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**Anthropological Reformations –
Anthropology in the Era of
Reformation**

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

Notger Slenczka

**'Theologiae proprium subiectum est homo ...' (Luther).
Shifts in the Structure of Theological Systems in the Wake
of Reformation¹**

0. Introduction.

In many ways, the Reformation marks a radical change; for me as a systematic theologian, those results in particular are of interest, which the Reformation had for the structure of the sorts of theological works in which theologians presented the entire content of theological knowledge as a unit – as they still do today: The *sententiae* works, the theological *summae*, and dogmatics works.

I will attempt to show that from the very beginning, Reformation theologians share a concern for a systematically ordered depiction of theology. Therein, however, they give the systematic summary of the content of theology a different function than most medieval authors, and they define the subject of theology differently compared to their predecessors.² To initially formulate it in a memorable thesis: I will show in the first section that, for medieval authors, God is the subject of theology, and that it is the task of theology to mediate knowledge about God. But for the Reformation and post-Reformation theologians, I will show in the second section that man is the subject of theology, and that it is the task of theology to mediate knowledge of self. And in a final section, I will briefly demonstrate how this subject definition was picked up in modern theology, particularly by Schleiermacher, and how with its help, theology proves itself to be relevant also in the modern era.

¹ For the translation I am indebted to Jacob Corzine, doctorate student of mine, now serving as a student's pastor in Pretoria/SA. A significantly extended German version of the insights presented in the following are published in: N. SLENCZKA, "Cognitio hominis et Dei. Die Neubestimmung des Gegenstandes und der Aufgabe der Theologie in der Reformation," in *Der Reformator Martin Luther 2017 – eine wissenschaftliche und gedenkpolitische Bestandsaufnahme*, ed. H. Schilling, Munich 2014, pp. 205–29.

² I should note that throughout, when I speak of the 'subject of theology', I mean the content, the 'object' of theological inquiry, and not the person actively 'theologizing'.

1. The theological summae of the pre-Reformation era

– you all know this – grew at the end of the high middle ages out of thematically arranged anthologies (*‘florilegia’*).

1.1 The origin of complete systematic presentations.

Since the beginning of the 12th century, these anthologies or collections served the purpose of identifying the single unified voice of the church within the diversity of the normative tradition of the fathers:

My good will and my efforts are aimed at nothing but collecting the words of the Lord and His saints from where these sparks [scintillae] are picked...³

Peter Abelard's work published in 1122, *‘Sic et Non’*,⁴ for example, is such a collection, but one that goes beyond earlier ones: Abelard sees that the church fathers and also the biblical writings contradict each other in many questions. He therefore does not just collect the voices of the scripture and the church fathers, but in fact gathers the contradictory positions of the scripture and the fathers on all important issues: the *‘Yes and No’* of the authorities on a particular question. The scholastic theologian, then, has the task of determining the truth in the face of this contradiction among the authorities. As the 12-year-old Jesus in the temple before the teachers of the law – such is Abelard's description in the hermeneutical introduction to his work – so also the scholastic theologian stands before the many-voiced, contradictory tradition and decides their struggle on the basis of reason.⁵

Also Peter Lombard's sentences work, which defined the theology of the Middle Ages for centuries, stands in the tradition of this *‘Concordia discordantium autoritatum’*.⁶ Different than many earlier sentence collections, Peter Lombard's sentences have a structure that is based on a definition of the subject of theology: He takes up Augustine's thesis that all science deals either

3 E.g. *Doctrina patrum: F. Diekamp, Doctrina patrum de incarnatione verbi. Ein griechisches Florilegium aus der Wende des 7. und 8. Jahrhundert*, Münster 1907; *Defensor, Liber Scintillarum*, CChL 117, pp. 1–34, quote taken from prologue [without p.]. From the school of Isidorus of Sevilla: *Sententiae Divinitatis*: B. GEYER, *Die Sententiae Divinitatis*, BGPhThM 7,2–3, Münster 1967 (repr. of the 1909 ed.), p. 1*–3*.

4 E.L.TH. HENKE/G.ST. LINDENKOHL, ed., *Petri Abaelardi Sic et Non*, Marburg 1851. For the following, cf. the prologus, op. cit. pp. 1–17.

