

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. XV.

JANUARY, 1911.

10237
G. 2-11
No. 1.

THE DOCTRINE OF CONVERSION ACCORDING TO Eph. 1, 19, 20 and 2, 1—10.

(From Stoeckhardt's Commentary.)

Eph. 2, 1—10, together with ch. 1, 19, 20, is a section of Scripture which at all times has passed in the Church for the principal *locus Scripturae classicus* on the doctrine of conversion. Accordingly, we shall summarize the dogmatic yield of our exegetical disquisition in the following main points.

1. Conversion is a change, a transformation of the ethical condition and conduct of man, and this change is not rightly understood except when we bear in mind the ethical character and condition of man prior and up to his conversion, *viz.*, the natural, corrupt state out of which we are removed by conversion. We are by nature spiritually dead. That is the leading thought in Eph. 2: *ὄντας νεκρούς*. We are by nature alienated from the life that is of God; we have become dead unto God and unto everything good. Man was originally created for God and for a life in communion with God. The *Apology* says: "The chief distinction in that noble creature, the first man, was a clear light in his heart whereby he understood God and His work, possessed a genuine fear of God, a very cordial trust in God, and in every respect an upright and firm mind, a fine, noble, and cheerful courage toward God and all divine affairs." (Mueller, p. 81.) This concreated righteousness man has lost by the fall. That is original sin, *viz.*, that man by it "has lost these gifts: true knowledge of God,

true love of God and trust in Him, and the virtue, or light, in his heart which kindled love and desire for all these things in him." This defect, this inability, is spiritual death. In fallen man there is no residue of spiritual affections and emotions, or of spiritual strength. As regards his spiritual condition, he is, in God's view, not merely sick unto death, but actually dead. Spiritual death embraces spiritual blindness. A dead person cannot see. The understanding is darkened, ch. 4, 18. Although natural man is, by means of the works of creation and by means of the Law which has been written in his heart and conscience, capable of attaining to some knowledge of God, of the omnipotence and righteousness of God, and of the will of God, still this natural knowledge is not "a true knowledge of God," not a bright and blessed light in the heart. Man does not know God as his God, as the God and Lord of his life, in whom he is to rejoice, for whom he is to live, and whom he is to serve. God is to him a distant, unapproachable, and forbidding sovereign, with whom he is not in touch inwardly. And while the understanding of the natural man is darkened, his will has been corrupted, and turned from God. The fear of the Lord, love of God, trust in God, are strange and unknown matters to him. And since a neutral attitude is impossible in this business, the will of man, being alienated from God, is at the same time hostile to God. We are by nature children of disobedience; our ethical character has been determined by disobedience. Natural man resists God and the will of God with all the strength of his soul. That is what Paul states Rom. 8, 7: "The carnal mind is enmity against God." This innate evil disposition, this depraved ethical condition, becomes manifest and operative in all sorts of sins and transgressions, in works of the flesh. Although the unconverted person is able, in a manner, to lead an outwardly decent life, still this *justitia civilis* of his is not obedience rendered to God, and possesses no value in God's eyes; for it lacks the true motive. Man, dead in sin, is entirely unable and incapable of thinking, speaking, doing anything right

or good whatsoever; moreover, he is kept firmly attached to his evil disposition and conduct by his environments, by the world round about him, by the course of human affairs, the spirit of the times, and the devil, the prince of this world. The fact that man is by nature spiritually dead, utterly unfit for the affairs of God, and a child of disobedience, becomes apparent especially when God approaches him by means of His Word. When God rebukes man's sin by the word of the Law, and brands even the evil lust of the heart as iniquity, it is then that man's lust becomes very active, the contradiction which man's heart raises against the will of God is intensified, and man resents the demands and the verdict of the divine law. Comp. Rom. 7, 7—11. When God has the Gospel of Christ preached to natural man, he is unable to understand it and to receive it into his heart. For, as the *Form of Concord* puts it, natural man is "like a pillar of salt, like Lot's wife, yea, like a log and stone, like a lifeless statue, which uses neither eyes nor mouth, neither sense nor heart." "All teaching and preaching are lost upon him, until he is enlightened, converted, and regenerated by the Holy Ghost. (Jacobs, p. 556.) In like manner Paul testifies elsewhere: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them," 1 Cor. 2, 14. Yea, everything in him rebels against Christ, against faith. That, as we have seen, is what is expressed in ch. 1, 19. 20. Christ crucified is "unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness," 1 Cor. 1, 23. When God offers to man in the Gospel grace and salvation, man is not only unable to believe or give his assent to the offer, but he resists it willfully and in a hostile spirit, unless he is enlightened and governed by the Spirit of God, as our confession states in the place aforesaid. And this inability, this disobedience, this hostile resistance, continues until man is enlightened, converted, and regenerated by the Holy Ghost. This is a miserable, unhappy state. Since we are by nature spiritually dead and children of disobedience, we are all by

