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“GRACE AND FREE-WILL.”

An article in the *Lutheran Quarterly* by Prof. Vollert, Ph. D., as an object lesson to our adversaries.

It seems that in recent times this question becomes mooted more and more in every quarter of the Lutheran church. Even the theologians of the General Synod, who usually boast that it never has concerned them, being only a squabble between the Missouri and Ohio synods, have, as time passes on, joined with the Ohioans and Iowaans in the controversy against Missouri, and try to defend that position. At least they want to show that with joyful eyes they look on the war the Ohioans are waging on Lutheran doctrines as confessed by us. They do this mainly by translating articles from German sources, and seem to think that they have established the point when this or that “theologian of the fatherland” also coincides with them. They show, at any rate, that they hold certain doctrines because they are held by others—as all the world is wont to do.

We do not know whether our adversaries are rejoiced to find such able allies or not. Certainly they ought to become suspicious of the correctness of their position in regard to all the questions that have arisen between them and us and the scripturalness of their doctrines, if all the world hastens to the rescue. History teaches that the fight for the Truth of God has ever found few supporters, while its enemies found the whole host of half-Christians and all the

WHAT IS LUTHERAN AND WHAT CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE IN THE ARTICLE OF ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION?

III. CAUSES OF ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION.

In the preceding chapters we have briefly presented the fundamental differences between our Lutheran and Calvin's doctrine of election. After showing that our doctrine differs totally from that of Calvin as to the extent and basis of election it remains to speak of some other points connected with this doctrine. Because Calvin's doctrine concerning the basis of election is false, he must necessarily teach false of the causes of election, of redemption, calling, conversion, perseverance, and the certainty of election. What does Calvin teach concerning the first of these points?

Regarding election an act of the absolute will of God in His independent sovereignty, Calvin, in fact, allows no cause of election whatever, unless the absolute will of God be called a cause. According to Calvin's doctrine God ordained men unto salvation simply and only because He wanted it so, moved thereto by nothing, in consideration of nothing, but exclusively regarding His own will. Christ and His merits are to Calvin not a cause of election, but by a decree of His absolute will God set apart some men for salvation, and their redemption through Christ is only a consequence of that decree. Calvin's doctrine is based on absolutism pure and simple, predestination for no cause or reason whatever, save only the absolute will of sovereignty.

On this doctrine Calvin insists most emphatically. He says: "When God is said to harden or show mercy to whom He pleases, men are taught by this declaration to seek no cause beside His will." (*Inst.*, vol. II, p. 163.) In place of more citations we will here only add how Calvin's followers understand his doctrine on this point. In an explanation of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (published by

the Presb. Board of Publ., p. 101) these questions occur: "Question 7: Is Christ the cause of election? Answer: No; the free love of God sent Christ to redeem the elect, and therefore He could not be the cause of electing love. Question 8: Did not Christ procure God's love to an elect world? Answer: No; the Father Himself loved them." This plain declaration renders election absolutely without a cause, and leaves Christ out in the cold.

On the other hand, our Evangelical Lutheran Church teaches that there are two causes of election: the grace of God and the merits of Christ. Moved by His grace and the merits of Christ, God elected men unto salvation from a perishing world, and not merely and only because He willed it so. *Epitome*, Art. XI, Negative 4, our Church condemns the doctrine, "that the mercy of God, and the most holy obedience of Christ, are not the only causes of the election of God, but that *in us* also there is a cause, on account of which God has elected us to eternal life." Here our Church distinctly confesses that there are these two causes of election: "the mercy of God, and the most holy obedience of Christ." Likewise, our Church solemnly warns against presenting election as if God had instituted "a military review, saying, This one must be saved, but that one must be lost." (N. M., 2. ed., p. 712.) Here our Church warns against considering election in the Calvinistic manner; for this is the very essence of Calvin's doctrine that God appointed one to life, another to death, only because He willed it so.

