

XI. OF GOD'S ETERNAL FOREKNOWLEDGE [PREDESTINATION] AND ELECTION.

1] Although among the theologians of the *Augsburg Confession* there has not occurred as yet any public dissension whatever concerning the eternal election of the children of God that has caused offense, and has become wide-spread, yet since this article has been brought into very painful controversy in other places, and even among our theologians there has been some agitation concerning it; moreover, since **the same expressions were not always employed** concerning it by the theologians; therefore, in order, by the aid of divine grace, to prevent disagreement and separation on its account in the future among our successors, we, as much as in us lies, have desired also to present an explanation of the same here, so that everyone may know what is **our unanimous doctrine, faith, and confession also concerning this article.** 2] For the doctrine concerning this article, if taught from, and according to, the pattern of the divine Word [and analogy of God's Word and of faith], **neither can nor should be regarded as useless or unnecessary, much less as offensive or injurious**, because the Holy Scriptures not only in but one place and incidentally, but in many places, thoroughly treat and urge [explain] the same. 3] Moreover, we should not neglect or reject the doctrine of the divine Word on account of abuse or misunderstanding, but precisely on that account, in order to avert all abuse and misunderstanding, the true meaning should and must be explained from the foundation of the Scriptures; and the plain sum and substance [of the heavenly doctrine] concerning this article, accordingly, consists in the following points:

4] First, **the distinction between the eternal foreknowledge of God and the eternal election of His children to eternal salvation**, is carefully to be observed.

1A. For *praescientia vel praevisio* (foreknowledge or prevision), that is, that God sees and knows everything before it happens, which is called *God's foreknowledge [prescience]*, **extends over all creatures, good and bad**; namely, that He foresees and foreknows everything that is or will be, that is occurring or will occur, whether it be good or bad, since before God all things, whether they be past or future, are manifest and present. Thus it is written, Matt. 10, 29: *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.* And Ps. 139, 16: *Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them.* Also Is. 37, 28: *I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against Me.*

1B. 5] **The eternal election of God**, however, *vel praedestinatio* (or *predestination*), that is, God's ordination to salvation, does not extend at once over the godly and the wicked, **but only over the children of God**, who were elected and ordained to eternal life before the foundation of the world was laid, as Paul says, Eph. 1, 4. 5: **He hath chosen us in Him**, *having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.*

Distinction between
Foreknowledge and
Eternal Election

Foreknowledge
extends over godly
and wicked

Eternal Election
extends only over
the godly

2A 6] The foreknowledge of God (praescientia) foresees and foreknows also that which is evil; however, not in such a manner as though it were God’s gracious will that it should happen; but all that the perverse, wicked will of the devil and of men wills and desires to undertake and do, God sees and knows before; and His *praescientia*, that is, foreknowledge, observes its order also in wicked acts or works, inasmuch as a limit and measure is fixed by God to the evil which God does not will, how far it should go, and how long it should last, when and how He will hinder and punish it; for all of this God the Lord so overrules that it must redound to the glory of the divine name and to the salvation of His elect, and the godless, on that account, must be put to confusion.

<p>Foreknowledge God only observes but does not cause evil</p> <p>Eternal Election God causes the salvation of the elect</p>
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7] However, **the beginning and cause of evil is not God’s foreknowledge** (for God does not create and effect [or work] evil, neither does He help or promote it); but the wicked, perverse will of the devil and of men [is the cause of evil], as it is written Hos. 13, 9: *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help*. Also: *Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness*. Ps. 5, 4.

2B 8] The eternal election of God, however, 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, works, helps, and promotes our salvation** and what pertains thereto; and upon this [divine predestination] our salvation is so founded *that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it*, Matt. 16, 18, as is written John 10, 28: *Neither shall any man pluck My sheep out of My hand*. And again, Acts 13, 48: *And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed*.

9] Nor is this eternal election or ordination of God to eternal life to be considered in God’s secret, inscrutable counsel in such a bare manner as though it comprised nothing further, or as though nothing more belonged to it, and nothing more were to be considered in it, than that God foresaw who and how many were to be saved, who and how many were to be damned, or that He only held a [sort of military] muster, 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.”