5 HENKE/LINDENKOHL, *Petri Abaelardi* (see n. 4), p. 17.

6 Cf. *‘We, aiming at removing the apparent contradiction of authorities’*, PETRUS LOMBARDUS, *Sententiae in 4 libros distinctae*, 2 vol., SpicBon 4 and 5, Grottaferrata³ 1971, I dist 1 chap. 3 [9].

with things or with signs;⁷ and out of this thesis he draws his guideline for sorting the entire content of theology according to this basis: Theology deals with things and with signs: The only thing that is not also a sign of something else is God; everything else finally points to God. The subject of theology is therefore God – and everything else, as signs, points toward him. In the end, the knowledge of the truth about God in the midst of the dispute of opinions about him remains the goal of theology.

1.2 God as the subject of theology – Thomas Aquinas.

The liberation of theological systematization from the template of the sentences works is presented in its completed form by Thomas Aquinas and his *‘Summa Theologiae’*. A theological Summa that no longer lines up quotes from church fathers, but rather connects the teachings of the church in a coherent systematic relationship, is faced with the task of defining a center that can rule all the teachings of the Christian faith and from which they can all be bound together into a systematic whole. Also Thomas bases the unity of the many teachings of theology in a definition of the main subject of theology, which he offers at the beginning of the *Summa Theologiae*.⁸ At first, he writes, it seems obvious to define God as this subject, since the name is *‘Theology – language about God’*; but the objection remains that theology is not a science focused through a single unified subject: The subjects of theology, for example as they are listed in the creed, are manifold – they reach from creation over Christology to the church and the *‘last things’*; apparently theology has no unified material subject.

In the *responsio* [answer], Thomas opposes this *objectio* [objection] with a formal definition of the subject⁹ of the science of theology. For clarification: in the context of an Aristotelian concept of science, the subject of a science is formally defined. This is done through the declaration of the perspective, out of which the whole of reality is to be observed in a certain science; so the subject of physics is movement and thus everything that is, so long as it is moved or as moved; the subject of metaphysics is everything that is, so long as it *‘is’* or: as being. A formal perspective – movement, being – and not a certain set of beings or else determines the boundaries of the different sciences. It is only by this formal perspective that a certain set of beings turns out to be the subject of a science. For

7 AUGUSTINUS, *De doctrina Christiana* I, I,1.

8 THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae* [STh], for the following cf. [part] I q [quaestio/question] 1 a [articulus/article] 7 resp [responsio/answer – the main argument]. All modern editions provide these subdivisions.

9 See above footnote 2.

instance: the perspective of physics is movement, so the material entities are subject of this science, but not mathematical entities or God, the unmoved mover.

The formal perspective, out of which theology observes all reality – according to Thomas – is God.¹⁰ Theology has to do with what is, in as far as it either is God or has to do with God – has to do with him, meaning that it is dependent on him as its source and goal. It follows then, that theology has frankly to do with everything that is, because everything that is is either God himself or is dependent on God as its source and its goal. And it is on the basis of this subject determination that the basic idea of the *Summa* is structured, which then holds together and structures all the sections and quaestiones and articles:¹¹ the three parts of the *Summa* describe a broad movement:¹² The first section deals with God and all reality originating from God: the doctrine of God and creation – God and being which originates from him as source (pars I). The second section deals with the return of every creature, in particular those equipped with a mind and will, to God: The reality related to God as its goal – ethics (pars II). And the third section deals with Christ as the path upon which the return of man to God is actually carried out (pars III).

I am passing over much of what could still be said here; to summarize, one could say that God and the dependency on God of reasonable beings that have their origin in him and strive to return to him are in the center of theology. But this subject determination has its center and its point of origin in the doctrine of God; the task of theology is the mediation of knowledge of God; everything else depends on this.

1.3. Further historical consequences.

This thesis, that God is the main subject of theology, is undisputed in scholastic university theology; one might cite here Bonaventura's commentary on the sentences, Albertus Magnus's *Summa*, or Gabriel Biel's Commentary in Lombard's *Sententiae*, from which Luther learned.¹³ God and knowledge of God are at the center. Further subjects handled by theology are related to this central and

10 Op. cit. I q 1 a 7 resp. Cf. NOTGER SLENCZKA, art. "Gotteslehre" [doctrine of God], in *Thomas-Handbuch* (due for publication Tübingen 2015).

