

Jon Bare  
German Translation  
Middler Dogmatics  
May 6, 2005

**Third Synodical Report of the Canada District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
of Missouri, Ohio, and other states. In the year 1882.**

**Doctrinal Discussion**

As a primary doctrinal matter, the Synod sets forth the theses of Pastor Frosch for consideration.

**Concerning the true use of the means of grace in the work of conversion.**

**Thesis I.**

**Although the conversion of a person is completely a work of God alone, to which the person cannot even do the smallest part by himself, God, however, does not work in such an act without means.**

**Thesis II.**

**The means, which God himself applies in the work of the conversion of man, are law and gospel according to the two parts, which belong to repentance and conversion, namely, repentance and belief in Jesus Christ.**

**Thesis III**

**Because the word, through which the Holy Spirit works the conversion, is certainly varied in its content, it depends above all else on the true distinction and application in the preaching of law and gospel.**

**Thesis IV**

**Also, the Holy Sacraments are decreed by God as the Means of Grace but they are only powerful in the work of conversion because of the word of God which is with and in the Sacraments.**

**Thesis V**

**Because the Means of Grace not only call for faith, but also give it, so they are sufficient for the conversion of man.**

**Thesis VI**

**Since the Means of Grace have been established for the conversion of man by God, so also each person is obliged to diligent and earnest usage of the same if he wants to be and remain converted.**

As an introduction to the theses it must be emphasized how important the pure doctrine of conversion is. Just as in the answering of all questions of the Christian faith, so also here in the handling of this doctrine, we must acquire the truth not from our

reason but from the word of God, the only source. It must also be noticed that the word “conversion” is used in a twofold sense. In the narrow sense is understood the act of conversion itself, the bestowal of faith, the relocation from a state of scorn into the state of grace. In the wider sense, the renewal and sanctification of life is also included. Here we will now deal with the conversion in the narrower sense, namely, with the dealings of God when he transfers a sinner out of the realm of the Devil into the realm of his dear Son.

### **Thesis I.**

**Although the conversion of a person is completely alone a work of God, to which the person cannot even do the smallest part by himself, God, however, does not work in such an act without means.**

**John 17:17-20, Acts 10:5-6, 1 Corinthians 1:21.**

One of the most widespread errors of our time is that people don't want to allow the work of a person's conversion to God to be solely a gracious work of God alone. Rather, they ascribe a part of the power – if not the entire power – to the will of the person. One often hears such talk: “The man can and must desist from the willful reluctance himself, if he wants to be converted.” “The person must make a decision for heaven himself.” “He has the power and the freedom to choose heaven.” “He must prepare himself for the grace of God, give the word of consent, and open his heart's door, if he wants God to come into him.” Or “He must hold at least a little bit still, and let himself be converted.” In short, they say that each person, exactly as he is by nature, should now be able to cooperate at least a little bit in his or her conversion. The conversion should not only be a work of God, but also a little bit the work of the person.

The Scripture and the confession teach otherwise. They describe a person's conversion to God only as a work of God and thereby exclude every cooperative work of the person.

Jeremiah 31:18 says, “Restore me, and I will return, because you are the LORD my God.”<sup>1</sup>

In Ezekiel 36:26-27, God says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

John 6:44, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Philippians 2:13, “for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

Acts 16:14, “One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her

---

<sup>1</sup> Bible passages translated using the NIV translation.

heart to respond to Paul's message." Lydia could not accept the Gospel in faith and convert herself by her own power. Instead, the Lord had to open the heart for her. Only then did she pay attention to the word. Therefore also even the fact that we take notice of the word with meditation is a gracious working of the Holy Spirit.

Our confessional writings testify to the same. The Formula of Concord says, "As then third of all the Holy Scriptures ascribe conversion, the faith in Christ, the rebirth, renewal, and everything which belongs to the absolute beginning and execution of the same, not to the human power of the natural free will, neither acquired completely, nor in part, nor even in the most little or most common part, but in *solidum*, that is, totally alone to the divine working and to the Holy Spirit as also the Apology says. Reason and the free will are capable to outwardly live honorably to a certain degree. But the Holy Spirit alone works the ability to be born anew, to inwardly receive another heart, sense, and boldness. He opens the understanding and the heart to understand and to give attention to the word, as Luke 24:25 says, "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." (M. S. 594; St. L. A. S. 406). And further: "For the conversion of our depraved wills, which is nothing other than their awakening from the spiritual death, is solely a work of God alone, just as also the raising of the bodily resurrection of the flesh should be ascribed to God alone." (M. S. 609; St. L. A. S. 415)

We sing also concerning this in the song:

"That I now am converted, you have alone performed  
You have Satan's rule and work in me destroyed."

To sum up what has already been said, the person cannot cooperate in his conversion at all. Meisner says rightly: "As much as is ascribed to the free will of man in conversion, so much also is the divine grace removed." The words of Augustin are also known: "*Gratia non est gratia ullo modo, si non gratis datur omni modo.*" The Apostle Paul also emphatically states in Romans 11:6 "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. But if by works, then it is no longer grace; if it were, work would no longer be work."

We see also that the man is capable of nothing in spiritual matters before his conversion in how the Holy Scripture describes the natural man. It says that the natural man is spiritually dead. Ephesians 2:1,5.

To this point we hear the Formula of Concord: "Now just as the man who is physically dead can not out of his own power cause or bring it about that he would again receive temporal life, so also the man who is spiritually dead in his sins cannot out of his own power bring about or turn to the obtaining of spiritual and heavenly righteousness and life, if he were not made alive and free from the death of sins through the son of God." (M. S. 590; St. L. A. S. 403)

Mueller says very accurately, "Just as impossible as it is for a millstone which falls from a mountain to turn itself around and climb back up, it is just as impossible for the person to be able to convert himself to God by his own powers."

The scripture testifies also that that natural man cannot think anything good even once in spiritual matters. Indeed scripture calls it sheer darkness. 2 Corinthians 3:5. 1 Corinthians 2:14. Ephesians 5:8.