<p>Eternal Election is NOT to be sought in God’s secret counsel, BUT in the Word of God alone</p>

10] For from this [notion] **many derive and conceive strange, dangerous, and pernicious thoughts, which occasion and strengthen either security and impenitence or despondency and despair, so that they fall into troublesome thoughts** and [for thus some think, with peril to themselves, nay, even sometimes] say: Since, before the foundation of the world was laid, Eph. 1, 4, God has foreknown [predestinated] His elect to salvation, and God’s foreknowledge [election] cannot fail nor be hindered or changed by any one, Is. 14, 27; Rom. 9, 19, therefore, **A**. if I am foreknown [elected] to salvation, nothing can injure me with respect to it, even though I practice all sorts of sin and shame without repentance, have no regard for the Word and Sacraments, concern myself neither with repentance, faith, prayer, nor godliness; but I shall and must be saved nevertheless, because God’s foreknowledge [election] must come to pass. **B**. If, however, I am not foreknown [predestinated], it helps me nothing anyway, even though I would occupy myself with the Word, repent, believe, etc.; for I cannot hinder or change God’s foreknowledge [predestination].

<p>Many Dangerous Thoughts - concerning election</p>

11] And indeed also to godly hearts, even when, by God’s grace they have repentance, faith, and a good purpose [of living in a godly manner], such thoughts occur as these: **C**. If you are not foreknown [predestinated or elected] from eternity to salvation, everything [your every effort and

entire labor] is of no avail. This occurs especially when they view their weakness and the examples of those who have not persevered [in faith to the end], but have fallen away again [from true godliness to ungodliness, and have become apostates].

12] To this false delusion and [dangerous] thought we should oppose the following clear argument, which is sure and cannot fail, namely: Since all Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is to serve, not for [cherishing] security and impenitence, but *for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*, 2 Tim. 3, 16; also, since everything in God's Word has been prescribed to us, not that we should thereby be driven to despair, but *that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope*, Rom. 15, 4, therefore it is without any doubt in no way the sound sense or right use of the doctrine concerning the eternal foreknowledge of God **that either impenitence or despair should be occasioned or strengthened thereby.**

Accordingly, the Scriptures teach this doctrine in no other way than to direct us thereby to the [revealed] Word, Eph. 1, 13; 1 Cor. 1, 7; exhort to repentance, 2 Tim. 3, 16; urge to godliness, Eph. 1, 14; John 15, 3; strengthen faith and assure us of our salvation, Eph. 1, 13; John 10, 27f ; 2 Thess. 2, 13f.

13] Therefore, if we wish to think or speak correctly and profitably concerning eternal election, or the predestination and ordination of the children of God to eternal life, we should accustom ourselves **not to speculate concerning the bare, secret, concealed, inscrutable foreknowledge of God, but how the counsel, purpose, and ordination of God in Christ Jesus, who is the true Book of Life, is revealed to us through the Word, 14]** namely, **that the entire doctrine concerning the purpose, counsel, will, and ordination of God pertaining to our redemption, call, justification, and salvation should be taken together;** as Paul treats and has explained this article Rom. 8, 29f ; Eph. 1, 4f , as also Christ in the parable, Matt. 22, 1ff , namely, that God in His purpose and counsel ordained [decreed]:

15] 1. That the human race is truly redeemed and reconciled with God through Christ, who, by His faultless [innocency] obedience, suffering, and death, has merited for us the righteousness which avails before God, and eternal life.

16] 2. That such merit and benefits of Christ shall be presented, offered, and distributed to us through His Word and Sacraments.

17] 3. That by His Holy Ghost, through the Word, when it is preached, heard, and pondered, He will be efficacious and active in us, convert hearts to true repentance, and preserve them in the true faith.

18] 4. That He will justify all those who in true repentance receive Christ by a true faith, and will receive them into grace, the adoption of sons, and the inheritance of eternal life.

19] 5. That He will also sanctify in love those who are thus justified, as St. Paul says, Eph. 1, 4.

Eternal Election
considered according
1. Word of God
2. Entire Doctrine of
Salvation

This is the way God saves those He has chosen from eternity.

A. The Human Race redeemed and reconciled With God through Christ (Atonement)

B. Offered through Word and Sacraments

C. Which creates repentance and faith in Christ,

D. Justify those who have repentance and faith

E. Sanctify those who are justified

F. Protect and Strengthen them.

G. Eternally save and glorify

20] 6. That He also will protect them in their great weakness against the devil, the world, and the flesh, and rule and lead them in His ways, raise them again [place His hand beneath them], when they stumble, comfort them under the cross and in temptation, and preserve them [for life eternal].

21] 7. That He will also strengthen, increase, and support to the end the good work which He has begun in them, if they adhere to God's Word, pray diligently, abide in God's goodness [grace], and faithfully use the gifts received.

22] 8. That finally He will eternally save and glorify in life eternal those whom He has elected, called, and justified.

