

CHICAGO THESES.

[Notice. Herewith we lay before our respective synods the final result of many years of labor on the part of the so-called Intersynodical Committee. The text herewith presented offers the Chicago Theses in the form definitely approved by the Committee, as they were adopted after careful revision at St. Paul, Minn., on August 2, 1928. For the purpose of clearly stating their understanding of the Theses, two representatives of the Venerable Synod of Ohio have added a separate explanation to these Theses. Since the printing of the Theses always involved the Committee in special difficulties, a resolution was passed to release the Theses for publication by the synods. Hence any synod cooperating in this endeavor has the right to publish these Theses in the version herewith submitted. It was decided that the German text herewith presented be the official text of the Theses for Union. An English version is to be prepared by a committee charged with this task, and is to be published as by authority of this committee. However, in case of possible differences of interpretation the German text is to remain the deciding text. In the name and by order of the Committee, A. C. *Haase*, Secretary. St. Paul, Minn., August 22, 1928.]

Brief Presentation of the Doctrine of Conversion and Election.

Without reservation we pledge our adherence to the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding conversion and election of grace, as presented on the basis of Scripture in the Confessional Writings of our Church.

This doctrine, briefly stated, is as follows

1) Holy Scripture teaches that through original sin man is by nature in such a state of corruption that, on the one hand, he lacks all power and ability unto anything that is good in a spiritual respect, and, on the other hand, he is filled with a desire for and inclination to everything that is evil.

2) Prompted by His mercy and unmerited grace, God in His love has taken up the cause of the lost and condemned human race, and has prepared salvation in Christ for all without exception. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all men should be converted to Him.

3) To this end He causes His eternal, divine Law and the saving Gospel of Christ, the Savior of sinners, to be preached in all the world.

4) The preaching of God's Word is the means and instrument by which God proposes to work effectually in all and to save all. If God is to do His work in man, man must hear the Word. (Baptism and the Lord's Supper are included in the Word; they are "the Word made visible.")

5) By the Word God works in them that hear the Word. By the preaching of the Law He crushes our hearts and thus leads us to know our sin and the anger of God and to experience in heart a genuine terror, contrition, and sorrow. By the preaching of the holy Gospel concerning the gracious forgiveness of our sins in Christ He draws us in such a manner that a spark of faith is kindled in us. (F. C. 601, 54; Triglotta 903.)

6) This work of conversion, according to the teaching of Scripture, is entirely and exclusively God's work. Man can in no wise make himself worthy of it, prepare himself for it, nor, in general, conduct himself in such a manner that it would be because of man's conduct that God performs His work in him. True, natural man can make an external use of the Word of God by hearing and reading it. (F. C. 594, 24; 601, 53; Triglotta 891 and 901.) However, he can in no wise contribute anything toward his conversion but, as much as in him lies, can only frustrate this work of God in him.

7) True, even in the converted person there remains a certain resistance because original sin is not eradicated until death, but in the heart of the believer the Holy Ghost, by His power, has brought forth a new life which daily overcomes this resistance.

8) The sinner's failure to be converted and saved is in no wise due to God, but is entirely the fault of man, who either does not hear God's Word or, having heard it, puts it out of his mind, despises it, closes his ear

and hardens his heart against it, and in this manner blocks the way to the Holy Spirit. A person who in this manner resists the Holy Spirit continually and persistently, and who forever rejects the grace of God wilfully, is not converted and perishes by his own fault.

9) Accordingly, every true Christian confesses: "I believe, that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." He will also "on the last day raise up me and all the dead and give to me and all that believe in Christ eternal life."

10) Even in eternity every detail that pertains to all that the Holy Spirit has done, is doing, and will yet do, in me and all believers has been considered and ordained by God out of grace alone for Christ's sake, so that our salvation rests entirely in His faithful hands and whatever may befall us must work together for our good.

11) This eternal counsel of God regarding His children, revealed to us in His Word particularly for strengthening our faith in times of trouble and tribulation, we call, in accordance with the Scriptures and our Confessions, "God's ordination unto sonship and eternal life", or, briefly, "the election of grace".

12) We find our election revealed only in Christ who is the Book of Life, and only in Him can we be assured of our election. The elect are not saved by any other grace than that which is trampled under foot by them that are lost. This constrains us to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling", Phil. 2, 12. 13, which means, that we be careful to abide with Christ and His Word, that we pray diligently, that we faithfully put to use the gifts we have received, and thus "make our calling and election sure". 2 Pet. 1, 10.

13) When our faith views this eternal gracious counsel of God regarding us Christians, from which springs our entire salvation now and hereafter, we join with all our heart in the doxology of Paul in Eph. 1, 3 : "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

In view of the controversies waged during the last decades we deem it necessary to offer this brief presentation of the Lutheran doctrine in an extended form and, in antithetical statements, reject false presentations and errors.

A. Conversion.

I.

Without reservation we pledge our adherence to the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding conversion, as it is presented on the basis of Scripture in divers places in the Confessional Writings of our Church, particularly in Article 12 of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, in the Smalcald Articles, and in Article 2 of the Formula of Concord.

