

The main subject of the doctrinal discussions were the theses printed shortly before the convention in *Der Lutheraner*, entitled [245/1]

Theses on the conversion of man to God.

Thesis I.

The word conversion is taken both in sacred Scripture and in human books in different, namely in a wider and in a narrower sense; here we take this word in the narrower sense, according to which conversion means the transfer necessary for all men from the state of sin and wrath to the state of faith and grace.

1. in a broader and narrower sense the word conversion is taken, e.g. Acts 26:18, 20.
2. synonymous or rather related to conversion are rebirth, quickening, creation of a new heart; repentance is the effect immediately following conversion, Jerem. 31:19. <page 20>
3. with regard to the persons who convert, a distinction is made between the first, the continued and the repeated.
4. Conversion is also necessary for those who have been baptized and thereby born again, but have fallen back into besetting sins.

Thesis II.

The means by which a person is converted is the Word of God heard or read.

1. Compare Rom 10:17; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; John 17:20.
2. ordinarily by appointed preachers, exceptionally also by non-appointed laypersons.
3. also by simply reading.
4. also through individual pieces of the Word of God.

Thesis III.

Although conversion ordinarily takes place only after various preparatory processes in the person and therefore in this sense gradually, step by step, conversion itself happens at any time in an instant.

1. there are extraordinary conversions.
2. Ordinarily, conversion takes place only after various preparatory processes in the person.
3. As soon as the first sparks of faith are kindled, it is not a mere

so-called revival, different from the first conversion, but a real conversion.

4. The transfer to the state of faith and grace happens in an instant.

5. It is erroneous that he cannot be truly converted who cannot state the day and hour of his conversion. [245/2]

Thesis IV.

The only author of conversion is God the Holy Spirit, who works it through the Word of God, Law and Gospel, solely by grace for the sake of Christ, but man can certainly hinder it in himself, but cannot contribute to it.

1. It is worked by grace alone for Christ's sake. Rom 3:23. Eph 2:1 ff. 2 Tim. 1:9.

2. Although the first effects of the Holy Spirit when a person hears or reads God's word are inevitable, they are not irresistible; on the contrary, a person can hinder his conversion through willful resistance.

3. It is indeed man whose mind and will are moved and converted in conversion, but he himself cannot cooperate until he is converted, namely, a. at no stage, b. neither to repentance, nor c. to faith.

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Discussion of the theses.*)

*) Pastor Crull took minutes during these doctrinal discussions.

After reading out the theses, the author of the thesis, Prof. Walther, explained why he had divided the doctrine of conversion into these four points. The doctrine of conversion is very broad, since it is connected with almost all other doctrines; but it is mainly in these four points that one encounters errors, namely 1. in the question: What is conversion? 2. what is the means of conversion? 3. what time is required to be converted? 4. what part does man himself have in the work of conversion? It must be borne in mind that there is no more mysterious subject than this very doctrine. Reason should not be asked for information about it. The words: "Take off your shoes from your feet, for the place where you stand is a holy land" (Ex. 3:5) and: "The natural man hears nothing of the Spirit of God; it is foolishness to him, and he cannot discern it, for it must be spiritually directed" (1 Cor. 2:14) also apply here. He who consults his reason to discern this doctrine is led astray and speaks as the blind man

speaks of color. Therefore, one must act on this teaching with fear and trembling.

Our dogmatists name three principles or origins of our salvation: 1. God's will of grace, 2. redemption through the Son of God, and 3. the appropriating activity of the Holy Spirit. It was not enough that God wanted our salvation, he also had to send his Son for our reconciliation, and finally something must happen in man himself, who, as he comes into this world is excluded from salvation. This latter process in man, however, is the work of the Holy Spirit, who first calls man and then enlightens him. Enlightenment, however, is the effect of the Holy Spirit, through which the Lord Jesus is transfigured in our souls as our Savior. In this respect, enlightenment and conversion are synonymous. [246/1] Only this enlightenment is followed by sanctification; for until a person is enlightened by the light of faith, he cannot be sanctified by the power of faith.

Thesis I.

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- 1. in a broader and narrower sense the word conversion is taken, e.g. Acts. 26:18. 20. <page 22>**
- 2. synonymous or rather related to conversion are rebirth, quickening, creation of a new heart; repentance is the effect immediately following conversion, Jerem. 31, 19.**
- 3. with regard to the persons who convert, a distinction is made between the first, the continued and the repeated.**
- 4. Conversion is also necessary for those who have been baptized and thereby born again, but have fallen back into besetting sins.**

To 1. the Scriptures speak of conversion in various senses; and this is just a gracious arrangement of God. For this different use of so many words imposes upon us the necessity of investigation. Thus, for example, the word repentance is used in two senses. It means, as every good schoolchild knows, 1. only repentance and 2. repentance and faith, and is thus used in both a broader and a narrower sense. So also the word conversion. When, for example, the Lord Jesus Acts 26:18 says to Saul: "I am now sending you among the Gentiles to open their eyes, that they

may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, and receive forgiveness of sins", this is speaking of conversion in the narrower sense. But when it says in verse 20: "I also preached to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God and do righteous works of repentance" (according to the basic text [*ἐπιστρεφειν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, ἀξία της μετάνοιας ἔργα πράσσοντας*] actually: convert to God by doing etc.), so conversion is used in the wider sense. We are now dealing with conversion in the narrower sense. The question is not: What must a person do after his conversion in order to remain in grace? for all Lutherans agree on this; but the question is: In what way does a person become such a blessed person that he has God's grace?

Our thesis gives us the answer to this question with the words: "through the necessary transfer of all men from the state of sin and wrath to the state of faith and grace". Conversion is not a merely temporary process, but the transfer to a new state; it changes the whole nature of man; then he is no longer dead, [246/2] blind, powerless and hostile to God, but has new powers, a new mind, a new will, a disposition in agreement with God's mind, although the old man still remains; which is why the Holy Scriptures demand the constant struggle of the new man against the old man. Where this struggle has ceased, spiritual death has occurred. —

Conversion, therefore, does not consist, as some blind people think, in saying, when they go to confession, "I must also be converted again," in reading a prayer or a hymn of repentance, or in not eating before partaking of <page 23> the Lord's Supper; nor in beginning to do other works. For although there is a certain truth in the saying: "To do nothing is the right repentance", it is usually misused in a rather ungodly way. When people who have given to gross shame and vice, such as drunkards, swearers, thieves, swindlers, fornicators and the like, only begin a worldly, honorable life, they are said to have been converted. But that is not conversion. For conversion is not a change of works, nor a change of moral principles, but a transfer from the state of sin and wrath to the state of faith and grace. Conversion differs from justification in that justification does not take place in our hearts, but before God in heaven. Part of the essence of conversion is that a person comes to faith. But since no one believes in Christ except the one who has recognized him, faith and knowledge are often used synonymously in Holy Scripture.

Quenstedt, a Wittenberg theologian of the 17th century, writes:

"Conversion is either taken in a wider sense, inasmuch as it

comprehends not only a transfer from the state of sin to the state of faith, but also justification and regeneration, as well as their continuation, Acts 26:20 (see the Formula of Concord pp. 656, 663 and 675; Müller's edition 589, 594 and 604; or in a narrower sense, in so far as it is opposed to justification and regeneration; so we take it here." *)

*) „*Conversio accipitur vel late, prout non tantum aliquam translationem ex peccati statu in statum fidei, sed etiam justificationem ac renovationem, nec non hujus continuationem ambitu suo complectitur; Act. 26, 20- Vide Formul. Concord. p. 656- 663. et 675; ed. Muell. p. 589. 594- et 604. Vel stricte, prout justificationi et renovationi contradistinguitur; et haec acceptio est hujus loci.*" (Theol. didact.-polem. P. III. c. 7. fol. 700.)

Hülsemann, a Leipzig theologian, writes:

"After the disputes of the synergists had been aroused, one began to take the word repentance and conversion in the narrowest sense for the effected (transitiva et activa) conversion of God alone, who begins in man the enlightenment of the intellect and the improvement of the will and the sensual instincts, in which sense the Formula of Concord fol. 274. 275 [ed. Muell. 526] rejects that doctrine of three causes working the conversion of the unregenerate man, and teaches that the conversion of man to God is a work of the Holy Spirit alone, to which the will of the man to be converted contributes nothing, but suffers God to work in him (the will) until he is born again. From this it is evident that the Formula of Concord has in certain places included the conversion of man [247/1] in the same words in which regeneration is included, which is in no way a work of man at work, but of God alone, <page 24> in which sense the little word conversion is often used of an effect of God alone fol. 268, 271b. fg. [ed. Muell. p. 524. 525] and elsewhere; but it cannot be denied that the same formula has in other passages taken the word conversion in a wider sense, and distinguished between the beginning and the continuation of conversion fol. 272 b. 265 b. 268. 273. 275." (Praellect. in lib. Conc. p. 500.)

An explanation was added to this passage: The synergists taught that man must go to meet God, or at least say yes, if God wants to save him. Synergists means co-workers in German. But the natural man cannot contribute to his salvation, but only to his damnation. Only since these synergists, who were also called "voluntary masters", had tried to cover up their false doctrine in a dishonest way, was a distinction made between

conversion in the narrower and in the broader sense. Even Philipp Melanchthon erred in this doctrine by establishing three causes of conversion. But despite all respect for his great merits, our church decisively rejected his error. Of course, he complained bitterly about the rabies theologorum (i.e. the rage of theologians) and asked God to deliver him from it. But only God, the One who knows the heart, knows whether carnal zeal was really involved in this fight for the purity of doctrine. One can easily sin against the Holy Spirit by declaring his work to be the work of the flesh, even of the devil. -

Hülsemann further writes:

"It is true that children are said to be converted in baptism, when they are not only born again, but also renewed and attain not only a real (actualem) faith, but also a real holiness, namely Tit. 3, 5. Matth. 18, 3. But when the word conversion, in so far as it is experienced (intransitiva), is used of adults, it signifies not only conversion wrought (activam) on the part of God, and conversion experienced (passivam) on the part of man, but also conversion wrought on the part of a man who is already reconciled or absolved from sins by regeneration, and who, by powers infused from above, cooperates in the continuance of his conversion." (L. c. p. 506.)

He distinguishes here between transitiva et activa, or being wrought, and intransitiva et passiva conversio, i.e. experienced conversion, just as Holy Scripture says: "Convert us, Lord, and we shall be converted." He also points out the difference between conversion and rebirth. In rebirth, man is given new powers of life; conversion, however, goes one step further: in it, the new life is begun. However, it must be borne in mind that even if these things [247/2] can be separated conceptually, they nevertheless coincide in reality.