23] And [indeed] in this His counsel, purpose, and ordination God has prepared salvation **not only in general**, but has **in grace considered and chosen to salvation each and every person of the elect who are to be saved through Christ**, also ordained that in the way just mentioned He will, by His grace, gifts, and efficacy, bring them thereto [make them participants of eternal salvation], aid, promote, strengthen, and preserve them.

24] **All this, according to the Scriptures, is comprised in the doctrine concerning the eternal election of God to adoption and eternal salvation**, and is to be understood by it, and never excluded nor omitted, when we speak of God's purpose, predestination, election, and ordination to salvation. And when our thoughts concerning this article are thus formed according to the Scriptures, we can by God's grace simply [and correctly] adapt ourselves to it [and advantageously treat of it].

25] This also belongs to the further explanation and salutary use of the doctrine concerning God's foreknowledge [predestination] to salvation: **Since only the elect, whose names are written in the book of life**, are saved, *how, we can know, whence and whereby we can perceive who are the elect* that can and **should receive this doctrine for comfort**.

26] And of this **we should not judge according to our reason, nor according to the Law or from any external appearance**. Neither should we attempt to investigate the secret, concealed abyss of divine predestination, but should *give heed to the revealed will of God. For He has made known unto us the mystery of His will, and made it manifest through Christ that it might be preached*, Eph. 1, 9ff ; 2 Tim. 1, 9f.

27] This, however, **is revealed to us in the manner** as Paul says, Rom. 8, 29f : *Whom God predestinated, elected, and foreordained, He also called*. Now, God does not call without means, but through the Word, as He has *commanded repentance and remission of sins to be preached in His name*, Luke 24, 47. St. Paul also testifies to like effect when he writes: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God*. 2 Cor. 5, 20. And the guests whom the King will have at the wedding of His Son He calls through His ministers sent forth, Matt. 22, 2ff , some at the first and some at the second, third, sixth, ninth, and even at the eleventh hour, Matt. 20, 3ff

Our Eternal Election is revealed in this manner...
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28] Therefore, if we wish to consider **our eternal election to salvation with profit**, **we must in every way hold sturdily and firmly to this, that, as the preaching of repentance**, so also **the promise of the Gospel** is *universalis* (universal), that is, it pertains to all men, Luke 24, 47. For this reason Christ has *commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among ALL nations. For God loved the WORLD and gave His Son*, John 3, 16. *Christ bore the sins of the WORLD*, John 1, 29, *gave His flesh for the life of the WORLD*, John 6, 51; *His blood is the propitiation for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD*, 1 John 1, 7; 2, 2. 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, John 6, 40. Likewise 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.

29] And this call of God, which is made through the preaching of the Word, we should not regard as jugglery, but know that thereby

Through the Word

God reveals His will, that in those whom He thus calls He will work through the 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.

30] For this reason **the elect are described thus**, John 10, 27f : *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life.* And Eph. 1, 11. 13: *Those who according to the purpose are predestinated to an inheritance* hear the Gospel, believe in Christ, pray and give thanks, are sanctified in love, have hope, patience, and comfort under the cross, Rom. 8, 25; and although all this is very weak in them, yet they hunger and thirst after righteousness, Matt. 5, 6.

31] Thus *the Spirit of God gives to the elect the testimony that they are children of God, and when they do not know for what they should pray as they ought, He intercedes for them with groanings that cannot be uttered*, Rom. 8, 16. 26.

32] Thus, also, Holy Scripture testifies that God, who has called us, is so faithful that, **when He has begun the good work in us, He also will preserve it to the end and perfect it, if we ourselves do not turn from Him, but firmly retain to the end the work begun, for which He has promised His grace**, 1 Cor. 1, 9; Phil. 1, 6 [1 Pet. 5, 10]; 2 Pet. 3, 9; Heb. 3, 2.

33] With this revealed will of God we should concern ourselves, follow and be diligently engaged upon [eagerly con] it, because through the Word, whereby He calls us, the Holy Ghost bestows grace, power, and ability to this end, **and should not [attempt to] sound the abyss of God's hidden predestination**, as it is written in Luke 13, 24, where one asks: *Lord, are there few that be saved?* and Christ answers: *Strive to enter in at the strait gate.* Accordingly, Luther says [in the Preface to the Epistle to the Romans]: **Follow the Epistle to the Romans in its order, concern yourself**

Follow the order of Romans

A. first with Christ and His Gospel, that you may recognize your sins and His grace;

B. next, that you contend with sin, as Paul teaches from the first to the eighth chapter;

C. then, when in the eighth chapter you will come into [will have been exercised by] temptation under the cross and afflictions, this will teach you in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters how consolatory predestination is, etc.