1) Since the Fall man is by nature *flesh* (John 3, 6), and hence an enemy of God (Rom. 8, 7). His intellect is darkened (1 Cor. 2, 14); his will is turned away from God and directed only towards what is evil (John 8, 34; 2 Tim. 2, 26). He is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2, 1). Being in this condition, man is of himself incapable of anything good and unfit for it. He wills, and can will and do, only that which is evil and contrary to God. This is the natural condition of all men without exception. (Rom. 3, 12; F. C. 589, 7 ; Triglotta 883, 7.)

2) Out of pure mercy God the Holy Spirit approaches these men who are spiritually dead and enemies of God by the preaching of His Word. By the preaching of the Law He desires to bring them to a knowledge of their sins and of the anger of God ; by the preaching of the Gospel He desires to produce in them the knowledge of salvation, of the free grace of God in Christ. In this manner He desires to convert them to Himself. (A. C. 12; F. C. 601, 54; comp. page 98, 61 ; 171, 28; 173, 44 ff.) It is God's gracious will, *equally earnest towards all men*, that all be saved and that all come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2; 4; Fzek. 33, 11; John 3, 16.)

3) Natural man in no wise meets this gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in his heart (Rom. 9, 16; F. C. 589, 7), but *resists* it. He cannot but resist it, because he is unfit for anything good, an enemy of God, and a servant of sin. (Rom. 8, 7; F. C. 592, 17. 18; 598, 44.) He resists the grace of God with all his powers, *knowingly, intentionally, and in a hostile spirit*. (F. C. 593, 18. 22.) *Of his own accord he strives only to frustrate the gracious work of God in him. This is the natural attitude of all men towards the gracious work of God by His Word as far as their own will and ability are concerned.*

4) This resistance against the Word and grace of God is expressed and manifested in individuals differently, according to their characteristic traits or according to external circumstances, but it is essentially the *same* in all men. In its real essence it is nothing else than the *refusal of grace, rebellion against God and His grace*. (F. C. 609, 88.) This resistance springs from the innate evil nature of man, from original sin, and consists in the hostile opposition which man knowingly and purposely sets against grace. (F. C. 593, 21.) Over against the grace of God in His Word all men are by nature equally guilty (*in eadem culpa*, Rom. 3, 23. 24); this means, that by nature their attitude towards the work and grace of God is evil only. This applies equally to those who are converted by the- grace of God and to those who are lost by their own fault. (F. C. 716, 57. 58.)

5) Natural man cannot, by his own powers, omit, break, and hinder, nor even diminish this resistance. Man is and remains an enemy of God and resists the Word and will of God, until faith in Christ is wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. (F. C. 589, 5 ; 590, 11. 12; 593, 21 ; 602, 59.) Nor can man omit this resistance by spiritual powers which God, as some hold, confers on him before the creation of faith and which man is supposed to employ for his own conversion. This would presuppose that man after all has, by nature, or prior to faith, *a will* to convert himself and also the ability to accept, and to properly employ, the spiritual powers offered him.

6) True, even before faith is kindled a person receives in his heart various impressions of the operation of the Law and the Gospel, all kinds of emotions which he cannot evade (*motus inevitabiles*; Mark 6, 20; Luke 4, 22; Acts 24, 25; John 16, 8-11.) However, these emotions a person *suffers* by the operation of God upon him from without, independently of his own volition, yea, in opposition to the same. Before faith is kindled no inward change for the *good* takes place in the person, by which he would be enabled, even before conversion, through the operation of grace, to submit to the grace of God, to assume a passive attitude to grace, to allow the grace of God to continue its operation upon him, etc. (1 Cor. 2, 14.) On the contrary, all that man is able to do, and does, of his own accord merely tends to ward off these impressions and to suppress these emotions. Until renewed by God his will remains the same obstinate will that is at enmity with God. *There is no intermediate state between being converted and being unconverted, between spiritual death and spiritual life*. (F. C. 602, 59; 593, 20.21.)

7) God alone, by the operation of His mighty grace, can overcome this resistance in man against His grace and His Word. (Eph. 1, 19; 2, 5-10; Rom. 9, 16.) He does it by bringing a person who has learned to know his perdition by means of the Law and is terrified by God's anger, to faith in his Savior by means of the Gospel, thus drawing the person to Him, raising him from spiritual death, regenerating and renewing him. (Eph. 2, S. 9 ; F. C. 609, 87; 603, 61.) However, conversion does not take place by irresistible grace, or by coercion, which would be the same thing; for conversion consists in this very thing that God, by means of the Gospel, turns a rebellious will into an obedient will, an unwilling person into a willing one. (F. C. 603, 60; 09, 87.88.)