Heshusius: "So now admittedly the man understands nothing in God's affairs, but vain darkness, as Scripture testifies. How can he then cooperate or help with his conversion?" (Four Sermons on the inability of human power etc., page 47)

Hence, we also confess in the Third Article: "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts and sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

But still more. The natural man is not positioned somewhere in a natural circumstance that he is certainly not for, but also not against God. But rather, he is in fact an enemy of God. His heart is striving against God's Spirit and his grace completely. This is shown in the following places:

Genesis 8:21, "Every inclination of man's heart is evil from childhood."

Luther says, "Therefore, I say that the spiritual power is not only lost, but completely eradicated through sin, both in man and in the devils. And therefore it is now nothing other than a depraved understanding and such a will that is an enemy completely against God. Such a will thinks and lives with nothing else in mind than only that which is against and contrary to God." (E. A. 58, 234.)

Romans 8:7, "The sinful mind is hostile to God."

I Corinthians 1:18, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing."

Accordingly, our Formula of Concord compares the natural man to a stone or block, which can also do nothing when a sculptor forms a statue out of it. It says that the person is still worse than a stone or block, for this at least holds still and does not struggle. But the person struggles against the dear God when he wants to convert him to himself. (M. S. 602 and 593; St. L. A. S. 411 and 405)

So it is then false when anyone ascribes cooperation in the work of conversion to the natural power or to the so-called free will of man. Luthardt, for example, teaches: "The grace is able to come so near to the person. The person must then open the door himself so that Jesus might go into him." The author of the Canadian "Kirchenblattem" also asserted that the person still has the same freedom of choice after the fall as Adam and Eve first did. Many write such things freely out of pure ignorance. But they dispute vigorously, the person must still be there. Certainly, the person must be there. Just like every one condemned to the gallows, who sits already on the wagon to be led to the place

of execution. As he sees the farmer running so that he might not arrive to late, he calls to him: "There is no urgency, I must also be there."

To be sure, Scripture contains many demands that the person should turn himself and be repentant. For example, Ezekiel 33:11: "Turn from your evil ways!" It must, however, be noticed here that when God demands something from us, it does not mean that we can do it out of our own power. He wishes rather to reveal to us our great weakness. So then we should know that with the word, "Turn," God wants also to accomplish the same. Just as when Jesus called to the dead Lazarus, "Come out!" he knew that Lazarus could not arise out of his own power. But with just a word he gave him the power of life immediately. So also God gives the Spirit with the Word of the Gospel to work the faith in us.

As true as it is that God alone can and must convert us to himself, so the second part is just as true. God does not work it in a manner without means, but he has ordained certain means for it. God certainly could have given us his Spirit into our hearts without means. He could have enlightened, converted, and sanctified us without means. He is almighty. But it pleased God to work in another way. In his Word, God has placed the entire treasure of salvation and eternal life, which Christ has gained for us through his suffering and death. And this Word is the hand, the container, in short, the means, through which he administers, offers, and grants that treasure.

This is then the means of conversion as we see clearly in the conversion of Paul. He was on the way to Damascus about to persecute the Christians when the Lord suddenly stepped before him through a miraculous appearance in his divine majesty. Saul called out terrified, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Christ did not then speak another, "Turn to me, and you will live," but he directed him to the disciple Ananias in Damascus and said, "Go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9:6). Therefore Paul was not converted so much by the outward appearance, but moreover through the Word. We see the same also in Cornelius (Acts 10:5-6). An angel appeared to him in a vision. He, however, did not preach the Word of faith to Cornelius himself. Instead, the angel commanded him that he should have the Apostle Peter visit, and he would tell him what he should do.

Everywhere, Scripture says that we are converted through the word. John 17:17, 20: "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message." 1 Corinthians 1:21: "God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe." James 1:18: "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created."

Accordingly the Smalcald Articles say: "And in this part, which pertains to the verbal, external word, the fact must remain that God gives his Spirit or grace to no one except through or with the proceeding outward word." (M. S. 321; St. L. A. S. 237.)

The Formula of Concord: "On account of this, out of his immeasurable goodness and mercy, God allows his divine, eternal law and the wonderful decree of our salvation, that which alone is able to sanctify us, the holy Gospel of his eternal Son, our own Savior and Sanctifier, Jesus Christ, to be preached openly. Through this, he gathers an eternal church to himself from human kind. In the hearts of man he works true repentance and confession of sins, true faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And through this means and none other, through his holy Word, which is heard preached or is read, and through the Sacraments used according to his word, God calls man to eternal blessedness, pulls him to himself, converts, gives him a new life, and sanctifies him" (M. S. 600; St. L A. S 409 f.).

Dietrich: "Although each power of God, through which he accomplishes the conversion of man, is unlimited, it is accordingly not absurd to say that he is able to resist it, because he established it ordinarily only through certain means. ... The Schwenkfeldians, Anabaptists, and Enthusiasts all err when they think that God works conversion without the Means of Grace of the Word and the Holy Sacraments through visions and blowings. And so they wait for divine delight" (Inst. Pg. 429).

Just as horrid, however, is the contempt on the part of the present day enthusiasts, who hope to attain the Spirit and await delight through carnal excitement in the manner of the priests of Baal in the Old Testament.

Against this the Formula of Concord says: "It is a right and true statement that no one may come to Christ unless the Father draws him to him. But the Father does not want to do that without means. Instead, he ordained his Word and Sacraments as an orderly means and instrument. And it is neither the will of the Father, nor the Son, that a person would not hear or not pay attention to the preaching of his Word, and would rather wait for the pulling of the Father, without Word and Sacrament. For the Father certainly pulls with the power of His Holy Spirit, yet, according to his common order, through the hearing of his holy, divine Word, as with a net through which the chosen ones are ripped from the throat of the devil. Each poor sinner should be disposed to it, hear it with diligence, and not doubt the Father's pulling. For with his power the Holy Spirit wants to be with the Word and to work through it. This is the pulling of the Father" (M. S. 720; St. L. A. S 487).

Theses II, III, and IV follow as a further elaboration of these points.

### **Thesis II.**

**The means, which God himself applies in the work of the conversion of man, are law and gospel according to the two parts, which belong to repentance and conversion, namely, repentance and belief in Jesus Christ.**

Luke 16:31. Acts 2:22-38.

