

A translation of a portion of Fritschel's
"Die zwei Lehrweisen von der
Praedestination"

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The Two Ways of Teaching about Predestination

1. Are there two ways of teaching?

The term, figure of speech, (ways of teaching) was used by Philippi for both of the interpretations of the Lutheran doctrine concerning predestination. From that time on it has been universally accepted. From that time the previously contested fact that there are two ways of teaching has now become universally accepted. Concerning the particulars of the matter, however, no agreement still prevails. Therefore it will not be without benefit that once again the matter be straightway laid out clearly.

Although one has forgotten to grasp this for a long time, the difference is by no means a new understanding, which has first come to light through new historical research. One only needs to pick up Baier, who still today is used as the doctrinal textbook at St. Louis. Baier correctly states the difference throughout. Already in part one he makes the observation that many append the qualifying phrase “to glory” or “to grace” to the expression “election.” In part two, he repeats the difference and characterizes the first expression of doctrine as *latior* (broader). He then enlarges on this way of teaching in parts 3-8 (pp. 542-550). With these pages he ties himself closely to the *Formula of Concord*. In chapter nine he then comes to the teaching of election or predestination in the narrow sense, and in parts 9-18 he expands on the teaching of *intuitus fidei finalis* (in view of final faith). In both of the concluding paragraphs he gives the formulated definition as was the rule of the old dogmaticians. And indeed he defines in part 19 the teaching of the first figure of speech and in part 20 the teaching of the second (pp. 601-602.)

In the notes Baier shows that he himself is entirely clear in understanding the difference which is found here. Not only does he label the first figure of speech as broad (*latior* p. 537; *late* according to Walther's quotation from Quenstedt p. 545) and the second as *stricte* (narrow), but he also shows that it is called *electio ad gratiam, s. ad media salutis* (election to grace, election to the means of salvation) and that it passes through an order of steps which one follows after another. He also knows that predestination in the broad sense passes through these eight steps and that the *Formula of Concord* includes this broad wording. He says: *Huc pertinent gradus illi, quibus [praedestinatio] constant, iuxta F. C. l. c.* (To this point those steps, of which predestination consists, are closely related to the *Formula of Concord*) (p. 542 3a). He also says: *Atque haec quidem **latior** est vocabulorum acceptio, qua **totus**, ut sic loquar, **processus** Dei in negotio salutis, in tempore locum habiturus, ab aeterno decretus esse concipitur...Et **certi** quidam **gradus**, in quibus **consistat** electio aut praedestinatio, numerantur* (What is more, broader is certainly a more accepted term, as far as the whole matter, as it spoken in this way, the process God produced in the work of salvation, having a point in time decreed from eternity...and with confidence these certain steps, in which election or predestination consist, are numbered) (p. 537 2a). He also cites Cundisius: *Late ubi accipitur, comprehendit universum mediorum salutis apparatus; in hoc sensu vocem usurpat F.C in Sol. Decl. Art II* (Broad here is accepted. It covers the entire process of preparing for the means for salvation; in this sense the *Formula of Concord* employs it in the Solid Declaration, Article II) (p. 539 2b). The added quotation from Loescher is also valuable here: *Habet certe praedestinationis vox significationem aliquam **amplam**, non in sacro codice (!), sed in libris symbolicis. Unde denuo*

*distinguiamus inter significationem ejus vocis **symbolicam et biblicam: illa est ampla, haec stricta*** (Without a doubt the expression “predestination” has a very wide range of meanings, not in sacred scripture, but in the symbolical books. From which in turn we differentiate between the meaning of each expression symbolically and biblically: that is wide, this is strict) (p. 539). Even more interesting is the quotation from Nikolai, an advocate of the first figure of speech, who publicly stated that unity of doctrine existed between him and the advocates of the second figure of speech. He also stated the way of presentation does not have a negative influence on the brotherhood of believers; there should be no strife over word^s among brothers.

Therefore it is completely clear that Baier differentiates between the broad way of teaching of the *Formula of Concord* and the narrow of the dogmaticians. He pronounces both as correct and standing in complete harmony. One must acknowledge his definition as in agreement with the wording of the doctrine in the *Formula of Concord*.

