Concordia Theological Monthly

Volume 9 Article 83

12-1-1938

A Course in Lutheran Theology

Th. Engelder
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Concordia Theological Monthly

Vol. IX DECEMBER, 1938 No. 12

A Course in Lutheran Theology

(Concluded)

A second reason why a certain class of theologians charges Luther with teaching predestinarianism in *De Servo Arbitrio* is because he so emphatically and uncompromisingly teaches the monergism of grace. What these theologians — the synergists — mislike more than the "harsh, predestinarian" sayings of Luther is the *sola gratia* back of them. Because they do not like the *sola gratia*, they mislike Luther's teaching on election.

Melanchthon, repudiating Luther's monergism, embraced synergism. Febvre has told us that Melanchthon, declaring that "Luther was wrong in preaching predestination, . . . restores to the human will and human cooperation their dignity as a means of salvation. As the theologians say, 'he becomes a synergist.'" Koeberle has told us that "Melanchthon was afraid that as a result of Luther's harsh deterministic statements the practico-ethical side of faith as an inner decision might be lost." So he "formulated the teaching *de tribus causis efficientibus, concurrentibus in conversione hominis non renati.*" (See p. 241 f., above.) Huebner has told us that "in consequence thereof Melanchthon indorsed the definition of Erasmus which Luther so violently assailed: *Liberum arbitrium in homine facultatem esse applicandi se ad gratiam.*" (See p. 406, above.) Melanchthon was the foe of the *sola gratia*, and in combating Luther's teaching on predestination, he was aiming at the *sola gratia*. As Dr. Bente tells us: "The true reason why Melanchthon charged Luther and his loyal adherents with Stoicism was his own synergistic departure from the Lutheran doctrine of original sin and of salvation by grace alone. Following Melanchthon, rationalizing synergists everywhere have always held that without abandoning Luther's doctrine of original sin and of the *gratia sola*, there is no escape from Calvinism." (*Triglotta*, Hist. Intr., p. 209.)

Let us hear, once more, some of these *sola-gratia* declarations which form the heart of *De Servo Arbitrio:* "Our salvation is apart from our strength and counsel and depends on the working of God alone." (P. 72. — XVIII:1717.) "It is given us to understand both truths — that we can do nothing ourselves and that, if we do anything, God works that in us." (P. 186. — XVIII:1805.) These are certainly hard statements — to a synergist. "The will cannot will anything but evil" (p. 247. — XVIII:1853); and here Scripture "excepts no one, in any place, at any time, in any work or endeavor" (p. 350. — 1935), "so far it is from possibility that grace should allow of any particle or power of 'free will'" (p. 372. — 1951). Those who ascribe to man the *facultas se applicandi ad gratiam,* the power to cooperate with God towards conversion, the faculty of self-determination, cannot see anything nice in these statements. And what a harsh thing to say to the synergists in the Lutheran Church: "I am more than astonished, I say, how it is that words and sentences contrary and contradictory to these universally applying words and sentences have gained so much ground; which say: Some are not gone out of the way . . .; there is something in man which is good and which endeavors after good." (P. 362. — 1944.) *"Dass der freie Wille nichts sei"* — that is *anathema* to Melanchthon and his followers.

And because they find *these* statements to be hard and objectionable, the so-called "harsh deterministic" statements of Luther sound harsh in their ears. Both classes of statements inculcate the same truth. The doctrines of conversion and of election do not essentially differ. The doctrine of conversion tells us that we owe our salvation to nothing in us, but solely to God's grace. The doctrine of election tells us that we owe our salvation, our election, our conversion, to nothing in us but solely to God's grace. What Luther inculcated when speaking of conversion he inculcated when speaking of election. In connection with the statement on page 186, "that we can do nothing of ourselves," etc., he speaks, on page 185, of predestination. Again: "Grace comes by the purpose of God, or by election." (P. 360. — 1942.) "How can they merit that which is theirs and prepared for them before they had existence? . . . The kingdom is not merited but before prepared; and the sons of the kingdom are before prepared for the kingdom but do not merit the kingdom." (P. 191. — 1809.) Luther ascribes our salvation to God's grace, to God's gracious purpose, to the election of grace. And that is why the Melanchthonians object to Luther's doctrine of predestination. It is because the *sola gratia* is the heart of it. The doctrine of the monergism of grace leaves no room for the dignity, the alleged spiritual capabilities, of natural man. H. Gollwitzer puts it this way: "Melanchthon's interest lay in saving the

personality of man. . . . That led him to repudiate the essentials of predestination and to embrace synergism." (*Coena Domini*, page 79.)

The determination to cast Luther's teaching on election out of Lutheran theology, which determination springs from the synergistic abhorrence of the *sola gratia*, is intensified by considerations of another kind. The synergistic mind is swayed by rationalistic considerations. The refusal to accept both the *universalis gratia* and the *sola gratia*, the attempt to harmonize the teachings of Scripture on this matter, causes many, in the words of Dr. Pieper, "to rationalize themselves into the synergistic camp." (*Chr. Dog.*, III, p. 568.) It is an axiom in the synergistic theology that, if salvation depended absolutely on the grace of God, God could not be willing to save all men, otherwise all men would be converted. Recall Melanchthon's famous argument: "Since the promise is universal, and since there are no contradictory wills in God, some cause of discrimination must be in us why Saul is rejected and David accepted; that is, there must be some dissimilar action in these two." Why was David elected? You cannot say, argue the synergists, that he owed his election to the pure, sole grace of God; for the grace of God is universal! Therefore the reason must lie in David. He must have been a better man than Saul. Consequently, in order to uphold universal grace over against the Calvinists, you must give up the *sola gratia* and ascribe David's salvation, conversion, election, to grace *and* something in David. "Melanchthon and modern Lutherans, Dieckhoff, Luthardt, and so forth, believe that the *sola gratia* must be given up in order to safeguard the Church against Calvinism." (Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, 215. See also *Trigl.*, Hist. Intr., p. 209; *Lehre u. Wehre*, 46, p. 281.) It does seem to be an inescapable conclusion that, if God really wills to save all men, the fact that not all men are saved can be explained only by assuming that the action of saving grace is determined by a different attitude and disposition in man. In discussing the synergistic teaching of Jul. Mueller (see Baier, *Compendium*, III, p. 229), the teaching that God's grace is efficacious only when we meet Him with the spiritual powers left to us, Dr. Walther declared: "That is perfectly correct according to reason. If Scripture did not tell us that God would have all men to believe, that God offers His grace to all, all of us would embrace predestinarianism. But we are not afraid to believe what Scripture teaches. We accept God's Word and do not ask whether it is in accord with Aristotle." Luther accepted both teachings. He taught the *universalis gratia* in its fulness. But he also insisted on the *sola gratia*, on every feature of it, and was willing to bear the shame of being stigmatized as a predestinarian.