8) When faith is kindled man's attitude towards the Word and grace of God is entirely changed. In the power of God who works in him both to will and to do, the person *willingly assents to what God proposes*. There arise in him good emotions and sensations of a truly spiritual nature. These are the new spiritual life in him. Immediately man begins to fear, love, and trust in God. He is engaged in the daily practice of repentance and cooperates in good works which the Holy Ghost accomplishes in him. (F. C. 603, 63; 604, 65. 66.605, 70; 609, 88.) Indeed, even in the regenerate there still remains a certain resistance towards the Word and grace of God. Until death they bear the sinful flesh. However, God has created in them the new man who willingly serves God. In the regenerate—and only in these—there takes place a constant struggle: the wrestling of the

spirit with the flesh, in which the spirit, by the power and grace of God, is victorious and conquers the flesh as long as the Christian by faith clings to the Word and grace of God. (F_ C. 608, 84. 85; Gal. 5, 17; Rom. 7, 23. 25.)

9) It is God alone who is able to convert and quicken spiritually dead men, and does convert and quicken them by His grace in the Word. But, alas, not all men are converted and saved. *This is in no wise God's fault. His grace is universal (universalis); it is sufficient (sufficiens) for all, and efficacious (efficax) in all who hear the Word.* By the preaching of His Word God gives to all who hear it an opportunity to be converted and saved. God purposed to be efficacious in all through the Word, to give to all the power and ability to accept His Word. (F. C. 710, 29.) However, the grace of God does *not operate in an irresistible manner.* Man can resist it and block the way to the Holy Spirit and His operations of grace, so that He cannot achieve His work in man. Anyone resisting the Holy Spirit continually and persistently, anyone thrusting the grace of God from him continually and wilfully, is not converted, but is lost by his own fault. (F. C. 602, 57-60; 713, 40-42.)

10) Accordingly, we confess

a) that conversion is solely and alone the work of divine grace which man by nature does nothing but resist, and cannot but resist, until God gives him faith;

b) that God earnestly desires to work conversion in all men, but "cannot perform His work" in them that are lost (F. C. 555, 12; Triglotta 835, 12), because by their own fault they wilfully persevere in their resistance, harden themselves and become increasingly obdurate in this condition the more earnestly God operates on them by means of His Word, and thus continue to heap up guilt against themselves (Matth. 23, 37), until finally they may be overtaken by the condemnation of hardening.

II. Antitheses.

On the basis of this truth we reject as contrary to Scripture and false any teaching by which the utter incapacity of all men for anything that is good in a spiritual respect and the monergism of divine grace in the conversion and salvation of men are denied and obscured; we also reject any teaching which finds the ultimate cause of the non-conversion even of a single person in God and His means of grace and which charges Him in any way with the fault of such non-conversion; as, for instance, the teaching

1) that man by his own natural powers or by powers communicated to him by the grace of God can in any manner omit or diminish his resistance—whether it be of the "natural" or the "wilful" kind—against the gracious operation of God; or that he can in any manner contribute anything to his conversion, cooperate with God towards it, or prepare and make himself fit for the same;

2) that prior to faith man himself, either of his own accord or through powers given to him by grace, can determine to submit to the grace that is to convert him, or to allow converting grace to continue its operation upon him. This "decision in favor of God" does not precede conversion (in the strict sense) but is the very conversion which God works;

3) We also reject as false and contrary to Scripture the distinction between natural and wilful resistance for the purpose of offering a uniform¹ explanation why it is that some remain in perdition and are lost while others are converted and saved though all are equally guilty and maintain only an evil attitude towards the converting grace of God, and though grace works with equal power upon all men. By this teaching conversion and salvation are made to depend not on the grace of God alone, but also on man's conduct.

4) Again, we reject the teaching which makes non-conversion and rejection dependent not solely upon a person's conduct, but rather on a secret decree of God; a teaching which conceals or denies that the cause, the

¹ A uniform explanation of conversion and non-conversion is offered by Synergists when they place the cause of both in man. A uniform explanation of conversion and non-conversion is offered by Calvinists when they place the cause of both in God.

only cause, of non-conversion is man's wilful and persistent resistance, i. e., that he either does not hear God's Word, but wilfully despises it, closes his ear and hardens his heart against it and thus blocks the way which the Holy Ghost ordinarily pursues, so that He cannot perform His work in him, or, having heard it, puts it aside and disregards it;

5) Again, the teaching which employs the term "almighty grace" in the sense that God converts men by irresistible grace or by coercion;

6) Again, the teaching that in order to accomplish conversion, universal grace must be reinforced by a secret grace of election which is withheld from those who are not converted;

7) Again, the teaching that God by a secret decree has excluded from conversion those who are not converted, or has passed them by with His grace;

8) Again, the teaching that God, while imparting a certain measure of grace to all, imparts only to the elect the full measure of grace sufficient for conversion.

B. Universal Will of Grace.

1) Scripture teaches that everything which God has done, is doing and will do in time here on earth, in order to acquire and appropriate to men salvation in Christ, He does in accordance with an eternal, premeditated will, counsel, and purpose. (Acts 15, 18; Eph. 1, 11.)

2) God has taken pity on the fallen race of men. In the fulness of time He has sent into the world for all men His onlybegotten Son, who has *acquired* perfect salvation for all, for each individual, also for me. God has done this in accordance with an eternal, premeditated counsel and will. Before the foundation of the world, He has foreordained Christ as the Redeemer of the entire human race. (Acts 2, 23; 4, 28; 1 Pet. 1, 20.)