34] However, **that many are called and few chosen** is **not** owing to the fact that the call of God, which is made through the Word, had the meaning as though God said:

many are called and few chosen

Outwardly, through the Word, I indeed call to My kingdom all of you to whom I give My Word; however, in My heart I do not mean this with respect to all, but only with respect to a few; for it is My will that the greatest part of those whom I call through the Word shall not be enlightened nor converted, but be and remain damned, although through the Word, in the call, I declare Myself to them otherwise. *Hoc enim esset Deo contradictorias voluntates affingere,* that is: 35] **For this would be to assign contradictory wills to God.**

← Does NOT mean this.

That is, in this way it would be taught that God, who surely is Eternal Truth, would be contrary to Himself [or say one thing, but revolve another in His heart], while, on the contrary, God [rebukes and] punishes also in men this wickedness [this wantonness, this dishonesty] when a person declares himself to one purpose, and thinks and means another in the heart, Ps. 5, 9; 12, 2f. 36] Thereby also the necessary consolatory foundation is rendered altogether uncertain and void, as we are daily reminded and admonished that **only from God's Word, through which He treats with us and calls us, we are to learn and conclude what His will towards us is**, and that we should believe and not doubt what it affirms to us and promises.

37] For this reason also Christ causes **the promise of the Gospel not only to be offered in general, but He seals it through the Sacraments** which He attaches as seals of the promise, and thereby confirms it [the certainty of the promise of the Gospel] to every believer in particular.

Word and Sacraments are signs of God's will

38] On this account, as the *Augsburg Confession* in Art. 11 says, we also retain private absolution, and teach that it is God's command that we believe such absolution, and should regard it as sure that, when we believe the word of absolution, we are as truly reconciled to God as though we had heard a voice from heaven, as the *Apology* explains this article. This consolation would be entirely taken from us if we were not to infer the will of God towards us from the call which is made through the Word and through the Sacraments.

39] There would also be overthrown and taken from us the foundation that the Holy Ghost wishes certainly to be present with the Word preached, heard, considered, and to be efficacious and operate through it. Therefore **the meaning is not at all** the one referred to above, namely, that the elect are to be such [among the elect are to be numbered such] as even despise the Word of God, thrust it from them, blaspheme and persecute it, Matt. 22, 6; Acts 13, 46; or, when they hear it, harden their hearts, Heb. 4, 2. 7; resist the Holy Ghost, Acts 7, 51; without repentance persevere in sins, Luke 14, 18; do not truly believe in Christ, Mark 16, 16; only make [godliness] an outward show, Matt. 7, 22; 22, 12; or seek other ways to righteousness and salvation outside of Christ, Rom. 9, 31. 40] **Moreover, even as God has ordained in His [eternal] counsel that the Holy Ghost should call, enlighten, and convert the elect through the Word, and that He will justify and save all those who by true faith receive Christ, so He also determined in His counsel that He will harden, reprobate, and condemn those who are called through the Word, if they reject the Word and resist the Holy Ghost**, who wishes to be efficacious and to work in them through the Word and persevere therein. And in this manner many are called, but few are chosen.

Those who reject and resist...

41] For few receive the Word and follow it; the greatest number despise the Word, and will not come to the wedding, Matt. 22, 3ff **The cause for this contempt for the Word is not God's**

foreknowledge [or predestination], but the perverse will of man, which rejects or perverts the means and instrument of the Holy Ghost, which God offers him through the call, and resists the Holy Ghost, who wishes to be efficacious, and works through the Word, as Christ says: *How often would I have gathered you together, and ye would not!* Matt. 23, 37.

42] Thus 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, for that is contrary to St. Paul, Phil. 1, 6; but the cause is that they willfully turn away again from the holy commandment [of God], grieve and embitter the Holy Ghost, implicate themselves again in the filth of the world, and garnish again the habitation of the heart for the devil. With them the last state is worse than the first, 2 Pet. 2, 10, 20; Eph. 4, 30; Heb. 10, 26; Luke 11, 25.

43] Thus far is the mystery of predestination revealed to us in God's Word, and if we abide thereby and cleave thereto, it is a very useful, salutary, consolatory doctrine; for it establishes very effectually the article that we are justified and saved without all works and merits of ours, purely out of grace alone, for Christ's sake. For before the time of the world, before we existed, yea, before the foundation of the world was laid, when, of course, we could do nothing good, we were according to God's purpose chosen by grace in Christ to salvation, Rom. 9, 11; 2 Tim. 1, 9.

...a very useful, salutary, consolatory doctrine

← Definition of Election.

