be written to man. For if my non-resistance is the ultimate and actual reason, then I would actually be my Savior, my Redeemer, my Savior, and on the Last Day I could call out to those who then stand on the left hand of the Lord: You too could stand on the right, could be as blessed as I am, if only you had done as I have done. I have not resisted. But no! it will not be so; rather we will confess that we have been saved only by grace, by God's free mercy. That is why we sing:

It is the eternal mercy that surpasses all thought,
It is the open arms of love of him who leans towards the sinner,
Whose heart always breaks, we come or we don't come. [TLH 385:2]

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Yes, yes, Holy Scripture gives us no other solution than: "It is the eternal mercy that surpasses all thinking", which also opens the arms of its eternal love to us wicked sinners.

It is certainly true that willful rebellion is the cause of people being condemned. For example, we read in Matthew 23:37 that the Savior says: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I desired to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing." But what does this mean other than: you have striven as He strives? The Savior says that He willed, but they did not. He not only willed it in his heart, no, he also proved his right will, lured them as a mother hen lures her chicks. It was as in the Gospel of the XX Sunday after Trinity; all were invited, seriously invited, the call went out to all: "Everything is ready, come to the wedding"; "but", it says, "they did not want to come", so they resisted. We read the same thing in Acts 7:51, where Stephen says to the high council: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit, as your fathers did, so do you." And Acts. 13:45-46. it says: "But when the Jews saw the people, they were filled with envy, and contradicted and blasphemed what was said by Paul. But Paul and Barnabas said freely in public, "The word of God must first have been spoken to you; but now that you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles." The Jews thought: we are the chosen people; how can they preach salvation and blessedness to the Gentiles? we have been promised this. Pharisees still often say this today: Oh, I don't like to go to church;

there are abominable people there, people who have lived in all sins, and there they are absolved, and then they are suddenly considered saints. That is why the Savior said that fornicators and publicans go to heaven rather than such Pharisees. The Jews rejected the word and willfully resisted it. This is certainly true: people are lost because of willful, stubborn resistance, but others are not saved because they did not resist. Those who do not resist are saved, but the question is whether the cause of salvation lies in man, so that one can say: Behold, he did not resist, therefore the cause is not in God, but in man. But even though opposition is in man, non-opposition is not in any man. God must first plant it in him. He must turn man's will around. That is why we speak of conversion.

We see this in all the passages of Holy Scripture in which conversion is ascribed to God, e.g.

Jer 31:18: "Convert thou me, and I shall be converted: for thou, O Lord, art my God."

Isaiah 63:17: "Why hast thou caused us to err from thy ways, O Lord, and hardened our hearts, that we should not fear thee? Return for the sake of your servants, for the sake of the tribes of your inheritance.

This sounds as if the prophet is blaming God for the apostasy; but it only sounds that way. He wants to say: We cannot help but resist; oh, therefore take this resistance away from us! The words: "Why do you harden our hearts?" are not an accusation against **<AGtG 210>** God, but rather a bitter complaint about the state of the people at that time. Oh, he wants to say, what wretched people we are, we cannot take away our reluctance, only you can. If you do not take it away, we will become more and more hardened.

Furthermore, Ezek. 11:19: "And I will give you one heart, and put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your body, and give you a heart of flesh." So God wants to take away the heart that resists, that hardens. If he does not, we keep the same.

A remarkable example is that of the apostle Paul. To him the Lord says in Acts 9:5: "It will be hard for you to resist the thorn." He wants to say: "You have now been a tool of the devil against me and my church; but I have decided to put a stop to you. You shall not strike out, you shall not resist. When plowing, farmers had a plow like this, with goads attached to it to discourage the animals from striking while plowing. The Savior wants to say: I will see to it that you do not strike it, you will feel the thorn. That was nothing other than his great grace and mercy that overcame him.

Before, he snorted with murder; but no sooner had the Lord spoken these words than this lion, this wolf, became a gentle lamb. All Christendom was astonished at this. Everyone shook their heads, thinking that this was not possible, that such an enemy of Christ could not be converted. Even Ananias, whom God commanded to baptize him, could not understand it. He refused, for he thought he would have him seized and brought to trial. That is why God adds: "Behold, he prayeth!" The Savior wants to say: This is a certain sign that he has been converted.

But what has happened in us? Can anyone say: Yes, I am a Christian, because I have not resisted? Alas, no! We must say: I have resisted all my days, all my days I have wanted to flee from God, but he has followed me. When I wanted to leave him, he knocked on my door, sweet and friendly, but often also terrible and threatening. So I had to give myself up. — Our heart always wants to resist, but God makes sure that it is broken. Alas, everyone would have to speak against his conscience if he wanted to deny his reluctance. Everyone sees every day what a rebellious heart he has. How often have we stood on the brink of destruction and He has pulled us back again and again. It is He who has begun the good work; He must also complete it.

The non-resistance of man cannot be a reason that lies in man; for Christians do good works, make up their minds, have a fervent desire for salvation, pray, do not resist; but these are all effects of God, all causes that lie not in them but in God.

Our old teachers also taught this.

Thus John Olearius writes: "The teaching of the Lutherans ... ascribes everything to God and nothing to man. This is not contradicted ... 4. non-resistance, because even this is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who removes and restrains the resistance that is ours alone through the proper means of salvation. For non-resistance is by no means a causative influence, but only a non-prevention of the activity of an agent; just as both the leper **<AGtG 211>** Matthew 8 and Lazarus John 11, by not resisting Christ, were by no means the cause of the miraculous healing or resurrection." (*L. c. p. 1684. s.*)

God restrains the reluctance in us, although he does not completely abolish it until death; otherwise we would not always have to lament with the apostle: "What I do not want, I do." Resistance is always present with us until we are redeemed from the body of this death. Our not resisting does not matter at all. Someone who is ill may do nothing at all and lie down quietly, but that is not why he is

found. If, of course, he rages, rages and eats and drinks all sorts of things, he may catch his death. But the fact that he does nothing does not make him well. God must not only take away our resistance, he must also come with the medicine of the gospel and make us righteous and saved. That is why Lazarus did not come to life, because he did not resist. He could not have done so. Suddenly he was alive and did not know what had happened to him. It is the same with everyone who comes to spiritual life. He must say: God has done this! What has happened to me has only held me back and hindered me.

Hülsemann writes: "Non-resistance is by no means our work, but a work of God produced in us, which we can only resist." (*Vindiciae* p. 158.)

Hollaz writes: "Non-malicious resistance means either the omission of a resistance that resists the outward use of the means of grace".

The Pharisees, for example, already resisted the outward use of the word. They avoided the Lord and did not want to hear him. They could have refrained from this outward resistance; they did not need the Holy Spirit for this. They could have gone once and heard the Lord, just as the ungodly still speak today: You must go to church, see and hear what is there. God will meet such a person and convert him.

Hollaz continues: "or the omission of a reluctance that resists the inward grace of conversion. The latter omission is a matter of free will; the latter is due to divine grace, which takes away the stony heart." (*Examen theol. P. III. s. 1. c. 1. q. 9. p. 602.*)

Every man has so much strength by nature that he can say: I will go to church, or not; I will read the Bible, or not; I will be baptized, or not. But that is not what conversion is all about. I can do all that and still be and remain a godless person. This is only due to divine grace. The Pharisees did not refrain from resisting inward grace; they maliciously resisted it and went to hell. If a person refrains from doing so, he owes it to divine grace alone.

f. The faith of man.