On 2 Quenstedt writes: "Conversion is synonymous with quickening, Eph. 2:5-6, regeneration, 1 Pet. 1:3, [<page 25>](#page25) the creation of a new heart, Ps. 51:12, Ezek. 36:26, likewise repentance, which, however, does not concern conversion as it is actually described and after its beginning, but inauthentically and from the effect that follows it; for repentance follows the conversion that has already actually taken place as its immediate effect." *) (L. c. fol. 702.)

*) „Synonyma conversionis sunt vivificatio, Eph. 2, 5. 6., regeneratio 1 Pet. 1, 3., cordis novi creatio Ps. 51, 12. Ez. 36, 26., item poenitentia, quae tamen conversionem non proprie et a priori, sed improprie et ab effectu consequente

descriptam respicit; sequitur enim poenitentia conversionem in actu jam constitutam ceu immediatus ejus effectus."

There is a difference to be made between the spark of faith and the state of faith. Thus a spark of faith is kindled in many a heart by a powerful sermon, but the person does not come to a state of faith because he extinguishes the spark again. Thus, as it were, the little child dies at birth. But while faith cannot increase, although it can become stronger, conversion always increases. Faith has to do with grasping the promises of grace; conversion, however, addresses the whole person; a change takes place in his mind, will and sensual drives. Conversion, in contrast to regeneration, has as its terminus a quo (i.e. from what man is converted) the corruption of man, and as its terminus ad quem (i.e. to what man is converted) the change that includes a part of the removal of sinful corruption. Holy Scripture also refers to straying as terminus ad quo when it says: "You were once like sheep going astray, but now you have been converted to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Peter 2:25).

To 3. about conversion with regard to the persons who convert, writes Quenstedt: "If we consider conversion with regard to the persons to whom it is ascribed, then another is the first and that of the unbelievers or the unregenerate, Ps 22:28, Acts 9:35, 11:21, 14:15, 26:18, 1 Thess 1:9, another is the continued or that of those who have been reborn, Jer 31:18-19, Lam. 5:21, Ps. 51:15, another the repeated and of the fallen reborn and those returning to a better disposition, Deut. 30:2; Jer. 3:7; 12:13; Ezek. 18:30. 32. Joel 2:12-13. Matt. 13:15. Mark 4:12. Joh. 12:40. The first meaning is that of this place." †) (L. c. fol. 699.)

†) "Ratione subjectorum spectata conversio alia prima, et infidelium seu non-renatorum est, Ps. 22, 28, Actor. 9, 35, etc., alia continuata seu renatorum stantium, Jer. 31, 18, 19, Thren. 5, 21. Ps. 51, 15., alia reiterata seu reassumta et renatorum lapsorum ac vicissim ad saniozem mentem redeuntium est, Deut. 30, 2, etc. Prima acceptio est hujus "

The first conversion is to be understood here as God's action on a person who is dead in sin; the continued [<page 26>](#page26) conversion is God's action on a person who has already experienced God's grace; the repeated conversion is the conversion of the fallen. But this last distinction is confusing; it is not really a third kind of conversion at all, but only a repetition of the first. For all that such fallen ones retain from before is the

literal knowledge that is also sometimes found in completely unconverted Gentiles to whom the Word of God has been preached for a long time.

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To 4. it is a dreadful error to maintain that through baptism an indestructible, heavenly germ is planted in man, as Delitzsch, for example, thinks he may call the notorious Wislicenus his brother for the sake of this supposed germ. It is true: on God's side the baptismal covenant is eternally firm; but man loses the new life received in holy baptism through reigning sins, is then twice dead and even worse than by nature, just as a once tilled field is then not tilled again, the more weeds it bears. If baptism is not to be a condemnation to us, we must seize daily the gifts of grace given to us in it. Since those who have fallen from grace retain no residuum (i.e. remnant) of spiritual powers, they must be born again, like Nicodemus (John 3:3) and the apostate Galatians (Galatians 4:19). It was only the so-called orthodoxists who claimed against the pietists, who did not want to regard those who had not converted according to their pattern as converted: The rebirth had happened in baptism, therefore only conversion was necessary for those who had fallen into besetting sins.

The Formula of Concord says:

"Therefore there is a great difference between the baptized and the unbaptized; for since, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, Gal. 3:27, all those who are baptized have put on Christ and are thus truly born again, they now have arbitrium liberatum, that is, as Christ says, they are made free again; for the reason that they not only hear the Word, but are also able, though in great weakness, to assent to and receive it....

"But since those who have been baptized have acted against conscience, have allowed sin to reign in them, and have thus grieved and lost the Holy Spirit in themselves, they may not be baptized again, but must be converted again." (Art. 2. Rev. fol. 272 fg. Müll. 604. 605; [FC II, 67, 69](#); [Triglotta, 907](#))

It (the Formula of Concord) therefore contrasts conversion with Baptism, but not with rebirth, because conversion is the rebirth.

Olearius writes:

"Repeated conversion is necessary for those converts who sin against conscience. The reason is, because faith cannot exist with crime, and therefore, when it is lost, requires a repeated gift, and indeed a successive one [<page 27>](#) (successivam); although in the fallen from the first conversion a knowledge of the truth remains, and therefore

conversion is easier." (Carpzovii Isag. in libr. symb. p. 1259.) [248/2]

Now, of course, hundreds of thousands are growing up in the midst of Christianity who have no more knowledge of the truth than the heathen Indians. An example was given of a 26-year-old student who had heard nothing of Christ's ministry in his entire life, but who became a new man through the first lecture of a believing professor.

Finally, in the Smalcald Articles it says:

"It is, accordingly, necessary to know and to teach that when holy men, still having and feeling original sin, also daily repenting of and striving with it, happen to fall into manifest sins, as David into adultery, murder, and blasphemy, that then faith and the Holy Ghost has departed from them." (Part III. Art. 3. fol. 328b. Müll. p. 319; [SA III. 3. 43](#); [Triglotta p 491](#);)

Thesis II.

The means by which a person is converted is the Word of God heard or read.

- 1. Rom 10:17; Zac 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; John 17:20.**
- 2. ordinarily by appointed preachers, exceptionally also by non-appointed laypersons.**
- 3. also by simply reading.**
- 4. also through individual pieces of the Word of God.**

When it is said in the thesis that the Word of God heard or read is the only means by which man is converted, it is assumed that one is speaking of the conversion of adults, and not of the conversion of children, which also takes place through Baptism, and which is usually called regeneration. For the intention of the author of the Thesis is to show that adults take no active part in their conversion.

Concerning 1. that the Word of God is the means of conversion, the Holy Scripture Romans 10:17 says: "So faith comes from preaching, but preaching comes through the Word of God." But if faith comes from preaching, then conversion also comes from preaching; for conversion is the transfer to the state of faith. Furthermore, James 1:18 says: "He begat us according to his will by the word of truth, that we should be the firstfruits of his creatures." If we are begotten or born again by the word of truth, we are also converted by it, for conversion implies regeneration. Furthermore, 1 Peter 1:23 says: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, that is, of the living Word of God, which abideth for ever." This passage of Scripture is a powerful testimony against the

new false doctrine that man is only [<page 28>](#page28) born again through Baptism. On the contrary, an adult must be born again before Baptism if he is not to receive it for damnation. For adults, baptism is a confirmation and a testimony of their rebirth; they are thereby strengthened in their rebirth. Of course, baptism is also a bath of rebirth for adults; for what strengthens rebirth, it also gives. This saying also refutes the [249/1] error of the "new believers", who, like many so-called "Old Lutherans", teach that faith only becomes a true faith through Baptism, and thus exaggerate the necessity of the sacrament. Finally, the Lord says in John 17:20: "I do not pray for them alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word." Here the Savior says that the word of the apostles works faith and thus also conversion.

That is why our church confesses the following in the Smalcald Articles:

"In these matters concerning the oral, outward word, it is to be firmly maintained that God gives no one his Spirit or grace without through or with the preceding outward word..... For even those who believe before baptism, or have believed in baptism, have received it through the outward word that precedes it; as those of old who have come to their senses must have heard beforehand that whoever believes and is baptized is saved, even though they may receive the Spirit and baptism after ten years of unbelief. ... Therefore we should and must insist that God will not deal with us men except through his outward word and sacrament; but everything that is vaunted by the Spirit without such word and sacrament is the devil." (P. III, Art. 8, fol. 147 b. Müll. 321 fg.)

Conversion through visions, raptures, convulsions, one's own or other people's prayers, of which the enthusiasts make so much boast, is of a completely different kind and a deception. No one can pray for conversion who is not already converted, for God does not hear sinners. But when a convert prays for instruction, he is not praying for initial conversion, but for continued conversion. This is in no way contradicted by the fact that an afflicted person who is not yet sure of his state of grace may be advised to pray diligently. For although, as Chemnitz says, one cannot find the mathematical point at which the cooperation of man begins, one can nevertheless advise anyone who complains in this way to pray, because one may assume that the person who complains in this way is already under the influence of God. Especially for us here in America, where the fanatical churches find such fertile ground, the saying of our church is so important: "Everything" (no matter how holy it may look) "that is attributed

to the Spirit without such Word and Sacrament is of the devil"; for the devil also likes to pretend to be pious, and especially where God's Word resounds strongly, he tries to drag souls to hell through pious appearances.

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Quenstedt writes:

"God's Word does not work in the conversion of man by mere moral persuasion or by presenting to us the lovable object only by an [249/2] acceptably persuasive power; for this moral persuasion presupposes powers of free will which are not present in conversion, just as the things presented in God's Word do not correspond either to the intellect or to the will, considered in themselves. . . . God's written and preached Word has a true and proper efficacious power, or is a supernatural, efficacious means of producing spiritual effects, i.e. To penetrate into the heart, to transform it inwardly, and to work and really produce in it conversion, regeneration, and sanctification, and this power and efficacy is truly divine; therefore Paul affirms of the gospel of Christ preached outwardly or with a living voice, Rom. 1:16, that it is a power of God, that is, a divinely strong and mighty means of saving us." *) (L. c. (fol. 708. 704.)

*) "Verbum Dei in conversione hominis non agit per nudas suasiones morales sive per vim solum plausibiliter persuasivam proponendo nobis objectum amabile; haec enim suasio moralis supponit vires liberi arbitrii, quae in conversione nullae sunt, nullaue est rerum, quae in Verbo Dei proponuntur, congruentia sive cum intellectu sive cum voluntate in se considerata. . . . Habet Verbum Dei scriptum et praedicatum vim et virtutem effectivam veram et propriam sive est medium supernaturale efficax ad producendum effectus spirituales h. e. ut cor penetret, intrinsecus mutet atque in eo conversionem, regenerationem et sanctificationem vere operetur et realiter efficiat, et haec vis et efficacia vere divina est; hinc et Paulus de evangelio Christi externa seu viva voce praedicato affirmat Rom. 1, 16, quod sit potentia, h. e. divine potens et validum medium ad nos salvandos."