nature children of wrath. Nor is there found in natural man the least longing and desire for deliverance from this misery. A dead person does not move; not the faintest wish to become alive stirs in him.

2. Conversion is the transformation of the natural ethical condition of man. And now it is of importance, as we enter upon a consideration of this change, that we note the manner in which the apostle describes this transformation in our Epistle and elsewhere. He does not describe it *in abstracto*, by laying down a general rule by which sinners can be converted, but he gives quite a concrete description; for he talks about the very persons who are, or have been, actually converted; he reminds the Christians of those things which by the grace of God they had experienced in their hearts. Thus he writes ch. 1, 19: "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power." Eph. 2: "And you"—"and us, even when we were dead . . . God hath quickened." In a similar manner he says in 2 Thess. 2, 14: "Whereunto He called you by our Gospel." 1 Cor. 1, 9: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord." Rom. 9, 24: "Even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." This *forma docendi* arrests our thought at the start and rivets it upon the wonderful, yet actual, concrete event and occurrence which is treated at this place; it leads Christians rightly to understand and ponder those things which have happened to them, and it checks idle and misleading speculations which are ill suited to this mystery of godliness. If the discussion of this matter deals *in genere* with conversion and nonconversion, and those persons, too, who have not been converted, together with what God has done for them, are embraced in some general rule, our perception becomes clouded, and we are forced to insert all sorts of conclusions as connecting links, and our meditation soon becomes lost in a bewildering chaos of obscure and ambiguous concepts, in a maze of truth and fiction. The apostle aims his instruction regarding con-

version—just as he did that regarding election—not primarily at those who are without, for the purpose of winning them, of converting sinners, but his aim is to advance believing Christians in their knowledge, and thus to establish them in their Christianity. When seeking to convert sinners to God, to Christ, we tell them, first of all, that they are sinners, but that sinners have a Savior; we preach to them Christ and the redemption which is by Christ Jesus. By such preaching faith is kindled in the hearts, and upon those who believe we then impress the truth, that it is only by the grace of God that they are what they are, and hence they must expect and ask in prayer only from the grace of the Lord all that they are still lacking.

3. Conversion is an internal change, transformation of man. Not, indeed, a change of man's substance, of the substance of his mind, his intellect and will. Man has after his conversion the same rational soul, the same intellect and will as before. But conversion is a thorough change of the moral condition and habitude of man, a change in his intellect, will, heart. Man's intellect and will receive a different direction, and are differently determined by conversion, from what they were before: while prior to conversion they were turned away from God and directed against Him, they are now turned toward God and divine matters. This change Paul characterizes by such terms as raising out of death, quickening, recreation, and by stating that the old corrupt state, which he termed disobedience, has now ceased. Spiritual death is spiritual inability, utter unfitness as regards the affairs of God, and complete absence of all spiritual affections and emotions. Accordingly, conversion, or quickening from spiritual death, consists in the removal of spiritual unfitness and the bestowal of spiritual fitness, also in the originating of new spiritual emotions in man, *motus et actus mentis et voluntatis spirituales, boni, salutare*. The *Form of Concord* throughout the Second Article describes conversion as the bestowal of new spiritual strength and new spiritual emotions. The new spiritual life