Now we come to the last point, for the sake of which some say that, after all, everything depends on man's decision, namely that he must believe. Faith, they say, is the reason why a number of people are chosen and saved, while unbelief is the reason why others are not saved, for we read in the Holy Scriptures: "He that believeth shall be saved"; and just as God acts in time,

so he has decided to act in eternity; we human beings often intend to do something, but often decide otherwise; it is not so with God; he is **<AGtG 212>** omniscience and eternally perfect wisdom; he knows everything beforehand and is so all-wise that he decides everything that he actually does in time. "You see," they say, "since man is saved by faith now, God must have decided in eternity to save man for the sake of faith." They seem to be speaking quite correctly, and yet they are not speaking correctly. Nowhere in Holy Scripture does it say that we are saved because of faith, that we are justified and saved because we believe. Nothing of the kind is to be found; but it says that we are justified and saved by faith. So we see that Holy Scripture does not make faith the cause of justification, but the means of it. We admit that God has determined from eternity to save a person by bringing him to faith, thereby justifying him and allowing him to attain the end of faith, the salvation of souls. But to be saved by faith means nothing other than to be saved by grace. Whoever says that he is saved by faith is either mistaken or does not know what he is talking about. It is by no means to be understood as if God had decided that those who are so pious that they believe everything he has said in the Bible should now also go to his heaven for it. The unbelievers so often say: "Oh, what a doctrine that is! what can God care that we believe all that! we can't believe for once." Are we to be damned because of that and are others, who are no better than we are, to go to heaven just because they believe that?" But if that were the case, faith would be nothing but a work, and it would be strange that it should count for so much before God, more than all other works. No, we are saved by faith because God has already redeemed the whole world, the Son has reconciled us with the Father, purchased righteousness for us, and bought us salvation. Everything is already there. Nothing, not even the slightest thing, remains to be done on our part. "Come to the wedding," God calls out to us, "everything is ready." God says: "You guests, just come, you don't need to bring anything, neither food nor drink; you will even be given a dress. — If Christ has done everything, what else do we have to do? Nothing, nothing at all. Whether I tell someone to whom I have explained the counsel of God that he should do nothing, but only accept it, or that he should be saved by faith, is one and the same thing. For to be saved by faith means: to accept what God has acquired and wants to give you, to rejoice in it, to place your trust in it. This is the miracle doctrine of Christianity. This is the secret that was hidden in the heart of God and was revealed through the mouth

of the prophets and apostles. Only he who believes: I am also redeemed, also reconciled, I am righteous, will be saved and no one else. Only through faith, not for the sake of faith, are we saved. Faith only takes. It is the beggar's hand that gives us eternal love in the first place.

The following objection was made here: How should we answer someone who concludes: "God sees nothing in election but the merit of Jesus Christ, not in abstracto, but in so far as someone has grasped it; so he has seen that someone accepts the merit of Christ by faith, and therefore he is elected"? To this we should reply: "Behold, my beloved, the wedding garment God puts on us. He foresaw that he would put it on us and give us faith. How can this be a reason that lies in man? Rather, it is a **<AGtG 213>** reason that lies in God. If he did not give us faith, we would not have it. God has included faith in the counsel of election; faith is part of the golden chain that God has forged, so to speak, with which he draws me out of hell and away from earth into heaven. The first is that he chose me; the second, that he created me; the third, that he redeemed me; the fourth, that he made me believe; the fifth, that he preserves me; the sixth, that he introduces me to eternal life.

Here belong all the passages which testify that faith is not our work, e.g.

Col 2:12: "In whom ye are buried with him by baptism; in whom also ye are risen by the faith which God hath wrought." There it is most clearly stated: It is God who works faith, not I.

John 6:44-45 also belongs here: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God. Whoever therefore hears from the Father and learns it will come to me." These are two beautiful sayings. First it is said: The Father must draw us, so we cannot give ourselves faith. But then it is added: Whoever hears from the Father and learns, comes to me. So if I reject the word of the gospel, the Father does not draw me. He only deals with us through the word. But whoever needs the word can be sure that the Father will draw him to the Son and give him faith.

Furthermore, Heb. 12:2: "And look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith." Here we hear both: first he begins faith, then he also perfects it; he alone sustains us in faith.

Furthermore, 1 Cor. 12:3: "Therefore I declare to you that no one curses Jesus who speaks through the Spirit of God; and no one can call Jesus Lord without the Holy Spirit." Calling Jesus a Lord means nothing other than believing in him.

1 Peter 1:5 reads: "To you who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation prepared for revelation in the last time." It is not by our power, but by God's power that we are preserved, and it is by faith that God wants to preserve us for salvation. From eternity he has included faith as a link in the chain; no one is chosen who does not come to faith. But the fact that a person comes to faith has been planted in him by the hand of eternal love; it has not grown on the soil of his heart.

Phil 1:6 reads: "And I am confident of this very thing, that he who began the good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ." He has begun it. It's not that we have to start it and then God wants to carry it on and help us further. We do not come to him, no! he comes to us; we do not lay the first stone for our salvation, but he does it. Nor is it as if we could not make the beginning, but then, when God has made it, bring it to the end. No, he must make the beginning, the progress and the end, or we are all lost.

Thus our Catechism says: 'I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him.' "The kingdom of God comes from Himself without our prayer." **<AGtG 214>**

A few more passages have been collected from the Fathers on this subject, since this teaching is contradicted everywhere. Precisely those who teach that faith is the reason for our election think that they are the most orthodox. But they do not consider that, according to their teaching, faith must be our work. No, it is not our work, but God's. But if it is God's work, it cannot move him to do something that he himself has done.

Gerhard says that God has chosen us in regard to faith. Others have spoken out against this form of expression and said: If it is needed, then it must be explained in more detail. Should it mean as much as: Faith is the moving cause, then it cannot be accepted. But if you want to say: God has not chosen anyone who does not come to faith, then this is correct. Then only the elect are described, but faith should not be the reason for election. The reason for this is Christ alone. If he had not become man, then no man could be chosen, because God cannot forgive sins if they have not been blotted out. He is a righteous judge; he does not acquit the guilty until his debt has been paid. Everyone must have paid his sin debt before he can be acquitted. Since we could not do it ourselves, God did it for us. This is the reason that God can save us, for which he could choose us from eternity.

Gerhard writes: "We do not say that predestination has its ground in the foreknowledge of faith (*ex praevisione fidei esse*), but that the intuition of faith (*intuitus fidei*) belongs to the counsel of election. But there is a great difference between these propositions; the former expresses the meritorious or prompting (xxxxxxxxxxxxx) cause, the latter denotes only the order." (*Loc. de dect. § 175.*)

So if one were to say: In the foreknowledge of faith the election of grace has its ground, one would say: faith is the meritorious cause. But Gerhard rejects this with great seriousness as quite false. But if one only wants to say that faith is part of the reason for election, then it is all right. For then it is so. God does not save anyone apart from Christ.

Quenstedt writes: "Faith is not the meritorious cause of election, but.... a part of the order established by God in election. We are not chosen because of, but through and in faith." (*Theol. L. c. fol. 53.*)

God does not say: Such and such a one shall go to heaven, whether he believes or not; but he has woven faith into the whole wreath of our salvation. We are to believe and remain in faith and die and be saved.

Gerhard writes: "We confess with a loud voice that we hold that God found nothing good in the man to be elected to eternal life, that he did not take into account either good works or the use of free will, nor even faith, so that he chose some because he was moved by it or for the sake of it." (*Loc. de elect. et re- prob. § 161.*)

Gerhard further writes: "We do not say that faith is the meritorious or effectual cause of election, or that God chose us for the sake of faith." (*Loc. de elect. § 170.*)

Joh. Olearius writes: **<AGtG 215>** "The doctrine of the Lutherans... ascribes everything to God and nothing to man. This is not contradicted by.... 2. faith, for this is by no means our work, but God's gift, nor is it a condition to be fulfilled by us, but a requirement which is bestowed by God by grace through the ordinary means of salvation." (*L. c. p. 1684.*)

Faith, then, is not a condition under which God would have us saved. It is rather a requirement which God himself wants to fulfill. He wants to make man blessed without condition; but he has made an order in which he wants to carry out this general will. Whoever does not want to submit to this order, but stubbornly resists it, will be lost. But he who allows faith to be generated in him

does nothing himself; God does everything and that makes him blessed.

Quenstedt writes: "The moving cause (of predestination) is partly internal, partly external. The inward cause is God's grace, which is manifested in vain, which absolutely excludes any merit of human works, or anything that has the name of a work or an action, whether it happened by God's grace or by natural forces. For God has not chosen us according to works, but by his mere grace. Nor does faith itself belong here, if it is regarded as a more or less worthy condition (whether in itself or according to an estimate of value added to faith by the will of God), because nothing of this belongs to the counsel of election as a cause that moves and impels God to make such a counsel, but this must be attributed to the pure grace of God. This sentence is first proved from Romans 9:15, 16: "Whom I have mercy on, I have mercy on. So then it is not a matter of someone's willing or running, but of God's mercy." (*Th. did.-pol. III*, 255.)