44] Moreover, all *opiniones* (opinions) and erroneous doctrines concerning the powers of our natural will are thereby overthrown, because God in His counsel, before the time of the world, decided and ordained that He Himself, by the power of His Holy Ghost, would produce and work in us, through the Word, everything that pertains to our conversion.

45] Thus this doctrine affords also the excellent, glorious consolation that God was so greatly concerned about the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian, and so faithfully purposed it [provided therefor] that before the foundation of the world was laid, He deliberated concerning it, and in His [secret] purpose ordained how He would bring me thereto [call and lead me to salvation], and preserve me therein. Also, that He wished to secure my salvation so well and certainly that, since through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh it could easily be lost from our hands, or through craft and might of the devil and the world be snatched and taken from us, He ordained it in His eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and placed it for preservation in the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can pluck us, John 10, 28. 46] Hence Paul also says, Rom. 8, 28, 39: *Because we have been called according to the purpose of God, who will separate us from the love of God in Christ?* [Paul builds the certainty of our blessedness upon the foundation of the divine purpose, when, from our being called according to the purpose of God, he infers that no one can separate us, etc.]

48] Moreover, this doctrine affords glorious consolation under the cross and amid temptations, namely, that God in His counsel, before the time of the world, determined and decreed that He would assist us in all distresses [anxieties and perplexities], grant patience [under the cross], give consolation, excite [nourish and encourage] hope, and produce such an outcome as would contribute to our salvation. Also, as Paul in a very consolatory way treats this, Rom. 8, 28, 29, 35, 38, 39, that God in His purpose has ordained before the time of the world by what crosses and sufferings He would conform every one of His elect to the image of His Son, and that to everyone His cross shall and must work together for good, because they are called

according to the purpose, whence Paul has concluded that it is certain and indubitable that *neither tribulation, nor distress, nor death, nor life, etc., shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.*

50] This article also affords a glorious testimony that **the Church of God will exist and abide in opposition to all the gates of hell**, and likewise teaches which is the true Church of God, lest we be offended by the great authority [and majestic appearance] of the false Church, Rom. 9, 24. 25.

51] From this article also **powerful admonitions and warnings are derived**, as Luke 7, 30: *They rejected the counsel of God against themselves.* Luke 14, 24: *I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.* Also Matt. 20, 16: *Many be called, but few chosen.* Also Luke 8, 8. 18: *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, and: Take heed how ye hear.* Thus the doctrine concerning this article can be employed **profitably, comfortingly, and savingly** [and can be transferred in many ways to our use].

Also warnings...

52] But **a distinction** must be observed with especial care between **that which is expressly revealed** concerning it in God's Word, and **what is not revealed**. For, in addition to what has been revealed in Christ concerning this, of which we have hitherto spoken, **God has still kept secret and concealed much concerning this mystery**, and reserved it for His wisdom and knowledge alone, which we should not investigate, nor should we indulge our thoughts in this matter, nor draw conclusions, nor inquire curiously, but should adhere [entirely] to the revealed Word [of God]. This admonition is most urgently needed.

There is much God has not revealed..

53] For our curiosity has always much more pleasure in concerning itself with these matters [with investigating those things which are hidden and abstruse] than with what God has revealed to us concerning this in His Word, because we cannot harmonize it, which, moreover, we have not been commanded to do [since certain things occur in this mystery so intricate and involved that we are not able by the penetration of our natural ability to harmonize them; but this has not been demanded of us by God].

54] Thus there is no doubt that God most exactly and certainly foresaw before the time of the world, and still knows, which of those that are called will believe or will not believe; also which of the converted will persevere [in faith] and which will not persevere; which will return after a fall [into grievous sins], and which will fall into obduracy [will perish in their sins]. So, too, the number, how many there are of these on either side, is beyond all doubt perfectly known to God.

Of course, God foreknows...
But it is not given to us.

55] However, since God has reserved this mystery for His wisdom, and has revealed nothing to us concerning it in His Word, much less commanded us to investigate it with our thoughts, but has earnestly discouraged us therefrom, Rom. 11, 33ff, **we should not reason in our thoughts, draw conclusions, nor inquire curiously into these matters**, but should adhere to His revealed Word, to which He points us.

56] Thus without any doubt **God also knows and has determined** for everyone the time and hour of his call and conversion [and when He will raise again one who has lapsed]. But since this has not been revealed to us, we have the command always to keep urging the Word, **but to entrust the time and hour [of conversion] to God, Acts 1, 7.**

57] Likewise, when we see that **God gives His Word at one place** [to one kingdom or realm], but not at another [to another nation]; **removes it from one place** [people], **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 [Rom. 11, 22ff] **58] fixes a certain limit to us how far we should go**, namely, that in the one part we should recognize **God's judgment** [for He commands us to consider in those who perish the just judgment of God and the penalties of sins]. 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. And thereby [by the punishments] 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, since we act wickedly in opposition to God's Word [are ungrateful for the revealed Word, and live unworthily of the Gospel] 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 with whom He leaves it, and whom He does not harden and reject.