11 Op. cit. I q 2 prooem [prooemium/prologue].

12 STh I q 2 prooem. cf. The prologues of the parts II – I, II – II and III.

13 BONAVENTURA, *Commentaria in IV Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi* [Opera theological selecta I–IV, ed. L.M. Bello, Florence 1934–1949] I, proemii q 1 resp; GABRIEL BIEL, *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum* I, ed. W. Werbeck/U. Hofmann, Tübingen 1973, Prologus q 9; ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Summa theologiae* lib I tract I q 3 cap 1 solutio (ALBERTI MAGNI *Opera Omnia* 34/1, ed. D. Siedler et al., Münster 1978 [10f]).

main subject: They all stand in a relationship to God – for Peter Lombard in a relationship of symbolized thing and symbol; for Duns Scotus in one of cause and effect, and for Thomas Aquinas in one of goal and striving. That also other things besides God are the subject of theology, is clear – but only in their relationship to that main subject, God.

2. The new definition in the Reformation.

Everything changed with the Reformation. The first Reformation dogmatics did not come from a theologian, but – in modern terms – from a philologist – Philip Melanchthon.¹⁴ A look at the origin of the text makes the genre recognizable, with which we are dealing here, and demonstrates that with the Reformation, the presentation of the entire material of theology acquires a perspective which is entirely different than that found in the medieval *Summae*.

2.1. Melanchthon's Loci.

The history of the text, which Melanchthon describes in a dedication, allows one to grasp the intention of the author and the original character of the Loci: The Loci are finally based on a lecture on Romans held in 1519. For the students in the lecture, Melanchthon had prepared an outline of the content and the argument in Romans; this outline was – apparently without his permission – printed by his students in 1520 as 'night-time labours' ('Lucubrationcula').

2.1.1. Distinction from scholastic theology.

The Loci communes of 1521 are – as Melanchthon describes in the dedication¹⁵ – intended to replace this premature publication; they are expressly intended as a reworked and improved version of the Lucubrationcula. It thus becomes apparent that this first dogmatics of Protestantism from the very beginning is part of the interpretation of scripture. This attribution is underlined by the intention which Melanchthon follows with the Loci:

Further, as far as the entirety of the argument is concerned, the chief areas of Christian doctrine are indicated here, so that the youth may understand what chiefly should be

14 PH. MELANCHTHON, *Loci communes theologici* [1521], Latin-German, ed. H.-G. Pöhlmann, Gütersloh 1993 – in the following I will provide after the page number in [square brackets] the numbering of sentences in this edition.

15 MELANCHTHON, Loci (see n. 14), pp. 12–15.

sought in the scripture, as well as how horribly in all theological questions those have phantasized, who have put for us the subtleties of Aristotle in the place of the teaching of Christ.¹⁶

The Loci, then, are a book for beginners; the addressees are the ‘iuventes,’ the (studying) youth. Melanchthon’s loci are usefully related to the reading of the scripture: they do not seek, as Thomas in his *summa*, to present a systematic and structured unfolding of the teaching of the church; they want instead to introduce an unpracticed reader of the bible to the contents of the scripture. In other words, they are an aid for beginners to understand the bible – Melanchthon gives a perspective on the bible, he indicates ‘what should be sought in the scripture’.¹⁷

Melanchthon distinguishes himself in the last quote from the phantasies of the scholastics (supposedly) influenced by Aristotle, which, in his estimation, place the reading of the scriptures under the hermeneutical perspective of Aristotle; he, Melanchthon, seeks instead to lead into the proper manner of inquiry which alone can guide successful reading of scripture. A line of questioning, a perspective, is being communicated to the students, through which scripture opens itself and becomes comprehensible. The goal of the Loci is to guide the reader to his own reading of the scriptures.