God's Word does not work like a human word by moving the mind or convincing the intellect. The human word has an effect on man, because every man carries certain truths within himself, and therefore, if he is not unreasonable, cannot deny what follows from those truths. God's Word, on the other hand, is like red-hot iron; as the latter is permeated by fire, so is the latter by the Holy Spirit. The truths contained in Scripture,

expressed in letters and words, contain the Holy Spirit. If a person now opens his ears and can literally understand the truths of the Word of God, the glow of the Holy Spirit is connected with the Word, so that the person must, as the Lord says, "realize that this teaching is from God." The Word of God therefore does not work through the persuasion of human reason, but in a supernatural way, through God's power, God's light, God's comfort.

This also includes [Article V of the Augsburg Confession](#), which reads:
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"That we may obtain this faith, the Office of the Ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear 3] the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake.

"They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works."

When asked whether the Law was also a means of conversion, seeing that it does not bestow the Holy Spirit, the answer was given: although the Law does not give the Spirit, the Spirit does work through the Law; Moses must precede Christ. In the strictest sense of conversion, i.e. insofar as it is nothing other than the gift of faith, the Law is of course not a means of conversion. —

Why is it that, although the word is a power of God, it only makes an impression on so few? One of the reasons for this is that so many who attend the divine service do not hear God's word at all, since they do not even pay attention [250/1] to the words, but merely hear the sound of the words with their ears. The word of God is the thoughts that God has in his heart and which he has revealed to us in the Scriptures. His thoughts, however, are not idle, but pure power, light and life. These thoughts are set down in the written word; they flow from the mouths of the apostles and prophets. But he who hears only the people, but not the thoughts, does not hear God's Word at all. An unconverted person who does not understand Chinese will not be converted by even the most powerful Chinese sermon, even though the enthusiastic Methodists claim that such conversions are possible.

A means of conversion is also often the learned Word of God. Some

who never go to church, but have learned the precious passages in their youth, are suddenly converted in the midst of their life of sin through this Word which they carry within them. For he who diligently hears God's Word grasps, as it were, the means of grace in the shrine of his heart.

Therefore it is quite wrong to be jealous that children learn so many sayings and songs by heart, even though they do not yet fully understand what they have learned. For they receive a treasure that is worth far more than the whole world. Therefore, if we fill them with the wWord as much as possible, they will carry the means of grace within themselves.

On no. 2. When it is said in No. 2 that conversion is ordinarily effected by appointed preachers, but also extraordinarily by laymen who are not appointed, this is not to say that conversion by laymen is extraordinary, but that this is not the ordinary way ordered by God. For since it is not the preacher but the Word of God that converts a man, conversion by the laity <page 31> is the same as conversion by the preacher. But this in no way entitles us to hold the public preaching ministry in low esteem; after all, God himself instituted it. He who does not use it faithfully, but arrogantly despises it, is a swarming spirit, an enemy of God, ruled by the evil spirit.

Therefore Luther says:

"Because the preachers have the office, name and honor of being God's helpers, no one [layman] should be so learned or holy as to neglect or despise the slightest sermon, because he does not know what time the hour will come when God will do his work for him through the preachers." (XII, 584; [StL 12, 436-437](#))

That is a terrible testimony against those who do not go to church diligently. Some people think that they are more experienced and more knowledgeable than their preacher; what the preacher can tell them, they have long since outgrown. But that is the devil's deception. God did not say that he wanted to work through the gifts of preachers, but through preaching. [250/2] We humans are all Pelagians by nature; we think we can convert if we want to. That is why we should not despise and neglect the slightest teaching for children, for it is just as much God's Word as the sermon from the pulpit, and God can convert and work on our hearts through the teaching for children as well as through the sermon. How sad it is, therefore, that so many stay away from church services without need! They are often deterred, as they suppose, by the heat, the cold, the snow, the rain, fatigue, indisposition, but really by the devil, who has also been in the preacher's study and read his sermon, and, fearing that man will be brought to conversion by it, keeps him from attending the house of

God. —

Nor should we think that conversion depends on the outward form in which God's Word is preached. Often the most powerful sermon has no effect on the heart of this or that person, while a simple hour of prayer kindles a spark that becomes a brightly blazing flame. Prayer, children's teaching, reading service, church prayer, Lord's Prayer, blessing, in short, everything that belongs to public worship is also preaching. Whoever despises these things despises the sermon and wants to dictate to God when and how he should convert, encourage and strengthen him.

The following statement by Quenstedt was read out in response to the words "also by non-appointed lay people":

"The ministerial cause (of conversion) are the preachers of the divine Word, either those who are ordinarily sent to this office, or some others who preach the word of salvation out of order, 2 Kings 5:2-3 (Naaman's slave), James 5:19-20. Hence the ministers of the Word of God are called fellow-workers 1 Cor. 3:9. our [page 32](#) blessed ones 1 Cor. 9:22. 1 Tim. 4:16. our fathers 1 Cor. 4:15. Gal. 4:19." *) (L. c. fol. 705.)

*) Ministerialis causa Verbi divini praecones sunt, vel ordinarie ad hoc munus deputati, vel quivis alii extra ordinem Verbum salutis annunciantes 2 Reg. 5, 2-3- Jac. 5, 19. 20. Hinc dicuntur ministri Verbi divini Dei *ὀννεργοι* seu cooperatores 1 Cor. 3, 9., nostri servatores c. 9, 22. 1 Tim. 4, 16., nostri patres 1 Cor. 4, 15- Gal. 4, 19., etc.

In the last 50 years, experience has taught us that not only preachers, but also lay people can be instruments in the hand of God for the conversion of people. For in the rationalistic age, when the preachers were for the most part unconverted people themselves, it was old, experienced laymen who held private services and thereby helped many a soul to conversion. Where pure doctrine is not publicly practiced, that is quite all right. For it is an ungodly doctrine that one can only be completely converted by a called preacher. To justify this false doctrine, Article V of the Augsburg Confession is falsely invoked, which deals with the ministry of preaching, and in which it is said that [251/1] God has instituted the ministry of preaching to obtain faith. The ministry of preaching is the institution of God that a person should be converted through God's word. The 5th Article of the Augsburg Confession deals with this ministry of preaching *in abstracto* (cf. the Torgau Articles No. 7), whereas the 14th Article of the Augsburg Confession deals with the parish

office or church government. The Word of God loses none of its power when it is proclaimed by a layman. Indeed, even if the devil preaches God's word, it still retains its divine power. Just as the seed of an ungodly farmer sprouts just as well as the seed sown by a believing Christian, so much less can it be said that the seed of the divine word loses any of its power when a layman scatters it.

Of course, this is in no way intended to advocate the conventicle system, which is the sad consequence of the terrible state of affairs in the German regional churches. However, the people who hold such conventicles must be treated very carefully, for they often have a lively piety and err out of weakness. Often, of course, they are driven by a false spirit, and while they have no concern for their wives and children at home, they run off to their neighbor's church. —

This subdivision also rejects the Roman Catholic error that the effectiveness of the divine Word depends on it being proclaimed by an ordained priest. No, every Christian is a priest and a missionary and should strive to help others to conversion. God has made this his sacred duty and will call him to account for it one day in eternity. Although he should not go around the houses as an inner missionary, in his profession he should bear witness to Jesus Christ wherever he finds the opportunity.

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To 3. That the mere reading of the Word of God is also a means of conversion, the Formula of Concord testifies with the following words:

"And by this means, and in no other way, namely, through His holy Word, when men hear it preached or read it, and the holy Sacraments when they are used according to His Word, God desires to call men to eternal salvation, draw them to Himself, and convert, regenerate, and sanctify them." (Art. 2. Müll p. 600 [[par. 50](#); [Triglotta p. 901](#)])

This is to be noted against the hierarchs who want to make the preachers, as it were, mediators between God and man. Indeed, if one cannot read, even the mere memory of what one has learned in the past can become the means of conversion. Therefore, Bible reading in schools [251/2] should not be hindered in any way, and no room should be given to the vain pretext that respect for the Holy Scriptures forbids their use as a reading book.

Examples of the fact that the mere reading of the divine Word has brought about conversion are the Jew [[Jean?](#)] Gerson, who, while reading the New Testament with some companions in order to have material for ridicule, was overcome not by reasons but by the power of the divine

Word; as well as the Reformed theologian [[Franciscus Junius 1545-1602](#)], who, while accidentally reading the first chapter of John's Gospel, felt the power of the Word in his heart and was converted to God; and finally the converted [Jesuit Jakob Reihing 1579-1628](#)], who, after having seduced the Prince of Palatinate-Neuburg and almost his entire country to Catholicism, came to insight by simply reading the Holy Scriptures. He did not read it in order to learn the truth from it, but only for the purpose of seducing the Lutherans by distorting and misusing the passages. He had written a Catholic handbook to seduce the Palatinate-Neuburgers, which he himself refuted in a special book after his conversion. He died in 1628 as a Lutheran professor of theology.

In one of his writings entitled: "*Laquei pontificii contriti*, i.e. *Jakob Reihing's Humble and Submissive Thanksgiving*" it says:

"O Divine Majesty, how great a good deed You have done me, that You have placed me, who previously had little knowledge and experience in sacred Scripture in the high schools, in such a place, where I have been led, drawn and driven to constant and diligent research of sacred Scripture, as it were, by Your divine hand! I could not do otherwise. O a good, blessed compulsion! My listeners (in the Palatinate-Neuburg), a good part of whom were Protestants or had only recently been seduced into papism, desired nothing more than to hear the holy, divine Scriptures, for they were accustomed to them. My opponent [[Hoe von Hoenegg](#)], against whom I acted verbally or in writing, challenged me and drove me to the Scriptures. What was I to do? I had to put myself in the Scriptures and stick to them strongly, lest I should infect the tender minds of my hearers, who had gone strongly to the Scriptures, with a [page 34](#) suspicion, as if I dared not bring out and win the bargain. Therefore I endeavored to the utmost to confirm the papist doctrine from Scripture and to refute and circumvent the Augsburg Confession. This was the purpose and aim of all my sermons, talks and writings. Many were of the opinion, and I myself, that I was lucky in the argument [[252/1](#)] and had victory in my hand. But God's judgment in heaven was much different and, according to God's all-wise counsel, the dispute had a different outcome. For since the heavenly rays of divine truth finally shone into my dark, blind and pompous mind, I began to see more and more clearly a year ago and from day to day thereafter, through divine enlightenment, how the Holy Scriptures in all, especially the most important articles of the controversy, are clearly on the Protestant side against the papacy. Then, at last, the disguised veneer of truth has been stripped off the papal errors

in my mind, but the deceptive veneer of error has been wiped off the Protestant truth. Thus, in the end, the shameful error, which I long defended as the beautiful truth, has been defeated; but the fair truth, which I contested as a harmful error, has risen up in my mind, gained the victory, and triumphed." (Laquei pontificii contriti, i.e. [*Jakob Reihing's Humble, Submissive Thanksgiving. Tübingen 1621. pp. 9-11*](#)).