While our Church confesses that there are two causes of election, she, at the same time, says that there are *only* these two causes; yea, she pronounces it "false, horrible, and blasphemous" to teach, "that *in us* also there is a cause" of election. Now Calvin also teaches that there is no cause of election in man. Does then our Church in this point agree with the Calvinists? We answer emphatically, No. We might also answer yes, because our Church teaches,

just as decidedly as Calvin does, that there is no cause of election in man. If God would have looked to see whether He could find anything in any man which would render him eligible unto eternal life, He could not have chosen a single one, because Adam "begat a son in his own likeness," Gen. 5, 3. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one," Ps. 14, 2. 3.

Nevertheless, we do by no means agree with the Calvinists in this point, because we teach that there is no cause of election in man for an altogether different reason than Calvinists do. Why do Calvinists teach that there is no cause of election in man? Because, according to their doctrine, God had no regard of man at all, whether he be sinless or sinful, but exclusively regarded His own secret determination. But why do we Lutherans teach that there is no cause of election in man? Because, since the fall, man is altogether corrupt. There can be no cause of election in man, because there is nothing good in man. Neither could God foresee anything good in any man which could have commended him to God, because all the good which is in man is the operation of God. The elect are elect, not because they in any respect excelled others, or were better than others, not because they favorably distinguished themselves from others by some action of theirs, neither because God, as an independent Being, had set them apart by an absolute decree of His sovereign will; they are elect, because God has compassion on them for Christ's sake.

Stated in short sentences, the difference of doctrine in this point is this:

1. Calvin teaches that there is no cause of election save alone the absolute will of God. — We Lutherans teach that there are two causes of election: the grace of God and the merits of Christ.

2. Calvin teaches that Christ and His merits are not a cause of election, but only a means to carry out the absolute decree of God. — We teach that Christ and His merits are the ground, foundation, and cause of election.

3. Calvin teaches that there is no cause of election in man, because God exclusively regarded His own absolute will. — We teach that there is no cause of election in man, because man is altogether corrupt.

From the latter it is evident that Calvinists cannot accuse our Church of Synergism, as they do those who use the expression that God elected "in view of faith;" for if that expression is to convey any definite meaning, it implies that man can do something to obtain faith, or to cause God to work faith in him. That expression, at best, places faith outside of election, making it the outside rule according to which God had chosen, and leaving it in doubt whence faith comes, whether from God or from man. Because the expression "in view of faith" must either be so limited as to become a meaningless jingling of words, or implies that there is a cause of election in man, the Calvinists have reason to criticise it. But while eminent Lutheran theologians have made use of this expression, the quotation given above shows that it is neither contained in the Confessions of our Church, nor is it in harmony with them, and it cannot be counted a doctrine of the Lutheran Church. When our Lutheran Church teaches that faith belongs into election as an integral part of it, that all men are equally corrupt and equally redeemed, and that election is an act of God's free grace in Christ Jesus not bound by anything good in man, Calvinists, judging by reason, may and do accuse us of inconsistency; they may and do pronounce our doctrine "puerile and absurd," but they must confess that we are not Synergists.

We have before given ample proof that Calvin's doctrine of an absolute election is not in the Scriptures, and we will only add the words of the Lamb: "I am Alpha and

Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," Rev. 22, 13. Our salvation does not spring from an absolute decree of God. Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end of our salvation.

IV. REDEMPTION.

In former chapters we set forth the difference of doctrine in regard to election and predestination proper, and, we believe, have demonstrated to every careful and unprejudiced reader that our Lutheran doctrine has nothing whatever in common with Calvinism. The close relation, however, in which the doctrine of election stands to other articles of the Christian faith renders it necessary to speak of several additional points of doctrine. This is the more indispensably necessary, because Calvin makes predestination the foundation of the whole plan of salvation. He makes his doctrine of an absolute predestination the starting point from which he construes and, because being led not by the Scriptures, but by the principles of systematic thinking, spoils all the chief articles of the Christian faith.

The first article which Calvin's doctrine of predestination affects is redemption. Because Calvin teaches an absolute predestination and places it before redemption, he, as a natural consequence of that doctrine, restricts redemption to the elect only. Because God, according to Calvin's doctrine, had predestinated and created comparatively only a small number of men unto life and the multitude unto eternal misery, therefore Calvin *draws the inference* that God could not have sent His Son to redeem the reprobate; for this would not at all have been consistent. The sending of Christ, in Calvin's system, was only a means to carry out the decree of election unto life. Therefore the *Presbyterian Confession* (ch. 3, art. 6) says: "Neither are any other *redeemed by Christ*, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, *but the elect only.*" And the *Larger Catechism* (Qu. 59) says: "Who are made partakers of redemption through Christ?" Answer: "Redemp-

tion is certainly applied, and effectually communicated, to all those for whom Christ hath purchased it." That is plainly denying universal redemption, and saying that the blood of Jesus Christ was not shed for all men, but to purchase the elect only.

