

II. OF FREE WILL, OR HUMAN POWERS.

1] Since a division has occurred not only between the Papists and us, but also among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession themselves, concerning free will, we shall, first of all, show exactly the points in controversy.

2] For since man with [respect to] his free will is found and can be considered in **four distinct, dissimilar states**, the question at present is not what was the condition of the same

A. *before the Fall*,

B. or what he is able to do *since the Fall* and before his conversion in *external things* which pertain to this temporal life;

C. also not what sort of a free will he will have in spiritual things *after he has been regenerated* and is controlled by God's Spirit,

D. or when he rises *from the dead*.

But the **principal question** is only and alone, **what the intellect and will of the *unregenerate* man is able to do *in his conversion and regeneration from his own powers remaining after the Fall***;

The Principal Question
in This Controversy.

whether he is able, when the Word of God is preached, and the grace of God is offered us, to prepare himself for grace, accept the same, and assent thereto. This is the question upon which, for quite a number of years now, there has been a controversy among some theologians in the churches of the Augsburg Confession.

3] **For the one side** has held and taught that, although man cannot from his own powers fulfil God's command, or truly trust in God, fear and love Him, without the grace of the Holy Ghost, nevertheless **he still has so much of natural powers left before regeneration as to be able to prepare himself to a certain extent for grace, and to assent, although feebly**; however, that he cannot accomplish anything by them, but must succumb in the struggle, if the grace of the Holy Ghost is not added thereto.

Both synergists and
enthusiasts are mistaken

4] Moreover [**On the other side**], both the ancient and modern enthusiasts have taught that **God converts men, and leads them to the saving knowledge of Christ through His Spirit, without any created means and instrument, that is, without the external preaching and hearing of God's Word**.

5] Against both these parties **the pure teachers of the Augsburg Confession** have taught and contended that by the fall of our first parents man was so corrupted that in divine things pertaining to our conversion and the salvation of our souls he is by nature blind, that, when the Word of God is preached, he neither does nor can understand it, but regards it as foolishness; also, that he does not of himself draw nigh to God, but is and remains an enemy of God, until he is converted, becomes a believer [is endowed with faith], is regenerated and renewed, by the power of the Holy Ghost through the Word when preached and heard, out of pure grace, without any cooperation of his own.

The Pure Doctrine
concerning This Article,
according to God's Word.

6] In order to explain this controversy in a Christian manner, according to the guidance of God's Word, and by His grace to decide it, our doctrine, faith, and confession are as follows:

7] Namely, that in spiritual and divine things **the intellect, heart, and will** of the unregenerate man are utterly unable, by their own natural powers, to understand, believe, accept, think, will, begin, effect, do, work, or concur in working anything, but **they are entirely dead to what is good, and corrupt**, so that **in man's nature since the Fall, before regeneration**, there is not the least spark of spiritual power remaining, nor present, by which, of himself, he can prepare himself for God's grace, or accept the offered grace, nor be capable of it for and of himself, or apply or accommodate himself thereto, or by his own powers be able of himself, as of himself, to aid, do, work, or concur in working anything towards his conversion, either wholly, or half, or in any, even the least or most inconsiderable part; but that he is **the servant [and slave] of sin**, John 8, 34, and a **captive of the devil**, by whom he is moved, Eph. 2, 2; 2 Tim. 2, 26. **Hence the natural free will according to its perverted disposition and nature is strong and active only with respect to what is displeasing and contrary to God.**

Man's intellect,
heart, and will

8] This declaration and principal [general] reply to the chief question and statement of the controversy presented in the introduction to this article is **confirmed and substantiated by the following arguments from God's Word**, and although they are contrary to proud reason and philosophy, yet we know that the wisdom of this perverted world is only foolishness before God, and that articles of faith must be judged only from God's Word.

Settling Matters **According to God's Word**: the Rule and Standard Alone

9] For, **first**, although man's reason or natural intellect indeed has still a dim spark of the knowledge **A. that there is a God**, as also **B. of the doctrine of the Law**, Rom. 1, 19ff,

Natural Knowledge:
Creation & Conscience

yet it is so ignorant, blind, and perverted that when even the most ingenious and learned men upon earth read or hear the Gospel of the Son of God and the promise of eternal salvation, they cannot from their own powers perceive, apprehend, understand, or believe and regard it as true, but the more diligence and earnestness they employ, wishing to comprehend these spiritual things with their reason, the less they understand or believe, and before they become enlightened and are taught by the Holy Ghost, they regard all this only as foolishness or fictions. 10] 1 Cor. 2, 14: *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him.* 1 Cor. 1, 21: *For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* Eph. 4, 17f.: *They (that is, those not born again of God's Spirit) walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.* Matt. 13, 11ff; Luke 8, 18: *Seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand; but it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.* Rom. 3, 11. 12: *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are all together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

The more they try **by reason alone**, the less they understand or believe

Accordingly, the Scriptures flatly call natural man in spiritual and divine things darkness, Eph. 5, 8, Acts 26, 18. John 1, 5: *The light shineth in darkness* (that is, in the dark, blind world, which does not know or regard God), *and the darkness comprehendeth it not*. Likewise, the Scriptures teach that man in sins is not only weak and sick, **but defunct and entirely dead**, Eph. 2, 1, 5; Col. 2, 13.

