

## “EN REDEGJOERELSE”

### An Accounting to the Congregations of the Norwegian Synod

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It is well known to you that we now for several years have been attacked and accused of teaching false doctrines regarding election or the election of grace. Our teaching has been called Calvinistic. The teachings with which we have been charged are of two kinds: some, which we have never believed and never taught; these we have publicly repudiated, but we have continued to be accused of them anyway; others, which we actually have taught, because they are expressly taught in God's Word and confessed by the Lutheran Church in its public confessions. Therefore we cling to these in spite of all attacks. We do not accept as our own a single doctrine which is not clearly based on the Word of God and which cannot be shown to be in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church.

We owe our congregations an accounting for what we teach and confess; and although we dare to believe that our hearers both know our testimony and will judge it by what they hear of us and not by what others say, we have still considered it our duty to present to you now this our common complete accounting, in which we hope no essential question that concerns the disputed doctrines has been unanswered.

We present this accounting to you, then, in the name of the Lord, for testing by the Word of God.

#### I

Concerning the Universal Grace of God, our Faith, Teaching, and Confession is as follows:

1. God will have all men to be saved. He is not willing that any sinner should perish and is not responsible for the damnation of any sinner. I Tim. 2,4; II Pet. 3,9; Ezek 33,11.

We reject the Calvinistic teaching that God does not will the salvation of all men.

2. Christ has redeemed all men, and His redemption has the same content and purpose for all. I Tim. 2,6; II Cor. 5,15; I Joh. 2,2; Matth. 18,11; John 1,29.

We reject the Calvinistic teaching, that Christ in reality has redeemed only the elect. II Pet. 2,1.

3. In the Word, God calls all men to repentance, and it is “His will that in those whom He thus calls He will work through the Word that they may be enlightened, converted, and saved.” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., XI, 25.) Accordingly this call of God is equally earnest and powerful over towards all. Acts 17,30; Mark 16,15; Matth. 23,37; Is. 65,2; Matth. 22,1–14.

We reject the Calvinistic teaching that God's call is earnest and powerful only over towards the elect.

4. The means of grace always possess their innate power to work repentance, faith and perseverance (in the faith) and thus to save the man to whom they come. The means of grace do not have different powers over towards the different men. John 6,63; Rom. 10,6– 8,17; II Cor. 1,18– 20.

We reject the Calvinistic teaching that the means of grace are powerful and efficacious only for the elect.

5. The power of the means of grace can be resisted and their saving effect can be prevented by every man and at every point. Matth. 23,37; Luke 7,30; Acts 13,46; Zech. 7,11– 12; Acts 7,51; Heb. 3,7– 11.

We reject the teaching of the Calvinists that God's grace is irresistible and that the truly regenerated cannot fall away from the state of grace.

## II

Concerning Conversion, our Faith, Teaching, and Confession in the disputed points is as follows:

1. The conversion (of the fallen) is "that a man who has fallen away from the grace of God and is dead in sin is again by the power of God raised up to a new spiritual life, reconciled with God by faith and thus entirely converted and changed." (Cf. Pontoppidan, Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed, Q. 677; Epitome, Q. 532.) II Tim. 2,25,26; Jer. 3,1,6,7; Eph. 2,4– 6; Acts 26,18.

2. When the Holy Scriptures call the natural man dead in sin, it designates thereby also a spiritual impotence and bondage such that the free use of the faculties of the soul in purely spiritual things is wholly and completely lost and gone; "the reason is darkened, the will is incapable of good and inclined to everything evil, and the peace of the conscience is disturbed." (Cf. Pontoppidan, Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed, Q. 383 [Q. 382– 386]; Epitome, Q. 270.) Rev. 3,1; I Cor. 2,14; 1,21; Matth. 13,11ff.; II Cor. 3,5; Rom. 3,11,12; 6,20; Gen. 6,5; John 8,34; Eph. 2,1– 3; 4,17– 18; Tit. 3,3; II Pet. 2,19; Is. 49,9.

3. Being dead in sin, the natural man cannot himself change this condition of his heart nor cooperate, either little or much, in effecting this change; for "the man who is not regenerated resists God altogether and is wholly and entirely a slave of sin," and "he is and remains an enemy of God, until he by the power of the Holy Spirit is converted, made a believer, regenerated and renewed, through the Word that is preached and heard, out of pure grace, without any cooperation of his own." (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., II, 44 and II, 2.) John 3,6; Rom. 8,7– 9; Eph. 2,4– 6; Phil. 2,13; Jer. 31,18; Hos. 13,9; Matth. 11,27; Deut. 29,4; I Cor. 12,3; Col. 2,12,13; Matth. 7,17– 18.