It is needless to repeat what our Lutheran Church teaches on this point.

The difference of doctrine is briefly this:

1. Calvin teaches that redemption is a consequence of election unto life.—We teach that election unto life is a consequence of redemption.

2. Calvin teaches that Christ died for the elect only.—We teach that Christ died for the elect, but not for the elect only.

3. Calvin teaches that Christ did not purchase salvation for those who will be lost.—We teach that Christ did purchase salvation for those who will be lost.

4. In Calvin's doctrine no one can know *a priori* whether he is redeemed, but each one is taught to *draw a conclusion* from his effectual calling to his redemption.—Our doctrine assures every one that he is redeemed, that salvation is prepared for him.

That Calvin's doctrine in this point is flatly against the Scriptures is evident from almost every page of the Bible, and he spends much labor to dodge those numberless passages treating of universal grace and redemption. These passages are so irritating to him that he sometimes apparently loses his temper. He, for instance, says: "If they obstinately insist on its being said that God is merciful to all, I will oppose to them, what is elsewhere asserted, that 'our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased!' This text, then, must be explained in a manner consistent with another, where God says: 'I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.'" (*Inst.*, vol. II, p. 196.) Calvin takes those passages treating of election, and would have passages treating of universal grace ex-

plained *in a manner consistent with them*. Following the same principle, Synergists take those passages treating of universal grace and would have passages treating of election explained *in a manner consistent with them*. One is about as right as the other. The only difference is, Calvin goes to the right, Synergists to the left. But we hold that the Holy Spirit makes no blunders; neither is He, as John Calvin pretends in regard to John 17, 12, ever guilty of "inaccuracy of expression." When the Holy Ghost says "all," He means all, and when He says "chosen," He means a choice.

But of those passages which directly say that Christ redeemed those who will be lost, which, therefore, admit of no evasion, Calvin is silent as a grave. Thus Peter writes: "There shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction," 2 Pet. 2, 1. Of those *same persons* of whom Calvin says that the Lord had not bought them, Peter says that the Lord has bought them.

V. CALLING IN ITS RELATION TO ELECTION.

Next to that of redemption the article of God's gracious calling is most miserably perverted by Calvin's doctrine of election. Because Calvin teaches an absolute predestination of some to life, some to death, and a redemption of the elect only, he, furthermore, consistently teaches that not all men are called alike: for it would not be consistent for God to call those unto salvation whom He had foreordained unto damnation, or for the Father to draw those to the Son for whom Christ had not been sent. If, indeed, the two first, Calvin's decree of reprobation and the non-redemption of the greater part of mankind, were true, it would certainly be inconsistent, yea, God would be acting against Himself, if He would call all men alike. What consistency would there be in first dooming a man to destruction and then

earnestly calling him to salvation? or in drawing those to Christ for whom Christ had not died? "Where, then," says Calvin, "will be the consistency of God's calling to Himself such as He knows will never come?" (*Inst.*, vol. II, p. 161.) For the sake of consistency Calvin teaches a two-fold call: the one external, through the Word, the other internal, through the Spirit; or, the one ineffectual, the other effectual. He says: "There are two kinds of calling. For there is a universal call, by which God, in the external preaching of the Word, invites all, indiscriminately, to come to Him, even those to whom He intends it as a savor of death, and an occasion of heavier condemnation. There is also a special call, with which He, for the most part, favors only believers, when, by the inward illumination of His Spirit, He causes the Word preached to sink into their hearts. Yet sometimes He also communicates it to those whom He only enlightens for a season, and afterwards forsakes on account of their ingratitude, and strikes with greater blindness." (*Inst.*, vol. II, p. 187.) What Calvin means by the latter clause of God's granting His special call also to some non-elect, we learn from the preceding paragraph, where he says of such as "fall away from Christ again, and sink into ruin": "I dispute not their having similar signs of calling with the elect; but I am far from admitting them to possess that certain assurance of election which I enjoin believers to seek from the Word of the Gospel." (p. 186.) On the assertion that God does not intend to call the non-elect unto Himself, but that it is His determinate decree that they shall not believe, Calvin expresses himself thus: "Those, therefore, whom He has created to a life of shame and a death of destruction, that they might be instruments of His wrath, and examples of His severity, He causes to reach their appointed end, sometimes depriving them of the opportunity of hearing the Word, sometimes, by the preaching of it, increasing their blindness and stupidity." (p. 191.) Again he says: "That the rep-

