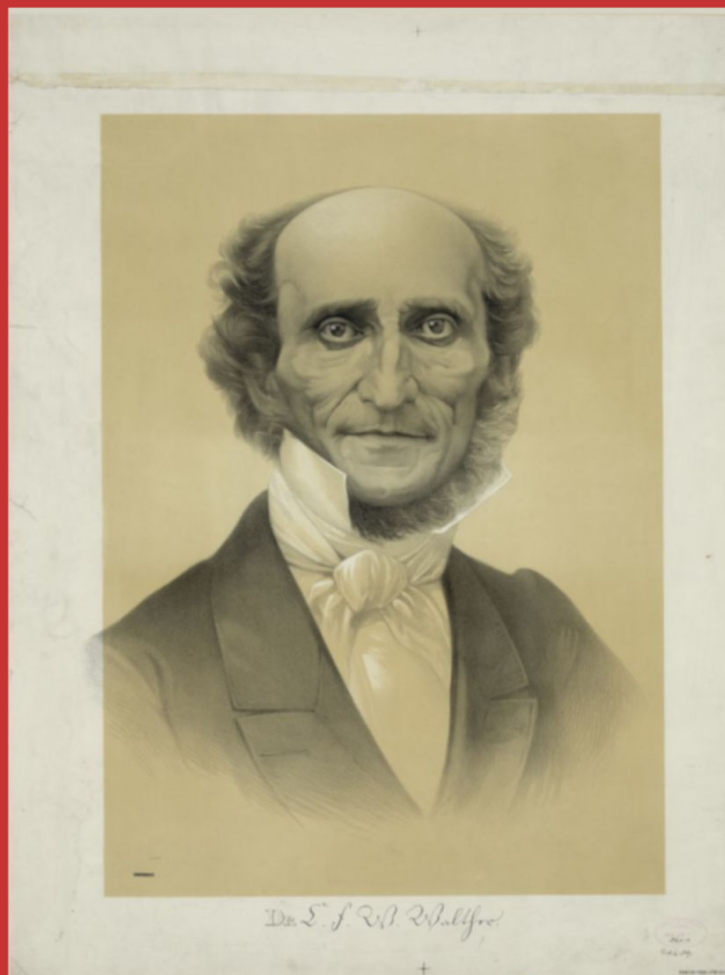


**Zöckler, Krauth, Mann,
Schaeffer, Spaeth & Jacobs**

The Missouri Doctrine of Election



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The Missouri Doctrine of Election

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The Missouri Doctrine Of Election By Prof. Otto Zöckler

Also

The Controversy On Predestination by Charles Krauth

And

Concerning the Dogma of Predestination by Charles William
Schaeffer, William Julius Mann, Adolph Spaeth, and Henry Eyster
Jacobs

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The Missouri Doctrine Of Election By Dr. Otto Zöckler.

From "Evangelische Kirchenzeitung". Translated by A. Martin.

A DECADE has fully passed since the outbreak of the eventful controversy which has divided the Lutherans of North America into two camps. Dr. Walther showed already in the years of 1864—70, a leaning to the Calvinistic doctrines; especially to the sentence that we dare not say: that God elected His own in view of their faith (*intuitu fidei*). The controversy itself broke out first in the year 1872, when "*Lehre und Wehre*," the organ of the Missourians, (p. 205) directed a sharp attack upon Philippi of Rostock, accusing him of Synergism on account of his treatment of the doctrine of conversion in his Dogmatics. Then it was that the theologians of the Iowa Synod (the Profs. Fritschell) raised a protest against the teachings of Dr. Walther (*Theologische Monatshefte*, 1872—73); in consequence of which the Missourians charged them not only with Synergism in general, but with "Gross Synergism." Since that time the violence of the controversy has increased from year to year, and in the latter years of the past decade has produced such extreme excitement, and such a complete separation of all the Lutheran elements of the west, that the Synodical Conference previously under the control of Missouri, has been dashed into ruins.

An important feature in the process of decomposition and division is the case of Asperheim, in the year 1878, which is the first step towards the separation of the Norwegian Synod from Missouri, with which it had been most closely allied. Prof. Asperheim of the Theological Seminary at Madison, Wis., had ventured to assert in a pastoral conference, that "the Missouri Synod, like all things human, has its weaknesses and imperfections. Being called to account for this assertion, he criticized—besides a certain traditionalism in Exegesis, and a tendency to many dogmatic extremes, e.g. the usury question, especially the erroneous

development in the doctrine of election. He declared that the Missourians exclude faith as a principle of God's election—i. e. they denied that the *intuitu fidei* is a determining factor in the election of grace. Because he maintained this declaration he was compelled by the influence of Missouri, to resign his Professorship and to withdraw from the Synod. In answer to voices outside of Missouri which were raised against this abuse of ecclesiastical power exercised against a worthy and able teacher of theology, the "*Lehre und Wehre*" declared officially, that the said declaration of Prof. Asperheim against the doctrine of election is enough to exclude him from church fellowship; that this is "so blasphemous, heretical and terrible a doctrine" (!) that on account of it church discipline was exercised with perfect right.

Other misunderstandings of divers sorts arose, and in the course of 1879 and 1880, led to the disruption of the Synodical Conference. The Ohio Synod, in complete unity and solid ranks, led by the theologians of Capital University at Columbus—Loy, Stellhorn, Schütte, etc., withdrew from church fellowship with Missouri, and the Norwegian Synod by a majority vote of its ministers and congregations, did the same thing. At the head of the latter Synod Prof. Schmidt of Madison, until 1879 a most violent antagonist of the least deviation from Missouri doctrines, but since then—in his publication "*Altes und Neues*"—a sharp critic of what he calls the "Missourian Crypto Calvinism," contends against the doctrines of Dr. Walther. He is a decided defender of the anti predestinarian, mild standpoint of universal grace which the above mentioned theologians of Ohio, as well as the Profs. Fritschel at the head of the Synod of Iowa maintain, which is reviled by the Missourians as *synergistic*, or Pelagian, and even rationalistic.

Both sides contend in great excitement, but there is no doubt that the opponents of Missouriism are decidedly worthy of the sympathy which is universally extended to them from the Lutherans of Germany, both in respect to the tone of their polemic as well as their firm adherence to the true Lutheran doctrines. For some years the Missouri polemic has been regaling itself with measureless extremes which make a calm consideration of the questions at issue really impossible. Among the theologians of Germany who are reproached by the Missourians (in the "*Lehre und Wehre*," and "*Freikirche Lutheraner*") with synergistic heresy, or even worse, with theological conceit inconsistent with pure doctrine

(*Aftertheologenthum*) are such men as Philippi, Muenkel, Harms, Frank, Luthardt and the present editor of the "*Evangelische Kirchenzeitung*." Even the deceased Stroebel, at one time the only German theologian whose Lutheranism Walther's organs acknowledged as genuine, must submit to the posthumous accusation of "Synergistic, Semi pelagianism." In fact, all the opponents of the dogma of election in the Missouri sense, on both sides of the Atlantic, are "refined or gross synergistic heretics." (*Freikirche*, July 15, 1881). We "have attacked not the topmost points and branches of the saving truth;" no, but we "have laid violent hands upon the very first doctrines of the foundation of the Christian faith." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1882, p. 90). It is possible that in isolated instances a North American opponent of Missouriism struck a similarly exaggerated key. A pamphlet published three years ago in Oshkosh, Wis., entitled "*Lutherthum oder Calvinismus*," by Antibarbarus Logikus, is, in our opinion, not altogether free from it. But the chief theological organs of the Anti-Missourians, such as the Fritschels' "*Kirchliche Zeitschrift*," Schmidt's "*Altes und Neues*," Stelhorn and Loy's "*Theological Magazine*," and "*Zeitblaetter*," appear to us to observe an essentially moderate and dignified bearing. It is certainly a mild and temperate phraseology, if they simply accuse their opponents of "crypto-calvinism," or a "calvinizing tendency in their method of teaching." For unquestionably, what is set forth by Missouri, on the point of "election" as the pure doctrine of scripture and genuine Lutheranism, resembles the central dogma of original Calvinism as nearly as one egg resembles another.