As the basis for this thesis, the following passages will be addressed: Luke 16:31, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." The rich man in Hell thought that if Lazarus would rise

from the dead, his brothers would certainly be converted. Abraham points to Moses and the Prophets, that is to say, to the Law and the Gospel, as the means for conversion.

Accordingly, Peter then also in his Pentecost sermon preached the Law most sharply to the Jews, holding forth their terrible sin—that they had handed over Jesus of Nazareth to the cross through the hands of the unrighteous. This preaching of the law cut them to their hearts so much that they asked in fear, “Brothers, what shall we do?” At this point, he declared the Gospel to them. “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:22-38.)

Romans 10:17, “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” If faith comes from the preaching of the Word of God, then conversion must also come from the preaching, for the conversion is the transferring of a person into the state of faith.

Correct penitence and conversion has two parts: contrition and sadness over the sin and the true, confident faith in Christ. Wherever penitence is expressly discerned from faith in Holy Scripture, penitence can be equated with remorse.

The Augsburg Confession says this also. “True repentance is nothing other than having contrition and sorrow or fear over the sins, and yet at the same time, believing the Gospel and absolution, that the sins are forgiven and grace has been obtained through Christ. This faith will again comfort the heart and set it at rest” (Article 12).

The contrition is an effect of the law. For the law reveals the sin. Romans 3:20 says, “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.” And in Romans 7:7 the Apostle Paul confesses, “Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet.’” In this case, the law serves as a mirror, in which man can see what he has procured by nature.

Further, the law also reveals the wrath of God over sin. Romans 4:15 declares, “The law brings wrath.” It reveals the wrath of God in the conscience of man and becomes a thundering voice to scare him away from his fall into sin. It announces that God threatens to punish all those who trespass against his commands. It directs the thoughts and senses of man. Like a hammer, which smashes the rocks, it smashes the heart of man, which is hard by nature. As a result, it is terrified before the strong ruling of God and calls out: “To where should I flee? I am weighed down by so many great sins. Where should I find salvation? Even if the whole world would come forth, they could not take away my fear!” When the law has then driven its way into the conscience of a person, he experiences the deepest sorrow. He is saddened that he has enraged the Lord of Heaven when he was obedient to the desires of sin. He has pure horror in that which was previously a delight to him, pure gall at that which had been as sweet as honey to him.

So we see then how the law works in a person to produce recognition of his sins, grief over them, and fear before God's wrath and punishment. As a result he may flee from God. Indeed, he becomes an enemy to him.

Smalcald Articles: "But it is the most important office or power of the law to expose the original sin, its fruit, and all its results. It also shows the person how deeply his nature has fallen and has been depraved. To him the law must say that he has no God, does not pay attention to God, but worships false gods. He would not have believed this previously without the law. But with it he becomes terrified, mortified, and disheartened. He would like help but doesn't know from where. He begins then to become an enemy of God and to grumble. Romans 4:15 then says that the law excites wrath; and Romans 5 says that the sin becomes greater through the law" (M. S.312; St. L. A. S. 231).

And again from the same: "The New Testament holds such an office and urges it as St. Paul does and says in Romans 1:18, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men." And again in 3:19 "The whole world is held accountable before God." And, "No one is righteous before him." And Christ says in John 16:8 "When [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt." This is now the thunderous axe of God with which he throws both the open sinners and the false saints into one pile and allows them no rights. He drives all of them into fear and hopelessness. This is the hammer. Jeremiah says, "My word is a hammer, which smashes the rocks." This is not *active contritio*, a common sadness, but *passive contritio*, the true sorrow of the heart, suffering, and the feeling of death. And this is what it means to begin true remorse. All people must hear the judgment: There is nothing for any of you. Whether you are open sinners or saints, you must all be changed and act in another way than how you now are and act." (M. S.312; St. L. A. S. 231.)

Wherever there is remorse, the first part of conversion has been accomplished. But this is not enough. Cain and Judas were also brought to remorse over their sins and they were both still lost. After the remorse, the true confident faith in Christ must follow.

Concerning this, the Apology says quite beautifully: "We therefore add as the second part of penitence the faith in Christ. And we say that the gospel of Christ should be held forth to the conscience in these terrors. In this is promised the forgiveness of sins out of grace through Christ. And such a conscience should believe that his sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. This same faith sets such a shattered heart up again, comforts it, and makes it living and joyful again. As Paul says to the Romans in chapter 5:1 "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This faith shows the distinction between the contrition of Judas and Peter, of Saul and David. The contrition of Judas or Saul is of no avail, because faith which holds onto the promise of God through Christ did not exist in them." (M. S. 172; St. L. A. S. 127.)



The faith, however, is an effect of the gospel. The gospel is the teaching of the free grace of God and the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake. Through this the Holy Spirit brings about the trust in Christ in the hearts that are cut and shattered by the law, comforts them, and directs them.

If anyone asks about his sins in the turmoil of his conscience, "What should I do to become free from the curse of the law and from the punishment for my sins?" he finds the comforting answer in the Gospel: Jesus Christ has perfectly accomplished everything. He has fulfilled the law. He has atoned for your sins and has gained righteousness for you that is effective before God. Therefore believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Recognize also your reconciliation in the reconciliation through his blood. Set your trust on him alone. Be comforted by his merit. You also are made holy. Through this Gospel message of Christ the troubled and fearful heart and conscience of man is propped up again and made joyful. As a result, when he is disheartened by himself and his own self-righteousness, he may not doubt, but take refuge in Christ through faith and thus be converted to God, made righteous and holy. The tax collector did this. He repented of his sins and did not want to lift up his eyes to heaven, but instead beat his breast. But then he took his refuge in the reconciling grace in Christ Jesus and spoke with a believing heart, "God, be gracious to me, a sinner." And in this manner he then went home justified.

Smalcald Articles: "But to this office," the office of the law, "the New Testament adds the comforting promise of grace through the Gospel, which must be believed. As Christ says in Mark 1:15, "Repent and believe the Gospel." That is, become different, do otherwise, and believe my promise." (M. S. 312; St. L. A. S. 231.)