“Election or predestination can be defined in the broad sense. It is the decree of God, in which He has resolved, to the honor of His kindness, that He, out of infinite kindness, wishes to send the Mediator for all men, concerning whom He had foreseen that they would fall into sin. By means of the universal preaching He wishes to offer for acceptance and also, through Word and Sacrament, to offer to all who would not reject it, faith. He wishes to justify all believers, to renew those who make extensive use of the means of grace, to preserve in them faith until life’s end, and to make them eternally blessed at their end those who believed until the end.” If anyone wishes to trouble himself to seek out this question, he would find more clear expressions of the same.

2. How are both ways of teaching distinguished?

This distinction is thus not entirely new, but it has good precedent. We now wish to seek the difference for ourselves even somewhat more precisely. The basic difference between Calvin's teaching about predestination and the teaching of the Lutheran church concerning it (both figures of speech) is found rightly in this, that we have to deal with the first one with only human speculation, for which a scriptural basis is sought. The last one drawn directly from God's Word. One very old relationship between both ways of thinking, which used since Luther and Melancthon, is *a priori* verses *a posteriori*. With the first, one is transposed in his thoughts to eternity and looks over that which God has resolved to do. However, that is not the way of Luther. Luther had learned to know this *a priori* way from the Scholastics and had come through it to brink of despair until Staupitz showed him another method. This one directed him to seek his "being foreseen" to the wounds of Jesus; there it is not terrifying, but comforting. Thus he taught hereafter; one takes his letter of comfort in temptation. The one searching recognizes himself as standing in grace. He knows that he is a child of God and as such is holy and blameless before God. He knows that heaven belongs to him through faith as his very own inheritance. The glory of heaven already belongs to him on account of faith. He asks himself, "From where do I have this my glory?" Scripture answers him in this way that the faith is a purely a gift of God which He has given to them, to them who hear and make use of the Word. He recognizes the importance of the means of grace, which have appropriated to him the merits of Christ, and his gaze turns back to the unfathomable love of God which has directed to him above all that Christ also asked for him as He went to His death. With that his gaze has reached the boundaries of this world. The Word of God reveals to him the eternal mystery that this is already considered by God in His plans

before the laying of the world's foundation and that it is enclosed within the individual detail. And if then his gaze is directed from the past and the present into the future, then to be sure an impenetrable fog covers it. However beyond the fog his eye of faith sees in the light of eternity the golden door opened for him and he knows: my Father in heaven has also considered everything about the covering of the fog and it will work out well to the blessed end. He knows what he has to do. He must hold loyal to God's Word and Sacraments, pray for the strengthening and preservation of his faith, and demonstrate his faith in good works. For the building he is about to construct, a master builder does not only design the deeply buried foundation, not only the massive foundation walls, but also the roof, indeed even the little weathervane on top of the spire. So also the master builder of our blessedness has not forgotten the smallest thing. He will work everything out well. God, who has gone so wide a path since the laying of the world's foundation until he came to me, will also work out well the span of the path before me. In addition, the blessed confidence is the result of the gaze upon the eternal counsel of love; my salvation stands in the hands of my God. Matthesius expresses it drastically in this way. "Indeed no rooster can scratch it out and also no devil can strike it out, as long as we are in the recognition and assurance of the blood of Christ and in clear steadfast conscience."

On the basis of this "wider" way of consideration, the *Formula of Concord* systematically presents the eternal decree of love of predestination in the well-known eight points. In the same way it leads one through the "Negativa" that one must keep together the whole teaching concerning the purpose and so on as belonging to our redemption. And afterwards the eight points are presented and still the observation is made that one must take the same in its personal, concrete form (part 24): "This all is

grasped according to Scripture in the teaching of the eternal election of God to sonship and eternal blessedness.” And so that one might not misunderstand the word “grasp” it is still added to it “should also be understood among it.” Finally also the original index says further (p. 876 line 25ff in Latin) *de doctrina de praedestinatione complectitur octo capita*. And this *a posteriori* way is in accordance with the *Formula of Concord*, as it explicitly says, learned from Paul who uses this way.

Certainly it is the love of God, which hereafter constitutes the 1st point of the divine decree, which sent Christ as the universal Redeemer. But that is also the case with the means of grace and the call to grace. These come in here not insofar as they cover all, but because they cover God’s children who are present among them. These three decrees (upon which still many more follow) of the eternal decree speak then also concerning them. They belong in the summary of the eternal decree, out of which our blessedness and all that belongs with it, gushes forth as its source.