The question of whether the laity should be allowed to hold public prayers from the heart was answered in the negative, because this was public teaching, for which a regular call was necessary according to [Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession](#).

It was subsequently asked whether it should not be admitted that even adults are sometimes reborn in and through Baptism.

The same was conceded and the example of the [pagan actor Genesius](#) was pointed out as proof. When he once played the role of a proselyte who was to be baptized, he saw the writing in his mind during the baptismal act: "One Lord, one faith, one Baptism", was born again through this Baptism and was executed as a martyr after he had publicly confessed his faith in front of the audience. If, on the other hand, a Jew, for example, is baptized only to improve his reputation, Baptism is of no use to him, but only brings him condemnation. This is why the apostle Philip once asked the eunuch before he baptized him: "Do you believe with all your heart?" or what is the same: Have you been born again? (Acts 8:37) Baptism is therefore to be denied to adults who are obviously unbelievers.

To the words that a person is also converted by merely reading the Word of God, it was remarked:

Some people say that at least children and young people should not be given the whole Bible to read, because it contains individual stories that could be dangerous to them. But that is a gross error. God himself has commanded [<page 35>](#) that His Word be read to all the people, including women and children. The fact that such stories are contained in Scripture is a gracious institution of God, who thereby wants to show us the sinful corruption of men, including the saints, and bring us to repentance. We should recognize from this that we too would have fallen into the same sins if God had not graciously preserved us, and we should thank Him for this. Furthermore, [\[252/2\]](#) Scripture always says that God hates and punishes such sins. We are not only told about the sins of the saints, but also about their painful and serious repentance. — It is true that in the Israelite Church, too, individual passages were singled out

which were not given to young people to read. But this was done according to the writings of the elders. No one is tempted to sin by such narratives of the Holy Scriptures. For while the world, with its novellas and novels, uses an ingenious means to arouse slumbering lusts by covering sin with a veil, Holy Scripture speaks of sin in such a way as to arouse revulsion and disgust at sin, but never carelessly or even with pleasure. Just as Holy Scripture reveals to us the commandments of God, it also tells us of the transgressions of these and the punishments that follow. Nor should we forget that these narratives are also God's Word and that God holds his hand protectively over them.

To explain the fourth section of the second thesis, that a person can also be converted through individual pieces of the Word of God, the following statement by Quenstedt was read out:

"The instrumental cause (of conversion) is not a rapturous impulse or being forcibly carried away, but God's Word. ... But God's Word is considered either in its entirety, however it may be heard, whether by hearing or by reading, Phil. 1:15. f., for however God's Word is preached, it is never proclaimed without a saving fruit; or according to a part which contains a doctrine of Christ the Savior, and is sufficient in its way, namely with regard to a certain time. For sometimes a man is converted by reading or hearing a Biblical saying of Christ, how he suffered and died for us, which document, so far as concerns conversion and transfer from the state of wrath to the state of grace, may suffice at this time; but he must afterwards be instructed more fully from God's Word in the other articles of faith." (L. c. fol. 704.)

Luther says:

"We must confess that the enthusiasts have the Scriptures and God's Word in other articles, and whoever hears and believes them will be saved, even though they are unholy heretics and blasphemers of Christ." (XVII, 2675; [StL 17, 2212](#); [AE 40, 251](#))

This testimony of Luther shows how important and correct our 4th section is. For if a person could not [<page 36>](#) be converted even by individual pieces of the Word of God, there could be no children of God outside the orthodox church; indeed, even within the orthodox church the situation would be sad, since only very few have a correct knowledge of all the doctrines. It is almost always only one part of the divine word that brings a person to conversion, in the case of this one saying, in the case of that one another saying; for every evangelical saying can bring a person to conversion. But when Quenstedt says in the above quotation

(cited passage) that a person can [253/1] be converted by a part of the Word which is sufficient in its way, namely with regard to a certain time, he wants to warn us against lazy certainty and admonish us to search the Scriptures so that we may grow and increase in knowledge, so that we do not remain children and allow ourselves to be weighed and swayed by all kinds of winds of doctrine; for otherwise we would lose everything again. A Christian must therefore not think that he, as a simple-minded layman, has no need to search the Scriptures and leave that to his pastor. No, when the Savior calls the simple and ignorant blessed, he does not mean the stupid and ignorant, but the modest and humble Christians who submit to the divine Word in all things. The Weimar Bible can therefore be warmly recommended to all Christians who can read well, not only for reading but also for researching the Scriptures.

Thesis III.

Although conversion ordinarily only takes place after various preparatory processes in the person and therefore in this sense gradually, step by step, conversion itself happens at any time in an instant.

- 1. there are extraordinary conversions.**
- 2. Ordinarily, conversion takes place only after various preparatory processes in the person.**
- 3. as soon as the first sparks of faith are kindled, it is not a mere so-called revival, different from the first conversion, but a real conversion.**
- 4. the transfer to the state of faith and grace happens in an instant.**
- 5. It is erroneous that he cannot be truly converted who cannot state the day and hour of his conversion.**

First of all, it should be noted that there are also extraordinary conversions that do not proceed according to the ordinary rule; for God gives us rules, but no creature can bind him to a rule. <page 37>

Quenstedt writes about this:

"Conversion is either ordinary or extraordinary. The extraordinary is a sudden act of God, by means of which, according to his free will and infinite wisdom, he converts this or that person in a special and miraculous way without the ordinary ministry of the word, either by his word spoken directly by himself, whether without or with miracles and signs, or by the word proclaimed by a minister of the church but accompanied by certain miracles and signs, or in some other unusual

way, but not by an absolutely irresistible power.... However, the power to convert is not to be attributed to miracles and signs, but to the word of God.

“Examples of an extraordinary conversion are [253/2] (1). Abraham, who was an idolater. For Joshua 24:2-3 he is counted among the fathers of the Israelites who served other gods. For Pererius and Bellarminus do not falsely attribute the word "polytheism" to Thara and other ancestors of Abraham without violent distortion, especially since the Israelites derive their lineage mainly from Abraham and, as far as Nahor is concerned, his idolatry cannot be denied, Gen. 31:53; moreover, the proof which Joshua himself takes of the utter unworthiness of the Israelites in comparison with the great good deed done to them would not be valid if it were not conceded that Abraham had been converted from idolatry. But he was called and converted directly by God through an outward address, Gen 12:1. (2). the wise men of the East, who were led to Christ by an extraordinary means, namely by a star, and were converted to him, Matt 2:1 ff. (3). the thief on the cross, who was directly converted by Christ, Luke 23:42; and (4). Paul, whose conversion was an extraordinary one, in that the Lord Jesus spoke to him directly on the road to Damascus, and a light suddenly shone around him, Acts 9:3-4. ... This extraordinary conversion, as it ceased after the planting of the Church and the preaching of the Word throughout the whole world, is therefore not dealt with here at first." (L. c. fol. 701.)

Here Quenstedt speaks of three different kinds of conversion: 1. when a person is converted by the word spoken not by men but by God himself, as for example Saul on the road to Damascus; 2. when God combines miracles and signs with his word proclaimed by a preacher or even by a layman, which of course he has not promised to any man for the special purpose of conversion; finally 3. in another extraordinary way, but never by an irresistible grace. — Quenstedt's words that the power to convert is not to be ascribed to miracles and signs, but to the <page 38> Word of God, are extremely important here. For there is no other power of conversion than the Word. Even in the case of extraordinary conversions, the word of Christ is always the means of conversion.

To 2. that conversion ordinarily takes place only after various preparatory processes in man is confirmed by the experience of every Christian. God had to work on every Christian for a long time before he could say: "I know that my Savior lives." The preparatory processes in man are to be understood here as internal processes, but not external

guidance, although it cannot be denied that God often leads some people miraculously, e.g. brings them to America, sends them illnesses, causes them severe losses and the like in order to convert them.

Quenstedt writes about the preparatory inner processes:

"The grace that works and completes the conversion itself by means of the Word produces 1. knowledge of sin, which is the first stage of conversion, 2. shock (compunctionem) of the heart, so that [254/1] he abhors the sins he has committed and is sorry for them, 3. The act of faith itself and confidence in Christ, namely, that he believes in Christ and grasps the merit of Christ through true faith, which act of faith is immediately followed by transfer from the state of wrath to the state of grace, which is the last act of conversion." (L. c. fol. 713.)

This statement of Quenstedt names the three absolutely indispensable stages by which man must ascend to conversion, between which, of course, there may be many small ones. The first is the recognition of sin, which Scripture testifies to when it first calls out to the unconverted: "Repent and believe", thus stating that the law is a disciplinarian of Christ. The second stage is the shaking of the heart, for a dead understanding of the multitude and gravity of sins is no part of repentance. Man must also be embarrassed because of his sins, he must become afraid and anxious, as it is said of the Jews in Acts. 2, 37: "it went through their hearts", and of Felix: "he was terrified", Acts 24, 25. 24, 25. Until the heart is broken by the hammer of the law, the gospel cannot enter it, just as oil cannot penetrate a diamond. Therefore the teaching of the Herrnhuters is wrong, who first want the gospel preached and then the law. They want to bring the sinner to conversion through the Savior's figure of torture, while their descriptions of the Lord's unspeakable sufferings only move their listeners to natural pity and tears. But this is what the Lord forbade when he called out to the daughters of Jerusalem: "Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children!" So we should neither weep for him nor rebuke the Jews, but rather weep and rebuke ourselves. But it is well to note that Christ on the cross also preaches the wrath <page 39> of God and is thus a preaching of the law and helps to convince man of the impossibility of ever being justified by the law.

Finally, the third stage is the gift of faith. —

To the question of whether the law, separated from the gospel, brings about a true knowledge of sin, the answer was given that the law alone could bring about a living knowledge of sin, but not a salutary one. For the law does not bring about repentance for having offended God, but for

having earned hell with one's sins. Only when the Gospel is added does repentance become salutary. Jeremiah testifies to this when he says: "When I was converted, I repented," Jeremiah 31:19. As long as a person only trembles before hell, he hates God and wishes there were no God at all. That is why the apostle says: "Sin became exceedingly sinful through the law", Rom. 7, 13. Such repentance is nothing more than sin coming to life. By nature, sin lies in the heart like a snake frozen by the winter frost; it stirs here and there, but [254/2] does not come to life and consciousness until God's law brings it to life.