robate obey not the Word of God when made known to them, is justly imputed to the wickedness and depravity of their hearts, provided it be at the same time stated that they are abandoned to this depravity, because they have been raised up by a just but inscrutable judgment of God, to display His glory in their condemnation." (p. 193.)

Calvin's doctrine is plainly this: God calls only those truly, seriously, and earnestly unto faith and salvation who are predestinated to life; to them alone He gives true repentance and faith. The others God either deprives of His Word, or He calls them only externally, for a show, or He even cheats them by granting them emotions very similar to those of the effectual call, or He calls them by the Word to obdurate and harden their hearts. According to Calvin, God calls only the elect with the intention that they should come, the others may also be called, yet not with the intention that they should come, but only to render them more culpable, or, which is certainly the worst of all, to deceive them so that they mistake a stone for a fish. According to Calvin, the Word of the Gospel must indeed be preached to the multitude, but it is preached to the multitude only in order that out of that multitude the few elect ones may be called; for he says: "When the doctrine of salvation is offered to all for their effectual benefit, it is a corrupt prostitution of that which is declared to be reserved particularly for the children of the Church." (p. 160.)

At the risk, even, of becoming tedious to the reader we must yet mention a special point in Calvin's doctrine which is of far-reaching practical importance, and which shows the spirit and tendency of Calvinism. It is the relation into which Calvin places effectual calling to the Word. He frequently speaks as though he regarded the Word of the Gospel a means of grace, nevertheless he, in fact, separates the calling of the Spirit from the Word. His real sentiment is expressed in his treatise on the Sacraments. He there says: "The office of the Sacraments is precisely the same as that

of the Word of God." (*Inst.*, vol. II, p. 467.) Now to Calvin the Sacraments were nothing but empty shadows, signs, and emblems, of which he declares: "Nor do they impart any benefits, unless they are accompanied by the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts." To Calvin using the Sacraments amounts about to occupying one's self with a shadow which can be of benefit only when, aside from the Sacrament, the Spirit works in the heart appropriating that which is signified by the Sacrament. To Calvin the office of a sacrament is nothing more than only to emblemize, and the office of the Spirit is to effect that which is typified by the Sacrament, and the Spirit does not perform His work in and through the Sacrament, but apart and aside from it; for he says: "We assert the necessity of a separate consideration and contemplation of the internal grace of the Spirit, as it is distinguished from the external ministry." (p. 468.) Now the office of the Word is to Calvin the same. He does not regard the Word a vessel bringing the Spirit, not that which makes the heart to burn, but a mere proclamation which cannot and does not effect what it proclaims, wherefore he pronounces the calling through the Word ineffectual. Calvin's effectual calling is something aside and separate from the calling through the Word, something which the Spirit does immediately, like Revivalists expect the Spirit without means. (See also on this *Presb. Conf.*, chap. X.) As Calvin teaches an absolute predestination without causes, so, also, an absolute calling of the elect without means, and if absolute, then, of course, irresistible. What God decreed absolutely He carries out absolutely, that is Calvin's consistency, which, at the same time, opens a copious well-spring for fanaticism.

What we said in regard to redemption must here be repeated. According to Calvin's doctrine no hearer can know whether the Word which he hears is for him or not; whether it is intended for his salvation or for his greater damnation; he must wait to experience the working of the Spirit in his

heart, then to draw the inference that the Word is preached to him for his salvation, and even then he cannot be positively certain, because he might be deceived in his judgment.