2.1.2. The Loci and the Reformation Scripture Principle.

It follows, then, that Melanchthon recommends a return from churchly authorities to reading the scriptures oneself; he is guided therein by the thesis that the scriptures begin to interpret themselves if they are read without the mixing in of other authorities:

The spirit namely – or, as John says, the anointing – will teach much when you work with the scriptures which the efforts of human understanding cannot attain.¹⁸

More closely understood, this means that the scriptures have a formative power; as you can see in the following quote, Melanchthon holds that the scriptures change the person who engages them into their own kind of essence and thus transform the reader into the image of God:

Indeed, I would want nothing so much as that all Christians – if that were possible, would move around in the freest manner within the scriptures and be completely changed by their innate character. Because Divinity expressed His perfect image in the

16 MELANCHTHON, Loci (see n. 14), p. 12 [4.].

17 MELANCHTHON, Loci (see n. 14), p. 12 [4.].

18 MELANCHTHON, Loci (see n. 14), p. 16 [11.].

scriptures, God cannot be recognized with more certainty and in a more proper way than in the scriptures.¹⁹

The Loci stand – in summary – in the service of the Reformation Scripture Principle, which shows itself here in a particularly clear manner: It is borne by the thesis that the scriptures in themselves have the ability to influence the reader, to impress on him the ‘image of God,’ which they bear in themselves – in order thus to correct the sinful human being. In opposition to this formative power of the scriptures stand the individual attempts of a reader who places the words of the scriptures under the mark of his own opinions – those are for Melanchthon the concepts of philosophy and the ‘judgment of the [mere] human spirit.’ These Loci seek to guide the reader to a free reading of the scriptures – free from human opinions, that is. They would do this by opening up the basic concepts of the scriptures and leading the reader into the perspective, out of which the scriptures are comprehensible.

2.2. The introduction – title and subject of the ‘Loci’

2.2.1. The selection of the subjects of theology.

The term ‘*locus*,’ which makes its home in theology in the wake of Melanchthon’s work, is best translated fairly literally with ‘area’ – it has to do with topical areas in theology, with ‘*communes*,’ i. e. basic concepts. According to Melanchthon, all sciences deal with particular topical areas, in which the whole of the particular science is encompassed; theology proceeds no differently, and so the central teaching works – Melanchthon mentions John of Damascus and Peter Lombard – present main contents, which Melanchthon lists:

God – the One – trinity – creation – man, the powers of man – sin – the fruits of sin, the vices – punishments – the law – the promises – renewal through Christ – grace – the fruit of grace – faith – hope – love – predestination – the sacramental signs – the estates of men – secular authority – bishops – damnation – salvation.²⁰

Melanchthon lists these contents with the intention of distinguishing: He determines that there are concepts and contents that are beyond human understanding and which bring those who attempt to grasp them into danger – among these Melanchthon counts the doctrines of the essence of God, the trinity, the incarnation, and others:

19 MELANCHTHON, Loci (see n. 14), p. 14 [7.].

20 MELANCHTHON, Loci (see n. 14), p. 18 [4.].

Even as among these [articles] some are incomprehensible, so there are others among them which Christ desired all people of Christianity to know in the most exact possible manner. We are better off worshipping the mysteries of God than investigating them – indeed, they cannot be investigated without great danger, as holy men have often experienced. And God, the best and greatest, hid his son in the flesh, in order to lead us from the contemplation of *his* majesty to the contemplation of the flesh and thus of *our* fragility.²¹

This basic rule is a unique mix of humanist and mystic elements with basic insights of the Reformation; the reference to the mysteries of God which are better worshipped than investigated follows the principle of Erasmus of Rotterdam²² and can be found in similar form in the scholastic mystic Gerson;²³ the reference to the incarnation picks up on the ‘theologia crucis’ of Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation from 1518, according to which God does not open himself to the speculation that begins with the works of creation, but is rather to be found in the suffering of man.²⁴

2.2.2. Knowledge of self as the goal of theology.

The last sentence in the quote is decisive, because with it, we have a redefinition of the subject of theology: Theology is not concerned with the essence and qualities of God, but with the incarnate God; the theologian, though, does not simply seek knowledge of God by means of Christology, but rather through the contemplation of the humility of Christ he is directed toward *his own* human humility and decrepit nature: God wants to invite man ‘to the contemplation of the flesh, and thus of *our* fragility.’ The contemplation of Christ is thus relevant not as a path to knowledge of God but as a path to a person’s knowledge of self.

With this, the basic topic of all first generation dogmatics works of the Reformation is brought to light: According to them, theology does not have to do with the knowledge of God, but with the knowledge of the human being – and this in such a manner, that one is to deduce from the last passage quoted out of the introduction to the Loci that the knowledge of God in Christ is also an insight into the basic constitution of being a human.

21 MELANCHTHON, Loci (see n. 14), p. 18 [4], italics are mine.

22 ERASMUS VON ROTTERDAM, *Laus stultitiae* [in *Erasmus von Rotterdam, Ausgewählte Schriften*, Latin-German, ed. W. Welzig, 8 vol., Darmstadt 32006, vol. 2, 211] Nr. 53, pp. 131–143; cf. later [1524]: *De libero arbitrio diatribe* I a 7 [in ERASMUS VON ROTTERDAM, *Schriften* vol. 4, p. 1–195, see p. 10–19].

23 JOHANNES GERSON, “Considerationes de mystica theologia,” in *Opera Omnia*, ed. L.E. Du Pin, III, 362–428, cf. e.g. pars sexta principalis [383 sqq.]: *de acquisitione mysticae theologiae et de eius ... differentiis ad theologiam speculativam*.

24 MARTIN LUTHER, “Disputatio Heidelbergae habita” [1518], WA 1, [p. 350–] 352–74; theses 20–24 (p. 354).

2.2.3. The Reformation’s path of reduction: The human being’s knowledge of self as task and center of theology.

This concentration of theological knowledge in Christology and thus anthropology is motivated by God’s incomprehensibility (*incomprehensibilitas*), which is beyond the potential of human knowing. This is a classic basic topic even in other pre-Reformation dogmatics, in which the limitations of the knowledge of God are grounded in the weakness of human beings. But here, in Melanchthon and the other reformers, the tip of the thought is exactly this, that the weakness and dependency of man is not only considered as a hindrance to knowledge, but is in fact the actual true insight of theology; and thus the actual knowledge of God rests in the insight into the weaknesses and dependency of man. I intend to show that this insight represents the actual theological progress made in the Reformation.

Melanchthon concludes in the following passages of the introduction to his Loci that the ‘chief areas’ mentioned above – namely the doctrine of God, of his unity and trinity, of the mystery of creation and of the means of the incarnation – are not the subject of meaningful investigation and thus cannot be the subject of theology. He rejects the investigations of pre-Reformation scholasticism: These theologians – thus Melanchthon – engaged in meaningless term-cobbling and beyond that have ‘darkened the gospel and the salutary deeds of Christ.’²⁵ The ‘danger’ of researching the mysteries of the divinity that Melanchthon identifies in the last quote rests therefore not or not only in the human being coming too close to the mystery of the divine, but rather in that through interest in the unsearchable mysteries, the knowledge of the ‘*beneficia Christi* – the salutary deeds of Christ,’ and thus of the proclamation of the gospel, is darkened.

Therefore, according to Melanchthon, theology is not ‘teaching about God,’ as Thomas had defined it; rather, the entire doctrine of God, creation, and beyond that significant parts of Christology fall away from the subject area of theology. Expressly: the doctrines of God and the trinity are not the subject of theology:

Therefore there is no reason why we should expend great effort on these exalted investigations into God, the unity and trinity of God, the mystery of creation, the means and mode of the incarnation. I ask you: what have the scholastic theologians achieved in all the years which they invested in only these topic areas?²⁶

Reformation dogmatics begins therefore with a gigantic reduction program. The main areas of pre-Reformation theology are simply discarded from the curriculum: Theology has neither to do with God nor with the doctrine of the trinity, and also not with Christ in the sense of the classic doctrine of the two natures. The

25 See quote above.

26 MELANCHTHON, Loci (see n. 14), p. 20 [8–9].

‘salutary deeds of Christ’ are now the decisive and famous keyword, with which Melanchthon summarizes the topical areas which theology has rightly to engage:

But if someone does not know of the other topical areas, namely the power of sin, the law, grace – I do now know how I can call him a Christian. For it is therein that Christ is truly recognized, for to recognize Christ means: to recognize his salutary deeds [hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia eius cognoscere], and not what they teach: the contemplation of his natures, the means and mode of the incarnation. For if you do not know to what end Christ has taken on flesh and was nailed to the cross – what does it help, to know the history of his life [quid proderit eius historiam novisse]?²⁷

The ‘*beneficia* – salutary deeds’ of Christ are the subject of theology, that means: Christ – but not in himself or in his two natures, but only in as far as he has a usefulness and effect for man. Christ is considered in view of the salutary effects of his person and his life on people. These effects become the hermeneutical center of Christology, which is then formulated from the perspective of this center. And this means that all Christological topical areas, which do not have Christ as the origin of ‘*beneficia* – salutary deeds’ as their subject, are simply not the subject of theology. For exactly this reason, Melanchthon determines that the true subject of theology is ‘the power of sin, the law, grace’ (see quote above): These topics are entirely anthropologically focused and name those concepts, under which, according to a Reformation understanding, human existence before and after the work of Christ come to word:

This finally is Christian knowledge: to know what the law demands, whence one can attain the power to fulfill the law and grace for sin, how one can support the faltering soul against the devil, the flesh, and the world, how one can comfort the troubled conscience.²⁸

When Melanchthon calls ‘the power of sin, the law, grace’ and (related to these) the salutary deeds of Christ the subject of theology, the entire content of theology is concentrated on the existentially relevant subjects and the description of human existence itself. Only that can be the subject of theology, which is existentially relevant, i. e. relevant for the person’s knowledge of self. The entirety of the theological subject areas is focused and reduced. The selection criterion among the many topical areas that are handled in pre-Reformation theology is no longer God as origin and end of all reality. Instead, a doctrine is a subject of theology if and only if it has a function in the description and conquering of the situation of the individual between *Anfechtung* – spiritual struggle or tribulation – and comfort.

27 MELANCHTHON, Loci (see n. 14), p. 22 [12–14].

28 MELANCHTHON, Loci (see n. 14), p. 22–24 [16].

In comparison to Melanchthon’s extensive list of the topical areas of pre-Reformation theology I quoted before, a massive reductive shift is present here – a reduction to that which was existentially relevant. The basic selection criterion of content is in the question of whether they have to do with the individual and his salvation in the situation of *Anfechtung*:

Thus we will describe a system of topical areas which recommend Christ to you, which strengthen the conscience, which erect the soul against Satan.²⁹

2.2.3. The human being as the subject of theology.

Here, the definition of the subject of theology comes together with Luther’s famous definition in his interpretation of Psalm 51:

The true subject of theology is the man, who stands under the accusation of sin, and God, who justifies and saves the sinful man. What is asked or disputed in theology aside from this subject is error and poison. The whole scripture aims toward this, that it may recommend to us the goodness of God. Thus this is the essential theological knowing – that the man knows himself, that is: that he knows, feels, and experiences that he stands under the accusation of sin and is doomed to death; and second, that he knows and recognizes the opposite: that God justifies and redeems the man who knows his own situation.³⁰

The text must be read with care: Luther does not name as subject of theology God and then human being – this would be Thomas’s approach. Rather, Luther calls the human being the actual subject of theology: The actual subject of theology is the individual human being, in a particular situation, namely in the situation of *Anfechtung*. To be clear: The subject of theology is in the first case the human being and not God. God is only the subject of theology in as far as he and his actions have relevance for the basic situation of man: *Anfechtung*. The reductive movement which Melanchthon and Luther carry out here is, to be more specific, an anthropological reduction; in comparison to Thomas and the entirety of pre-Reformation theology, the definition of the subject of Christian teaching changes and the assertion – thus far unheard of – is taken up, that the chief subject of theology is the human being, and that correspondingly the decisive goal of theology is not knowledge of God, but knowledge of self.³¹

29 MELANCHTHON, Loci (see n. 14), p. 24 [20f.].

30 M. LUTHER, “Enarratio Psalmi 51” [1532/38] WA 40/II, p. 328, line 15–21.30–35.

31 Cf. N. SLENCZKA, “Anthropology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Luther’s Theology*, ed. R. Kolb et al., Oxford 2014, pp. 212–232. Luther’s insight goes back to Bernhard Claravallensis – see SLENCZKA, Cognition (see n. 1).

3. History of influence.

3.1. Later Lutheran dogmatics works.

One would have to follow this further. It would be pointed out that in later editions of his *Loci*, Melancthon reintegrates the doctrinal content that he had discarded in his *Loci communes*; but he does this under the premiss that all of this content – from the doctrine of God to the doctrine of the two natures in Christ – has to do with this center, with the human being's knowledge of self,³² – and accordingly, Melancthon links his doctrine of Trinity to the doctrine of the Church³³ and emphasizes the soteriological content of these doctrines.³⁴ Similarly both, Zwingli and Calvin, define God and human being as the subject of theology – but, other than Luther, in this order (God first and then the human being), and Calvin explicitly derives self knowledge of man from his knowledge of God.³⁵ Johann Gerhard, who writes his *Loci theologici* in the tradition of Melancthon's *loci* in the first decade of the 17th century, presents all the classical doctrines of theology starting with the doctrine of God all the way to the 'last things' but accompanies them with the constant question of the *usus practicus* – the use of the doctrines for human beings and their self-knowledge. Also the analytical dogmatical works of the 17th century³⁶ do not define God as the subject of theology; rather they define theology as a 'scientia practica – a science directed toward its execution,' by which a future pastor is enabled to lead people to eternal salvation – also here it is not simply the knowledge of God but the knowledge that man is lost and the knowledge of his way to salvation that is the subject of theology:

Q 1: What is theology? Theology is science directed in the highest manner towards execution, which teaches out of the revealed word of God what sinful man must know for the true faith in Christ and do for the sanctification of life so that he may attain to eternal salvation.³⁷

32 Cf. e.g. the last edition published 1559: PH. MELANCHTHON, *Loci praecipui theologici, Melancthons Werke in Auswahl* II,1 and 2, Gütersloh 1952/3, which includes a full-fledged doctrine of God, of trinity, of Christ and a doctrine of creation (II,1, p. 172–224).

33 Cf. *ibid.* II,1, p. 179.

34 E.g. p. 174 line 17–32; p. 178; p. 204 line 15f; pp. 211–14.

35 HULDRYCH ZWINGLI, "De vera et falsa religione commentarius," in *Huldrych Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke III* (CR 90), Leipzig 1914, [p. 590–]628–911, p. 640 line 20–26; cf. JOHANNES CALVIN, *Institutio Christianae religionis* I cap 1 (*Johannis Calvini opera selecta II–V*, ed. P. Barth et al. Munich 1928–1936). Cf. GERHARD EBELING, "Cognitio Dei et hominis," in Gerhard Ebeling, *Lutherstudien I*, Tübingen 1971, pp. 221–272.

36 H.E. WEBER, *Die analytische Methode der lutherischen Orthodoxie*, Naumburg 1907.

37 DAVID HOLLAZ, *Examen theologicum acroamaticum*, Stargard 1707, Propaedia q 1.

Due to that, David Hollaz, as well as most of the pre-modern 'orthodox' Lutheran theologians of the 17th century, uses that definition as the formative principle for his theological system and its order: God is not the principal subject of theology but he is the aim (*finis*) sinners are to be led to; creation and human sin are not a subject of speculation but the starting point of the way to God; the redemptive work of God, centered in Christ and distributed by the Holy Spirit, are the principles, and Word and sacraments are the means of distributing salvation. All the Christological doctrines are focused on this process of salvation. At the core of the theological system, therefore, lies the human being that is to be led to true faith and by that to God. All the traditional contents of theology are nothing but descriptions of this way (*ordo salutis*) and its steps and are descriptions of the means by which these steps are taken. But the perspective from which this process of salvation is seen is the theologian who knows what to do and how to lead the sinner towards God. The perspective is not, as it was with Luther, the self-awareness of the sinner himself – that is a step backwards from Luther and a step which is taken anew by the theologians in the 18th and 19th century.

3.2. Consequences for the relevance of protestant theology in the modern era: Schleiermacher.

With Hollaz we find ourselves at the beginning of the 18th century, at the end of the age of post-Reformation orthodoxy, at the edge of the modern age. Precisely this concentration of theology on the human being's knowledge of self, the knowledge of man as the task of theology, is what enabled one part of protestant theology to position itself in a positive relationship to modernity and its interest in human subjectivity. This positively defined relationship of Christian faith and modernity is carried out by – among others – Schleiermacher, who defines the task of theology as the interpretation of the self-understanding of Christian faith, and who does not define Christian faith primarily as knowledge of God, but as self-perception or self-awareness of man:³⁸ Piety, according to Schleiermacher, is not knowledge about divine things and also not a particular ethical practice; piety is rather an unmediated, i. e. non-theoretical knowledge of oneself, a consciousness of absolute dependency. God is not the primary subject of theology.

38 For a more thorough analysis cf.: N. SLENCZKA, "Das Dogma als Ausdruck des religiösen Selbstverhältnisses. Trinitätslehre bei Schleiermacher, Troeltsch und Tillich," in *Aufgeklärte Religion und ihre Probleme. Schleiermacher – Troeltsch – Tillich*, ed. U. Barth et al., TBT 165, Berlin 2013, p. 661–84; N. SLENCZKA, "Gott über die Religion wieder hoffähig machen – Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher und die Liberale Theologie," in "*Nimm und lies!*" *Theologische Quereinsteige für Neugierige*, ed. R.K. Wüstenberg, et al., Gütersloh 2008, pp. 145–75.

Rather, the meaning of the concept of God stems from this human self-awareness: knowing oneself to be dependent in an absolute way, i.e. without at the same time knowing oneself to be free – that is 'schlechthinige Abhängigkeit': absolute dependency, dependency without freedom. This dependency, however, is not a state of the human being but a state of self-awareness: seen from the perspective of the person who is not but knows himself to be free or dependent. This self-awareness is not a cognitive theoretical knowledge, but it is unmediated, it is an emotional self-awareness, 'Selbstbewußtsein' in the sense of 'emotion': not knowing but feeling oneself to be dependent.

All apparently object-oriented statements of Christian faith – language about God, Christ, creation, sin – are nothing but the verbalization of this pre-theoretical (emotional) knowledge about oneself: The term 'God' e.g. derives its meaning from this self-awareness of being dependent: it is impossible to verbalize this self-awareness without talking about a 'where from' of this dependency; and knowing oneself to be dependent in an absolute way is the same as: knowing oneself in relation to God (cf. Glaubenslehre § 4, thesis). All the concepts of Christian doctrine – Christology as well as the doctrine of sin – are descriptions of the way this self-awareness as absolutely dependent being finds itself weakened and is reestablished by encountering the 'Urbild' – the archetype, the idea in the sense of 'original and origin' of this 'relation to God': Jesus Christ. By his teaching he establishes in his Church this 'consciousness of dependency'. All the apparently object-oriented statements of the church are expressions – 'Ausdruck' – of the self-consciousness of the Christian. This is the insight from which Schleiermacher derives the principle of composition of his 'dogmatics' ('Glaubenslehre'): Language of faith expresses the consciousness of redemption provided in the encounter with Christ, it therefore expresses the consciousness of sin and grace.

This 'de-objectification' of Christian faith and this concentration of all doctrines of Christian faith on a knowledge of oneself is the consequence of the turn of Reformation dogmatics I have described, according to which man and his self-knowledge, and not simply God and knowledge of God, are the subject of theology.

It is not without cause that Hegel sees Reformation as the origin of the modern concept of subjectivity, and therefore it is not unreasonable to say that coming to terms with this concept as Schleiermacher did, means coming to terms with the 'original insight' of Reformation as well.

Anna Vind

The Human Being according to Luther

Introduction

When this article was commissioned, I was asked to write about Luther's anthropology, a topic which is neither the smallest nor the easiest. How can one take up such a challenge with the considerable amount of secondary literature about the topic in mind? One may be in serious doubt as to whether it is possible to present anything that will enlighten the reader further on aspects of Luther's view of the human being. It is nevertheless worth a try.

A diligent reading of some of Luther's texts might help us to trace the contours of his anthropology. In this connection it is necessary to emphasize two things: First of all, the focus of the readings lies in trying to capture the essence of Luther's own thoughts and not to detect their roots. Of course, he was inspired by, and heavily dependent upon, the material handed down to him, but nevertheless he was still to a high degree a thinker of his own – a thinker with a very characteristic profile. This profile is what I am in search of, and will try to bring to light. And secondly: due to limitations of space, the secondary literature must to a large extent be passed over except in the form of a few references. Thus, the reader will not find here a discussion of Luther's position in relation to the mystical and the apophatic tradition, his critical as well as constructive attitude towards scholastic thinking, his ambiguous affinity with humanism, his dependency on Aristotle or Aristotelianism nor of his incorporation of monastic theology, Augustine or, more broadly, the earlier tradition and the Patristics. Nor does this writer seek to place herself definitively among Luther researchers from different schools such as the German liberal, dialectical and hermeneutical interpretations, the Finnish Luther research or the Danish heritage of Luther exposition. By leaving these issues aside, the article at the same time gives an open invitation to critical comments and to illuminating contextual and scholarly discussion of the topic.

The article falls into four parts: 1) The first deals briefly with philosophy and theology in Luther's thinking, 2) then we will look at some concrete examples of