Some say: "We admit that faith in itself is not such a good work that it deserves anything before God. But God in his great goodness has promised salvation to faith." This is not how we should think of faith. It is not a work by which we earn anything; God has not given it any such value out of goodness. It is nothing but a taking. But that has no value. A beggar who takes a gift given to him will not be praised for it. A beggar has to thank the person who gives him a gift, and not the other way round.

The same: "It agrees with the word, that the cause why some believe is not in man, but in God, who gives them faith according to his good pleasure." (*L. c. fol. 59.*)

Calov writes: "It is not because of faith that we are called elect, but through faith in Christ, of which the former is the signifying expression of the moving cause, the latter of the instrumental cause. The blessed Meisner reminds us: 'When faith is called the cause of election, it must not be understood as the moving or impulsive cause. 'For', says Blessed Hutter, 'election does not depend on faith as its moving or meritorious cause'... And blessed Gerard says that it is absurd to say that faith is the moving cause of election." (*Syst. Tom. X.*, 629.) **<AGtG 216>**

Dannhauer: "Predestination does not depend on any work, on any merit, on any motive that is from us or through us, that is in us, for the sake of which election would have happened; not on faith, insofar as it is a work or the fruit of faith.

For thus we also say that the decree is a purely gracious one. This graciousness excludes the merits, not the order; faith here is not a work, but the foreknown beggar's hand. Therefore nothing of boast, even the least, is left to faith, in that it takes, not gives or acquires. Therefore God saw nothing of active worthiness in man, nothing good that was not from him, God himself. God remains the cause and never becomes the caused: in fact, nothing in him is earlier in time; but neither does the will depend on foreknowledge, although it is earlier in concept." (*Hodos. Phaen. 7. p. 289.*)

This is an important axiom: God remains the cause and never becomes the caused. He does not allow himself to be determined by his creatures, he determines them. Before him nothing is prior to time. Luther says: God does not see lengthwise, but transversely. We see lengthwise and therefore our gaze is stopped; but God does not need to see far, he has everything before him. —

Spener speaks quite differently. He writes: "It is impossible for the elect to be persistently deceived, Matt. 24:24. However, election is not the cause that such people remain steadfast in grace, but because they will remain steadfast, (this) has made them chosen by the Lord." (*Kurze Catechismus — Predigten*. Frankfurt a. M. 1689. p. 355.) The first theologian who used the expression: "in view of faith" is Aegidius Hunnius; but he did not want anything wrong to be understood by it; he thought he could best beat the Calvinists with it.

Thesis IV. *)

*) Due to the advanced time, Thesis IV. and V. could only be treated summarily.

[Walther's great Bible lesson.]

It rejects the doctrine "that God does not will that everyone should be saved, but, regardless of their sin, ordains them to damnation by the mere counsel, purpose and will of God, so that they cannot be saved"; rather, it teaches that "not all those who have heard the Word believe and are therefore condemned so much deeper is not because God has not granted them salvation, but because they themselves are guilty of not learning the Word in this way, but only of despising, blaspheming and profaning it, and that they have resisted the Holy Spirit, who wanted to work in them through the Word"; It also teaches that "such contempt of the Word is not the cause of God's providence

(*vel praescientia, vel praedestinatio Dei*), but of man's wrong will". (FC SD XI 41)

Ezek. 33:11. 2 Pet. 3:9. 1 Tim. 2:4-6. Joh. 3:16. Rom. 11:32. **<AGtG 217>** Matth. 23:37; Acts 7:51; Prov 1:24-31; Acts 13:46; Hos 13:46. 13:46. Hos. 13:9. Rom. 9:22. cf. v. 23 after the foundation.

Our church's teaching on the universality of God's grace is based on clear, bright passages of Holy Scripture that shine like suns within it. Every Christian should be able to memorize these passages and know where they stand, so that he can hold them up to himself in hours of temptation and also hold them up to those who deny the universality of God's grace and yet claim to follow the Bible. These passages are:

Ezek. 33:11: "As surely as I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live."

The Lord adds the question to his prayer: "Why do you want to die, you of the house of Israel?" to testify that he truly does not want this. So if you die eternal death, he says, it is the result of your evil will, and not because I did not want to; no, I am sorry for your death.

The New Testament teaches the same thing.

2 Peter 3:9: "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to repentance."

Here the generality of God's grace is first expressed in the negative and then in the affirmative. It is almost incomprehensible how the Reformed could have seen such suns shining and yet remain in their darkness and maintain: God does not want all men to be saved. Of course, we shall hear how shamefully Calvin distorted this passage; but since we cannot assume that all reformers are godless people who err against their better judgment and conscience, it is truly incomprehensible how honest people can be so blinded. But they only confirm the words of Scripture: "The natural man hears nothing of the Spirit of God" etc.

1 Timothy 2:4-6: "God wants all men to be helped and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is One God and One Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for all for salvation, that this might be preached in His time."

So God not only wants all people to be helped, but also that they all come to the knowledge of the truth. He wants not only the end, but also the means. There are Reformed who admit that the good Lord, so to speak, had no objection in eternity to all men being saved,

and in this respect accept this passage, but who maintain that he did not want to give the means to salvation to all men. But here it expressly says: "and come to the knowledge of the truth". This is nothing other than the means and the way to life.

Likewise, this passage not only testifies to the universality of the divine will of grace, but also to the universality of salvation, which the Reformed likewise deny. Note that verse 6 does not say: for us alone; one could still think that perhaps only the elect are meant, but: "for all". The words also follow: "that these things might be preached in their time". So God also wants to call all through the gospel. This passage alone overturns the Calvinist doctrine that God's grace does not extend to all people, but only to the elect. The golden saying of the children also belongs here:

<AGtG 218>

John 3:16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God loved the "world", namely the fallen world, the world that had become hostile to God, the wicked and damned world, and he loved it "in such a way" that, etc. The Savior wants to say, as it were, "I myself must marvel at the greatness of God's love; who would think that God so loved the world? Consider this too, it means "gave"; the Son of God has therefore already been given to the whole world; the whole world has not received him, but he has been given to it. So whoever receives Christ in faith does not presume anything, no! he only takes what has been given to him. So no matter how far a sinner may have fallen, he should not ask: "Yes, may I also take hold of it?" Of course you may; for the Son of God has already been given to you; and do you ask: why? our passage answers you: because God has given him to the world; for since you belong to the world, and God has given him to the world, he has also given him to you. Therefore I not only may, but I should and must grasp it for the salvation of my soul. There can never be any question as to whether a sinner may or may not access it; it goes without saying that he may. Indeed, it is a denial of the Gospel that the Methodists and the false pietists, for example, so often say: "Examine yourself to see whether you are allowed to take hold". This is proof that they have no real understanding of the gospel. You are not supposed to do something first so that your Savior can be given to you; you are only supposed to accept him who was given to you 1800 years ago, and if you do that, then you are ready at any moment to pass from time into blessed eternity. Another question is, of course, whether you can accept Christ!

Romans 11:32: "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.."

This is also a passage which Luther says is a real strengthening of the heart for all poor sinners. When the good Lord looked down on mankind after the fall, he found everything in unbelief according to this passage; but to what end did he allow this to serve him? It says: "that he might have mercy on all". What an unspeakable consolation! For this says: As certain as you are that you have been unbelieving until now, you can now also be certain that God wants to have mercy on you; for as far as the number of unbelievers goes according to our passage, so far goes the number of those on whom he wants to have mercy. No man need therefore despair of his salvation, for a man can go no further than to say, "I am an unbeliever. Well then, says God to such a one, if you realize with horror that you are still unbelieving, you are just the right man for me; for then you know that I want to save you; therefore believe, and you will be saved.

Let us now consider the passages which teach that whoever is condemned is not condemned because God does not want to save him, but only because he does not want to.

Matt. 23:37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you, how often have I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling."

The Lord calls out these words with tears in his eyes. What passage could testify more clearly to our teaching?

Acts 7:51: "Ye stiff-necked and unchastened in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, even so do ye." **<AGtG 219>**

This passage also clearly shows what a false doctrine, which flies in the face of Holy Scripture, is that of the Calvinists ["**irresistable grace**"], that man does not lose God's grace because of his resistance, but must do what God has previously appointed him to do.