In glaring contrast to Calvin's doctrine our Lutheran Church teaches that God has not two different calls, but as He has created all men unto eternal life and has redeemed all in Christ, so He also seriously, earnestly, and effectually through the Word of the Gospel calls all men unto Christ; for thus our Church says: "The divine call, which takes place through the Word, is not the cause that *many* are called, but *few* chosen; as if it were the declaration of God: 'Externally through the Word, to my kingdom, I call you all, indeed, unto whom I give my Word, but in my heart I do not intend it for all, but only for some few; for it is my will, that the greater part of those whom I call through the Word should not be enlightened and converted, but be and remain damned, although I have declared myself otherwise towards them through the Word in the call.' In this manner it would be taught that God, who is the eternal Truth, contradicts Himself; when, at the same time, God punishes this levity even in men, when a person declares a thing, and means and intends another in his heart." (N. M., 2. ed., p. 716.) Therefore our Church also teaches that no one should look to anything outside of the Word, but each one should be certain that it is for him, should embrace it, and expect all from, in, and through the Word, as our Confession continues in the passage quoted: "In this" (the Calvinistic) "way the useful (consolatory) foundation of our faith would also be rendered entirely uncertain, and be destroyed, in which we are daily reminded and admonished that *from the Word of God alone, through which He confers with us, and calls us, we should learn and determine what His will towards us is, that whatever it promises us, we should firmly believe and not doubt.*" That in this doctrine an absolute calling and an irresistible grace has no room is too manifest to need special proof.

Hence the difference of doctrine may be summed up thus:

1. Calvin teaches that God has two calls. — We teach: As God is one His calling is one.

2. Calvin teaches that God does not earnestly and effectually call those who will be lost. — We teach that God does earnestly and effectually call those who will be lost.

3. Calvin teaches that God deprives some men of His Word, because He does not want them saved. — We teach that God deprives men of His Word only and alone because of their wickedness and ingratitude.

4. Calvin teaches that to some men God sends His Word to obdurate and harden them. — We teach that God sends His Word to enlighten and save all.

5. Calvin teaches that the non-conversion of men is owing to the decree of God denying them the grace of conversion. — We teach that God denies no man the grace of conversion, but the non-conversion of men is owing only and alone to their own wickedness.

6. Calvin separates the effectual calling of the Spirit from the calling through the Word, and teaches an absolute or immediate calling of the elect. — We teach that God calls men only through His Word.

7. Calvin teaches an irresistible calling of the elect. — We teach that the calling of God is not irresistible.

8. Calvin's doctrine leaves man in doubt, whether the Gospel is intended for him. — Our doctrine assures everyone that he is called unto Christ.

Because the calling of God is so important a point of doctrine we will briefly examine Calvin's attempt to prove his twofold call from Scripture and by argumentation. Here it becomes most manifest that Calvin's doctrine is false, heretical, and blasphemous; for by his attempt to prove his doctrine from the Scriptures he succeeds only in making it very evident that his doctrine is not in the Bible. To set this forth we will adduce several of those passages to which

Calvin chiefly appeals, and which to a superficial reader might appear to speak in his favor. Is. 53, 1 we read: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Arguing against our doctrine of a universal call Calvin says: "Though the voice of the Gospel addresses all men generally, yet the gift of faith is bestowed on few. Isaiah assigns the cause, that 'the arm of the Lord' is not 'revealed to all.' If he had said that the Gospel is wickedly and perversely despised, because many obstinately refuse to hear it, perhaps there would be some color for the notion of the universal call. The design of the prophet is not to extenuate the guilt of men, when he states that the source of blindness is God's not deigning to reveal His arm to them; he only suggests that their ears are in vain assailed with external doctrine, because faith is a peculiar gift." (*Inst.*, vol. II, p. 161.) The cause, says Calvin, why the arm of the Lord is not revealed to the great mass of mankind is not their wickedness and obstinacy, but because God, having decreed their blindness, does not deign to reveal His arm unto them, but calls them only with an external, ineffectual calling. But where does the text say this? Not with a single syllable does the passage indicate a twofold calling of men, only by an unwarranted inference does Calvin construe his own opinion into the text under the plea that faith is a peculiar gift of God. Faith is indeed a peculiar gift of God, but the question here is, Does this text teach a twofold calling of God? But not only does this passage not contain Calvin's doctrine, in the connection in which it stands it plainly teaches that which Calvin denies; namely, that the wickedness and obstinacy of men is the cause why the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them; for in the following verse the prophet says: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." In Jesus of Nazareth God did reveal His arm to the Jews,