Prof. Fritschel, whose able article "The Doctrine of the Missouri Synod on Predestination," in Luthardt's *Zeitschrift*, we have followed hitherto; and in which he clearly sets forth the points of controversy, proves that a comprehensive definition adopted ten years ago by a ministerial conference of the Missouri Synod, and which has never been retracted, corresponds "almost verbatim with that of the Synod of Dort." Just compare.

Missouri Pastoral Conference, 1872. (*Lehre und Wehre*).

"Election is the unchangeable and eternal decree of God, whereby according to the free purpose of his will, in pure grace and mercy, from the entire human race, which by its own fault has fallen from original innocence into sin and ruin, he has ordained a definite number of certain men, not better and worthier than others, but lying with the rest in universal ruin, unto salvation."

Canons Of Dort, C. I., Art. 7. (Compare Niemeyer, Coll. conf. Eccl. ref., p. 694).

“Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, from the entire human race, which by its own fault had fallen from original innocence, into sin and ruin, according to the free good pleasure of his will, from pure grace, he selected a definite number of certain men, who were neither better nor worthier than the others, but lay with the rest in common ruin, for salvation in Christ Jesus.”

To the question, how this close correspondence between a doctrinal declaration pretending to be Lutheran with the Calvinistic Canons of Dort can be justified, no answer has ever been given. Many other points of direct agreement with Calvin and the Calvinistic dogmatics can be shown.

The objection, that the Missouri doctrine of election excludes faith as an element in election is answered, just as Calvin answered it: that:

“...because God has foreordained us to adoption, he has foreordained us to faith.” “When God elected us to salvation, he determined at the same time to bring us to salvation *in the way of faith alone.*”

“Faith is, however, by no means the *causa instrumentalis*, or the condition, or presupposition of election,” but the “end and object of election.”

“We are elected, not in consequence of our faith, but in order that we may believe.”

On this point also appears a remarkable resemblance of phraseology to a canon of the Council of Dort—“*Deus non eligit nos ex fide sed ad fidem.*” (I., 9; Niem. p. 695). In like Calvinistic manner and with extreme definiteness, is the decree of election represented as fixing unalterably the lot of the *individual*. “God has from eternity elected a number of men unto salvation. He decreed: These shall and must be saved; and as God is God, so surely shall these be saved, and no others be sides them.”

“Very well,” thought God (to speak after the fashion of man), “here I will help. I will determine from eternity, that one and that one shall be saved, and all the devils in hell shall not snatch them from my hand. I will not only bring these to faith, but I will help them in it, and thus bring them to salvation.” (*West. Synodalb.*, 1879, pp. 24—55).

“Experience proves it, that He does not take away the opposition to His word in many millions of men, which he could, nevertheless, take away, just as easily, as with the elect, since all, by nature, lie in equally deep ruin, and these are by nature no better than those.” (“*Lehre und Wehre*,” June, 1876).

Irresistible Grace

That electing grace is considered as both irresistible (gr. *irresistibilis*) and impossible to be lost (gr. *inamissibilis*), is apparent already in these declarations, and needs no farther proof. Whoever wishes such, can find them in abundance in Prof. Fritschel’s excellent article. The casual emphasis also of the comforting, cheering and strengthening effect of a belief in this doctrine of election, forms an important point of relationship between the Missouri doctrine and that of the Dort decrees. (Citations by Fritschel, p. 606, with Can. Dordr. I, 9, 12, 13).

Attempt to Reconcile Absolute Predestination With Scripture, Luther, and the Old Lutherans

Naturally enough, the Missourians, as well as their opponents, seek to reconcile their doctrine both with Scripture and with Luther and the old Lutheran dogmaticians. But that they proceed altogether arbitrarily in this attempt is a matter of course. So likewise they interpret the fundamental passages of universal divine grace, like 1 Tim. 2:4; Tit, 2:11; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:3; Col. 1:28; altogether according to Calvinistic recipe, as *voluntas signi* of God. In like manner, they adduce Rom. 9; especially the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, without regard to the connection and the general line of the apostolic argument, heedlessly referring to the final lot of the individual what is declared of the general theme of salvation in its relation to the election and reprobation of entire nations or masses of humanity. Respecting the unscripturalness of the dogma of election, in the harsh form of Calvinism, and renewed by the Missourians, there is fortunately no longer any difference of opinion with us in Evangelical Germany. Since Tholuck, Beck, v. Hoffman, Philippi, Weiss have with one accord shown it

to be inadmissible to think of finding in Rom. 9, a *sedes doctrinae* for absolute predestination, it is not necessary to spend time in presenting an answer to the predestinarian exegesis of this passage. Even in the Reformed theology outside of Germany, a sort of Lutherizing tradition has begun to be formed in the treatment of this formerly supposed fundamental passage of a harsh Calvinism. Compare the decidedly anti-predestinarian exposition which the French Swiss theologians, Godet and Ottramare (*Commentaire sur l'epitre aux Romains, 2 tomes, Geneve, 1881*), have recently presented. And at the same time bear in mind what we showed in No. 36 of last year of this periodical respecting similar deviations from a rigid Calvinism in Scotland and New England.

Luther, Predestination, and Universal Grace

We will therefore not tarry with the unscripturalness of the Missouri doctrine; but turn to its unlutheran character, and the vain endeavor of its advocates to cover themselves with Luther's authority. In this year of the four hundredth anniversary of Luther's birth, it must not remain unmentioned, that a great wrong is done to our reformer, if it be attempted to support the Crypto-Calvinistic, or rather the open and decided Calvinistic type of doctrine of a part of the Lutheran churches of America by any isolated declarations of his. Luther did at times speak in a way that may be taken in a predestinarian sense, especially at the beginning of his reformatory career, and during his controversy with Erasmus respecting Free Will and Original Sin. But he adhered to this method of teaching just as little as Melancthon adhered to the equally rigid particularistic declarations of the first edition of his *Loci*.

If therefore, on the part of Missouri, the language of Luther, in his introduction to Romans from the year 1522, of the eternal Providence of God, whence it originally flows, who shall believe or shall not believe, who shall be delivered from sin and who shall not be delivered," and the tract *De Servo Arbitrio* from the year 1525 are endlessly repeated and quoted to satiety, in order to show the genuine Lutheran character of their doctrine of election, their procedure is an altogether one-sided one. By so doing they improperly generalize a particular stage in the process of Luther's theological development, and urge it at the expense of the rest. What Luther

held and taught temporarily and under particular circumstances and influences, is represented as being his permanent and intense conviction. They are silent concerning the very important and full additions, modifications and transformations to which he subjected those expressions of an absolute free election, during the last twenty years of his reformatory work. In this way the appearance is produced, as though Luther deviated in the doctrine of election, both from the Augustana and the Formula of Concord, and as though he were in conflict on this point, as well with Melancthon, as with all Lutheran theology ever since. Luther's method of theological thought experienced a development from an earlier predestinarian rigidity to the decided and oft-repeated and emphasized fundamental proposition of universal grace, expressed in the sentence, "God will have all men be saved." Whoever fails to recognize this, evinces either ignorance or deficiency of honest historical comprehension.