Put it another way. The synergists tell us: Either synergism or Stoicism, determinism, Calvinism. (The Calvinists, by the way, take the same position: If you refuse to accept Calvinism, you must adopt the Arminian, synergist system.) The synergists tell us that, if conversion be altogether the work of God, man's conversion must take place by compulsion, man is made a mere machine, man's personality is being sacrificed on the altar of determinism. And Luther, sad to say, offered that heinous sacrifice in *De Servo Arbitrio.* What shall we say? In the first place, Scripture teaches the *sola gratia,* the sole agency of grace in conversion. And we shall teach it in spite of the dilemma you point at our heads. And, in the second place, there is no such dilemma — either synergism or determinism. *Tertium datur!* Man is converted by grace alone, but that does not involve the thought that man is coerced into conversion. Grace *creates* the willingness. Grace does not destroy our personality. Read, read, *De Servo Arbitrio!* "His will being changed and sweetly breathed on by the Spirit of God." (P. 73; cp. p. 167.) And, generalizing, one need be neither a synergist nor a Calvinist; you can be a Biblicist — if you are willing to sacrifice your rationalism on the altar of Scripture.

Put it yet another way. Can you explain the *discretio personarum?* Luther refused to explain why of two men, both of whom God wills to save and both of whom are in equal corruption and guilt, one is saved and the other lost. Luther denounced the attempt to solve the *Cur alii, alii non?* problem in this life as presumptuous wickedness. (See p. 561 ff., above.) Melanchthon accepted the solution which blind reason suggests and demanded: "Some cause of discrimination *must* be in us"; grace operates in those and chooses those who are of better stuff than the others. You have heard how vehemently Luther rejects this solution offered by the Erasmian, synergistic reason. And it is because of this attitude of Luther "that he is charged with teaching particularism." (Pieper, *op. cit.,* II, p. 595.) "The mystery of the *discretio personarum* is the distinctive mark, ever stressed, of the Lutheran orthodoxy of the sixteenth century over against the synergists and their *causa discriminis in homine.*" (Stoeckhardt, *Roemerbrief,* p. 444.) And because Luther refused to obey reason, because he denounced the solution which operates with a difference in man, he must have been a particularist, a Calvinist, a traitor to the cause of universal grace! — Here, too, the Calvinists are in agreement with the synergists. They, too, say that reason solves the mystery of the *discretio personarum* (the only difference is that their reason prefers the other alternative — since all are in equal guilt, the reason why some are lost *must* be that God withholds His

grace from them). The Calvinists stamp the Lutheran theology as puerile and absurd because of its refusal to adopt their rational solution; Luther was mistaken when stating that mortal man must here remain silent. Poor Luther — the synergists tell him he belongs in the Calvinian camp, and the Calvinists tell him that he lacks the Calvinist spirit. He has no place to go to — except Scripture.

Another rationalistic consideration. The synergists assure us that their reason tells them that the complement of a particular election is reprobation. If God chooses some unto salvation, He necessarily predestinated the others to damnation. The Calvinists tell us that their reason tells them the same. Calvin admits that his doctrine of the twofold predestination is based on a deduction. At the third Calvinistic Congress (1936) a speaker quoted the *Institutes*, Book II, chap. 23:1, as showing that Calvin knew that he "attained the *decretum horribile* of reprobation not from direct Scripture statement but by means of deduction." (See *Ev. Theologie*, July, 1938, p. 179.) C. Hodge calls the Lutheran teaching, which rejects the predestination to damnation, illogical. (*Syst. Theol.*, II, 325.) The Calvinist L. Boettner tells us that "the doctrine of absolute predestination of course logically holds that some are foreordained to death as truly as others are foreordained to life. The very terms 'elect' and 'election' imply the terms 'non-elect' and 'reprobation.' When some are chosen out, others are left, not chosen. . . . Those who hold the doctrine of election but deny that of reprobation can lay but little claim to consistency. To affirm the former while denying the latter makes the decree of predestination an illogical and lopsided decree." (*The Ref. Doct. of Pred.*, p. 104 f.) They cannot see it otherwise: the obverse of election to life is election to death. And the synergists cannot see it otherwise. That is one of the chief reasons why so many do not dare to say that God, of His free grace, for Christ's sake, elected a definite number of men, out of the corrupt mass of mankind, for salvation and why so many denounce this teaching as predestinarianism (particular grace; twofold predestination): If there is an election of grace, there must be, by all the rules of logic, an election of wrath. We deny that this "logical" inference is sound. For it is against Scripture. There is not one syllable in Scripture pointing to a double predestination. The only predestination known to Scripture is the election of grace. Moreover, while Scripture traces our salvation back to God's election, it does not trace man's damnation back to God but exclusively to man. Nevertheless the cry has gone down through the centuries that Luther taught Calvinism in *De Servo Arbitrio;* for did he not teach that God is the sole cause of our salvation? Did he not thereby teach that God

passed by the greater part of mankind? And the cry will not cease till men listen to Scripture. "As long as a person will not learn from Scripture that monergism does not include the *praeteritio* (Acts 7:51; Rom. 10:21), it is useless to argue with him." (Pieper, *op. cit.*, II, p. 596.) He will stick to his opinion that Luther was a Calvinist.

Pronouncements of modern Lutherans, expressive of the attitude just discussed, are now in order. Luthardt is a pronounced synergist. He declares that "faith is demanded of man as his achievement (*Leistung*). . . . In consequence of the working of God's Spirit man is able either to accept the Word or to reject it." (*Komp.*, p. 384.) "The determining influence of God does not take the place of self-determination; it extends rather only to the point where self-determination sets in." (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, II, p. 567.) And Luthardt charges Luther with deterministic teaching. Why would he do that? He tells us: "If God Himself produced the acceptance of salvation, the obedience of faith, conversion; . . . then of course predestinarianism would be unavoidable. But according to the Formula of Concord [!] He operates towards the renewal of man in such a way that He makes the proper attitude towards grace, self-determination for grace, *possible.*" (*Die Lehre vom freien Willen*, p. 276. See *Lehre u. Wehre*, 1886, p. 219.) Here is the false dilemma: Unless you are a synergist, you are a Calvinist.

Dieckhoff is another thoroughgoing synergist. In his paper *Der missourische Praedestinatianismus* he writes: "It depends on man's conduct in the exercise of his freedom, which he still possesses — for grace does not act irresistibly — whether he will, by grace, become a believer or not." He, too, thinks that you cannot escape determinism unless you embrace synergism. And so he is not pleased with *De Servo Arbitrio*. He finds that "Luther placed the secret and the revealed will of God in opposition to each other after the manner of the predestinarians," and because Luther would not solve the *Cur alii, alii non?* problem after the manner of the synergists, he declares: "Luther had not yet sufficiently mastered the problem." (See *Lehre u. Wehre*, 1886, p. 193 ff.) Quoting the declaration of the Wisconsin Synod: "Scripture teaches that from eternity God elected, for Christ's sake, according to the good pleasure of His will, certain persons to eternal life, in whom God for this reason works faith and all that pertains to salvation and who accordingly will certainly be saved," he demands that this teaching be abandoned because it involves determinism. (See *Lehre u. Wehre*, 1887, p. 124.)