Proverbs 1:24-31: "Because I call, and ye refuse; I stretch out my hand, and no man hearkeneth; and forsake all my counsel, and will not my punishment: so will I laugh at your calamity, and mock you when it cometh, which ye fear, when it cometh upon you as a storm, which ye dread; and your calamity as a tempest, when trouble and distress cometh upon you. Then they will call to me, but I will not answer; they will seek me early and will not find me. Therefore, because they hastened the doctrine, and would not fear the Lord, and would not heed my counsel, and blasphemed all my judgment, they shall eat of the fruit of their doctrine, and be filled with their counsel."

This, too, is a powerful passage showing that man can resist, and that persistent resistance brings God's judgment upon him. Here we also have the interpretation of the word

"hardening". For if a person has despised all God's grace for a long time and has continued to regard God's repeated blows of grace to his heart as nothing, then God's judgment finally falls upon him, and this consists in the fact that God leaves him, namely no longer works in him. The consequence of this is that man now becomes ever more blind, ever harder, in one word, ever more hardened. God does nothing, but precisely because he does nothing for him, he hardens himself. Just as the sun does nothing to make it dark, but because it no longer shines, darkness falls: so it also becomes dark in our hearts when the eternal sun of God's grace no longer shines in them. He does not bring darkness into our hearts, but it is already in us, and it only disappears when the sun of Christ shines in us. But when man mocks God, consciously fights against him again and again, rejects his grace, then God says: Well, if you do not consider yourself worthy of eternal life, I will go away from you, — and now man falls down from step to step; for God does not want to force man. This, of course, is a great mystery, and no mortal can fathom why God does not force us; it is also incomprehensible why he did not force Adam and Eve to remain in his company, why he withdrew his hand from them at their first unfaithfulness; but it says: "Who are you, man, that you want to be right with God?" That is what you stand for: God acts justly, for he owes no man a special mercy apart from the grace he has freely promised to all men. No, whoever rejects all the impressions that God's Word makes on him, and even scoffs at them, saying, "Shall I also be a fool and a mocker?" let him cry out over himself when he goes to hell, for God earnestly wanted to save him, but he did not want to be saved.

Acts. 13:46: "But Paul and Barnabas said openly, The Word of God must first have been spoken to you; but if you reject it, and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, stand, we turn to the Gentiles."

This saying also shows that **God does not harden anyone who has not first hardened himself. <AGtG 220>**

Hosea 13:9: "Israel, thou hast brought thyself into trouble; for thy salvation is with me alone."

Here, too, we see that man is responsible for his own damnation and that God is not the author of it. It is true that man attains salvation only through the free mercy of God, but through his own fault he is lost. Blind reason may speculate about this riddle as much as it likes, but it will not solve it; nor is this necessary, for God will already open it up for us there.

Romans 9:22-23: "For this cause, when God would have shown wrath,

and made known his power, he hath borne with great patience the vessels of wrath prepared unto condemnation, that he might shew the riches of his glory in the vessels of mercy, which he hath prepared unto glory."

[Walther on translating:] Here the Greek text must be compared, for it shows all the more clearly that the Calvinists misuse this passage badly. This passage therefore also says: Christians, to whom the good Lord gives time in their earthly calling so that they can research His Word a little more than others, should not refrain from acquiring an interpretative Bible. They should therefore not be content with the Altenburg Bible alone, although this precious work, which is so wonderfully prepared for home worship, should certainly not be missing in any Christian home. But in addition to this edification Bible, an interpretation Bible is also extremely useful to a Christian. Sometimes Luther translated in such a way that he got the meaning of the original text quite right, but in such a way that a heretic could slip through with his false doctrine if he were only given the translation, whereas he would be caught if the actual words of the original were held out to him. [Walther on translating:] You can easily see this in America when two translators translate an English sentence into German. One will render individual expressions somewhat differently than the other, and yet the translation comes to one thing. While one translates quite well into German, but loses some of the English expression, the other sometimes renders the English expressions more completely and accurately, even if perhaps not in such good German. This is also the case here in our passage. Luther is a master translator like no other; but the German language sometimes forced him, if he wanted to render the main sense of the original text in good German, not to render the expressions used in the original language completely. That is why it is a good thing for Bible scholars to have an interpretation Bible which says: this is what it actually says in Hebrew or Greek; then everyone can say to himself at once: this word is what matters in your translation, this is what you have to pay attention to, or: here Luther has inserted a little word, not to change the sense, but to speak correctly in German; but since it is missing in the original, nothing can be proved from it. If one does not know this, then sometimes, though rarely, a heretic can say to us: "Oh, there is a word in your German Bible that is not in the Greek or Hebrew at all", and so he thinks he has refuted us. You should therefore buy such a work as the Weimar Bible, which has been republished. This priceless gem of our Lutheran church <AGtG 221> should not be missing in any home, especially among those who are capable of researching the Bible a little more than others. The use of this work, on which so many highly enlightened and gifted men, such as John

Gerhard, have labored for years in sour sweat, is of incalculable blessing. To dig in such a gold mine must be a true delight of the heart for a true Christian! How many new insights this book gives us into a large number of passages of Holy Scripture, over which a Christian rejoices like a child over the holy Christ. David says that he would rather have God's Word than many thousands of pieces of gold and silver; but of course he does not mean the mere outer letter without the right meaning, for if one does not have this, then one does not have the Word either, but only that in which it is contained. But it is the Christian's task to extract this [right] meaning from the Word of God and to refresh his soul with it. Every new insight into a passage of Scripture is a true ray of sunshine for a Christian, and anyone who does not rejoice in it is not a Christian. —

In our passage we now speak of vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy; of the former it is said in our German Bible that they were prepared for condemnation; of the latter it is said that God had prepared them for glory. In the Greek, however, it is more precisely said of the latter that God prepared them beforehand, not merely prepared them; but this word "beforehand" is not used of the vessels of wrath. This is very important! For from this we see that all who are saved are prepared for salvation by God before the foundation of the world, whereas the vessels of wrath, i.e. those who are damned, are also prepared for damnation, but firstly, not beforehand, and secondly, not by God, but by the devil and their own evil will. Here our doctrine shines forth completely. It would be blasphemy to say that the Holy Spirit has forgotten to add the words "before" and "from God" to the vessels of wrath, so that we have nothing to give to these different ways of speaking! He, who is eternal wisdom, knew perfectly well why he says "from God" one time and not the other, why he says "before" one time and not the other. It is also very important to know that verse 22 in the Greek does not contain the words "therefore there", but instead the words "but if [Εἰ ὅτι]". From this we see that when the apostle says in the previous verse, "Does not a potter have power to make one lump into a vessel for honor and another for dishonor?", he does not mean to say: and this is how God really does it, but that he only wants to reject human reason with its foolish objections, which so readily masters and even blasphemes God as soon as it cannot understand why he acts as he does. The apostle rather wants to say: As natural as we find it that a potter makes a soup tureen from clay, and from the same material a nasty vessel, which is placed in a corner so that it is not seen, and how no one confronts him about it: it is just as natural that whatever God may do, no one

may confront him about it. This thought, that God does not allow himself to be mastered by us, also precedes the 20th verse, where it expressly says: "Yes, dear man, who are you, then, that you want to be right with God?" No one should therefore be misled by the words "therefore there" into Calvinistic errors, since these words are not in the original text at all, and since the apostle does not say: as a potter makes vessels of honor and dishonor from a lump, so God also first made vessels of mercy and then vessels of wrath; but he continues: "But if God... bore the vessels of wrath with great patience?" So the apostle's meaning is: What will you, what can you say then? **<AGtG 222>**

The Formula of Concord also draws attention to this when it states:

"Thus the apostle distinguishes with special diligence the work of God, who alone makes vessels of honor, and the work of the devil and of man, who by inspiration of the devil, and not of God, has made himself a vessel of dishonor. For thus it is written in Romans 9: "God bore with great patience the vessels of wrath prepared for condemnation, that he might make known the riches of his glory in the vessels of mercy which he had prepared unto salvation". For the apostle clearly says that God bore the vessels of wrath with great patience, and does not say that he made them vessels of wrath, for if it had been his will, he would not have needed great patience. But that they are prepared for condemnation is the fault of the devil and men themselves, and not of God." (Repetition, Art. 11. p. 721.) [[FC SD XI 79-80](#)]

Our Luther, in particular, is suspected of teaching that when Scripture says that God hardens a person, this indicates that God Himself does evil. But Luther interprets such passages quite correctly. When Scripture says that God hardens a person, he says that it means nothing else than this: God no longer does to the sinner what he has previously done to him in vain. Thus Luther writes beautifully in 1522, three years before he wrote his book: "That Free Will is Nothing":

"Why do you argue about the evil that God does? I see that you have nothing else to do in such disruptions of Satan. God does not need a work, nor is it a work or a deed, but an omission of the work of God. For that is why we do evil, because He ceases to work in us and lets nature do what it does in its wickedness. Otherwise, where He Himself works, nothing but good follows. And this omission on God's part is called obduracy in Scripture. For evil cannot happen because it is nothing, but only comes about when nothing good happens or is prevented." (Letter to J. Lange, dated 1522. XV. Appendix. p. 230 f.)