Isolated expressions of the universality of the Divine will of love occur even in the earlier writings of his reformatory efforts (1517—1525), e. g. in his "sermon on the preparation for death," from the year 1519 (where doubts whether one be well provided are reckoned among the temptations of Satan). So also in his Commentary on the Psalms, from the same year, where, on Psalm 6th, it is expressly declared "God wishes all men to be saved, and that no one be lost or perish." However, expressions of this kind in Luther's earlier writing are the minority, as opposed to the decidedly particularistic declarations, in the sense of a rigid Augustinianism. Together with the most forcible denial possible of the freedom of the human will (in Anti-pelagianistic interests directed against monasticism and popery), the existence of an eternal Divine decree which foresees the lot of every man, is ever emphasized anew. This Anti-pelagian determinism comes to most forcible expression in the powerful controversial tract against Erasmus, "*De Servo Arbitrio*," at the close of which we read:

"If we believe that God has foreseen and foreordained everything from eternity, which foreknowledge can neither waver nor fail, nor be prevented; and if we believe that nothing happens except by His will, which even reason must confess; then reason must also soon confess here, that there is no free will, neither in men nor in angels, nor in any creature in heaven and upon earth."

As far as the absence of free will,—(the assertion of the "*servum arbitrium*")—is considered the effect of sin, Luther never recalled this

declaration made as early as 1522. But very soon after his controversy with Erasmus he assumed a different position towards the doctrine of God's foreknowledge and predetermination of the lot of men. That the eternal council of God is something hidden and withdrawn from the reach of human speculation; but that the good will and love of God unto the salvation of man is revealed in Christ; that it is not allowed to doubt that this good will of love extends to all men; that the word of God, wherever it assures us of our eternal salvation, is in no sense equivocal or deceptive;—all these propositions of a truly universal Divine grace come now more and more into the foreground of his teaching and preaching. Already, in his *Trostschriften* to some person not named “Against the temptations from God's foreknowledge,” dated July 20th, 1528 (Erlang, ed. 54, 21), we find language such as this:

“It is certainly God's earnest will and intention, decreed from eternity, to save all men, and make them sharers of eternal joy, as is explicitly announced, Ezek. 18:23, where he says: ‘Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?...’ ...for His grace extends from the rising to the setting of the sun, and from the south to the north... Mark these words: *in omnes, super omnes* (Rom. 3:22), whether you do not belong here; and whether you are not one of those who lie and crawl under the banner of sinners... And, even if you were ever so hard, obdurate and insensible, you must perceive, see and hear the Son, who stands by the wayside, where every one must pass, and cries and calls, yet more earnestly than God in heaven: ‘Come.’ He says not only come; but ‘all,’ no exception: whoever he may be—even if he were the very worst. And we all shall remember, that God the Almighty has not created, foreordained and elected us to destruction, but to salvation (Eph. 1:4). And in discussing the foreknowledge of God, we must not begin with reason, or with the law; but with the grace of God and the Gospel which is preached to all men (Luke 2:14).”

As here, so in innumerable places he emphasizes also in his other writings, from that time on, the eternal, unchanging, unchangeable character of the Word of God, where it gives assurance of our salvation. So in his tract “*Von der Wiedertaufe*,” which together with the *Trostschriften* just quoted, belongs to the year 1528. Likewise also in the commentary on John 6, from the year 1530, where in reference to the drawing of the Father to the Son, he says:

“Therefore God must draw one farther, that he not only hears God's Word, but doubts not and believes that it is the Word of God. And if you once enjoy occupying yourself with the word, reading, hearing and loving it—you will soon come to say: God Himself has spoken it: and you will say: truly it is the Word of God. Thus faith is added and you are saved.”

To this declaration of a universal divine grace, from the year of the origin of the Augsburg Confession, which Confession largely composed and solemnly approved by Luther is to be reckoned among the evidences of his anti-predestinarian opinions (see Art. 19, “Of the cause of sin”), we propose to add only three more, as proof, that he never afterwards wavered or changed on this interesting point.

First from the *Ennaratio in Joalem* of the year 1536 (Joel 2:32). This passage must be taken just according to the words, without addition of any foreign annotations:

“He shall be saved”; i. e. he shall be delivered from sin, death and hell... For this purpose the Holy Ghost is poured out upon all flesh... Especially must we bear in mind the *word without restriction*: ‘*whosoever*’—(particula infinita: quicumque). For it excludes no one from salvation, which, He freely, and without price, offers to those who call upon Him.”

Then from the commentary on Micah, composed in the year 1542 (on Micah 2:12):

“One may ask, Why are the promises of God made in such general terms? Certainly for this reason, that no one shall exclude himself from the promise of the Gospel, as if it did not concern him. For Christ is not the treasure of one people and of one time, but is offered to all men through the word. But that many do not receive Christ is their own fault, because they do not believe, and adhere so persistently to their unbelief. Meanwhile the intention and promise of God remain *universal*; namely, that it is God’s will that all men shall be saved... For it is God’s will, that Christ shall be a common treasure for all people, as our Lord Christ Himself says (John 3:16, etc.)”

Finally from the last and chief exegetical work of the reformer, his Latin commentary on Genesis, from the years 1536-45. Here Luther turns repeatedly against the predestinarian doctrines, as sophistical and presumptuous.

“I have often warned against entering into speculations about the pure majesty of God... We should rather think of God, as He gives Himself to us in word and sacrament... We must not refer such examples—as the deliverance of Noah alone of antediluvian humanity—to the secret, eternal election of God; for this remains to us incomprehensible; and we see how inconsistent it is with the revealed will of God” (chap. 6, vol. II., p. 205).

"God has not descended from heaven, to make you uncertain about predestination, and teach you contempt of the sacraments, of absolution, and of other divine ordinances: ...but He rather ordained these for the very purpose of making you quite sure, and of taking away the disease of doubt from your heart... Accept the present promise and predestination, and ask not after God's secret counsels. Accept the Word of God as He has revealed Himself; and it will gradually reveal also the hidden God to you, for: 'He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father' (John 14:9)

...If you have Christ, you have the hidden God at the same time with the revealed God. I have indeed written (in the book *De servo arbitrio*) *esse omnia absoluta et necessaria*; but I have added at the same time, that we should look to the revealed God, of whom we sing: "Jesus Christ is His name, the Lord of Zebaoth (cap. 26, vol. II., p. 290, seq.)".

The number of these testimonies could easily be considerably increased, if we were inclined to exhaust this great storehouse, the Commentary on Genesis, and especially the important passage on Chap. 26. But without such multiplication of declarations, it is clear that Luther's opinions, during his later years, are in no manner of contradiction with the Anti-Calvinistic dogmas of the eleventh article of the Formula of Concord. The preponderance of the Anti-predestinarian expressions over such as might at best be turned to account in favor of absolute predestination, is simply overwhelming. We are accustomed to hear especially two declarations from the year 1537 quoted in the interest of the latter view. They are contained in a letter to the Swiss, and in one to Capito in Strasburg. In the latter, Luther still places himself unequivocally on his tract "*De servo arbitrio*" against Erasmus. But with an impartial appreciation of the condition of affairs, there remains no doubt, that these expressions have reference not to election, but to the impotency of the human will, because of its corruption in Original Sin. It is not predestinarianism, but Anti-pelagian and Anti-synergistic interest, which induces Luther at that time to defend his controversial document against the recently deceased leader of the humanists, and to designate it as a work to him especially important and precious. He was probably no longer fully conscious of many an expression of really predestinarian import, contained in that work which he would not have been willing to endorse at this late period (1537). And he nowhere furnishes a clear and systematically arranged exposition of the relation between election and the freedom of the human will, as contained in his teachings. This want of such a systematic reconciliation, the want of even an attempt of a solution of the contradiction in question, and formulated

with logical precision (even if it were only so partial and incomplete a one as the authors of the Formula of Concord afterwards offered) does not destroy the fact, that from and after the year 1528, Luther, without exception, expressed himself in the interest of universal grace; and that in the doctrine *Benevolentia Dei universalis*, he therefore occupies no position in antagonism with his German Evangelical brethren in the faith.