Man cannot from his own powers do anything good or right in spiritual matters

11] Now, just as a man who is physically dead cannot of his own powers prepare or adapt himself to obtain temporal life again, so the **man who is spiritually dead in sins cannot of his own strength adapt or apply himself to the acquisition of spiritual and heavenly righteousness and life, unless he is delivered and quickened by the Son of God from the death of sin.**

12] Therefore **the Scriptures deny to the intellect, heart, and will of the natural man all aptness, skill, capacity, and ability to think, to understand, to be able to do, to begin, to will, to undertake, to act, to work or to concur in working anything good and right in spiritual things as of himself.** 2 Cor. 3, 5: *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* Rom. 3, 12: *They are together become unprofitable.* John 8, 37: *My Word hath no place in you.* John 1, 5: *The darkness comprehendeth* (or receiveth) *it not* [the light]. 1 Cor. 2, 14: *The natural man receiveth not* (or, as the Greek word properly signifies, grasps not, comprehends not, accepts not) *the things of the Spirit*, that is, **he is not capable of spiritual things; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them.**

13] Much less will he truly believe the Gospel, or assent thereto and regard it as truth. Rom. 8, 7: *The carnal mind, or the mind of the natural man, is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* 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.*

14] **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.**

Where there is a "small spark" or longing for divine grace...

15] Here belong also all **the prayers of the saints** in which they pray that they may be taught, enlightened, and sanctified by God, and **by this very act declare that they cannot obtain those things which they ask of God from their own natural powers;** as, in Ps. 119 alone David prays more than ten times that God would impart to him understanding, that he might rightly comprehend and learn the divine doctrine. [Very many] similar prayers are in the writings of Paul, Eph. 1, 17; Col. 1, 9; Phil. 1, 9. These prayers and passages concerning our ignorance and inability have been written for us, not for the purpose of rendering us idle and remiss in reading, hearing, and meditating upon God's Word, but, **first, that we should thank God from the heart that by His Son He has delivered us from the darkness of ignorance and the captivity of sin and death, and through Baptism and the Holy Ghost regenerated and illumined us.**

Prayer: An Example of Man's dependence on God

16] And after God through the Holy Ghost in Baptism has kindled and effected a beginning of the true knowledge of God and faith, **we should pray Him without ceasing** that through the same spirit and His grace, by means of the daily exercise of reading and practicing God's Word,

He would preserve in us faith and His heavenly gifts, strengthen us from day to day, and keep us to the end. For unless God Himself be our schoolmaster, we can study and learn nothing that is acceptable to Him and salutary to ourselves and others.

17] **Secondly**, God's Word testifies that the intellect, heart, and will of the natural, unregenerate man in divine things are not only turned entirely away from God, **but also turned and perverted against God to every evil**; also, that he is not only weak, incapable, unfit, and dead to good, but also is so lamentably perverted, infected, and corrupted by original sin that he is entirely evil, perverse, and hostile to God by his disposition and nature, and that **he is exceedingly strong, alive, and active with respect to everything that is displeasing and contrary to God**. Gen. 8, 22: *The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*. Jer. 17, 9: *The heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked, or perverted and full of misery, so that it is unfathomable*. This passage St. Paul explains Rom. 8: *The carnal mind is enmity against God*. Gal. 5, 17: *The flesh lusteth against the spirit; and these are contrary the one to the other*. Rom. 7, 14: *We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin*. And soon after, 18, 23: *I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man, which is regenerate by the Holy Ghost; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin*.

Man before conversion is turned against God to every evil

18] Now, if in St. Paul and in other regenerate men **the natural or carnal free will even after regeneration strives against God's Law, it will be much more obstinate and hostile to God's Law and will before regeneration**. Hence it is manifest (as it is further declared in the article concerning original sin, to which we now refer for the sake of brevity) that the free will from its own natural powers, not only cannot work or concur in working anything for its own conversion, righteousness, and salvation, nor follow [obey], believe, or assent to the Holy Ghost, who through the Gospel offers him grace and salvation, but from its innate, wicked, rebellious nature it resists God and His will hostilely, unless it be enlightened and controlled by God's Spirit.

And against His Law.

19] On this account the Holy Scriptures also compare **the heart of the unregenerate man to a hard stone**, which does not yield to the one who touches it, but resists, and to a rough block, and to a wild, unmanageable beast; not that man since the Fall is no longer a rational creature, or is converted to God without hearing and meditating upon the divine Word, or in external, worldly things cannot understand, or of his free will do, or abstain from doing, anything good or evil.

20] For, as Doctor Luther says Ps. 90: "In worldly and external affairs; which pertain to the livelihood and maintenance of the body, man is cunning, intelligent, and quite active; but in spiritual and divine things, which pertain to the salvation of the soul, **man is like a pillar of salt, like Lot's wife, yea, like a log and a stone, like a lifeless statue**, which uses neither eyes nor mouth, neither sense nor heart. 21] For man neither sees nor perceives the terrible and fierce wrath of God on account of sin and death [resulting from it], but ever continues in his security, even knowingly and willingly, and thereby falls into a thousand dangers, and finally into eternal death and damnation; and no prayers, no supplications, no admonitions, yea, also no threats, no chiding, are of any avail, yea, all teaching

Luther's Writings
1. His analogy that unconverted man is like a stone.
2. That man is passive in conversion.
3. Lacks the capacity to be saved.

and preaching is lost upon him, until he is enlightened, converted, and regenerated by the Holy Ghost, 22] for which [renewal of the Holy Ghost], indeed, no stone or block, but man alone, was created.