Along with this it is now good to take notice that the proclamation of the gospel is always powerful to work faith. St Paul says in Romans 1:16: "I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

Baier therefore defines conversion in this way: "It is an action of God through which he, out of pure grace for Christ sake, works in the understanding and will of an adult, who was formerly against him and still not born again, or who had fallen away from God again after his rebirth. Through the law, he works the realization of sin and the true remorse over the same. Through the gospel, however, he works the faith in Christ with the intent to better his life. God does all this in order to bring him to justification and to eternal life."

### **Thesis III**

**Because the Word, through which the Holy Spirit works the conversion, is certainly varied in its content, it depends above all else on the true distinction and application in the preaching of law and gospel.**

2 Timothy 2:15. Luke 12:42.

The Apostle Paul says explicitly in 2 Timothy 2:15: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." And in Luke 12:42 we read, "The Lord answered, 'Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food and allowance at the proper time?'"

Because the law and the gospel are two doctrines entirely different from each other, it is necessary to keep them apart from one another and divide them properly in their usage so that each receives its allowance at the proper time.

The law is the "ministry that condemns men" (2 Corinthians 3:9). To each and every trespasser it declares God's wrath and eternal curse, and thereby closes heaven to him. "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law" (Galatians 3:10).

The Formula of Concord confesses also, "We believe, teach, and confess that the law is actually a divine doctrine which teaches that which is right and God pleasing and punishes everything that is a sin and contrary to God's will. Therefore, everything that punishes sin is and belongs to the preaching of the law." (M. S. 534; St. L. A. S. 366.)

And Luther: "Against that we say with St. Paul that no law, whether it is human or divine, can not make one single person righteous again. On account of this the law is separated from the righteousness as far as death is from life or hell is from heaven. And that we hold and teach such, is set forth by this bright and clear text of Paul where he says: The law has not been given so that it should or can make one living or holy; but exactly the opposite, that it should deprave, kill, and condemn" (On Gal. 3:21).

The gospel, on the contrary, is the ministry that preaches the righteousness, namely, the righteousness of Christ, which he has acquired for us through his active suffering obedience and has granted to us freely through faith. The ministry of the gospel has not demanded, but given; has not killed, but made alive; has not condemned, but has made holy. While the law terrifies, the gospel comforts; while the law demands work that we should do, the gospel is the joyful message of the great work which God has done in Christ for our eternal holiness; while the law threatens with punishment, the gospel promises the forgiveness of our sins; while the law places God against us as a strong judge, the gospel attracts us to himself as our reconciling, gracious, and merciful Father; while the law troubles the conscience and leads to damnation, the gospel gives us joy, hope and peace with God, as Paul says: "Now then we have become righteous through the faith. Therefore we have joy with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have an entrance to this grace in faith, in which we stand, and boast of the hope of future glory, which God will give to us."

What a difference there is between these two doctrines! How important it is then also to correctly make a distinction between the law and the gospel in preaching just as in any use. What Luther says is certainly true: whoever is not able to separate these two, law and gospel, knows nothing at all from Scripture. It cannot be made clear enough

what is law and what is gospel. Every word in the Bible, other than that which is reporting mere external historical events, is either law or gospel. If one imagines law and gospel as two large chests, it could be said that every saying in the Bible can and must be thrown into one of the two chests. Which then are the sayings that should be placed in the law and which are those which should be placed in the gospel? 1. In the law belong all the statements that say that God is holy and just; in the gospel, however, belong those which say that God is gracious and merciful for Christ's sake. 2. In the law belong all the statements, which say what the holy and just God demands from us; in the gospel, the statements which say what the gracious and merciful God has done, still does, and will do for us for Christ's sake. 3. In the law belong all the statements, which say that we have not done and cannot do that which God demanded from us, and that we are therefore all under God's judgment; in the gospel, all the statements which say that what we have not done, Christ has done for us. 4. In the law belong all statements which punish, damn and sentence man; in the gospel all statements which call and attract man. Thus it can be made clear to even children how law and gospel are separated according to their essence.

It is then wrong and perverse to make Christ into a lawgiver and the gospel into a teaching of law. This happens when Christ is made into a second Moses who demands a large amount of works, as the Papists do. Christ certainly preached also the law, but this was a foreign office, the office of Moses. His actual office was only to preach the gospel. Often the Lord Jesus seems to demand something, but what is asked is only an offer, as when I call to some sort of beggar, "Take this!" and hand him a coin. L. Harms fell into error when he interpreted John 8:51, "I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death," as the ten commandments and explained, "Whoever keeps the ten commandments in love for Christ will not see death eternally." Christ words would accordingly be law. But no, Christ's word is the gospel. It is also a terrifying preaching when one first pictures the gospel as the most beautiful thing and then following it comes with all kinds of demands and requirements. This is exactly like if anyone would promise me a dish of sweet milk, and then pour in suddenly a portion of vinegar.

If, however, law and gospel are to be correctly separated, then the law must also be preached in its full strength. The Papists weaken the law so much that they, for example, say, "sins of weakness are not condemning." Also sins of weakness, which is only the term for the sin of a believer (with the unbelievers every sin is a sin of death), is condemning all by itself just like any trespassing of the law. Yet because it does not push the person from faith, it is covered by the merit of Christ. One may not excuse the so-called common sins according to the law; God punishes each sin, whatever the manner may be. "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10). Also in the interpretation of the ten commandments in Christian doctrine, in the manner and way it points to Christ, one should well be careful that he does not dull the law. No, the sharpness of the law should be enforced so that they penetrate into the heart and the conscience.

A blending of law and gospel then takes place if anyone ascribes worth to the works of man, whether he is born again or not, in his conversion – if he does not allow the conversion to be exclusively a work of the grace of God.

Therefore, in public preaching, the gospel should not be preached first and then the law, but the other way around. Luther says: "First one should and must shatter the person with the law, then heal him with the gospel. First one must make him into sinners, into sick, and into completely nothing; then he may comfort them and raise him up. First he must thrust him into hell, then he can pull him up to heaven. First he must make him hunger and thirst, then he can feed him and give him drink." Still one must in this consider that the Bible is not a human book (in a doctrinal book, everything should follow piece by piece and be ordered logically) but the revelation of God. There the law and the gospel are immediately next to one another. Quickly we must smash with the law, quickly be comforted through the gospel. Even if someone would shake up a flask filled with water and oil, the water would still remain water and the oil would still remain oil.