The two thorough, full and able works on “Luther’s Theology” which we have recently received, the one by Harnack and the other by Koestlin are essentially agreed, in the recognition of this fact. Though the latter theologian shows somewhat more inclination, than the former to assent to the attempts of Julius Mueller and Luetkens who endeavored to make out Luther’s predestinarian opinions as permanent and final, and not transient, there is no essential difference between the results of his investigations and those of Harnack. Koestlin also derives that expression of Luther to Capito not from an unchanged adherence to the predestinarian contents and sense of the work “*De Servo Arbitrio*,” but from the fact that Luther “had specially in mind the powerful denial of all human merit contained in the same.” He also emphasizes the very perceptible antithesis in Luther’s teachings, before and after the year 1528, on this question, before particularistic, afterwards universalistic. And he also sets forth most convincingly:

“...that what decided the matter for Luther was not the metaphysical thought of absolute power, or of eternal foreknowledge; but opposition towards all human merit, and an ardent desire for salvation and redemption coming purely from God, and just therefore absolutely sure, all which opposition and desire rested in a purely religious interest.”

So much then is sure. The Missourians cannot claim the right to cover their predestinarianism with Luther’s name. If, however, they persist in doing so, it is not the entire Luther rightly understood upon whom they rest, but an arbitrary selection of expressions from his writings, made for the purpose, and which is not in accord but in direct contradiction with his fundamental opinions. And independently of this, what Missouri teaches is in irreconcilable contradiction with the doctrine of the Formula of Concord and all the Lutheran dogmaticians since the end of the Sixteenth Century, standing upon the foundation of that confession. Whether its adherents acknowledge it or not, Dr. Walther’s doctrine really threatens to draw a large portion of the church of North America from Lutheranism to

Calvinism. Dr. Fritschel is right when he represents the danger as serious, that in case this Missouri doctrine gain more ground and dominion in the Lutheran Church of America, for which great efforts are made;

“the Lutheran Church of this country will thereby receive its fatal thrust, and become a Crypto-calvinistic sect, which with logical necessity must further unfold the germs here contained, and on an inclined plane rush completely into Calvinism.”

The Controversy On Predestination by Charles Krauth.

Introduction by Dr. A. Spaeth

IT WAS ON the last Sunday in October, 1882, that Dr. Krauth was for the last time a guest at our table. The conversation turned on the lamentable controversy concerning the doctrine of election. I urged him to write out his views on this subject and give them to the Church, as many were looking to him for counsel and advice in this complicated matter. He said he knew it was his duty to speak and he would try to do so, if the state of his health would permit. After his death I found among his papers at the University the following article, written in a trembling hand, and evidently of a fragmentary character. It was his intention to add a number of points which were to show what language on the disputed question was Calvinistic and what was not. Though it is only a fragment, still we think the readers of the Review, and especially the Alumni of our seminary, are entitled to this paper, which sets forth the principles underlying the whole controversy in such forcible, clear, and dispassionate language. It is the voice of one who through his whole life aimed to be a faithful servant of the Lutheran Church, but never of a party.

A. SPAETH.

The Controversy On Predestination

(The Controversy on the doctrine of Election. that is Simple Counsel, with proofs, for godly Christians who wish to know who is Lutheran and who is un-Lutheran in the present controversy.) Veröffentlicht von C. F. W. Walther. St. Louis, Mo. Concordia Verlag, 1881. 8vo. 15.

THE TIME IS WELL SPENT in any discussion which is devoted to clearly settling, what is the question? If the disputants in the Synodical Conference agree upon a statement, made in simple good faith, as to what are the points on which they are one and what are the points on which they differ—we may hope for final peace. Till they can do this the more they discuss the doctrine of election the more they will muddle the mind of the Church, and the further they will be from a decision.

The question, Is our faith a cause of God's election or an effect of it? must be carefully defined before men can wisely take sides upon it. Considered as a question of the relation between man and God the answer would be made in one way. Considered as a question as covering the case between one man and another the answer would be reversed.

What is the cause of my faith? The generic action of God's election or choice. He chose to provide redemption for lost man. He chose that a divine-human Saviour should consummate it. He chose that the Spirit should apply it. He chose the Word and sacraments as organic instruments of it, and these links of choices form the generic chain of election. This election is the cause of faith. Without it there would be no object of faith, no vocation to it, no overcoming by grace, of natural inability. From this point of view:¹

“Predestination, or the eternal election of God pertains only to the good and beloved children of God and is the cause of their salvation.”

This is beyond dispute, for the generic election “*procures* their salvation, and fixes the order of those things which pertain to it.” It is very clear too

why “*this* predestination of God” is in such sense the foundation of our salvation “that nothing but the triumph of the gates of hell could overthrow it.” For if “*this* predestination” is overthrown we have no elected salvation, no elected Saviour, no elected work of the Spirit, no elected means of grace—all are gone. And the bare possibility of faith goes with them. And from this point of view is manifest why it is so great and obvious an ERROR—
"THAT NOT *ALONE* GOD’S PITY AND THE MOST SACRED MERIT OF CHRIST, IS THE CAUSE OF THE ELECTION OF GOD, BUT THAT THERE IS ALSO SOMETHING IN US WHICH IS A CAUSE OF THE DIVINE ELECTION, FOR THE SAKE OF WHICH ___CAUSE God has chosen us to eternal life." Our faith is the outcome and practical finality of this election—an effect in which the cause comes to its consummation.

Now comes the other question, no longer as between man and God, but as between man and man. Election as generic contemplates all men alike—its redemption is universal, its Saviour, the Saviour of all, its Spirit the gift purchased for all, its means are objective forces, which put all men to whom they come on a common plane of responsibility and above the simple condition of natural helplessness. Why do men in completely parallel relations to *this* election move in opposite directions? The one believes, the other disbelieves. Is the election of God in any sense the cause of the difference? The answer of the Calvinist is: Yes. The answer of the Lutheran is: No. The election of God is indeed the cause of the faith of the one, but it is neither positively nor negatively, neither by act nor by failure to act, the cause of the unbelief of the other. Hence it is not the cause of the difference. I choose (or elect) to offer bread to two beggars, The election of bread for his food and the election to offer it to him are the proper cause of the reception of the bread on the part of this one, but they are not the cause of the rejection on the part of the other. The first concurs in my election, but his concurrence is the effect, not the cause, of my election. The second refuses, but his refusal is not the effect of my election, but an effect in spite of it. As between me and the men the decision must be that the acceptance of one is no more than the refusal of the other, the cause of my election. But between the one man and the other the difference is made by the willingness to receive—wrought by me through the offer—and the unwillingness to receive, wrought by the man himself in spite of the offer.

Faith is not the cause of our general election. That must be admitted by all. [But neither can it be the cause of our particular election, for the particular is only possible, and indeed only thinkable, as the result of the

general.] But it is the cause of the difference between the man who receives the benefits of this (the?) election and the man who refuses them. This faith is foreseen indeed, but it does not become by that the cause of the election—it is foreseen as an effect of the election and therefore cannot be considered as the cause, it is a finality in the work of God in the restoration of fellowship. It is as a condition part of the election, and cannot therefore be the cause of the whole.