And although God, according to His just, strict sentence, has utterly cast away the fallen evil spirits forever, **He has nevertheless, out of special, pure mercy, willed that poor fallen human nature might again become and be capable and participant of conversion, the grace of God and eternal life; not from its own natural, active [or effective] skill, aptness, or capacity (for the nature of man is obstinate enmity against God), but from pure grace, through the gracious efficacious working of the Holy Ghost.”** 23] And **this Dr. Luther calls *capacitatem (non activam, sed passivam)***, which he explains thus: *Quando patres liberum arbitrium defendunt, capacitatem liberatatis eius praedicant, quod scilicet verti potest ad bonum per gratiam Dei et fieri revera liberum, ad quod creatum est.* That is: *When the Fathers defend the free will, they are speaking of this, that it is capable of freedom in this sense, that by God’s grace it can be converted to good, and become truly free, for which it was created is the beginning.* (Tom. 1, p. 236.) To like effect also Augustine has written, lib. 2, *Contra Iulianum*. Doctor Luther on Hosea 6; also in the Church-Postil on the Epistle for Christmas; also on the Gospel for the third Sunday after Epiphany.

24] But before man is enlightened, converted, regenerated, renewed, and drawn by the Holy Ghost, he can of himself and of his own natural powers begin, work, or concur in working in spiritual things and in his own conversion or regeneration **just as little as a stone or a block or clay**. For although he can control the outward members and hear the Gospel, and to a certain extent meditate upon it, also discourse concerning it, as is to be seen in the Pharisees and hypocrites, nevertheless he regards it as foolishness, and cannot believe it. And in this respect **he acts even worse than a block, inasmuch as he is rebellious and hostile to God’s will**, unless the Holy Ghost is efficacious in him, and kindles and works in him faith and other virtues pleasing to God, and obedience.

25] **Thirdly**, in this manner, too, **the Holy Scriptures ascribe conversion, faith in Christ, regeneration, renewal, and all that belongs to their efficacious beginning and completion, not to the human powers of the natural free will, neither entirely nor half, nor in any, even the least or most inconsiderable part, but in solidum, that is, entirely, solely, to the divine working and the Holy Ghost**, as also the *Apology* teaches.

Conversion is God’s Work, 100%

26] **Reason and free will are able to a certain extent to live an outwardly decent life; but to be born anew, and to obtain inwardly another heart, mind, and disposition, this only the Holy Ghost effects.** He opens the understanding and heart to understand the Scriptures and to give heed to the Word, as it is written Luke 24, 45: *Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures.* Also Acts 16, 14: *Lydia heard us; whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. He worketh in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure,* Phil. 2, 13. *He gives repentance,* Acts 5, 31; 2 Tim. 2, 25. *He works faith,* Phil. 1, 29: *For unto you it is given, in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him.* Eph. 2, 8: *It is the gift of God.* John 6, 29: *This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent. He gives an understanding heart, seeing eyes, and hearing ears,* Deut. 29, 4; Matt. 13, 15. *He is a Spirit of regeneration and renewal,* Titus 3, 5. 6. *He takes away the hard heart of stone, and gives a new tender heart of flesh, that we may walk in His commands,* Ezek. 11, 19; Deut. 30, 6; Ps. 51, 10. *He creates us in Christ Jesus to good works,* Eph. 2, 10, and

makes us new creatures, 2 Cor. 5, 17; Gal. 6, 15. And, in short, *Every good gift is of God*, Jas. 1, 17. *No one can come to Christ unless the Father draw him*, John 6, 44. *No one knoweth the Father, save him to whom the Son will reveal Him*, Matt. 11, 27. *No one can call Christ Lord except by the Holy Ghost*, 1 Cor. 12, 3. *Without Me*, says Christ, *ye can do nothing*, John 15, 5. *All our sufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. 3, 5. *What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* 1 Cor. 4, 7. **27]** Accordingly, **St. Augustine** particularly writes of this passage that by it he was convinced that he must lay aside **his former erroneous opinion**, when he had maintained the following in his treatise *De Praedestinatione*, chap. 3: *Gratiam Dei in eo tantum consistere, quod in praeconio veritatis Dei voluntas nobis revelaretur; ut autem praedicato nobis evangelio consentiremus, nostrum esse proprium et ex nobis esse. Item erravi (inquit), cum dicerem, nostrum esse credere et velle; Dei autem, dare credentibus et volentibus facultatem operandi.* That is: *I erred in this, that I held that the grace of God consists only in this, that God in the preaching of the truth reveals His will; but that our consenting to the preached Gospel is our own work, and is within our own powers.* Likewise, **St. Augustine writes further: I erred when I said that it is within our own power to believe the Gospel and to will; but it is God’s work to give to them that believe and will the power to effect something.**

28] This doctrine is founded upon God’s Word, and conformable to **the Augsburg Confession and other writings** above mentioned, as the following testimonies prove.