4. The natural man has freedom and power outwardly to hear and consider the Word of God or not to do this, but man cannot cooperate at all in bringing about any inner change in his heart for good. Col. 2,13; Phil. 2,13; John 15,5; Luke 11,23; II Cor. 3,5; Jer. 13,23; Rom. 8,8.

5. Not to want to hear the Word of God is an effective and deciding cause for a person's not being converted. Rom. 10,14,17.

6. The fact that the unregenerate man outwardly hears and with his still darkened reason considers the Word of God is not a cooperating, much less deciding, cause for this that he is converted, although such hearing is necessary as a means which God uses for conversion. Matth. 13,14; Rom. 8,7; 9,16; 10,17; I Cor. 2,14; Matth. 19,22; Acts 28,26; II Tim. 3,1–7; Rom. 10,21; Heb. 4,2; Acts 16,14; II Cor. 3,14–15.

We reject the assertion that the natural, unregenerated man, because he can outwardly use the Word of God, can by this conduct of his cooperate in his conversion.

7. God's command: Repent ye, Awake, etc., does not prove that it is possible for the unregenerated man by his own strength to obey, any more than the command: "Thou shalt love God above all things," shows that man is capable of doing this. Such and similar words are means which God uses, both to bring a man to recognize his own impotence and also by the power of the divine Word to produce the effect intended. Matth. 7,18; Jer. 31,18; II Tim. 2,25; II Cor. 3,5; Eph. 2,1; cf. John 11,43; Mark 5,41–42.

We reject the Semi-pelagian, papistic misuse of the Scripture passages named, when by them men seek to prove that the unregenerated man is of himself capable of obeying; likewise that, if this were not the case, then these admonitions and commands would be meaningless.

8. There is no power left in the will of the unregenerated man, by which he can assist the work of the Holy Ghost. Rom. 8,7–8; Gen. 6,5; John 15,5; I Cor. 2,14; John 6,63; Eph. 2,8–10.

We reject the opposite Semi-pelagian and synergistic error.

9. The will of an unconverted man is not a cooperating instrument but is itself the object on which the Holy Ghost works in order to convert and change him. For, since the unregenerated man is dead in his sins, "no *modus agendi*, or no way whatever of working something good in spiritual things, can be ascribed to man before his conversion." (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., II, 31.)

We reject the synergistic teaching that the unregenerated man, by the help of some divinely bestowed powers, can himself cooperate in his conversion. This would presuppose that the unregenerated man who is dead in sin already had a will, freed from the bondage of sin, to make use of such powers; but this is contrary to Scripture. Jer. 31,18,33; Acts 15,9; II Cor. 3,5–6; Phil. 2,13; Ezek. 36,26–27.

10. “This doctrine concerning the inability and wickedness of our natural free will and concerning our conversion and regeneration, namely, that it is a work of God alone and not of our powers, is abused in an unchristian manner both by enthusiasts and by Epicureans” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., II, 21); namely, so that they show contempt for the means of grace, are indifferent regarding their conversion, yes, even mock and blaspheme; but this does not give us the right to pass by, change or limit the express and oft-repeated teaching of the Word of God concerning it. I Cor. 4,12– 15; Jer. 6,10,19; Acts 20,18,21,26– 27; I Tim. 1,13; Rom. 3,8.

11. The preparation of the heart of man for conversion by preparatory grace is a work of the Holy Ghost, like conversion itself, and is described in Holy Writ by many names, such as Calling, Awakening, Inviting, Drawing, Knocking, etc. Matth. 20,16; II Tim. 1,9; Eph. 5,14; Luke 14,16; John 6,44; Jer. 31,3; John 12,32; Rev. 3,20.

12. There may be several steps and degrees in this preparation for conversion, through which men are led, sometimes in a shorter, sometimes in a longer, time; for God deals, in his wisdom and love, very differently with the different men. Is. 48,4; Acts 24,25; I Tim. 1,13; Acts 26,28– 29; Heb. 4,12; Luke 13,17; Mark 12,34; Luke 24,25; Acts 16,14; 13,18; Matth. 21,28– 29; Luke 11,27– 28.