Another example of how law and gospel are not correctly separated is when the gospel is not preached in its entire sweetness, but is blended with law. The gospel may not be made into a doctrine of work. Nothing may be taken for the comfort of the gospel, but it must be preached in such a way as if there were no law.

Each and every law and gospel must not only be recognized and separated as two completely separate doctrines from one another, but it must also be recognized when it is proper to preach the law and when to preach the gospel. Certainly, either law or gospel must be declared to each person, whether he is converted or unconverted, whether he is a Christian or not.

The law must therefore be shown to the secure to terrify him out of his sleep of sin; to the hypocrite to show him that God looks at the heart; to the self-righteous to reveal to him the invalidity of his forced works; to the godless and the wicked to point out to them that their end is damnation if they do not repent. 1 Tim 1:9: "We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for the lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murders, etc."

Away then with preachers who keep the law secret because they don't want to upset anyone or because of their honor and call out 'peace, peace!' where there is no peace. Jeremiah 6:14. The threat of Ezekiel 3:17-18 concurs: "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them a warning from me. When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood."

But the law must also still be preached to the believers in so far as they still bear with them the old Adam as long as they live.

We hear about that in the Formula of Concord: "Although no law is given to the righteous, as the Apostle testifies, but to the unrighteous, this is, however, not to be

understood as merely that the righteous should live without the law. For the law of God is written for them in the heart and he gave a law to the first man immediately after his creation on how he should behave. But the thought of St. Paul is this: the law, with its curse, cannot burden anyone who is reconciled to God through Christ. Also it may not agonize the regenerate with its force because they have a desire for the law of God according to the indwelling person. And certainly when the believing and predestined children of God are perfectly renewed through the indwelling Spirit in this life, they remain completely and entirely unwed in their nature and all its powers. They need no law and therefore also no enforcement, but they do on their own and completely voluntarily what they ought to do according to God's will, without any doctrine, admonishment, encouragement, or force of the law... and they achieve as the dear angels a completely voluntary obedience. Accordingly, however, in this life the believers are not renewed perfectly, completely, *complete vel consummative*. For although their sins are covered through the perfect obedience of Christ so that they are not imputed to the believers as damnation and also the killing off of the old Adam and renewal of their nature in the Spirit begin, the old Adam and all of the inward and outward powers of the same still cling to sins in their nature. Concerning this the Apostle wrote: "I know that in me, that is, in my sinful nature" (Romans 7:18). And again, "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want" (Galatians 5:17). Therefore, in this life on account of such desires of the flesh, the orthodox, predestined, and regenerate children of God need not only the daily teaching, admonishment, warning and urging of the law, but also often the punishment with which they are encouraged and follow the Spirit of God. As it is written, "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees" (Psalm 119:71)" (M. S. 640 f.; St L. A. S. 437 f.).

It is also just as important that the Gospel is declared to those who need it. Through the Gospel the sad should be comforted, the battered uplifted again, and the foolish and weak encouraged and strengthened.

Luther: "Therefore when I notice that the person has been broken sufficiently with the law, thereby suffers hardship, has been martyred with his sins, and is in demand of grace, it is naturally high time and necessary that I remove for him the law together with the justice of his deeds from his eyes, and show him through the gospel the other righteousness, which God has attributed to him and granted him without his own work, merit, and influence, by grace alone for his Son's sake. This righteousness means that the righteousness that Moses had demanded has been removed. And to the people terrified by the law it holds forth the promise of Christ as the one who has come for the sake of such distressed consciences and poor sinners. Here there is true help for the poor man that he has a true comforting hope and draws good confidence that he is no longer under the law, but under grace" (Epistle to the Galatians).

The reader may find a detailed exposition concerning what has been said in this thesis in the second Synodical report of the Iowa District.

#### Thesis IV

**Also God has ordained the Holy sacraments as means of grace. They are, however, powerful in the work of conversion only because of the word of God, which is in, with, and under the Sacraments.**

Just as the word, so also the Holy Sacraments are means through which God offers, presents, and gives his grace to the person. Accordingly, God has put grace, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation into Holy Baptism. "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved," (Mark 16:16). "Baptism is the bond of a good conscience with God," (1 Peter 3:21). It is a well of salvation, a door and gate to heaven, to the kingdom of grace and blessedness. So is also Holy Communion. There God allows us again and again to take on his grace and makes us certain of the same. "That has been poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins," read the words of institution. That which Christ has gained for us through his life, suffering, and death will also be administered and granted to us here.

Apology: "When I receive the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, Christ speaks clearly: 'This is the new testament.' I should believe with certainty that I receive the grace and forgiveness of sins that is promised in the New Testament."

Luther: "Now the entire Gospel and article of faith: "I believe in one holy, Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, etc.," is placed in this sacrament and is presented to us through the word" (Large Catechism).

The efficacy of the sacrament in respect to conversion should be clarified by defining the terms. Therefore we call it conversion of the grown and rebirth when talking about children. Actually, the sacraments are established for the believers, for those already converted. The faith must exist if one should use them. Certainly the sacraments are not as much to work and to create faith, as much as they are to awaken and strengthen the same.

As it is said in the 13<sup>th</sup> article of the Augsburg Confession, "Of the use of the sacraments is taught that the sacraments are established not only to be outward signs so that one may recognize the Christians outwardly, but rather to be the signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us to awaken and confirm our faith. Because of this, they also require faith and then are correctly used so that it may be received in faith and through this strengthen the faith."

Gerhard articulates the matter in this way: "when someone is baptized who is already born again through the word as through the spiritual seed, he or she does not have the rebirth through the baptism. The baptism is for them, however, a confirmation and sealing of the rebirth" (Vid. Baier, Ed. Walther III, 4.paragraph 9).

Holy Communion works the conversion so little that we must reject each unconverted from it. The only purpose of Holy Communion is to strengthen and to seal the faith already present.