but because He was meek and lowly they despised and rejected Him, although they could not deny that the power of God was with Him. The source of their blindness was not that God had not deigned to call them effectually, it was their obstinately refusing to believe in Christ. This is established by John 12, 37. 38: "Though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him, that the saying of Esaias, the prophet, might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The Lord wrought miracles before the Jews that they "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," John 20, 31, but blinded by the righteousness of the Law they could not see the glory of the Gospel, and therefore they despised and rejected it. The source of their blindness was the spirit of self-righteousness within them and not a decree of predestination, and, least of all, the miracles and preaching of Christ, through which God called them.

On Acts 13, 48 Calvin observes: "Jews and Gentiles in common heard the preaching of Paul and Barnabas. Though they were all instructed on that occasion with the same discourse, it is narrated that 'as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' With what face, then, can we deny the freeness of calling, in which election reigns alone, even to the last?" (p. 181.) Calvin means to say, in that assembly the elect alone were called by the effectual calling of the Spirit and therefore they believed; the others were called only by the calling through the Word and therefore they did not believe. But the text does not say: As many as were effectually called, it says: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Of an effectual and an ineffectual calling the text says nothing. The fact is, that whole assembly was effectually called, the same call came to them all, but the Jews from envy towards the Gentiles put the Word from them and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas. They did the same that the members

of the High Council at Jerusalem had done before them, and to these Stephen said: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye," Acts 7, 51. They were so effectually called that "they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth," and so determined were they in their opposition that "they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord." Stephen does not say: Ye do always resist the calling of God through the Word, he says: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." It is plain, through Stephen's word they were called by the Holy Ghost, and this effectual call they resisted. The obvious meaning of Acts 13, 48 is this: That whole assembly was called with the same effectual calling through the Word; the elect among them received the Word, as God's Word, with joy; the others, not in consequence of any decree of God, neither because of a different calling, but only and alone by their own wickedness, particularly their malice against the Gentiles, denounced and blasphemed the Word, or if some of them did believe they believed for a time only and fell away again.

We must yet examine that passage which Calvin evidently regards the main citadel for his ineffectual call, Is. 6, 9. 10: "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." On these words Calvin remarks: "Observe, He directs His voice to them, but it is that they may become more deaf; He kindles a light, but it is that they may be made more blind; He publishes His doctrine, but it is that they may be more besotted; He applies a remedy, but it is that they may not be healed. John, citing this prophecy, declares that the Jews could not believe, because this curse of God was upon them." (p. 192.) As a matter of course

it is not our object to answer all questions which may be asked in regard to this passage, but only to examine whether Calvin's ineffectual calling is founded here. Neither is this in question, whether men do sometimes become more hardened when the Word is preached unto them;—this we Lutherans also teach; for the longer Moses dealt with Pharaoh the more hardened did Pharaoh become;—but the question is, whether God sends His Word with the intention and for the purpose that it should not work salvation in all men but greater damnation in the non-elect? To this question Calvin answers, Yes, and we Lutherans, No. Which answer does the text justify? Calvin brings this passage into connection with his absolute decrees of predestination, particularly the decree of damnation, and he here imagines to see its execution; but we say that this passage has nothing to do with the eternal election of God; for the election of God is an election of grace unto salvation. It only saves and never condemns anyone, neither does it in any way promote the damnation of men. Now this text treats of the damnation of men, so, then, it cannot of predestination; for there is no predestination unto death, as we have before proved. Nevertheless, the Lord's commission to Isaiah plainly is: "Go, make fat." How do the Scriptures explain this? To the Jews at Rome, Paul said: "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive, for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed," Acts 28, 26. 27. So the Word found the hearts of the people fat; it did not close their eyes, but St. Paul says of them: "Their eyes have they closed." In the first place, therefore, the commission to Isaiah was a prophecy, foretelling, so it would come to pass, Christ would come to save His people from their sins, and they would not receive His Word, but would harden their hearts, and Paul testifies the fulfillment

of this prophecy to them v. 28, saying: "Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it."