13. Just as the unregenerated man is without ability to cooperate, but is passive, i.e., is acted upon, when the Spirit of God first begins to work on him by the Word, so he is also not active in producing the succeeding emotions or changes either, but is also then passive, i.e., is only acted upon, until conversion has taken place and the will thus has been set free and made capable of good. (Cf. Pontoppidan, Sandh. til Gudfr., Q. 478, 485, 498, 586.)

We reject the newer synergistic doctrine that every man to whom God’s call comes receives before regeneration a liberated will by the operation of the Word, so that the as yet unregenerated man is assumed to be able to will the good or to determine that he will turn to God and thus decide his conversion and salvation himself; and that a man’s conversion thus depends on his own choice. It is the teaching of Scripture that the man who does not become converted, has himself to thank for it; but it does not teach that about those who are converted. John 3,6; Rom. 8,7; Eph. 2,4– 5; I Cor. 2,14; Phil. 2,13; Gal. 5,17; Rom. 7,18,22,23; James 1,18; I Pet. 1,23; John 1,5; Rom. 14,23; 9,16; Hos. 13,9; Luke 11,23; John 1,12– 13.

14. When we teach that a man during preparatory grace and in conversion itself remains passive, it is “not our meaning that in conversion no new emotion whatever is awakened in us by the Holy Ghost and no spiritual operation begun,” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., II, 46); for each of the preparatory operations of the Holy Ghost may produce even violent emotions and agitation in the as yet unregenerated man (e.g., terror, distress, and efforts to make oneself righteous according to the law). But since the unregenerated man does not as yet know God as his Savior and is at enmity with God in the depths of his heart, he cannot truly turn to God with

his heart or contribute anything to the changing of his heart and thus cooperate in his conversion. Acts 2,37; II Cor. 4,6; Acts 24,25; 16,27– 30; Rom. 7,8– 11; cf. the passages under Thesis 3.

15. God's work is not done on man by force, but by changing the will. Therefore, as certain as it is that God alone works conversion, so certain is it also that man repents and that the man who repents wants to repent. For the man who repents does not do it by compulsion, but willingly, although it is God alone who effects this that a man both wants to do this and does it. For it is not God, but man who repents of his sin; it is man who ceases his resistance; it is man who believes and makes good resolutions and thus decides for God, although all these things are the operations of grace, which God alone, without any cooperation of man, has produced in him by the power of the Word by which He in His grace bends and determines the will. (See Pontoppidan, Sandh. til Gudfr., Q. 585, 586 [Q. 692, 487, 488].) Jer. 24,7; John 1,12; Jer. 20,7; Ezek. 18,31– 32; 36,26; Ps. 51,14; Is. 55,6– 7.; Phil. 2,13.

16. Since the unregenerated man is at enmity with God and resists God altogether, it belongs to the gracious work of the Holy Ghost to "remove the resistance of the will." This removal does not take place by compulsion, but by the drawing of God; for "the Lord God draws the man whom he wishes to convert, and draws him in such a way that his darkened understanding is turned into an enlightened one and his perverse will into an obedient one. And this is what the Scriptures call creating a new heart" (Ps. 51,12). (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., II, 30. cf. Pontoppidan, Sandh. til Gudfr., Q. 485; Epitome, Q. 369.) Rom. 8,7; Acts 7,51; Is. 63,17; II Tim. 2,25; Acts 9,1ff.; Ezek. 36,26; John 6,44; Matth. 11,27.

17. It is God's gracious will to remove all resistance in every man to whom His call in the Word comes. Where a man in spite of this persists in his resistance, this has its cause not in any lack or insufficiency in the operation of the Holy Ghost, but in man's own wickedness. But we do not have the right, according to Scripture, to deduce from this that those men whose resistance is removed have themselves cooperated in any way toward this result which must be ascribed to the grace of God alone.

We reject the doctrine that the outward hearing of the Word of God by the unregenerated man constitutes a cessation of the rebellious opposition of the human heart and thus a change in his real conduct toward God.

We likewise reject the doctrine that this inner, rebellious opposition, where it is removed, is removed not by God but by man himself, either by his own natural powers or by powers which the unregenerated man is supposed to have received from God.

I Tim. 2,4; Ezek. 11,19; Acts 7,51; Jer. 7,25– 27; Luke 7,30; Matth. 23,37; Hos. 13,9; cf. Thesis 3.

18. When a man does not repent, he cannot rightly excuse himself with this that he was incapable of doing so. For it is God's gracious will to remove this hindrance, as well as everything which

hinders a man's conversion. The cause is only this that the man himself would not. Matth. 21,32; 22,4; Ps. 95,8; Is. 55,6–7; Acts 7,51; Is. 65,2.