Olearius writes:

"Conversion is the act of God, according to which he offers his grace to men by degrees, and communicates the following degrees to those who do not reject the first, but without their influence to bring about these degrees, by means of the Word, so that through the preaching of the Word they are given the power to recognize spiritual things, through the Law they are given contrition, and finally through the Gospel they are given faith."*) (Isag. in libb. symbol. J. B. Carpozvii, p. 1198.)

*) J. Olearius: "Conversio est actio Dei, gratiam suam gradatim hominibus offerentis et priores gradus non repudiantibus subsequentes, sine ipsorum tamen influxu ad eosdem gradus producendos, per medium verbi conferentis, ita, ut per verbi praedicationem vires spiritualia cognoscendi subministrentur, per legem contritio et tandem per evangelium fides conferatur."

Quenstedt speaks in even greater detail when he says:

"That conversion takes place little by little, as far as the preceding acts are concerned, we prove from this, because it pleases the Holy Spirit according to his free will not always to accomplish the work here by a sudden movement, as happened in the conversion of Paul, but more often slowly and little by little, so that a time is necessary in which the knowledge and meaning concerning the Law and the Gospel are awakened, certainty is driven out, natural resistance is quieted, unbelief is driven out, the flesh is overcome, the old man is put off and the new man is put on. ... But these acts are accomplished by the Holy Spirit sometimes more quickly, sometimes more slowly, so that this one is converted more quickly, that one more slowly. God never, or at least seldom, pours out the full vessel of [<page 40>](#page40) grace upon those who are to be converted, and not every unbeliever can promise himself the measure of the thief or Paul, but God moves this one more slowly, that

one more quickly, according to his good pleasure." (L. c. fol. 707.)

With the Epicurean principle: "Quod supra nos, nihil ad nos" (What is above us is none of our business) most people go along in safety; therefore God must first bring man to a standstill and to the realization that he must concern himself with the salvation of his soul. This is followed by the other stages or acts mentioned by Quenstedt.

To 3. it is well known that the Halle Pietists and the newer followers of this school in particular have fallen away from the model of pure doctrine. They demanded that the sinner must be able to show a certain degree of knowledge, of repentance, even of tears; that, after remaining for a time in a state of revival, he must be able to tell of comforting experiences and heavenly feelings before they recognized him as converted. They made a distinction between revival and conversion. But according to Holy Scripture, revival from spiritual death is as much as the creation of a new life, and is therefore not really different from conversion. For as [255/1] soon as a poor sinner comes to faith in Christ, he is converted; "Christ is the end of the Law; he who believes in him is righteous." One could make a distinction between revival and conversion if one understood revival to mean the beginning of knowledge: I cannot go on like this, otherwise I am lost. But this is not how the Pietists understand the word "revival", but includes the heartfelt desire for grace in Christ.

On the other hand, the Formula of Concord testifies to this with the words:

"And, in a word, it remains eternally true what the Son of God says, John 15:5: Without Me ye can do nothing. And Paul, Phil. 2:13: "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." To all godly Christians who feel and experience in their hearts a small spark or longing for divine grace and eternal salvation this precious passage is very comforting; for they know that God has kindled in their hearts this beginning of true godliness, and that He will further strengthen and help them in their great weakness to persevere in true faith unto the end" ([Article II, 13-14](#); [Triglotta 885](#))

In another passage it says:

"For concerning the presence, operation, and gifts of the Holy Ghost we should not and cannot always judge ex sensu [from feeling], as to how and when they are experienced in the heart; but because they are often covered and occur in great weakness, we should be certain from, and according to, the promise, that the Word of God preached and heard is [truly] an office and work of the Holy Ghost, by which He is certainly

efficacious and works in our hearts, 2 Cor. 2:14ff; 3:5ff.” ([Article II. 56; Triglotta 903](#))

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The lack of a sense of the state of grace does not justify the conclusion that a person is awakened but not yet converted. Rather, we must look at how a person relates to God's Word. Anyone who hears it with heartfelt desire and does not refute his heartfelt desire through action (such as Herod, for example, who gladly heard John the Baptist but did not improve his life of shame) is certainly to be considered a child of God.

Another important testimony concerning revival is that of the Dortmund Ministerium, which wrote in 1647 in its critique of the Latermannic controversies as follows:

"Therefore, the words of the contrary contain a contradiction, insofar as it is said that as soon as the human will is awakened by the anticipatory grace of the Holy Spirit, it is free in the progress of its conversion to be converted and therefore to cooperate with the [255/2] Holy Spirit in the act of its first conversion. For this awakening signifies the removal of death and, on the contrary, involves the impartation of spiritual life. Therefore, if the happening of that awakening is presupposed, there is no more talk of the act of first conversion than that which has already happened by virtue of that awakening. And consequently, where revival is presupposed, we are no longer speaking of a person who has not been reborn, but of a person who has been reborn through that revival. And if the aforesaid revival takes place without our cooperation, then our first conversion also takes place without that cooperation." (Calovii system. loc. th. X, 80 ff.)

As you can see from this, as soon as a significant distinction is made between revival and conversion, synergism is the inevitable result.

To 4. that the transfer into the state of faith and grace happens in an instant, testifies Quenstedt:

"The essence of conversion consists in the transfer of an unregenerate person from the state of wrath and sin to the state of grace and faith, from the realm of darkness to the realm of light, which has its preparatory acts, with regard to which it is said that conversion takes place gradually. Here the preparation is to be distinguished from the transfer from the state of wrath to the state of grace. Preparation has its stages and takes place gradually, but conversion from the state of wrath to the state of grace takes place in an instant, since it is impossible for a person to be in the state of wrath and in the state of grace, under life and

under death at the same time, even for a moment." (L. c. fol. 706.)

Whoever therefore teaches that one can be converted and not yet be fully converted, contradicts the Holy Scriptures, which only know of two [<page 42>](#page42) states, either death or life. He who is not under grace is under wrath; he who is not in life is still in death; he who is not on the way to heaven is on the way to hell; he who is not a blessed man is a damned man. There is no twilight, no middle state between light and darkness. But just as the new theologians assume a Hades (an intermediate state between heaven and hell) against the clear word of Scripture, which otherwise always means hell in the New Testament, so they also speak of a middle state between spiritual death and spiritual life. The Savior does indeed speak of those who are neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm (Revelation 3:14-15); but he does not speak of an intermediate state, but says that the lukewarm is even worse than the cold, and threatens that he will spit such out of his mouth. There is also a great difference between unconverted people. Some go along in diabolical malice without even feeling a better emotion, while others have a troubled conscience, so that in their fear they go to church diligently without coming to conversion. There are some drunkards who [\[256/1\]](#256/1) often howl about their ruin, but for all that remain slaves to sin. Such a person, on whom only the law exerts its effect, is like a castle on a high rock that is fired upon by a besieging army, but which, despite all the breaches shot into the walls, despite all the fire caused by the projectiles in it, still does not surrender. This is why our ancients distinguish between *gratia assistens* (grace working from outside) and *gratia inhabitans* (indwelling grace). When the Lord says, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34), he means to say that the preparatory effects of the Spirit are already present in you, for the Christian scholar addressed had already allowed himself to be brought to a better knowledge of the law than the Pharisees. When Christ says: "Strive to enter through the narrow gate" (Luke 13:24), he is speaking to those who have already been born again and does not understand the narrow gate to mean repentance, but the cross, tribulation and various temptations.

To 5. The fifth section of the third thesis is directed against the sects. It is well known that they deny conversion to those who cannot state the time, hour, moment and place of their conversion. But most Christians cannot do this, although some can, such as Paul and Moses.

Chemnitz comments on this:

"Conversion or regeneration is not such a change that is completed

and accomplished in all its parts in an instant; rather, it has its beginnings, its progressions, in which it is accomplished in great weakness. One must therefore not think: I want to wait safely and idly until the renewal and conversion has been completed according to the indicated stages through the action of the Holy Spirit, without experiencing any movement. For it **<page 43>** cannot be shown in a mathematical point where the liberated will begins to be active." (Loc. theol. ed. Pol. Lys. Francof. et Witteb. 1653. I, 184.)

The erroneous teaching of the enthusiasts on this point is very dangerous, for it leads to certainty and spiritual hopefulness. It does not matter whether a person is certain that he was once converted at this or that time, but everything depends on whether he is certain that he is converted now. Many make of the fact that they were once converted into a bed of laziness and rest, and are eternally lost.

Thesis IV.

The only author of conversion is God the Holy Spirit, who works it through the Word of God, law and gospel, solely by grace for the sake of Christ, but man can certainly hinder it in himself, but cannot contribute to it.

- 1. It is worked by grace alone for Christ's sake. Rom. 3:23. Eph. 2:1 ff. 2 Tim. 1:9.**
- 2. Although the first effects of the Holy Spirit when a person hears or reads God's Word are [256/2] inevitable, they are not irresistible; on the contrary, a person can hinder his conversion through willful resistance.**
- 3. It is indeed man whose mind and will are moved and converted in conversion, but he himself cannot participate until he is converted, namely, (a). on no level, (b). neither to repentance, nor (c). to faith.**

To 1. that God the Holy Spirit is the only author of conversion, but that man cannot participate in it, is attested by the concordia formula to Luther's words that man is *merely passive*, i.e. merely suffering, in the work of conversion, thus:

"In these words Dr. Luther, of blessed and holy memory, ascribes to our free will no power whatever to qualify itself for righteousness or strive after it, but says that man is blinded and held captive to do only the devil's will, and that which is contrary to God the Lord. Therefore there is here no cooperation of our will in the conversion of man, and man must be drawn

and born again of God; otherwise there is no thought in our hearts which of itself could turn to the holy Gospel for the purpose of accepting it. Even so Dr. Luther wrote of this matter also in his book *De Servo Arbitrio*, i. e., *Of the Captive Will of Man*, in opposition to Erasmus, and elucidated and supported this position well and thoroughly" ([Solid Declaration, Art. II, 44; Triglotta p. 897](#))

With these <page 44> words our Confession ascribes the conversion of man to the Holy Spirit alone and rejects all human participation. And rightly so. For Holy Scripture teaches that we have everything to thank God for. —

The apostle Romans 3:23-24 says that conversion is wrought by grace alone for Christ's sake: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." When the Holy Spirit says here that there is no distinction among sinners, it follows that there can never be anything in a person for which God converts him and not another.

