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“GRACE AND FREE-WILL.”

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

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

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

world at their side. We ask them to make an investigation at their back. They might institute a practical test. To their satisfaction they can prove their tenets in regard to the disputed doctrines everywhere — even with free-thinkers. Let them state correctly their position and ours in regard to free-will, election, conversion, and the analogy of faith to anyone of their unbelieving acquaintances and ask him which he prefers as the more reasonable one, and *they* will unhesitatingly be confirmed. It is what the natural man likes. It is his highest ambition to contribute at least a mite to his salvation, if not the whole. Val. Strigel's beggar wanted to pay one farthing rather than accept the nobleman's offer of a free supper at the tavern. Why? Then he could boast that he had supped with a nobleman.

In the article, which we would like to hold before our adversaries as an object lesson and a mirror giving plainly their image, we notice at the outset the absence of religious interest. It considers grace and free-will as some interesting object in the theological curiosity shop, not as a question of life and death to man—the proper attitude of one who does not live by grace alone. It discusses the question as a problem of the human mind, while it is the human mind *versus* faith in the revealed will of God, *i. e.*, the Scriptures. To the author it is the greatest problem of "theological science." Thus it is made devoid of interest to the common Christian. It is also to him only a different attitude of the several divisions of Christendom. That it might be the division line between Christian and antichristian teaching never enters the "theological" mind. That free-will, in the theological sense, is opposed to the grace of God he cannot conceive. Thus we say: The theologian is not in it, if it is true that *Pectus facit theologum* (the heart makes the theologian).

Now we state with the utmost confidence that this applies with the same force to the teaching of our special adversaries as it does to that of their more outspoken backers.

In the inmost heart their theology has not its seat. If they are Christians, the theology of their heart differs far from its statements in words so far as divine revelation from human invention, though in their outward forms, speech, and letters they sometimes somewhat dissemble each other. A quasi-theologian of the General Synod, who was present at the Free Conference at Detroit in the spring of 1904 ascribes religious interest to our adversaries in the following words: "Through the Missourian doctrine of eternal election of particular persons to eternal salvation without regard to their faith (while others are not elected in the same sense) the souls are led into despair, and the consolation of the Gospel is lost. The contention of Missouri that just the reverse is true: that in their doctrine of election, according to which the eternal selection of particular persons is the cause of their salvation, the greatest consolation is offered, because the salvation of the soul is taken out of its own weak hand, but is committed to the power of the almighty hand of God, does not allay the scruples of the Ohioans, because a soul must, ever doubting, ask: Do I really belong to the few elect? Has God really taken my salvation into His almighty hand? This is the religious interest of the anti-Missourians in this controversy about the election of grace." The following consideration will prove that it is no truly religious (Christian) interest. Doubt, scruples, and despair do not arise from faith in God's promises, but from disbelief therein. They are not caused by God, but thrown in the heart, even of the faithful, by Satan, and find an ever ready ally in the flesh. Our adversaries will hardly dare to gainsay this. They interest the Christian only in so far as he has to fight against and overcome them. They do not belong to his religion, and he does not lay them to his heart. Assisted by the grace of God in the Word, he holds them as far away as he ever can. His religion is faith in God's promises of salvation. This gift of God he has at heart. Assured by the Gospel that his sins are banished

forever from the sight of God, man knows for certain from the Word of God that he belongs to his elected, because God has given him faith and taken his particular ("Who-soever," John 3, 16) salvation into His almighty hand. Losing this religious assurance his interest begins to concern itself with his doubts and scruples, falling into despair. This interest is outside the Christian religion, which is interested in divine assurance, faith in Christ and the Gospel. Our adversaries take them up and hold them before their hearers as a bugaboo against Missouri. If they have them at their heart and nurse them, they are outside the pale of Christianity. Their religious interest is gone. Their interest, then, is not to assure the sinner of *his* salvation, but, instigated by their reason, to fight against faith and divine assurance.