19. Since it is God's gracious purpose to remove every hindrance to conversion by the means of grace, and it still is possible for a man at every point to continue in his opposition to God, a man is never without responsibility over towards the grace of God, although he may mock and say that, since God is the one who does everything for our salvation, then a man has no responsibility himself, as we see in Rom. 9,19. cf. Theses 17 and 18.

20. There is only a difference in degree between those who by preparatory grace are awakened from their sleep in sin, are restless in conscience and therefore seek to escape God's wrath, and those with whom this is not the case, up to the time when faith enters in. Until this happens, a man is still carnal and an enemy of God; for there is no such thing as an intermediate state between converted and unconverted, regenerated and unregenerated, believing and unbelieving. (See Pontoppidan, Sandh. til Gudfr., Q. 498 [Q. 484, 323, 327]; Epitome, Q. 217.) John 3,6; Matth. 6,24; Luke 11,23; Matth. 7,13–14; Acts 26,18; Heb. 11,6; Eph. 2,5; 5,8.

21. Where the first spark of the true faith is ignited in a man's heart, there the man is in truth converted. Matth. 12,20; Mark 9,24; Luke 17,5; Heb. 5,13; Is. 42,3; 35,3–4.

22. Although conversion in the strict sense, as a transition from death to life, must necessarily take place in an instant, it is still as a rule not possible in experience to tell when faith is created in the heart, and thus to notice the transition from the preparatory to the really converting operations of grace; "for the Holy Ghost does not work on the human will of man as by violent jerks, and one cannot put one's finger, as on a mathematical point, on the time when the liberated will begins to function" (Martin Chemnitz). Matth. 6,24; Luke 11,23; Eph. 5,14.

### III

#### Concerning Election — Introductory Remarks

1. The words: election of grace, election, predestination, foreordination to salvation, appointment to eternal life, are expressions which in Scripture and our confessional writings all denote the same thing. Rom. 11,5; cf. Rom. 8,29–30,33; Eph. 1,4–5,11; Matth. 20,16; Acts 13,48.

We reject the assertion that in some of the Scripture passages which treat of and explain election for us, the words "chosen" (elected) and "choose" (elect) have another meaning than that which our confessional writings have found in them, namely, election to eternal salvation, as our Savior Himself uses the word in Matth. 22,14; 24,22,31; Mark 13,22, etc.

2. The doctrine of election is not a chief article in the teaching of God's Word; for a man can be a believing Christian and be saved, although he has not attained to a knowledge of this doctrine and appropriated it. But since Holy Writ treats of it, "we should not neglect or reject the doctrine

of the divine Word on account of abuse or misunderstanding.” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., XI, 1.) I Cor. 3,2; Heb. 5,12– 13; II Tim. 3,16– 17; Acts 20,27.

3. A man comes to repentance and faith not by brooding over God’s predestination, but by appropriating the Gospel of God’s universal grace in Christ. No one who has not already become a true believer by the Gospel can appropriate the doctrine of election for his comfort. Luke 13,23– 24; Rom. 1,16– 17; Matth. 11,28.

We reject the Calvinistic error which makes the doctrine of election the starting point for the Christian faith.

4. The doctrine of election stands in close connection with the fundamental chief articles of the Christian faith, such as: That fallen man is completely corrupted and dead in sin; that God desires the salvation of all men; that salvation is by the grace of God alone; and that it therefore is gained through faith alone without the works of the law. Eph. 1,3ff.; Rom. 8,29ff.; Matth. 22,1ff.; I Pet. 1,1– 2; II Thess. 2,13.

Therefore the doctrine of election can be kept pure only then when these chief articles of faith are kept in their purity.

5. While that which is taught us in the Word of God concerning election is clear and definite, “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 to the revealed Word. This admonition is most urgently needed. For our curiosity has always much more pleasure in concerning itself with these matters 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.” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., XI, 41– 42.) Rom. 11,33– 36; Job 38,1ff.; 40,2; 42,3; Is. 55,8– 9.

6. Where we in the Word of God meet with two clearly taught truths which we cannot reconcile with each other by our reason, there we shall let them stand side by side, “bring into captivity every thought,” and believe both things. Just as we must do this in the doctrine of the Trinity, in the doctrine of Christ’s person, of the sacrament and of conversion so we must do it also in the doctrine of election. (Cf. Pontoppiclan Sandh. til Gudfr., Q. 80 [Q. 15,16].) I Cor. 13,9– 12; II Cor. 10,5; cf. Heb. 11,17– 19; John 10,35; Eccles. 8,17; Prov. 3,5; I Sam. 1,23.