which begins in conversion is made up of movements and acts of the intellect and will. However, "strength" and "movements" (emotions) must not be separated. The new spiritual ability becomes action forthwith. Positing *vires* or *facultates novae spirituales*, the *motus et actus mentis et voluntatis* are *eo ipso* posited. Just this is what our Confession expresses by the definition of conversion which it offers, *viz.*, that a darkened understanding becomes an enlightened understanding, and a refractory will an obedient will. The critical point in this business lies in the will, and in the obedience of the will. Disobedience is changed into obedience, a child of disobedience becomes a child of obedience. The first *motus et actus spiritualis* is faith in Christ. Being converted and becoming a believer coincide. The apostle states emphatically that we are raised, quickened, created in Christ Jesus by faith. Briefly, this is the wonderful change through which we passed when we became Christians: we heard, and we believed, we accepted by faith, the Word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation, ch. 1, 13. While walking in our own ways, departing from God, running counter to God's direction, we heard the Gospel of Christ; and after hearing it for a longer or shorter time, suddenly the veil was taken from our heart; we recognized Jesus as our Savior and Redeemer, we beheld in His face the glory of God. The crucified Christ, who first seemed foolishness to us, now appeared to us divine wisdom. And in Christ we knew God as the Father of all mercy, as our God and Father. By that same act, however, our heart and will were won for Christ and God. Our hostile resistance was broken. The crucified Christ, who was an offense to us at first, now became the solace and joy of our heart. We reposed our trust, the confidence of our heart, in this Jesus, the only Helper and Savior. And with the kindling of faith other godly virtues, such as the fear of the Lord, love of God, obedience to God and God's will, were kindled in our heart, and we promptly manifested our obedience by good works, by willing compliance with the Law of God. Conversion is instantaneous.

Death as well as the raising from death occur in a twinkling. A gradual passage from death into life, a successive conversion is a nonentity, a *contradictio in adjecto*. The first spark of faith,—with which, indeed, other spiritual *motus mentis et voluntatis* are soon associated,—the first spark of faith, no matter how feeble, a faint longing at first for the salvation of Christ,—that is, strictly speaking, conversion. Although we may not be able definitely to state the hour and the moment when the first spark of faith was kindled in us, still that moment was the decisive moment, the awaking from spiritual sleep and death, the passage from death into life, from the state of wrath into the state of grace. Prior to this moment, up to this moment, we were still dead, utterly dead in sins, enemies of God, and disobedient. Up to that moment not the least change had occurred in our ethical condition. The new spiritual movements which began in conversion were quite strange and unknown to us before. Conversion is a re-creation. Of those things which are created in conversion, nothing, absolutely nothing, existed before. Up to the hour of our conversion there were in our soul only foolish, ungodly, wicked thoughts and movements of the will, and such as were opposed to God; there was not a single nobler emotion, nor was there any nobler emotion excited by grace. For such nobler emotion would have been conversion. As soon as a dead person begins to move faintly, he is alive. There is, verily, no contrast more glaring than that between death and life. And there is nothing to mediate the transfer from death into life. In the moment when we were raised out of spiritual death, when the *prima initia fidei* began to stir in us, we had all of a sudden become new men, new creatures; we had been transferred into an altogether different world; we had gained access to God and heaven, and we lived once more for that end for which we were created, namely, unto the God of our life. On the other hand, we must, indeed, firmly hold that conversion is but the beginning of the new spiritual life, the beginning of a moral renewal, which is continued throughout the life of

a Christian and consummated in the life everlasting. Our Epistle is evidence what great importance the apostle attaches to the growth of the inner man, the growth of knowledge, faith, and sanctification in us. In our conversion the intellect, heart, and will have become renewed; however, there is still much remaining within us of the old, evil, foolish, ungodly, refractory traits. The characteristic of a converted person is not perfect holiness and spiritual-mindedness, — that cannot be attained in this life, — but the opposition and conflict between the new man and the old. Comp. ch. 4, 22—24. Meanwhile the real *ego* of a Christian, of a converted person, that which governs his mind, life, and conversation, and by the power and grace of God maintains its ground in opposition to the sins still clinging to the Christian, is the *ego* which has been renewed in conversion. Paul testifies concerning himself, Rom. 7, 25, that notwithstanding the fact that with the flesh he still serves the law of sin, he serves God with his real *ego*, *ἀντὸς ἐγώ*.