We have always maintained, that the position of our adversaries transgresses the division line between those who humbly accept God's revealed truth, without any interference of human reason in God's mysteries, and those who go off in their own conceit, following after strange gods. They are animated by the same spirit of lowering the barricades between the human and divine wisdom by giving the reins to the human factor in conversion and election. They try to smooth the way of the Lord by making the points in the controversy an "anthropological" problem, a different comprehension of certain Scripture passages and Christian truth. This they show when they are willing to enter into compact and spiritual communion with us, if we would only consider our position as a "theological" explanation, a viewpoint (*Richtung*) of thought. They would gladly join us, if we declared it as a problem of theology that can be interpreted according to the two different "tropes" of Lutheran teaching, as Rohnert asserts in his *Dogmatik*. On the contrary, we maintain that, as a problem of anthropology, it cannot be of the theological interest to all Christians and is not worth fighting for. But such it can never be, as it

is a theological principle involving the salvation by grace alone as the Scriptures teach everywhere. Here the spirits part company. Those following our adversaries land at the denial of pure grace. The historical genesis of the rise of orthodoxism, pietism, and rationalism points to the introduction in the Church of the error of making salvation partly dependent on human effort in the shape of foreseen faith as an “explanation” of the divine mystery of election. Though our adversaries ever stoutly deny these allegations, their more pronounced backers show the black hand clearly, as the article in question does.

Our adversaries always stoutly deny that their teaching is the outgrowth of the efforts of the human reason to find a *reconciliation* between God’s unmerited grace and human resistance to that grace offered in Christ alone. For this purpose they have invented in conversion the “anthropological problem,” *i. e.*, human conduct (*Verhalten*), in election the foreseen faith, and instead of the true analogy of faith, *viz.*: the clear Scriptures, the harmonious structure of the Scriptures. But in trying to throw us off our guard by these levers—for which they have not the *ἄδς ποῦ στῶ*—and subterfuges, they have lost their balance. Still maintaining to conform to the harmony of Scripture, and professing their adherence to the Confessions of the Church, they have to throw off this yoke when coming to the battle and substitute other testimony, *viz.*: that of the “fathers,” who introduced their error, and that of their own reason. They have not that of the Law and the Testimony. As we are their true friends, confessing the same confession, and sticking to them without a waver, not wanting to war, but to win them back, we wish them to take a look at their allies who hasten to their rescue.

The evident purpose of the article referred to is to find the reconciliation between grace and free-will. There must be one, though they be ever so much opposed. The writer takes that for granted. He does not so much as question

whether there is one anywhere, whether it is necessary, or whence it is to come. It may not be brought in, as the author asserts, in the way of Martensen in his *Dogmatik* ("Freedom can surrender itself to prevenient grace as the flower opens itself to the rays of the sun") nor in the way of Julius Müller (*Lehre von der Sünde*, p. 207), because that leads to Erasmus' and Strigel's "*facultas se applicandi ad gratiam.*" Neither is the way of predestinarianism to be considered. But come in it must. The *Form of Concord*—though, as he shows, it gives not the least clue—must furnish it. If it is not contained therein, it must be "supplemented;" where it cuts away the desired reconciliation, it must be "rejected" or "corrected." It must mean what it does not mean. The "theologian" is bound to explain and reconcile.

In this behavior of their allies our adversaries have a patent enough example of what they do, too, in order to reach their goal. Stop they will not where the Word of God and our Confessions bid us shut our mouth. Neither the Word nor our Confessions give an explanation of His mysteries, because God has revealed none. Neither does reason taken captive by His Word insist on it. Yet they want us to acknowledge that we dare not stop at the brink of the precipice of predestination, but must let down a ladder in the shape of a reconciliation between grace and free-will of man in conversion and an explanation of the election of the saints through foreseen faith, although this ladder never reaches the bottom, the reconciliation not reconciling and the explanation not explaining. They tempt God as Satan did when standing beside Christ on the pinnacle with the wrong words of Scripture, and they want us to join in the effort. But we decline.

The main part of the article is taken up by an examination into the Confessions of the Church, what they teach about grace and free-will, and the historical genesis of them is considered in the teaching of Luther and Melancthon.

In view of the desired reconciliation Luther's teaching in *De Servo Arbitrio* is considered as a misstatement of the question of grace and free-will, which he later had to modify, and which the Confession does no more contain. How this accords with the view which Luther held in regard to this book long after the *Augustana* had been in evidence, is a mystery to us. But the explanatory "theologian" must not be conscious of historical facts when they collide with his "scientific" explanation. But, nevertheless, the statement that "free-will (in regard to divine matters) is a lie" holds good. Luther had accompanied it by showing us God's revealed will in Christ. How could he do otherwise after he had found forgiveness of his sins, which had bound him with iron chains, and from which he could not be released by all exertion of free-will? We find nothing else in the quotation of the author from the *Trostschrift*. Free-will is denied there, as well as in the III. Article of the Small Catechism, and no explanation and reconciliation attempted between grace and free-will. With Melancthon's changes we are less concerned, but as long as he acted as the penman of the Church in the confessional writings he professes the faith of the Church.