The sacrament is powerful only because of the Word, which is with and in the sacrament. Therefore the small Catechism says about baptism: "Certainly the water does nothing, but the word" etc. And concerning communion: "Eating and drinking certainly do not accomplish it, but the words which are there." Not the clothing, but what is within the clothing now accomplishes the effect. An example serves well here as explanation: A king granted a pardon, which he had written with his own hand and sealed with his seal to a criminal. For what purpose then does the seal serve? Is a special grace, different from that contained in the letter itself conveyed? Certainly not! The seal is only attached so that it might certify and confirm the contents of the letter. But also, the matter does not come about as if the content of the letter receives its certainty in and for itself through the seal. In and for itself, the letter is just as certain as if there were no seal. Also, without the seal, the letter remains certain and sturdy and nothing is forfeited in its meaning. The seal, however, separated and detached from the letter, has no meaning at all. The seal without the word is nothing; but the word without the seal remains sturdy. So it is also with the Word in the sacrament. Outside of the sacrament the Word has its meaning; but the sacrament does not without the Word. It is therefore always the Word and only the Word that makes the sacrament powerful. The seal gives nothing new to the Word, but is only an endorsement and verification of it.

– A second example: A king wants to knight one of his servants. The chosen person steps forward and the king says, "This man should be a knight," dubs him on the shoulder with the sword and hangs an medal on him. The man is a knight. But it is not because he has the medal, but solely through the word of the king. If this should happen, however, the person would not think he could scorn or devalue the seal. If the knight wanted to tear off the medal, which had been hung on him by the king and throw it with scorn upon the ground, his action would be a visible despising of the king himself. He would without a doubt withdraw his word along with the medal. To be sure, the word is always at the base. Through this God does and wants to do such great things.

– Yet a third example: Some servants are taking arms against their king. They are sentenced to die. The son of the king intercedes. He begs for the indignant servants. This finally renews the king's good will. In his heart he has already forgiven the indignant servants. Note that this was in his heart. Further the king declares his noble disposition with his mouth. He sends out his messengers and has an open pardon declared to the indignant servants. In order to make it certain and commonly known, he has the pardon set down in writing and openly published. Certainly, so that no one could think that he did not mean it or that he had turned back from his grace, the king writes a special letter of pardon and finally attaches his kingly seal to it. So also God authenticates his promise of grace twice, three times, or four times. But no reassurance gives a new grace different from the first. It is always the word. If that is taken away, only an empty husk remains.

How foolish are those who, as the Roman Catholics, wish to elevate the sacrament at the cost of the Word. If someone looks in the sacrament for a grace apart from that which the word administers, he has disowned the entire Christendom. How highly we must boast and praise the love, goodness, and faithfulness of our God, that he

has added seals and signs to the word to strengthen and invigorate our faith, yes, that in Holy Communion Christ gave us his body and his blood as a pledge of his grace. So it remains firmly established that only the word makes the Sacrament into a Means of Grace. It is the Word to which we should cling in the sacrament by our faith.

The newer German, so-called Lutheran Theology, as represented by Vilmar, Kahnis, Luthardt, and others, is situated terribly on this point of doctrine. That which Luther stressed so sharply, that the word is essential also in the sacraments, they have completely switched around. They think that the working of the Sacrament must be separate from the Word, and this, their opinion, they have brought to the highest level of nonsense. The pure nonsense comes forth here among the German theologians today. Through the indulgence in Holy Communion the "seed of the body of resurrection" (Vilmar) should, according to their opinion, be planted. In a spiritual and bodily manner, Christ's flesh and blood should transfer over into our flesh and blood through the indulgence in Holy Communion. It should begin the body of resurrection in our inmost being, remaining indestructible even when our body rots in the grave. According to this doctrine, all those believers who die without having enjoyed the sacrament (for example, the small children in the grace of baptism) cannot take part in the body of resurrection. And again, all those who are unworthy and yet took part in the sacrament without faith must still bear in themselves the seed of the blissful body of resurrection. You can see that if one does not remain with the word, he comes to pure foolishness and stupidity.

#### **Thesis V.**

**Because the means of Grace does not only demand faith, but also gives faith, they are sufficient for the conversion of a person.**

The Means of Grace demand faith on behalf of the person. The mere outward use of them can still not restore him or her to blessedness. The faith is the means through which we make the heavenly gifts of grace our own. Indeed our faith does not even begin to make the Means of Grace powerful. Romans 3:3-4. But without faith, the grace, which faith holds onto, cannot be distributed to us. Not to believe means so much as to not receive the grace. For example, a criminal is pardoned. Now if he would not believe the one who brings the message to him, but remains sitting in captive, then the message is of no use to him; but it is his own fault. God grants us actual grace, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation in his Word. All that which God, the giver, lies down belongs to the person. But the person must first rejoice over them and be comforted by them and console himself when he receives them through faith. Thus the Gospel demands faith. "Believe the Gospel." "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." Baptism demands faith. This is shown in Acts 8:36-37. Philip asked the eunuch, "Do you believe from your heart?" And to this he answered: "I believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son." It was then that Philip first baptized him. Accordingly one should not approach the Lord's Supper unworthily. "He who is truly worthy and fully prepared has faith in these words: Given for you and poured out for the forgiveness of sins. But whoever does not believe these words or doubts them, is not worthy or fully prepared; for the words 'for you, require nothing but a believing heart.'"



Therefore it is horrid that the Romans Catholics and the Council of Trent explain, "When anyone says that grace is not given through even this sacrament of the new covenant by virtue of the performed work (*ex opera operato*), but the faith in the divine promise alone is sufficient to receive the grace, may he be cursed." The Baptists want to lift up the sacrament highly. But we must reject such high esteem from the bottom of our heart. For God's word says, "Whoever believes and is baptized." Therefore the Apology also quotes the phrase: *Fides sacramenti, non sacramentum justificat*. Namely, if faith does not come to the means of grace, the use of them is in vain. This position is also held against the newer so called Lutheran Theologians, who speak of an indelible character which is pressed upon each person whether he is believing or unbelieving. No, a person who is baptized in his unbelief separates himself only through that from the other unbelievers in that he is a tree that has died twice. And therefore he also has in store for him a doubly severe judgment if he does not repent.

When it is said that the Means of Grace demands faith, the faith should thereby in no way be established as a work that the person must achieve or a condition, which the person must fulfill. Otherwise no one would come to faith. For I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord by my own reason or power. Moreover, it is the Means of Grace themselves through which the Holy Spirit works and maintains the faith.