Now to the Witnesses: Referring back to the documents written before the controversy

29] **In Article XX the Confession** says as follows: *Because through faith the Holy Ghost is given, the heart thus becomes fit for doing good works. For before, because it is without the Holy Ghost, it is too weak, and, besides, is in the devil’s power, who drives poor human nature into many sins.* [Without Christ, without faith, and without the Holy Ghost men **are in the power of the devil, who drives men to manifold and open crimes.** Therefore men are first taught regarding faith, how the Holy Spirit is given, and that Christ aids and protects us against the devil, etc.] And a little afterward: *For without faith and without Christ human nature and ability [reason and virtue] are much too weak to do good works [to resist the devil who drives men into sinning].*

30] These passages clearly testify that **the Augsburg Confession** does not at all recognize [pronounce] the will of man in spiritual things as free, but says that **he is the devil’s captive; how, then, is he to be able of his own powers to turn himself to the Gospel or Christ?**

31] The **Apology (Art. XVIII)** teaches thus of free will: [We do not deny liberty to the human will.] *We also say that reason has, to a certain extent, a free will; for in the things which are to be comprehended by reason [as such] we have a free will [liberty in the choice of works and things].* And a little after: *For such hearts as are without the Holy Ghost are without the fear of God, without faith, without trust [in God]; they do not believe that God hears them, that He forgives their sins, and helps them in troubles; therefore they are godless.* **32]** **Now, “a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit,”** and “without faith it is impossible to please God.” *Therefore, although we concede that it is within our ability to perform such an outward work [we concede to free will the liberty and power to perform the outward works of the Law], nevertheless, we say that in spiritual things [truly to fear God, truly to believe in God] the free will and reason have no ability, etc.* Here it is clearly seen that **the Apology** ascribes **no ability to the will of man, either for beginning good or for operating of itself.**

33] In **the Smalcald Articles (Of Sin)** also the following errors concerning the free will are rejected: *That man has a free will to do good and omit evil*, etc. And shortly afterward it is also rejected as an error when men teach: *That it is not founded upon Scripture, that for a good work the Holy Ghost with His grace is necessary*.

34] Furthermore, we read in the **Smalcald Articles (Of Repentance)**, as follows: *And in Christians this repentance continues until death, because through the entire life it contends with sin remaining in the flesh, as Paul, Rom. 7, 23, testifies that he wars with the Law in his members, etc., and that not by his own powers, but by the gift of the Holy Ghost, which follows the remission of sins. This gift daily cleanses and sweeps out the remaining sins, and works so as to render man truly pure and holy*. These words say nothing whatever of our will, or that even in regenerate men it works anything of itself, but ascribe it to the gift of the Holy Ghost, which cleanses man and makes him daily more godly and holy; and our own powers are entirely excluded therefrom.

36] In **the Large Catechism** of Dr. Luther (**the Third Article** of the Christian Faith) it is written thus: *And I am also a part and member of the same, a sharer and joint owner of all the goods it possesses, brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Ghost, by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God, which is the beginning of entering it.* 37] *For formerly, before we had attained to this, we were altogether of the devil, knowing nothing of God and of Christ. Thus, until the last day, the Holy Ghost abides with the holy congregation or Christendom, by means of which He brings us to Christ, and which He employs to teach and preach to us the Word, whereby He works and promotes sanctification, causing [this community] daily to grow and become strong in the faith and the fruits of the Spirit, which He produces.* 38] In these words **the Catechism** does not mention our free will or cooperation with a single word, but **ascribes everything to the Holy Ghost**, namely, that **through the office of the ministry He brings us into the Christian Church, wherein He sanctifies us, and brings it about that we daily grow in faith and good works.**

39] And although **the regenerate even in this life advance so far that they will what is good, and love it, and even do good and grow in it**, nevertheless this (as above stated) is not of our will and ability, but the Holy Ghost, as Paul himself speaks concerning this, works such *willing and doing*, Phil. 2, 13. As also in Eph. 2, 10 he ascribes this work to God alone, when he says: *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk therein*.

40] In **the Small Catechism** of Dr. Luther it is thus written: *I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith*, etc.

41] And in the explanation of **the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer** the following words occur: *How is this, done? When our Heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and live a godly life*, etc.

42] These testimonies state that by our own powers we cannot come to Christ, but God must give us His Holy Ghost, by whom we are enlightened, sanctified, and thus brought to Christ through faith, and kept with Him; and **no mention is made either of our will or cooperation**.

43] To this we will add a passage in which **Dr. Luther** declared himself later, with a solemn protestation that he intended to persevere in this doctrine unto the end, in his **Large Confession concerning the Holy Supper**, where he says: *Herewith I reject and condemn as nothing but error*

all dogmas which extol our free will, as they directly conflict with this help and grace of our Savior Jesus Christ. For since outside of Christ death and sin are our lords, and the devil our god and prince, there can be no power or might, no wisdom or understanding, whereby we can qualify ourselves for, or strive after, righteousness and life; but we must be blinded people and prisoners of sin and the devil's own, to do and to think what pleases them and is contrary to God and His commandments.

44] 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 anew 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, and afterward he repeated and explained it in his glorious exposition of the book of Genesis, especially of Gen. 26. There likewise his meaning and understanding of some other peculiar disputations introduced incidentally by Erasmus, as of absolute necessity, etc., have been secured by him in the best and most careful way against all misunderstanding and perversion; to which we also hereby appeal and refer others.