In the same way Luther is persistently misrepresented by our adversaries. He must have modified his views of free-will and election, otherwise no explanation is possible, no reconciliation between grace and human free-will can be thought of. They ought to see this from their more outspoken allies.

From the *Augsburg Confession* the author cannot make out a clear case for free-will. He makes indeed some consequences, but they are entirely his own, as he has to confess: "On this subject ('that man is enabled to cooperate with grace and to decide for it, because the center of gravity of the nature has been changed by the working of God') the Confession does not contain any more accurate definition, as likewise on the other question, Whether the idea of *civil righteousness* comprehends all that is made possible

to man," etc. The *Apology* of the *Augsburg Confession* limits man's free-will to the resistance of *voluntas malorum*. More he cannot show.

For us, and for all who stand by God's revealed will, no more is needed in the Confession. We are assured of the deep chasm that yawns between the sinner and God's righteousness and justice. We know that it is bridged entirely by the grace of God in Christ and plainly stated in the means of grace, which carry us over to His side in spite of our sin-bound and resisting free-will and deep corruption. We need not, snake-like, wriggle over it on the belly of our understanding the explanation and reconciliation. In Christ these things are plain, and His merit must be, at least partly, overlooked, before the muddle ensues, that needs, of course, an explanation. Though ever so vehemently denied by our adversaries, the fact is plainly shown by their more untrammelled backers.

But does the author educe the desired reconciliation, or only the necessity of it, from the *Form of Concord*? Certainly he has not brought out the fact, if a contradiction exists between it and the earlier confessions on this line. He rather says that the *Form of Concord* in Articles I, II, XI "form(s) a parallel and supplement to the Articles II, XVIII, XIX of the *Augustana*," rejecting both Flacius' Manichaeian extreme and Strigel's doctrine of the *modus agendi aliquid boni in rebus divinis*. The fact is brought out that in man not a spark of free-will for good or of spiritual strength is left, and that "conversion results when the Holy Spirit, by means of the Word and the Sacraments, operates upon him," that the deep gulf of original sin, stated in the earlier confession, is not only "copiously repeated," but "even *sharpened* by the definition, that man now, as regards the good, is wholly corrupt and dead. . . . The human will is *thus not causa efficiens*, it suffers, it does not work," though man is not in so far like a block or a stone, that he can receive an impression from the divine Word, but

the unconverted remains *the* “dead block,” the “unhewn stone,” and is lost of his own fault. But *in conversion* “the *servum arbitrium* is changed into an *arbitrium liberatum*,” “then by the power of the Holy Spirit we are able and we ought to cooperate, though much weakness still persists.”

After correctly stating the contents of Article XI in regard to election, that man is the sole cause of his damnation, while his salvation entirely rests on God’s gracious mercy, and that we are not to seek the assurance of our election in God’s secret counsel, but in Christ, revealed in the Word, the author states three points that are thus made: 1. God’s will of grace in Christ is general, embracing all. 2. It is serious. 3. It is not irresistible. Reject man can. That is man’s conduct in the matter. All the passages quoted reveal no more. Truly the author says in his summary at the end: “The *Form of Concord* identifies the secret will of God with the will of God revealed in Christ. (We hold this to be the correct and satisfactory reconciliation.) Its exclusive purpose is *to secure to grace alone the glory of saving the sinner*. But there is *no reconciliation* of the two attested truths: The *universal will of grace* and *particularistic election of grace*.”