The Apology states, "And the same faith comforts the terrified conscience; and just as God gives the promise to awaken such faith, the outward sign is also given along with it and placed before the eyes. As a result, it persuades the heart to believe and strengthens the faith. For through the two, through the Word and the outward signs, the Holy Spirit works." (M. S. 264; St. L. A. S. 197.)

The Word of God has no dead letter, which has no power, which is in no way useful for the person, if the Holy Spirit would not come in addition to it, as the enthusiasts say. Zwingli writes almost mockingly, "How the grace comes and is given by the divine Spirit..., so each gift is received to [man's] spirit alone. For the Spirit, however, no driver or vehicle." -- Yet, even if the Holy Spirit is not bound to the means, we still know that he wants to deal with us through the Means of Grace. So then, the Means are established for our sakes, so that we might have means, course, and way, upon which we could come to God.

We must ascribe a double power to the Word. One, the effective, working power, according to which it awakens the person from his sleep of sin, brings him to the recognition of his deep depravity, and enkindles faith in the heart. Therefore the Word is called a fire and a hammer, which smashes rocks. Through the preaching comes the faith. The Word is the deed of rebirth. Through the Word, the Father has testified to us. The Word of God is spirit and life, for it gives the Holy Spirit and creates also a new spiritual life in man.

The second power that we ascribe to the Word is the collating, communicating power, according to which it actually gives and grants that about which it speaks. Thus the Apostle Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for the

salvation of all who believe in it.” He calls it the Word of Grace, of reconciliation, of peace, of salvation, of blessedness, because it grants these heavenly goods to the person. James says about the Word: “Which can make your souls holy.” And Jesus said to his Apostles: “You are pure for the sake of the Word, which I have spoken to you.”

When we, therefore, speak of a collating power of the word, we wish to thereby say that the Holy Scripture does not merely speak about a matter, but it also actually proffers to lay the heavenly treasures in our laps. The enthusiasts hold the gospel as a beautiful story. Yet, the word does not merely tell a story, but it also gives that about which it speaks. An example may make this clear. If anyone would come to me and tell me about the immeasurable treasures somewhere in California, nothing is yet given to me from the treasures. If I want to have them, I may find out how I can find them. Here the word is told clearly. When I, however, reach into the sack, lift up a piece of gold, and place it into the hand of a beggar saying, “this is yours,” then the gift itself is given with these words. Here the word is actually collating and communicating. This is exactly how the Word of God behaves. It grants and gives the good about which it speaks.

Concerning the efficacy of the word our opponents in the election controversy have an entirely mechanical concept. As one fills a battery with electricity and then can send it out uncoupled from the electricity machine into all parts of the world, without the electricity escaping. The electricity stays in the containers detached from the electricity machine. Whoever touches the container experiences a convulsive twitch, whether he wants it or not, whether he believes it or not. Similarly our opponents imagine the word of God. For them it is a battery filled with the power of salvation, which, disconnected from God, has nothing more to do with him. The Word is full power of salvation. When now the person out of his own power lets go of his wanton resisting, of which he is well capable, when he approaches this battery filled with the power of salvation, when he comes into contact with the Word, then a spark must travel from the Word into the person, the Word must completely naturally take away the natural resisting, and so a great work would happen, the person would be converted! According to the appearance of our opponents, the personal God has noting more to do in the work of conversion other than to look down from his high throne and heaven and see what the battery of the Word filled with the power of salvation has accomplished on earth among the people.

Accordingly, the matter cannot be thought of so mechanically. God’s Word is not disconnected from God. The almighty God himself is present in the word. In the word, God nears himself to the person. God himself is working and active in the Word. And directly from that, since God is active in the Word, therefore it is an effective, active, and powerful Word, a Word that gives birth to the spiritual life anew. The word is the means in the hand of God. It is the bayonet with which God himself thrusts, the sword which God himself swings, the hammer with which God himself pounds, the auger with which God himself pushes and turns. Through the Word, therefore, God himself is active in the work of conversion. With one hand pushes and turns the auger of his Word, and with the other hand he holds onto the person so that he may not evade the working of the Word. It is also God himself who works conversion in the Word and through the Word. It is not a

hammer and chisel which God hands over to the person with the words: There now build yourself your salvation. The Word is the means in the hand of God.

If then anyone would say that the Word works because the Holy Spirit uses it as a means, it should not be denied that all along the word had in itself the power to make holy. If we deny that, and teach that the Word only has power for salvation at certain times, we would be Calvinists. This must remain firm: The Word is always full of the Spirit, life, and salvation. It is, however, worth noting that the Lord himself says, "The wind blows where it will, and you hear its sound well." And so it is also with the Holy Spirit. Our predecessors knew well what that means.

Therefore, in the 5<sup>th</sup> article of the Augsburg confession they set forth, "To attain such faith, God has established the office of preaching, given the Gospel and the sacraments, through which he, as through means, gives the Holy Spirit, who works the faith, where and when he will, in those who hear the Gospel, which teaches that we have a gracious Father through Christ's merit, not through our own, if we believe such."

From this it is clear as day that the Holy Spirit, after he gave the Word, is not a mere spectator. Instead, when and where a person is converted belongs to will of the Holy Spirit.

To this point now our opponents freely say that the "where and when" apply to time and place; so it is all dependent upon the Holy Spirit, that the Word is brought into one land rather than another, and at what time this all happens. This is bologna! If our confession had wanted to say nothing more, then it would have to mean that the Holy Spirit works the faith when and where he will among those who do not have and hear the Gospel. But it is written here: "Who works the faith when and where he will, it those who hear the Gospel." There are, for example, two people who hear the Word; and now it rests still on the Holy Spirit whom the Word should penetrate first and whom second. In short, each one feels something from the Word. But it still not settled that the Holy Spirit has filled the Word equally with his power; but the Holy Spirit says where and when it will work. If it would be true that the Holy Spirit has nothing more to do with it, but simply observes from above what that Word filled with the power of salvation accomplishes, then it would be incomprehensible why all people are not converted at the same time, when the Word comes into their ears. It is also impossible to see how our opponents can sing: "Give power and emphasis to your word." This means that the Holy Spirit has not only been effective when He gave the word, but still is always active. The doctrine of our opponents also leads to fleshly security.