So here Luther says in clear words: "The nonactivity of God is called hardening in Scripture." Furthermore, he writes: "Evil cannot happen because it is nothing." Evil is only a quality of certain things that are not evil in themselves. Man, for example, is not evil in himself, but he has evil in himself. Even the devil is not evil in himself, he is rather a creature of God, and in this respect he is something good; but he has an evil nature, namely, he is an enemy of God.

Let us now listen to what Calvin says. He teaches, as we know, that God first destined man to damnation and then to sin, so that sin is not actually the cause of damnation, but the means and the way for God to (supposedly) justly condemn the reprobate. He writes in his famous work "Institutes of the Christian Religion":

"Predestination we call the eternal counsel of God, by virtue of which he has determined with himself what should happen with respect to every man. For not all are created in the same proportion; but eternal life is preordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. **<AGtG 223>** Therefore, as each one is created for one or the other end, so we say that he is predestined either to life or to death." (*Institut. christianae rel. L. III, c. 21. § 5. Ed. Tholuck. p. 183.*)

Calvin further writes: "Since God foreknows what is to come in no other way than because he has so decreed that it shall come to pass, it is in vain that one argues about foreknowledge, since it is obvious that everything comes to pass because it is so decreed and willed. It is denied that it is expressly stated that it was decreed by God that Adam would be lost through his apostasy. As if the God of whom the Scriptures preach that he does what he wills should have created the noblest of his creatures for an uncertain purpose!..... That all mortals in the person of one man are doomed to eternal death, the Scriptures testify with a loud voice. Since this cannot be attributed to nature, it is quite clear that it came from the admirable counsel of God.....I further ask: Where did it come from that the fall of Adam plunged so many nations, together with their children, into eternal death without remedy, but because it so pleased God? Here the otherwise so loquacious tongues must fall silent. I confess that it is a ghastly counsel; but no one can deny that God foreknew what course man would take before he created him, and that he foreknew this because he had decreed it beforehand in his counsel." (*Institutes L. III. c. 23. § 6 sq. p. 151.*)

Note this: Calvin himself calls the counsel of God, which

he teaches, a terrible one; thus he condemns himself. From God, who is eternal love, comes no horrible counsel; rather, horrible things come only from the devil.

Furthermore, Calvin writes: "Those whom God created for the reproach of life and the destruction of death, that they might become instruments of his wrath and examples of his severity, he deprives, in order that they may attain their end, sometimes of the possibility of hearing his word, sometimes he blinds and hardens them more by the preaching of it." (*Institutes. etc. L. c. c. 24. § 12. p. 166.*)

He further writes: "The objection is made that men were not predestined by God's decree to the corruption which is now claimed to be the cause of damnation. If, therefore, they are lost in their corruption, they suffer punishment for nothing else than for the misfortune into which Adam fell by predestination and into which he plunged his descendants with him. Is not he therefore unjust who mocks his creatures so cruelly? I confess, indeed, that all the children of Adam have fallen into the miserable condition into which they are now banished, by the will of God; and this is just what I said at the beginning, that one must always go back at last to the mere good pleasure of the divine will, the cause of which lies hidden in him." (*Instit. etc. L. III. c. 23. § 4. p. 149.*) **<AGtG 224>**

Likewise, "That the reprobate do not obey the word of God revealed to them, would be justly attributed to their wickedness and sinfulness, if it were only added at the same time that they are devoted to this wickedness, because they are awakened by God's righteous but unsearchable judgment to glorify his honor by their damnation." (*Institut. etc. L. III. e. 24. § 14. p. 168.*)

Further: "By the promise God wills nothing else than that His mercy be open to all those who desire and ask for it; which no others do than those whom He has enlightened. But he enlightens those whom he has predestined to salvation. . . But why does he call them all? That the consciences of the pious may the more assuredly rely thereon, seeing that there is no distinction of sins, if faith be present." (*Institutes etc. L. III. c. 24. § 17. p. 170.*)

It is terrible to see how Calvin perverts the clearest passages on the universality of God's grace. Thus he writes:

"One adduces the passage Ezek. 18:23, that God does not desire the death of the sinner, but rather that he should repent and live.... . If one seeks the true meaning of the prophet, he only wants to give hope of forgiveness to those who repent. ... Experience teaches, however, that God wills the conversion of those whom he invites to himself in such a way that he does not touch the hearts of all." (*Instit. etc. L. III. c. 24. § 15. p. 168 sq.*)

Similarly, on 1 Tim. 2:4, he writes: "The passage

of Paul 1 Tim. 2:4 is cited, where he teaches that God wills that all men should be helped. . . I answer that God thereby indicates nothing else than that he has not closed the way to salvation to any class of men." (*Instit. etc. L. III. c. 24. § 16, p. 169.*)

He means, therefore, that by these words Paul only means to say that God has among all classes, among tailors, cobblers, Frenchmen, Germans, etc., men whom he wishes to save. people whom he wants to save.

Furthermore: "It is also said, not without reason, that (according to Rom. 9:22-23, the basic text) the vessels of wrath are directed to condemnation, but the vessels of mercy are directed to the front; because in this way he (Paul) ascribes and attributes the glory of salvation to God, and casts the guilt of perishing on those who bring it on themselves through their own will. But though I grant them that he softens the severity of the first part by the different mode of expression, yet it is in no way consistent to ascribe the 'preparation' for damnation to anything but the secret counsel of God." (*Institutes etc. L. III. c. 23. § 1. p. 147.*) **<AGtG 225>**

Calvin thus asks nothing of the generality of God's grace after all the bright, sunlit passages; whatever may be written in the Bible, he still maintains that God has, according to an unconditional counsel, chosen some to salvation and destined others to damnation, and that Scripture must be interpreted according to this theory of his. His intimate friend, Theodor Beza, who later continued his work and who is called the "Pope of the Reformation", writes in the same way:

"Paul answers Rom. 9-13. concerning the reprobate, or those whom God hates even before they are born, and whom he has appointed to destruction without regard to previous unworthiness." (*N. T. 1598. Ad I. c. II, fol. 67.*) "They speak with Paul who say that some are created by God for a just destruction, and who take offense at this formula, betray their ignorance." (*L. c. ad v. 21. fol. 69.*)

Let us now listen to another passage from the Presbyterian Confession. Alongside the Dutch Reformed and a group of Baptists, they are the church community here in America that still adheres strictly to Calvin's teachings (although there are also Presbyterians of the newer school who are more Arminian). The Presbyterians make the following statement in their symbolic book:

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated to everlasting life, and others foreordained to eternal death.... Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the

elect only. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice." ([*The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Philadelphia, 1840. p. 23. 25. f.*](#)) —

Perhaps one will have wondered that in our discussions Luther has been mentioned so little, contrary to our usual usage; but there is a good reason for this. That he was not a Pelagian; that he taught that we have to thank God's mercy alone for our election, the whole world believes; we need not prove that to anyone. But many people now do not want to believe that he taught the universality of God's grace for the whole world of sinners; on the contrary, they want to make him a Calvinist. Therefore, this time we limited ourselves mainly to quoting such passages from him which clearly show that he does not hold Calvin's doctrine. For example, he says:

"The cause why God rejects this or that person should not be laid on our Lord God, but on man; the blame should be laid on him, not on God. For the promises are *universal* (general), given and promised to all men, no one excepted, be he who he may, without distinction. Now God wills that all men should be saved; therefore the fault is not of our Lord God, who promises it, and what he promises he will faithfully and surely keep, but of our own, who will not believe it." (*Table Talk*. Erlanger Ed., vol. 60, 163)