There is a noticeable difference between our Lutheran divines in the sixteenth century and those of later date, but we do not believe there is a conflict. In the sixteenth century the struggle was for the true doctrine of election. As the warfare with Calvinism grew hotter there was a fierce conflict with the error of reprobation. Luther and our earlier divines over against the Pelagianism of Rome, made most prominent election as it is related to the grace of God—and in this relation it is the cause of faith—the faith is conditioned by the election of God as its necessary presupposition.

The later divines over against the absolutism of Calvinism brought into prominence election as it is related to the responsibility of man. In this relation, election is not the cause of the difference in result, for while faith is the result of it in the believer, want of faith is not the result of it in the unbeliever.

Faith is the actual *condition* of the application of election or its determination at this point.

No doubt there are expressions in both directions which if isolated are open to objection and incapable of harmony. The Formula of Concord is midway between the tendencies and avoids the extremes of both.

CHARLES P. KRAUTH.

1. Formula of Concord, 544. 4.↩

Concerning The Dogma Of Predestination.

Opinion given by the Faculty of the Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in answer to a request made by the New York Ministerium.

A. The Profound Mystery

In entering upon the consideration of the doctrine of Predestination, it is highly important to bear in mind that, as a most profound mystery concerning which God has, in his infinite wisdom, revealed only a few facts, what Scripture affirms and what it rejects, can be learned only as we approach the subject with such disposition of mind and heart as is enkindled and maintained by the Holy Spirit. Not only is the doctrine itself entirely above human reason to discover, but, even when revealed in the plain words of Scripture, the remnants of original sin inhering in the most sincere believer and profound theologian, will inevitably lead him astray in comprehending its relations, and reducing them to a formulated statement, in proportion as he is swayed by such motives as the love of controversy, the persuasion of the strength of his own powers to learn and elucidate the truth, or the desire to penetrate further into these mysteries than God has intended. At every stage in our argument it is faith, rather than learning that is demanded. The extent of the material revealed on this subject in the Holy Scriptures is limited, and so must be our knowledge. For that “in this article, we neither can, nor should inquire into and investigate everything, the great Apostle Paul declares.” (Formula of Concord, Sol. Dec. XI. 64.) The doctrine, as presented in Scripture, is always addressed to mature Christians—never among the first principles of the faith—and that, too, with the practical aim, either of humbling the persuasion of their own knowledge and ability (e.g. in Romans and Ephesians), or of comforting

them under persecution and severe trial, with the assurance that their salvation rests entirely in the hands of God (e. g. in John 10:28; Rom. 8:33; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 Pet. 1:2).

Just in the proportion that the renewed attention given to the subject will have the same effect of humbling the pride of knowledge, so pleasing to the flesh, and of encouraging private Christians amidst severe trials in which they are tempted to doubt the surety of the promises of God's all prevailing grace, can it be profitable. If the injunction "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground," has force anywhere, it is here. As the doctrine is thus especially for the advanced Christian, whenever controversies concerning it arise, we must always return to the great foundation truths, and thence begin our treatment. For while the fuller knowledge of this mystery belongs to that light in which God dwells and unto which no man can approach (1 Tim. 6:16); yet our Lord answers Philip's prayer to be shown the Father, in the words: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," (John 14:9). As we must read the Father in Christ, so also must we read what is meant for us to know of Predestination in the Gospel, which is the actualization in time of God's eternal purpose, or decree of election. Hence the Formula of Concord has so clearly drawn "the entire doctrine concerning the purpose, counsel, will and ordination of God" from the Gospel in the eight propositions (Sol. Dec. ch. xi: 15—22) which it urges on our attention instead of:

"speculations concerning the mere secret, concealed, inscrutable foreknowledge of God,"
"if we wish to think or speak correctly and profitably concerning eternal election or the predestination and fore ordination of the children of God to eternal life." (§§ 13, 14.)

Resting, then, on this foundation that so unequivocally maintains certain scriptural principles often overlooked or denied in the treatment of this doctrine—to wit, the universality of Christ's redemption, the universality of the call, the efficacious presence of the Holy Spirit with the word wherever it is preached, the earnest intention of God to fulfill all the promises offered in the Gospel to and for all unto whom they are offered, the lack of any reason in God whereby the offers of his grace whose sincerity is confirmed by an oath in any case miscarry, and remembering that all that is declared concerning the still more remote mystery can in no way contradict these most essential and most explicitly and repeatedly taught principles of the

Gospel, we are prepared to examine the doctrine treated in a number of passages which, as part of the revealed will of God, dare not be ignored, but must be considered in its proper place and relations (Form. Concord Sol. Dec. XI.: 2).

As the result of such examination we have unanimously agreed:

[1] That this dogma, even more than other articles of faith, offers to human reasoning certain peculiar difficulties which prevent its formulation in such manner as to entirely exclude certain seeming incongruities or antagonisms. The harmonizing of these is entirely beyond the efforts even of sanctified learning in this life. Certain facts are clearly stated, but the precise mode of their relation can be determined only so far as Scripture expressly describes it, and no further.

[2] Thus, the word of God, on the one hand, undeniably affirms an election by the divine will and grace, in such manner as to totally exclude any supposition of condition or behavior on man's part, whereby that election would be caused or occasioned, Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:2.

On the other hand, it just as clearly describes man as a moral agent, who, either by an act of his own, rejects the grace offered to him (Matt. 23:37; John 5:40; Acts 7:51) or, moved by the Holy Ghost, (Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29; 2:13; 1 Cor. 12:3) from whose workings proceed the beginning, (Phil. 2:13; 1:6), the increase (Mark 9:24; Luke 17:5) and the completion of faith (Phil. 1:6; Heb. 12:2) accepts it, in such way that he stands in the relation of a divinely-moved and willing recipient, (John 1:12; Acts 2:38; Rom. 7:22) while God alone is the author and giver. The divine work however, may at any moment be arrested by the resistance of the recipient, (Matt. 23:37; Acts 7:51). The relation between God and man in the work of grace is, neither of a mechanical, nor of a physico-dynamical, but of a personal character.

[3] In case we admit that election and reprobation occur by any arbitrary decision such as is described in the Formula of Concord Sol. Dec. Art. XI. 9, "pernicious thoughts" result whereby God's entire revelation of his moral nature is misrepresented and perverted.

[4] In case we deny to man responsibility with respect to the grace offered, we deny his moral nature and degrade him to the condition of irrational creation.

[5] If we concede to him self-decision with respect to the grace offered, we incur the charge.

- a. Of entirely ignoring all that is taught in the word of God concerning the divine election.
- b. Of making man the author of his salvation, or at least the concurrent cause or coadjutor.

[6] The evangelical mind will, however not be satisfied with any attempt to solve the problem, or with any formulation of the dogma

- a. Which does not recognize God as the only, exclusive, absolute author of our faith and salvation.
- b. Which ascribes to man any ability from his own natural powers to accept God's grace, or, by any exercise of his own will to free himself from his corrupt and sinful condition, or prepare himself for God's grace, as though man by his own will, would be an efficient agent, or would introduce into election any meritorious element.

B. The Relation of the Formula of Concord to Lutheran Theologians Earlier and Later

The main interest of this question, however, centers at the present time in the correct apprehension of the relation which the Formula of Concord holds to the respective expressions of earlier and of later Lutheran theologians on this subject. We therefore present the following facts, which throw the necessary light, not only upon the theological development of the dogma, but also upon the position taken by the Confession of the Lutheran Church.