By this statement of the scriptural doctrine WE *abide*, as the author himself shows by his quotations from Pastor Brauer of Dargun (Mecklenburg). Who, then, has brought about the lively controversy? Have we, especially Prof. Walther, “*brought out* a conception of the matter which differs essentially from that of the ‘Ev. Lutheran theologians’ of Germany”?)¹⁾ Was it we who began to war against

1) The question is, whether the Missouri Church has brought out a *different conception of the Confessions* as it is given in the preceding, or whether the Lutheran theologians in Germany did so. We earnestly deny it on the strength even of the proof of the author himself. The trouble arose because the German theologians *held* a different conception from that of the symbolical writings of the Church, and our special adversaries followed in their wake. But we did not follow, and by the grace of God the Confessions experienced a true resurrection, and are alive to-day, as God’s Word and Luther’s doctrine never can be buried.

the Confessions, when we confessed that we accept the sense which the author of necessity educes from its clear statements? Our adversaries prefer that charge against us, but we aver that we wish to stand and to fall by the sense of the Confessions as brought out by their allies, and which they cannot alter except by a juggling with words. They ought to see that the cause of the controversy was and is a radical departure from the Confessions, though they say: "She (the Ohio Synod) will not be enticed or goaded into any position or movement by which the saving truth set forth in the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church is compromised" (Prof. Loy). To this we invite them back, after they have followed the movement of the Lutheran theologians in Germany in seeking after a reconciliation.

But as "the Word of God should frame articles of faith, otherwise no one, not even an angel" (*Smalc. Art. II, 2, 15*), and "we are not to place the Confessions of the Church on an equality with the Holy Scriptures" (Loy), perhaps our adversaries have found a different doctrine on conversion and election in the Scriptures from that which the Confessions teach. This they deny. But their allies, who are not so much trammled by a formal adherence to the Confessions, give the whole secret away.

In his eagerness to produce the desired reconciliation, the author says: "But who will say to what extent the heathen even are blown upon and touched by the breath of God's grace? . . . Who will say whether the *capacitas* here is not already sometimes *actus*? Hence the *Form of Concord* is *not to be approved* when in its articles it assumes an equal disinclination of *all* to the Gospel, in so far as this is said to be *equally great*." The proof from Scripture he is yet owing. Not a single passage he produces for this assertion. And those who know their Bible can quote any amount to the contrary. We recall a few: 1 Kings 8, 46. Job 4, 18; 14, 4. Ps. 14, 3; 143, 2. Prov. 20, 9. Matt. 7, 20. Rom. 2, 23; 5, 16. 18. 19. Gal. 3, 22. 1 John 1, 8—10;

5, 19. From the Word of God our adversaries and their allies will never disprove the statement of the *Form of Concord* that there *is* in man an equal disinclination, and equally great.

The strangest part of the whole discussion is found in the point regarding conversion. From the fact that, according to the Confessions, “conversion is not the same as *Infant* Baptism,” but “includes the motions of the new life,” the deduction is made that man, after Baptism, has power to convert himself. According to this, man, born in sin and under death, gets in Baptism not remission of sin and life everlasting, but his power is rehabilitated to convert himself afterwards. He gets in Baptism *synergia*, the *arbitrium liberatum* before conversion and necessary to it. God gives him grace and spiritual life without faith or without converting him: “The person is restored to the first man,” who “occupies no neutral position in regard to God.” A baptized sinner has grace without being converted, because his free-will is required for the latter act.

Need we say that this contains two errors explicitly condemned in the Confessions, and not found anywhere in the Scriptures? We quote Art. II, § 77: “Fourthly, the doctrine of the Synergists which pretend . . . although free-will be too weak to make the beginning and convert himself by its own powers to God and obey the Law of God: but when the Holy Spirit makes the beginning, . . . then free-will by its own natural powers can . . . believe the Gospel,” etc. Against the other: “Item, those who pretend that God in . . . regeneration create a new heart and new man, thus, that the Old Adam’s substance and being be wholly erased,” etc. According to the Bible and the Symbolical Books “regeneration (in the washing of regeneration, *i. e.*, Baptism) and conversion go together hand in hand (Acts 2, 38), Baptism including conversion, though not the same, as conversion, in the language of the Church, is exclusively used of adult persons. If the author really means what his words indi-

cate, that Baptism "includes the motions of the new life," then in Baptism a real conversion is wrought. The "smallest spark and desire of divine grace and eternal salvation" is true faith, or, being converted, as we gather from the *Epitome*, Art. II, §§ 18, 19, and the *Larger Catechism* IV, §§ 74—76.