45] Therefore it is teaching incorrectly to assert that unregenerate man has still so much power as to desire to receive the Gospel and to be comforted by it, and that thus the natural human will cooperates somewhat [in a manner] in conversion. For such **an erroneous opinion** is contrary to the holy, divine Scripture, *the Christian Augsburg Confession, its Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the Large and the Small Catechisms of Luther, and other writings of this excellent, highly [divinely] enlightened theologian.*

46] This doctrine concerning the inability and wickedness of our natural free will and concerning our conversion and regeneration, namely, **that it is a work of God alone and not of our powers, is** [impiously, shamefully, and maliciously] **abused in an unchristian manner both by enthusiasts and by Epicureans; and by their speeches many persons have become disorderly and irregular, and idle and indolent in all Christian exercises of prayer, reading and devout meditation;**

A. for they say that, since they are unable from their own natural powers to convert themselves to God, they will always strive with all their might against God, or wait until God converts them by force against their will;

B. or since they can do nothing in these spiritual things, but everything is the operation of God the Holy Ghost alone, they will regard, hear, or read neither the Word nor the Sacrament, but wait until God, without means, instils into them His gifts from heaven, so that they can truly feel and perceive in themselves that God has converted them.

C. 47] **Other desponding [weak and disturbed] hearts [our godly doctrine concerning the free will not being rightly understood] might perhaps fall into hard thoughts and [perilous] doubts as to whether God has elected them,** and will work His gifts also in them through the Holy Ghost, especially when they are sensible of no strong, ardent faith and sincere obedience, but only of weakness, fear, and misery.

Practical Applications
1. Enthusiasts
2. Epicureans
3. Despairing

1. Enthusiasts
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48] For this reason we shall now relate, furthermore, from God's Word **A. how man is converted to God**, how and **B. through what means** (namely, through the oral Word and the holy Sacraments) the Holy Ghost wants to be efficacious in us, and to work and bestow in our hearts true repentance, faith, and new spiritual power and ability for good, and **C. how we should conduct ourselves towards these means**, and [how we should] use them.

How Man is Converted
Through What Means
How We Should Conduct Ourselves

49] It is not God's will that anyone should be damned [perish], but that **all men should be converted to Him and be saved eternally**. Ezek. 33, 11: *As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.* John 3, 16: *For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

God Desires all
Men to be Saved

50] Therefore God, out of His immense goodness and mercy, has

A1. His divine eternal Law and A2. His wonderful plan concerning our redemption, namely, the holy, alone-saving Gospel of His eternal Son, our only Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, publicly preached; and by this [preaching]

How? By Means of the WORD

A. The Law and Gospel publicly preached **B.** so that He gathers a church and **C.** works true faith (repentance & knowledge of sins, and faith in Christ.)

B. collects an eternal Church for Himself from the human race, and

C1. works in the hearts of men true repentance and knowledge of sins, and C2. true faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

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. 51] 1 Cor. 1, 21: *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* Acts 10, 5. 6: *Peter shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.* Rom. 10, 17: *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* John 17, 17. 20: *Sanctify them by Thy truth; Thy Word is truth, etc. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their Word.* Therefore **the eternal Father calls down from heaven** concerning His dear Son and concerning all who preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name: *Hear ye Him*, Matt. 17, 5.

52] Now, **all who wish to be saved ought to hear this preaching** [of God's Word]. **For the preaching and hearing of God's Word are instruments of the Holy Ghost, by, with, and through which He desires to work efficaciously, and to convert men to God, and to work in them both to will and to do.**

53] **This Word man can externally hear and read**, even though he is not yet converted to God and regenerate; for in these external things, as said above, man even since the Fall has to a certain extent **a free will**, so that he can go to church and hear or not hear the sermon.

Man Can Externally Hear,
and He should do so

54] Through this means, namely, **the preaching and hearing of His Word, God works, and breaks our hearts, and draws man**, so that through the preaching of the Law he comes to know his sins and God's wrath, and experiences in his heart true terrors, contrition, and sorrow, and through the preaching and consideration of the holy Gospel concerning the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ a spark of faith is kindled in him, which accepts the forgiveness of

sins for Christ's sake, and comforts itself with the promise of the Gospel, and thus the Holy Ghost (who works all this) is sent into the heart, Gal. 4, 6.

55] Now, although both, the planting and watering of the preacher, and the running and willing of the hearer, would be in vain, and no conversion would follow it if the power and efficacy of the Holy Ghost were not added thereto, who enlightens and converts the hearts through the Word preached and heard, so that men believe this Word and assent thereto, **still, neither preacher nor hearer is to doubt this grace and efficacy of the Holy Ghost,** but should be certain that when the Word of God is preached

purely and truly, according to the command and will of God, and men listen attentively and earnestly and meditate upon it, God is certainly present with His grace, and grants, as has been said, what otherwise man can neither accept nor give from his own powers. 56] 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.

57] **But if a man will not hear preaching nor read God's Word, but despises the Word and congregation of God,** and thus dies and perishes in his sins, he neither can comfort himself with God's eternal election nor obtain His mercy; for Christ, in whom we are chosen, offers to all men His grace in the Word and holy Sacraments, and wishes earnestly that it be heard, and has promised that where two or three are gathered together in His name and are occupied with His holy Word, He will be in their midst.

58] But when such a person **despises** the instrument of the Holy Ghost, and will not hear, no injustice is done to him if the Holy Ghost does not enlighten him, but allows him to remain in the darkness of his unbelief and to perish; for regarding this matter it is written: *How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and ye would not!* Matt. 23, 37.