3) This fact, that Christ has fully acquired complete salvation for all men, God has also *revealed and made known* to all men *in the Word of the Gospel*. This Gospel of His He causes to be preached here in the world, in order that men may hear it, and thereby come to the knowledge of the truth, and thus be saved. God has done and is doing this in accordance with an eternal purpose and counsel. (Eph. 1, 9.)

4) Through the Gospel which is His ever equally efficacious means and instrument with all men, the Holy Ghost approaches the individual sinner, lost by nature, but redeemed by Christ. After having brought the sinner to a knowledge of his utter depravity and having terrified him with the anger and judgment of God by means of the Law, the Holy Spirit earnestly purposes to bring him to faith in his Savior and thus to appropriate to him the entire salvation acquired by Christ, to justify him, to preserve him in faith by the Word, to glorify him and in this manner to carry out His work of grace unto the end. God does this in accordance with an eternal counsel and purpose.

From the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding the universal will of grace, presented in the foregoing, there is kept distinct in Scripture

C. The Doctrine of the Election of Grace or of God's Predestination Unto the Adoption of Children and Unto Salvation.

Without reservation we pledge our adherence to the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding the election of grace, or predestination of man unto sonship, as it has been presented, on the basis of Scripture, in the Eleventh Article of the Formula of Concord.

Preamble.

In order to think and speak correctly concerning the election of grace, and in order not to exceed the barriers fixed in this doctrine by Scripture, we must learn from Scripture also the proper mode of presenting this

doctrine. The apostle takes the position of the Christian readers here in time (Rom. 8, 28ff. ; Eph. 1, 3ff.) ; he reminds them of the blessing which they hold in their possession at present; then he directs their gaze backward to the pretemporal source of that blessing. He identifies himself and his fellow-Christians with the elect. Thus he would have us contemplate the eternal election of God. True, Scripture also refers elsewhere, though briefly, to the elect whom God has chosen, to the elect who are few in number as compared with the many that are called. (Matth. 22, 14.) But wherever the apostles instruct Christians more fully regarding the mystery of eternity they apply what they say to those in particular whom they are teaching. Such a direct, practical mode of contemplating the mystery guards us against unprofitable and dangerous speculations.

I.

1) Holy Scripture teaches that *it is God alone who*, by grace for Christ's sake, has called us and all believers by means of the Gospel; has brought us unto faith, sanctifies and keeps us in faith, and finally saves us. However, Scripture teaches likewise that everything which God does now and will yet do for us and all believers *He has already in eternity considered in His counsel and resolved to do*. (2 Tim. 1, 9; Rom. 8, 29; Eph. 1, 3-5; 2 Thess. 2, 13.) Conformably to Scripture and the Confessions of our Church we call this eternal purpose of God to save us and all believers according to the universal way of salvation the foreknowing of God (Rom. 8, 29), or God's predestination of men unto the adoption of children (Eph. 1, 5 ; Rom. 8, 29), or the eternal election unto the adoption of children (Eph. 1, 4), or the election of grace (Rom. 11, 5).

2) The eternal election, or God's predestination unto the adoption of children, is that eternal act by which God has prepared our salvation, not only in general, but has also in particular considered in His grace us and every one of His own, has elected us unto salvation and has decreed that, and in what way, He will call us by the Gospel, bring us to faith, keep us therein, and finally give us eternal life in Christ (Eph. 1, Off. ; Rom. 8, 28ff. ; 1 Pet. 1, 2 ; F. C. 707, 13-24; Triglotta 1067 ff.)

3) The cause of this eternal act of God concerning His children *is solely the mercy of God and the most holy merits of Christ*, who by His living, suffering, and dying has redeemed all men and reconciled them unto God. In ourselves *there is not found anything* that could in any way have prompted God to make this gracious plan concerning us. This applies also to our faith, which is not a presupposition, but a result and an effect of the predestination unto the adoption of children. (Eph. 1, 4, 5; 2 Tim. 1, 9 ; Rom. 8, 28-30; F. C. 557, 20; Triglotta 837; F. C. 720, 75; Triglotta 1087; F. C. 723, 88; Triglotta 1093.)

4) Accordingly, election, or predestination, is the *cause* which effects and consummates our salvation and whatever pertains thereto (hence also our faith and our perseverance therein). Upon this immutable and insubvertible counsel of God our salvation is so firmly established *that the devil, the world, and our flesh cannot deprive us of it*. (John 10, 28-30; Matth. 16, 18; F. C. 705, 8 ; Triglotta 106S; F. C. 714, 45-49; Triglotta 1079.)

5) *Every Christian can and should by faith be certain of his election unto everlasting life*. He does not obtain this assurance by his natural reasoning, nor by way of the Law as he reviews his good deeds, but from the Gospel promises of grace, which are sealed by the sacraments. Accordingly, it is to the believer an insubvertible assurance; an assurance, however, which does not exclude the necessity that the Christian work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, yea, prompts him to do so. (Rom. 8, 31-39; Eph. 1, 13, 14; Phil. 2, 12, 13; 2 Pet. 1, 10; Hebr. 11, 1; F. C. 709, 25-33; Triglotta 1071 ff. ; F. C. 714, 45; Triglotta 1079.)