60] For inasmuch as our nature has been corrupted by sin, and is worthy of, and subject to, God's wrath and condemnation, **God owes to us neither the Word, the Spirit, nor grace; and when He bestows these gifts out of grace, we often thrust them from us, and make ourselves unworthy of everlasting life**, Acts 13, 46. And this His righteous, well-deserved judgment He displays in some countries, nations, and persons, in order that, when we are placed alongside of them and compared with them [and found to be most similar to them], we may learn the more diligently to recognize and praise God's pure [immense], unmerited grace in the vessels of mercy.

61] For **no injustice is done** those who are punished and receive the wages of their sins; but in the rest, to whom God gives and preserves His Word, by which men are enlightened, converted, and preserved, God commends His pure [immense] grace and mercy, without their merit.

62] When we proceed thus far in this article, we remain on the right [safe and royal] way, as it is written Hos. 13, 9: *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help.*

63] However, as regards these things in this disputation which would soar too high and beyond these limits, we should, with Paul, place the finger upon our lips, and remember and say, Rom. 9, 20: *O man, who art thou that repliest against God?*

64] For that **we neither can nor should investigate and fathom everything in this article**, the great Apostle Paul declares [teaches by his own example], who, after having argued much concerning this article from the revealed Word of God, as soon as he comes to the point where he shows what God has reserved for His hidden wisdom concerning this mystery, suppresses and cuts it off with the following words, Rom. 11, 33f : *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? that is, outside of and beyond* that which He has revealed to us in His Word.

65] Accordingly, **this eternal election of God is to be considered in Christ, and not outside of or without Christ.** For *in Christ*, the Apostle Paul testifies, Eph. 1, 4f, *He hath chosen us before the foundation of the world*, as it is written: *He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.* **This election, however, is revealed from heaven through the preaching of His Word**, when the Father says, Matt. 17, 6: *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.* And Christ says, Matt. 11, 28: *Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* And concerning the Holy Ghost Christ says, John 16, 14: *He shalt glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.* **66] Thus the entire Holy Trinity, God Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, directs all men to Christ, as to the Book of Life, in whom they should seek the eternal election of the Father.** For this has been decided by the Father from eternity, that whom He would save He would save through Christ, as He [Christ] Himself says, John 14, 6: *No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.* And again, John 10, 9: *I am the Door; by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.*

67] However, **Christ, as the only-begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, has announced to us the will of the Father, and thus also our eternal election to eternal life**, namely, when He says, Mark 1, 15: *Repent ye, and believe the Gospel; the kingdom of God is at hand.* Likewise He says, John 6, 40: *This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life.* And again [John 3, 16]: *God so loved the world, etc. [that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life].*

68] This proclamation the Father wishes **all men to hear and desires that they come to Christ; and these Christ does not drive from Him**, as it is written John 6, 37: *Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.*

69] And in order that we may come to Christ, **the Holy Ghost works true faith** through the hearing of the Word, as the apostle testifies when he says, Rom. 10, 17: *Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*, [namely] when it is preached in its truth and purity.

70] Therefore, **whoever would be saved should not trouble or harass himself with thoughts concerning the secret counsel of God**, as to whether he also is elected and ordained to eternal life, with which miserable Satan usually attacks and annoys godly hearts. **But they should hear Christ [and look upon Him as the Book of Life in which is written the eternal election], who is the Book of Life and of God's eternal election of all of God's children to eternal life:** He testifies to all men without distinction that it is God's will *that all men should come to Him* who labor and are heavy laden with sin, in order that He may give them rest and save them, Matt. 11, 28.

71] According to this doctrine of His **they should abstain from their sins, repent, believe His promise, and entirely trust in Him;** and since we cannot do this by ourselves, of our own powers, the Holy Ghost desires to work these things, namely, repentance and faith, in us through the Word and Sacraments. **72] And in order that we may attain this, persevere in it, and remain steadfast, we should implore God for His grace, which He has promised us in Holy Baptism, and, no doubt, He will impart it to us according to His promise, as He has said, Luke 11, 11ff: *If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!***

The Holy Spirit
Dwells in the Elect!