It also says in Eph 2:1-3. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." In these words, the apostle puts himself on an equal footing with the pagan Ephesians, who had lived in all sin and shame, and then attributes his salvation to the grace of God alone, verses 4-9.

Finally, 2 Timothy 1:9 says: "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 us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Here the call [257/1] into the kingdom of God is traced back to the mere grace and mercy of God. It is indeed strange that precisely those who seem to be made for Christianity often become its bitterest enemies, while often the most godless accept the Christian faith with joy. This is why the Savior says that the fornicators and tax collectors will enter the kingdom of heaven sooner than the self-righteous Pharisees. For the counsel of the heart will be revealed in the infant Jesus.

In the Formula of Concord it says:

"For inasmuch as our nature has been corrupted by sin, and is worthy of, and subject to, God's wrath and condemnation, God owes to us

neither the Word, the Spirit, nor grace; and when He bestows these gifts out of grace, we often thrust them from us, and make ourselves unworthy of everlasting life, Acts 13:46. And this His righteous, well-deserved judgment He displays in some countries, nations, and persons, in order that, when we are placed alongside of them and compared with them [and found to be most similar to them], we may learn the more diligently to recognize and praise God's pure [immense], unmerited grace in the vessels of mercy. 61] For no injustice is done those who are punished and receive the wages of their sins; but in the rest, to whom God gives and preserves His Word, by which men are enlightened, converted, and preserved, <page 45> God commends His pure [immense] grace and mercy, without their merit." ([Art. 11, of the Solid Declaration. Müll. p. 717: \[par. 60-61, Triglotta p. 1083\]](#) —

Outward worldly respectability is often the greatest obstacle to conversion. That is why God undoubtedly withdraws his hand from some people and lets them fall into sin and disgrace in order to bring them to conversion. The newer theologians teach that God looks upon the virtue and excellence of the Gentiles to whom he sends the preaching of the Word. However, experience, among other things, teaches that this is wrong, for it is often the most vicious pagans who are the first to accept the Gospel.

In another place the Formula of Concord says: "Therefore it is false and wrong [conflicts with the Word of God] when it is taught that not alone the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ, but that also in us there is a cause of God's election, on account of which God has chosen us to eternal life. For not only before we had done anything good, but also before we were born, yea, even before the foundations of the world were laid, He elected us in Christ; and that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger; as it is written concerning this matter, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated, Rom. 9:11ff.; Gen. 25:23; Mal. 1:2 f." ([par. 88; Triglotta p. 1093](#))

When God converts a person, He does not do so because He has seen something good in him, but because He has seen his misery and his sin.

When asked how the words "I loved Jacob [257/2] and hated Esau" were to be understood, the answer was given:

It must not be thought that God had an eternal aversion to Esau and destined him for condemnation; but here 'to hate' means the same as in

the saying, "He that hateth not his father, etc., cannot be my disciple," Luke 14:26, But the parallel passage tells us what 'to hate' means here: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me," Matthew 10:37. If we love Christ more than our own, it is often as if we hated our own. Thus it is said of Jacob that he preferred Rachel to Leah, Gen. 29:30, and immediately afterwards it says in v. 31: "When the LORD saw that Leah was unworthy (Heb.: hated)." It can be seen from this that, according to the language of Holy Scripture, "to hate" sometimes also means "not to love". When God wanted to speak to mankind, he used human language and therefore speaks sometimes actually, sometimes figuratively and so on. Just as God became man in his Son like us, yet without sin, so God also became man in his words, yet without error. If, converted by God's Word, the son of a father who is hostile to Christ adheres to the church, the father may ask him, with tears and wringing of hands, to leave and avoid the fellowship of the mucker, lest he spoil his whole [page 46](#) worldly career and disgrace his family. Now if the son does not obey his father in this matter (Acts 4:19), it is as if he hates his father, and he is probably reproached by the world as a disobedient son. "I loved Jacob and hated Esau" means as much as: I loved Jacob more than Esau.

Why? That is a matter for God; neither his Word nor our reason can tell us. If we follow reason at all in this doctrine, we must become either Calvinists or Pelagians; for we cannot possibly reconcile the fact that we owe it to God's grace alone if we are saved, and that we are lost through our own fault if we are damned. It can well be said that God, according to his omnipotence, can convert every human being, even the devil. For who can resist the Almighty? But since he has established his order of salvation, in which he wants to bring people to conversion and salvation, it cannot be said that God can save all people if he wants to. Rather, we must say that if the world did not willfully and stubbornly resist, all men would be converted and saved. This is the teaching of Holy Scripture, which, in presenting this doctrine, admittedly also leads us to such abysses and depths that we are dizzy when we look into it. —

Luther is often accused of having been a Calvinist; but it is precisely his writing against Erasmus, which is so often cited as proof of this claim, that refutes it. In this work Luther says that it is the highest order of faith to believe that God's will [258/1] is such that some must be damned, and yet that he is the most benevolent God, and not a cruel tyrant, which one would have to take him for if Calvin were right. In the explanation of the

passages which the Calvinists cite for their false doctrine, such as the verses quoted by Calvin and Beza as the main passage, Matthew 13:13-15, Luther calls it downright godless reason if one teaches that damnation is not both the consequence of sin and the consequence of God's judgment on the damned. Luther was far too honest to hold back his conviction. His splendid statements on this doctrine, which must clear him of even the slightest suspicion of particularism, are collected in a paper on justification, which was presented to the western district of our synod and was also printed in pamphlet form. The terrible doctrine of Calvin consisted in this: God had resolved to reveal himself; for this purpose he wished to create men; these he himself wished to plunge into sin, in order to prove both his wrath and his grace; he had therefore resolved to pass by the great majority of men with his grace, in order thus to reveal his wrath against sin; in order to show his grace, he had resolved to have mercy on some, to send his Son into the world for [page 47](#) them alone, and to bring them alone to faith. This is called the supralapsarian doctrine. —

The lowans now claim, with the Jesuits of old times, that Luther was a weathercock, that he had changed; that he was a Calvinist until 1527, but that he then began to teach universal grace. How shameful this slander was can be seen from the fact that Luther declared until his death that his book "On the Captive Will" was his best book. He never recanted a single letter, although in his interpretation of Genesis he rejects the misunderstanding that many associate with his saying: "What happens, happens by necessity", as if God compels man to sin. One must not forget against which opponent, proud of reason and virtue, Luther wrote this book, and that he wanted to beat Erasmus with his own weapons. Some passages admittedly sound as if they were spoken in the spirit of Calvin; but other passages in the same book and other writings by Luther provide proof that Luther was never a particularist. Luther's treatise against Erasmus proves the vast difference between Luther's and Calvin's doctrine of election by grace, for in it Luther calls the Word of God the only means of conversion.

Quenstedt says:

"There is a profound silence in Scripture concerning the natural righteousness required beforehand according to the Socinians and Arminians. A true and godly righteousness of mind and a good resolution springs from the purification of the heart by faith, Acts 15:9, and consequently only after the purification of the heart by faith. 15:9, and

consequently only after conversion, cf. Phil. 2:13, Heb. 11:6, Rom. 14:23. Without such righteousness the thief, Luke 23:42, the centurion, Matt. 27:24, Saul, Acts 9:6, and the jailer, Acts [258/2] 16:31, were converted. Also of those who mocked the apostles, that is, according to Wolzogen's interpretation, were of an evil spirit, Acts 2:12-14; 37:41, some were converted. **) (L. c. fol. 722.)

*) "De praerequisita a Socinianis et Arminianis probitate naturali altum in scripturis silentium est. Vera Deoque placens probitas animi et bonum propositum ex purificatione cordis per fidem (Act. 15, 9.) oritur, et consequenter ipsa conversione posterius est; conf. Phil. 2, 13, Ebr. 11, 6, Rom. 14, 23, Absque probitate tali conversi sunt latro Luc. 23, 42, centurio Matth. 27, 24, Saulus Act. 9, 6, carceris praefectus c. 16, 31... Etiam ex iis, qui apostolos ridebant h. e., exponente Wolzogenio, animo improbo erant, quidam conversi sunt Actor. 2, 12. 13. 14. 37. 41."

The Socinians and Arminians claimed that the reason why some were converted but not others was that some had a natural righteousness of mind while others had an evil mind. But Scripture knows nothing of this. On the contrary, the example of the jailer, who immediately before [page 48](#) his conversion wanted to murder himself and was therefore a suicide before God, is a clear proof that the natural righteousness of the mind cannot be a reason for conversion. Righteousness does not precede conversion, but follows it.

To 2. That the first effects of the Holy Spirit are indeed inevitable, but not irresistible; that man can rather hinder his conversion by willful resistance, the following passage from Quenstedt testifies:

"We admit that man is so affected (tangi) by the first movement awakened by prevenient grace through the preaching of the Word that he cannot escape the presence of God and experiences an impulse (instinctum aliquem percipere); but it does not follow from this, and it is not true, that if the first movement of prevenient grace is inevitable, the success of it, or conversion itself, is also inevitable, and so we are irresistibly converted. For although man cannot prevent the first movement from arising, he has the freedom to resist in the first movement, he also has it in the second and last (although not indifferently, that is, to convert and not to convert in the same way, for the ability of a man already moved by the prevenient grace is always more inclined to the former than to the latter), and he can, by an adverse

(morosam) will, put a stop to the prevenient grace, reject it and hinder his conversion by resisting it." (L. c. fol. 735.)

The example of Felix, who was not at all inclined to be touched by God's Word, but listened to Paul in the hope of receiving money from him, teaches us that man cannot prevent himself from being touched by it. He could not avoid the effect of the apostle's preaching, he was frightened; but he was able to resist, for he dismissed the apostle with the words: "Go your way this time; when I have a convenient time, I will send for you," Acts 24:25. We see from this that the resistance to the effects of divine grace is shown primarily in the rejection of the word of God. "It went through their hearts," so it is said not only of those who were converted on the first Christian [259/1] Pentecost (Acts 2:37), but also of the members of the high council, who covered their ears so as not to hear the powerful words of Stephen, which burned them like fire (Acts 7:54). Even the most hardened man cannot avoid the effect of the Word, but has the terrible freedom to resist the effect, so that he does not come to faith. We also see this in King Agrippa, who, although he was forced to confess, "There is not much lacking for you to persuade me to become a Christian," thus having to admit the excellence of the Christian faith, yet out of pride did not want to accept the teaching of Paul, the chastened man standing before him in chains and fetters, Acts 26:28. [<page 49>](#)

Furthermore, Quenstedt says:

"The unregenerate man who hears God's word cannot prevent a spiritual movement from arising in his heart, namely, a thought of sin committed, of crimes to be avoided, etc.; but it is not irresistible, for he can prevent those movements from taking root and persisting in the heart; he can stifle them, push them away, etc., after the example of the Jews, Luke 4:22, 28, of Felix, Acts. 24:25, of Agrippa, Acts. 26:28." (L. c. fol. 716.)