The Means of Grace are, however, also adequate for the conversion of the person. They are certainly given by God himself. As a result, they must be perfectly adequate to arrive at their goal, namely, to bring to confession, to faith, and to blessedness. – The Roman Catholics hold the Word and the Sacraments as inadequate and set next to them, even over them, the so-called traditions. The enthusiasts declare that the Word and Sacrament are completely superfluous. Even the hierarchic movement in the Lutheran Church makes the word inadequate. Anyone still on the side of the Buffalo movement

professes that it is empty words when God's Word is preached by one who has not accepted the doctrinal position and is not ordained, indeed, that the properly administered holy Sacrament is "mere bread and wine," if the one who administers it lacks ordination to carry it out through the doctrinal position.

We hear God's revealed Word as it is written in Isaiah 8:19-20. "When men tell you to consult mediums and spirits, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have not light of dawn."

To this point, Luther says, "See, this is a clear verdict which penetrates and forces that one should seek everything that he wishes to know according to the law and testimony of God. And he who does not do that should be robbed of the light of morning, which is without a doubt Christ and the truth itself. And note also that when he had said that one should seek from God so that no one would gape into heaven and wait for anything else, he showed where and when we should seek, saying, "According to the law and to the testimony." And if he doesn't want God to force him to seek the scriptures, why would he want anyone else to force him?

And further in Jeremiah 23:22, "But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds." Luther says, "God's Word converts; all other doctrines ensnare." Here in we find the entire advice of God for our salvation. As Peter had described the heavenly appearance on the mount of transfiguration, "We have a sure prophetic word." "God sustains all things with his powerful word." The word is powerful. It is sufficient.

#### Thesis VI

**Since the Means of Grace have been established for the conversion of man by God, so also each person is obliged to diligent and earnest usage of the same if he wants to be and remain converted.**

We have already heard that the conversion is a work of God, but that God does not work it without means. We have heard what that means is, wherein the power of the same lies, and that this means is therefore sufficient. Up to this point it has been made clear that it is God who does everything. But not it says in this last thesis for the first time that you must also do something. Someone might ask, "How does that fit in?" A righteous Christian, however, who has attentively listened to us, would hardly ask such a question. For he knows that when God demands something, he gives also the power. When he wants me to do something, he then impels me toward it. He gives the will and the accomplishment. The old Adam would certainly like to now figure out where and when God's will and our will come together. He wants to already exactly know, while we are still in the ABC school, the things which he has not yet figured out, which we first will discern in the school above, where everything will become clear to us. But every simple-minded Christian heart realizes as much. We should do something, namely, we should read God's Word diligently, hear it, consider it, and protect it in our hearts. The

Lord Jesus also admonishes urgently in John 5:39, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me." In Hosea 4:6 is written, "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I will ignore your children." There is no greater sin than when we people despise God's Word. As we see in the Jews and especially in the city of Jerusalem, God has always punished this sin most severely. How earnestly Christ speaks in John 12:48, "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day."

How sternly we should also be punished for neglecting any opportunity to worship without need. Concerning those who so quickly bring out the insipid excuse that they certainly can also read the scripture at home, Luther says, "Certainly, many may also come forth and say, 'What need to we have any more for the pastor and preacher, if we can read the same thing ourselves?'" They then leave confidently and then don't read it at all at home. Or if they do happen to read it at home, it still isn't as fruitful or as powerful as it is through the public preaching and the mouth of the preacher, whom God has called and ordained to say it and preach it to you." (E. A. V. [2. Aufl.], 379.)

No one should also think that he has certainly memorized the catechism, knows the truths which are preached, and therefore it is not necessary for him to hear the Word again and again. We see from the Word itself how necessary it is to place the Word into the heart again and again. There is a wide separation between heavenly and earthly truths. Once I have grasped an earthly truth, when I, for example, have understood that  $2 \times 2 = 4$  or that there are five parts of the world, I then have that always. But it is completely different with the heavenly truths. They do not stick when they have been grasped once with the understanding. That is just the way it is. Earthly truths as truths of reason find nothing in me that struggles against them. Rather, they find an open gate and door in me. But all that is in me by nature contradicts the divine truth. The earthly truths certainly require no change in my thinking, being, and doing. The heavenly truths, however, attack my entire person. They agitate everything that is in me from the natural understanding, wit, feeling, self-righteousness and blessedness. They defy everything. They do not lie peacefully in me just as a dollar will not rest in a coffer. We only have the heavenly truths as long as we take them up again and again and hold onto them.

Here is an example. There I sit in a dark room. I light a candle and it burns for approximately ten minutes. Everything is lit up clearly. What an ass I would now be if I would blow out the candle thinking that it would remain just as bright by itself. Christians are just as foolish when they do not want to hear the word again and again. Then it has to become pitch-black in the heart again, for the light is gone. Let us think about this when the pastor admonishes us to diligently attend church and worship.

Yet another example. Let's suppose that someone would say, "I have already eaten every day for forty to fifty years. What good does the constant eating do now?" Could anyone ever say that in full consciousness? But we think and act just so foolishly when we think, "Today I do not need to read the Bible. Today I can also remain home

from church for once.” Christians should speak in no such carelessness. If we were heathens, it would be a different matter. But when a person is a Christian who wants to come into heaven and at the same time complains that he must hear God’s word to often, this is completely absurd. God’s word is our food.

Likewise, we should also use the Holy Sacraments diligently. If we despise Baptism, we despise God’s advise for our salvation. Luke 7:30: “But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.”

And those who despise the Holy Supper encounter the word of Luther in the foreword to the small catechism. “But whoever does not highly value the sacrament shows that he has no sin, no flesh, no devil, no world, no death, no danger, no hell. That is, he does not believe any such things, although he is in them over his ears and is doubly the devil’s own. On the other hand, he also needs no grace, life, paradise, heaven, Christ, God, nor any good. For if he believed that he had so much that is evil, and needed so much that is good, he would not neglect the Sacrament in which so much evil is remedied and so much good is given. It will not be necessary to force him to the Sacrament by any law, but he will come running and racing of his own accord, will force himself and urge you that you must give him the Sacrament.”

May God grant that the more we have recognized the use of the Means of Grace in the work of conversion, we may also regard them more highly and use them more diligently and more earnestly.