I. Early Theologians

Without entering into the discussion of the much controverted question as to the meaning of many expressions used by Luther, especially in the former period of his life, we hold it to be a historical fact, that a number of the most prominent teachers of the Lutheran Church, as Melancthon, Urbanus Rhegius, Brentius, Flacius, Wigand, Heshusius, Amsdorf, in their private writings here and there used expressions of a strongly deterministic character implying an absolute predestination. Such expressions were used

first in the conflict with Rome and her Pelagianism, and afterwards over against the Semi Pelagianism of the Synergists.

MELANCHTHON, *Loci*, 1521:

“If you refer the human will to predestination, neither in external nor internal acts is there any liberty, but all things occur according to divine destiny.” C. R. xxi. 93; cf. *ib.* pp. 16, 88, 96.

Annot. Ep. Rom., 1522:¹

“It is evident that God does all things not permissively, but effectually, so that, to use an expression of Augustine, the betrayal of Judas is his work as well as the call of Paul” (Luthardt, *Freie Wille*, p. 154; Thomasius, *Dogmengeschichte*, II. 303).

It follows that, since some are not converted, God is unwilling to save them (*Ibid.* p. 155).

They did not believe, because they were not predestinated (*Ibid.*, p. 156).

FLACIUS, *Clavis s. v. Praedestinatio*:

“Let those who apply the term foreknowledge to the qualities foreseen in men, whereby God is induced to elect or reprobate, e.g. *faith or unbelief, perseverance or defection*, ... know that they are so absurd and ignorant that they do not need refutation” (Frank, *Theol. d. Conc. Form.* IV. 255).

BRENTIUS, *Comment. Epist. ad Rom. Tub.*, 1588, lib. II., fol. 375:

“From the entire mass of the human race to one, God indeed gives faith in Christ whereby to be justified and saved, but leaves another in his unbelief to perish” (Frank, IV. 256).

WIGAND in his polemical writings against Synergism: *Solutiones ad paralogismos synergistarum* (Schlüsselburg, V. p. 211):

“Why God does not equally regenerate all, and enkindle the light of faith without distinction in the heart for all, without doubt is to be ascribed *partly* to his secret judgment, which we cannot scrutinize, and partly it must be maintained according to God’s revealed word, that God thus justly punishes some for their crimes, and also for the crimes of ancestors.” This manifestly teaches that the human will is not the cause why men are not regenerated and saved.

AMSDORF's deterministic views are revealed in the statement (*Sententia de declaratione Victorini*, a. 1562, Schlüsselburg V. p. 547):

"It is false that God acts otherwise with man than with other creatures; ...for God has but one mode of acting with all creatures. Wherefore God acts with a willing and intelligent man in the same manner as with all other creatures, with a stone and block, alone by his willing and saying."

The condemnation of this statement in the Formula of Concord (M., p. 603; J., p. 564) is very direct and emphatic:—

Amsdorf: *Falsum est quod Deus aliter agat cum homine quam cum reliquis creaturis, ...nam non est nisi unus modus agendi Dei um omnibus creaturis, quare eodem modo cum homine volente et intelligente agit Deus, quemadmodum cum omnibus creaturis reliquis, lapide et trunco, per solum suum velle et dicere.*

Formula Of Concord: *Verum quidem est quod Deus alium modum agendi habeat in homine, utpote in creatura rationali, et alium modum in alia aliqua irrationali creatura, vel in lapide aut trunco.*

The lost "are *vasa irae* and condemned, and, therefore, they resist the word and Spirit."

HESHUSIUS calls it Synergism to say, that those of whom God had foreseen that they would believe the Gospel had been elected by Him to everlasting life.—The question: Why does not God give His grace to all? is answered: a.) in order to reveal on them His severe and eternal wrath against sin; b.) in order to reveal His divine power to the world in the rejection of the wicked; c.) in order to make all the more glorious his infinite mercy and goodness towards the elect, who, though belonging to the same *massa perdit*a, are foreordained to life out of mere divine goodness. "The Father does not pity all or draw all, but converts some, and passes by others, by a mysterious, yet not by an unjust judgment. Hence it is that Paul distinguishes different kinds of call One is holy and special, whereby He calls the elect, not only by the outward preaching of the word, but also inwardly, the Spirit of God knocking at the soul; the other is external and general, whereof it is said, 'Many are called,' etc. (Schlüsselburg V. p. 325.) "If any be not satisfied, but obstinately urge, 'God will have all men to be saved,' he must blot out the doctrine of the predestination of saints." (p. 330).

II. Earlier Lutheran Confessions

It is a historical fact, that the earlier Lutheran Confessions, the Catechisms, Augustana, Apology, and Smalcald Articles, so far from sanctioning any of these views of the above mentioned theologians, avoid any direct reference to the subject of predestination, and certainly do not teach an absolute predestination or determinism. Up to the time of the Formula of Concord there is no really official statement and consensus of the Lutheran Church on this difficult and perplexing doctrine.

With reference to the Augustana we know that silence on this particular doctrine was intentional.

Melanchthon writes (Sept. 30th, 1531) to Brentius on this point:

"In tota apologia fugi illam longam et inexplicabilem disputationem. Facio hoc certo consilio; non enim volo conscientias perturbare illis in explicabilibus labyrinthis. Ubique sic loquor, quasi praedestinatio sequatur nostram fidem et opera (C. R. II., p. 547).

This same attitude of reserve characterizes all the Lutheran Confessions up to the Formula of Concord, and is all the more remarkable, because the very leaders seemed in the beginning to be unanimous in strongly deterministic tendencies. In spite of the strength of their convictions and the apparent agreement of the same, nothing of this kind was admitted into the public and official declarations of the Church.

III. The Reformed From The Beginning Openly Declared Absolute Predestinarianism and Determinism

It is a historical fact that in striking contrast to this reticence on the part of the Lutheran Confessions, most of the official declarations and confessions of the Reformed from the very beginning not only openly declare an absolute predestinarianism and determinism, but treat it in such a manner as to make it the very basis and starting point of their whole system.

Ratio Fidei by Zwingli (1530), Niemyer Coll. Conf., p. 21 (Jac. B. of Con. II. 165, 166):

"God's free election does not follow faith, but faith follows election... For those who have been elected from eternity, undoubtedly have been elected even before faith... Yet many are elect who as yet have not faith... Were not Matthew, Zacchaeus, the penitent thief and Magdalene elect before the foundation of the world?"

Consensus Geneviensis (1551, adopted 1554), Niemyer, p. 231:

"Far, therefore, was God in electing us from having any respect to faith, which could not be unless the grace of His adoption had destined it for us." Approvingly from Augustine: "He elected us not because we believed, but in order that we might believe, so that we might not seem to have first chosen him."

IV. The *Confession* Rejects the Deterministic and Ultra-Predestinarian Tendencies of Earlier Lutheran Theologians

The *Confession* of the Lutheran Church with reference to this doctrine, as contained in the Formula of Concord at the very end under Art. xi., not only condemns outspoken Calvinistic and synergistic errors (Epit. Art. xi., 17—20), but it also rejects those deterministic and ultra-predestinarian tendencies of earlier Lutheran theologians, in that it:

- a. Rejects the idea of an absolute or arbitrary decree or predestination. Sol. Decl., § (M. 706, J. 651.)