Quenstedt quotes here the example of the Jews, Luke 4:22, where it says of them: "They all testified of Christ and marveled at the blessed words that came out of his mouth, saying: 'Is this not Joseph's son?'" The Lord had preached the sweet gospel to them. But when he had rebuked them for their hypocrisy, it says, "all who were in the synagogue, when they heard this, were filled with wrath, and arose and thrust him out of the city, and led him to a hill of the mountain on which their city was built, so that they threw him down." So it can still happen today that a person praises the gospel in this hour and in the next hour wants to murder the preacher of the gospel, even Christ himself.

Quenstedt further writes:

"Divine grace is not repulsed by every opposition in man, otherwise no one would be saved, Rom. 7. Not by the innate, which is common in all men, which grace overcomes by its efficacy; nor by every real or actual (actuali) ..., but by the external, obstinate, and especially by the actual, which is permanently opposed to the means of salvation." (L. c. fol. 736.)

Quenstedt thus distinguishes here three kinds of resistance, 1. the innate, which arises from the natural impotence, 2. the added real or actual, and 3. the external persistent, obstinate, which is especially directed against the means of grace, and says that not the first, nor always the second, but certainly the third kind of resistance repels conversion. —

According to its manifestations, divine grace can be divided into three stages: 1) prevenient grace, that is, the working of the Holy Spirit, which must precede the proper conversion of a person by God; 2) operative grace, through which God works faith; [259/2] and 3) co-operative grace, which co-operates with the power already inherent in the regenerate person. Man, as he is by nature, cannot help but resist the effects of the Holy Spirit; he can, however, refrain from willful resistance, not absolutely, but to some extent by his own strength. But we must bear in mind that our ancients understand by willful resistance the malicious, stubborn resistance. With the addition of grace, man can refrain from this stubborn resistance out of his own strength, but not the willful, deliberate resistance that is found in every soul, even in true Christians; for their struggle against the flesh is a struggle against the perpetual resistance of the old man. Man is, as it were, like a block that is to be erected; even if it is already leaning, it falls to the ground again as soon as the external force is removed; only when the block stands on its base does it no longer need any external force to stand. It is similar with the conversion of man; as long as he is not converted, he can do nothing; only when he is converted do the forces of grace no longer work merely from outside, but have become his own.

In the article on free will, Baier ascribes to man a *libertas specificationis*, i.e. the freedom to choose between sinful objects, but he also says that man has only a certain degree of such freedom. When God's grace comes upon man, he does not have to resist, is not forced to do so by God, but it is his own wickedness that compels him to do so, as well as the devil's deceit.

In the case of young children, the resistance is indeed a violent one,

but because they are not yet conscious, it is not willful or deliberate and not a stubborn resistance. That is why their rebellion is not completely taken away by Holy Baptism, but it is overcome. However, experience teaches us that even small children can resist and thus commit real sin. For when small children make their desire for milk known by crying and impatiently thrashing about, when they are unruly and do not allow themselves to be calmed until their desire is satisfied, this is not merely original sin, but real sin. That is why our baptismal prayer in the Agende says that God wants to drown and destroy everything in the baptized person, not only what is innate in him, but also what he himself has done. This testimony of our Church should not be omitted in any act of baptism.

To 3. that man cannot cooperate until he is converted, the Formula of Concord testifies with the following words:

“So also when Luther says that with respect to his conversion man is pure passive (purely passive), that is, does nothing whatever towards it, but only suffers what God works in him, his meaning is not that conversion takes place without the preaching and hearing of God's Word; nor is this his meaning, that in conversion no new emotion whatever is awakened in us by the Holy Ghost and no spiritual operation begun; but [260/1] he means that man of himself, or from his natural powers, cannot do anything or help towards his conversion, and that conversion is not only in part, but altogether an operation, gift, and present, and work of the Holy Ghost alone, who accomplishes and effects it by His power and might, through the Word, in the intellect, will, and heart of man, *tamquam in subiecto patiente*, that is, while man does or works nothing, but only suffers; **<page 51>** not as a figure is cut into stone or a seal impressed into wax, which knows nothing of it, neither perceives and wills this, *) but in the way which has been recounted and explained a short while ago.” ([Solid Decl., Art. 2, par. 89.](#); [Triglotta p. 915](#))

*) This idea was attributed to the Lutherans by Striegel.

When the Fathers say that conversion should not be thought of in such a way that one can lie down quietly as if in sleep, but that much takes place in the mind, will and sensual impulses, this is wrongly interpreted by the moderns as the cooperation of man in conversion. Just as the garrison of a castle does nothing to make breaches in the walls and ramparts and to set fire to the defensive works here and there, just as

they only close up the breaches and extinguish the flames, so it is with conversion; however lively it may be, it is still only a life suffered, and man himself is only a suffering, not an active person. But although he is pure passive in the process, he is not like the sealing wax, which neither knows nor feels the impressions of the petition, but knows and feels the work of the Holy Spirit in himself, and usually in such a way that he resists it.

J. A. Osiander writes:

"It is objected that although all men are by nature children of wrath, even those who are not yet converted feel a struggle of the flesh and spirit; that even those who are yet to be converted have movements of the Holy Spirit and movements of the resisting flesh, this alone is evident from the example of Augustine and the books of his Confessions: without struggle no one is converted. — I answer, that the struggle of the flesh and spirit is twofold, an outward and an inward one; but in an unregenerate or in a man without grace there is no inward struggle at all; in one to be converted there is rather only an outward one, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is still outside and knocking (pungit); but in the converted it is inward, because it indwells him." (L. c. p. 374.)

A holy desire and longing is also sometimes found in a person who has not yet been converted, but only as long as the Holy Spirit is at work in him. Just as gutta-percha gives way to the pressure of the finger, [260/2] but soon returns to its former place as soon as the finger is removed, so also a holy desire and longing often arises in an unconverted person through the action of the Holy Spirit, without his being active in the least; but as soon as the Holy Spirit removes the hand, this desire also disappears. Only when a person has surrendered to the effects of God, when grace is no longer merely an external influence (gratia assistens) but has become an indwelling influence (inhabitans), can he himself participate. <page 52>

Anyone who teaches otherwise can only do so under Pelagian presuppositions.

J. A. Osiander counters the objection that man can go to church and hear God's word and thus contribute to his conversion thus:

"Hearing is not really an instrument, because it does not have the nature of an activity, but of suffering or acceptance, and, whether one understands external or internal hearing, we owe neither of them to ourselves, but either to the grace that comes before us or to the grace that works." *) (Collegium theologic. IV, 346.)

He who goes to church to find the way of salvation is already

converted, or at least the first little fountains of faith are already kindled in him. —

*) „Auditus non proprie dicitur organon, quia se non habet per modum agentis, sed patientis et recipientis, et, sive auditus internus, sive externus intelligatur, neuter nobis ut nobis, sed gratiae vel praevenienti, vel operanti debetur.”

Regarding a. Osiander testifies that man cannot participate in any stage of his conversion when he writes:

"Hornejus distinguishes between the first beginning of conversion and its progress. In the first beginning man is indeed dead, destitute of all spiritual life, but in the continuation he cannot be called dead....

"I answer: That man is not only dead in the beginning of conversion, but also in the progress, because 1) divine grace also in the progress only prepares man, so that he does not cooperate, but is made alive (disponatur) to greater movements of grace to be received little by little; 2) because even in the process of conversion man is not yet made alive before the last moment of the communication and gift of faith; but if he lacks the source of life (principio vitali), how can he cooperate in a living way? 3) because everything that is done in the process of conversion is done to the person from the outside. ... Assisting grace is a grace which is active in man from without and is distinguished from indwelling grace in that, as far as the latter is concerned, the activity takes place from the Holy Spirit, but not with the Holy Spirit; but indwelling grace means such an activity which is from the Spirit and with the Spirit." (L. c. p. 333 sq.)

The synergists after Luther's death did not present their heresy as finely and subtly as the Helmstadt synergists in the 17th century. Synergism went the same way as heresy always does. First came the coarse Arianism, then the more subtle Semi-Arianism; first the coarse Pelagianism, then the fine Semi-pelagianism; first the coarse synergism, then [261/1] the fine, that one calls it so, semi-synergism. — It sounds quite nice when the newer theologians say: "if God gives the unconverted man the power, he can cooperate in his conversion". But <page 53> this is not correct, for a dead person cannot use the powers given to him as long as he does not have the strength necessary for the use of such powers, for as long as he does not have life in him. It is possible to roll a dead body to and fro, to act upon it electrically, so that it opens its eyes, opens its mouth, and the like, but these are only the consequences of

forces acting from without; only he to whom the power has subjectively become his own can move himself. —

The Jena theologians wrote in 1646:

"The good volition, which precedes conversion, and is indicated by the word 'pious desire,' is not a deliberate act (actus deliberatus); but when the Holy Spirit inspires the pious thought, it is suddenly produced by him in the will, and without our asking for anything of the kind; as the teachers in the schools generally teach." (Calov. system. X, 64.)

Yes, not only without, but even against his will, the unconverted man can have a pious desire in his heart through the action of the Holy Spirit. But if a person stubbornly and obstinately resists this effect with diabolical malice, he sinks to his death.

Osiander writes:

"Dreier says that a person who has not yet been converted, who has been made alive by the new powers of prevenient grace and healed by the divine word, only fully consents and completes his conversion; but how can he be made alive who is yet to be converted, who has not yet been converted, since only the conversion itself, as it is accomplished by perfecting grace, is the making alive of a spiritually dead person? ... How does this contradictory assertion (hoc paradoxum) exist, since according to John 20:27 there is no mediator between the dead and the made alive, the converted and the unconverted, the believer and the unbeliever?

Prevenient grace does not give man the power to be active (agendi) or to cooperate in conversion, but a living skill through which, by suppressing the resistance of the corrupt nature, he only becomes capable of further grace until conversion is completed. For man behaves perversely toward every movement of divine grace; from which it is evident that he who receives this movement cannot by virtue of it cooperate in the attainment of the other, nor does he cooperate, but that after that he receives the other movement and behaves perversely toward the third movement and all and every movement preceding faith, as long as conversion has not been accomplished." (Colleg. theol. system. P. IV, p. 337.)