59] **And in this respect it may well be said that man is not a stone or block. For a stone or block does not resist the person who moves it,** nor does it understand and is sensible of what is being done with it, as man with his will so long resists God the Lord until he is [has been] converted. And it is nevertheless true that man before his conversion is still a rational creature, having an understanding and will, however, not an understanding with respect to divine things, or a will to will something good and salutary. **Yet he can do nothing whatever towards his conversion** (as has also been said [frequently] above), and is in this respect much worse than a stone and block; for he resists the Word and will of God, until God awakens him from the death of sin, enlightens and renews him.

60] And although **God does not force man to become godly** (for those who always resist the Holy Ghost and persistently oppose the known truth, as Stephen says of the hardened Jews, Acts 7, 51, are not converted), yet **God the Lord draws the man whom He wishes [decreed] to convert, and draws him in such a way that A. his darkened understanding is turned into an enlightened one and B. his perverse will into an obedient one. And this [just this] is what the Scriptures call *creating a new heart*, Ps. 51, 10.**

No Credit to preacher for conversion. We Should Not Doubt God's Holy Spirit Working Through the Word

Don't Despise the Word!

Worse than a stone, as he resists.

61] And for this reason it **cannot be correctly said that man before his conversion** has a *modus agendi*, or a way, namely, of working something good and salutary in divine things. For inasmuch as man before his conversion is *dead in sins*, Eph. 2, 5, there can be in him no power to work anything good in divine things, and hence, too, **he has no *modus agendi*, or way of working in divine things.** 62] But when we treat of the matter how God works in man, God has nevertheless [it is true, indeed, that **God has] one *modus agendi*, or way of working in man**, as in a rational creature, and another way of working in some other, irrational creature, or in a stone and block. Nevertheless, **no *modus agendi*, or no way whatever of working something good in spiritual things, can be ascribed to man before his conversion.**

Before conversion no way of working something good

63] **But when man has been converted, and is thus enlightened, and his will is renewed, it is then that man wills what is good** (so far as he is regenerate or a new man), and *delights in the Law of God after the inward man*, Rom. 7, 22, and henceforth does good to such an extent and as long as he is impelled by God's Spirit, as Paul says, Rom. 8, 14: *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* 64] And this impulse of the Holy Ghost is not a *coactio*, or coercion, but the converted man does good spontaneously, as David says, Ps. 110, 4: *Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power.* And nevertheless that also [the strife of the flesh and spirit] remains in the regenerate of which St. Paul wrote, Rom. 7, 22f: *For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* Also, v. 25: *So, then, with my mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.* Also, Gal. 5, 17: *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

After conversion (or as soon as man is converted), he will what is good!

65] From this, then, it follows that **as soon as the Holy Ghost**, as has been said, through the Word and holy Sacraments, has begun in us this His work of regeneration and renewal, **it is certain that through the power of the Holy Ghost we can and should cooperate**, although still in great weakness. But this [that we cooperate] does not occur from our carnal natural powers, but from the new powers and gifts which the Holy Ghost has begun in us in conversion, 66] as St. Paul expressly and earnestly exhorts that *as workers together with Him we receive not the grace of God in vain*, 2 Cor. 6, 1. But this is to be understood in no other way than that the **converted man does good to such an extent and so long as God by His Holy Spirit rules, guides, and leads him, and that as soon as God would withdraw His gracious hand from him, he could not for a moment persevere in obedience to God.** But if this were understood thus [if any one would take the expression of St. Paul in this sense], that **the converted man cooperates** with the Holy Ghost in the manner as when two horses together draw a wagon, this could in no way be conceded without prejudice to the divine truth. (2 Cor. 6, 1: *Συνεργοῦτες παρακαλοῦμεν: We who are servants or coworkers with God beseech you who are God's husbandry and God's building*, 1 Cor. 3, 9, *to imitate our example, that the grace of God may not be among you in vain*, 1 Cor. 15, 10, *but that ye may be the temple of God, living and dwelling in you*, 2 Cor. 6, 16.)

After conversion, must can and should cooperate, yet in great weakness

Two Horses Drawing a Wagon

67] Therefore there is **a great difference between baptized and unbaptized men**. For since, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, Gal. 3, 27, *all who have been baptized have put on Christ*, and thus are truly **regenerate, they have now *arbitrium liberatum* (a liberated will)**, that is, as Christ says, *they have been made free again*, John 8, 36; whence they are able not only to hear the Word, **but also to assent to it and accept it, although in great weakness**.

Believers have a liberated will
--they assent and accept
--in great weakness
--due to struggle with flesh

68] For since we receive in this life only the first-fruits of the Spirit, and the new birth is not complete, but only begun in us, **the combat and struggle of the flesh against the spirit remains even in the elect and truly regenerate men**; for there is a great difference perceptible among Christians not only in this, that one is weak and another strong in the spirit, but each Christian, moreover, experiences in himself that at one time he is joyful in spirit, and at another fearful and alarmed; at one time ardent in love, strong in faith and hope, and at another cold and weak.

69] **But when the baptized have acted against their conscience, allowed sin to rule in them, and thus have grieved and lost the Holy Ghost in them, they need not be rebaptized, but must be converted again, as has been sufficiently said before.**

Believers who reject,
need to be converted again.