Toward this conversion, whether brought about in infant or adult, man cannot do and act the smallest particle. It is the action of the Holy Spirit. On this factor alone rests God's command of Baptism, and Infant Baptism becomes not only admissible but valuable as a means of grace. Because the allies of our adversaries, especially in the General Synod, admit a human factor in conversion, they are ever debating¹⁾ among themselves, whether a child has faith or not. They cannot say: If I baptize a child, I have saved a soul. In the same way the other means of grace are falsified in consequence of battling against the doctrines of election and conversion as confessed by our Church in the Symbolical Books. By this signal denial of the Symbolical Books in quest of the reconciliation of free-will and grace alone our adversaries ought to take warning and not imagine that they differ from us only in the explanation of this or that passage, but "when one part suffers, the whole body" (of doctrine) "will suffer." The Confession is clear on the point of excluding *every* human factor: "With his own powers man can contribute, do, work, cwork to his conversion neither the whole, nor the half, nor the least part, but is a slave of sin and body-servant of Satan, by whom he is actuated: John 8, 34. Eph. 2, 2. 2 Tim. 2, 26."

1) Only last fall the *Lutheran World* and the *Lutheran Observer* had a quarrel among themselves about Baptism, whether anything is given in Infant Baptism or not. The *Observer* contended for the last, because a child has no faith. The *World* being dissatisfied, because it holds Baptism to be a means of grace, said, that in Baptism "grace is infused," this grace, later on, being explained as the "germ of the new life." Faith is dodged persistently.

The author further makes for reconciliation by a description of conversion as “the long process of conversion extending through the entire life of a person, the daily laying-hold on grace.” Of daily repentance we are assured by Scripture, but we know also from the same source that conversion (*conversio transitiva*) is the act of the Holy Spirit by which He works faith in the sinner. Of this *act* we speak, and thereby man is *not συνεργός θεοῦ*. Of this act Chemnitz (*Loci* II, p. 185, ed. Leiseri), whom the author quotes, does not speak when he says: „*Post hunc autem motum voluntatis divinitus factum voluntas humana non habet se pure passive, sed mota et adjuta a Spiritu Sancto, non repugnat, sed assentitur et fit συνεργός Dei*“ (But after the movement divinely wrought [that is, after conversion] the human will does not hold itself purely passive, moreover, moved and aided by the Holy Spirit, it does not resist, but assents and becomes a coworker of God). Chemnitz speaks of the progress or the fruit of conversion as not an idle but a fruit-producing motion of the Holy Spirit, and even in this he is divinely actuated.¹⁾ But the author makes him say that in conversion proper (in the divine movement) man is a coworker with God, because in Baptism he has been infused with the new life. Conversion is not to be the divine movement to faith (the gift of faith), but something of man’s work.

What causes the author to make such a muddle of it? He wants to prepare the ground for his reconciliation. He is going to make faith a personal exertion of free-will. He avoids the word faith, he calls it “the being-laid-hold-on

1) This is proven from Chemnitz’ definition of conversion, where he says (Part III, 9, p. 222): „*Non autem hic consistere debet disputatio de libero arbitrio. . . Est igitur conversio mutatio divinitus a Spiritu Sancto per verbum in homine facta, qua novae spirituales virtutes . . . menti, voluntati ac cordi infunduntur*“ (The question about free-will must not here [in conversion] be brought in. . . Conversion, therefore, is the change wrought in man in a divine way by the Holy Spirit through the Word, by which new spiritual virtues . . . by the gift of the Holy Spirit are infused in the mind, will, and heart).

by grace," while the exertion of the free-will (he means faith) gains the name of "the full decision." These he can manage more easily. They must be identified, one taken for the other. These are his words: "Only when the being-laid-hold-on by grace and the full decision are identified do we get out the right way."¹) The proof passage is made of: "Thou hast been too powerful for me, and I have suffered myself to be won." The will of God and free-will are the same thing. If man decides for God, God has decided for him. You may call it either way: you are correct. This is the conception of the Lutheran theologians in Germany—we hope not of all.