6) The election of grace, or predestination unto the adoption of children and unto salvation, which pertains only to us and all believers, is in no wise in contradiction to God's universal will of grace to save all men through Christ. While, on the one hand, the universal will of grace is the firm foundation on which the election of grace rests, the election of grace, on the other hand, serves the purpose of giving the Christian a greater assurance of the universal will of grace, for it is the eternal decree of God to carry into effect this universal will of grace in us and all believers. Accordingly, by the election of grace there is effected in us, the elect, not a second, different will of grace, but the identical universal will which God earnestly entertains

regarding all men, and which is frustrated in those that perish by their persistent wilful resistance.

7) This election of grace is not paralleled by an *election of wrath*, by a predestination of individual men unto perdition, by God's passing most men by with the fulness of His grace, by leaving them in their misery, by a will to work less in them, by a will to draw them less powerfully, and the like. On the contrary, God wills earnestly that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. The damnation of those who are lost is not due, either directly or indirectly, to God, nor to His decree of election, nor to the execution of the same, but solely to the malice of men. (Matth. 22, 1 ff.; 23, 37; Acts 7, 51; 2 Thess. 2, 10-12; Rom. 1, 18 ff.; F. C. 555, 12; Triglotta 835; F. C. 711, 34-42; Triglotta 1075; F. C. 721; 78-86; Triglotta 1089.)

8) In regard to the election of grace and to reprobation there is, indeed, much that God has not revealed in His Word, and that men presumptuously desire to know. Our Confessions enumerate many mysteries of this kind, among them the following : “Likewise, when we see that God gives His Word at one place, but not at another; removes it from one place, and allows it to remain at another; also, that one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again, etc.—in these and similar questions Paul fixes a certain limit to us how far we should go, namely that in the one part we should recognize God's judgment. For they are well-deserved penalties of sins when God so punishes a land or nation for despising His Word that the punishment extends also to their posterity, as is to be seen in the Jews; whereby God in some lands and persons exhibits His severity to those that are His, in order to indicate what we all would have well deserved, and would be worthy and worth to receive, since we conduct ourselves evilly over against God's Word, and often grieve the Holy Ghost sorely; in order that we may live in the fear of God, and acknowledge and praise God's goodness, to the exclusion of, and contrary to, our merit, in and with us to whom He gives His Word and allows it to abide, and whom He does not harden and reject.” (F. C. 715, 54-57; Triglotta 1081.) We are not to brood over these unsearchable mysteries, *but to cling to the clear Word of God, in which everything that we need to know for our salvation is plainly stated.* (F. C. 711, 33; Triglotta 1073.)

In those who perish by their own fault we are to perceive the great earnestness of God and His appalling judgment against sin, and thus be moved all the more to live constantly in the fear of God, seeing that we deserve the same fate as the reprobates, because by nature we also have only an evil attitude towards the Word of God.

In ourselves who are saved we are to perceive the pure grace of God, glorify and praise it all the more and render thanks to God also in this way that we apply all diligence to make our calling and election sure.

Anything that exceeds these limits we subordinate to the statement of Scripture in Rom. 11, 33-36. (F. C. 716, 58-64; Triglotta 1081.)

II. Antitheses.

1) On the basis of these truths we reject every teaching which places the cause of election or predestination unto the adoption of children *not solely* in God's universal earnest grace and mercy and in the merits of Christ, or, generally speaking, every teaching which in any form and manner, or in any respect bases election on and explains it by, what man is, what he has, does, or refrains from doing.

2) On the other hand, however, we also reject on the basis of these truths every teaching by which those who believe only for a season are numbered with the elect; any teaching which in any manner mingles unbelief or backsliding as well as punishment and judgment of God with the doctrine of the election of grace, and thus confounds Law and Gospel; any teaching by which different and mutually contradictory wills of grace are placed in God: any teaching by which an *irresistible* and *partial* grace is fictitiously ascribed to God ; in short, any view which directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly, in any way conflicts with the doctrines of Scripture regarding the *one universal grace which is equally earnest and efficacious towards all*, and which in any way limits the Word of God which states that God would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of

the truth. For instance,

- a) the teaching that God has elected us Christians to salvation *in preference to others (prae aliis)*, by granting us, in addition to universal grace which exists and is efficacious for all, an altogether particular grace, namely, an “election grace” by which He would lead us surely and infallibly to salvation in preference to others;
- b) the teaching that it is due to this “election grace” that the means of grace effect conversion and salvation in some and not in others;
- c) the teaching that it is a divine mystery, that is, a mystery in God, why the means of grace do not effect conversion in many.

Declaration Regarding the Phrase "*Intuitu Fidei Finalis*."

1) If the term “election” or selection in view of persevering faith (*intuitu fidei finalis*) is interpreted in this manner only, that God has decreed from eternity to give on Judgment Day—for the sake of the merits of Christ imputed to them—the crown of glory to those whom He Himself by His grace has brought to faith and has kept in faith unto the end, and whom by virtue of His omniscience He knows from eternity; —then such an interpretation expresses, indeed, a truth which is clearly revealed in Scripture, and which, moreover, as far it concerns the last of the decrees passed by God regarding the elect, can, indeed, be included in election or predestination unto the adoption of children and unto salvation. But neither in Scripture nor in the Confessions is this action called election or predestination unto adoption and salvation. What Scripture and the Confessions call election has not taken place “*intuitu fidei*” (see C. I. 1 and 2).

