

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 1

A. THESES OF AGREEMENT

IV: Election

Discussions on the doctrine of Election were based on Article XI of the Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, which was read at the joint meeting on December 16 1948. No difference in belief and teaching was noted by either body during the reading and the following theses were adopted at a Joint Meeting on February 3, 1949.

Reviewed July 2001, unedited.

We agree in particular

1. That the Election of Grace, or Predestination, is actually an election of persons and not the ordaining of the means of grace or of the *ordo salutis* on the part of God.
2. That while predestination does not exclude God's foreknowledge (*praescientia*), which embraces all persons and all things, this foreknowledge must not be identified with predestination.
3. That although universal grace (*gratia universalis*) is powerfully taught in Scripture and must not be weakened or restricted in any way, nevertheless predestination is not identical with God's will to save all sinners (*gratia universalis*), but is, as the very term indicated, particular.
4. That as regards the position of faith with respect to election, the following is in agreement with the teachings of Scripture and the witness of the Confessions:
 - a. The terms *intuitu fidei* (election took place in view of faith), while not necessarily synergistic, have often been used synergistically and lend themselves to a synergistic understanding. They should therefore be avoided, all the more since they are found neither in the Scriptures nor in the Confessions.
 - b. It is correct to speak of an election to faith, since both the Scriptures and the Confessions trace the present and future salvation of believers and all that pertains thereto, to God's eternal act of predestination.

- c. In order to avoid the imputation of Calvinistic error, that is, of an altogether arbitrary act of God, as if the means of grace were irrelevant to salvation, it must be said that God's elective purpose is accomplished solely through the means of grace, by which faith is wrought in the hearts of men.
- 5. That in regard to the distinction made between persons, why some are saved and not others (*discretio personarum, cur alii prae aliis? Cure alii, non alii?*) we must together with the Confessions and with Scripture acknowledge a mystery that cannot be solved by reason, not even that of the enlightened theologian, in this life. We cannot go beyond the double declaration: if saved, a sinner is saved by grace alone; if lost, he is lost by his own fault.
- 6. That this doctrine is correctly taught and used when, as the Confessions so plainly show, it 'gives the most enduring consolation to all troubled, afflicted men, that they know that their salvation is not placed in their own hands, but in the gracious election of God, which He has revealed to us in Christ, out of whose hand no man shall pluck us' (Form. Conc. XI, par.90).