With this way of consideration it is clear that the word election indicates nothing more or less than the words, “child of God, pious, holy, convert.” Concerning this one needs to lose no word to the time of the *Formula of Concord* because the word is used in this sense by all (even Catholics and Reformed). One sees only once in the catechism where, in the explanation of the 3rd article, this word so often stands where other catechisms place “true faith.” One counts only one time in Harm’s compendium the passages where it is expressed in watered-down words that each Christian is a member of the elect. (An exception makes Melenchthon and a few students, which, again not always, bring in a *finaliter*.) If one, with this way of expression comes to the question: how do the particulars of the matter stand in relation to the universal, gracious will? Is

the answer then that it is an unsolvable mystery? As the question arises and where it is thrown about, there one is answered straight out. “It stands not in opposition with the universal promise, but it is in agreement with it in the best way, inasmuch as it is included in it.” (Francisci, Harms 7, 114). In other words, that means both stand ever so close to each other as if I, on the one hand, preach the gospel to Christians and unbelievers and, on the other hand, speak absolution in the private confession to the confident. That is not two gospels, but one gospel in two kinds of forms and applications. The first time the form is universal, the second time particular. Thus the gospel presents the eternal decree as it covers over all the sinners in the world. The predestination presents to us the eternal decree of love insofar as it covers over the genuine believers.

According to this manner of teaching, as it is systematically laid out in the *Formula of Concord*, the eternal decree is considered from the standpoint of the Christian. There he embraces all eight points, removing nothing in points 1-8 in the covering of each individual of those who believe. (Compare here especially the completely confusing statement of Leyser, the *amanuensis* of Chemnitz, against Huber in Harm’s Compendium—see index). Under “elect” then one understands the Christian as opposed to the non-Christian. Therefore the *Formula of Concord* translates with *pii omnes* and the like (part 48). And then this decree is a subdivision of the universal decree of love (likewise the expression about this in Harm and in mine “for unity”).

According to the way of consideration it is also clear that if the Calvinist or another presents the question to us, “*Cur alii prae aliis?*” I am not able to answer, “*intuitu fidei.*” Is there one single Lutheran who, in response to the question from where

does my present and future salvation flow, would answer, “from the view of my faith or in view of my faith until the end, God has resolved to prepare my salvation and give it to me”? That would be Arminianism. However, on the other side I cannot answer, “It is a mystery that eternity will reveal to us”! That would be Calvinistic. If one presents to Lutherans in the teaching of predestination to sonship etc. this Calvinist trick question, then the genuine Lutheran answer is “this question I will answer you at once after you tell me why is each 30th raven white and the similar false question what makes an error true?” This question, presented by the Calvinists time and time again to the Lutherans, contains a double error. They maintain as an accomplished fact that the particulars of the decree come from God, which means that God has drawn “the one instead of the other.” With that *a priori* it makes God as the origin of the particulars. Twice it draws (against the explicit warning of the *Formula of Concord*) “the other” into this teaching which certainly only exclusively speaks about children of God and not about any others. It confuses *providentia* with *praedestinatio* against the warning of the *Formula of Concord*. Our answer to this question is thus in this passage: “This question is here false and is a sure sign of false teaching. Since this question is justified in other places it then shows here either a Calvinistic or synergistic undertone.

In short, to formulate the 1st figure of speech we say:

“The predestination to sonship and blessedness” is God’s eternal decree of love concerning the redemption, conversion, justification, sanctification, preservation, and considers the future entrance into heaven in its particular relationship to the child of God or believer.

This concludes the translation up to the end of the first paragraph on page thirteen of Professor Fritschel's essay. There are a number of problems with this essay. Fritschel mentions finding comfort in "the wounds of Jesus," but he proceeds to rest his assurance also on "a clear steadfast conscience." Whether or not Luther or Baier, or the dogmaticians or anyone else used the term "intuitu fidei," it does not automatically mean that it is scriptural or beneficial. It does no good to call a Calvinist a false teacher if he is not shown to be one on the basis of scripture. This essay was lacking scriptural evidence and therefore also scriptural support. The translation of this essay was also made difficult by the many typos and misprints.

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