Furthermore, he writes in a concern, which Bugenhagen and others also signed: **<AGtG 226>** "Caspar Cruziger ... indicated to me how he ... understood from your friends that you (are) entangled with strange thoughts concerning the providence of God.... Such would be your propositions and complaints that God Almighty knows from eternity which are to be saved or will be saved, whether they are dead, alive or yet to come. This is true and should and must be admitted, since he knows all things and nothing is hidden from him; because he has counted and knows the drops in the sea, the stars in the sky, the roots of all trees, branches, twigs, leaves, and all the hairs of men. From this you finally conclude that you do whatever you want, good or evil, God knows whether you shall be saved or not. This is true; and yet you think more of damnation than of salvation, and hesitate about it, not knowing God's disposition towards you; therefore you become very fainthearted and completely deluded. Therefore, as a servant of my dear Lord Jesus Christ,

I am writing you this report and consolation so that you may know how God Almighty is disposed towards you, whether you are destined for salvation or damnation. God Almighty, even though he knows all things and all works and thoughts in all creatures must be done according to his will, *juxta decretum voluntatis suae* (according to the counsel of his will), yet his earnest will and opinion, also command, is determined from eternity to make all men blessed and partakers of eternal joys, as Ezek. 18:23, where he says: "God does not will the death of the sinner, but that he should repent and live. Therefore, since he wants to save and have sinners who live and hover everywhere under the wide, high heaven, you should not separate yourselves and separate yourselves from the grace of God through your foolish thoughts inspired by the devil. For his mercy stretches out from the beginning to the end, from noon to midnight, Psalm 103:12, and overshadows all who are converted, who truly repent, and who partake of his mercy and seek help. For 'he is rich in all who call on him' (Rom. 10:12). This requires a real, true faith that casts out such fear and despair, which is our righteousness, as Rom. 3:22 says: 'The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, who is in all and above all men. Remember these words: *'In omnes, super omnes'*" (in all and above all), "whether you are not also among them, and one of them, who are under the field of sinners. As your heart will convince you and feel it in your conscience; for you want to rise too high and flutter, and give room and place to unholy thoughts and cast God's word to the wind.... . "Come, all you who labor and are weighed down, and I will give you rest. He does not just say: "Come", but: "All", excluding no one, whoever he wants, even if he is the very worst, for the best will be the last, Matt. 21:31. **<AGtG 227>** Harlots and knaves must do it, the worldly pious do not belong here, those who wear clean clothes. But since they are all to come, none excepted, be he equal or think what he will, run along with them and jump in too, do not willfully stay behind with the lost crowd, do not neglect yourselves so carelessly and willfully." (Consolation against the temptation of God's providence. 1528. X, 2036 ff. [[StL 10, 1737 ff.](#); not in *Am. Ed.*; see [Currie translation here.](#)])

Note the words: "that God Almighty may know from eternity which shall be saved or not." Luther famously writes in his preface to the letter to the Romans: "In the 9th, 10th and 11th chapters he teaches about the eternal providence of God, from which it originally flows who should believe or not believe." Some think that Luther is teaching here that God has decreed in his dispensation not only who should believe, but also who should not believe. But our passage shows

us that he understands the word "should believe" in the sense of "will believe", just as he himself does not write in the Latin translation: *qui credere debent*, or *qui credant oportet*, but: *qui credituri sunt*. In former times it often happened that the word "shall" was taken for "become", just as the English *shall* has the same meaning. Indeed, even now in German one still says: "das soll wohl so sein", for: that will probably be so.

Furthermore, Luther writes: "God does not grieve over the death of the sinner, which he works, but grieves over the misery and death that he finds in man, and would gladly take it away. . . He wills that all men should be saved 1 Timothy 2:4, because he came to all by the word of the Spirit; and it is the fault of our will that we do not receive him, as the Lord Christ says in Matthew 23:37: 'How often have I wanted to gather your children together, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you were not willing!'" (That Free Will is Nothing. XVIII, 2235 f.)

This passage is the key to Luther's important, so often misunderstood book "That Free Will is Nothing". It shows us that he teaches the exact opposite of what Calvin claims. Incidentally, when he says: "God does not grieve over the death of the sinner which he works", he naturally means this: that he is said to work it.

Furthermore, Luther writes: "Human reason conceives an unequal will of God, as if God were like a tyrant who has some companions whose nature he allows to please him, be it good or not good, and on the other hand he hates the others, they do as they please. So we should not think of God's will. This saying is eternally true in Psalm 5:5: "You are not a God who pleases ungodliness or sin. For though he accepts the saints who still have sin in them, he does not accept them without a great payment; Christ has to become the sacrifice for which God **<AGtG 228>** accepts and spares us, as long as we remain in faith and if we are in faith." (Concerning the Sins of the Elect. A. 1536. X, 2001) —

Some maintain that Luther also rejected the doctrine that man can resist God; but he interprets, among other things, the passage John 7:17 thus: "This is His (the Father's) will, that I (Christ) teach and you listen to Me and believe. If you do this and do not resist me, the Holy Spirit will enlighten you and teach you that this is the Father's will in Christ, that he sent the Son to be heard." (On John 7:17. VII, 2255.)

To cite here only one theologian of the 17th century, Quenstedt writes: "That the cause why some believe is not in man, but in God, this agrees with the word of God, Ephes. 2:8. Phil. 2:13; but what is inferred from this, namely, that the cause

why others persist in unbelief is likewise in God, this, as it is contrary to the Scriptures 1 Tim. 2:4. 2 Pet. 3:9, etc., does not follow from that sentence either. For the lack of faith is solely of man, who by stubborn resistance and rejection of the means prevents God from bringing it forth in the will of man. The cause that some do not believe is therefore not in God, but in unbelieving men themselves." (*Theol. did.-polem. III, 59. s.*)

It is probably not necessary to cite more testimonies from our old dogmatists to confirm our thesis, for the whole world knows that the Lutheran Church agrees with them. But it will not be superfluous to show how differently Luther and Calvin interpret precisely those passages which seem to some to contain the Calvinist doctrine. For these passages show most clearly that Luther was free from all Calvinism, since otherwise he would undoubtedly have interpreted these passages Calvinistically, just as Calvin actually uses them to confirm his error. To show this, we repeat here a quotation which was previously communicated in our Synod in 1859. It reads:

"Here is another example of how different Luther's doctrine of predestination is from Calvin's. To the words of the Lord Matt. 11:25: 'I praise thee, Father and Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes,' Calvin adds by way of explanation: 'That some come to faith, others remain blinded and hardened, this happens through his free election, because he draws some while he passes by others, and makes a distinction only among men whose nature is the same. *)' [*] S. J. Calvini in N. T. Commentarii. Ed. Tholuck. Vol. I., p. 274.] On the same words, however, Luther writes: 'Christ here boasts that God is right in hiding his secrets from these wise and prudent men, because they themselves want to be above, not below God. Not that he hides it in fact and truth or in will, since he is authorized to preach it publicly under all heavens and in all lands; but that he has mentioned such a **<AGtG 229>** sermon, from which the wise and prudent by nature have an abhorrence and which is hidden from them through their own fault, because they do not want to have it. (VII, 201.) Further on the words of Matthew 13:13 and 15: 'Therefore I speak to them in parables. For with seeing eyes they do not see, etc. For this people's heart is hardened, and their ears hear evil, and their eyes slumber, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, that I may help them' — Calvin writes

about these words: 'He says that he speaks darkly to the multitude, because they are not partakers of the true light. However, when he says that the blind are covered with a blanket so that they remain in their darkness, he does not attribute the guilt of this matter to them, but rather praises the grace given to the apostles, because it is not equally common to all. Thus he gives no cause except the secret counsel of God, although the reason for it is hidden from us, but known to Himself... For this purpose the Lord actually wants his word to be preached so that people's hearts may be renewed and they may be reconciled to him. But with regard to the rejected, Isaiah proclaims here, on the contrary, that the stony hardness remains in them, so that they do not receive mercy, and that the word is deprived of its effect for them, so that it does not soften their hearts to repentance.' Concerning the same words Luther writes: 'These words: Lest they one day see with their eyes . . . and be converted, that I may help them, seem to have been spoken out of envy, as if he did not want them to see and be helped. But this whole passage must be read one after the other in such a context that it is like a chain, as follows: This people has a hardened heart, and ears that hear evil, and closed eyes, etc., hence it is that they cannot be converted and cannot be helped. As if to say, the hardening of their hearts stands in the way, that they cannot see and that I cannot help them. I would gladly help them, he says, therefore I send my Son; but the hardening of their hearts stands in the way of my will and their salvation. VII, 295." ([The Lutheran Doctrine of Justification, a paper, etc. p. 49 ff. \[1859\]](#))

(Luther famously dictated this interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew to a young professor so that it would be a model of correct scriptural interpretation for him).