4. And now the apostle emphasizes in the strongest manner possible that God has done all this, — that He has wrought in us. God has suddenly interfered with the course of our life and has given it another direction, leading us in the opposite direction. Conversion is *in solidum* the work of God. To raise the dead is a divine work and prerogative. While we were still dead in sins, God has quickened us and placed us together with Christ in a new spiritual, heavenly life and conversation. God has removed our spiritual incapacity, has endowed us with new spiritual strength, has elicited the new spiritual emotions in our intellect, heart, and will. To create anew, to call into being that which is not, is a divine work and prerogative. It is God, too, who has produced the new creature. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. God has taken away our disobedience and resistance, and has made the unwilling willing. We believe according to the working of the might, power, and strength of God. By His great power and strength God has wrought in us faith in Christ, by

which we are born again, and has overcome everything in us that resisted Christ and faith in Him. The Word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation, by which we attained to faith, is a means in God's hand. God has with His strong hand pressed the Gospel of Christ, His Son, the sinners' Savior, into our heart, has written it into our inner being, has opened our inner eye and ear unto its teaching, and thus has kindled faith and, together with faith, other godly virtues in us. God has even before ordained and placed in readiness for us the good works in which we are walking now. Accordingly, all glory and honor for the work of our conversion, renewal, salvation, belongs to God alone. However, it is purely His great love, mercy, and grace that has prompted Him to quicken and save us. It is proper, on the basis of ch. 2, 5. 8, that the Church speaks of a *gratia convertens* or *operans*. Our conversion, vivification, is a gracious operation of God. This is followed by another, *viz.*, God strengthens and preserves us in faith and obedience. This is *gratia cooperans* or *conservans*. Comp. 1 Pet. 5, 10. But as to a *gratia praeveniens* or *prae-parans*, which is said to precede and to prepare the way for salvation, all that has been said about this kind of grace utterly contradicts the presentation which the apostle has made. Conversion, or vivification, is, by the native force of these terms and by reason of its nature, *prima gratia*, the first gracious operation of God in our heart. For until he is converted man is dead in sins, and a dead person is absolutely not susceptible of any operation whatsoever. Not until He has wrought this great miracle in man and quickened him out of death, God can continue to work in him.

5. By the absolute and very emphatic declaration of the apostle, that God has quickened us according to His might and grace, that He has created us anew, that He has mastered our resistance, and has wrought faith and obedience in us, all and every cooperation of man for his own conversion is excluded. This fact is, indeed, posited by the very concept "dead;" for a dead person cannot raise himself nor contribute anything

toward his own vivification. However, to ward off every error, the apostle adds to his presentation of this matter the *particulas exclusivas*: οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων. The great ethical change which has here been described has not sprung from out of our own will and resolve, nor has it been occasioned or anticipated by any act or conduct on our part whatsoever. In the strongest manner possible our Confession emphasizes the fact that man cannot effect anything, nor can he in any way cooperate, toward his conversion, nor can he dispose or prepare himself for it, not even in the least degree. Every form of synergism, the fine as well as the gross, stands condemned by the apostle's testimony, which is clear as the day. Modern theologians of a "churchly" character—we ignore the "liberal" theologians, who are plainly Pelagianists—usually represent the process of conversion thus: It is, indeed, God who makes the beginning in this business, by conveying new strength by His Word to sinful and corrupt man, and by restoring in all who hear the Word their lost freedom of will or freedom of choice, and then men, by the strength of their *arbitrium liberatum*, decide in favor of Christ and of the salvation that is in Christ, some, it is true, deciding adversely. This is, in a new form, the old teaching of Latermann, who held that man cooperates in his conversion by means of a strength which has been given him. The only difference is this, that modern theologians have changed Latermann's *cooperatio* into an *operatio*, that they trace conversion itself, faith itself, to the self-acting conduct of man, and that they have coined the password "self-decision," albeit they claim that such self-decision is not possible except by grace. This theory is diametrically opposed to the entire presentation which the apostle has made of this matter. The concept "dead in sins" is rendered valueless and emptied of its content when an *arbitrium liberatum* prior to conversion, hence, eventually, the choosing of what is good, is ascribed to man who is dead in sins, hence, dead unto all that is good. The glory of God, expressed in such statements as these: "God hath quickened