Our adversaries will hardly admit that this forms the *basis* of their arguments. They make the *Form of Concord* say so. The author shows the way, when he says: "This is the (Dominus) Deus hominem non cogit." Thus it is easy to remove "the block and stone and pillar of salt" of the Confession with Chemnitz' words: "The will moved and assisted by the Holy Spirit does not receive an impression like a block, but it begins to will and to work. There is no such struggle in a block." Chemnitz might wonder what the German theologian is able to accomplish with his cautious words. While he is going to say that man is not in *every* regard like a block or stone, because he has an immortal soul capable of understanding and willing if moved and assisted by the Holy Spirit, the theologians of Germany make him say: Man is in *no* respect like a block or stone. But if he wanted to argue against the likening of unconverted man in this manner, he need not have looked up

1) The words read exactly thus: "Only when the being-laid-hold-on by grace and the full decision are identified do we get out of the right way." But as they give no sense in the connection of thought, we assume that they are incorrectly translated from the German: "Nur wenn das Ergriffensein von der Gnade und die voellige Entscheidung identificirt werden, kommen wir auf den rechten Weg hinaus." We beg the author's pardon if we cannot get at his true meaning. The fault, then, lies in the translation, which only is before us.

Chemnitz for proofs. He might have found *this* contradiction to the likening of unconverted man to a block and stone besides the “Deus hominem non cogit” as follows: “But if such a man (unconverted) despises the tools and means of the Holy Spirit and wills not to hear, . . . in this case it can be said that man is not a stone or block. For a stone or block does not *resist* him who moves him, does not understand and feel what is done with him as man resists the Lord God with his will *until he becomes converted*. . . . Yet toward his conversion . . . he is much worse than a stone or a block.” But we think the Confession was too insoluble a stone to go into the compound.

Like our adversaries, their ally tries the Scripture proof for his identification theory, and it says what he wants the Scripture to say. But such are his words before he has introduced the Scriptures: “They characterize conversion, *as a work of grace, both as an act of God and as an act of man.*” We are almost afraid to tell plainly what these sacrilegious words mean. Don’t they say that man performs an act of (divine) grace when he is converted? We recoiled at the first reading from such blasphemous language and blamed the translator, that he might have misunderstood the original, but the summary bore him out: “Man *can hear* (spiritually, Luke 11, 28) the Word when it addresses itself to him. Whether he then *longs* for it is decided according to the preceding course of his life and according to the greater or less morality existing in his natural disposition. . . . The *new affections created by grace*” (mark: this is before conversion) “*are intimately connected* with the moral nature of man and with the concrete stage of his development.” We are not so uncharitable as to assume that our adversaries like this war-cry of their allies at their back. It is too plain an admission that they are in for the spoil. As soon as we are overridden and silenced, it won’t matter. You must regard conversion as an act of grace by man. He has made himself King

of grace. If you yet want to call it the grace of God, you may be permitted, but rather be cautious and call it the grace of Man. It sounds natural, the other smacks of magic, according to the author. "This working-of-grace (of man) is irresistible in so far as it takes place unconditioned; but it does not act magically, and is *resistible in so far as the process is decided in the self-consciousness* one way or the other, in consequence of the position taken by the human personality." Man saves himself. He holds the decision for God, for eternity, for salvation in the hollow of his hand. He is his own savior. We are sure our special adversaries do not yet agree with that host of the enemies of God's grace. We take them at their profession. But we like to warn them of the dangerous company into which they have thrust themselves and tempted God.

What are the scriptural arguments of these outspoken enemies of God's grace? The same that our adversaries employ. "Conversion *even, as an act of man, is demanded:*" *Μετανοείτε, πιστεύετε, ἐπιστρέψατε.* And because man can resist with his own powers God's gracious will, they *must* also say that man can accept or convert himself by his own powers. That this is Erasmian logic has been sufficiently shown by Luther. The author also cites examples of resistance to grace of their own will: the rich young man, the scribe, Felix, to maintain thereby that every converted person in Scripture was not taken captive by the Lord, but delivered himself up out of his own grace. Nevertheless, if you are afraid to say so, then say: It was the grace of God. It means the same. This is the theme of the whole Bible: "Convert Thou me, and I shall be converted." According to the "identification theory" it is to say: If I have converted myself, Thou hast converted me. The Holy Spirit did not exactly know how to express Himself. But as He said so, His words can be easily mended. — But Peter (Matt. 16, 17), Paul (1 Tim. 1, 16), John, and the rest of those that were converted in the Scripture are not

among the company. They are too unmanageable. They are either acknowledging that God was too powerful for them, or are stupidly silent on the point of their own decision.

As you like it, dear friends. These are your arguments. Shall we come over? You will not expect it. We believe that some of you venerate in their hearts the flag of God's Truth and the Confession of the same, and will follow its lead.