The situation is indeed as Hoenecke describes it: "The modern theologians are for the greater part synergists. Many of these have taken up with synergism because of their mistaken notion that it

offers the only escape from the predestinarianism of Calvin." (*Ev.-Luth. Dogm.*, III, p. 286.) It is hard to resist the blandishments of carnal reason. Theod. Harnack praises Luther for declaring: "Scripture commends the grace of God, . . . therefore free will has no existence. . . . So far is it from possibility that grace should allow of any particle or power of free will." (*Bondage*, pp. 320. 372.) But later on he indulges in these rationalistic thoughts: "What Luther, and his age with him, did not sufficiently distinguish, that is, with regard to God the metaphysical and personal relation of God to the world and with regard to man the formal and real freedom of the will, — that forced him to adopt a deterministic world-view. . . . Luther openly declared for absolute predestination." (*Luthers Theologie*, p. 183 f.) So also L. Keyser missed his step. He wrote: "When God offers the sinners salvation, their free moral agency comes into play. If this is not true, we repeat again that the grace bestowed in conversion must be 'irresistible grace'; and that is Calvinism, not Lutheranism." (*Election and Conversion*, p. 67. Cp. p. 407 ff. above.) The following disquisition shows very plainly, how men, in the words of Dr. Pieper, rationalize themselves into the synergistic camp. The *Lutheran Companion* of December 16, 1933, writes: "There is no dispute as to the fact that predestination is taught in the Bible. But just what does it mean? As I understand it, there are especially three differing interpretations. The one says in effect that God has sovereignly chosen and elected some unto salvation and some unto damnation. Since men are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, it follows that God has predestined some to believe and others not to believe in Jesus. To me this seems impossible if God (as the Scriptures declare) 'would have *all* men to be saved.' . . . The second interpretation says that God has *elected* some unto faith and salvation. It stresses just as strongly as the first that God sovereignly determines those who shall believe. It tries (as it seems to me unsuccessfully) to ignore the negative side of the question, or the election unto unbelief and damnation. If God determines who shall believe, it follows that He thereby also determines those who shall not believe. Predestination unto unbelief is the natural corollary and consequence of predestination *unto* faith." We shall have to repeat here: "As long as a person will not learn from Scripture that monergism does not include the *praeteritio*, it is useless to argue with him." "It *follows*"! But you dare not follow the judgments of reason. Reprobation (in the Calvinistic sense) is not the corollary, the necessary complement, the obverse, of election unto life. Scripture says there is no such a thing as predestination unto damnation. But it does teach the election to life. And when you accept this teaching and really

teach it, men are going to tell you that you are teaching predestination to damnation. It is a hopeless situation. Now, what sort of an election will these people substitute for the election unto faith? Naturally the synergistic election: "The third interpretation says that God predestines unto salvation those who, He foreknows, will believe in Jesus. . . . The third interpretation seems to me to be the only one that correctly safeguards both the grace of God as the sole ground and means of man's salvation and also the individual responsibility of man." Just one more sample. Dr. J. Aberly: "I would not be understood as committing myself entirely to an acceptance of the entire theology of Luther. The distinction between the *Deus revelatus* and the *Deus absconditus*, as he develops it, seems too dualistic." "If faith alone knows Jesus as divine, and if this faith itself is the work of grace, how can we escape the doctrine, be it that of Calvin or of Luther, as perpetuated by Missouri?" (*Luth. Ch. Quarterly*, 1934, p. 40; 1935, p. 81.) That is what we have been saying right along: The synergists accuse Luther of being a predestinarian not so much because of various "hard" statements as mainly because of his *sola-gratia* teaching. A man who teaches "that faith itself is the work of grace" is related to Calvin!

The teaching of *De Servo Arbitrio* on the *sola gratia* is anathema to all free-will tribes, be they synergists, Arminians, Semi-Pelagians, or Pelagians. What do you suppose the Catholic Moehler thinks of *De Servo Arbitrio*? Having quoted this book on page 32 of his *Symbolism* to prove that Luther really asserted that man is devoid of freedom; having stated, on page 88, the doctrine of the Catholic Church: "According to Catholic principles, in the holy work of regeneration we find two operations concur, the divine and the human, so that this regeneration constitutes one theandric work. . . . Through his faithful cooperation he is exalted again gradually (though never completely in this life) to that height from which he was precipitated," he concludes his discussion of Luther's teaching, on page 92, with this statement: "In other words, the doctrine of the non-cooperation of man . . . presupposes, accordingly, absolute predestination." The synergistic ideology is, in this respect, exactly that of the Catholics. No man who loathes the teaching that grace does absolutely everything likes *De Servo Arbitrio*. Witness the modernist H. F. Rall, who speaks of salvation in terms of "our higher self waiting to be achieved" and discussing the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, speaks thus: "If man is this utterly evil thing, lacking all vision of God, all desire for good, all capacity to respond, then he is no longer a moral person but a mere thing, inert and impotent. Then salvation will have to be *a one-way affair, every step of which is determined by God, and*

God alone. . . . Salvation, in effect, becomes a mechanical rather than a moral process." (*A Faith for Today,* pp. 159, 151.) They are all alike. They rail at the *sola-gratia* salvation as a mechanical affair. They do not want God to determine salvation. They do not want to be told that God must carry us through every step in the way of salvation. "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul." When M. Doerne tells us that Goethe's ire was aroused when he was told that man is radically evil and in that connection asks: "Wer hat das beunruhigende Buch 'vom verknechteten Willen' geschrieben? Wer hat dort jeden schuechternen Versuch, dem Menschen auch nur einen kleinsten Teil seiner Selbstvollendungsfaehigkeit zu retten, mit beinahe diktatorischer Gewalt niedergeschlagen?" he places his finger on the sore spot. (*Theol. Mil.,* XVI, p. 1517.) Men do not want to be told that they are absolutely nothing and God's grace everything. Goethe and Moehler and the thoroughgoing synergist have no use for the teachings of *De Servo Arbitrio.*

Here is Luther's confession of faith: "As to myself, I openly confess that I should not wish free will to be granted me, even if it could be so, nor anything else to be left in my own hands, whereby I might endeavor something towards my own salvation. . . . But now, since God has put my salvation out of the way of *my* will and has taken it *under His own,* . . . I rest fully assured and persuaded that He is faithful, . . . so that no devil, no adversities, can pluck me out of His hands, John 10:27, 28." (P. 384. — 1961 f.) Here is the Erasmian confession of faith: "I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul." Do you not see why the Erasmians have no use for *De Servo Arbitrio* and are bound to misunderstand it? Dr. Bente: "One who is a synergist is sure to misunderstand Luther, to judge him falsely, and to draw false conclusions from his statements. Um das Licht zu sehen, muss das Auge selber licht und sonnenhaft sein." (*Lehre u. Wehre,* 1910, page 72.)

Our diagnosis of the case of Luther's "Calvinism" will be confirmed by studying the parallel case of Missouri. The Synodical Conference was formerly charged with teaching Calvinism; some indeed repeat the charge at the present day. Professor Dieckhoff wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Predestinarianism of Missouri and the Formula of Concord* and wrote about the predestinarianism of Wisconsin (see above). Professor Luthardt: "Walther, rejecting the formula that election took place *intuitu fidei* and teaching an 'election unto faith,' came dangerously close to predestinarianism." (*Komp.,* p. 177.) Professor Rohnert: "The Missouri Synod taught a particular election of grace — a position which trenches on Calvinism." (*Dogm.,* p. 237.) The *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung* used

to speak of the "bitter Missourian-Calvinistic pill" which the Wisconsin Synod and the Minnesota Synod, etc., swallowed. (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, p. 215.) A Hauge Synod periodical: "Dr. Walther read into the eleventh article of the Formula of Concord Luther's early predestinarian view, a view which he, in later life, did not deem advisable to press but which, under the development given it by Dr. Walther and his colleagues, became a modified form of Calvinism." (See *Lehre u. Wehre,* 1915, p. 133.) A voice from the Augustana Synod: "Our Norwegian brethren, who affiliated with the German Missouri Synod, soon found themselves entangled . . . in the predestinarian error." (See *Lehre u. Wehre,* 1911, p. 124.) The *Lutheran Companion,* June 29, 1929: "We cannot swallow their [Missouri Synod's] lean predestinarianism, which Calvinism has been choking on these many years. In our preaching we begin with Christ as our Foundation. The Missourians begin at the top and muddle their little brains with God's election." Professor Aberly: "If faith alone knows Jesus as divine, and if this faith itself is the work of grace, how can we escape the doctrine, be it that of Calvin or of Luther, as perpetuated by Missouri?"