In this quotation Osiander proves from the words of the Lord: "Be not unbelieving, but believing" that there is no middle state between unbelief and faith, death and life. The pious impulse that is sometimes [261/2] found in the heart of the unconverted as: I see that things must be different with me and the like, is nothing of my own, but something suddenly produced in him by the Word. <page 54> Thus Felix and Agrippa felt good stirrings in their hearts through the influence of Paul's

preaching, but did not answer God's knock.

Calov writes:

"The Holy Spirit must also work in us the non-resisting, since the nature of man, because of the innate evil desire, resists the Holy Spirit in itself and cannot but resist, Rom. 8:7. Since, as Christ reminds us, to him who has, i.e. does not resist and does not put a stop to the Holy Spirit, it is given that he may have more, Mark 4:25, whereby a comparison is made with the growth of the seed, v. 27 ff, which, by virtue of an implanted power (*ex re insita*), grows without any help from any other side (*αυτομάτως*), while man contributes nothing, but sleeps, v. 27: therefore, since God and the Word are actually the cause of our conversion, we recognize only these two causes; but we do not add a third, namely man or the human heart, to the active causes, but hold that the heart behaves in a purely spiritual way in the act of conversion. But we mean the whole conversion, so that we ascribe to God alone the beginning, the middle, and the end of our conversion (with respect to its various constituent parts [*secundum momenta naturae*]), although the conversion, as far as time is concerned, happens simultaneously and all at once and as in a moment, speaking here of God after the manner of man." (System, loc. X, 15 sq.)

It is especially remarkable that the Lord Himself compares the work of grace of the Holy Spirit to the rising of the seed while man sleeps. This in no way contradicts Chemnitz's statement that man knows and feels something of the work of the Holy Spirit; for the *tertium comparationis* (the point of comparison) here is that man does nothing.

To b. Almost no one today believes that man cannot contribute to remorse before his conversion. It is believed that man can make his own repentance, and that only his willful wickedness is to blame if he does not repent of his sins. But such self-made repentance is hypocrisy and only harms salvation.

Luther testifies to this when he says:

"The school theologians have taken the definition of repentance, 'that it is remorse or sorrow for sin and a good resolution to amend one's life, from the old teachers and have thus imitated them. But they did not understand the parts of the definition, namely repentance, sin and resolution, nor were they able to teach others. Repentance, they have invented, is a self-matured and adopted thought, by virtue of the free will, [262/1] so that it can commit sin as often as it wants to or does not want to. But this repentance is a suffering or torture, which the conscience, whether it will or will not, must suffer when it is rightly struck and urged by

the law." (XX, 2036.) <page 55>

Furthermore, the Smalcald Articles state:

"The New Testament retains such a ministry (of the law). ... This is the hammer, as Jeremiah says: My word is a hammer that shatters rocks. This is not activa contritio, a made repentance, but passiva contritio (a suffered contrition), the right heartache, suffering and feeling of death. And this is what it means to begin right repentance, and man must here hear such a judgment: there is nothing wrong with you all, you are (sive ... sitis [you may now be] public sinners or saints ("opinione vestra", according to your delusion); you must all become different and do differently, neither as you now are and do." (P. III, Art. 3. fol. 143. Müller 312.)

Furthermore, the Apology says:

"The adversaries say that people deserve mercy with such pain, remorse and suffering, with such fears; but where they repent out of love for God or love God. Dear Lord God, what kind of sermon is this for consciences in need of consolation? How can we love God when we are in such great, great anxiety and unspeakable struggle, when we feel such great, terrible fear and wrath of God?" (Art. XII. M. 72 d. Müller p. 172. [par. 34])

Kromayer writes:

"The contrition of the fallen, considered in itself, before faith is added, is not a good work. Here the person behaves in a completely unidentical way, but in good works he cooperates with the Holy Spirit." (Theol. posit.-polem. I, x. 581. 583.)

Finally, Luther testifies:

"It is also false and untruthful that the law punishes sin without the Holy Spirit, even though the law is written with the finger of God, Exodus 32:16." (XX, 2043.) —

To c. It is almost inexplicable how a Christian can claim that man must cooperate in order to come to faith. If one claims that man can produce faith in himself through cooperation by means of the powers of grace, then one makes faith a good work. For a good work is that which man works through the powers of grace. Whoever claims this asserts that he can do good before faith, that therefore not everything is sin "that does not proceed from faith". As certain as a person cannot work faith to produce faith, it is equally certain that if the Holy Spirit alone does not give faith, the production of faith is impossible. If the unconverted man could work faith with the powers given to him, he would have to be alive before he is born again, and converted before he is converted. It is a nonsensical

assertion to try to maintain a good appearance by saying that man comes to faith, not by his own powers, but by powers given to him. As long as a person is not converted, he does not have these powers, they are only offered to him. The new false doctrine of conversion overturns [262/2] everything that the <page 56> Holy Scriptures say. God gives faith. If man could cooperate in this, then man himself would be the agent of his salvation, more the cause of it than faith; for he who creates the cause is more powerful than the cause itself. On the other hand, Holy Scripture says: "It is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure", Phil. 2:13; "It is the work of God that you believe", John 6:29; "You have been raised through the faith which God works", Col. 2:12, and so on. Whoever can say of his faith that it is his work has only a ghost and an empty thought of faith. Such faith cannot endure hardship, temptation and death.

The Strasbourg theologians wrote about this in 1646:

"Latermann asks whether God bestows (prasstet) this on his part, that all, if they wish, can fulfill the condition of faith, convert and thus be saved? Whether the conversion of man is free in this sense that it is in the power of man to want to convert and not to want to convert? A will prepared by the Lord is presupposed, and that man does not convert by his own efforts, but by the power of God-given grace. But here he says 1) nothing that Bellarmin and others have not also said and maintained, who have been declared guilty of Pelagianism or Semipelagianism with great unanimity of theologians. For they too say that conversion takes place by means of grace, that grace gives powers and ability by which conversion is accomplished, and that a prepared will is presupposed. 2) He says nothing that the synergists have not also said. For they also presupposed the gift of grace and protested most clearly: "We presuppose a will prepared by the Lord, and we maintain that it freely converts to God the Lord, not in the sense that the free will accomplishes this by its own powers, but because it converts by the power of God-given grace in such a way that it cannot convert. This could be proven by many of Striegel's testimonies if it were not known to everyone. 3) He says things here that are ambiguous and confused (ambigua et intricata). For what is that power of man by which it rests to perform or not to perform by grace that which is necessary to conversion? In what does it lie, to want to convert and not to want to convert? as Latermann says. He will not say that these are the powers given by the Holy Spirit and the ability itself. For what kind of assertion would that be: it rests with the new powers and abilities given, to

do or not to do what is necessary for conversion, to want to convert and not to want to convert! Are these new powers equally capable (indifferent) on both sides of conversion or rejection, of wanting and not wanting? Will there therefore be a power in <page 57> man before the powers and abilities given by the Holy Spirit, by which, with the help of the added grace and the given powers, what is necessary for conversion is accomplished, by which also [263/1] the unwillingness to convert is worked? But this is Pelagianism and synergism itself.

Furthermore, what is that which is necessary for conversion and salvation, which is provided by that power through grace? Latermann should have explained that which is necessary, that which is provided by human power through grace, if he had wanted to serve the truth sincerely and without evasion. Again, how is this to be taken, that he says: God bestows this in his part, that all, if they would, might fulfill the condition of faith, be converted, and so be saved? What strange and crude words are these! Does not God lend his part so that we will? That we believe? Does he only provide that we can will? That we can be converted? That we may believe?" (Calov. systema, X, 49.)

Synergism is basically nothing other than papist leaven; for the papacy is nothing other than hierarchism on the one hand and Pelagianism on the other. Synergism or semipelagianism is only a finer expression, but in substance the same as Pelagianism. When the devil sees himself betrayed, he only puts on another garment and tries to plunge people into gross heresy by subtle false teaching and to deprive them of their salvation. If man's own strength is allowed to make the final decision as to whether he wants to believe or not, then true evangelical Christianity is no longer to be thought of; then there is neither true humility before God nor real certainty of one's own salvation. —

The last decisive question is this: Who is the one who is to administer the alien powers given to him? A dead man can do nothing with the powers of life placed in his coffin if he has not first been raised to life. Christ did not say to Lazarus, the young man of Nain and Jairi's daughter, before they were alive: Here you have the power of life; now use it to come to life! But he made them alive with his word. — The lowans may therefore speak as they please; they make it known that they attribute power to the unconverted man to use the powers given to him. They teach that the Holy Spirit does not work volition and faith, but that man can will and believe as he pleases, whereas the Scriptures say that God works both volition and works according to his good pleasure by his word.

Every true Christian will have to affirm that he does not strive for faith, but that God has given it to him and also preserves it. God alone must keep man in the faith; if God withdraws his hand from him in the righteous judgment of man's conduct, he loses [page 58](#) his faith. [263/2] Therefore the apostle says that we should not seek eternal life **through** good works, but **in** good works. For to him who does not do good works, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Romans 4:5.

At last the question was raised how it was to be rhymed that it was said of Cornelius that his prayer and his alms had come before God, and yet that Peter was sent to him to speak words to him by which he and his household should be saved?

It was answered: Cornelius was a believer from the Old Testament and therefore had to be introduced to the New Testament. The Old Testament believers were saved through faith in the future Savior. But after he appeared and was transfigured, they also had to believe that it was Jesus. Through this latter faith Cornelius was not first converted, but became a New Testament Christian.

The Smalcald Articles also testify to this with the following words:

"Cornelius, Acts 10:1ff., had heard long before among the Jews of the coming Messiah, through whom he was righteous before God, and in such faith his prayers and alms were acceptable to God (as Luke calls him devout and God-fearing), and without such preceding Word and hearing could not have believed or been righteous. But St. Peter had to reveal to him that the Messiah (in whom, as one that was to come, he had hitherto believed) now had come, lest his faith concerning the coming Messiah hold him captive among the hardened and unbelieving Jews, but know that he was now to be saved by the present Messiah, and must not, with the [rabble of the] Jews deny nor persecute Him." ([par. 8](#); [Triglotta p. 495](#)) Müller p. 322.)

When Peter says, "He that feareth God and doeth right is acceptable unto him," Acts 10:35, this means nothing other than: Whoever believes in Christ will be saved, he may be born of whomever and wherever he wishes. It was necessary that Cornelius should be brought to the New Testament faith in Christ Jesus, for Christ said to the Jews, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," John 8:24, and to the apostles, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," John 14:6; and in the marketplace at Jerusalem Peter preached Acts 4:12: "There is salvation in no one else, nor is there any

other name given to men by which we must be saved, but the name of **Jesus Christ** alone."