70] For this is certainly true that in genuine conversion a change, new emotion [renewal], and movement in the intellect, will, and heart must take place, namely, **A.** that the heart perceive sin, **B.** dread God's wrath, **C.** turn from sin, **D.** perceive and accept the promise of grace in Christ, **E.** have good spiritual thoughts, **F.** a Christian purpose and diligence, and **G.** strive against the flesh. For where none of these occurs or is present, there is also no true conversion. 71] **But since the question is *de causa efficiente* (concerning the efficient cause)**, that is, who works this in us, and whence man has this, and how he attains it, this doctrine informs us that, since the natural powers of man cannot do anything or help towards it, 1 Cor. 2, 14; 2 Cor. 3, 5, **God, out of His infinite goodness and mercy, comes first to us** [precedes us], and causes His holy Gospel to be preached, whereby the Holy Ghost desires to work and accomplish in us this conversion and renewal, and through preaching and meditation upon His Word kindles in us faith and other godly virtues, so that they are gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost alone.

The Efficient Cause
is God, out of His
infinite goodness
and mercy

72] **This doctrine, therefore, directs us to the means** whereby the Holy Ghost desires to begin and work this [which we have mentioned], also instructs us how those gifts are preserved, strengthened, and increased, and admonishes us that we should not let this grace of God be bestowed on us in vain, but diligently exercise it [those gifts], and ponder how grievous a sin it is to hinder and resist such operations of the Holy Ghost.

Thus, we are directed to
God's means: the Word

73] From this thorough explanation of **the entire doctrine concerning free will** we can now judge, **lastly**, also the questions upon which, for quite a number of years, there has been **controversy in the churches of the Augsburg Confession** (*An homo ante, in, post conversionem Spiritui Sancto repugnet, vel pure passive se habeat; an homo convertatur ut truncus; an Spiritus Sanctus detur repugnantibus, et an conversio hominis fiat per modum coactionis*; that is,

- A. Whether man before, in, or after his conversion resists the Holy Ghost,
- B. and whether he does nothing whatever, but only suffers what God works in him [or is purely passive];
- C. likewise, whether in conversion man acts and is like a block;
- D. likewise, whether the Holy Ghost is given to those who resist Him;
- E. likewise, whether conversion occurs by coercion, so that God coerces men to conversion by force against their wills),
- F. and can perceive, expose, censure, and reject the opposite dogmas and errors, namely:

74] 1. First, the folly of **the Stoics and Manicheans** [who asserted] that everything that happens must so happen, *et hominem coactum omnia facere*, that is, that man does everything from coercion, and that even in outward works the will of man has no freedom or ability to render to a certain extent external righteousness and respectable deportment, and to avoid external sins and vices, or that the will of man is coerced to external wicked deeds, in chastity, robbery, murder, etc.

75] 2. Secondly, **the error of the gross Pelagians**, that the free will, from its own natural powers, without the Holy Ghost, can turn to God, believe the Gospel; and be obedient to God's Law from the heart, and by this its voluntary obedience can merit the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

76] 3. Thirdly, **the error of the Papists and scholastics**, who have proceeded in a somewhat more subtle manner, and have taught that man from his own natural powers can make a beginning of doing good and of his own conversion, and that then the Holy Ghost, because man is too weak to bring it to completion, comes to the aid of the good begun from a person's own natural powers.

77] 4. Fourthly, **the doctrine of the Synergists**, who pretend that man is not absolutely dead to good in spiritual things, but is badly wounded and half dead. Therefore, although the free will is too weak to make a beginning, and to convert itself to God by its own powers, and to be obedient to God's Law from the heart, nevertheless, when the Holy Ghost makes a beginning, and calls us through the Gospel, and offers His grace, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal salvation, that then the free will, from its own natural powers, can meet God, and to a certain extent, although feebly, do something towards it, help and cooperate thereto, can qualify itself for, and apply itself to, grace, and apprehend accept it, and believe the Gospel, and can also cooperate, by its own powers, with the Holy Ghost, in the continuation and maintenance of this work.

78] Over against this, however, it has been shown at length above that **such power**, namely, *facultas applicandi se ad gratiam*, that is, **to qualify one's self by nature for grace, does not proceed from our own natural powers**, but alone from the operation of the Holy Ghost.

79] 5. Likewise, the following doctrine of **the Popes and monks**, that after his regeneration man can completely fulfil the Law of God in this life, and that through this fulfilment of the Law he is righteous before God and merits eternal life.

80] 6. On the other hand, **the enthusiasts** should be rebuked with great earnestness and zeal, and should in no way be tolerated in the Church of God, who imagine [dream] that God, without any means, without the hearing of the divine Word, and without the use of the holy Sacraments, draws men to Himself, and enlightens, justifies, and saves them.

81] 7. Also **those who imagine that in conversion and regeneration God creates a new heart and new man in such a way that the substance and essence of the old Adam, and especially the rational soul, are completely destroyed**, and a new essence of the soul is created out of nothing. This error St. Augustine expressly rebukes in [his exposition of] Psalm 25, where he quotes the passage from Paul, Eph. 4, 22: *Put off the old man*, etc., and explains it in the following words: *Ne aliquis arbitretur deponendam esse aliquam substantiam, exposuit, quid esset: "Deponite veterem hominem et induite novum", cum dicit in consequentibus: "Quapropter deponentes mendacium, loquimini veritatem." Ecce, hoc est deponere veterem hominem et induere novum etc.; that is, Lest any one might think that the substance or essence of man is to be laid aside, he has himself explained what it is to lay aside the old man, and to put on the new, when he says in the succeeding words: "Putting away lying, speak the truth." Behold, that is to put off the old man and to put on the new.*

82] 8. Likewise, if **the following expressions** are used **without being explained**, namely, that
A. the will of man before, in, and after conversion resists the Holy Ghost,
B. and that the Holy Ghost is given to those who resist Him.