Why do these men charge the Synodical Conference with Calvinism? They do not offer as proof any of the ten thousand statements in Missouri and Wisconsin and Norwegian Synod writings which, stressing universal grace, repudiate Calvinism. But they offer in evidence such statements as insist on the *sola gratia,* statements which declare that faith is the product of grace alone, statements which declare that we owe our election unto salvation solely to the grace of God, statements which declare that there really and actually is an election of grace, a particular election. They submit statements of this nature and argue: Calvinism is the *logical consequence* of the Missourian teaching; the teaching that God in His grace chose some to eternal life necessarily means that He elected the others to damnation; if God elected us to faith, it follows 1) that He does not want to create faith in all and 2) that conversion takes place under compulsion (*Zwangsbekehrung*); if grace does *everything* for a man's salvation, universal grace is a myth. That is their plea according to Dr. Pieper: "People look upon it as a self-evident truth, as a matter of course: If any one teaches the *sola gratia,* teaches that conversion is *in solidum* the work of God, not effected in part by man's conduct, he is — a Calvinist and denies universal grace." (*Lehre u. Wehre,* 1899, p. 6.) That is their plea according to Luthardt and Aberly, who have just told us that, if God Himself works conversion, predestinarianism is unescapable. These men say that "that is the very quintessence of the Calvinistic teaching." (See *Lehre u. Wehre,* 1912, p. 242.) They

said at the General Pastoral Conference, Fort Wayne, 1881: "This election of individuals, this election unto faith, ushers in predestinarianism." (*Proc.*, p. 49.) Read again the quotation from the *Lutheran Companion:* "If God determines who shall believe, it follows that He thereby also determines those who shall not believe." Meusel's *Kirchliches Handlexikon* (*s. v.* "Gnadenwahlstreit"): "It cannot be denied that Calvinism, though it be repudiated by the Missouri Synod, is the necessary corollary of their teaching. For if *praedestinatio* does not take place *intuitu fidei*, this selection (*Auswahl*) of individuals must be a matter of free determination on God's part, an arbitrary procedure. . . . In order to maintain universal grace, absolute predestination must be rejected." It is hopeless. They keep on saying: Unless you assign man a part in his conversion, you must teach the absolute election of Calvin. And we shall have to keep on saying: Unless you learn from Scripture that monergism does not include the *praeteritio*, — and it does not according to Acts 7:51 and Rom. 10:21, even though our reason insists that it does, — we cannot argue the matter from a common ground. We say that their deductions are false. And they virtually say that Scripture is wrong.

Dr. J. Stump, writing in the *Lutheran* of December 13, 1934, declares that the Missourian teaching (election not *intuitu fidei* but unto faith) "sounds very much like the Calvinistic doctrine of election to faith." Yet, he says, the Missourians repudiate and condemn Calvinism, and we believe that they are not Calvinists. However, "the trouble with many persons outside of Missouri is that they cannot see how anybody can hold the Missouri doctrine of election without falling into Calvinism. Yet evidently it can be done." Yes, we can do it, and you could do it, too, if you would learn from Scripture that monergism does not imply the preterition. You must rid yourself of the idea that, if your faith is the result of God's gracious election, or (what amounts to the same thing) the result of the monergism of grace in conversion, God withholds His saving grace from the rest. Notice also that these people shy away from the terms election, particular election, selection of persons. Rohnert is horrified to hear Missouri speak of "a *particular* election of grace." Meusel identifies: "*particular* election" and "absolute predestination." Gentlemen, talk sense! When you said that reprobation is the necessary complement of election, that at least made sense, according to reason. But it makes no sense when you say that there is an eternal election but deny that there is a *particular* election. An election which takes in all is no *election.* Any election is particular. It makes no sense when men want to use the Scriptural term election, but refuse to say with Scripture that God elected, chose, individuals, particular persons, a definite

number of them. Do not make Scripture speak nonsense! — What really bothers these people is their notion that a particular election would and must imply particular grace. Let it be said for the thousandth time: The monergism of grace, the fact that God chose us as His own out of pure grace, does not imply any sort of preterition. Learn that truth from Scripture. Learn above all the central truth: Salvation is by grace alone. If you have learned that a man's conversion, his eternal election, was not brought about in any way, in any respect, by himself, by his condition, conduct, attitude, but is altogether the result of God's grace, you will no longer accuse those who stand four-square on the *sola gratia* of leaning towards Calvinism.

Because Walther was a *consistent sola-gratia* theologian, he is under suspicion of being a Calvinist. "When they hear from us this statement: 'Out of pure mercy God has elected us to the praise of the glory of His grace; God vindicates for Himself exclusively the glory of saving us,' etc., they say: 'That is a horrible decree! If that were true, God would be partial. No; He must have beheld something in men that prompted Him to elect this or that *particular* man. When He beheld something good in a person, He elected Him.'" (Walther, *Law and Gospel*, p. 40.)

This section on the "predestinarianism of Missouri" is not a digression. It shows why it is not a surprising thing that *De Servo Arbitrio* has been stigmatized as a Calvinistic treatise. We of the Synodical Conference are not at all surprised at the situation.

Summa summarum, was Luther a determinist? Yes, he was — a Biblical determinist. He declared with a loud voice that our salvation is due to nothing else than God's gracious purpose and firm determination. We poor sinners like to hear that truth. We like to read books written on the text "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works but according to *His own purpose and grace*, which was given to us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*," 2 Tim. 1:9. These are precious statements: "Grace comes by the purpose of God, or by election, . . . not by any devoted effort or endeavor of our own." (P. 360.) Do you know to what you, a believer, owe your faith and salvation? That "was already determined by the prescience and predestination of God. . . . Jacob attained unto it solely by the grace 'of Him that calleth.'" (P. 253. — 1857 f.) Thank God for His gracious determination! Men like Rall loathe such a doctrine. "Then salvation will have to be a one-way affair, every step of which is determined by God, and God alone." We rejoice in that gracious order of salvation which leaves nothing to man's self-determination. We know that at every step man would determine himself into perdition. Read again page 384 (XVIII, 1961 f.)! We thank Luther for having

restored to the Church the sweet doctrine of the determinism of grace and thank God that our dear Lutheran Church has inscribed it on her standards. "God the Lord draws the man whom He wishes [decreed] to convert, *quem convertere decrevit.*" (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., II, § 60.) "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 bring them thereto." (F. C., Thor. Decl., XI, § 23.) Our Confession leaves nothing to man's self-determination in the matter of salvation but everything to God's determination. "Without any doubt God also knows and has determined for every one the time and hour of his call and conversion." (§ 56.) *Everything* — "the eternal election of God . . . 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." (§ 8.) We poor, helpless sinners rejoice in the determinism of grace as proclaimed by the Formula of Concord in words borrowed from *De Servo Arbitrio:* "God deliberated concerning it [the salvation of every Christian] and in His purpose ordained how He would bring me thereto and preserve me therein. . . . He ordained it [my salvation] 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." (§ 45.)