This eternal election or appointment of God to eternal life is not to be considered merely in God's secret, inscrutable counsel in such a manner as though it comprised in itself nothing further, or nothing more belonged thereto, and nothing more were to be considered therein, than that God foresaw who and how many would be saved, and who and how many would be damned, or that He only held a review, and would say thus: "This one shall be saved, that one shall be damned; this one shall remain steadfast [in faith to the end], that one shall not remain steadfast."

- b.) It emphasizes the universality of grace and of the redemption in Jesus Christ. Sol. D., Art. xi. § 28 (M., 709, J. 651.)

If we wish with profit to consider our eternal election to salvation, we must in every way hold rigidly and firmly to this, viz. that as the preaching of repentance, so also the promise of the Gospel is universal, i. e. it pertains to all men (Luke 24). Therefore Christ has commanded “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.” For God loved the world, and gave His Son (John 3:16). Christ bore the sins of the world (John 1:29), gave His flesh for the life of the world (John 6:51); his blood is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 1:7; 2:2). Christ says: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). “God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all” (Rom. 11:32). “The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). “The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.” (Rom. 10:12). “The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:22). “This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life.” Therefore it is Christ’s command, that to all in common to whom repentance is preached, this promise of the Gospel also should be offered (Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15).

c.) It rejects the distinction between an outward and an inward calling of God. Sol. D., Art. xi. § 28 (M. 709, J. 654).

But that many are called and few are chosen is not owing to the fact that the meaning of the call of God, made through the Word, is as though God were to say: “Outwardly, through the Word, I indeed call to my kingdom all of you to whom I give my word, yet in my heart I intend it not for all, but only for a few; for it is my will that the greatest part of those whom I call through the Word should not be enlightened or converted, but be and remain lost, although through the Word, in the call, I declare myself to them otherwise” For this would be to assign to God contradictory wills. That is, in such a manner it would be taught that God, who is, however, eternal truth, would be contrary to himself; and yet God also punishes the fault when one thing is declared, and another is thought and meant in the heart.

d.) It affirms the real presence and efficacious operation of the Spirit through the means of grace. Sol. Decl., § 29, J. 654, M. 710; Sol. D., Art. xi., § 39 (M. 712, J. 656), § 7 M. 720, J. 653); cf. also Sol. D., Art. II., De lib. Arbit., §55, 56 (M. 601, J. 563).

The call of God, which is made through the preaching of the Word, we should regard as no delusion but know that thereby God reveals his will, viz. that in those whom he thus calls he will work through his Word, that they may be enlightened, converted and saved. For the Word, whereby we are called, is “a ministration of the Spirit,” that gives the Spirit, or whereby the Spirit is given (2 Cor. 3:8). And a power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). And since the Holy Ghost wishes to be efficacious through the Word, and to strengthen and give power and ability, it is God’s will that we should receive the Word, believe and obey it, (Art. xi. 29: J. 654).

If we were not to infer the will of God towards us from the call which is made through the Word and the Sacraments—there would be—overthrown and taken from us the foundation that the Holy Ghost wishes to be certainly present with the Word preached, heard, considered, and thereby to be efficacious and to work. Art. xi. 39: J. 656.

The Holy Ghost will be with His Word in His power, and thereby work: and this is the drawing of the Father, Art. xi. 77: J. 663.

Compare also Art. II. The Free Will, or Human Powers, & 55-56: J. 563. Although now both, viz. The planting and watering of the preacher, and the running and willing of the hearer, would be to no purpose, and no conversion would follow, if the power and efficacy of the Holy Ghost were not added thereto, who, though the Word preached and heard, enlightens and converts the hearts, so that men believe this Word, and as sent thereto; nevertheless neither preacher nor hearer should doubt the efficacy of the Holy Ghost, but should be certain, if the Word of God is preached purely and clearly, according to the command and will of God, and men listen attentively and earnestly, and meditate upon it, that God is certainly present with his grace, and grants, as has been said, what man can otherwise from his own powers neither accept nor give. For concerning the presence, operation and gifts of the Holy Ghost we should not and cannot always judge from sense—but we should be certain from and according to the promise, that preaching and hearing the Word of God is [truly] an office and work of the Holy Ghost, whereby he is certainly efficacious and works in our hearts.

e.) It ascribes the failure to believe on the part of those that are condemned not to God, whose Spirit was willing to work in them through the word, but to their own unwillingness and obstinate resistance. Sol. D., Art. xi., §§ 78—80 (M. 721, J. p. 663); cf. Ep. 1, Art. II., Neg. VIII.

But the reason that not all who hear believe, and some are therefore condemned the more deeply is not that God has not desired their salvation; but it is their own fault, as they have heard the Word in such a manner as not to learn, but only to despise, traduce and disgrace it, and have resisted the Holy Ghost, who through the Word wishes to work in them.

The Apostle clearly says: “God endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath” but does not say that he made them vessels of wrath; for if this had been his will, he would not have required for it any great long-suffering. The fault however that they are fitted for destruction belongs to the devil and to men themselves, and not to God.

Compare also Epitome II. Of the Free Will § 15 f. 499. We reject and condemn as contrary to the standard of God’s Word the following error: “That the Holy Ghost is given to those who resist him intentionally and persistently.”

f.) It also ascribes the failure to persevere in the faith not to any unwillingness on the part of God to grant the gift of perseverance, but to the willful turning away of men from the commandment of God. Sol. Decl., Art. xi., § 42, M. p. 713, J. p. 657.

Many receive the word with joy, but afterwards fall away again (Luke 8:13.) But the cause is not as though God were unwilling to grant grace for perseverance to those in whom he has begun the good work, or this is contrary to St Paul (Phil. 1:6.); but the cause is that they willfully turn away again from the commandments [of God], grieve and exasperate the Holy Ghost, implicate themselves again in the filth of the world etc. Ans. XI, 42. f. 65-7.

g.) It deprecates any investigation of the hidden, unsearchable will and purpose of God apart from the revelation of His word, which teaches “that God in His purpose and counsel decreed that all those who in true repentance receive Christ by a true faith He would justify and receive into grace, adoption and inheritance of eternal life.” Sol. Decl., Art. xi., § 18 (M. 708, J. p. 652), M. 715, § 52, J. 658.

With especial care the distinction must be observed between that which is expressly revealed concerning this in God’s Word and what is not revealed. For in addition to that hitherto mentioned which has been revealed in Christ concerning this God has still kept secret and concealed much concerning this mystery, and reserved alone for his wisdom and knowledge. Concerning this we should not investigate, nor indulge our thoughts, nor reach conclusions, nor inquire curiously, but should adhere [entirely] to the revealed Word of God. This admonition is in the highest degree necessary. Ans. XI. § 52. J. 658.

V. Faith and God’s Election

With reference to the particular relation between faith and God’s election, the historical facts are the following:

It is true that on the one hand—

a.) The Formula of Concord teaches in Sol. D. xi., § 8 (M. 705, J. 651) that “the eternal election of God not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but is also, from the gracious will and pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause which procures, helps and promotes what pertains thereto,” and in so far is certainly the cause also of faith.

b.) The Formula of Concord nowhere uses the terms: *intuitu fidei*, *ex praevisa fide*, and the like in speaking of God’s election.

But on the other hand, it is equally true that the authors of the Formula themselves, preeminently the chief author of the xith Article, Jacob Andreae, as also the defenders and interpreters of the Formula of Concord in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries in speaking of election as the cause of faith understand election and predestination in a general sense, in which it contemplates all men alike and includes the whole plan of salvation, the Saviour, the means of grace, the order of salvation, “the entire doctrine concerning the purpose, counsel, will and ordination of God pertaining to our redemption, call, righteousness and salvation.”—F. C. Art. xi., §14 (M. 707, J. 652).