We reject the opposite procedure as dangerous and presumptuous.

7. There is no real contradiction between the Scripture’s doctrine of universal grace and that of election, although these doctrines cannot be harmonized by reason. He who seeks to harmonize them before the judgment of our reason will not succeed in doing so, except by limiting or changing one or the other of them, and must, on the one hand, depart from the Scripture doctrine

concerning election, and, on the other hand from the Scripture doctrine concerning the universality of God's grace (Calvinism) or from the Scripture doctrine concerning man's complete corruption (Synergism). Scripture gives us no other explanation than that in Hos. 13,9: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help." II Cor. 1,18– 19; I Cor. 2,12– 13; I Tim. 2,4; cf. Acts 13,48; Matth. 23,37; cf. Rom. 9,16.

8. Every article of faith must be sought in those Scripture passages in which the respective doctrine is specially and thoroughly treated by the holy writers. Other passages in which the same doctrine is only incidentally mentioned must be explained in accordance with these passages. Rom. 12,6; I Pet. 4,11.

It is therefore an improper way to treat Scripture when people in the doctrine of election partly set aside more or less those passages where this teaching is specially and thoroughly treated, partly want to explain these in accordance with such passages as either treat this doctrine only in passing or even do not treat it at all.

9. The passages in Scripture which specially and thoroughly treat of the doctrine of election are chiefly: Eph. 1,3ff.; Rom. 8,29ff.; Matth. 22,1ff.; I Pet. 1,1– 2; II Thess. 2,13.

On these passages, therefore, we base our faith and teaching concerning this matter, which is contained in the following theses:

#### The Doctrine of Election

10. "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 (by the means of grace and in the order of salvation) He will, by His grace, gifts, and efficacy, bring them thereto, aid, promote, strengthen and preserve them." (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., XI, 19.) Acts 13,48; Rom. 11,5; John 15,16; Matth. 16,18; John 10,28; Is. 43,1. Cf. Thesis 9.

11. All those, and only those, who die in the faith in Christ are the elect. (Cf. the Formula of Concord, XI, 3 and Pontoppidan, Sandhed til Gudfr., Q. 547, Epitome, Q. 426 and 454.) Matth. 24,24,31.

We reject the Huberian error of an election of all men. Matth. 22,14.

12. The fact that election does not apply to all men is not due to any unwillingness on the part of God to save all men. For God has not by any eternal decree either predestined any man to damnation or passed him by with His grace. That the many are not chosen has its ground alone in their resistance or in their renewed and continued fall from grace; "they have prepared themselves to be vessels of wrath." (Cf. Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl. XI, 52, 53, Pontoppidan, Sandh. til Gudfr., Q. 545, 546.) I Tim. 2,4– 6; Matth. 25,41; 23,37; Is. 65,2; Jer. 7,24; Matth. 22,1– 14; II Pet. 2,1ff.; Luke 11,24– 26; Is. 3,9; 5,1– 6; Hos. 13,9; Rom. 9,22– 23.

We reject the Calvinistic doctrine that God has predestined some men to damnation.

13. Election is not a mere foreordination to salvation or “a muster, thus: ‘This one shall be saved, that one shall be damned;’ — as though nothing more belonged to it and nothing more were to be considered in it” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl. XI, 7). Rather it stands in the very closest connection with God’s universal will of grace, in that it includes the whole order of salvation, through which God in election has determined to lead the elect, and fain would lead all men, on to salvation. Eph. 1,3ff.; Rom. 8,29ff.; I Pet. 1,1– 2; II Thess. 2,13.

That presentation which limits election to the bare decree concerning salvation and which excludes from it God’s decree concerning the way and means of salvation, we do not acknowledge as the presentation of Scripture and the Formula of Concord. (Formula of Concord, XI, 6 and 19.) However, so long as the doctrine of sin and of grace is kept pure, we do not regard anyone who has used, or uses, that incomplete concept of election as a false teacher. Therefore we acknowledge, not indeed as a complete definition of the concept of election, but still as a correct presentation of the last part of it, the answer given to Q. 548 of Pontoppidan’s Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed, which reads: “That God has appointed all those to eternal life whom he from eternity has seen would accept the grace proffered them, believe in Jesus and persevere in this faith unto the end. Rom. 8,28– 30.” II Tim. 1,13.