Let us then not only use the quotes from Luther to strengthen our faith, but let us also not forget that those numerous passages from Calvin show us what it looks like in our own hearts. For this man's terrible speeches are nothing other than the products of an unenlightened reason, which we all have by nature. We too naturally think like Calvin. Suppose, for example, that five hundred people have heard a sermon **<AGtG 230>** and only a few have allowed themselves to be captured by God's Word. Now it is certain that no one can accept the Word by his own efforts, but rather that God must open the heart of each one. So what does our reason think? It thinks: This can have no other reason than that God forces his word on some, forces them to accept it, while he passes by others and does not want to convert them. This is the diabolical logic that

dwells within us. And how often do we encounter it! Don't many people say or think when they sin? I can't help it, God made me this way once? Even Adam and Eve hinted after the fall into sin that God himself was actually to blame for it. Even from the mouths of people who want to be considered pious, one often hears sayings like this: I can't help it if I don't get better, the Savior doesn't make me better. Sometimes people also pretend that they cannot fall from grace at all, while they have been living in terrible mortal sin for years. Incidentally, the Calvinist error basically dominates the whole of modern pantheistic philosophy. After Calvin had made God the author of sin, it was only one step further to deny the existence of sin altogether; for since God cannot do sin, reason must further conclude that sin is not really sin at all, but only a natural process. Thus we see in recent philosophy how reason, without God's Word, sinks step by step deeper and deeper into the abyss; first God is made the author of sin, then denied, and the world is made God.

Thesis V. *)

*) Here follows the minutes of Pastor Hein's 10th session, which still deals with Thesis V. and concludes the doctrinal proceedings. D. S.

It teaches that "concerning that which is revealed in Christ, God still keeps much of this mystery secret and hidden, and reserves it for His wisdom and knowledge alone, which we should not investigate, nor follow our thoughts in it, nor conclude or ponder, but keep to the revealed Word; which is a reminder of the greatest need, for our ingenuity is always much more interested in this than in what God has revealed to us in his Word, because we cannot reconcile it together, nor are we commanded to do so." ([FC SD XI 52-53](#))

Rom. 11:33-36; 9:18-21.

The following comment was made on this: As already mentioned, this is the peculiarity of the Lutheran church, that where God has left a gap, it does not bridge it with reason. If it cannot rhyme two doctrines with each other, it leaves them unrhymed with each other and believes God and takes reason captive to the obedience of Christ, as is required of every Christian. Now it cannot be denied that in this doctrine many things degenerate which we cannot possibly rhyme with one another. Thus Scripture teaches that whoever is elected to eternal life is not so

<AGtG 231> because he has done anything

for the sake of which God should or would have chosen him, but rather that God first had to remove the reluctance in him. And yet it also teaches that those who are rejected are rejected because of their own sin and guilt. Who can rhyme with this? Reason will say: How is it possible that these are rejected because of their sin, since God could have taken away their rebellion? for that is not the cause of election, that the elect had less hard hearts. But we believe both, for both are revealed in Holy Scripture. Furthermore, God created all people for eternal life, and yet he allowed Adam and Eve to be tempted and overcome by the devil. Reason says: If God had sincerely willed that men should be eternally saved, he could not have allowed the devil to trap us. Or, says reason, if God wished to save me, how could it be possible that he created them knowing that they would fall? Or, why did he not destroy them again immediately after the fall, so that they could not fall into hell? We cannot make sense of it. Scripture teaches that God loved all people and wants to save them. And yet we find that whole nations have had no Word of God for centuries, and therefore have not been able to reject it directly. For centuries they have sat in darkness and the shadow of death. Furthermore, some are born among false believers, while others are born among true believers. Some have many hindrances to coming to Christ, while others have many facilitators. Some God bears with great patience for years, converts them and finally saves them, others he takes out of their course of sin in the prime of life and plunges them into hell. All mysteries that reason cannot solve! If we want to follow it and believe, we become blasphemers. The false church also blasphemes God in fact and says: "God does not want to save everyone; that is why he gives one person a falsified word, another a pure one; one person godless parents, another pious ones; one person unbelieving teachers, another believing ones. Still others say: It is because some are better than others. Or they say: The Gentiles did not receive the Word because God foreknew that they would not believe it; or: They will be saved because they did not have the Word. Yes, people also want to help themselves by teaching that even after death there is still a possibility of conversion. All this is nothing but the thoughts of men! Our Lutheran Church does not accept this; it does not want to mix human thoughts into the divine Word. That is why it says in our Thesis: "It teaches that 'about that which is not commanded us'." (see above.)

That there are such mysteries in this doctrine, we see from the fact that

the apostle Paul, after dealing with the election of grace, finally exclaims:

Rom. 11:33-36, "O what depth of riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

After he has finished this teaching, he feels as if he is standing before an abyss. Then he looks into it and bursts into words: O what a depth! You can't see to the bottom. So he continues:

"How utterly incomprehensible are his judgments, and his ways unsearchable! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has given Him anything beforehand that will be repaid to Him? For from Him, and through Him, and in Him, are all things. To Him be glory for ever and ever! Amen."

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The apostle Paul therefore also answers those who claim that what he teaches is completely contrary to reason, which must believe that God is an unjust God,

Romans 9:18-21: "He therefore has mercy on whom he wills and rejects whom he wills. So you say to me: What does he owe us? Who can resist his will? Yes, dear man, who are you that you want to be right with God? Does a work say to its master, "Why do you make me like this? Has not a potter power to make one lump into a barrel for honor and another for dishonor?"

He is not saying that God wants to act as arbitrarily as a potter. But he is saying that just as you are not allowed to ask a potter why he acts in this way, you are not allowed to take God to school and say: God is not allowed to act in this way. No, bow down and believe both that God is eternal love and that he acts rightly, just as he acts.

Hence the Formula of Concord also says: "When we see that God gives his word in one place and does not give it in another, takes it away from one place and lets it remain in another; item, one is hardened, blinded, given to a wrong mind, another, though in the same guilt, is converted again, etc.: in these and similar questions Paul shows us a certain goal, how far we should go; namely, that we should recognize God's judgment in one part. For it is a well-deserved punishment of sins when God punishes a country or people for despising his word in such a way that it also affects their descendants, as can be seen in the case of the Jews; in this way God shows his seriousness to his own people and countries, which we all deserve and are worthy of, because we behave badly against God's word and often grieve the Holy Spirit."

Doesn't our dear Germany come to mind? How splendidly

it stood there more than a hundred years ago! Now most of the pulpits are occupied by seducers. There one hears of us. But we must be an abominable sect. Beware of them, they call out to those who are preparing to move to this country. So the poor people come over here and think: Just not to the Missouri Synod! We must see this, and cannot comprehend that God can allow the poor simple souls to be so shamefully deceived and defrauded, and that we, who are no better, possess the pure Gospel. If we did not have the doctrine that it is all grace, we could not believe that we had the pure doctrine. We would deserve the same punishment as those who languish under false prophets. But it strengthens our heart, it makes us happy to know that this is God's counsel of grace. But we should not let this make us proud and secure, but rather think: O how great is God's goodness and mercy towards us! We deserved to have false teachers, yes, to have been born <AGtG 233> among the Gentiles, and now he has given us the precious treasure of his pure word! — But this is how God has done it as long as the world has existed; he has acted according to grace, not according to merit.