Yet it is not to be disputed that the commission to Isaiah was not only a prophecy; for there is the direct command: "Go, make fat." On this Calvin insists by citing John 12, 39. 40: "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see," etc. Why could the Jews not believe? What does it mean that God hardened their hearts? The connection in which the words occur is this: When Jesus was admonishing the Jews to believe in Him a voice occurred from heaven, of which the Lord, v. 30, says: "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes," namely that they should believe; v. 37 reads: "Though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him." Immediately after the words cited from Isaiah, John adds: "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." A little thereafter Christ says: "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." How Calvin, in the face of all this, can assert that Christ, when preaching to those Jews, intended to call them only to damnation, we cannot see, unless he had his doctrine all fixed beforehand, and then hunted words of the Bible to give it an appearance of right. The reason why those Jews could not believe was very simply this: The Pharisees taught false doctrine and had seduced the people to that doctrine; neither were they willing to drop their false doctrine and to adopt the truth, and because they rejected and blasphemed the light, therefore God surrendered them to walk in darkness, and when God ceased to strike them (Is. 1, 5) they could do nothing but fall into greater blindness, until in madness of heart they exclaimed, "His blood be on us, and on our children," Matt. 27, 25. To

them happened what was threatened Deut. 28, 25: "The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart, and thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness." "It has never yet been heard," says Luther, "that one who has brought up false doctrine was converted; for this sin is too great, because it blasphemeth the Word of God and sins in the Holy Ghost; therefore God permits them to become hardened, that it comes to pass according to the saying Is. 6, 9." (W. ed. XX, p. 958.) That the false teachers of the Jews cast themselves into the judgment of hardening and seduced the people unto the same, should this prove that they had not been effectually called? If God ceases to spread forth His hands to those who obstinately refuse to hear, should He therefore not be in earnest about wanting all men saved? If a driver ceases to beat a balky horse, should this be a proof that he was not in earnest about wanting the horse to go?

Calvin also employs reasonable argumentation to prove his double calling. To the objection that God would act dishonestly by promising salvation to all while intending it only for a few he replies: "We know the promises to be effectual to us only when we receive them by faith; on the contrary, the annihilation of faith is at once an abolition of the promises. If this is their nature, we may perceive that there is no discordance between these two things—God's having appointed from eternity on whom He will bestow His favor and exercise His wrath, and His proclaiming salvation indiscriminately to all." (Vol. II, p. 197.) This is a mere sophism. The question is not what effect God's calling has in men, but whether it is effectual in itself, effectual on the part of God, intended by Him for the salvation of men. Calvin teaches that God does not intend the calling through the Word to be effectual; we teach that in itself God's calling is always effectual. But here Calvin asks: If the same effectual call comes to all, why does it not have the same effect in all? "The same sermon," he says,

“is addressed to a hundred persons; twenty receive it with the obedience of faith; the others despise, or ridicule, or reject, or condemn it. If it be replied that the difference proceeds from their wickedness and perverseness, this will afford no satisfaction, because the minds of others would have been influenced by the same wickedness, but for the correction of divine goodness.” (p. 191.) Here is the whole of it in a nutshell. Calvin explains the result of that sermon in this wise: ‘The eighty are called only externally by the Word and therefore they cannot believe; the twenty are called with the effectual calling of the Spirit and therefore they must believe. This would make the result very plain. Synergists explain it in this wise: The eighty are so desperately wicked as to regard the Gospel foolishness; the twenty are not quite so desperately wicked; they refrain from counting the Gospel foolishness, and so enable God to have His work in them. This would also make the result very plain. Does the reader perhaps ask: How do you Lutherans explain this? *Answer:* We do not explain it at all; we let it alone. We only insist on these four things, but on these *we do insist*: 1. The same call comes to them all. 2. The same depravity is in them all. 3. The eighty despise the Gospel by their own wickedness. 4. The twenty are no better, of themselves they would do exactly the same as the eighty but for the work of divine grace in them. Here we stop, and let Arminians and Calvinists travel on flourishing the lantern of reason.

COUNTRY PARSON.