83] For from the preceding explanation it is manifest that **where no change whatever** in intellect, will, and heart occurs through the Holy Ghost to that which is good, and man does not at all believe the promise, and is not rendered fit by God for grace, but entirely resists the Word, there no conversion takes place or can be. **For conversion is such a change through the operation of the Holy Ghost in the intellect, will, and heart of man that by this operation of the Holy Ghost man can accept the offered grace.** And, indeed, all those who obstinately and persistently resist the operations and movements of the Holy Ghost, which take place through the Word, do not receive, but grieve and lose, the Holy Ghost.

84] Now, **there remains, nevertheless, also in the regenerate, an obstinacy** [a certain rebelliousness] of which the Scriptures speak, namely, that *the flesh lusteth against the spirit*, Gal. 5, 17, likewise, that *fleshly lusts war against the soul*, 1 Pet. 2, 11, and that *the law in the members wars against the law of the mind*, Rom. 7, 23.

85] Accordingly, the man who is not regenerate resists God altogether, and is entirely a servant of sin, John 8, 34; Rom. 6, 16. **The regenerate person, however, delights in the Law of God after the inward man, but nevertheless sees in his members the law of sin, which wars against the law of the mind; on this account he serves the Law of God with his mind, but with the flesh the law of sin**, Rom. 7, 25. In this way the correct opinion can and should be thoroughly, clearly, and discreetly explained and taught.

86] As to **the expressions of Chrysostom and Basil**: *Trahit Deus, sed volentem trahit; tantum velis, et Deus praeoccurrit*, likewise, the saying of the Scholastics [and Papists], *Hominis voluntas in conversione non est otiosa, sed agit aliquid*, that is, **God draws, but He draws the willing**; likewise: *Only be willing, and God will anticipate you*; likewise: *In conversion the will of man is not idle, but effects something* (expressions which have been introduced for confirming the natural free will in man's conversion, against the doctrine concerning God's grace), it is manifest from the explanation heretofore presented that **they are not in harmony with the form of**

sound doctrine, but contrary to it, and therefore **ought to be avoided when we speak of conversion to God.**

87] For the conversion of our corrupt will, which is nothing else than **a resuscitation of it from spiritual death**, is **only and solely the work of God** (just as also the resuscitation in the resurrection of the body must be ascribed to God alone), as has been fully set forth above and proved by manifest testimonies of Holy Scripture.

88] But how **God in conversion changes stubborn and unwilling into willing men** through the drawing of the Holy Ghost, and that **after such conversion, in the daily exercise of repentance, the regenerate will of man is not idle**, but also cooperates in all the works of the Holy Ghost which He does through us, has already been sufficiently explained above.

89] 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 **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; 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.

Luther's Purely Passive

90] Since also the youths in the schools have been greatly perplexed *de tribus causis efficientibus, concurrentibus in conversione hominis non renati*, that is, by **the doctrine of the three efficient causes of the conversion of unregenerate man to God, as to the manner in which they, namely, A. the Word of God preached and heard, B. the Holy Ghost, and C. the will of man, concur,**

it is again manifest from the explanation above presented that **conversion to God is a work of B. God the Holy Ghost alone, who is the true Master that alone works this in us, for which He uses A. the preaching and hearing of His Holy Word as His ordinary [and lawful] means and instrument.** But the **C. intellect and will of the unregenerate man are nothing else than *subiectum convertendum*, that is, that which is to be converted**, it being the intellect and will of a spiritually dead man, in whom the Holy Ghost works conversion and renewal, towards which work man's will that is to be converted does nothing, but suffers God alone to work in him, until he is regenerate; and then he works also with the Holy Ghost [cooperates] that which is pleasing to God in other good works that follow, in the way and to the extent fully set forth above.

Not Three Causes

- A. the Word of God
- B. the Holy Ghost
- C. the will of man,

Only Two Causes

- A. the Word of God
- B. the Holy Ghost

The Cause of Evil/Sin and the Responsibility of Man

Apology, Article XIX: Of the Cause of Sin.

77] The Nineteenth Article the adversaries receive, in which we confess that, although God only and alone has framed all nature, and preserves all things which exist, yet (He is not the cause of sin, but] **the cause of sin is A. the will in the devil** and **B. men turning itself away from God**, according to the saying of Christ concerning the devil, John 8, 44: *When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own.*

FC SD XI. Eternal Election

“4] 3. This foreknowledge extends alike over the godly and the wicked, but it is not **the cause of evil**, neither of sin, namely, of doing what is wrong (which originally arises from

A. the devil and

B. the wicked, perverse will of man),

nor of **their ruin** [that men perish], **for which they themselves are responsible** [which they must ascribe to themselves]; but it only regulates it, and fixes a limit to it [how far it should progress and] how long it should last, and all this to the end that it should serve His elect for their salvation, notwithstanding that it is evil in itself.”