The Formula of Concord continues: "That we may live in the fear of God and recognize and praise God's goodness without and against our merit in and with us, to whom he gives and leaves his word, whom he does not harden and reject. For because our nature is corrupted by sin, we are worthy and guilty of God's wrath and condemnation, and when he gives it by grace, we often reject it and make ourselves unworthy of eternal life. Act. 13, 46. And such his righteous, well-deserved judgment he allows to be seen in many countries, peoples and persons, so that, if we are held against them and compared with them, we may learn all the more diligently to recognize and praise God's pure, undeserved grace in the vessels of mercy. For those are not wronged who are punished and receive the wages of their sins; but in the others, when God gives and preserves his there and thereby enlightens, converts and preserves people, God praises his pure grace and mercy without their merit. If we go this far in this article, we remain on the right path, as it is written in Hos. 13:9: 'Israel, thou art destroyed, the iniquity is thine: but my mercy is pure to save thee. But what in this disputation wants to run too high and out of these bounds, we should put our finger on the mouth with Paulo, remember and say: "Who are you, O man, who want to be right with God? Romans 9:20 For that we cannot, nor ought not, to search out and reason out everything in this article, is testified by the great apostle Paul, who, when he has much discoursed on this article from the revealed word of God, as soon as he comes to indicate what God has reserved of this mystery of his hidden wisdom, he presses it down and cuts it off with

the following words: 'O what a depth of riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments and unsearchable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Rom. 11:33, that is, apart from and above what he has revealed to us in his word.'" (Repetition. Art. 11. p. 716 f.)

Already at that time, when the Formula of Concord came out, it was reproached by the Calvinists that it had no doctrine of the counsel of damnation; it had Pelagian doctrine and placed the difference in man. To this Chemnitz, Kirchner and Selnecker replied in the "Apology to the Christian Book of Concord" thus:

"Nor does the Christian Book of Concord deny that there is reprobation in God, or that God should not reprobate some, nor does it go against Luther's saying, since in his *servo arbitrio* *) [*] That is, in Luther's writing: "That Free Will is Nothing."] **<AGtG 234>** he writes against Erasmus, that this is the highest order of faith, to believe that God is nevertheless the most good, who saves so few; but that he does not ascribe to God the real cause of such rejection or damnation, which is the doctrine of the contrary (the Calvinists); and that, when it comes to this disputation, all men should put their finger on their mouths and say earnestly with the Apostle Paul Rom. 11: 'They are broken because of their unbelief', and Rom. 6: 'The wages of sin is death'; on the other hand, when it is asked why the Lord God does not convert all men by his Holy Spirit and make them believers, etc., we should speak with the apostle: 'How incomprehensible are his judgments and unsearchable his ways', but by no means attribute to God the Lord himself the willing and real cause of the rejection or condemnation of the impenitent."

It is true that God could convert all people if he wanted to. As well as he created a pious heart in Adam and Eve, he could also transform our hearts by force. Why he does not do this, no one can say. All kinds of reasons are given, but they are not found in the Bible. They say: Man is not an animal, so God must treat him as a free being. But that is not true! Man is not free. Only the first human beings were free, because God had created this for them. It remains a mystery to us why God acts in this way. Those who want to solve it without the clear word do not honor him. Where God solves a riddle for us, we accept it; where he does not solve it, we do not say: That may be so; but rather: We do not know: We do not know. A day is coming when God will make it clear to us. Then we will see with delight what glorious counsel God has taken and how gloriously he has carried it out. The elect will then sing

song of praise and say: "God, you are righteous, praise be to your name forever and ever!" And none of those who go to hell will be able to accuse God of injustice; they too must confess: "Yes, God, you are righteous!" The rich man does not accuse God of being in hell. He knows that he is in this place of torment because he deserves nothing else.

The aforementioned *Apology* etc. continues: "But they press upon us and say: Because you confess the election of the elect, you must also confess the other, that in God himself is a cause of reprobation from eternity, even apart from sin, etc. — So we say that we are by no means intending to make God the cause of reprobation (which is not really in God, but in sin) and to ascribe to Himself the cause of the condemnation of the ungodly, but want to remain with the saying of the prophet Hosea chapter 13, where God says: "Israel, you bring yourself into misfortune, your salvation is with me alone". Nor, as we have heard above from Luther, do we want to inquire about the dear God if he is hidden and has not revealed himself. For it is too high for us and we cannot comprehend it. The more we enter into this, the further we get from the dear God and the more we doubt his most gracious will." (*Apologia*, etc., written by Chemnitz, Selnecker and Kirchner. Heidelberg, 1583. fol. 206. f.)

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The newer theologians say that what the Formula of Concord has written about the election of grace is worthy of all honor; through it this doctrine has indeed been further developed and much has been opened up; but it has nevertheless put forward two propositions that could not be united; therefore it would be the task of our time to mediate these two opposites. But they will not glue together what God has shattered for our reason. Even two recent theologians in Germany have admitted that the glory of the Lutheran Church lies precisely in the fact that it accepts what it finds in God's Word, and if Holy Scripture does not rhyme with something, it leaves it unrhymed.

Thus Guericke writes: "Both (the Lutheran and Reformed Church) declare decisively that whoever becomes unsaved is rejected only through his own guilt as a sinner *) [*] Many Reformed, however, claim at the same time that God has rejected the rejected not because of their unworthiness, but out of mere good pleasure]; But while the Lutheran Church remains with this sentence in modest resignation, the Reformed Church extends it ruthlessly to all the unsaved in a consistent argumentation of reason — indeed, in unbending, rigid consistency of reason that does not bow even to the Word of God. Whoever becomes unsaved becomes so through his own fault; but this fault only takes place because God does not also here strongly communicate his grace; but God does not also here

strongly communicate his grace because he has decreed this damnation from eternity. The Lutheran Church recognizes from this that it is not for mortals to want to penetrate this mystery of divine justice, and in humble submission refrains from answering a question which, as it does not conceal, could only be answered blasphemously by the weak mortal. The blessed, it teaches, is saved by God's grace alone (in Christ) without any merit of his own; the unblessed is unblessed through his own fault, because he continually resists divine grace; why the resistance of the former to divine grace is finally broken, but not that of the latter, is not the merit of the former, but the fault of the latter;".

Guericke declares the doctrine as we have taught it to be the doctrine of the Lutheran Church, and praises it highly for not wanting to build a bridge over an abyss over which God has not built one, but says: If you want to cross it, you cannot walk over it, but must leap over it with faith. That is what we do, and thus do not fall into it. Calvin, on the other hand, builds a bridge, and those who cross it fall into the abyss. We Lutherans want nothing to do with this paper bridge.

Guericke continues: "The underlying inner disposition of man, however, if it is good, comes only from God, but if it is evil, not from God; but man with his stupid understanding, clouded by sin, **<AGtG 236>** is not able to explore this deepest depth of the divine workshop, and it is greater wisdom to recognize the divine mystery than to solve it blasphemously." (General Christian Symbolism). (General Christian Symbolism. p. 294. ff.)

Thomasius also gives our Lutheran Church the honors in this respect After he has explained what Holy Scripture says about election, he continues:

"Just with this we have arrived at one of the greatest difficulties, which perhaps cannot be solved at all: On the one hand, God's eternal will of love in Christ, that all may be helped without exception; on the other hand, the fact that this will is not accomplished in all.... This problem" (this as yet unsolved task) "is of course easily solved if one either accepts with Augustine and Calvin a twofold absolute decree of election and reprobation, or if one allows with Pelagius the eternal counsel of grace to be conditioned by the divine foreknowledge of the good behavior of human freedom. Both are just as simple and easy — as contrary to Scripture." (Christ's Person and Work. 1875. I, 426. f.)

Praise be to God, we have no doctrine so contrary to Scripture in our Book of Concord. But let us not forget this either: To whom much

is given, much will be required. Therefore, let us also faithfully hold on to this unspeakable treasure! Above all, we preachers must treat this teaching with fear and trembling when we present it to the church of God, and call upon God on our knees that no straw may enter into this heavenly wheat. But the dear churches must praise God when their preachers proclaim the eternal counsel of God's grace. They should not come to it with reason, but test everything according to God's Word, and when they see that it is God's eternal wisdom, they should accept it gratefully and then apply it in joy and sorrow, in happiness and misery, in life and death. Thus this teaching will be a lamp for them which will not go out even in the night of death, but will rather shine very brightly so that the transition from time to eternity will be a triumphal procession of the soul from the valley of sorrow to the eternal heavenly kingdom.

In order to bring this important subject to a close, it was decided that at the next Synodal Assembly the remaining Thesis VI would be dealt with first, and then points 10 and 11 of the main lecture would be discussed.