us," "created in Christ Jesus," "by grace are ye saved," becomes vitiated when the work and operation of God is restricted to His rendering it possible for man to convert himself. The bold contrast, in no way mediated, between death and life—*καὶ ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασι συνεζωποίησε*—is wiped out by the assumption that man, while still dead spiritually, is engaged in a decisive conflict, in which he gradually forges ahead unto the life in God; it is effaced by interposing between death and life a *status medius, tertius*, in which man trains himself to the use of the new strength of life granted him. Every clear conception and notion of death and life, quickening from death, creating, is wrecked upon the rock of this new-fangled wisdom. Moreover, that state of ethical neutrality which must be assumed when we assume freedom of choice, is logically and ethically a non-entity of which Scripture knows nothing. The apostle's statement that God works faith can nevermore bear this interpretation, that God effects merely the *facultas credendi*, and that man is to actualize this faculty. On the contrary, according to all the rules of language and logic the meaning can only be this, that God works the very faith of man, that together with the *facultas* He effects the *actus credendi*. Moreover, this entire theory is, in a very direct manner, shut out utterly by the apostle's statement: *οὐκ ἐξ ἑμῶν*, "not of yourselves," not even in the least part of yourselves. It is but a finer form of synergism which is expressed in the doctrine of the later Lutheran dogmaticians concerning conversion, and which is maintained and championed by a goodly part of the "confessional" theologians of our day. True, over and against Laternann those theologians insisted that God alone, without any cooperation of man, effects conversion in the strict sense, or faith, and by faith they meant the very act of believing; but in their view conversion is preceded by a longer or shorter process, in which man is rendered capable of, and prepared for, conversion by God. They teach that prevenient grace, so-called, produces in all men who bear the Word certain new

motus, which they have even termed *motus spirituales, bonos, sanctos, pios*; that prevenient grace removes man's natural incapacity, and thus enables man to refrain from what has been called malicious resistance, and that man is converted by God when he makes the proper use of this *facultas non resistendi*. By this form of teaching likewise the apostle's statements concerning death, quickening, and the immediate transfer from death to life are rendered illusory; for by this teaching there is ascribed to man, while still dead spiritually and unconverted, the ability to assume a proper attitude to grace, yea, the attitude itself is ascribed, namely, the refraining from malicious resistance; and a person's conversion is made to depend on his conduct. And the apostolic dictum: *οὐκ ἐξ ἑμῶν*, not in consequence of a particular conduct on our part, is canceled when conversion is represented as taking place in consequence of the previous conduct of man, even though it be asserted that such conduct must be rendered possible by grace. Add to this that not a word is said in the Biblical text before us regarding all these synergistic matters and occurrences, which have been inserted between death and quickening. Verily, the complicated speculations aforementioned have not grown out of a study of Scripture, but they have been invented in defiance of Scripture by man, who would like to assert his own knowledge and activity somewhat in this matter. These speculations have their genesis in the desire, more or less consciously cherished, to find a reasonable explanation for the inscrutable mystery why some are converted, others not, and to secure for man a certain share in his own conversion and salvation. We abide by the simple statements of Scripture, gladly sacrificing our own wisdom and our own glory; yea, acknowledging our own incapacity, we render thanks to God, because He alone, without us, without any cooperation or preparation on our part, has translated us out of death into life by His power and grace.