This is to be understood in the manner in which it is developed by John Gerhard in the following quotation:

“The merit of Christ is the cause of our election. But since the merit of Christ does not benefit anyone without faith, therefore we say that the regard to faith is a component part of the decree of election. We confess with loud voice that we teach: that God has not found anything good in the man who was to be chosen to the life eternal; that He has not taken into consideration either good works, or the use of the free will, or, what is more, not even faith itself in such a way that he was influenced by it, or that He has elected some on account of it; but we say that it is solely and alone the merit of Christ whose worthiness God has taken into consideration and that He has resolved upon the decree of election out of pure grace: However, since the merit of Christ is found in a man only through faith, therefore we teach that election has taken place in view of Christ’s merit which is to be appropriated by faith. We say, therefore, that all those, and only those, are by God in eternity elected unto salvation, of whom he has foreseen that they by the operation of the Holy Ghost through the ministry of the Gospel would come to a true faith in the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and would persevere in the faith until the end.” (Gerhard, Loc. de electione, par. 161.)

Therefore, we declare also that we stand in fellowship of faith with those who like Pontoppidan and Johan Gerhard teach correctly regarding sin and grace and who, like them, reject the doctrine that God has been influenced in electing men by their conduct.

14. The election of grace or predestination is not an act of judgment, but alone an act of grace. Rom. 11,5– 6.

15. The cause of the election of grace is alone the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ, and there is in us no cause for the sake of which God has elected us unto eternal life. (Cf. Formula of Concord, Epitome, XI, 20.) Eph. 1,4– 5; Tit. 3,4– 7.

We reject the synergistic doctrine that God in electing a man has been “determined by” or has “taken into consideration” or has “been guided by” man’s conduct. For a man’s (good) conduct denotes something which man “does or omits doing,” or a work of the law; and when one refers to election unto salvation and the attainment of salvation, we confess that “our best works are of no value whatever to that end.” (Cf. Pontoppidan, Sand. til Gudfr., Q. 325 [323, 327]; Epitome, Q. 215, 217.) On the other hand, when one refers to damnation, then we confess that a man’s (evil) conduct is the cause of it. Eph. 2,4– 5,8– 9; Matth. 22,5– 8; I Cor. 4,7; John 3,27; 1,17.

16. Although a man’s good conduct (i.e., the works of the law) cannot contribute anything whatever to his salvation, it is still on the other hand certain that a man’s evil conduct unfortunately can only too easily bring him to perdition. Furthermore, since the only way to salvation along which God leads the elect is via repentance, faith, and sanctification, and he accordingly who would be saved must be found on that way, it is blasphemous to say that, since our conduct does not help us to gain salvation, we can then conduct ourselves as we wish — which is the ancient offense of the Gospel. Hos. 13,9; John 14,6; II Thess. 2,13; Rom. 3,8; 6,1– 2; cf. Theses 12 and 13.

17. Since everything good in man is God’s free and undeserved gift of grace, there is nothing in man which could induce God to elect him. Man’s faith could not induce God to do this either, for faith is itself a free gift of grace from God, which He has not been induced to give to man by anything good in him, but alone by His mercy for Christ’s sake; “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” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl. XI, 36). Phil. 1– 29; James 1,17; I Cor. 4,7; Eph. 2,8– 9.

Since we are saved by grace and therefore by faith alone without the works of the law, faith does not come into consideration here as a work of the law, i.e., as a piece of good “conduct” on our part. We therefore reject the synergistic doctrine which gives faith this significance. Rom. 4,16.

18. Faith must not be excluded from the election of grace, for there is no election of grace except in Christ, and man is united with Christ only by faith. Therefore also faith is included in election as a part of the order which has been fixed in the decree of election itself. II Thess. 2,13; cf. theses 9 and 13.

We reject the Calvinistic teaching that God first has ordained some people to salvation by an absolute election and then thereafter has decided to send His Son and bestow faith as a means of salvation on those men who were in an absolute manner elected to salvation.

19. Since everything is eternally present for God, the faith of the elect is also foreseen, and the elect themselves are foreseen by God as believing, without its being the case, however, that this foreseen faith in any way dare be counted among the efficient causes of election. For “the eternal election of God not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but is also, from the gracious will and pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause which procures, works, helps, and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl. XI, 6). Cf. thesis 10.

20. The faith of the elect is not produced by any other means than by the means of grace which are the same for all; nor by any special power which is supposedly added to them by election; for God wanted to lead all men exactly in the same way and by the same means through the ordinary order of salvation to eternal bliss. Is. 5,4; Rom. 1,16; 2,11; Matth. 22,1ff.