2) It is wrong to call the truths just outlined a second form of the doctrine of God's election and predestination unto adoption of children and unto salvation, yea, rather we are confronted with two entirely different truths, which cannot be designated by *one* term without creating boundless confusion. The doctrine of predestination unto adoption of children and the selection of those who continue in faith to the end unto everlasting glory differ in many points. For

- a) the former treats of the entire salvation accorded to us (eight points) in all its details; the latter treats *only* of the last part, the consummation (*glorificatio*);
- b) the former views the creation and preservation of faith as the result and as the execution of God's plan; the latter views the merits of Christ, apprehended by faith and kept to the end, as the basis and presupposition of the eternal decree of God;
- c) the former knows of only *one* basis for the decree of God, viz., the grace of God and the merits of Christ viewed as having been prepared; the latter knows as the basis the grace of God and the merits of Christ viewed as having been apprehended by faith and kept to the end;
- d) the former understands by “electing” the action in eternity by which men are taken from the kingdom of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of grace; the latter understands by “electing” the segregating, the singling out of one in preference to others for the purpose of ushering him into heaven.
- e) the former understands by “the elect” people who are in a state of grace; the latter understands by “the elect” those who in the sight of God are believers at the last;
- f) the former answers the questions: Whence is my past, present, and future salvation? the latter the question: Why has God decreed in eternity to place certain definite persons at His right hand?
- g) the former is, according to F. C. 9-11 and 12ff., the way to think and speak “correctly and profitably” of the predestination unto adoption of children; the latter is a different way of speaking regarding the action of God in eternity.

3) It is an undeniable fact that by the rise of the doctrine of an election *intuitu fidei finalis* and by divergent use of the term “election” involved in this doctrine trouble and confusion have been caused; the

doctrine of the Eleventh Article of the Formula of Concord has thereby been pushed to the background; and an unsound mixture has been produced out of both.

4) Since the Lutheran Church binds its ministers by a pledge to adhere to the Confessions, the doctrine of election or predestination unto adoption of children and unto eternal life, that is, their being ordained unto the adoption of children etc., is the only doctrine within the Church which may justly claim to be the Church's doctrine of eternal election.

5) Accordingly, the only way to establish peace in the church is for all to accustom themselves to speak as the Scriptures and the Confessions speak.

Declaration Regarding the Phrase “*Cur alii prae aliis?*”

As regards the use of the question : “Why are some converted in preference to others?” since God's grace and men's guilt are the same, we declare the following:

A. If the question presupposes that in the last analysis there is, either in God or in man, a uniform cause of conversion and non-conversion, of election and reprobation, the question must be rejected as false in itself and involving an error that utterly subverts a fundamental truth. Scripture and the Confessions know of no identical cause.

1) Scriptures teaches quite clearly whence it is that men are converted and saved: *that is due solely to the grace of God*, and in no respect to the activity or conduct of man. (See Theses on Conversion I, 1-7.)

2) With equal clearness Scripture teaches whence it is that men are not converted and saved, but remain in their lost, sinful condition : *that is solely their own fault* (“they would not”) and in no wise the fault of God. (See Theses on Conversion I, 9.)

3) By means of our reason we cannot harmonize these two Scripture truths, viz., that the grace of God is the only cause of conversion, and that man's fault is the only cause of non-conversion, just as we, by means of our reason, cannot bring Law and Gospel into harmony. (See Theses on Conversion II, 3, with the footnote.)

4) Nor can we in many instances harmonize God's activity in the world with His revealed will. We cannot and will not attempt to solve these mysteries, since Scripture does not solve them.

Therefore, on the basis of Rom. 11, 33-36, in agreement with the Confession of our Church, we declare: F. C., Art. XI, 52-64, M. 715ff., Triglotta 1079ff.

B. The question is admissible, however, if the words "*prae aliis*" do not imply a grace that exists exclusively for the elect (*gratia particularis; praeteritio*), but are used only for the purpose of calling attention to the mystery referred to in A, points 3 and 4.

We should, however, like to point out, in particular, that the bare question “*Cur alii prae aliis?*” may easily lead to misunderstanding, and for that reason should be avoided.

D. Theses on Other Doctrines.

I. The Scriptures.

1) We pledge adherence to the Holy Scriptures as the only source and norm of doctrine and faith. (2 Tim. 3, 16; 2 Pet. 1, 19-21.) Over against modern theology we maintain, now as formerly, the doctrine of the verbal inspiration. (1 Cor. 2, 13; 2 Tim. 3, 16.) We believe and confess that Scripture not only contains God's Word, but is God's Word, and hence no errors or contradictions of any sort are found therein.

2) Accordingly, to us all doctrines and statements contained in Scripture are insubvertibly established, and our conscience is bound by them. (John 10, 35.) Although some of them may seem, or be, more important or less important to our life of faith, still as regards their divine character all statements of Scripture are, to us,

on the same level.