The author also has a short battle-cry, succinct and clear. We must admit, it is not quite easy to understand what his many words meant: they are so very theologico-scientific. They remind us of what we read of Oliver Cromwell: His long speeches were not to be understood, but when he went against his enemies, his commands could not be misunderstood, nor misapplied, nor dodged, nor disobeyed. The author summarizes: “In so far as this reconciliation fails” (probably an incorrect translation of the German *fehlt* = is missing in the Confession), “we have to *supplement* the Confession; but in so far as it (the Confession) assumes an *equal* disinclination toward the Gospel” (as forbidding the desired reconciliation by identification) “and quotes only” (mark: because no others are available) “passages of Scripture which prove the corruption of the human heart, we have to *rectify* and *complete* it.” There the allies show the black flag which our special adversaries persistently conceal. The Confession is to be rejected, because it gives and allows no reconciliation. That must be supplied. But he has given not a single passage from Scripture that says, as he does: “Man, despite the Fall, *has* the *capacitas passiva, aptitudo naturalis* to salvation. Grace works in him an appropriating” (? appropriate) “*Verhalten* without taking away his natural freedom, in that the Word comes to him. . . . Whether he then longs for it, is decided according to the preceding course of his life and according to the greater or less morality existing in his natural dis-

position. . . . The *new affections created by grace* are intimately connected with the moral nature of man and with the concrete state of his development . . . they work a *new spiritual life*. This *process* is called *conversion*. At every point in this line the initial condition of being-laid-hold-on and of laying-hold-on is repeated. Grace alone" (according to identification: Man's act of grace) "holds the new *Ego* fast to the way that directs to God, but ever according to the measure in which man's *arbitrium liberatum* cooperates with it."

This summary of the position of God's enemies is exactly the same thing which we are resisting in the Ohio and Iowa synods. That is the essence of all they have said and written against us, charging us with secession from the Confessions and the Scripture and starting for "the gloomy error of Calvinism," while we know that we are just as far from it as from Arminianism, which hangs over them like the sword of Damocles. But here they have, in the confession of their allies, the cause of this great hubbub. *The reconciliation of the grace of God and human free-will is missing and must be SUPPLEMENTED*. Human reason, sun-dered from Scripture, is bound to make it.

Let us consider *this* reconciliation.

This reconciliation *fails*. It is not a reconciliation, but an identification. The human will is made divine, and the divine will human. It is a syllogism of the worst kind, tantamount to a tautology. It moves in a circle. The end is nothing more than the beginning. Its terms do not mean what they say. Man is without spiritual powers, and, Man has spiritual powers, may mean the same thing or may be suited to the occasion. The blind man has been *led*, therefore *he* found the way; or he *found* the way, therefore he *was* led. Our adversaries will excuse us if we find no deep theological and logical acumen in this reconciliation by identification. "There is an inner contradiction in it," as Pastor Brauer is quoted as saying by the author.

This reconciliation is *impossible*. The deep chasm between God's will and the sinner's will is eternally yawning. No amount of *reasoning* can bridge it. It is bridged only by God's almighty love in His Son offered in the Word, laid before the foundation of the world, and it is able to bring us over and keep us spiritually alive. It is a lie of the totally depraved imagination, inflamed by the Old Serpent, that when we are commanded to turn, repent, and believe we are able to decide for it. Rescue is brought and applied to us by these words of the Almighty. Are our adversaries and their allies totally unable to comprehend when Christians say: On this hinges Christianity altogether, that it marks the division line between faith in Christ and rejection of the Savior? It seems so: otherwise they could not throw it among "anthropological problems." But we say to them and all their host: Man has to believe God and take Him at His Word and let *His* way of redemption prevail, otherwise he is lost.

This reconciliation *has made the Lutheran church spiritually dead*, and will continue to do so, wherever it is upheld, all outward manifestations of life and influence notwithstanding. It has opened the doors to orthodoxism (holding the outward form of godliness, but denying the power thereof), pietism (making morals more than faith), unionism and rationalism, and all pietism, so-called, cannot help her up. We can only entreat our adversaries to turn, repent, and believe. It is God's gracious will that gives the power, which they have not. But they can reject.

We sum up by saying that the General Synod theologians of the *Quarterly* made a very poor selection in the means of succor for our adversaries against the "fanatic" Missourians. We cannot imagine that they wanted to indoctrinate their own helpless children, who are allowed to shift for themselves in all these questions.

FR. SCHWARZ.