But in speaking of the particular election of individual men to everlasting life, they have no hesitation in saying, That under this aspect faith enters into the divine purpose of predestination as the actual condition of the application of general election to the individual. In this sense they speak of an election “*intuitu fidei*,” “*ex prævisa fide*,” and of faith as *causa minus principalis, instrumentalis, conditio electionis, conditio ex parte subjecti predestinandi et pars ordinis predestinationis*. They lay particular stress on these terms over against the absolute predestinarianism of Calvinists, and being charged by them with Pelagianism and Synergism, they indignantly repel those charges, because they are conscious of excluding from this view any consideration of faith as a meritorious act or quality, and look upon it, as in justification, simply as the organ of the personal apprehension of Christ, being itself the gift of God.

NIC. SELNECCER *Instit. Christ.* II. 127, Frankfort, 1573:

“In the Church of Christ we must with all our might maintain and defend the *universal* promise that God in His good pleasure (εὐδοκίᾳ) wills that all men should be saved on the condition which He himself has laid down. But that many are lost, is the fault of men and comes from no other will of God but that of His justice.”

“This very particularity which seems to be *a posteriori* men themselves occasion by their unbelief and studied (*affectata*) ignorance, in direct opposition to God’s express will of mercy.”

JACOB ANDREÆ, in his *Kurze grundliche Antwort auf die nichtlige Protestation, so ein leichtfertiger, grimmiger Calvinist—verferligt hat*, 1589, pp, 26, 27:

"That among the heretical articles because of which no conference with me should be allowed, the following are enumerated, viz., that I teach:

1. 'That Christ died for all godless men.'
2. 'That this word (all) in the Scriptures should be understood of all men, that God wishes that they all in common be saved.'
3. 'That God *regards* faith alone, and that they who have this faith in Christ the Lord He will save for *this cause*, but the rest He will condemn alone for their unbelief; although it is nevertheless His will that they all should believe and be saved.'

This should justly occasion all Christians much reflection as to the spirit that impels those who make this protest."

SALOM. GESSNER, *XVI. disputatio pro s. fibro christ, concord.*, Wittenb., 1595, p. 582 f.:

"Election is in so far the efficient cause of faith as it includes the merciful will of God, the merit of Christ, the calling and the gift of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, in so far as it includes faith in Christ, renewal and perseverance, it is not the cause, but is a decree based itself on the combination and inseparable connection of several causes."

p. 616:

"Wherefore the causes which precede the decree of election, not indeed in time, but in order... are in God: 1. The prevision of our misery. 2. The merit of Christ. 3. The application of the merit by faith."

CENSURA THEOLOG. TUBING., *de doctrin. Huben.*

"We come now to the Book of Concord, which, in addition to God's universal will, mercy and purpose to save all men through Christ to be apprehended by faith, treats this special election so extendedly and avowedly" (Frank IV. 284). -

L. HUTTER (1608), *Libri Chr. Concordiæ Explicatio*, p. 1138:

"In the beginning we not unwillingly grant that neither faith nor the prevision of faith is a cause of our election. Not faith, indeed, because in and by itself, so far as it is a virtue, habit or quality, it contributes nothing either to our election or justification; and in this respect manifestly holds the same condition as the works or merits of men. But we also grant that the prevision of faith is not properly speaking the cause of election; since it has been shown above that prevision as also foreknowledge is not the cause of anything precognized or foreseen, but only embraces the knowledge of all things foreknown. But granting both, we do not thereby lose our case; much less has the position been established by the adversaries that faith in Christ must be expunged from the decree of election. We have just demonstrated above ocularly and irrefutably, that God's foreknowledge, without which the decree of election could not have occurred, respected only Jesus Christ as foreknown (1 Pet. 1:20), as the true cause of election; and Him, not only so far as He performed the work of redemption, but also as he is ours by faith. For without faith, Christ profits us nothing.

"From these premises, we infer: In the decree of election two things are especially to be considered, viz. the decree itself and the mode of the decree. The decree itself has respect to the gratuitous purpose to elect men to salvation. But the mode of the decree includes the ordination of means whereby God determined to execute this his decree, viz. that he wishes that only those be elected to life who perseveringly would believe in the Son. Thus, therefore, faith necessarily depends upon the ordination of means, without which no decree of election has ever been made. The election of persons indeed depends upon God's grace and Christ's merit, but only as apprehended by faith. Wherefore when we maintain that faith in Christ was included in the decree of election, we consider not indeed faith itself *per se*, but designate Christ—alone apprehended by firm faith—as the meritorious cause of predestination.

"If the question now be asked: "Does election depend on faith, or faith on election?" I answer that both can be stated without a violation of propriety. For as far as there is a mutual bond between *ordinata*, so far certainly both faith depends upon election, and, *vice versa*, election upon faith, or, what is the same, upon Christ apprehended by faith; inasmuch as only those who believe are elect. Here the mutual relation that arises between election and faith is such as exists between the matter ordained and the order, the matter determined and the determination, and not such as exists between an effect and a cause. For election does not depend upon faith as an impulsive or meritorious cause, but as an instrumental or organic cause, which firmly apprehends the grace of God electing and the merit of Christ offered in the Word of the Gospel."

B. MEISNER, *Anthrop.*, Sec. II. (ed. 1626):

"It seems most fitting that faith be not considered separately, as a peculiar cause of election distinct from the merit of Christ, but joined with that merit as apprehended, so as to render both united the one impelling cause of election. For neither does faith merit without the application, nor does it itself move God to elect, but both combined in the divine foreknowledge, i. e. the merit apprehended by faith, or faith apprehending the merit." (Commended y BAIER, Part III., Cap. XII., § xv., d.)

Similar quotations might be made from Aegidius Hunnius, John Gerhard, Nicholas Hunnius, Calovius, Koenig, Scherzer, Musaeus, Quenstedt, Baier, Beckmann, Hollazius, and other standard bearers of Lutheran orthodoxy.

VI. Conclusion

In the controversy which has recently arisen between Lutheran theologians of this country concerning the relation of faith to God's election we are willing to acknowledge on the part of those who claim to represent the views of the earlier theologians an anxiety to exalt the majesty of divine grace over against the prevailing Pelagianism and Synergism of modern times; and we admit that the terms "*intuitu fidei*," "*ex praevisa fide*," and similar ones do not present a satisfactory solution of the *theological* problem in question.

But if those terms, once commonly used by our soundest theologians, be now condemned as being either *per se*, or with the qualifications given to them by the dogmaticians, in conflict with the confession, and the attempt be made to interpret the Formula of Concord in the sense of those statements of our earlier theologians which were referred to under B. I., and to assign to the mystery of election another and more central position in the system of Christian doctrine than the place which the Confession in its wisdom and caution had given to it; we are constrained by the evidence before us to consider this a misconception of the historical position of the Formula of Concord, and an actual receding from its sounder and safer standpoint to a position which has been practically overcome by that document, and which at no time represented the *Confession of the Lutheran Church*.

We close with the prayer that terminates the discussion of this topic in the Epitome of the Formula,

"May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant the grace of his Holy Spirit, that we all may be one in Him, and constantly abide in this Christian unity which is well-pleasing to Him. Amen."

C. W. SCHAEFFER, W. J. MANN, A. SPAETH, H. E. JACOBS.

1. These quotations are from the edition published without Melancthon's knowledge by Luther, and of which perhaps he writes in Sept., 1532 (C. R. II. 612): "*Ego plane non agnosco.*" But as Luthardt remarks (p. 154), he makes no charge that it was not a correct presentation of what was his position at the time of its publication. Comp. C. R. xiv. 440.↩

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Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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