3) On the other hand, we maintain likewise that only such things as are revealed in Scripture can be an object of faith and doctrine. Although a doctrine may not offend against Scripture, no one has a right to believe or teach something as divine truth without or beyond the authority of Scripture. No error, though it seem ever so insignificant, can claim any right whatsoever.

II. Our Position As Regards the Lutheran Confessions.

4) Our Confessions are a presentation and summary of the faith of the Lutheran Church, as it has found expression in its response to needs arising from time to time. They do not claim to be anything else than a confession of the faith dwelling in the heart, and of the saving truth to be preached in the Church of God.

5) We pledge adherence to all the Confessions of the Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, not “in so far as”, but “because” they are a presentation of the pure doctrine of the divine Word.

6) Accordingly, any person assuming the office of teacher in our Church must obligate himself to conduct his office in accordance with the aforementioned Confessions.

7) The pledge to adhere to the Confessions relates only to the doctrinal contents (that is, to the doctrine proclaimed as divine truth and to the rejection of contradictory teachings); however, it relates to these doctrinal contents without exception and limitation in every article and part, no matter whether a doctrine is stated expressly as a confessional doctrine, or whether it is adduced only casually for the purpose of explaining, substantiating, etc. some other doctrine.

8) On the other hand, anything that pertains merely to the form of the presentation (historical remarks, purely exegetical questions, etc.) is not binding.

III. Church Fellowship.

9) Church fellowship, that is mutual recognition of Christians as brethren of the faith and their cooperation in church activities, presupposes, according to God's Word and our Confessions, their agreement in the pure doctrine of the Gospel and in the confession of the same by word and deed. (Matth. 7, 15; Rom. 16, 17; Gal. 1, 8 ; Tit. 3, 10; 2 John 10. 11; M. 40, Art. 7 ; 337, 42; 561, 30; p. 16; Triglotta 47. 517. 843. 19.) Ignoring doctrinal differences existing at the time when church fellowship is being established and maintained or declaring them to be of no import is unionism which fictitiously presents a unity that does not exist.

10) The rule is: “Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only; Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only”. Pulpit and altar fellowship without unity in doctrine is a denial of the truth and a sin committed against the erring.

11) Church fellowship with a church body which persistently clings to an error in doctrine and practice must ultimately be dissolved, because unity has already been disrupted by that error.

12) Wherever disagreement in the confession of the one divinely revealed truth arises through the deception of Satan or the frailty of the flesh, it devolves upon us to confess the truth of the divine Word, which alone can overcome error and close the breach.

13) Such confession is done by word and deed, and requires, in the first place, that we take our stand firmly with those who confess the truth in its purity, and, in the second place, that we oppose those who falsify the truth to any degree.

Note. How an error of this kind must be treated in individual instances, however, and how long the erring must be tolerated in the hope that he can be led to forsake his error, is a problem to be solved by the brotherly love of Christians.

IV. The Church

14) The Church of Christ on earth, established and being built up by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace, is composed of all true believers, that is the totality of those who put their trust in the vicarious living, suffering, and dying of Christ and are united with one another by nothing else than this common faith.

15) Accordingly, we confess with the Apology: “However, the Christian Church consists not alone in fellowship of outward marks, but it consists chiefly in inward communion of eternal blessings in the heart, as of the Holy Ghost, of faith, of the fear and love of God. And yet, this same Church has also external marks by which it may be known; namely, where there is pure use of God's Word and the Sacraments are administered in conformity with the same, there certainly is the Church, there are Christians; and this Church only is called the body of Christ in the Scriptures.” (NI. 152, 5 ; Triglotta 227.)

V. The Spiritual Priesthood.

16) Christ has made all believers kings and priests in the sight of God, His Father, and, in the saving Gospel and in the Sacraments, has bestowed upon them as such all the spiritual possessions which He has acquired by His redemption.

17) Every Christian is to exercise this universal priesthood by his testimony in behalf of the saving truth, according to opportunity and the measure of his knowledge and ability.

VI. The Pastoral Office.

18) As distinct from the universal priesthood, the pastoral office, as regards its essence and purpose, consists in this, that a person qualified for this office and duly called to the same edifies, teaches, and governs a certain congregation in Christ's stead by means of God's Word, and administers the Sacraments in its midst.

19) This office is of divine institution, and its functions, aforementioned, are precisely defined in God's Word. Accordingly it is the right and duty of every Christian congregation to establish this office, and this is done by means of calling a pastor. Such action is a function of the universal priesthood.

20) The calling of a pastor is a right of that congregation in which the minister is to discharge the duties of the office, and by such calling Christ appoints His ministers for the congregation. Ordination is not a divine, but an ecclesiastical ordinance for the public and solemn confirmation of the pastor's call.

VII. Antichrist.

21) As regards Antichrist, we confess with the Smalcald Articles that the Pope is “the very antichrist” (M. 308, 10-14; Triglotta 475), for among all the antichristian manifestations in the history of the Church down to the present time there is none in which all the characteristics predicted in 2 Thess. 2 are found as in the papacy. The papacy, then, being the hereditary enemy of the Church, must be fought with all earnestness. So much can be clearly seen from 2 Thess. 2.