We reject the opposite, Calvinistic doctrine.

21. According to Scripture it belongs to the essence of grace to be free; for if grace is not free, i.e., undeserved by any kind of merit whatsoever in the one who is favored with it, then “grace is no more grace” (Rom. 11,6), and a man cannot then trust in the grace of God alone. Rom. 3,23–24, 27–28; Eph. 2,8–10.

We reject the synergistic doctrine that the election in Christ has not taken place in accordance with a free purpose of grace by God, and that “salvation in a certain sense does not depend on God alone.” Eph. 1,11.

22. On the other hand the election of grace is not absolute: (1) Because it is conditioned by the merit of Christ, which is the foundation on which it is built, Eph. 1,3ff. (2) Because it is determined by the order of salvation fixed by God, which points us to Christ. “In Him we are to seek the eternal election of the Father, who has determined in His eternal, divine counsel that He would save no one except those who know His Son Christ and truly believe on Him” (Formula of Concord, Epitome, XI, 12). II Thess. 2,13. (3) Because there is no corresponding election of wrath, since no man is predestined by God unto perdition. Matth. 25,41ff.; 7,22–23; Cf. theses 9, 12, and 13.

23. Every correct teaching and presentation of the eternal and saving election of God’s elect children must “give to God His own glory entirely and fully, that in Christ He saves us out of pure mercy, without any merits or good works of ours, according to the purpose of His will, as it is written, Eph. 1,5: ‘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’” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl. XI, 68).

Every doctrine according to which our election and our salvation in any part and in any manner are ascribed to any other source or origin than solely and alone and exclusively God Himself, robs God of His honor and depreciates the merit of our Savior.

Therefore, we reject every doctrine which either directly or indirectly mentions any work of any kind whatsoever in us men, along side of God's mercy and Christ's merit, as a cause or as a concurrent cause or as an explanatory cause of our election and salvation. For such a doctrine conflicts with the First Commandment, robs God of His honor and robs us of our hope. Gal. 2,21; 5,4; Rom. 8,32; Is. 42,8; 48,11; Dan. 9,7ff.

#### IV

Concerning the Certainty, by Faith, of Preservation (in the Faith) and of Salvation, our Faith, Teaching, and Confession is as follows:

1. When a man has been converted to God, he has thereby received a new spiritual life with desire and power to do that which is good. II Cor. 5,17; Rom. 7,22; Eph. 2,4– 5; Phil. 4,13; Mark 9,23.
2. The preservation of this new life is, like its creation, to be ascribed solely and alone to the power and grace of God. Phil. 1,6; Heb. 12,2; Phil. 2,13; Heb. 13,21.
3. Since faith is a new life, the believer is also willing to do, and be active in, the good by the powers given him by God, works out his own salvation with fear and trembling through daily renewal, and strives thus to keep the faith. Matth. 3,8; Tit. 2,14; II Cor. 3,5; Phil. 2,12; I Cor. 10,12.
4. Where this exercise of the faith ceases, where the means of grace are neglected, where the mind becomes worldly and vain, and where a man becomes addicted to sins of security or malice, there faith is lost, and since man has the power to do this, he also has the power to hinder his preservation in the faith. I Tim. 1,19; II Tim. 4,10; II Cor. 13,5; Luke 8,7,14; I Tim. 6,10.
5. The cooperation of the regenerated man does not, however, have this importance for his preservation (in the faith), that it is a source and cause of it, nor does it merit it; for “the converted man does good to such an extent and so long as God by His Holy Spirit rules, guides, and leads him, and as soon as God would withdraw His gracious hand from him, he could not for a moment persevere in obedience to God” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., II, 33). Phil. 1,6; 2,13; Heb. 13,21; Luke 22,32; I Cor. 4,7; I Pet. 1,5; John 15,5; Ps. 51,10.

We reject the papistic doctrine “that our good works preserve salvation, or that the righteousness of faith which has been received, or even faith itself, is either entirely or in part kept and preserved by our works” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., IV, 23); for from this would follow that the believer must depend at least in part on himself. Jer. 17,5; Prov. 28,26.

6. Since it is God's will to save by faith in Christ the one whom He calls, He has also promised the believer to keep him in all temptations by the true faith unto the end. (Cf. Pontoppidan, Sandh. til Gudfr., Q. 509; Epitome, Q. 390). I Cor. 1,8– 9; John 10,27– 28; I Thess. 5,23– 24; Is. 41,10– 13; I Cor. 10,13; Luke 12,32; Ps. 55,23.