6. It is sheer folly when the charge is raised against the Lutheran, Scriptural teaching of the sole operation of God in

man's conversion, that this teaching makes conversion a compulsory conversion, a mechanical process, and endangers the ethical character of this act. By no means; conversion as represented in Scripture, also by Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians, is not an act of violence inflicted on man, and repulsive to every faculty which man possesses, but, in the language of our Confession, it is a change, a new movement and emotion in the intellect, will, and heart; it affects, in particular, the will of man; and the will of man does not suffer itself to be coerced. God does not compel man to obey Him against his will, but He seizes man's will and makes children of disobedience, unwilling persons, willing. In conversion God renews the will of man and liberates the will which has been held captive by sin and the devil; not so as to establish an *aequilibrium*, an equipoise of good and evil, for that would be void of ethical quality, but in such a manner that the will becomes free, and actually is free in God, and that man willingly and gladly lives unto God and serves Him. God works faith, and faith is pure willingness, it is *velle et accipere*, willing apprehension and acceptance of the salvation which is in Christ. Moreover, the means of conversion excludes pressure and coercion. God converts man, effects faith in him, by the preaching of the Word, of the Gospel, and this preaching is addressed to the intellect, heart, and will of man. When the Holy Ghost, by means of the Gospel, excites new emotions in the mind of man; when sinful man, while meditating the Gospel, the incomparable love of God which caused Christ to die for the ungodly, for His enemies, is stirred and seized by the Spirit of God and begins to breathe freely and to feel a new life throbbing in him; when he ceases his resistance and flies into the arms of his Redeemer,—that is the most thoroughgoing change and emotion imaginable, the very opposite of a conversion by force, or a mechanical change. A conversion by force results much rather from the synergistic view, which assumes that God restores in all men who hear

the Word, also in those who are still unwilling, the freedom of choice or a *facultas non resistendi*.

7. In his description of conversion and of the beginning of faith the apostle mentions only the Gospel, ch. 1, 13, and does not say a word about the Law. True, he declares elsewhere, for instance, by his arrangement of the contents of the Epistle to the Romans, that the Law must precede the Gospel. The knowledge of Christ presupposes the knowledge of sin. The comfort of the Gospel and faith finds no abode except in a heart and conscience crushed by the Law. However, Paul defines, in this very Epistle, Rom. 7, 7—11, the effect of the Law, by stating that the Law reveals, rouses, increases, intensifies sin, and makes the sinner a slave of death. Luther, commenting on Gal. 3, 19, remarks: "When a person has sin, death, the wrath and judgment of God revealed to him by the Law, he cannot but lose his patience, rebel against God, and hate Him and His will." The Law does not effect the least change in the natural, sinful condition of man. The Law produces only mortifying effects. And hence, the Law has no part in the spiritual vivification; nothing but confusion is created by inserting the effects of the Law as an intermediate element between spiritual death and the quickening from death.

8. There is an eternal background to our conversion, vivification, salvation. In Eph. 2 the apostle speaks of and to the same persons as in Eph. 1; he speaks of such as are now become Christians, of those persons whom God, according to ch. 1, 3—14, has chosen before the foundation of the world in Christ, unto the adoption of children and also unto the inheritance of children, *i. e.*, unto salvation. According to ch. 1, 3—14, the preaching of the Gospel and the originating of faith in us are parts of the realization of God's eternal decree of election. (Comp. my Excursus on the Doctrine of Election, sub 9.) And according to ch. 2, 7, those whom God, according to His great love, mercy, and grace, has quickened spiritually, are identical with those on whom God in ages to come will bestow the abundant riches of His grace,

hence, with those who are ultimately saved. Thus Paul declares Rom. 8, 30: *οὐς δὲ προώρισεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν*. And this is that "excellent, glorious consolation," of which our Confession speaks: "that God was so solicitous concerning the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian, and so faithfully provided therefor, that before the foundation of the world was laid He deliberated concerning it, and in His purpose ordained how He would bring me thereto and preserve me therein." (Jacobs, p. 657.) Yea, it is a comfort to me to know that God was so solicitous concerning my conversion and salvation that He graciously ordained even in eternity the hour of my conversion and the hour of my death which is to land me at the final, blessed goal of my vocation.

9. When conversion is being discussed, it is customary to advert also to those who are not converted and saved. However, the reason for the status of these people, *viz.*, that unbelief and damnation have their cause only in man,—this fact is recorded on another page in our Bible, and does not belong in this discussion. If this matter is drawn into the description of conversion, it only darkens the perception of the great work of grace which God has performed in us. In Eph. 1 and 2 Paul, as we remarked above, speaks of such persons only as are actually being converted, or have been converted, of those whom God has chosen in eternity, and has called in time, converted, and to whom He has finally given eternal salvation. When pondering this matter, it is likely that also in this connection the question will be suggested to us: *Cur alii prae aliis*, why are some converted, others not? But this question pertains to the inscrutable secrets of God which we cannot and may not find out, which God has reserved unto His own wisdom. A person who seeks to find out and explain what is inscrutable will forfeit the light of revealed truth. Comp. my Excursus on Election.)