22) Whether there will yet be a special development of the antichristian power, and of what character this will be, cannot be determined from the Word of God—a fact with which our faith has to be content.

VIII. Chiliasm.

23) Every teaching of a millenium (Rev. 20) which turns the kingdom of Jesus Christ into an external, earthly, and secular kingdom of glory, or in any manner denies the permanent crossbearing character of the Church on earth is to be rejected as a doctrine that is in contradiction to clear statements of Scripture.

24) Even a conception of the millenium which does not bear this more or less physical character, but

merely holds that a season of spiritual flourishing for the Church, or a general conversion of the Jews, or a resurrection of the martyrs prior to the last day, and similar events are still to be expected, has, on the one hand, no clear word of Scripture to support it, and, on the other hand, is contradicted by words of Scripture that are quite clear. For this reason it must not be preached as a doctrine of Scripture. (See above D, I, 3.)

IX. Sunday.

25) Luther's explanation of the Third Commandment in the Small and in the Large Catechism is a masterly presentation of this subject as regards contents, form, and spirit.

26) Every addition to the same which in any manner prescribes some external feature, like a day or a form for worship, as commanded by God, is not in accord with Scripture or the Confessions.

X. Open Questions.

Since the phrase "open questions" is understood in various ways, we declare the following:

27) We reject as a grievous error the attempt to designate as open questions such questions as, notwithstanding the fact that they have been answered in God's Word, are to remain undecided and uncertain until they have been decided by a verdict of the Church, thus leaving every body at liberty until then to hold his own opinion and to teach concerning them what he pleases. All doctrines clearly and plainly revealed in God's Word are definitely decided because of the unconditional authority of the divine Word, no matter whether the Confessions say anything about them or not. There exists in the Church no right whatever to deviate in any manner from the Word of God.

28) However, if by open questions are understood such questions as are not answered by Scripture, though they are suggested in the Scriptures or by the Scriptures, a difference of opinion in answering them is permissible, provided that in doing so the teaching of Scripture is not contradicted. Human opinions of this kind, however, must not be represented as doctrines of Scripture, because they go beyond Scripture. (See above D, 1,3).

29) We recognize, indeed, that in an attempt to define the extent of the term "open questions" we meet with a difficulty. Practically, however, in any controversial case when the point in controversy is to be defined, it will be made plain by a thorough study of Scripture, whether we are dealing with an article of faith or a so-called problem in theology. In the latter case a difference in conviction must not be regarded as a cause for church division, because the authority of Scripture is not impugned.

The principle expressed in the Confessions we are to heed "That a distinction should and must by all means be observed between unnecessary and useless wrangling, on the one hand, whereby the Church ought not to be disturbed, since it destroys more than it builds up, and necessary controversy, on the other hand, as when a controversy occurs such as involves the articles of faith or the chief heads of the Christian doctrine, where for the defense of the truth the false opposite doctrine must be reproved." (M. 572, 15; Triglotta 857.)

With reference to the above Theses adopted by representatives of the Buffalo, Iowa, Ohio, Missouri, and Wisconsin Synods the following separate declaration was offered by two members of the Committee, to be recorded in the minutes

Separate Declaration.

The Theses treat the doctrine of election, or of the predestination unto adoption of children *a posteriori*, that is, from the viewpoint of believing Christians, and answer the question: "Whence is my present, past, and

future salvation?" We concede the right to take thus view, and also give it the preference for practical ends. However, we cannot share the opinion that Scripture and the Confessions present the doctrine of election chiefly from this viewpoint, and that, accordingly, *only* this form of the doctrine is to be authorized in the Church.

Furthermore, we cannot say that the so-called second form of the doctrine which has been used by our Church for more than three hundred years, gives expression to another "doctrine"; we regard it rather another "method of teaching", by which the right doctrine of election can be maintained to its full extent.

As regards the doctrinal contents of the Theses, we are in complete harmony therewith.

We offer this declaration, partly because we wish to act in perfect sincerity, partly because we cannot admit that our Lutheran Church for the entire period of three hundred years did not possess the right doctrine of election or of the predestination unto adoption of children.

W. D. Ahl

M. P. F. Doermann

Committee:

Lorenz Blankenbuelaler (Missouri).

A. W. Walck (Buffalo).

A. D. Cotterman. (Ohio).

Karl Ermisch (Iowa).

St. Paul, Minn., June 21, 1929.

For his kind help in the preparation of this translation Prof. W. H. T. Dau deserves honorable mention.

Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
For round us falls the eventide ;
Let not Thy Word, that heav'nly light,
For us be ever veiled in night.

O keep us in thy Word, we pray ;
The guile and rage of Satan stay;
Unto Thy Church grant, Lord, Thy grace,
Peace, concord, patience, fearlessness.

And since the cause and glory, Lord,
Are Thine, not ours, do Thou afford
Us help and strength and constancy,
With all our heart we trust in Thee.

A. C. Haase, Secretary.

SOLI DEO GLORIA!