7. Since the good works which the believer must and will busy himself with cannot, whether wholly or in part, keep him in the faith, he must also with reference to his preservation (in the faith) trust in God alone. (Cf. Thesis 6.)

We reject the error by which the believer is misled to trust more or less on the gift and work of God in him instead of on God Himself alone. (Cf. Pontoppidan, Sandh. til Gudfr., Q. 56 and 98.) Luke 18,11.

8. Since God has promised His children that He will keep them in the faith unto the end, the believer trusts in this promise of God, which is unbreakable and sufficient; therefore, he has the certainty by faith that he will be kept in the faith until the end, that God then "will grant him and all believers in Christ eternal life," and that he thus actually will attain and share the (life of) glory with God. (Cf. Small Catechism, Art. III.) John 14,1– 3; Is. 41,10; II Cor. 12,9; II Cor. 1,19– 20; II Tim. 4,7– 8; Phil. 1,6; I John 3,2; I Cor. 15,19,49; Rom. 8,31– 39; Col. 3,4.

We reject the papistic and synergistic doctrine of doubt that a believer neither can nor should have a certainty by faith regarding his preservation and his final salvation. I John 5,10; Heb. 10,23; Jam. 1,6– 7; Matth. 21,22.

9. This certainty by faith is not a more or less well-grounded assumption or a careless hope, but it is a faith, i.e., "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," a firm trust in the heart, because it is based on God's unbreakable promise. However it is often "hidden under weakness and temptation." (Cf. Pontoppidan Kort Begreb, par. 35.) Heb. 11,1; Rom. 8,38– 39; II Cor. 5,1– 2; Phil. 3,20– 21; I Thess. 5,24; I Cor. 1,9; II Thess. 3,3; I Cor. 10,13; Matth. 8,25– 26; Mark 9,24.

The expression, "a conditioned certainty of salvation," is ambiguous. If thereby is meant that the certainty by faith of preservation and salvation is bound up with the order of salvation, so that only those who are in that order can have it, then the teaching is correct. Heb. 3,6,14; Rom. 11,22.

But that expression is often used by those who teach the false doctrine that a man's preservation and salvation has its cause more or less in his own works by which, accordingly, the certainty of salvation is conditioned. A "certainty" "conditioned" in this way becomes in reality an uncertainty or a groundless hope. For one can have no certainty by faith that a condition which a man must fulfill will really be fulfilled. Rom. 9,16.

10. No man who will not trust in God alone for salvation, but who thinks that he must himself be able to contribute something to it, can have any certainty by faith that he will be saved. Rom. 4,16; 9,16; Eph. 2,8– 9; II Chron. 13,18; Ps. 84,13.

11. The certainty by faith that salvation will actually be attained is not an absolute certainty, as if it were impossible for a man to hinder it; for preservation does not take place by compulsion, and the possibility of apostasy is, therefore, not removed. Nor are the promises of God to the believer a prophecy that he will be saved. Rom. 8,24– 25; I Cor. 9,27; Rev. 2,10; Mark 4,17.

12. Recognition of the possibility of apostasy, and the earnestness which results from it in working out one's own salvation with fear and trembling (filial fear), does not take away the believer's certainty of salvation, nor does it limit it, but strengthens it; for that is one of the means whereby God preserves the believer. For it compels him continually to seek refuge in God's promise of help, which strengthens and preserves him in the firm faith and hope that the possibility of apostasy shall by the grace of God not become a reality. That recognition, therefore, will always accompany the true certainty by faith of salvation. Where it is forgotten and a man falls into sinful security, there the grace of God and faith are lost. (Cf. Pontoppidan, Sandh. til Gudfr., Q. 86, 670, 514.) Tit. 2,11– 13; Phil. 2,12– 13; Mark 13,33– 37; I Tim. 1,19; 6,10; Ps. 2,11; I Pet. 1,4,8,17.

13. A man cannot arrive at a certainty by faith concerning his salvation and election by brooding over election or by wanting to get that clear first, but alone by building on the universal grace and the call of God's love in Christ. But he who in this way has become a believer will have, especially in temptation, this comfort in the teaching of God's Word concerning election, that God who in the Gospel has promised him salvation, has ("since through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh it could easily be lost from our hands") "wished to secure my salvation so well and certainly that 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). (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl., XI, 37.) Luke 16,29; Rom. 11,34; John 1,12– 13; II Tim. 1,9; I Pet. 2,6; Ps. 9,11; John 3,16.