The indictment of *De Servo Arbitrio* stresses three chief points. It charges Luther with false teaching concerning (1) the *discretio personarum,* (2) concerning the *Deus absconditus,* and (3) with Calvinistic teaching in general. It submits, in addition, two subsidiary points. The first of these supporting arguments is that the Lutheran Church in her last confession, the Formula of Concord, repudiated these teachings of Luther. If that is true, Luther, as far as *De Servo Arbitrio* is concerned, cannot qualify as a Lutheran theologian, and *De Servo Arbitrio* cannot serve as a textbook in a course in Lutheran theology.

They say that the Formula of Concord refused to accept Luther's teaching on predestination and the related subjects. Dieckhoff goes so far as to say that in rejecting Stoicism, the Formula had Luther in mind. (See preceding article.) Others say, more moderately, that the Formula of Concord modified Luther's teaching, polished off the rough Calvinistic spots. That is asserted also by non-synergistic theologians. "The Lutheran Church saw more clearly than did Luther and, by going beyond him, showed her independence of human opinion, even if presented by her Luther." (K. Ermisch, *Predestination,* p. 32.)

Did the Formula of Concord correct Luther? Did it junk certain teachings of *De Servo Arbitrio?* To begin with, read once more the quotations from the *Formula* you read a minute ago. The Formula certainly accepted Luther's teaching that we owe our salvation to God's grace, to God's eternal election of grace.

To enter more fully into the matter, we ask: Which of Luther's teachings did the Formula correct, modify, change? Luther's teaching on the *discretio personarum,* his refusal to answer the *Cur alii, alii non?* question? The Formula states: "When we see that God gives His Word at one place but not at another; . . . 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. 11:22 ff.) fixes a certain limit how far we should go. . . . 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." (Thor. Decl., XI, § 57 ff.) That is exactly what Luther said. Nothing is modified, nothing qualified, nothing toned down. Dr. Pieper points it out: "The Formula of Concord confesses, clearly and at length, that very truth on account of which the 'early' Luther is being charged with particularism, the truth that, comparing the saved and the lost, not a difference in guilt and a difference in conduct but the same guilt and the same evil conduct must be predicated." (*Chr. Dogm.,* II, p. 597.) Prof. W. Curtis, University of Aberdeen, praises the Formula for remaining silent on the *Cur alii* question: "It may be that we owe it to the undaunted efforts of these men that we have learned either to practise or at least to respect undogmatic silence upon sacred mysteries left undisclosed by Holy Writ itself." (See *Theol. Monthly,* 1921, p. 366.) Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom* takes the Formula to task on this account. "If God sincerely wills the salvation of all men, as Article XI teaches, and yet only a part are actually saved, there must be some difference in the attitude of the saved and the lost towards converting grace, which is denied in Article II." And Schaff adds: "The Lutheran system, then, to be consistent, must rectify itself." (I, 330.) Men may praise or censure the Formula on this point, but they agree that the Formula refuses to solve the mystery. The Formula and Luther are in full accord.

Did the Formula modify Luther's teaching concerning the *Deus absconditus?* Luther said (see page 573 ff., above): "Who are we that we should inquire into the cause of the divine will? . . . Christ gives no other reason why the Gospel is hidden from the

wise and revealed unto babes than this: So it pleased the Father.... It is here the hand is to be laid upon the mouth, and it is here we are to reverence what lies hidden, to adore the secret counsels of the divine Majesty and to exclaim with Paul: 'Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?' Rom. 9:20." And Luther also said: "Let the man acquaint himself with the God Incarnate, or, as Paul saith, with Jesus crucified, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.... In the present case we are to consider *His Word only* and to leave that will inscrutable." And that is exactly what the Formula states. First: "In addition to what has been revealed in Christ concerning this, God has still kept secret and concealed much concerning this mystery.... In these and similar questions Paul (Rom. 11:22 ff.) fixes a certain limit to us how far we should go." And secondly: "With this revealed will of God we should concern ourselves...." (§ 52 ff. § 33.) The Formula and Luther think the same thoughts and speak the same language. — Study in this connection Dr. Pieper's article in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1886, p. 193 ff.: *"Luther und die Konkordienformel."*

Did the Formula modify, eliminate, Luther's particular election? People, you know, have been telling us that the teaching of a particular election is strongly symptomatic of the predestinarian disease. So, if the Formula intended to eliminate Luther's alleged predestinarianism, it would have been very clear and outspoken on this point. And it does declare, clearly and emphatically, for — particular election. Paragraph 23 states: "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 is to be saved through Christ, also ordained that in the way just mentioned," etc. That is particular election, election of individuals, *Einzelwahl*, as plain as language can make it. But for some it is not plain enough. W. Walther asks "whether the Formula of Concord really does teach that God in eternity elected, selected (*Auswahl*), particular persons, individually, unto salvation." He finds that "only in one passage the Formula *seems* to say that," and quotes our passage, § 23. But he objects, first, that the Latin for "in grace considered" is *"praescivit,"* and secondly, that "it is unthinkable that the Formula of Concord, treating the matter so thoroughly, would mention the election of particular persons only once if the Formula really wanted to teach that." (*Lehrbuch der Symbolik*, p. 306.) However, the Latin is "*clementer* praescivit" and *clementer* proves that "praescivit" expresses not mere knowledge but an act of God's will. And this passage is not the only one. There are many more. But it would be useless to quote them to one who waves aside § 23. We might mention here that Frank's *Die Theologie*

der Konkordienformel (with which we cannot agree on all points) finds the *Einzelwahl* plainly taught in the Formula. Frank devotes several pages to this matter. He takes issue with Luthardt, who declares that the phrase used in the II. Article *"Trahit quem convertere decrevit"* is dangerous, a phrase pointing to the old erroneous teaching of a particular election, "traces of which error are found in the XI. Article." Frank declares: "Not traces merely! No, the Formula teaches it most distinctly." He points out that *clementer* praescivit is more than simple *praevisio;* it is the equivalent of the German "in Gnaden bedacht," the basic draft of Chemnitz reading: "Gott habe in seinem ewigen Rat, nach seinem gnaedigen Vorsatz, bedacht." He also takes the time to point to other passages, for instance, § 5: "The eternal election of God, however, *vel praedestinatio,* 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." Study, by the way, two more important remarks of Frank. First: "According to the Formula you touch the Christian's assurance of salvation at its most tender point and wound it sorely if you take away the particular election of grace." Second: "Particular election does not mean particular grace." (IV, p. 166. — 171.)