73] And since **the Holy Ghost dwells in the elect**, who have become believers, as in His temple, and is not idle in them, but impels the children of God to obedience to God's commands, believers, likewise, should not be idle, and much less resist the impulse of God's Spirit, but **should exercise themselves in all Christian virtues, in all godliness, modesty, temperance, patience, brotherly love, and give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, in order that they may doubt the less concerning it, the more they experience the power and strength of the Spirit within them.** 74] **For the Spirit bears witness to the elect that they are God's children,** Rom. 8, 16. And although they sometimes fall into temptation so grievous that they imagine they perceive no more power of the indwelling Spirit of God, and say with David, Ps. 31, 22: *I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Thine eyes*, yet they should, without regard to what they experience in themselves, again [be encouraged and] say with David, as is written *ibidem*, in the words immediately following: *Nevertheless Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto Thee.*

75] And since our election to eternal life is founded not upon our godliness or virtue, but alone **upon the merit of Christ and the gracious will of His Father**, who cannot deny Himself, because He is unchangeable in will and essence, therefore, when His children depart from obedience and stumble, He has them called again to repentance through the Word, and the Holy Ghost wishes thereby to be efficacious in them for conversion; and when they turn to Him again in true repentance by a right faith, He will always manifest the old paternal heart to all those who tremble at His Word and from their heart turn again to Him, as it is written, Jer. 3, 1: *If a man put away his wife, and she go from him and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me, saith the Lord.*

76] Moreover, the declaration, **John 6, 44, that no one can come to Christ except the Father draw him, is right and true. However, the Father will not do this without means, but has ordained for this purpose His Word and Sacraments** as ordinary means and instruments; and it is the will neither of the Father nor of the Son that a man should not hear or should despise the preaching of His Word, and wait for the drawing of the Father without the Word and Sacraments. For the Father draws indeed by the power of His Holy Ghost, however, according to His usual order [the order decreed and instituted by Himself], by the hearing of His holy, divine Word, as with a net, by which the elect are plucked from the jaws of the devil. 77] Every poor sinner should therefore repair thereto [to holy preaching], hear it attentively, and not doubt the drawing of the Father. For the Holy Ghost will be with His Word in His power, and work by it; and that is the drawing of the Father.

78] But the reason why not all who hear it believe, and some are therefore condemned the more deeply [eternally to severer punishments], is not because God had begrudged them their salvation; but it is their own

What is the reason some are not saved?
It is not God, but the man who resists

fault, as they have heard the Word in such a manner as not to learn, but only to despise, blaspheme, and disgrace it, and have resisted the Holy Ghost, who through the Word wished to work in them, as was the case at the time of Christ with the Pharisees and their adherents. 79] Hence the apostle distinguishes with especial care the work of God, who alone makes vessels of honor, and the work of the devil and of man, who by the instigation of the devil, and not of God, has made himself a vessel of dishonor. For thus it is written, Rom. 9, 22f : *God endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.*

Romans 9:22ff

80] Here, then, the apostle clearly says that **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 any great long-suffering for it. The fault, however, that they are fitted for destruction belongs to the devil and to men themselves, and not to God.

81] For all preparation for condemnation is by the devil and man, through sin, and in no respect by God, who does not wish that any man be damned; how, then, should He Himself prepare any man for condemnation? **For as God is not a cause of sins, so, too, He is no cause of punishment, of damnation; but the only cause of damnation is sin;** for *the wages of sin is death*, Rom. 6, 23. And as God does not will sin, and has no pleasure in sin, so He does not wish *the death of the sinner either*, Ezek. 33, 11, nor has He pleasure in his condemnation. For He is not willing *that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*, 2 Pet. 3, 9. So, too, it is written in Ezek. 18, 23; 33, 11: *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.* 82] And St. Paul testifies in clear words that **from vessels of dishonor vessels of honor may be made** by God's power and working, when he writes thus, 2 Tim. 2, 21: *If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.* For he who is to purge himself must first have been unclean, and hence a vessel of dishonor. But concerning the vessels of mercy he says clearly that the Lord Himself has prepared them for glory, which he does not say concerning the damned, who themselves, and not God, have prepared themselves as vessels of damnation.

83] Moreover, it is to be diligently considered that **when God punishes sin with sins**, that is, when He afterwards punishes with obduracy and blindness those who had been converted, because of their subsequent security, impenitence, and willful sins, this should **not** be interpreted to mean that it never had been God's good pleasure that such persons should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. For both these facts are God's revealed will:

When God punishes sins with sins

First, that God will receive into grace all who repent and believe in Christ.

Secondly, that He also will punish those who willfully turn away from the holy commandment, and again entangle themselves in the filth of the world, 2 Pet. 2, 20, and garnish their hearts for Satan, Luke 11, 25f, and do despite unto the Spirit of God, Heb. 10, 29, and that they shall be hardened, blinded, and eternally condemned if they persist therein.

