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# Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) and the Conceptualization of *Theologia* at the Threshold of the »Age of Orthodoxy«

The Making of the Theologian

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Dedication

To my unsung heroine, my tireless companion, my beloved wife, Susan.

This would not have happened without you.

*Te amo*

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# Preface

This study was born out of the classroom, from nearly two decades of engaging students from many different parts of the world in what has come to be called 'theological education.' Of course, that experience gave rise to the endless search for more effective ways of educating students theologically. And that, in turn, has led to participation in the wider conversation about theological education in general. Indeed, Edward Farley ([1983] 2001:3) was right some three and half decades ago when he quipped, 'Complaints about theological education are as old as theological education itself.' While the plethora of literature on the *methodus studii theologici* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and on the *encyclopedia theologica* of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries attest to the truth of this statement, there seems to be a growing foreboding sense of aimlessness and groundlessness in today's theological education that surpasses that of years past.

As church historian Richard Muller (1991:20) pointed out already two and half decades ago, despite the profusion of theological education systems being employed both at home and abroad, the contemporary problem continues of a 'certain intellectual and spiritual distance between dogmatic system and Christian piety or the Christian pulpit.' The modern dichotomy between theory and practice, inadvertently and somewhat ironically initiated by the eighteenth century Pietists (Farley [1983] 2001:61, see also pp. 49–72; cf. Muller 2003:120–121) and exacerbated and conventionalized by the Deweyan Pragmatism of the United States, continues to be the center of conversations about theological education. Consequently, the study of theology is often reduced to the acquisition of mere professional skills or, to a lesser extent, the cultivation of mere personal spirituality. In both cases, such a narrowing of the theological endeavor renders the knowledge component of *theologia* virtually irrelevant. Of course, the opposite is at times also the case whereby the learning of theological knowledge is divorced from personal spirituality and professional practice.

In the search to regain some semblance of bearing for the future, many scholars are looking backwards into the past (e.g., Farley [1983] 2001; Muller 1991; Hütter 2000) – not because of some desire to anachronistically relive the past, but because understanding where we have trod may help us plot a way forward. Such a venture is not risk free. The tendency to imitate an idealized past in the search for direction in the present has often led to shallow, cursory solutions (e.g., adjusting the list of courses, increasing required field work, changing teaching methods). As important as these solutions may be for addressing immediate problems and particular contexts, they are, after all is said and done, exactly that – responses to immediate problems and particular contexts, and therefore inherently fleeting and temporary. Ironically, as Farley ([1983] 2001:3–6) has pointed out, these problems are actually only surface symptoms of what may be a much deeper underlying prob-

lem only to be found at the level of presuppositions upon which theological education is built.

In pondering the many and varied presuppositional influences on theological education, it seems that one stands out above them all – the concept of 'theology' itself. How does our understanding of the very concept of theology shape our approach to theological education? After all, the question of how to study theology is steeped in that seemingly simple, yet surprisingly evasive, question: What is theology in the first place?

This study, then, is not primarily about theological education, per se, but is an attempt to get at that fundamentally important question about the nature of theology. Of course, in doing so, it is also about theological education because any investigation into the *nature* of theology necessarily leads one to ponder how one might appropriate or *study* that theology. In other words, the question regarding theology can never be separated from the question of how the theologian is made[1] – hence the title of this book. It is also the underlying reason for the last chapter.

That question about the nature of theology has been answered in a surprisingly wide variety of ways over the ages and, consequently, has led to significantly different approaches to carrying out the theological task. A study such as this could pick up the history of that rather elusive term *theologia* at nearly any point in the two thousand year history of the Christian Church. There have been times throughout that history, however, when the debate over the nature of theology has surfaced more so than at other times. For example, in the first few centuries after the Church's birth, Augustine delved into the nature of the theological task in his *De doctrina christiana*. Some eight hundred years later, Thomas Aquinas addressed the same topic in his magnum opus, the *Summa theologica*, reflecting and further provoking throughout the late Middle Ages a lengthy debate over the true nature of theology. That same debate was again picked up by Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians in the seventeenth century, that period of time that has been dubbed rather disparagingly the 'Age of Orthodoxy.' And the list could go on.

This study focuses on this 'Age of Orthodoxy' and hones in on one influential theologian within the Lutheran confession of faith. One of the reasons, as will become clear below, is that Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) is somewhat of a transitional figure within Christianity and especially within Lutheranism. His service as ecclesiastical superintendent and then university professor of theology during the first decades of the seventeenth century was during a time of transition in the theological culture of German Lutheranism, occasioned by the reintroduction of Aristotelian thought into the theological conversation of that time. In fact, it was that very Aristotelian thought that formed the framework for and enabled an ongoing conver-

1 I first encountered this idea in a short article on theological education according to Martin Luther: '*Oratio*, *Meditatio*, *Tentatio*: What Makes a Theologian?' (Kleinig 2002). That it has shaped the title of this book reveals Gerhard's keen desire to follow in Luther's footsteps on this very topic.

sation directly addressing the very question that lies at the heart of this study: What is theology?

In one way or another, that conversation revolved around the relation between theology and piety (i.e., personal spirituality including faith and the life lived in faith). Is the study of theology essentially the same as the pursuit of piety or are they two separate endeavors? In other words, what does theology have to do with faith? This is an ever relevant question, as evidenced by the current debate over whether the university should offer courses in 'religious studies' or 'theology.' During Gerhard's time, no one was even remotely suggesting a course of studies like one might find in the 'religious studies' departments of some universities today. Regardless, while there were some who nearly equated theology and piety (e.g., Johann Arndt), there were others who viewed them as distinctly separate endeavors (e.g., Georg Calixt). Most fell in between these extremes, with some leaning more toward the former and others more toward the latter.

This question and the conversation it occasioned were accompanied by other trends within Lutheranism. One of those trends, which has been documented by recent research (see, e.g., Schorn-Schütte 1996, 2000, and the series of essays treating this topic in Dixon & Schorn-Schütte 2003), was the increasing professionalization of the clergy, which naturally coincided with a rise in the theological education level of pastors. There was a necessary correlation between the two. The increasing education of the Lutheran (and Protestant) clergy was due in great part to the fact that pastors were now chiefly responsible for the interpretation of Scripture and the preaching of that Word, rather than focused on the mere facilitation of prescribed rituals (Dixon & Schorn-Schütte 2003:11). So, although it did vary from one territory to the next, a university education with at least some time spent in the post-graduate theology faculty was increasingly common among the clergy as more and more congregations sought better educated pastors.

It is understandable within this context that the concept of theology would also undergo a parallel shift toward increasingly being viewed as an academic discipline within the academy or university setting. Although certainly none of those involved in the conversation would offhandedly dismiss faith as unimportant when studying theology, treating theology as an academic discipline did call into question its relation to faith and piety. Of course, the 'shift' or 'transition' referred to here was far from an abrupt change in direction. It was gradual and more a matter of emphasis than outright assertion. Yet one can detect that emphasis through subtle changes in the way that one spoke about theology. For instance, since other university disciplines were often classified as *habitus* per Aristotle's intellectual virtues, identifying theology as a *habitus* clearly indicated that it, too, was an academic discipline. Another clear indication was the orientation of theology's practical goal. Was theology a matter of personally 'coming' to faith or a matter of 'leading' others to faith? Although subtle, the latter way of talking about theology revealed a more professionalized view of theology that was also more academically inclined. Of course,

shifts throughout history often bring about tension and eventual conflict and this shift was no different. Some feared greatly that viewing theology as a university academic discipline would inevitably drive a wedge between it and faith and piety. And they protested adamantly.

Johann Gerhard and his thoughts about theology are situated squarely in the middle of this shift and the controversies it occasioned. He is, thus, a very transitional figure. His response to the central question of this book reveals a theologian who is pulled in two directions, sensitive to the past, but also attentive to the future, and he incorporates both ways of understanding theology into his own concept of it and into his advice regarding its study. This book seeks to offer a more nuanced understanding of Gerhard's transitional concept of theology that includes in a rather innovative way both the intellect and the will and to investigate its connection to other important aspects of the theologian's life, such as faith, piety, theological study, and pastoral ministry.

As we explore these themes, a few caveats are worth heeding. One of my underlying concerns in this study has been to call into question what I consider are inaccurate and unfair caricatures of the theologians of the so-called 'Age of Orthodoxy' and to promote a more accurate interpretation of what these theologians were about. Surely the responsive nature of Gerhard's statements on theology belies the caricature of seventeenth century theologians as sterile and uncreative. It is also worth clarifying, however, that the 'shift' as talked about in this study and to which Gerhard responds does not at all refer to the supposed shift from the vibrant and creative theology of Luther to the allegedly dull and unresponsive theology of those later theologians who followed the reformer, whether it be Gerhard or others. In the century after Luther, theological treatises, admittedly quite voluminous at times, were an accepted and helpful way of conversing about theological topics that were held to be of the utmost importance. These treatises must be considered alongside works of other genres of literature, often devotional in nature, that reflect a deep concern for personal piety and pastoral care. Even the theological treatises reflect a serious desire to heed what had been inherited from their theological forebears while creatively interacting with contemporary political, social, and ecclesiastical issues (see, e.g., the series of essays in Friedrich, Salatowsky, & Schorn-Schütte 2017).

Moreover, the shift from a personally oriented to a more professionally oriented definition of theology (from *auto-praxis* to *allo-praxis*) should not be interpreted as a shift from a practically oriented theology to one of ivory towers and lofty ideas that had little to do with the common person. This lingering misconception has discolored the 'Age of Orthodoxy' in less than accurate ways, as an increasing number of scholars are beginning to recognize. What may lie behind this misconception is the persistent idea, so very common in contemporary thought, that Christianity (and all religions) falls in the domain of personal feelings and is therefore

devoid of any substantive knowledge and information.[2] Such a view of Christian theology would find no place for it in the university curriculum. Within this mindset, it becomes very difficult to understand how treatises on doctrinal knowledge could be considered in any way practical.

The historical reality is that Lutheran theologians, in contrast to some theologians of other confessions, were almost all agreed that theology was a practical endeavor. In other words, they agreed that one did not study theology purely for the sake of attaining theological knowledge, but one attained that knowledge for a practical purpose. The aforementioned shift was in regard to the *orientation* of that practical purpose as expressed in their definitions of theology, that is, from one practical purpose (salvation of oneself) to another (salvation of others). Of course, those before the shift were very much concerned with pastoral care just as those after the shift were concerned with personal piety. Luther, whose own concept of theology was decidedly *auto*-oriented, was very attentive to the question of pastoral care. In fact, his concern for the salvation of his parishioners at Wittenberg seems to have been one of the underlying motivations for the *95 Theses*, the very spark that set off the entire Reformation.

Nonetheless, the ideal (e.g., definitions of theology) ought not to be so readily separated from the actual (pastoral and church practice). The gradual shift in emphasis in the conceptualizations of theology throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is not insignificant. Many feared the practical repercussions that this shift would bring about in the long-term when it came to church practice and pastoral formation. Not only did their resistance to this shift give rise to serious controversies but their concerns were later picked up by forerunners of the Pietist movement (Friedrich 2004:314–115). Moreover, in important ways these doctrinal statements give us a glimpse into how theologians perceived themselves, their task, and their place within the larger society (cf. Nieden 2006:3, 8). As mentioned earlier, they reflect and contributed to actual social changes and movements, such as the emergence of the clergy as a professional class. The *actual* impact and effect that these statements of the *ideal* had within their historical setting render a close analysis of their content all the more valuable (see Appold 2004:7–8). Hence, more fully understanding Johann Gerhard's carefully crafted statements about the nature of theology provides a helpful complement to existing and future studies on the early modern Protestant clergy.

Of course, one would hope that any historical study such as this goes beyond merely clarifying and elucidating historical facts or even amending certain misconstruals of Gerhard's thinking, important as both of those are. Surely there are benefits for the present and future as well. Indeed, one of the underlying implications is that a study such as this provides what the prominent historian John Lewis Gaddis

2 See *The Idea of a University* (Newman 1907) for an excellent discussion and defense of theology as knowledge in response to contemporary views to the contrary.

(2002:4) has called an 'expanded horizon' for those currently involved in the theological education endeavor. The grinding daily routine and pressing academic responsibilities tempt the theological educator to focus on immediate experiences in striving to understand the predicament of and possible solutions for the study of theology. The problem is that such direct experience is always severely limited. As mentioned earlier, it very seldom leads to deep understanding and, thereby, to enduring solutions. One needs to step back, to regain perspective, and to take a new look from afar. History provides this occasion because it 'lifts us above the familiar to let us experience vicariously what we can't experience directly: a wider view' (Gaddis 2002:5).

Although this study has focused rather narrowly on the thinking of one individual in the seventeenth century and delved deeply into only one aspect of his theology, precisely by doing so it attempts to provide such a 'wider view.' It invites the theologian and the theological educator to venture beyond the limited experience of the present theological education situation and to delve into the unfamiliar landscape of the past – specifically into the thinking of Johann Gerhard who, as senior theology professor at Jena, also faced equally important and pressing questions about theological education. One of those was that deceptively simple, yet enduring, question: What is theology in the first place? The extent to which Gerhard has perhaps offered a way forward in the midst of today's current conversation regarding the relation between doctrine, faith, personal spirituality, and professional practice in what has come to be known as 'theological education' is a question for the reader. It is, at least, worth pondering.

In any case, through Gerhard the theological educator of today is introduced to the theological thinking of another epoch. Horizons are expanded and presuppositions challenged about how theological education could, or perhaps even should, be done. Far from irrelevant and archaic, the research presented here constitutes in many ways a plea for continued dialogue with the theologians (and, therefore, theological educators) of an oft forgotten age as we ponder together how one goes about 'making' the theologian.

Undertaking a study such as this is never a solitary venture, despite what the title page might indicate. I am so very well aware of this. To express the depth of my gratitude to the full breadth of people involved is certainly far beyond the scope of this short preface. Nonetheless, at least a few words are in order

In some ways this book bridges three continents. It is the revised version of a study accepted as a doctoral dissertation by the Theology Faculty of the University of Pretoria in South Africa. Although I started it on the African continent, the vast majority of the research and writing took place in the United States. Prof. Dr. Werner Klän, rector of the *Lutherische Theologische Hochschule* in Oberursel, Germany, was kind enough to serve as my doctoral supervisor and, afterwards, as the editor for the book series in which this book now appears. From our first informal conversations in South Africa to the final revisions of the dissertation and now the

book, his endless encouragement and support have been indispensable. Likewise, my former professor and current mentor, Prof. Dr. Robert Kolb was and continues to be a valuable source of advice and encouragement, as well as a seemingly endless source of knowledge and wisdom when it comes to early modern Lutheranism.

Two individuals have worked tirelessly to 'unlock' the German and Latin writings of early modern theologians such as Johann Gerhard for those of us Anglophones. Many thanks go to both of them: Elmer Hohle and the late Richard Dinda. Their gracious and eager willingness to offer advice regarding particularly difficult Latin texts, to help with translations, and to share unpublished manuscripts made the perusal of original sources all the more feasible.

I owe thanks to my many colleagues at Concordia University Irvine for their encouragement and many a helpful conversation that fed into the pages that follow. Special thanks are due to Steve Mueller, dean of Christ College, for helping me arrange my work load to make room for the necessary researching and writing. I wish to also thank Axel Wittenberg of Neumünster, Germany, for his selfless help in penetrating some of Gerhard's manuscripts in Old German.

My deepest heartfelt gratitude goes to my dear wife, Susan, who patiently and lovingly put up with an absent and preoccupied husband for many a long night and yet remained a stalwart source of encouragement and inspiration. The many sacrifices she has made on my behalf have not gone unnoticed. Similarly, I would like to thank my children, Samuel, Abigail, Caleb, Jesse, and Eliana, for their patient understanding of a father whose time has often been more preoccupied with a man from four hundred years ago and less engaged with them in the here and now.

Finally, I am sure Johann Gerhard would join me in saying: *Soli Deo Gloria*!

# About this Book

Dominating the Wittenberg Reformation was the concern for good pastoral care. Luther, Melanchthon, and their colleagues drafted their plans and appeals for reform in response to the crisis of pastoral care that had driven late medieval theologians and preachers to seek ever cheaper ways of marketing the commodity of grace. Luther broke the mold and changed the paradigm for thinking about pastoral care by discarding and condemning the old system based upon a view of humanity that required human beings to perform good works in order to maintain and secure God's favor, even in the thinking of those who believed that God's prevenient grace initiated the restoration of human relationships with God.[1]

The Wittenberg solution included a redefinition of being Christian that laid aside the dependence on human performance, particularly in ritual forms, in sacred, religious activities. This new delineation of the Christian's existence emphasized that God approaches sinners and does so as a Creator who re-creates sinners into children of God through speaking. The Word of God had initiated all that exists in Genesis 1. That same Word also initiated the Christian life, from rebirth through baptism or some other form of the gospel promise to the motivation and instruction of living out the implications of trusting God's word of forgiveness and new life, centered on what God is saying to his people. Key for this process in Luther's mind was the conveying of the message of Scripture to the people of God and to those outside the faith. Although Luther believed that all the baptized were called to be speaking God's Word to others, key for this conveying was the public office of the pastoral ministry. Therefore, the Wittenberg Reformation was, among other things, a reformation of theological education and the curriculum of the faculty of theology. Biblical interpretation dominated the new curriculum that gradually emerged in the 1520s and became established formally in 1533.[2]

As historical developments occur and there emerge the new needs of the church and new perceptions of how pastoral ministry and its foundations in theological education should function, new issues in theological education and new thinking about the goals and methods of theological education also emerge. In the changing world of the early seventeenth century Johann Gerhard provided leadership for Lutherans in the German-speaking lands and beyond in a number of ways. Once metaphysics had become an important tool for seeking and expressing theological truths, a new quest began to define the precise nature and goals of the theological

1 On Luther's redefinition of being Christian, see Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God. The Wittenberg School and its Scripture-Centered Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 1–10; on the attempts to make pastoral care effective under the medieval system of gaining merit, see Bernd Hamm, *Ablass und Reformation. Erstaunliche Kohärenzen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

2 Walter Friedensburg, *Urkundenbuch der Universität Wittenberg* 1 (Magdeburg: Historische Kommission, 1926):155; cf. Kolb, *Luther and the Enduring Word*, 242–244.

task and for setting forth the presuppositions that governed its practice. Gerhard could not avoid injecting his own person and perceptions into this quest. Personally, he combined a firm command of the highest scholarly methods of the day, an ecumenical vision that brought him into conversation and often critical exchange with representatives of other churches and traditions, and a deep personal piety. Born of his pious upbringing, his illness, and his intensive engagement with Scripture, formed by his belief that God was addressing him directly from its pages, his approach to theology was anchored in his trust in Jesus Christ. This trust and its view of the world exhibited itself as he taught and reflected upon his calling as teacher of God's Word. This combination led him to ponder 'what makes a theologian' in some new ways as he built upon and within the Lutheran tradition of preparing pastors for the service of God's Word in the congregations.

In the wake of the Enlightenment, and into the late twentieth century, Gerhard's period, frequently labeled 'Orthodoxy,' was often criticized, often by those who emphasized the necessity of keeping theology strictly within the bounds of scholarship set by other disciplines. If the criticism did not charge seventeenth century Lutherans with being too scholarly, it at least expressed its distaste for their being scholarly within the scholarly horizons set by the time, horizons determined by the Aristotelian inheritance of almost two millennia of scholarship. Some critics charge the 'Orthodox' of the seventeenth century with not being strict enough in their attempts to convey theology strictly as a scholarly discipline, displaying too much of their own piety – although these critics also complain of computer experts who wrote manuals they could not understand, of physicians who 'had no heart,' or of attorneys whose mastery of the letter of the law overpowered their sense of justice. Others have missed the warmth and vitality of Luther in the seventeenth century dogmatic works. What many of these critics missed in their reading of theologians from Leonhardt Hutter and Jakob Heerbrand to Ernst Valentin Löscher and David Hollaz was precisely how many of them combined the scholarly standards and agendas of their day with a faith and piety that directed theology to its true end in the practice of the faith and of the pastoral office. Johann Gerhard modeled this combination for those who came after him.

Glenn Fluegge brings more than two decades of experience in theological education on two continents, Africa and North America, into dialogue with the experiences that Gerhard gained on a third continent, Europe, nearly four hundred years ago. His cross-cultural sensitivities, cultivated by his work in western and southern Africa, serve him well in plumbing the depths of thinking of the tasks of preparing servants of the Word in our 'post-Constantinian' age on the basis of insights from the 'Constantinian' seventeenth-century context. For at its foundation the disposition that parishioners desire from the servant of the Word remains the same in every age at its core, even as its outward features take on new aspects and attributes.

Fluegge shows how Gerhard went far beyond the early attempts in Wittenberg, especially those of Melanchthon, to use the Aristotelian concept of '*habitus*' to

describe the disposition necessary for the practice of the calling of the minister of God's Word. As is the case with all human beings, the actions of parish pastors grow out of their attitudes, which emerge from their character, which is formed by, as Luther designated, the 'god(s)' people have, that in which they place their trust. The servants of God's Word put into action the ideas they have about the reality of God and what it means to be human with the tools given them, both natural talents and theological learning. The way they practice the trade for which their theological education has prepared them reflects the attitudes they have toward God, other human beings, and all that God has created. Those attitudes have grown out of the character – the sense of how they are to view the world and operate within it – that is formed by that in which they put their trust. Trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, as liberator and life-restorer, molds a temperament and disposition, a personality and character, that generates attitudes that, in turn, produce the actions which convey who Christ is and what he has done for humankind that frames and informs the words which the pastor takes from Scripture to give to his parishioners.

As Fluegge explores how Gerhard viewed the disposition or *habitus* that constitutes the theologian, whom he was aiming to produce for the parishes of his Thuringia, readers come to see what it means that God makes theologians and how he uses professors and parishioners to complete the task. As we consider the challenges and besetting questions regarding the preparation of pastors and the practice of their calling in the twenty-first century, Gerhard is one of those individuals whose thinking rewards further contemplation and imaginative absorption, not only for Lutherans but for the larger Christian community, whom he was addressing as he engaged Roman Catholic, Reformed, and other theological voices in his day. Fluegge's study makes possible a conversation with the potential of great profit for the church in this day with his skillful listening and sprightly presentation of Johann Gerhard's vision, a vision that should command the attention of Christians around the world today.

Robert Kolb
Wolfenbüttel, the Festival of the Holy Trinity 2017

# Introduction

This book is concerned with that deceptively simple question: What is theology? On the one hand, it appears quite uncomplicated. As many an elementary theological textbook has mentioned, the Latinized Greek word '*theo-logia*' essentially means 'speech about God.' And as the late Gerhard Forde (1997:10) was quick to point out, 'All of us are theologians in one way or another. Being a theologian just means thinking and speaking about God.' On the other hand, as helpful as that succinct definition might be, an etymological analysis seldom reveals the underlying nuances and complexities of a word. And, indeed, this would seem to be the case with 'theology.' Of all those 'doing theology' the great variety of approaches within the Christian tradition both past and present would at least seem to belie it merely being a simple matter. As a matter of fact, the concept of *theologia* has experienced quite a few significant shifts in meaning over the last two and half millennia – from originally denoting the Greek mythical stories of the gods (cf. Bayer 2007:3–9), to referring to the mystical knowledge of the one true God, to identifying a disposition of the human soul, to its commonly accepted definition today as a deposit or collection of Christian truths, or as is perhaps more often the case, as a set of learned skills and techniques specifically aimed at the pastoral ministry (Farley [1983] 2001:49–98). So the question of the nature of theology is ever pertinent. But how do we get at that question and its rather elusive response?

## 1. Background

### 1.1 Age of Orthodoxy

It is far beyond the scope of this study to undertake the gargantuan task of tracing the nature of *theologia* and its consequent study throughout the history of Christianity.[1] As helpful as such studies are, their breadth seldom allows for the depth that we are looking for here. In order to examine the concept of *theologia* at the deeper and more nuanced level of presuppositions, a more feasible strategy would limit its focus to one particular era, and, furthermore, to one particular individual. And that is the approach adopted here.

This study limits its field of research to what is most commonly referred to as the age of 'Orthodoxy,'[2] especially within Lutheranism.

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1 For such an overview, though mostly focused on Roman Catholic theology, see Congar 1968; for a more focused study on theology's Medieval shift towards an academic discipline, see the more recent and helpful overview by Evans 1980; for a broad survey of the history of the study of theology, though mostly focused on the literature associated with it, see both volumes of Briggs 1916.

2 This is a contested term and one that I use with hesitation because of reasons similar to those identified by Kolb (2006:431). The term 'orthodoxy' often carries the connotation of 'dead' and

Although there is not yet agreement on the chronological limits of this historical period, nor even on its terminology (see the helpful summary in Kolb 2006:431–434), of particular significance for this study is the fact that it occurred after the Reformation period and before the age of Enlightenment. Both were eras of tremendous widespread transition, perhaps remarkably so with respect to the commonly accepted understanding of the nature of *theologia* and its study. A focus on the period between the two will allow a look at the situation after the dust has settled from the rather turbulent years of the Reformation but before the radical changes that took place during the Enlightenment. Theologian and historian Robert Kolb (2006:430) has called this the 'wide field of Lutheran Orthodoxy' and he invites researchers to 'venture onto this turf, much more fascinating than it is rumored to be, and perhaps even to stake out a claim to the many vacant lots still available.' This study aims to make at least a small contribution to this ongoing effort.

## 1.2 Johann Gerhard

The age of Lutheran Orthodoxy, depending on the definition, spans a time frame of almost two hundred years. Such a wide scope would not allow us to dig deep enough to gain insight into deeper underlying themes and patterns that might very well be overlooked in a cursory overview stretching over two centuries – the narrower the study, the deeper the study. Such a deep study, albeit focused on one individual, will shed light generally on the time in which that individual lived. In other words, he will serve as a window allowing us to catch a glimpse of the broader context of the times.

Of course, this is only true if the individual is representative of his time. Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) is such an individual. Standing as a bridge between what Preus (1970:44–46) has labeled 'the golden age of Orthodoxy' and 'high orthodoxy,' Gerhard is a 'link between two eras,' a transitional figure holding on to older trends while adapting to new ideas (Appold 1998:23; see also Appold 2008:95–97). Kolb (2006:432) identifies him as a 'kind of signpost for the beginning of "high orthodoxy"' and Scharlemann (1964:8) viewed him more than any other theologian of his time as a 'point of convergence' of the various patterns of thought in his day.

After Martin Luther (1483–1546) and Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586), Johann Gerhard came to be recognized as the third preeminent theologian of the Lutheran Reformation, even during his own lifetime (cf. Fischer [1723] 2000:98–99).[3] He

'boring' accompanied by a marked lack of creativity in the life of the church. This could not be further from the truth. As we will see below, Gerhard was a prolific writer of many genres of literature beyond that of 'dogmatics,' a pastor very concerned for the pious Christian lives of his parishioners, and a professor who was as equally concerned with the pious and pastoral cultivation of his students as with their dogmatic knowledge.

3 In 1635 Michael Walther wrote the following in a letter to Gerhard's successor, Salomon Glassius (1593–1656): 'That heavenly David, Christ Jesus, has from the beginning of the time of a very necessary Reformation seen and nourished more theologians of this sort in the orthodox Church,

was a prolific writer on a wide array of theological subjects ranging from his *opus magnum* of nine large quarto volumes (later published in twenty-three volumes), *Loci theologici* (1610–1625) to his pastoral devotional writings such as *Meditationes sacrae* (1606). The former was and still is celebrated as one of the greatest systematic writings in Lutheran history. More than two hundred years after Gerhard's death, C. F. W. Walther, a scholar on Lutheran Orthodoxy, described his *Loci* as the 'most glorious, most complete work in this field that has ever been achieved within Christendom, and until the Last Day it will probably remain the model for all who labor in this field' (as quoted in the editor's introduction to Gerhard [1625] 2009:xvii). The latter writing became immensely popular throughout Europe (even across confessions), was reprinted some 242 times, and translated into nearly every European language. Besides Arndt's *True Christianity* (1605/1610), it was the most successful Lutheran writing at the time in all of Europe.

Others have undertaken the task of recording the life of Gerhard.[4] Such lies outside the task of the current study; nonetheless, a brief sketch is in order. Gerhard was born of noble lineage on October 17, 1582 in the town of Quedlinburg in northern Saxony. He grew up in that town and attended school there studying humanities (including languages). His father, Bartholomew Gerhard, was the treasurer of that city until the bubonic plague took his life in 1598. At the age of fifteen, Gerhard too fell dreadfully ill from that same plague but ended up recovering. During that time he was pastored and mentored by Johann Arndt (1555–1621), who was the current pastor at Quedlinburg. The two would remain in close life-long contact and friendship. In 1598 Gerhard left to continue his studies at the lyceum in Halberstadt. After completing his humanity studies, he entered the University of Wittenberg in 1599 and studied the ordinary undergraduate studies in philosophy (i.e., history, logic, ethics, mathematics, physics, and anthropology), after which he took up the study of medicine. In 1603, following the advice of Johann Arndt, he made a decision to honor a previous vow he had made at the age of fifteen during his dreadful illness and subsequently enrolled at the University of Jena to study theology. That same year he received his master's degree and began to give private lectures in philosophy. At the end of that year he again fell so ill that he wrote his last will and testament expecting to die. He recovered a few weeks later, but that testament included a confession of faith which would later serve as the outline for his *Loci*

truly courageous and very learned. Three of them, however, have without any doubt taken first place ahead of all the rest. There is no one who can reach easily their singular gifts and activities, namely, our countrymen Luther, Chemnitz and Gerhard.' (Fischer [1723] 2000:98–99)

4 The most detailed biography of Gerhard's life that I know of is Erdmann Rudolph Fischer's *Vita Ioannis Gerhardi* from 1723. An English translation entitled *The Life of John Gerhard* ([1723] 2000) is now available. Despite Fischer's rather flattering portrayal of Gerhard, the work appears quite well-researched (note the title and preface, pp. 1–11) and, therefore, remarkably reliable. A shorter summarized, yet still accurate, German version was written by Boettcher (1858): *Das Leben Dr. Johann Gerhards*. Other sketches in English of his life and works include Schmeling (2011) and Scharlemann's (1964:37–43) shorter overview.

*theologici*. He left the University of Jena for a time to attend the University of Marburg and study under the famed Balthasar Mentzer, with whom he remained lifelong friends. When that university reverted to Calvinism, he returned to Jena in order to finish his studies, receiving his doctorate in 1606. At that point, he turned down several other teaching opportunities to become the ecclesiastical superintendent of Heldburg. Part of his task was to organize regular theological disputations at the new gymnasium at nearby Coburg. During his time at Heldburg he married a young woman in 1608, but she died in 1611 shortly after the death of their only child. He married again in 1614 and his second wife bore him ten children. She and six of their children outlived him. He continued in this role for nine years, until 1615 when he was offered and accepted a call to serve as ecclesiastical regional superintendent at Coburg. A year later in 1616, Gerhard was offered and accepted a professorship at his alma mater, the University of Jena. He remained at the University of Jena until an illness took his life in May of 1637. While a professor at Jena, Gerhard's reputation was such that he received (and declined) some twenty-two calls to other positions and many sought after his advice as they had Luther's a century earlier (Preus 1970:52–53).

Gerhard's prolific writing career spanned his entire professional life, both as a pastor and ecclesiastic administrator and as a theology professor. As such, he writes from a somewhat unique perspective. As we proceed to examine in some depth some of these writings, we will attempt to place them in their context within this biographic framework.

## 2. Statement of Problem

### 2.1 Need for Microhistories

Oswald Bayer (2007:9) has pointed out that any understanding of *theologia* has to eventually deal with the 'relation and tension between faith and knowledge, spirituality (*pietas*) and scholarship (*eruditio*), the affects ... and the intellect, the heart and the head.' He further contends that Luther essentially equated his new understanding of *theologia* with faith, but through the use of his renowned *Trias* (*oratio*, *meditatio*, *tentatio*) the reformer was able to unite the two extremes into what he called the passive life (*vita passiva*) (Bayer 2007:24). That tension continued throughout the history of Lutheranism. In their advice on how to study *theologia*, Lutheran theologians, including Gerhard, assigned various roles to Luther's *Trias*.

The middle of the eighteenth century witnessed momentous changes in the arena of theological studies and, for the first time, Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693–1755) openly challenged the legitimacy of applying Luther's threefold theological method to academic theological studies. Mosheim and his later contemporary, Johann Salomo Semler (1725–1791), steered the study of theology in the direction of

becoming more 'scientific'[5] (i.e., academic, scholarly) in order to render it more acceptable to an enlightened society. The idea of *Wissenschaft* (*scientia*) in the modern sense of the term was popularized by the great German scientist Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) and made its way into the study of theology (Lutheran and Reformed) through individuals such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) (cf. Wischmeyer 2005:250–254). Through Schleiermacher's *Brief Outline of Theological Study* (1811) the idea of theological study as 'theological encyclopedia,' which had already become popular half a century earlier, was given its conceptual grounding and justification. *Theologia* permanently shifted in meaning from a *habitus* to a collection of 'sciences' or what we might call 'academic disciplines' aimed at the education of clergy. As a result, according to Farley ([1983] 2001:73–98), since the beginning of the nineteenth century, theological studies have become progressively more "scientific" and, consequently, increasingly separated into distinct autonomous disciplines, each with its own method, means, and end.

This metanarrative stretching over several hundred years between the Reformation on the one end and the Enlightenment (and modernity) on the other proves helpful and such surveys have a necessary place in historiography. Notwithstanding, they depend on and are only as accurate as more focused narratives. And that is precisely the problem. As mentioned above, early modern Lutheranism in the 'Age of Orthodoxy' remains ripe for additional research in order to fill in the significant gaps that 'cry out for study' (Kolb 2006:429, 438). There is, therefore, a persistent need for 'microhistories' to clarify, adjust, and augment the existing macrohistories of early modern Lutheranism and Protestantism. Such microhistorical analyses will not content themselves with an overview from a distance, but will hone in on one particular individual, focus attention on one specific area of that person's thought, and delve into the texts that he or she has left us. One of those historical figures who begs further attention is Johann Gerhard (cf. Steiger 1996:321) and, since he is posed at a transitional place in the larger post-Reformation Lutheran metanarrative, honing in on him and his thinking with regard to *theologia* will contribute significantly to the ongoing task of clarifying and sharpening the parameters of that metanarrative.

5 The Latin term and concept of *scientia* is always difficult to render into acceptable English (see the 'Translators' Preface' to Bayer 2007:xx-xxi). I have chosen a straightforward translation using the common English term 'science' or 'scientific' with the following important caveat: Those terms as used in this study do *not* refer to the natural or physical sciences, but rather to the neo-Aristotelian concept of *scientia* and correlate to the early modern German idea of 'Wissenschaft' or, when applied to theology, 'wissenschaftliche Theologie.' At times I also use the terms 'academic discipline' and 'academic theology' more or less interchangeably with 'science' and 'scientific theology' respectively.

## 2.2 Need for Correctives

Such clarification is much needed because some less than accurate metanarratives are rather deeply entrenched in modern thinking. Therein lays one of the problems that have, generally speaking, plagued the study of the history of 'Orthodoxy.' The original 'recorders' of this history were scholars (e.g., Gottfried Arnold) heavily influenced by Pietism and consequently ultracritical of the 'Orthodox' theologians. These critical ideas were then passed on and replicated by later generations of historians, many of whom neglected reading the primary sources convinced that there was nothing of value to be discovered.[6] The 'Age of Orthodoxy' was and, to a certain extent, continues to often be condemned and/or brushed aside as dry, dead, stubborn, and unnecessarily polemical and systematic, an age that regrettably lost the dynamism and spirit of the original reformers. The tendency of the 'Orthodox' theologians of the seventeenth century to employ Aristotelian categories has attracted accusations of intermingling philosophy with theology and betraying the fundamental principles of Luther, Melanchthon, and the other reformers – hence the stigma behind the label 'protestant scholasticism.' And perhaps more than anything else, the 'Age of Orthodoxy' has often been accused of 'dogmatism' at the expense of personal piety or pastoral care and concern. The last is particularly surprising in light of, for example, Gerhard's numerous pastoral and devotional works such as *Meditationes sacrae* (1606), *Exercitium pietatis* (1612), *Enchiridion consolatorium* (1611), and his five volume work on *Schola pietatis* (1622–1623), with the aim of teaching Christians the purpose, virtue, and methods of acquiring piety. Gerhard was also an active churchman, as was normal at the time, and he published several collections of sermons.[7] Fortunately, there is a growing number of voices over the past decades that have challenged the less than appreciative views on Orthodoxy and offer more favorable evaluations that seek to interpret the age within its own context (see, e.g., Preus 1970; Steiger 1996b; Appold 1998; Muller 2003). Nonetheless, old voices are sometimes difficult to silence.

Any study of Gerhard faces another challenge. As Steiger (1996b:334–335) puts it: How does one reconcile 'Gerhard, the dogmatician' with 'Gerhard, the pastor and mystic?' In other words, how does one investigate Gerhard's writings without pitting the Gerhard of the *Loci theologici* against the Gerhard of the *Meditationes sacrae*? In a recent dissertation, Kent Heimbigner (2001:10–18) identified four different ways in which Gerhard has historically been interpreted (the 'forget Gerhard' position; Gerhard the 'dead orthodoxist'; Gerhard the proto-pietist; Ger-

6 Preus (1970:19–21), Steiger (1996:320–321), and Appold (1998:1–2) likewise bemoan this tendency among historians.

7 Some of these collections are currently available in English: *Postilla: An Explanation of the Sunday and Most Important Festival Gospels of the Whole Year*, vols 1 ([1613] 2001) and 2 ([1613–1616] 2007). He also published a collection of devotional sermonic contemplations entitled *An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ* ([1622] 1998).