The only possible way to demonstrate that the Formula of Concord rectified Luther's teaching on predestination is to set up the premise that Luther taught the Calvinian error, to show then that the Formula teaches universal grace, and then conclude: There you are. Quite simple; only the premise is wrong, absolutely wrong. W. Walther: "Luther taught the twofold predestination, and in order not to conflict with Scripture, he distinguished between the hidden and the revealed will of God. These two teachings, set up by Luther to support his real thesis (salvation by grace alone), the Formula does not accept." (*Op. cit.,* p. 305.) No; the Formula does not accept the teaching of the double predestination. But neither did Luther. If the Formula had Luther in mind in insisting on universal grace, its efforts were wasted. As to the distinction between the hidden and the revealed will of God, Dieckhoff enlarges on W. Walther's statement, quotes § 34: "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: 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. . . . *Hoc enim esset Deo contradictorias voluntates affingere,* that is: For this would be to assign contradictory wills to God," and then declares: "Luther taught the two *'contradictoriae*

voluntates,' which the Formula rejects in § 34." But Dieckhoff cannot establish his premise that Luther taught contradictory wills in God. He attempts it, but the passages he quotes — those which we have quoted above on the hidden and the revealed will — are, unfortunately for his line of argument, matched by statements of the Formula. The result would be that, when the Formula condemns those who assign contradictory wills to God, it condemns itself. — A word on the *seeming* contradiction confronting us here: "The Formula of Concord bids men refrain from occupying their thoughts with the secret judgments of God, which do seem to contradict the revealed Word and which we 'cannot harmonize' (§§ 52, 53) with the revealed Word, and to adhere in faith solely to the revealed Word. And that is exactly the position of Luther in *De Servo Arbitrio.*" (*Lehre u. Wehre,* 1886, p. 198.)

Did the Formula modify and eliminate Luther's alleged predestinarian views? If it set out to do so, it failed miserably. For a lot of men charge the *Formula* with teaching Calvinism. "The predestinarianism of the Formula of Concord and of Calvinism were but slightly different," says J. F. Hurst in his *History of the Christian Church,* II, p. 509. Others say the same. The latest pronouncement that came to our notice was made by Edmund Schlink, who bestows high praise on the Formula, "even though *one is compelled to dissent from its predestination doctrine* on the basis of Scripture and the other Confessions of the Lutheran Church." (*Theol. Ex. heute,* Heft 53, 1937, p. 65.) We just heard Luthardt stating that he found traces of predestinarianism in the Formula. And we all know that "the synergists have always charged that the Formula of Concord eliminates the universal grace *in effect* because, while teaching the *gratia universalis,* it so strongly stresses the *sola gratia* . . . and because it insists that the question why some are converted and saved and others not belongs to the unsearchable judgments and ways of God." (Pieper, *op. cit.,* II, p. 23. See *Trigl.,* Hist. Intr., p. 198.) It seems the Formula did not succeed very well in ridding theology of Luther's suspicious teachings. It is under suspicion itself.

And now let us get at the root of the matter. We have seen what constitutes the real grievance of the synergists against *De Servo Arbitrio:* Luther must be a Calvinist because he insists on the *sola gratia;* for you cannot teach *both, universalis gratia* and *sola gratia.* It follows that, if it is indeed true that the Formula rectified Luther's erroneous teaching, it had to modify the *sola-gratia* teaching. And this is the task these men have set themselves: they must show that the Formula teaches that something of free will is left to man, that the Formula renounced Luther's main thesis *Dass der freie Wille nichts sei.* We are not now

dealing with those synergists who face the issue squarely and charge the Formula with Calvinism because of its *sola-gratia* teaching. But we are telling those who insist that the Formula teaches a form of synergism and thus eliminates predestinarianism that they have set themselves an impossible task. What — the Formula of Concord ascribes spiritual powers to the unconverted? That Formula which declares: "All *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 the Holy Ghost, would produce and work in us, through the Word, *everything* that pertains to our conversion" (XI, § 44)? That Formula which contains Article II, "Of Free Will," the article which sets forth with all the vigor and power of Luther, *dass der freie Wille nichts sei?* If you read the statement: "In man's nature since the Fall, before regeneration, there is not the least spark of spiritual power remaining . . . by which he is able to aid, work, or concur in working anything towards his conversion, either wholly or half or in any, even the least or most inconsiderable, part" (§ 7); and the statement: "In spiritual and divine things man is like a log and a stone" (§§ 20, 24), you will say that it is impossible for any man to find synergistic views expressed in the Formula. But Luthardt thinks he can quote the Formula in his favor. He says: "It is true, the Formula frequently presents the matter in such a way *as though God alone wrought all* ('conversion is not only in part, but altogether an operation, gift, present, and work of the Holy Ghost alone,' § 89). However, the true meaning of such statements is seen in the light of the *potest apprehendere* and the *quam primum inchoavit* (§ 65). . . . According to the Formula of Concord, God operates toward the renewal of man in such a way that He makes the proper attitude towards grace, self-determination, *possible.*" (*Die Lehre vom freien Willen,* p. 276.) W. Walther, too, thinks that the Formula teaches self-determination. "According to the Formula of Concord the Holy Ghost so influences the natural man that he *can* refrain from resisting, *can* act *mere passive, can* permit the work of the Spirit. *If he decides to do this,* the Holy Ghost can effect conversion in him, can give him repentance and faith." (*Op. cit.,* p. 317.) Dr. Aberly, too, thinks that the Formula departed from Luther's teaching on the *sola gratia.* "The Formula of Concord reiterates in chap. II the fact that man is not a stone or block. It is true, it dwells on his being capable chiefly of resisting the grace of God. But not to resist — what is it in the final analysis but to receive?" (See page 410 above.) These men are desperate. They have set out to show that the Formula does not accept Luther's teaching, that it does not find natural man

utterly helpless — and how they torture and mangle the Formula in their desperation! They do not like to hear the Formula say that natural man is "like a log or a stone," incapable of any spiritual movement. Frank says: "Der *lapis* und *truncus* des Bekenntnisses ist, wie maenniglich bekannt, der modernen Theologie ein Stein des Anstosses geworden. Auch Thomasius sagt: 'Ich wollte, die Konkordienformel haette diesen Ausdruck nie gebraucht.'" (*Op. cit.*, p. 138.) Dr. Aberly, too, does not like it. And he tells the world: "The Formula reiterates the fact that man is not a stone or a block." Sure enough, the Formula says that in §§ 62, 73, 89. But it also says that he *is* like a stone or block. And it tells men like Thomasius and Aberly that the unconverted man is "much worse than a stone and block" in that he resists the Word, §§ 24, 59. No, the Formula is in full accord with Luther. It did not strike out the *truncus* and *lapis*. "Die Konkordienformel eignet sich vollstaendig, bis zum *truncus* und *lapis*, die *urreformatorische* Lehre vom *servum arbitrium* an." (Frank, *l. c.*) As to Luthardt's mishandling of the Formula: the *potest apprehendere* is a correct quotation, as far as the bare words go. § 83 states: "Conversion is such a change through the operation of the Holy Ghost that . . . man *can accept* the offered grace." But these words do not make a distinction between the ability to believe and believing itself. They rather state that conversion consists in this, that man is given the *power to believe* and *to believe*. Will anybody impute to the Formula the nonsense of saying that here is a man who has the power to believe but has not yet decided whether he will believe? Can a corpse be given the powers of life and for a while refrain from living? (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, II, p. 567. *Proceedings, Eastern Dist.*, 1895, p. 67.) As to the *quam primum inchoavit*, § 65 (*Trigl.*, p. 907), that is a very strong antisynergistic statement. Read it! It says that *before* a man is converted, he has no spiritual powers whatever.

Did the Formula of Concord modify Luther's teaching on the monergism of grace in any way? Let the Confession speak for itself: "In these words Dr. Luther, of blessed and holy memory, ascribes to our free will no power whatever to qualify itself for righteousness. . . . Even so Dr. Luther wrote of this matter also in his book *De Servo Arbitrio* in opposition to Erasmus, . . . to which we hereby appeal and refer others." (II, § 44. — Supplementary reading: *Trigl.*, Hist. Intr., p. 209 ff. 225 f. 250 ff.)

The second allegation made in support of the charge that *De Servo Arbitrio* is not a safe book is that Luther himself renounced some of its teachings. They say that in his younger days Luther was a predestinarian; as he advanced in evangelical knowledge, he discarded much of what he had held in *De Servo Arbitrio*. We have

quoted several such statements above. As early as 1559 men said that Luther had retracted his book against Erasmus. (*Trigl.*, Hist. Intr., p. 225; also p. 224.) The latest pronouncement of this kind we found in an article by Landesbischof a. D. Dr. Schoeffel: "Luther taught: *sola fide*, by faith alone; *sola gratia*, by grace alone. . . . But on one point, that concerning predestination, Luther may have been wrong, and *on this point he later held more moderate views.*" (See *Kirchl. Zeitschrift*, 1937, p. 80.) "Men are pronouncing it as a sort of ritual: though Luther did not directly retract his book against Erasmus, he in his later years abandoned it." (Pieper, *op. cit.*, II, p. 594.)

If this were so, that would prove nothing as to the value of *De Servo Arbitrio*, but it *would* cause some to look askance at it. So we shall have to examine this allegation. But we shall have to do it very briefly. The year is drawing to its close, and our space is running short.

In the first place we shall ask: Which particular teaching of *De Servo Arbitrio* did Luther later on modify or drop? Was it the teaching of election in general? Theod. Harnack tells us that "Luther later arrived at the point where he strongly repudiated the absolute predestination he had taught in *De Servo Arbitrio* and insisted on the universality of grace and the power and comfort of the means of grace. . . . Luther had gone too far in *De Servo Arbitrio;* but he cast off these views when he found that they did not agree with his basic teaching, particularly his teaching on the means of grace." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 154, 193 ff.) And for proof of his contention that Luther as much as abandoned his teaching on election Harnack cites a passage from Luther's exposition of Gal. 1:4, 5. The passage reads: "When Satan brings up the matter of predestination in order to distress you with the question whether you are elected to eternal life or not, points to the dreadful examples of God's wrath and judgment and to the fact that the number of the elect is small and the number of the damned large, — be wise and on no account let him entangle you in these perilous thoughts and disputations lest you climb too high and break your neck; but fight against these thoughts and say: It is not my business to investigate things that are beyond me and are unsearchable; I shall abide by the words of St. Paul, who tells me that Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us, etc." (IX:795.) Now, what are the facts in the case? First, Luther did not teach the absolute predestination in *De Servo Arbitrio.* He could not well abandon what he never held. Secondly, Luther's insistence on the *gratia universalis* was not a later development in his theology. He stressed it as strongly in *De Servo Arbitrio* as in his latest writings. (See p. 492 ff. above.) And thirdly, the pas-

sage just quoted and the many other similar passages in which Luther urges the distressed child of God to look to the Gospel for the assurance of salvation and to view election through the wounds of Christ, as, for instance, the exposition of Gen. 26:9: "We must not inquire concerning the predestination of the hidden God but acquiesce in that which is revealed by the call and ministry of the Word. . . . If you will hear Him [Christ], and are baptized in His name and love His Word, then you are certainly elected and fully assured of your salvation. . . . Gaze upon the wounds of Christ and the blood shed for you; there predestination will shine forth" (II, 176 ff.), these passages were not written for the purpose of ridding theology of the doctrine of election but for the purpose of giving the Christian the glorious comfort of this doctrine. And mark well, Luther urged the need of beginning with the wounds of Christ as strongly and insistently in *De Servo Arbitrio* as in any of his later writings. "We have to do with Him as far as He is clothed in, and delivered to us by, His Word. . . . In the present case we are to consider His Word only and to leave that will inscrutable. . . . Let a man acquaint himself with the God Incarnate." (P. 172. — 181.) He did this already in his lectures on Romans, in 1515 and 1516. "There he admonishes his hearers to immerse themselves in the wounds of Christ before they approach the mystery of election." (Hamel, *Der junge Luther und Augustin*, II, p. 110.) You want us to believe that Luther's teaching on election in *De Servo Arbitrio* is not safe because he had not yet grasped the nature and importance of the means of grace? Why, in none of his later writings is the need of the means of grace more forcefully presented than in *De Servo Arbitrio:* In the Gospel you find Christ and the assurance of salvation and the assurance of election. (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, II, p. 595.)

Again, did Luther rectify and recant his teaching that election is *particular*, that God elected individuals *unto faith*, etc.? It is this point which particularly rouses the ire of the synergists. Many years later Luther said in a sermon on 1 Pet. 1:2: "God the Father, as the apostle declares, has predestinated *you* that you should be His elect children. . . . *You* are chosen by God . . . that you should obey and believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ." (IX:1116.) The election unto faith, the Augustinian *electi sumus ut credamus*, as taught 1 Pet. 1:1, 2 (see Stoeckhardt, *Commentary on First Peter*, p. 24), is clearly taught by the "later" Luther. Let this one passage suffice. It proves sufficiently that, if "particular election" and "election unto faith" is one of the "harsh" teachings of Luther, he never softened it.

Once more, did Luther modify the *sola-gratia* teaching of *De Servo Arbitrio*? We are putting this question to the synergists.

One can object to certain harsh statements of Luther without being a synergist; but the real reason why the synergists object to them is because they object to Luther's teaching on the *sola gratia*. We have heard Luthardt declare that, if faith is in every way the work of God, predestinarianism is unavoidable. And when he states that "Luther gradually abandoned his deterministic views" (*Komp.*, p. 224), he means that the later Luther no longer ascribed conversion and salvation absolutely and unreservedly to God's grace. Must we produce quotations to show that Luther to the end of his days maintained that man is unable to cooperate towards his conversion and that we owe our salvation solely to God's grace, His gracious election? The Formula of Concord has set down a number of such quotations from Luther, one from the Smalcald Articles, which "rejects the error that man has a free will to do good." (*Trigl.*, p. 893 f.) Read, in addition, the following from the lectures on Genesis: "In those things that concern God and are above us man has no free will but is certainly like clay in the hand of the potter; it is wrought upon and itself works nothing." (I, p. 103.) And they say that Luther softened down his *sola-gratia*, his "deterministic" teaching! One more passage, on Gal. 1:15: "God had appointed, when I was yet in my mother's womb, that . . . He would mercifully call me back again from the midst of my cruelty and blasphemy, by His mere grace, into the way of truth and salvation. . . . Thus Paul cutteth off all deserts and giveth glory to God alone but to himself all shame and confusion, as though he would say: All the gifts, both small and great, spiritual as well as corporal, which God purposed to give unto me, and all the good things which at any time in all my life I should do, God Himself had before appointed when I was yet in my mother's womb, where I could neither wish, think, nor do any good thing. Therefore this gift also came unto me by the mere predestination and free mercy of God before I was yet born." (IX, p. 104.) Sounds exactly like *De Servo Arbitrio*.

If you look up this quotation, you will also find this: "God had appointed, when I was yet in my mother's womb, that I should so rage against His Church." That fully matches any of those "harsh" statements which they say Luther later repented of. (On the matter itself see Acts 4:27, 28 and Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, p. 598.)

Luther did not recede from the position he took in *De Servo Arbitrio*. Prof. Sasse — and there are others — agrees with us. Setting forth "the view of the God of Predestination which Luther develops in his great work against Erasmus," he declares: "That is the view to which Luther clung to the end of his days." (*Here We Stand*, p. 139.) Professor Sasse does not present this view cor-

rectly. He thinks Luther taught "absolute predestination." But that circumstance only adds weight to his testimony.

And now, in the second place, let Luther himself take the stand and tell us whether he ever thought that *De Servo Arbitrio* was in need of revision. Some say that beginning with 1527 Luther tacitly abandoned the particularistic teaching on predestination. (See *Lehre u. Wehre*, 1871, p. 161.) In 1528 Luther wrote his *Large Confession*, which he concludes with these words: "This is my faith, for thus all true Christians believe, and thus the Holy Scriptures teach us. And of that *which may* be *lacking here* my books will bear sufficient witness, especially those that have appeared of late, *within the last four or five years.* I beg all pious hearts to bear witness to this and to pray for me that I may remain steadfast in this faith to the end of my days. For if in great trials or in perils of death I should (which God may in mercy prevent!) say something different, it shall have no force, and I wish hereby to have confessed openly that it is wrong and instigated by the devil. May my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, blessed forevermore, help me! Amen." (XX:1104.) In this *Confession* Luther specifically rejects and condemns "all teaching which glorifies our free will." Moreover, he refers all men to his books written within the last four or five years, and that certainly includes *De Servo Arbitrio* (1525). If Luther had renounced any of the teachings of *De Servo Arbitrio*, here was the place to announce it.

In the year 1534 Luther reviewed his controversy with Erasmus in a long letter to Amsdorf. (XVIII:1990 ff. Translated in Cole-Atherton, *The Bondage of the Will*, pp. 397—419.) Luther sets down "why I judged it best not to answer Erasmus any farther. . . . And if I could have my will, Erasmus should be exploded from our schools altogether. Let him be left to the papists only, who are worthy of such an apostle." Now, if Luther had by this time found that some of the teachings he had upheld against Erasmus were erroneous, honesty would have compelled him to make this answer to Erasmus: Here you were right, and I was wrong. We are all agreed, Lutherans, synergists, and papists, that Luther always had the courage of his convictions. But — we would now have to admit — in this instance Luther was not man enough to admit that he had been mistaken.

Nor was Luther ready in 1537 to revise *De Servo Arbitrio*. In a letter to Wolfgang Capito he declared that this book together with the Catechism "fully expressed his thoughts." (See p. 242 above.) One of his best books — but to be read with caution!

Finally, towards the end of his life, Luther took occasion to tell all the world that he had not receded from the teaching which

he had championed in *De Servo Arbitrio.* In his *Commentary on Genesis,* begun in 1536 and completed in 1545, he reaffirmed those very points which have been listed as "harsh" sayings and which, they say, he later retracted. "Accordingly, in the book *De Servo Arbitrio* and elsewhere I have taught that we must distinguish when we treat of the knowledge of God or, rather, of His essence. For one must argue either concerning the hidden or the revealed God. Concerning God in so far as He has not been revealed to us, there is no faith, no knowledge, no cognition, whatever. Here one must apply the saying: "What is above us does not concern us (*Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos*)," etc. (II, 176. *Trigl.,* Hist. Intr., p. 224.) Again: "We are not permitted to occupy ourselves with these high thoughts and to doubt predestination; these thoughts are impious, wicked, and satanic. When, therefore, the devil attacks thee, say only: 'I believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom I have no doubt that He became incarnate, suffered and died for me, and that into His death I have been baptized.' At this reply the temptation will cease, and Satan will turn his back," etc. (Translated in H. E. Jacobs, *A Summary of the Chr. Faith,* p. 579.) If you can find one single statement in Luther's review of *De Servo Arbitrio* which looks like a retraction, we have lost our case.— Some say it is a quasi-retraction. Frank declares "that in this section of the Genesis commentary Luther does not indeed formally retract his earlier utterances, but he does, in effect, rectify and modify them." (*Op. cit.,* I, p. 130.) Luther does not modify anything, but he does set right those who misunderstand, misapply, and abuse his statements. "It was my desire to urge and set forth those things, because after my death many will quote my books and by them try to prove and confirm all manner of errors and follies of their own. Now, among others, I have written that all things are absolute and necessary, but at the same time (and very often at other times) I added that we must look upon the revealed God. . . . Now I transmit them orally too, *viva voce;* hence I am excused." (II:185. *Trigl.,* p. 897 f.) Luther stood by his *De Servo Arbitrio* to the end.

If you cannot believe Luther, believe Moehler, the Catholic theologian, who is well acquainted with Luther's writings. He says: "We are unacquainted with any such recantation on the part of Luther; and the Formula of Concord gives an express sanction to the writing of Luther against Erasmus." (*Symbolism,* page 33.)

People are saying hard things about *De Servo Arbitrio.* Do not let that turn you against the book. If you study it attentively, inclusive of its "hard" sayings, you will acquire good theology. You will learn (1) that free will can accomplish nothing towards

salvation. You will learn (2) to trust in the all-sufficient grace of God. And you will learn (3) to remain silent where Scripture has not spoken and to accept the teaching of Scripture despite the vociferation of your reason. He is a good theologian who will not limit the *gratia universalis* because of what Scripture says concerning the *sola gratia* nor deny the *sola gratia* because of what Scripture says concerning the *gratia universalis*. What Luther wrote in *De Servo Arbitrio*, "ut diligenter legantur, omnes hortamur." Your Formula of Concord so charges you. (Sol. Decl., II, § 44.)

TH. ENGELDER

The Arrival of the Saxons in St. Louis

Mr. J. F. Ferdinand Winter, teacher in Altenburg, Mo., 1839 to 1873, in a letter written to Germany in 1839, tells us about the arrival of his group of Saxon immigrants in St. Louis. They had crossed the ocean on the *Republik*, arriving in New Orleans January 12, 1839. The journey up the Mississippi was made on the *Knickerbocker*, which pulled up at the wharf in St. Louis, January 30, 3 P. M. He says, "It was high time," as there was much serious sickness in the group. Those who had arrived earlier on the *Rienzi* and the *Clyde* (Bishop Stephan and his group, on the *Selma*, did not reach St. Louis until February 19) had made arrangements for quarters. "In St. Louis," he adds, "we still experienced some of the cold of winter, especially those who were quartered in houses made of mere boards hammered together, of which there are many here. In a short time some twenty of our friends died. It was with a heavy heart that I accompanied such remains to their resting-place. . . . At this time we had our church services in the basement of the Episcopal church, where usually the pastors alternated in conducting them, and many German immigrants attended as well as Americans."

After relating something of the efforts made to establish Stephan's authority over the entire Saxon group, he declares that Stephan was again making his nightly "*Spaziergaenge*" with his friends but that he did not take part, because he considered it an unseemly practise, and, besides, he was too tired, after teaching school all day, to devote the nights, meant for rest, to running around.

Winter, as also Guenther in his *Schicksale und Abenteuer*, refers to Pastor Stephan's free use of the funds in the *Kreditkasse* during this period. Winter also remarks that the long stay in St. Louis helped to lessen the balance in the treasury, as rent and board for so many was very expensive. Finally, according to