84] Accordingly, **even Pharaoh** (of whom it is written, Ex. 9, 16; Rom. 9, 17: *In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power, and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth*) perished, not because God had begrudged him salvation, or because it had been His good pleasure that he should be damned and lost. For God is not willing that any should perish, 2 Pet. 3, 9; *He also has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live*, Ezek. 33, 11.

What about Pharaoh?

85] But that **God hardened Pharaoh's heart**, namely, that Pharaoh always sinned again and again, and became the more obdurate, the more he was admonished, that was a punishment of his antecedent sin and horrible tyranny, which in many and manifold ways he practiced inhumanly and against the accusations of his heart towards the children of Israel. And since God caused His Word to be preached and His will to be proclaimed to him, and Pharaoh nevertheless willfully reared up straightway against all admonitions and warnings, God withdrew His hand from him, and thus his heart became hardened and obdurate, and God executed His judgment upon him; for he was guilty of nothing else than hell-fire. **86]** Accordingly, the holy apostle also introduces the example of Pharaoh for no other reason than to prove by it **the justice of God which He exercises towards the impenitent and despisers of His Word**; by no means, however, has he intended or understood it to mean that God begrudged salvation to him or any person, but had so ordained him to eternal damnation in His secret counsel that he should not be able, or that it should not be possible for him, to be saved.

87] By this doctrine and explanation of the eternal and saving choice [predestination] of the elect children of God His own glory is entirely and fully given to God, that **in Christ He saves us out of pure [and free] mercy**, without any merits or good works of ours, according to the purpose of His will, as it is written Eph. 1, 5f: *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.* **88]** Therefore **it is false and wrong**

[conflicts with the Word of God] **when it is taught that not alone the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ, but that also in us there is a cause of God's election**, on account of which God has chosen us to eternal

There is not a cause in us of our election. The cause of our election is God's mercy and Christ's merit.

life. For not only before we had done anything good, but also before we were born, yea, even before the foundations of the world were laid, He elected us in Christ; and *that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, it was said unto*

her, *The elder shall serve the younger; as it is written concerning this matter, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*, Rom. 9, 11ff.; Gen. 25, 23; Mal. 1, 2f.

89] Moreover, this doctrine gives no one a cause either for despondency or for a shameless, dissolute life, namely, when men are taught that **they must seek eternal election in Christ and His holy Gospel, as in the Book of Life, which excludes no penitent sinner, but beckons and calls all the poor, heavy-laden, and troubled sinners [who are disturbed by the sense of God's wrath], to repentance and the knowledge of their sins and to faith in Christ, and promises the Holy Ghost for purification and renewal,** 90] and thus gives the most enduring consolation to all troubled, afflicted men, that they know that their salvation is not placed in their own hands,—for otherwise they would lose it much more easily than was the case with Adam and Eve in paradise, yea, every hour and moment,—but in the gracious election of God, which He has revealed to us in Christ, out of whose hand no man shall pluck us, John 10, 28; 2 Tim. 2, 19.

91] Accordingly, if any one presents the doctrine concerning the gracious election of God in such a manner that troubled Christians cannot derive comfort from it, but are thereby incited to despair, or that the impenitent are confirmed in their wantonness, it is undoubtedly sure and true that such a doctrine is taught, **not according to the Word and will of God,** but according to [the blind judgment of human] reason and the instigation of the devil.

If this doctrine does not give troubled Christians comfort and warn impenitent, then it is wrongly taught.
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92] For, as the apostle testifies, Rom. 15, 4: *Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*. But when this consolation and hope are weakened or entirely removed by Scripture, it is certain that it is understood and explained contrary to the will and meaning of the Holy Ghost.

93] By this simple, correct [clear], useful explanation which has a firm and good foundation in God's revealed will, we abide; we flee from, and shun, all lofty, acute questions and disputations [useless for edifying]; and reject and condemn whatever is contrary to these simple, useful explanations.

94] So much concerning the controverted articles which have been discussed for many years already among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession, in which some have erred and severe *controversiae* (controversies), that is, religious disputes, have arisen.

95] From this our explanation, friends and enemies, and therefore every one, may clearly infer that we have no intention of yielding aught of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and unity (which, moreover, is not in our power to do). Nor would such peace and unity, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression, have any permanency. Still less are we inclined to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and manifest, condemned errors. But we entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and are on our part sincerely inclined and anxious to advance, that unity according to our utmost power, by which His glory remains to God uninjured, nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered, no room is given to the least error, poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by faith, confirmed in new obedience, and thus justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ.