

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

## Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

---

Master of Sacred Theology Thesis

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

---

6-1-1963

### The Cosmological Proof for the Existence of God in Post-Reformation Theology

Otto Stahlke

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/stm>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Stahlke, Otto, "The Cosmological Proof for the Existence of God in Post-Reformation Theology" (1963). *Master of Sacred Theology Thesis*. 282. <https://scholar.csl.edu/stm/282>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Sacred Theology Thesis by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF  
FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD  
Short Title  
IN POST-POSITIVE THEOLOGY

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Systematic Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF

by  
GEO. F. STUBBS  
June 1967

24483

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

87  
4070  
024  
M3  
1963  
21432

THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF  
FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD  
IN POST-REFORMATION THEOLOGY

---

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Systematic Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

---

by  
Otto F. Stahlke  
June 1963

24492

Approved by:

Robert P. Neus  
Advisor

W. F. [Signature]  
Reader

BV  
4070  
C69  
M3  
1963  
no.9  
C.2

24492

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. THE POST-REFORMATION THEOLOGICALS AND THE NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD . . . . .	7
Casper Erasmus Brochsmid . . . . .	8
Salthever Meisner . . . . .	12
Johann Gerhard . . . . .	16
Abraham Calov . . . . .	20
John Andrew Quenstedt . . . . .	30
Conrad Hornejus . . . . .	36
Sebastian Schmidt . . . . .	38
Valentin Ernst Losscher . . . . .	39
David Hollas . . . . .	41
III. THE RESULTANT VIEW OF THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF, A REMARKABLE THEOLOGICAL CONSENSUS . . . . .	44
IV. NATURAL KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH IN RELATION TO THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD . . . . .	52
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	67

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. THE POST-REFORMATION THEOLOGIANS AND THE NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD . . . . .	7
Caspar Erasmus Brochmand . . . . .	8
Balthasar Meisner . . . . .	12
Johann Gerhard . . . . .	16
Abraham Calov . . . . .	20
John Andrew Quenstedt . . . . .	30
Conrad Hornejus . . . . .	36
Sebastian Schmidt . . . . .	38
Valentin Ernst Loescher . . . . .	39
David Hollaz . . . . .	41
III. THE RESULTANT VIEW OF THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF, A REMARKABLE THEOLOGICAL CONSENSUS . . . . .	44
IV. NATURAL KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH IN RELATION TO THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD . . . . .	52
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	67

if (philosophy) cannot attain to the knowledge of the true God; that it can see only the present misfortunes of men; that it thinks only of the state and the good life, not of Heaven; and that the monks perverted this philosophy by

Martin Luther, *Samtliche Schriften*, edited by John George Walckenaer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1907), XVI, column 232b. Hereafter in references to this work the Arabic numeral refers to col., rather than page.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In a letter to Justus Jonas from the Coburg, dated July 21, 1530, Martin Luther expresses his satisfaction that Melanchthon is experiencing the mentality of Campegius and the Italians and adds, "Philosophy does not believe these things unless it has experienced them"; as for Luther, he trusts neither the Emperor's confessor nor any Italian in even one syllable. "Cajetan," writes Luther, "loved me so much that he wanted to shed blood for me,-- mine. The Italians are rascals."<sup>1</sup> This witty comparison of philosophy with Melanchthon reveals Luther's acquaintance with philosophy and the scientific attitude and his freedom in dealing with philosophical matters. The Reformer's writings are replete with insights into the philosopher's way of thinking. He knows that philosophy thinks that there is no wisdom greater than man's; that it (philosophy) cannot attain to the knowledge of the true God; that it can see only the present misfortunes of men; that it thinks only of the state and the good life, not of heaven; and that the monks perverted this philosophy by

---

<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, Saemtliche Schriften, edited by John George Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1907), XVI, column 2324. Hereafter in references to this work the arabic numeral refers to col. rather than page.

adding the promise of salvation to it.<sup>2</sup>

In his comments on Jonah 1:5 Luther comes to the subject of philosophy and the natural knowledge of God. The words of the text are, "And each cried to his god." (RSV)

Here you see that it is true what St. Paul says Rom. 1:19, that God is known to all the heathen, i.e., all the world knows to speak of god, and natural reason recognizes that the divinity is exalted above all other things. . . . Such light and reason is in all men's hearts and cannot be dampened nor extinguished. There have been some, like the Epicureans, Fliny, and the like, who deny it with the mouth, but they force themselves and want to douse the light in their hearts. They act as those who stop their ears or eyes, that they might not hear or see. But it does not help them; their conscience tells them otherwise. [The discussion continues with the thought that man is unable to know who the true God is.]<sup>3</sup>

Luther presents the same teaching in the comments on John 1:18, "No man hath seen God."<sup>4</sup> Compare also the discussion of the natural knowledge of the law in Romans 2:15, which Luther presents under the allegory of the raven released by Noah after the Flood. It is from this natural knowledge that the books of the philosophers have sprung according to Luther, at least those somewhat purer and more reasonable, such as Aesop, Aristotle, Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, and Cato.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., V, 1518; VI, 108; IX, 346.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., XIV, 857f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., VII, 1702.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I, 621.

These references to Luther may suffice to introduce the matter under consideration, viz., the cosmological proof for the existence of God as presented by the early Lutheran theologians. The matter is there, but the terminology is absent. It is the aim of this study to inquire whether the Post-Reformation theologians were aware of the difficulty which the cosmological proof has encountered in later thought, and, if so, how they responded to this difficulty.

The Reformation theologians do not go much beyond the discussion presented by the ancient philosophers in their discussion of the proofs for the existence of God. While sixteenth century philosophical opinion is alluded to, there is no mention of particular writers until later. Their antithesis was rather another theology than another philosophy.

The discussion of the proofs for the existence of God is related primarily to the treatment of the natural knowledge of God, without the terminology of later periods: ontological, cosmological, teleological, historical, ethical, etc. Even in the Post-Reformation writers this terminology does not seem to appear at all. The primary opponent was Socinianism, while Quenstedt mentions a great number of men in his antithesis, including medieval writers. The Cartesians are named by Hollaz and Loescher in the beginning of the eighteenth century. The names of Hobbes and



Locke also begin to appear, though they may be included among the Cartesians.

J. F. Buddeus lists three classes of arguments, metaphysical, physical, and historical. He says that some add moral and mathematical, but that these presume something still to be proved. Buddeus also reports that he has refuted John Locke on the knowledge of God in his Institutes of Moral Theology, part II, section II, chapter V. Isaac Newton, Samuel Parker, John Baius, and Fénelon (de l'existence de Dieu) also appear in Buddeus' discussion.<sup>6</sup>

If the progress in the treatment of the proofs for the existence of God is briefly reviewed from Luther to Buddeus, the impression might be imparted that the early writers were quite barren. But this is not so. In a pre-controversial time there was no cause for longer statements. Chemnitz brings the Loci of Melanchthon, in which the latter uses the Flood, Sodom, etc. as judgments which prove the existence of God. Melanchthon shows from 1 Corinthians 1 that the revealed knowledge had to be added to the natural knowledge to achieve salvation. "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." (RSV) Melanchthon holds that

---

<sup>6</sup>J. F. Buddeus, Theses Theologicae de Atheismo et Superstitione (Jena: apud Bielckium, 1717), p. 372.

when Christ walked upon the earth, the existence of God was amply demonstrated by His presence and His works.

In answer to Philip's question, "Show us the Father,"

Jesus answered, "He that seeth me, seeth the Father."

Melanchthon also cites Mount Sinai and concludes, "Vult enim Deus agnosci." (God indeed wants to be known.)

Thus Melanchthon firmly asserts the insita notitia naturalis.<sup>7</sup>

In his own treatment Chemnitz cites Romans 1, Acts 14, and Acts 17 and sums up his discussion in the series:

God is known

- 1) from the very existence (ordine) of nature,
- 2) from the nature of the human mind,
- 3) from the distinction of good and evil,
- 4) from the truth of scientific knowledge,
- 5) from the terrors of conscience,
- 6) from political society,
- 7) from the series of efficient causes,
- 8) from the signs of future events,
- 9) from final causes.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Martin Chemnitz, Loci Theologici (Frankfurt and Wittenberg: D. Tobias Mevius and Elerd Schumacher, 1653), pp. 17-19.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 20A (For exactness and clarity this series is submitted also in the original.)

- 1) Ab ipso naturæ ordine
- 2) A natura mentis humanae
- 3) A discrimine honestorum et turpium
- 4) A veritate notitiarum naturalium
- 5) A terroribus conscientiae
- 6) A politica societate
- 7) A serie causarum efficientium
- 8) A futurorum eventuum significationibus
- 9) A causis finalibus

While this series cannot be regarded as original with Chemnitz, it is a tribute to his wide and thorough reading.

The Lutheran Confessions do not appear to touch on this question directly, asserting primarily man's incapacity to know God or to please Him since the fall into sin.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>J. T. Mueller, Die symbolischen Buecher (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1898), cf. pp. 43, 78, 79, 80, 88, 110, 218, 317.

<sup>1</sup>Christine Hof von Kolberg, Johannis Apocalypsis (Leipzig and Frankfurt: Verlagsbuchhandlung Neumann, Neudamm, et Johannes Friedmann, 1916), p. 136A.

## CHAPTER II

### THE POST-REFORMATION THEOLOGIANS AND THE NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The natural knowledge of God is treated with increasing emphasis in the seventeenth century, prompted largely by Socinus. It may appear strange that neither Copernicus nor Kepler nor Galileo are discussed in this connection, but the interest in "science" had not yet arisen in the theological world, and the speculation on the motions of the heavenly bodies were sufficiently remote to be ignored by the theologians. On the other hand, Hoë von Hoënegg in his Commentary on the Apocalypse had no difficulty in describing the circular rainbow about the throne of the exalted Christ in terms which reveal a fine understanding of the phenomena relating to celestial bodies.<sup>1</sup>

Of the theologians with whom we are concerned, Melancthon died in 1560, Chemnitz in 1586, Meisner in 1626, Gerhard in 1637, Erasmus Schmidt in the same year, Calov in 1686, Quenstedt in 1688, Sebastian Schmidt in 1696, Buddeus in 1705, and Hollaz in 1713. The age was one of tragedy and great stirring events which required the utmost from men in many fields. At the same time there was no language

---

<sup>1</sup>Matthias Hoë von Hoënegg, Johannis Apocalypsis (Leipzig and Frankfurt: Impensis Haeredum Schuererianorum, et Johannis Fritzschi, 1616), p. 134A.

barrier between the scholars of the many nations. Latin held sway while the vulgar tongues made their first timid literary efforts. Among the great names which star the seventeenth century's sky the Buxtorfs must be named, Jansen and Pascal, Boussuet and Bellarmine, Grotius, Escobar, Boehme, Gustavus Adolphus, Glassius, Calixtus, Spener, Peter Minuit, Cromwell, Ussher, Milton, and William Penn. In such a climate the theologians must be regarded as no cloistered friars, but rather as men about whom the most farreaching changes were taking place. And in the center of Europe there was the glorious court of Louis XIV.

Against this background the sketches of some of the theologians may be better understood.

#### Caspar Erasmus Brochmand

Caspar Erasmus Brochmand, appearing also as Jaspas Rasmussen Brochmand, was born on Seeland Island on August 5, 1585, studied at Leipzig and Franeker and became rector at Herlofsholm in 1608. After teaching Latin and Greek, he became professor of theology at Copenhagen (sic), instructed the crown prince, Christian V, and was advanced to canon and bishop of Seeland. He gave aid to many students, willed his library to the University of Copenhagen and seven thousand thaler to the poor in the hospital at

Warlow. Brochmand lived until Easter Monday, 1652.<sup>2</sup>

Brochmand wrote a Tractatio de bono originali, transcendentali, naturali et morali which might prove fruitful for this discussion, if available. It indicates some new terminology and perhaps freshness of interpretation but it does not reveal the terminology usually encountered in the discussion of the proofs for the existence of God. Brochmand's treatment of the natural knowledge of God conforms to the Lutheran orthodox approach in that the greatest emphasis rests upon the cosmological proof. The Lutheran, as did many other theologians of the day, looked out upon the world from the Biblical viewpoint within the kingdom of God which combined the physical and the spiritual. It was the only "rational," even legally tolerable view. If a "color-blind" atheist, as it were, could not be convinced of the presence of various colors, this was not to be admitted as a proof of the nonexistence of colors. So with the existence of God.

Brochmand treats chiefly the errors of the "Photinians,"<sup>3</sup> it being self-understood that these were the Socinians who denied the natural knowledge of God. Socinianism was spreading into the Netherlands and into Germany at this

---

<sup>2</sup>"Brochmand," Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexikon, edited by Christian Gottlieb Jocher (Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Gleditschens Buchhandlung, 1751), I, 1391f.

<sup>3</sup>Caspar Erasmus Brochmand, Universae Theologiae Systema (Ulm: John Goerlin, 1638), I, 106.

time with the result that Arminianism was soon greatly Socinianized. (See the Herzog-Zoeckler article on "Socin" in the Real-Encyklopaedie.)<sup>4</sup>

The sum of the Socinian arguments was this:

1. The knowledge of God is not to be sought in any manner but by faith, Hebrews 11:3, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God."
2. Holy Scriptures expressly testify that there are such who deny God, Psalms 10:4; 14:1; 53:2, "God is not in all his thoughts." "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."
3. By experience it is known that there are not only philosophers who deny the existence of God, but that in the new Western world there are whole peoples who have hardly any awareness (sensum) of any divinity.

The solution of these arguments, writes Brochmand, is easy: The impious of the Psalms do not so much deny the essence as the providence of God, not in their hearts, but in their lives. As to the philosophers, Protagoras, Diagoras, and others did not deny the existence of a true god but appear rather to deride the idols. Brochmand refers to Mornaeus for corroboration.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Brazilians, a people in India (sic), are falsely said to be a people devoid of all awareness of God, for Larius, On

---

<sup>4</sup>J. J. Herzog and O. Zoeckler, "Socin," Real-Encyklopaedie fuer protestantische Theologie und Kirche, edited by Albert Hauck, J. J. Herzog, and G. L. Plitt (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1884), XIV, 376-401.

<sup>5</sup>The reference is to a book, De veritate Religionis Christianae, p. 16, not available for this study.

Brazillian Navigation, chapter 16, teaches in the clearest terms that the Brazilians worship a cacodaemon in a manner unworthy of the true God. The thesis of the natural knowledge of God therefore stands unshaken until now, says Brochmand.<sup>6</sup>

Brochmand reports also the exegetical handsprings performed by the Socinians on Romans 1:17, 20, namely,

1. that the Apostle is not treating the works of the first creation, but the glorious deeds of Christ and the Apostles, by which they confirmed the doctrine of the Gospel;
2. that by poiemata ποιήματα the stupendous acts of Christ and the miracles of the Apostles are to be understood, and that ta aorata τὰ ἄορατα designate the revelation of the will of God;
3. that these words, apo ktiseos kosmou ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου, are not to be conjoined with kathoratai καθοράται but with the word aorata ἄορατα.<sup>7</sup>

But these arguments (argutiae) are dissipated without much trouble, avers Brochmand:

1. It is manifest that the Apostle is not speaking of the salutary knowledge of God through the Gospel, but solely of that knowledge of God which can be sought through the contemplation of the creatures.
2. The context does not permit that miracles should be understood under ta poiemata τὰ ποιήματα.
3. The words apo ktiseos ἀπὸ κτίσεως and aorata ἄορατα are falsely joined together.

It may appear that Brochmand is applying the old axiom,

<sup>6</sup>Brochmand, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 106.



what is gratuitously asserted may be gratuitously denied, but the examination of the Greek text saves him from that charge.

Brochmand asserts that the Spirit of God defends the natural knowledge of God against the Socinians in the following texts: Acts 17:27, "That they should seek after the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." Acts 14:16,17, "In the past ages he allowed all nations to go their own way; and yet he has not left you without some clue to his nature, in the kindness he shows: he sends you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons, and gives you food and good cheer in plenty." (NEB) Job 12:7,8,9, "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee. . . . Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?"<sup>8</sup>

#### Balthasar Meisner

Balthasar Meisner, born at Dresden on February 3, 1587, studied at Wittenberg and became first professor of moral theology (moralium) then doctor and professor of theology and consistorial assessor. His motto was beati mites ("Blessed are the meek"). Among his works the first listed by Joeger is Philosophia sobria s. consideratio quaestionum philosophicarum in controversiis theologicis,

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

in three volumes. His literary output was considerable. Obiit 29. Decembris, 1626. Unavailable works of Meisner which might be productive for this study are Fraecognita theologiae, s. dissertationes de theologiae natura, Questiones vexatas, Theatrum virtutum & vitiorum, Disputationes in systema theologicum, Dissertatio de summo bono, and especially Consideratio theologiae photiniana.

Balthasar Meisner accepts the notitia naturalis and discusses it with philosophical acumen.<sup>9</sup> To him nature does not reveal diverse operations and partial causalities, but one simple operation. Even Scripture, says Meisner, does not distinguish between the three persons of God as separate causes.

Meisner's answer to the question, An et quae sint notitiae homini de Deo ingenitae?<sup>10</sup> (Are there, and which are the particulars of knowledge concerning God in-born in man?) shows original treatment: "The book is threefold, from which God is known, 1. Nature, 2. Creation, 3. Scripture." And from this (threefold book) arises a threefold knowledge of God,

1. emphytos vel connata (implanted or cognate),
2. epiktetos vel acquisita (acquired),
3. theosdotos vel in Scriptura revelata (God given or revealed in Scripture).

---

<sup>9</sup>Balthasar Meisner, Philosophia Sobria (Jena: Johannis Nisii et Georgii Sengenwaldi, 1655), I, 84.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 596.

The last, says Meisner, concerns the theologians, while the first two concern the philosophers. It is noteworthy that Meisner uses notitiae in the plural, but not cognitio. Chemnitz had used the same plural, speaking of the truth of the particulars of natural knowledge as a proof of the existence of God.

The notitia acquisita (acquired knowledge in the abstract), writes Meisner, is but the cognitio (recognition, acknowledgment) of the Creator gathered from the actual contemplation of the creatures and from the continued observation of events on earth. No sane man would fail to grant this, says Meisner, for if a cause gives us knowledge of its effect and the opus witnesses to its master, who would be so absurd as to deny this in the case of the most illustrious works of creation?

Meisner draws from other writers to develop the thought further. The Calvinist Timplerus<sup>11</sup> holds that man has only the inborn capacity to compare the principles which become known to him; he has not the knowledge of principles by birth. Other theologians, says Meisner, explain the natural knowledge more accurately, not by dynamis (δύναμις), but by exis (ἔξις), resulting in this that the following noemata are written in man's heart: that God is; that He has the care of this world; that He delights in good men

---

<sup>11</sup> In a work called Metaphysica, not available for this study.

and punishes the evil; that He desires things honorable, but the depraved He does not wish. The proof for this Meisner brings from Johann Gerhard

1. Romans 1:18, "The gentiles hold the truth in unrighteousness." Truth here denotes that the knowledge of God is true; the gentiles have the knowledge of these common principles, partly theoretical, partly practical: 1. Deum colito. 2. suum cuique tribuito. 3. neminem laedito. ["Let God be worshipped; give every man his due; do harm to no one."] These are prescribed but not inscribed.
2. Romans 1:19, where τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ is the same as γνωσις, notitia, which in the previous verse was called ἀλήθεια. Also Romans 2:15, "They show the work of the law written in their hearts."
3. From the nature of the divine image.<sup>12</sup>

In answer to the question, Quae et quanta sit notitia naturalis de Deo? (What is, and how great is, the natural knowledge about God?) Chemnitz is cited: It is either nulla, imperfecta, or languida. (It is either void because it does not know the promise of the forgiveness of sins, imperfect because it is only partial, or languid because of the sluggish assent mixed with doubts on all sides--ob assensum languidum, & dubitationibus undiquaque permixtum.)

While thus the natural knowledge of God is not at all in doubt in Meisner's treatment, he brings the curious philosophical question, "Can God be logically defined?" No, he says; God belongs to no genus. Deus non cadit sub

---

<sup>12</sup> Meisner, op. cit., pp. 596f.

genus Logicum.<sup>13</sup>

### Johann Gerhard

Johann Gerhard, ein lutherischer Theologus, was born at Quedlinburg on October 17, 1582, in the home of the city treasurer. Joecher relates the curious incident:

Als seine Mutter mit ihm schwanger gieng, warff der Vater . . . einen schweren Pruegel nach einem versoffenen Diener, traf aber damit seine Frau fuer den Leib; daher ihr iederman eine unglueckliche Geburt prophezeite. Es lief aber alles wohl ab.<sup>14</sup>

Young Gerhard turned to Wittenberg in 1599 for medical studies and brought them so far that in his spiritual offices he prescribed medicines and remedies. In 1603 Gerhard went to Jena to study theology, saw Marburg in 1604 and returned to Jena in 1605, where he now lectured with great acclaim. In 1606 Gerhard became superintendent in Heldburg and doctor of theology in Jena, also professor of theology at the Coburg Gymnasium. His duties here required much from him in theological disputation. In 1615 Gerhard became general superintendent at Coburg, where he provided a church order which was still in use in 1750. Gerhard longed for the academic life and returned to Jena in 1616, found great favor with the ruling nobility and was sent on various commissions, attending almost all

---

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 610.

<sup>14</sup>"Gerhard," Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexikon, edited by Christian Gottlieb Joecher (Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Gleditschens Buchhandlung, 1751), II, 948f.

theological colloquies. He received many calls but was not persuaded to leave Jena. Gerhard was a sociable and amiable man, who however suffered much in the Thirty Years' War. The list of his writings is long, both Latin and German, although he died young on August 17, 1637. In addition to his many writings published Gerhard is said to have written more than ten thousand letters and left twelve large volumes of letters addressed to him. Erdmann Rudolph Fischer published a Latin biography in Coburg in 1723.

John Gerhard treats the matter under consideration in the second locus of his Loci Theologici, chapter IV, under the question, An sit Deus?<sup>15</sup> He takes up this question for the confutation of those who deny the existence of God vel directe, vel oblique. Among the former Gerhard names Diagoras Melius, Theodorus Cyrenaicus (after Cicero), Anaxagoras (after Irenaeus), Protagoras, and says that many more examples are named by J. Zuingerus. The oblique denial is asserted by Gerhard of those who deny the providence of God, as also Erasmus testifies.

Moses, says Gerhard, does not expressly teach that God exists, but simply begins, that Deum creasse coelum & terram. Thomas Aquinas is cited by Gerhard as stating that the existence of God is not an article of faith, but

---

<sup>15</sup>John Gerhard, Loci Theologici (Tuebingen: J. G. Cotta, 1764), III, 40.

a preamble to the articles of faith since it is based in part on natural knowledge.

Besides the confirmation of our faith Gerhard takes as his goal for this study the perfection of the natural knowledge, which by nature is imperfect and languid and almost nil in comparison with the revealed knowledge. Taking his position in the believer's knowledge of God, Gerhard discusses the esse, velle, posse, and operari of God in order to show the relation between natural and revealed knowledge. Thus the unity of God may be known in some manner, but not the Trinity; the legal will of God, but not the evangelical; the power of God to a degree, as shown in Romans 1:20, and the external operation of God, but not the internal. Four sources of knowledge concerning God are stated: nature, creation, Scripture and eternal life.

The objection of Socinus is taken up, who appears to argue from the silence of outstanding philosophers, puta Aristotelem, who had most diligently examined the world. These, Socinus held, were unable to arrive at the knowledge that God's providence includes the inferior beings or even man, and that God created the world. They rather deny these things. Gerhard points to Books VII and VIII of Aristotle's Physics and to Book XII of Metaphysics and shows that the prime mover is taught. This, says Gerhard, cannot be denied if the book De Mundo is by Aristotle. The

critical question is dealt with in an unsigned footnote, declaring in favor of Aristotle. Socinus' exegetical treatment of various texts is treated extensively. The chapter concludes with the antithesis of those who err in defect and those who err in excess. The former deny the natural knowledge, the latter declare it sufficient for salvation.

In chapter V Gerhard takes up the philosophical efforts to define God. He grants that for a technical definition the genus is lacking.<sup>16</sup> Gerhard is willing to distinguish between a perfect definition and an adequate description, between adequate information and full comprehension. That is comprehended which is perfectly known; that is perfectly known which is known to the extent that it is knowable. A nominal onomatodees (ὄνομα= τωδῆς ) definition can be given, but not an essential definition, ousiodees ( οὐσιωδῆς ). Hermes Trismegistus is brought into the discussion through citation from Alexander de Ales (Hales, Dr. irrefragabilis, d. 1245): God is an intellectual sphere whose center is everywhere but the circumference nowhere! Further descriptions are brought from ecclesiastical writers.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 68.



## Abraham Calov

Abraham Calov, also ein lutherischer Theologus, is one of the prime movers in the second half of the seventeenth century. His vigorous defense of the doctrine of the Book of Concord was very effective, but also earned him much opposition. The maligning of this vigorous proponent of sound Lutheranism has not ceased in our day. Born in the Prussian Morungen on April 16, 1612, Calov's childhood was characterized by moving from place to place to escape from war and pestilence. In Rostock and Koenigsberg he became magister (Koenigsberg 1632) and doctor of theology in Rostock, 1637. As professor at Koenigsberg he issued his Stereoma testatoris Christi against John Bergius, a Reformed theologian. In 1643 Calov was made rector at the gymnasium at Danzig, where he entered into controversy with Martin Statius, a deacon committed to the doctrines of Rathmann. From Danzig Calov went to the "charitative colloquy" at Thorn in the company of John Botsaccus. Calov exchanged controversial writings with John Caesar, a Reformed preacher at Danzig, Henry Nicolai, a professor of philosophy, with Calixt in Helmstedt, with Latermann, Dreyer, and Michael Behm in Koenigsberg, in the syncretistic controversies. He wrote also against Ravius, Hackspannius, Jacob Boehme, John de Labbadie, and others. In 1650 Calov became professor of theology in

Wittenberg, "Pastor primarius, Consistorial-Assessor, und General Superintendent."<sup>17</sup> Here Calov died after twenty-five years. Reference to his voluminous writings is frequently made, and they are truly astounding.

Of these writings the Systema locorum theologicorum and the Theologia naturalis & revelata have been available for this inquiry. Works not available, which appear promising, are

1. Socinismus profligatus
2. De fide veterum fidelium mundi ante diluivium
3. Theologia positiva
4. Metaphysica divina
5. Vindiciae Paulinae adversus Neophotinianos, sive loci classici apostolici ad Coloss. 1,16.<sup>18</sup>

In his Theologia naturalis & revelata Calov in 1646 treats the doctrine of God under five aspects. He defends the decree of the Council at Nicaea regarding the one essence and the three persons against the Socinians; he treats the natural knowledge of God; he discusses the names of God, Hebrew and Greek; he guards the divine monarchy and profligates the Pagano-Socinian polytheism; he examines the books of John Crellius De uno Deo Patre and maintains the mystery of the SS. Trinity against the at-

---

<sup>17</sup>"Calov," Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexikon, edited by Christian Gottlieb Jocher (Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Gleditschens Buchhandlung, 1751), I, 1576f.

<sup>18</sup>Loc. cit.

tack of Socinus.

It is the second book in this 1898-page volume which concerns this study particularly, the greater portion of which gives thorough exegetical refutation of the Socinian distortion of Romans 1, Acts 14 and 17. This is followed by "another class of arguments," by quotations from the fathers, and concluded by nostra sententia.

In regard to the absolute knowledge of God, writes Calov,<sup>19</sup> two matters concerning the essence of God are under discussion: (1) That He is, and (2) What He is, viewed as to His essence. On the first matter Calov quotes Hebrews 11:6, "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Both nature and Scripture teach the knowledge of God according to Augustine. Tertullian says, "You will more readily believe prophecy as a disciple of nature." The one is physical, the other mystic; the one more imperfect and pedagogical, the other more perfect and truly salutary. Clement of Alexandria calls the natural knowledge a stairway to philosophy.

The natural knowledge is both native and acquired, the former being called subjective, the latter objective. The native knowledge refers to common notions impressed upon the minds of all men by nature and creation, the

---

<sup>19</sup> Abraham Calov, Theologia Naturalis & Revelata (Leipzig: J. Wildens, 1646), p. 79.

acquired knowledge is elicited by sound reason from the contemplation of nature (intuitu creaturae). Both are propagated naturally, without the knowledge of the divine Word through the Scriptures. Both must be defended against certain opponents, first the Socinians who deny the natural knowledge of God directe. Some deny this knowledge ex parte, others simpliciter. The native knowledge is denied by all who subscribe to the Socinian heresy, but the acquired knowledge is acknowledged by some who adhere to this sect. Christopher Ostorodus agrees with Faustus Socinus in the denial of both.

Socinus writes, according to Calov, "Man by himself is able to understand neither himself, nor God and His will; it is necessary that these be made known to him in another manner."<sup>20</sup> Ostorodus writes in the Institutio religionis Christianae, quoted by Calov:

Das(s) die Menschen von Gott / oder von der Gottheit etwas wissen / das haben sie nicht von Natur / noch aus Betrachtung der Schöpfung / sondern von hören sagen. Sintemahl sich Gott von Anfang den Menschen offenbahret hat.<sup>21</sup>

Calov states that in order to declare "our" opinion,

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 80. Calov makes reference to a Miscellanea from which he cites. No such work is reported by Joecher. A variety of writings were sometimes bound together.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Calov ascribes the Institutio religionis Christianae to Ostorodus. Joecher credits this to Socinus and lists Ostorodus' Unterricht von den Haupt-Puncten der christlich-socinianischen Religion, published in Racaou in 1625.

"we" distinguish between the degrees of knowledge and the effects and uses of this knowledge (cognitio), adding also the object, the origin, and the subject. The degrees of knowledge can be stated as more perfect, less perfect, rude, and merely inchoative. It is agreed that the revealed knowledge is superior to the natural; this is illustrated with an apt quotation from Tertullian:

So that we might approach more fully and more emphatically [*impressius*] both to God Himself and to His attributes and his decrees, He added an instrument of literature,--if anyone wishes to inquire concerning God, and to find Him whom he seeks, and to believe Him whom he has found, and to serve Him in whom he believes.<sup>22</sup>

The effect and use of the cognition of God can be stated as salutary and pedagogical. But the salutary knowledge cannot be had from nature, for man left to himself is said sine Deo esse, Ephesians 2:12; Deum plane ignorare, Galatians 4:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:5; vivere in ignorantia, Acts 17:30. These texts, says Calov, cannot be used to disprove the natural knowledge of God.

The natural knowledge of God as to its use may also be described as direct and indirect. The direct use is subordinate and consists of the direction of morals; as ultimate and pedagogical it also leads to God, who manifests Himself in the Word, Acts 17:27. The indirect and ex accidenti leads to the just condemnation of those who

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 81. Calov cites from Tertullian's Apologeticus, chapter 18.

hold the truth in unrighteousness, Romans 1:17.

The object of this cognition may be divided into the knowledge of the essence and of the will of God. Regarding the essence the Hacovian Catechism says "that God is, that He is one, eternal, perfectly just, wise, and powerful." God is further defined in the same Catechism as infinite, immeasurable, etc., that He is the Creator and Conserver of all, etc., but not that He is in Three Persons, which is a mystery established only by divine revelation.

The subject of this acquired knowledge is that which men without the benefit of the Word may know. Where the use of reason is the basis of knowledge, some will know more than others. Calov is inquiring not about the actual knowledge of those without the Word, but about the ability (potentia) to arrive at a knowledge of God, "whether, namely, man devoid of the revelation in God's Word is able to rise to some manner of knowledge with the benefit of sound reason alone, that is, some knowledge of God, His comprehensive essence, His general will, and His providence." Or, if the question is to be stated in Socinus' terms, "Whether from the machine of this world alone, if one should put his mind to it,--whether one could know not only that God exists, but also discern Him in the affairs of men."<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup>Calov, op. cit., p. 83. The words of Socinus are: "Utrum ex sola hujus mundi machina, si quis animum advertat, possit cognoscere, non solum Deum esse, verum etiam rebus humanis eum prospicere?"

The exegetical distortion of Romans 1 is treated by Brochmand earlier than by Calov, though the latter enters more fully upon this discussion, illustrating it with the treatment of other texts also in a very rewarding analysis.

Calov cites John Crellius for a more complete statement of the natural acquired knowledge, a statement which includes teleological elements also. The reader is referred to Crellius for further treatment of the subject. While Calov disapproves of Crellius on other points, he does not hesitate to make favorable reference to him.

The discussion of Socinus' use of Aristotle is ample, and Calov finds opportunity to cite many philosophers, with the caution drawn from Crellius that "the philosophers have often fallen into absurd opinions, farthest from the truth," so that it is not said without cause that "nothing is so absurd that one of the old philosophers could not have said it."<sup>24</sup>

Against Socinus, who rejects the more widely held (receptor) opinion, Calov explains that certain theologians hold that common beliefs regarding God are implanted in man by birth, but that this is not the meaning of cognitio insita; it means rather the inborn capacity and potentiality, a readiness and inclination to accept and

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 144. Calov cites from Crellius' work, De Deo & attributis divinis, p. 50. This work was not available for this study.

acknowledge divine powers. Socinus in his Anti-Fuccio, chapter 4, page 118, again cites the axiom of the philosophers: quod non prius fuit in sensu. . . . (What was not first in the senses, cannot enter into the thought.) But even Schmalzius and Crellius, says Calov, depart from Socinus in this matter and recognize the potentia cognoscendi. In his book on God and the divine attributes Crellius himself in a manner (quoddammodo) confesses that a certain natural instinct concerning God is found in man.<sup>25</sup>

We concede that there is no particular notion (Calov, notitia vel notionel--sic) about God in man by nature before the use and exercise of reason. But if the mind of man is compared with the tabula rasa after the manner of the philosophers, then it must be remembered that the mind of man possesses a habitus, a native capacity to conceive thought. It is necessary then to restrict the philosopher's axiom that there is nothing in the intellect unless it was first in the sensation. Calov writes:

Nihil est in intellectu per ideam, seu idealem repraesentationem, quin prius fuerit in sensu per phantasma seu speciem sensilem, sive directe sive indirecte, quia ut docet Philosophus, quantum ad actualem cognitionem. . . . Ipsa anima sine phantasmate nunquam intelligit.<sup>26</sup>

He grants that there is no particular thought which man

---

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 149-150.



has actually always known since birth and then quotes Aristotle to show that the philosopher's axiom must not be pressed beyond its due.

Against the argument that nations have been found where no notion of a god existed, Calov is able to marshal a considerable learning concerning America, quoting a Monachus Scapuccinus, Hieronimus Benzo (De Indiis occident.), Mercator in Virginia, who found many who believed in a god called Mentoas (manitou ?), Joseph Acosta on the Peruvians (Rerum Americanorum), who called their god Pachamama, Antonius de Herrea, who says that the Mexicans called their chief god Pachaya chiachacik (hoc est, coeli, & terrae creator). Christoph Arcissevsky is the author of De Tapujaris, in which the Dutch, who have possessions in Brasilia, report that the natives acknowledge a twofold divinity, good and evil. John Lerius reports in his history of Brazilian navigation that the Caraibes were priests.

Matthias Flacius Illyricus is brought into the discussion on the basis of his entry sub voce legis, column 574f. in Clavis Scripturarum. Flacius is respectfully refuted.<sup>27</sup>

Nicolas Vendelius is cited for his attack on the orthodoxi (Luther and Chemnitz). The discussion involves

---

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

the right use of reason, defending the Gnesio-Lutherans against the Zwinglio-Calvinians.<sup>28</sup> Chemnitz' De duabus naturis is cited,<sup>29</sup> also Hornejus, Gerhard, Menzer, Ursinus, Cornelius Martinus, Calixtus, Meisner, Keckermann, Joh. Devenantius Sarisbur, John Macovius (Calvinist), and Hoffmann.

It is apparent that Abraham Calov had entered into the discussion of the natural knowledge of God with great diligence in his Theologia naturalis et revelata some years before his Systema.<sup>30</sup> This is reflected in his latter work. He distinguishes between the philosophical interest in this subject, and the theological, with a caution that theology presume not upon the domain of philosophy. In his Systema Calov holds that he need not treat natural theology ex professo, except to bring the testimony of Scripture that there is such a natural knowledge of the existence of God and His attributes. If the theologian will seek to know about God by means of reason alone, he produces a significant confusion of theology and philosophy. It is the function of philosophy to inquire on the basis of reason concerning the knowledge of God, to track down the false opinions of the philosophers

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>30</sup> Abraham Calov, Systema Locorum Theologicorum (Wittenberg: Andreas Hartmann, 1655), II, 25-60.

concerning God to the extent that the light of nature will penetrate. At this point of his discussion Calov thinks that it will suffice to caution concerning some of the confusions; he divides the knowledge about God into natural, supernatural, and revealed.

Calov holds that according to the natural knowledge man is able to know that God exists, that He founded the entire universe and all things, and that He governs all by His wisdom and power. The classical testimony of the Apostle, Romans 1:19,20, hardly permits us to be in doubt concerning this knowledge of the gentiles who are destitute of the light of God's Word. The Socinians indeed distort this illustrious text with iniquitous intent, as though it were taught here that the commands and promises of God were known from the works of the Gospel. For the exegetical analysis Calov makes reference to his Theologia Naturalis et Revelata.<sup>31</sup>

#### John Andrew Quenstedt

John Andrew Quenstedt, born at Qudelinburg on August 13, 1617, earned the master's degree at Helmstedt and lectured there on geography until he moved to Wittenberg in 1644. Here he lectured on geography, ethics, and metaphysics, and later became professor of theology. His famous

<sup>31</sup> Calov, Theologia Naturalis et Revelata, pp. 83f.

Systema Theologicum had the unusual fate of being pirated before it appeared. A Swedish student at Wittenberg had it copied for himself and issued it as his own in Sweden--to his great shame after the work appeared at Wittenberg in 1685. It was published also at Leipzig in 1702. Quenstedt lived until May 22, 1688.<sup>32</sup>

The published writings of this theologian are again voluminous, many of which appear to be preparatory studies for his Systema. Among them the De adynamia virium hominis irrogeniti in spiritualibus might be profitable for this study if available.

In the Systema Theologicum<sup>33</sup> Quenstedt condenses and arranges a mass of information in his logical, if pedantic order. His thetical sources are Chemnitz, Gerhard, Hutter, Selnecker, Feuerborn, Dorscheus, Celov, Klotz, Meisner, Scherzer, Voetius, and the Wittenberg Faculty. To these may be added Osiander, Walther, Casaubon, Acosta, Vossius, Maresius, Musaeus, the Book of Jena Disputations, Dannhauer, Huelsemann, and ex Pontificiis Thomas, Hervæus, and Tanner. The antithesis is represented by Maimonides, Peter of Ailles, Henricus Gandavensis, Besantius, Suarez, Johannes Puteenus Augustinianus, Flacius Illyricus, Daniel Hoffmann,

---

<sup>32</sup>"Quenstedt," Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexikon, edited by Christian Gottlieb Jocher (Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Gleditschens Buchhandlung, 1751), III, 1829f.

<sup>33</sup>Johannes Andreas Quenstedt, Theologia Didactico-Polemica Sive Systema Theologicum (Wittenberg: Sumptibus Johannis Ludolphi Quenstedii, Autoris filii, 1691), I, 255.

Wencel Schilling, Timpler, Crocius, Wendelin, Episcopus, Vorstius, Ostorodt, Socinus, Smalcus, Clement of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Justin, Pelagius, Louis Vives, Sotus, Victoria, Vega, Catharinus, ac omnium animosissime Andradius, Maldonatus, Zwingli, Gualtherus, Bullinger, Pareus, Amyraldus, Rivetus, Molinaeus, Franciscus Puccius Filidinus, Curcellaeus, Walaeus, the modern naturalists or Civiliter Honesti (Hobbes, Herbert of Cherbury, Titius), the Papizantes Episcopales in Anglia (Hornius, Bodinus), Raymond Lull, Gerson, Richard of St. Victor, Gregory of Valence, Becanus and Mornaesus. Some of these names are of little importance in theology today and difficult to identify.

The first didactic thesis is an inspiring statement of the goal of theology: the final goal of man and of all theology is the knowledge, the worship, and the joy of the Lord. This is followed by a beautifully succinct statement from Augustine which sounds in part like a translation from the Greek.<sup>34</sup>

The natural knowledge and the revealed are distinguished in the customary manner, citing Augustine's De Trinitate: Scripture and creation exist for this purpose that He be sought and loved Who created the latter and inspired the former.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

The causa efficiens reveals that God is also the Father of all natural knowledge, for He has founded nature and man's instinct. As a mediate cause the intellective faculty of man is given a secondary position. Quenstedt insists that there are notiones communes insculpted and impressed into the mind of man by nature, which are operative in man apart from any use of reason and laborious dialectics. From these the acquired knowledge must be distinguished. The matter which may inform this knowledge is theoretic and practical. The theoretic knowledge includes that God is and that His attributes are oneness, justice, goodness, wisdom, omnipotence, eternity, and providence; the practical knowledge recognizes the obligation to worship God. The providence of God is difficult for the natural knowledge, and the gentiles have revealed three principal viewpoints: the Epicurean sees the variety of fateful events, that the good often suffer while the evil prosper, and he thinks that all calamities fall upon men by chance; the Stoic seeks the cause in matter and in the position of the stars; while the Academic wonders why God burdened this infirm existence with such great miseries.

Quenstedt's logical system compels him to offer definitions which appear strange and superfluous, such as: "The form of this natural knowledge, insomuch as it is abstracted from the innate and acquired, is the perfection of our natural intellect concerning things divine knowable

by nature."<sup>35</sup> He might have done well at this point to heed the caution of Calov and leave philosophy to the philosophers.

The purpose of this natural knowledge according to the next thesis may be declared to be motivational and accidental. On the one hand it leads man to the fuller knowledge of God and to the congregation of those who worship Him; on the other hand, this knowledge leads to a consequence not intended, namely, that through neglect and abuse of his knowledge man will be found without excuse, Romans 1:20.

This knowledge is true, necessary, useful, and imperfect, says Quenstedt. It does not enable one to come to a full knowledge of God, nor can it offer full certainty because man is subject to congenital corruption.

The proof of this natural knowledge of God may be found in the natural discrimination between good and evil, in the fear of a supreme being, in the occurrence of the good conscience and the evil, in the tortures of the conscience on account of sin, which tortures no counsel can prevent, no force condemn, and no reason quiet. Thus Alexander could not be comforted over Clitus whom he killed inter pocula.

When it is said that the beasts and the heavens tell the glory of God, it must be understood in the sense of

---

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

Basilius: "They are an epistle, in which we may read the very great providence and wisdom of God over all things."<sup>36</sup>

In the polemic section of this locus Quenstedt asks three questions: (1) Is there indeed a natural knowledge of God? (2) Is this natural knowledge sufficient unto salvation, and have the gentiles thus found salvation? (3) Can the mystery of the Holy Trinity be known from nature?

The issue under the first question is raised by Moses Maimonides, to whom the opinion is attributed that the existence of God could be established only by revelation. Many Scholastics and Papists followed this opinion. Peter of Ailles speaks cautiously: "The probability exists in nature that God exists, but evidence cannot demonstrate the fact."<sup>37</sup> To this Bellarmine added that it was not possible to know about God except by a special act of grace.<sup>38</sup> From these and further citations the Schola Pontificia drew the corollary that there may be in man an innocent ignorance concerning the existence of God.

Flacius Illyricus is cited to the effect that the light of nature is to a degree (quoddam) fallacious, imposturing, and deceptive, and that the first principles are seeds of superstition, error, and idolatry in man.

---

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>38</sup>Loc. cit.



The Calvinists and Arminians are treated very briefly on the antithetic side of the question.

The antithesis to the second question goes back to the Fathers: "Before the law of Moses men were saved by the law of nature." The citation from Clement of Alexandria has lived through many learned tomes: "Philosophy alone once justified the Greeks, for there are many ways unto salvation."<sup>39</sup> The honor of the Greeks must have been great indeed in Alexandria. Does the multae viae include other paganisms and gnosticisms? Chrysostom holds that in the Old Testament the mere knowledge of God was sufficient, but not so now. Quenstedt refers to Casaubon for other and more difficult sayings of the Fathers. Justin's Apology yields the thought which seems modern enough: "Those who live according to reason are Christians!"<sup>40</sup> The Council of Trent held that the natural knowledge sufficed in some heathen unto salvation (Andradius). The Calvinists occasionally, and the Zwinglians were willing to grant this.

#### Conrad Hornejus

Conrad Hornejus was born at Braunschweig on November 25, 1590. After teaching ethics and logic at Helmstedt, Hornejus became doctor and professor of theology. He died

---

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>40</sup>Loc. cit.

on September 26, 1649. His Disputationes Theologicae are here reviewed. Other works which might prove profitable are his Ethica, seu doctrina civilis de moribus and his Compendium naturalis philosophiae.

Hornejus also uses a triplex division of the knowledge of God, what God is, and what His nature is, namely, (1) ex natura, (2) per revelationem, and (3) per visionem.<sup>41</sup> Of these the first two are found in this life, the third and last is reserved for the other.

In substantiation of the natural knowledge Hornejus cites Cicero and David. In comparing the natural with the revealed knowledge he will not say that the natural knowledge is superior to the revealed or supernatural, though the term "scientific" might be applied to the natural, and though in an absolute sense knowledge is more perfect than faith. The revealed knowledge is called supernatural because it exceeds the natural capacity for comprehension.

Concerning the attributes of God Hornejus holds that the experience of man is sufficient to establish in various ways the unity of God, His power, wisdom, goodness, justice, and the like, and he asserts that these attributes were known to the more learned heathen. Thus, says Hornejus, "one god" is asserted by Aristotle, Physics 6.12 and Metaphysics 7, and by Plato.

---

<sup>41</sup> Conrad Hornejus, Disputationes Theologicae (Helmstedt: Henning Mueller, 1643), pp. 233-39.

## Sebastian Schmidt

Sebastian Schmidt (1617-1696) was rector and minister at Lindau, professor of theology in Strassburg during the Thirty Years' War. He wrote on exegetical and Biblical matters, his most noted work being the Collegium Biblicum. Schmidt also edited a Latin translation of the Bible, published at Strassburg after his death.<sup>42</sup>

According to Schmidt the Photinians (Socinians) denied that Psalm 19:1 was applicable to the natural knowledge of God. They argued that if David had wished to say what the Lutherans wish him to have said, he never would have stated in Psalm 14, "The impious says in his heart: Non est Deus"; also, that Psalm 19 is addressed to those who already know that God is, etc., namely, to the people of Israel. Schmidt reports that Gerhard, Calov, and Stegmann treat this matter with reference to the "Photinians." Romans 10:14 is mentioned as a source of difficulty. "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" In verse 18 the psalm is quoted by St. Paul: "Yea verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." The question is, does Psalm 19 indicate that God reveals Himself in nature, or does this psalm assume that the hearers already know this by revela-

---

<sup>42</sup>Sebastian Schmidt, Collegium Biblicum (3rd edition; Argentorati: Josias Staedelius, 1689), I, 16.

tion? Schmidt goes back to D. Brentius noster for a pertinent discussion, where both sides of the problem are presented. Schmidt proposes the solution in the following words, attempting to conciliate the two points of view:

Conciliari posse putamus utramque sententiam eo modo, quo alias Nostratum nonnulli conciliant diversas sententias de visione Ezechielis Cap. 27. Si dicamus, quod omnino David in Psalmi nostri initio juxta literalem sensum agat de praedicatione Evangelii Apostolica in universum orbem, adeo, ut Paulus verba vers. 5 juxta literalem sensum citet, non tantum accomodatitium; sed phrasin totam sumserit ex libro naturae tropica mutatione, ut praedicatio Evangelii et praedicatio naturae se simul comparentur, et una alteram illustrat. Notum enim est, quod saepissime scriptura regnum Christi appellet regnum Coelorum, ut comparatio cum coelis corporeis physicis eo sit commodior.<sup>43</sup>

#### Valentin Ernst Loescher

Valentin Ernst Loescher was born at Sondershausen on December 28, 1672, held various offices and became professor of theology at Wittenberg in 1700. Loescher founded the periodical Altes und Neues, which later appeared under the name Unschuldige Nachrichten. The list of his writings is exceedingly long; of interest in this discussion is the

1. Oratio qua Lockium, Thomasium & alios lex naturae in corda hominum inscripta defenditur;
2. Fraenotiones theologicae contra naturalistarum & fanaticorum omne genus;
3. Epistola de theologia & illuminatione impiorum;
4. Notiones theologicae de illuminatione impij orthodoxi.

---

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

Loescher's father, Caspar, was also a professor of theology at Wittenberg; his brother Martin Gotthelf was professor of medicine at Wittenberg.<sup>44</sup>

Loescher rose up against the pietism and rationalism of the early eighteenth century. He recognized that Leibnitz and Wolff were men of faith and good intentions, and that they were not dedicated to the introduction of Spinozism. Nevertheless, their philosophy was a threat to the church. Loescher therefore demanded of philosophy:

1. That it may not assume the lordship over the true revealed religion;
2. That revelation cannot be without unsearchable mysteries which are incompatible with the philosophical effort to solve everything mathematically;
3. That a purely mechanical world cannot be granted, even if the philosopher is willing to grant a separate spiritual world;
4. That the true religion presupposes a true and genuine philosophical liberty in soul and body, as also the doctrine that man has a conscience, and that this is the work of God and the rule of all actions.
5. True religion cannot be harmonized with the eternity of the world and with the processus in infinitum.<sup>45</sup>

Loescher adds that if philosophy cannot conform to these principles, of what benefit can it be to the Lutheran

<sup>44</sup>"Loescher," Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexikon, edited by Christian Gottlieb Jocher (Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Gleditschens Buchhandlung, 1751), Vol. II, 2497-99.

<sup>45</sup>Moritz von Engelhardt, Valentin Ernst Loescher (Stuttgart: Verlag von Samuel Gottlieb Liesching, 1856), p. 282f. (The translation is by the undersigned.)

Church? Shall we abandon the body and chase after the shadow? The Leibnitians want to deduce everything a priori, because this alone is scientific. Even theology is to yield itself to the discretion of philosophy. Wolff appeals to the fact that the search for the sufficient cause is a natural urge of reason; let him not forget that this rationalist urge can become a consuming lust, which seeks satisfaction everywhere. It will destroy even God's freedom in divine providence.<sup>46</sup>

#### David Hollaz

David Hollaz (1648-1713) was pastor and provost in Jacobshagen, near Colberg, Pomerania. His noted work is Examen Theologicum Acroamaticum, the last of the great textbooks of Lutheran orthodoxy.

The Examen of Hollaz treats the various doctrines in the form of questions and answers. Under the doctrine of God, Question IV, "Where is the knowledge of God to be sought?" Hollaz answers, "Notitia Dei petitur tum ex lumine naturae, sive rationis, tum ex lumine revelationis. . . . Illa paedagogica, haec salutifera est."<sup>47</sup> The natural knowledge recognizes the laws of nature and thereby

---

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 287. Further information on Leibnitz and Wolff in Coppleston.

<sup>47</sup>David Hollaz, Examen Theologicum Acroamaticum (Leipzig: B. C. Breitkopf et Filius, 1763), p. 188.

knows to a degree the existence, the essence, the attributes, and the actions of God. This knowledge may be divided into innate (insita) and acquired. Hollaz adduces Romans 2:14 as a principal proof. Cicero's Tusculanean Disputations bring the illustration, "All men hold that there is a divine power and nature." Hollaz had the benefit of much literature on this subject and reviewed many opinions accordingly. Many Scripture texts are discussed. In the antithesis Hollaz takes up some Scholastics, the Socinians, and the Cartesians. Against the axiom, Nihil est in intellectu, quin prius fuerit in sensu, Hollaz cites the example of Adam in whom there was a concreated knowledge, not drawn from experience.

This natural knowledge, says Hollaz, is true both as to its principles and its conclusions.

God is good and the author of all good; therefore He is to be loved. God is most wise; therefore He is to be revered. He is just; therefore He is to be feared. He is supreme [optimus] and most powerful; therefore men should place their trust in Him and seek His aid in prayer.<sup>48</sup>

On this point Flacius and Hofmann are cited in the antithesis for they held that the natural knowledge is fallacious and full of errors. Hollaz also asserts that this knowledge as found in the heathen is mangled, mutilated, and null in relation to salvation. Among those who held that this knowledge was sufficient unto salvation Hollaz

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

lists Puccius, Zwingli, Herbert of Cherbury, Curcellaeus, Pelagius, and certain Scholastics. Cherbury stated five points of natural religion necessary to be believed:

1. That there is a certain supreme Numen;
2. That this supreme Numen is to be worshipped;
3. That virtue conjoined with piety is the chief part of the divine cultus;
4. That sins are to be shunned through a change of mind; and
5. That there are reward and punishment both in and after this life.<sup>49</sup>

Hollaz answers: "Nisi itaque praestita sit satisfactio pro peccatis, qua Deus iratus reconcilietur, neque fiduciam in Deo collocare, neque eundem sincere amare, neque opera ipsi probata praestare possumus."<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>50</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>1</sup> John Gerard, *Opera Theologica* (Tubingen: John George Cotta, 1764), III, 41.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE RESULTANT VIEW OF THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF, A REMARKABLE THEOLOGICAL CONSENSUS

The cosmological proof for the existence of God fares exceedingly well in the works of the great Lutheran theologians, forming the foundation of a cosmic Christian philosophy, if it may be so termed, which is still fundamental for most of Lutheranism. The classical Lutherischer theologus took his position in the kingdom of God, as it were, and looked out upon the world of men who possessed only the limited natural knowledge. The theologians did not despise the natural knowledge; it was God's gift with a purpose; it was divine insight, however incomplete and languid. Chemnitz had used the term "languid," and it continued in use.

The distinction between the natural and the revealed knowledge was neatly carried out by Gerhard when he discussed the divine esse, velle, posse, and operari.<sup>1</sup> The revealed knowledge is so far superior to the natural that the latter can be declared almost nil by comparison. But the revealed knowledge is in turn far inferior to that full knowledge which is to be granted in the beatific vision.

---

<sup>1</sup>John Gerhard, Loci Theologici (Tuebingen: John George Cotta, 1764), III, 41.

The theologian does not presume to understand God fully merely because he knows more about the true God by revelation.

The natural knowledge is by no means treated with contempt, for the areas of its operation are far too extensive and important. They include, citing Chemnitz,<sup>2</sup> the order of nature, the human mind, the distinction between good and evil, the reliability of scientific knowledge (notitiarum naturalium), the pangs of conscience, political society, the chain of cause and effect, the signs of future times, and final causes. Man's activity in these specifically human areas must be founded upon some natural capacities apart from revealed knowledge, but nevertheless gifts of God. When the theologians discuss this implanted knowledge, they are compelled to consider the nature and content of it. Against the Socinians they assert that this knowledge is not only acquired but innate. But as to the content of this knowledge the theologians do not use the same terminology. Are there inborn notiones communes, as Quenstedt asserts? Or is the distinction between dynamis and exis (Meisner) more apt? The discussion approaches what later philosophers discuss under ontology. There are noemata (Meisner), a notitia insita

---

<sup>2</sup>Martin Chemnitz, Loci Theologici (Frankfurt and Wittenberg: D. Tobias Mevius and Elerd Schumacher, 1653), p. 20A.

(Calov), which make man a religious being with an undeniable sense of the Holy.

If Hornejus calls this a knowledge ex natura,<sup>3</sup> he does not thereby separate it from the activity of God, who has created man. Hornejus calls this natural knowledge, both the inborn and acquired, scientific because it is related to man's knowledge as distinguished from God's revealed knowledge. But he immediately adds that this scientific knowledge is not to be held superior to revealed knowledge. In the absolute sense, he adds, knowledge is superior to faith, but this must be viewed in the light of the distinction of walking by faith and by sight. Even the natural knowledge according to Hornejus is sufficient to establish the unity of God, His power, wisdom, goodness, justice, and the like. This is readily granted by all the theologians.

The primary antithesis was that of the Neo-Photinians or Photinians, as the Socinians were called,--the name probably traceable to the Socinian christology. This doctrine was spreading strongly into Germany and the Netherlands, having its seat in Poland and Transylvania.<sup>4</sup> This

---

<sup>3</sup>Conrad Hornejus, Disputationes Theologicae (Helmstedt: Henning Mueller, 1643), pp. 233-39.

<sup>4</sup>J. J. Herzog and O. Zoeckler, "Socin," Real-Encyclopaedie fuer protestantische Theologie und Kirche, edited by Albert Hauck, J. J. Herzog, and G. L. Plitt (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1884), XIV, 376-401.

Anti-Trinitarian doctrine was most notably represented by the Racovian Catechism. The threat of Socinianism can be measured by the magnitude of the Lutheran efforts against it, shown by Calov's 1898-page Theologia Naturalis et Revelata.

Brochmand sets the pattern for the treatment of the Socinians, followed by Meisner and others. John Crellius, a Socinian, directed a polemical book against Meisner at Wittenberg. In the doctrine of God according to Crellius it was the denial of the natural knowledge with which the Lutherans were concerned, especially as it appeared in the exegesis of principal prooftexts. The exegetical discussions therefore form a large part of this controversy.

Other antithetical authors are drawn into the discussion by way of reference. Thus the ancient philosophers, some church fathers and medieval authors, and contemporary philosophers are drawn upon incidentally. The roster of such references grew longest in Quenstedt, though the treatment is more concise. Sebastian Schmidt adduces the example of Brenz, who in a manner tried to bridge the exegetical difference in the interpretation of Romans, finding that St. Paul writes comprehensively, including both the natural knowledge and the revealed. The discussion concerns the citation of Psalm 19 in Romans 10:18.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>Sebastian Schmidt, Collegium Biblicum (3rd edition; Argentorati: Josias Staedelius, 1689), I, p. 76.

The controversy is carried on without undue animosity, evidenced by the fact that Calov cites John Crellius in bonam partem repeatedly. The name Crellius must not be confused with Nikolaus Crellius who was beheaded by Christian II, not so much on account of Crypto-Calvinism as on account of political machinations, as von Hoënegg relates.

The philosophical discussion includes the broad range of arguments customarily heard, but without the later terminology. Calov knows how to distinguish carefully between that which belongs to the philosopher and that which belongs to the theologian:

The philosophers vindicate for their discipline the peculiar and proper prerogative to seek what can be known about God with the benefit of reason. If anyone would wish to transfer all these matters [to theology], he would draw after him a significant confusion of theology and philosophy, and the spiritual element [Pneumaticam] would be largely lost. It is the proper function of philosophy to seek knowledge about God under the guidance of reason, and to seek out the false opinions of philosophers regarding God and to confute them to the extent that the light of nature will penetrate. This may suffice to warn against the confusion of some.<sup>6</sup>

This excellent caution was not always observed by other theologians, though it would be unsuitable to charge even Quenstedt with philosophical confusion. Meisner is an example of the theologian who uses philosophical argument when he cites the absence of causae sociae in the

---

<sup>6</sup> Abraham Calov, Systema Locorum Theologicorum (Wittenberg: Andreas Hartmann, 1655), p. 25.

example is found in the citation which Calov makes from Crellius.

The historical proof from the constant and widespread occurrence of the belief in a god or gods is used with special reference to America. These references occur from Brochmand to Hollaz, usually countering the claim by some that the part of India called Brasilia was inhabited by natives who had not even the most primitive notion of a divine being. (The sources to which the theologians refer on this point should be made available to readers in this day when Latin America has become of paramount importance.)

Since philosophy is accorded a rightful place in the inquiry after the nature and existence of God, the demand for a logical definition necessarily arises. Meisner recognizes the difficulty of providing a definition which will conform to the canons of logic. God is unique; He belongs to no genus. Therefore no definition can be drawn up. Gerhard discusses this matter at considerable length, as has been shown, allowing a descriptive definition but not an essential one.

Quenstedt cites a curious viewpoint of Thomas Aquinas: Since it is possible for man to know without revelation about the existence of a divine being and its attributes, this is not an article of faith but rather a preamble to the articles of faith. Herein the proper use of this nat-

ural knowledge is indicated. This knowledge should and does motivate man to search for the true God, to strive to conform to the moral precepts implanted in man, and to seek the good life. It is not a criticism of the limited natural knowledge when Luther says that the philosophers were intent upon the creation of the perfect state. It is thus that the American democratic institutions were created.

## CHAPTER IV

### NATURAL KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH IN RELATION TO THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The view which Luther formulated in his explanation of the Apostles' Creed has lived on in the Lutheran Church: "I believe that God has made me and all creatures, that He has given me my body and soul, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them." Man was created to have dominion over creation, and he continues in such dominion as remains after the fall. Luther names reason before the senses as characteristic of the nature of man by which he is able to learn, to govern, and to establish the meaning of his experiences. In the Third Article, however, reason is declared to be limited: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him." The limitation applies most particularly to the Second and Third Articles. Here reason and the senses (strength) have reached their limits and the work of the Holy Ghost, revelation and divine enlightenment must enter. In the First Article the presupposition is different. By his reason and senses man is able to achieve a great degree of understanding regarding the nature and work of the divine being. This has been and is the area of the operation of philosophy and science,



and all that is good and true in human philosophy and science is granted in the First Article. This is not to say that man can gain a knowledge of the true God and a full understanding of the nature of the world without revelation. Even with revelation there is no such full comprehension granted to man in this life. But there is a degree of truth about the necessity of a divine being or beings, about the immortal spirit in man, about divine providence, and about man's moral obligation in the religions of mankind which have been without the benefit of revelation.

Man experiences the cosmos both materially and spiritually. This was granted even by the rationalists and deistic philosophy, who rested their case upon the natural knowledge of God and developed the religion of reason without revelation which was believed to be universally valid. They acknowledged a deity but held it to be indefinable; various solutions of the problem of God could be regarded as acceptable, whether Christian or pagan.<sup>1</sup> Adolf Hoenecke reviews the development of the doctrine of God in his Evangelisch-Lutherische Dogmatik. He tells of Herbert of Cherbury who still recognized the existence of a deity in his discussion of the lex naturae, which comprised religion and ethics, but denied all miracles. Hoenecke thinks

---

<sup>1</sup>Adolf Hoenecke, Evangelisch-Lutherische Dogmatik (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1901), II, 17.

it naive of Cherbury that he still petitioned the deity for a sign whether he should publish his De Veritate. Chateaubriand expresses this experience in his French manner and defends the spiritual experience in rationalistic times. In commenting on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, he writes in his Fragments:

God manifested Himself to Adam; the creature and the Creator hold converse; they speak of solitude. We suppress our reflections. Solitude is not good for man. Adam falls asleep; God draws a new creature from the breast of our first father and presents her to him at his awakening; "Grace is in her step, heaven is in her eyes, dignity and love is in her movements. She is called woman, she is born of man. The man will leave his father and his mother for her." Anathema to him who does not perceive the godhead in this!<sup>2</sup>

After the deists (Descartes, Locke, Cherbury, Toland, Collins, Tindal) came the Wolffian theologians, who stood on the shoulders of Leibnitz (Chr. Wolff, S. J. Baumgarten, Jacob Carpov). Their great endeavor was to demonstrate the truth of revelation by mathematical demonstration: first revelation, then the authority of Scripture, thereafter the articles of faith. They accepted the natural knowledge of God. Ernst Valentin Loescher recognized that the foundations of theology were being subverted when man was attempting to demonstrate revelation by reason. Theology was invited to entrust its lot to philosophy for the final demonstration

---

<sup>2</sup>Francis René Chateaubriand, Genie Du Christianisme (Lyon: J. B. Pelagaud, 1854), pp. 217ff. (The copy used is an association copy which bears the signatures of F. Wyneken, 1869, and of L. Fuerbringer.)

of spiritual truth.<sup>3</sup> In his Unschuldige Nachrichten Loescher published periodical essays in defense of the theological position, but his efforts were more valiant than effective. The age of reason had begun.

The interpretation of the cosmic experience took a turn to the left; the intellectual became a substitute for the spiritual. The experience of the material cosmos which had been accompanied by a spiritual experience of awe and fear, delight and confidence, joy and the sense of the holy, now became a purely rational, intellectual experience in a mechanical universe. The Christian experience of the material cosmos in the light of revealed knowledge continued in the hearts of many, but it was no longer the prevailing view. The rationally spiritual view gave way to an intellectual irreligious interpretation of the material cosmos.

The Christian has need to be aware of the fact that the empiricist has imposed restrictions upon himself contrary to the experience of the entire believing world, whatever the religion. He (the empiricist) holds that logic can operate with sensible phenomena only. To him facts are those alone among the data available, which can be scientifically tested, i.e., they can be measured and conceivably subjected to repeated experimentation. But is not

---

<sup>3</sup>Moritz von Engelhardt, Valentin Ernst Loescher (Stuttgart: Verlag von Samuel Gottlieb Liesching, 1856), pp. 282ff.

logic a process of reasoning, which by definition is limited to the bringing of its laws to bear upon the data made available? May logic per se decide which data it will accept and which not? Everything in human experience is subject to the logical examination, whether material, intellectual, or spiritual, and may be rightfully subjected to logical examination to the extent that the light of logic will penetrate.

If the term "scientific" is restricted in a similar manner to those things which are material in character, can such a restriction be defended in the face of the total experience of man? Man has universally experienced a spiritual world. Historic philosophy has dealt with the problems relating to the spiritual life of man as well as the material, social, etc. If then certain materialist philosophers have imposed an arbitrary restriction upon themselves with regard to the facts which they will accept, this appears as a most arbitrary procedure indeed. "If the blind lead the blind. . . ."

The basic disparity has become so fixed in modern thought that a philosopher would be a rara avis if he chose to regard the phenomena of the revealed knowledge as valid data to be embraced in a system of thought.

Within the strict discipline of a particular science the researcher is justified in limiting himself to matters of physics or chemistry if he limits his conclusions in accordance with the limits of his research. He may be

aware at the same time of a total spiritual experience which belongs to the domain of the philosopher or theologian. The interpretation of the material cosmos has charmed the mind of man since ancient times. The scientist has an experience of the exactness of scientific truth in the laws of nature, in causality, in the characteristics of animate and inanimate matter. He can find beneficent and constructive forces as well as harmful and destructive, while the decision as to what is true and good and beautiful and holy will involve him in pursuits beyond his experimentation, though not unrelated.

Even in the interpretation of the physical cosmos man continually experiences the need to relate himself to someone or something beyond mere matter. Even the love of nature and the love of science involve this relation. The withdrawal from such relatedness is a flight and a negation contrary to the experience of the many. To relegate all feelings and further thoughts on nature to poetry and religion is not a valid recourse, because even feelings and emotional states are facts which must be incorporated into philosophy or theology.

It is not surprising, then, that the history of thought reveals a series of broad intellectual constructs or entelechies, which aim to represent the inner reality and the total experience of existence. Plato created such a world of ideas, which to him were the essence of the real world. Among the modern entelechies one might choose as

typical those of Leibnitz, Hegel, and Darwin. Their philosophical constructions have been tempting substitutes to many for the cosmic dominion under the providence of God as confessed by Christians. They make man the measure of all things and proceed to create a thought world, which becomes a surrogate for revelation. Such a thought world may even include a deity, but it will be a philosophical god who has no relation to the Redeemer and the need for redemption. A philosopher might even give the idea of god a place "prior in the ontological order and in the order of ideas,"<sup>4</sup> as did Spinoza and Tillich; they are not therefore operating with Biblical concepts. To Pascal the disparity between natural knowledge and revelation causes greater difficulty than it should have.<sup>5</sup> If it is impossible to convince deists and atheists of the truth of revelation, the validity of the proofs for the existence of God is not thereby overthrown. When man makes himself the sole arbiter, his natural theology will become corrupted at its source; he has made himself god and has entered into the world of his own making. In this state of spiritual darkness he has even darkened the light of reason.

It must by no means be thought that men of science have always limited their outlook in the manner discussed above. Robert Boyle and Sir Isaac Newton were men of gen-

---

<sup>4</sup>Frederick Copleston, S. J., A History of Philosophy (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1960), IV, 213.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., IV, 160.

ius, but they remained in the service of God as revealed both in nature and in the Scriptures. On the other hand, Viscount Bolingbroke "eviscerated Christianity of its characteristic elements and reduced it to what he regarded as natural religion."<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that the Jewish philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn, held that the philosopher could "prove the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, the foundations of natural religion."<sup>7</sup> He accepted and defended the ontological argument: "God is possible. But pure possibility is incompatible with the idea of a most perfect being. Therefore God exists."<sup>8</sup>

Kant rejected the contemporary ontological and cosmological arguments for the existence of God. But Kant functioned more as a critic and did not construct such a thought world as did other idealists. To him the sensible experiences were categorically distinct from the transcendent. It would be impossible for Kant to say, as did Mendelssohn, that the philosopher gives theoretical justification of truths which the human mind, left to itself, spontaneously recognizes at least in a confused way.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., IV, 125.

<sup>7</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Loc. cit.

Man has an ineffaceable urge to construct a religion or philosophy by which he can relate himself to the cosmos. He does this in the hope of satisfying a spiritual hunger. The urge cannot be silenced even by negation, for this negation will need to be reconsidered, defended, and revised. At the same time the self-made religion or philosophy cannot satisfy the spiritual hunger for the very reason that it is self-made and does not possess the authority of the absolute. Thus in pagan societies there was frequent invention of new gods or the transfer of affections from one god to another, frequently also the worship of many gods at the same time in the hope that aid might come from one. This is also the fate of man-made philosophy.

In the nineteenth century philosophy became increasingly aware of the vast knowledge amassed by the naturalists and other scientists. How could this knowledge be integrated and synthesized into a world view? Romantic nature science sought a system and an idea to comprehend the mass of data. The classification of flora and fauna contributed greatly. The idea of development from the simple to the complex was one of the ancient chestnuts of philosophy, related to the processus ad infinitum. Evolution was enjoying a revival. Herder could write on the origin of language a century before Darwin, tracing speech to the birds, although the basis for a theory of creative evolution was still lacking.



The culmination of Romantic nature studies was to come in Darwin's Origin of Species, which purported to provide the scientific demonstration of inherited traits and thereby explain the order and variety in nature. From this time on the streams of philosophy began to converge upon the idea of evolution as though mutation had in fact been established in science rather than in philosophy. Sir Edward Burnett Tylor founded the science of anthropology in his Primitive Culture; Sir James Frazer developed the evolution of religion in his The Golden Bough. Psychology proceeded in Freud on a basis which left no room for the soul; man was now generically an animal. Others continued to develop this most commanding entelechy of modern times, evolution, a gnosticism with its own endless series of emanations, each resting upon its predecessor. The classification of flora and fauna now became a living spectrum which Nature, capitalized, had developed in the course of evolution. A similar evolution was never claimed in the other spectra of the physical world, in the laws of physics, chemistry, and electricity. The pre-Darwinian classification was indeed to suffer much revision, such as at the hand of Luther Burbank, who tried to prove that there were no such limits in nature as indicated in Genesis, which says that everything must produce "after his kind." Theories of mutation continued to be disputed into the twentieth cen-

tury and have not yet come to rest. Meanwhile the philosophy of evolution is loudly proclaimed as a scientific fact. Auxiliary studies are offered in corroboration, invariably failing to clinch the argument. Excessive claims are made for various dating methods, which however are contingent upon such factors which destroy their validity in any interpretation of extreme antiquity. The secret of life is the subject of research, and while some understanding of heredity is gained, the nature of life itself remains a mystery. It is strangely assumed that life in the plant, in the animal, and in man is all of the same order, some form of super magnetism or other form of radiation. Perhaps it is itself nothing at all, merely belonging to the conditions of existence after the manner of time, space, and causation! The life of the angel, of the spirit gone to its Maker, and of God Himself could necessarily not be the subject of such research.

In this intellectual climate the classical proofs for the existence of God have become an embarrassment to the theologians. Barth, Nygren, Bultmann, Tillich, and others repudiate the cosmological proof. Tillich indeed supports the ontological proof, but in a context that does not bring him to the Biblical God. John E. Smith compares Tillich with Tennent, the latter supporting the cosmological proof.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>John E. Smith, Reason and God (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 157ff.

Smith gives this statement italicized emphasis:<sup>11</sup>

If the ontological way starts with an initial certainty and encounters uncertainty when it attempts to relate its basic apprehension to the conditioned and contingent world, the cosmological way starts with initial probabilities and tries to attain certainty through the cumulative force of mediate argument.

Smith proposes that the two ways could be synthesized. He argues that as two poles are necessarily in relation to each other, so neither Tillich's nor Tennent's way can be without the other, or none prior to the other. To the Christian theologian this is not a problem. When instinct and intuition speak in ontology and observation and experience in cosmology, then revelation provides the information and guidance regarding God and His creation, His providence, and His mighty acts for the redemption of mankind. But natural man perceives not the things of the Spirit of God; they must be Spiritually discerned. In other words, faith must be added to the natural knowledge to effect a complete, as complete as can be granted in this life, and certain view of all existence. This might with equal justification be called a Christian theology or a Christian philosophy.

Smith attempts a further analysis of natural religion, apart from former definitions of this term. To him it concerns two different approaches to God: "The approach through

---

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 168ff.

repeatable experience and public knowledge and the approach through historical events and their records as preserved and interpreted by a continuing community or church."<sup>12</sup> He grants that man is a religious animal and that the religious question invariably arises; neither is there a positive religion at all without a transcending religious object. (Thou art not far from the kingdom of God!) This is far removed from the transcendentalism of Kant, but it does not appear to recognize that even the physical, secular, or profane world cannot be at all fully understood except in the light provided by revelation. It does not follow that revealed religion is wholly other, and that it can have no correlative in man's groping reason. Man cannot find ultimate answers by the light of reason, but he can know when he has found divine certainty with the help of God. Smith appears to give reason no more than its God-given function in the religious quest, and this he is pleased to call "rational religion."<sup>13</sup>

The range of human experiences is wider than some thinkers would grant. Perhaps the words, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio" are not inappropriate here. If serious studies are made to explore parapsychological experiences, and it is accepted that such experiences cannot be totally

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 270.

written off as mere phantasms, then the experience of multitudes of faithful confessors of Christ also deserves to be heeded. They have experienced a change of mind, a repentance, and a new conviction; it is an experience of the indwelling of God, of the presence of the Savior, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The believers identify themselves with the Heilsgeschichte as not yet ended; they have found the Way, the Truth, and the Life and they strive to continue in faith and hope and charity. While they are in the world, they are not of the "world"; and they know themselves in an integrated existence in which man lives not by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; to them the voice of science and the voice of faith are one and the same, for "the heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein."

This study of the cosmological proof for the existence of God in the Post-Reformation Lutheran theology concludes with the observations that the terminology indicated by the title is indeed absent in the theologians reviewed, but that their discussions of the natural knowledge of God are strongly based on the matter subsumed under the term "cosmological proof"; that there was great agreement on this matter, expressed in particular in the antithesis to Socinianism; that the confession of the natural knowledge

of God was vital to the theologians in the proper presentation of the doctrine of God; that the truth of this natural knowledge must not be overstated or overextended to become a basis for the hope of salvation, but that the natural knowledge could function in a pedagogical manner to lead man on in the search for God--it was a part of the endowment of man in creation which had become corrupted through sin, which however still separated man from the beasts as a creature who seeks God and is able to receive Him, given the proper assistance.

These conclusions are valid and Scriptural after several centuries of rationalism. They were strongly revived in the nineteenth century revival of Lutheranism and have continued in the teaching and confession of the Lutheran Church to the present day, as well as in many other communions where the authority of Scripture is heeded.

Bernhard, Conrad. *Manuale Theologiae*. Reprinted:  
Doming Miller, 1873.

Luther, Martin. *Werkliche Schriften*. 25 vols. Edited  
by John George Walke. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing  
House, 1875.

Walzer, Johannes. *Thesaurus Theologiae*. Jena: Johannes  
Walzer et Georgius Jurgensdorf, 1835.

Wittenberg, Johannes Andreas. *Thesaurus Theologiae*.  
3 vols. in 1. Wittenberg:  
Johannes Schickel, 1691.

Schickel, Sebastian. *Thesaurus Theologiae*. 2 vols. 3rd  
edition. Argentorati: Joannis Schickel, 1683.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. Primary Sources

- Brochmand, Caspar Erasmus. Universæ Theologiae Systema. 2 vols. Ulm: John Goerlin, 1638.
- Buddeus, J. F. Theses Theologicae de Atheismo et Superstitione. Jena: apud Bielckium, 1717.
- Calov, Abraham. Theologia Naturalis et Revelata. Leipzig: J. Wildens, 1646.
- Systema Locorum Theologicorum. Wittenberg: Andreas Hartmann, 1655.
- Chemnitz, Martin. Loci Theologici. Frankfurt and Wittenberg: D. Tobias Mevius and Elerd Schumacher, 1653.
- Gerhard, John. Loci Theologici. 10 vols. Tuebingen: John George Cotta, 1764.
- Hoënegg, Matthias Hoë von. Johannis Apocalypsis. Leipzig and Frankfurt: Impensis Haeredum Schuererianorum, et Johannis Fritzschi, 1616.
- Hollaz, David. Examen Theologicum Acroamaticum. Leipzig: B. C. Breitkopf et Filius, 1763.
- Hornejus, Conrad. Disputationes Theologici. Helmstedt: Henning Mueller, 1643.
- Luther, Martin. Saemtliche Schriften. 25 vols. Edited by John George Walch. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1885.
- Meisner, Balthasar. Philosophia Sobria. Jena: Johannes Nisius at Georgius Sengenwaldus, 1655.
- Quenstedt, Johannes Andreas. Theologia Didactico-Polemica Sive Systema Theologicum. 4 vols. in 1. Wittenberg: Sumptibus Johannis Ludolphi Quenstedii, Autoris filii, 1691.
- Schmidt, Sebastian. Collegium Biblicum. 2 vols. 3rd edition. Argentorati: Josias Staedelii, 1689.

## B. Secondary Sources

- Chateaubriand, Francois René. Genie Du Christianisme.  
Lyon: J. B. Pelagaud, 1854.
- Coppleston, Frederick, S. J. A History of Philosophy.  
6 vols. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press,  
1960.
- Englehardt, Moritz von. Valentin Ernst Loescher.  
Stuttgart: Verlag von Samuel Gottlieb Liesching,  
1856.
- Herzog, J. J., and O. Zoeckler, "Socin," Real-Ency-  
klopaedie fuer protestantische Theologie und Kirche.  
Edited by Albert Hauck, J. J. Herzog, and G. L. Plitt.  
Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1877-88.
- Hoenecke, Adolf. Evangelisch-Lutherische Dogmatik. 3  
vols. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1901.
- Joecher, Christian Gottlieb, and Others. Allgemeines  
Gelehrten-Lexikon. 4 vols. Leipzig: Johann Fried-  
rich Gleditschens Buchhandlung, 1751.
- Mueller, J. T., editor. Die symbolischen Buecher.  
Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1898.
- Smith, John E. Reason and God. New Haven and London:  
Yale University Press, 1961.