

The Significance of Humanist Educational Methods for Reformation Theology

By James M. Kittelson

The contribution of humanism to the beginnings of the Reformation has elicited far more scholarly interest than has its role in evangelical theology as such. In 1937 Gerhard Ritter (1888-1967) concluded his seminal inaugural lecture at Freiburg by noting that the humanists brought with them into their second careers as reformers and theologians tendencies to emphasize the symbolic and the spiritual in the elements of the Lord's Supper, at the expense of the Real Presence, and to place more weight upon sanctification over justification in the whole of evangelical theology. Following Ritter, others suspected that the influence of humanism was more a »deformation« of Luther's theology than a positive contribution to it. In 1959 Bernd Moeller thus repeated Ritter's judgments regarding the Real Presence and sanctification without further comment, while in 1963 Lewis W. Spitz followed suit, although he at least provided a gracious footnote to Ritter's original conclusions.¹

And so the matter stands. This general view has even penetrated discussions of the transition from Calvin to Calvinism, as in Brian Armstrong's treatment of the »humanist«, Moïse Amyraut's (1596-1664) opposition to double predestination. In much the same manner, James Estes extended the arguments of Karl Holl (1866-1926) and his student, Wilhelm Pauck (1901-1981), according to whom the creation of the »landesherrliches Kirchenregiment« was fundamentally the work of Melancthon rather than of Luther, by assigning also to Johannes Brenz (1499-1570) co-responsibility for the creation of what became the »state church«, and not just in Prussia.²

1 Gerhard RITTER: Die geschichtliche Bedeutung des deutschen Humanismus. HZ 127 (1923), 393-453; Gerhard RITTER: Erasmus und der deutsche Humanistenkreis am Oberrhein. FR 1937, 8-14; Bernd MOELLER: Die deutschen Humanisten und die Anfänge der Reformation. ZKG 70 (1959), 46-61; Lewis W. SPITZ: The religious renaissance of the German humanists. Cambridge, MA 1963, 1-19. 267-293.

2 Brian G. ARMSTRONG: Calvinism and the Amyraut heresy: Protestant scholasticism and humanism in seventeenth-century France. Madison, Wis. 1969, 120-221. 263-269; Karl HOLL:

This far-too-brief brief recitation of the status of the question ever since the beginnings of the Luther Renaissance could be taken to imply that the twentieth century, for all its assiduous research, has not really contributed much by way of a new, deepened, and general understanding of the influence of humanism on the Reformation. Such is not the case, if only because at least one old and much beloved idea is now regarded as almost self-evidently untrue. There are, to be sure, still scholars, such as Erwin Iserloh (1915-1996), who so misread the texts of Erasmus and Luther on the freedom and bondage of the will, as to argue that Erasmus, and with him the Church of Rome, granted a warmer welcome to unfettered learning than did the evangelical theologians.³ As noted, few people today would take this position even half seriously. They know that the issue really centered on the place of theological assertions in true religion, and they also know that, following Luther's lead, evangelical theologians accorded the greatest hospitality to all of learning on matters having to do with every aspect of creation, with the one exception being the fate of humans *coram deo*. In practical terms, this much is precisely what Lukas Osiander (1534-1604) intended in the controversy with Johannes Sturm (1507-1589) over the *condemnamus*, when he declared that Sturm was fully qualified to comment on the great authors of antiquity but the reach of his opinions far exceeded the grasp of his understanding when theological matters were at stake.⁴

The rejection of the facile identification of humanism with modern and uncommitted freedom of inquiry is itself a positive contribution to the status of the question, and one of which twentieth century scholars may be justly proud. Other

Die Kulturbedeutung der Reformation. In: Ders.: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*. Bd. 1: Luther. 6., new rev. ed. Tü 1932, 468-543 = Karl HOLL: *The cultural significance of the Reformation*/ intr. by Wilhelm Pauck; transl. by Karl and Barbara Hertz and John H. Lichtblau. Cleveland 1959; James Martin ESTES: *Christian magistrate and state church: the reforming career of Johannes Brenz*. Toronto 1982, 33 f.

3 Erwin ISERLOH: *Evangelismus und Katholische Reform in der italienischen Renaissance*. In: *Renaissance – Reformation: Gegensätze und Gemeinsamkeiten*; Vorträge, gehalten anlässlich eines Kongresses des Wolfenbütteler Arbeitskreises für Renaissanceforschung vom 20. bis 23. November 1983/ ed. by August Buck. Wiesbaden 1984, 35-46; and earlier for the faintly silly conclusions of Enno VAN GELDER: *The two Reformations of the sixteenth century: a study of the religious aspects and consequences of the Renaissance and Humanism*. The Hague 1961.

4 Lucas OSIANDER: *Theologiae doctoris antisturmius vnus*. Tü 1579, 31 f. Assuming the availability of sources, a comparable study on humanists' claims during the second half of the century to render theological judgments could be illuminating with respect to the nature of late humanism as well as the late Reformation.

negative results that have called other old truths into question also have their value. In one such instance, all attempts at providing nuances to the definition of the central term – as in civic and, most notably, »biblical humanism« – have done nothing to enlarge our understanding of the abiding influence of humanism upon evangelical theology. To take Ritter's first conclusion, one cannot conclude that humanists *as such* – even biblical humanists – tended to memorialize or spiritualize the Lord's Supper at the expense of the Real Presence in the bread and the wine. Some did and some did not, as simple comparisons freely demonstrate: Brenz was as thoroughly grounded in humanist learning as was Johannes Oekolampad (1482-1531). By the same token, Melanchthon did write the »Augsburg Confession«, and he can hardly be held responsible for what Reformed apologists tried to make of the substitution of »cum« pane et vino for in pane et vino by way of the Variata. But a glance at the »Wittenberg concord« – where the troublesome cum first appeared in a formal confession – and the use to which it was put in cities and territories throughout south Germany should end the discussion, now as it did then.

Much the same may be said with regard to Ritter's observation concerning sanctification and justification. There is no person-to-person correlation between those who were trained in the studia humanitatis and a tendency to emphasize sanctification in general, nor, as in the portrayal by Steffen Kjeldgaard-Pedersen, in the careers of individuals such as Johann Agricola (1492/94-156), whose acquaintance with the works of Erasmus played no role in his theological formation nor in his controversy with Melanchthon regarding preaching the Law to Christians.⁵ In sum, and assuming that tendencies, like beauty, lie in the eye of the beholder, both of Ritter's conclusions, no matter how often they have been repeated, collapse under the weight of the comparative evidence.

The second negative conclusion that comes from more recent research is rather like the first, although it is even more compelling. To jump forward into the late sixteenth century and the negotiations that led to the »Formula of concord«, no one has advanced beyond a certain hazy impressionism to anything like a precise depiction of the realities regarding the influence of humanism on evangelical theology. One cannot draw reliable conclusions from even the Formulators' own

5 For example, James M. KITTELSON; Ken SCHURB: The curious histories of the Wittenberg concord. CThQ 50 (1986), 119-137; Steffen KJELLGARD-PEDERSEN: Gesetz, Evangelium und Buße: theologiegeschichtliche Studien zum Verhältnis zwischen dem jungen Johann Agricola (Eisleben) und Martin Luther. Leiden 1983, 213-278, for Agricola's independent mindedness from the beginning.

attitudes toward Melanchthon himself, let alone humanism in general. Should there be any doubts on this matter, the briefest reference to Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575) should turn all hopes for order or pattern into vapor. A learned humanist historian, his views on original sin were also condemned in the »Formula of concord«, but not because there was anything particularly humanistic about them. Quite the contrary. The condemnations focused on the distinctions Flacius drew from Aristotle (384-322) and used in a thoroughly scholastic fashion, no matter how strenuously he insisted that he used »accident« and »substance« as metaphors, rather than ontological presuppositions in his depiction of the human will.⁶ Nonetheless, one positive conclusion is inescapable: with respect to the influence of humanism alone, research in the century has been far more fruitful on the subject of *how* the Reformation came to be than it has with respect to *what* it came to be.

The temptation to speculate about the factors that led to this state of affairs is almost overwhelming. For the present, however, it is enough to observe that the assigned theme for these observations very cleverly, and with one stroke, side-steps a host of problems. Thus, it does not concern the influence of humanism or of humanists as such on evangelical theology. Instead the subject is limited to the role of humanist pedagogy – the German, »Pädagogik«, is a better word if only because so few native English speakers attach a precise meaning to »pedagogy« – in what amounted to the transmission of evangelical theology. The advantages of this move, in addition to winnowing out the chaff from the wheat of the more general subject, should be obvious. Now, the mind concentrates on something far more concrete than the ephemeral »influence« of one thinker or text upon another. For this bankrupt exercise in the history of ideas, the present framing of the issues substitutes, in a very practical way, convictions and thoughts as they were conveyed from one person to another through formal schooling. The chief advantage of this approach, however prosaic, is obvious: it rests on relatively hard evidence in the form of curricula, books, and theses for academic disputation that are readily available. It is therefore possible to know in some detail both what teachers taught and how they taught it. Finally, because the investigation can be extended to cover at least two full generations of students, some of whom also

⁶ In general, see the noble effort in the introduction to Robert KOLB: *Andreae and the Formula of concord: six sermons on the way to Christian unity*. StL 1977, 9-57. On Flacius's fate in Strasbourg, James M. KITTELSON: *Humanism in the theological faculties of Lutheran universities during the late Reformation*. In: *The harvest of humanism in Central Europe: essays in honor of Lewis W. Spitz*/ ed. by Manfred P. Fleischer. StL 1992, 142-144, nn. 12-16.

became teachers and professors, it is, at least in principle, possible to gain some impression of what they learned and the role that humanist pedagogy played in the process.

The following subheadings will be useful in capitalizing on these advantages in order to assess the significance of humanist pedagogy for evangelical theology: I. a sketch of the importance and role of formal education in the spread of Reformation religious convictions; II. an outline of humanist educational methods, regardless of the subject; III. examples of how these methods shaped Luther's personal and intellectual journey, i. e. evangelical theology, into a transferable academic commodity. The over-arching thesis is that these methods not only ensured that the Reformation would endure in one form or another but also laid part of the foundation for Lutheran Orthodoxy, albeit in an unexpected way and with extraordinary materials.

I The Place of Formal Education.

Leif Grane, in his recent book »Martinus noster« looks at this subject from the standpoint of the young humanist recruits to the Reformation, and observes,

»many of those who were now [after 1519] ready to accompany Luther remained humanists, but by joining him in rejection of the papacy were made free to try out their ideas in practice, as soon as they had the opportunity. ... The impatience would be satisfied. Now it was going to happen. ... Also in Wittenberg the humanist programme of learned studies was taken up, as it had to be if the reformation should prevail.«⁷

No author can be chastized for not having written two books when one satisfies the objectives that he has set for himself. This much Grane certainly does. On the other hand, one need only take one more step, and move to the next reasonable question, to discover that Luther fully met, in the most public fashion imaginable, the young humanists' conviction, first acquired from Erasmus and others, that proper education in the *pie et bonae litterae* was the way to create a truly good and Christian society. Indeed, it is at least arguable that Luther himself was already on this very same road before the Leipzig Disputation, and in spite of the poverty of his own training in the *studia humanitatis* and the small stages on

7 Leif GRANE: *Martinus noster: Luther in the German reform movement 1518-1521*. MZ 1994, 296-297; see also Leif GRANE: *Modus loquendi theologicus: Luthers Kampf um die Erneuerung der Theologie (1515-1518)*. Leiden 1975, where he treats the subject principally in terms of Luther's own development, beginning with the lectures on Romans and proceeding to his relations with the *viae*.

which he walked as an Augustinian friar and a professor of theology at Germany's least distinguished university. The »Disputatio against scholastic theologians«, predated the 95 Theses, and the appointment of Melanchthon to the arts faculty just followed them. The triumphal letter about the victory of the focus on the ancient sources, to the detriment of the »more recent«, is roughly coterminous with the Heidelberg Disputation, after which Luther tried to explain what was taken as his version of the new wave to his former teachers and left them just shaking their heads in stunned disbelief. Nor did he ignore the matter in his famous three treatises of 1520. Among the specific reforms commended to the Christian nobility was, »The universities need a thorough reformation. This I say, no matter whom it offends.«⁸ Signing his name, »Eleutherius«, the free one, for a time was not an affectation but the marischino cherry on top of an ice cream sundae that the young found most enticing.

There is more to the story. It is one thing to favor educational reforms in general and quite another to insist upon them and enact them in order to produce an outcome. At least for Luther, what he sought to gain through educational reforms changed, not in its fundamentals but as a matter of nuanced priority, between his two treatises on public schooling of 1524 and 1530. The weight in the former falls almost entirely on the utility of the liberal arts in producing a civil and learned citizenry, »the greatest bulwark« for any municipality, far greater than one provided by the bravest, largest and best trained and equipped military force. But the weight shifted in the second to the absolute and urgent necessity of creating a learned clergy and providing sufficient training for all in evangelical theology, so that even those who were not specifically destined for offices in the church could become »emergency pastors« in the case of need.⁹

The reasons for this shift in Luther's emphasis are easy enough to identify, but they are also irrelevant to present purposes. The critical point is that what Luther recommended in 1524 and more pointedly in 1530 was happening throughout

8 James M. KITTELSON: Learning and education: phase two of the Reformation. In: *Die dänische Reformation vor ihrem internationalen Hintergrund = The Danish Reformation against its international background*/ ed. by Leif Grane and Kai Hørby. GÖ 1990, 149-163; Leif GRANE: Teaching the people: the education of the clergy and the instruction of the people in the Danish Reformation Church. In: *Die dänische Reformation ...*, 164-184.

9 James M. KITTELSON: Luther the educational reformer. In: *Luther and learning: the Wittenberg University Luther Symposium*/ ed. by Marilyn J. Harran. Selinsgrove, PA; LO; Toronto 1985, 95-114; WA 15, 44, 11-33; 30 II, 546, 7-12 / 23-28, for Luther's proposal. See also James M. KITTELSON: Luther's impact on universities – and the reverse. CThQ 48 (1984), 23-38, for this aspect of the subject from Luther's point of view, and Grane: *Martinus noster*, 138-140.

evangelical cities and territories before he set pen to paper, even the first time. One of the initial acts of Wolfgang Capito (1478-1541), Martin Bucer (1491-1551), and Kaspar Hedio (1494-1552) in Strasbourg was to begin two series of lectures on evangelical theology, one for the laity in the vernacular and one for the clergy in Latin. With the clergy, Capito explained, »We treat everything somewhat more fully.« He also reported that »soon the auditors were so numerous that they would not fit into my modest quarters«, which happened to include the canons' hall for chapter meetings at the collegiate church of St. Thomas. Moreover, these informal courses bore fruit. When the real crisis came in Strasbourg in fall 1524, Capito carried a majority of the canons of St. Thomas with him in a dispute with the chapter, and then he and his colleagues supported – virtually without resistance from the remaining local clergy – a decree according to which all the city's clergy would henceforth be citizens, would pay taxes as individuals, and would be subject to the city's courts.¹⁰ Education, that is, theological education in which the educators carried humanist pedigrees, led to conversion, or at least acquiescence to revolutionary changes in the status of the clergy.

These early beginnings to one side, the decade of the 1530s marks the onset of educational reform in a new hybrid that brought humanists and evangelical theology together in the same undertaking. Strasbourg's famous Gymnasium was fully founded in 1534 with the calling of Johannes Sturm and the establishment of two funds to support candidates for ministry who otherwise would have been unable to pursue their studies. The latter began with room and board at the home of one of the pastors in the church who was also a professor in the Academy, and this arrangement evolved into a version of the medieval bursa in the form of the *collegia praedicatorum* or »preachers' colleges«, whose members followed the regular lectures of the preceptors in the *studia humanitatis* as well as those of the professors in theology. A reform of the University of Tübingen also began in 1534, with Bucer as one of its chief external advisors, continued with the founding of Marburg in 1529, the reestablishment of Copenhagen under the leadership of Johannes Bugenhagen (1485-1558), with the assistance of Hans Tausen (1494-1561) in the 1530s, and so forth. The later part of the century featured further foundings, such as Königsberg in 1544, Jena in 1558, and Helmstedt in 1575. Per-

The most comprehensive and recent work on the general theme is Marilyn J. HARRAN: *Martin Luther: learning for life*. StL 1997.

- 10 For Strasbourg, which was typical of the new foundations, Anton SCHINDLING: *Humanistische Hochschule und freie Reichstadt: Gymnasium und Akademie in Straßburg, 1538-1621*. Wiesbaden, 1977, 18-67.

haps the most common pattern, particularly of the later establishments, is that they grew from lesser institutions, such as Strasbourg, that nonetheless included a semi-higher faculty that gave regular lectures in theology and sponsored theological disputations for the training of pastors. Nor do educational institutions as such tell the whole story. The first »textbook« to employ humanist pedagogy was doubtless Melanchthon's *Loci communes*, the 1521 edition of which Luther commended, and the first edition of the most famous in this genre, Calvin's *Institutes*, appeared in 1536. The agenda was clear: Reformation would occur via the methods of humanist education, as well as by princely or municipal legislation that abolished the celebration of the Mass.¹¹

II Humanist Pedagogy: The Loci Method

It is a truism that before the Enlightenment learning and education were bound to the texts of classical and Christian antiquity. It nonetheless remains necessary to emphasize that this statement holds for high and late scholasticism just as strongly as it did for the humanists and educators, beginning with Rudolph Agricola (1444-1485) in Germany, who turned the insights of Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) and Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457) into a complete educational program. Even as late as when Luther himself was a beginning theological student, the heart of the curriculum was the *cursus biblicus*, which Luther and his contemporaries followed and then used at the beginnings of their own academic careers. Lectures on the more recent theologians were the province of *professores extraordinarii* and were strictly elective. One who gave such lectures at Freiburg and then became both a humanist and perhaps Erasmus's closest confidante, the renowned Hebraist, Capito, bemoaned the time he spent as a professor *extraordinarius* while lecturing »for pay«, as he termed it, on Johannes Duns Scotus (1265-1308) around the year 1512. The irony is that while he, the humanist, lectured on the scholastic theologian, Luther was even then beginning a career in which he – the one supposedly so influenced by the *viae* – never lectured as a professor *ordinarius* on any text other than the Bible.¹² His external career thus followed precisely the same, that is, the common, pattern.¹³

11 Kittelson: Learning and education, 151-154, for an analysis of when and under what pressures education moved to the forefront of the reformers' agenda.

12 For an example of the endurance of this educational program, see John C. Rule: A career in the making: the education of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Marquis de Torcy. French historical studies 39 (Raleigh, NC 1996), 975-980.

The lesson here is simplicity itself. In the first place, the sources for this inquiry must center on biblical materials, and not on the more systematic treatments of evangelical theology, such as *loci communes*, or the most learned of Reformation controversial writings. In addition, whether a professor or student read the Bible is of no importance whatsoever to this undertaking. The only matter of potential significance is how one read it and then what one thereby conveyed to others about it. The how was the *loci* or *topoi* method and the consequent what was a tendency, thanks to the educational task at hand, to order the text according to rhetorical categories. As a consequence, the exact teachings that a theologian drew from the text pale, at least at the outset, into insignificance by comparison with the professor's actual manner of handling the text. The center of this endeavor remains therefore the text itself and the reading of it.

The *loci* method for interpreting texts can be reported briefly and simply or at great length and complexity. If only to hold fast to the humanist tradition of *docta ignorantia*, the shorter, simpler road is to be preferred in nearly every instance. In sum, the humanists asserted that the text spoke to the main points of the larger subject of which it was a part. To be sure, some texts addressed only one subset of the issues at hand, while others might more grandly treat the whole. But the purpose of the exegete's entire undertaking remained the same: to move the hearer or reader not so much to intellectual assent as to personal agreement with the point of the text itself. As a consequence, and precisely because the reader or lecturer claimed to penetrate into the mind and intentions that lay behind the *nuda verba* to their »spirit«, which gave them form, the text took on a life of its own. In addition, what gave the text its authority was some element in it that led to a fruitful interplay between its author and reader or hearer. This process thus enlivened not just the text but its recipient as well, to the point that the objective was not philosophy as such but »the fruit of philosophy«, as John of Salisbury (circa 1115-1180) had it centuries earlier, that is, *sapientia* or wisdom, the guide of life. In this way, side-by-side with their version of an ordered approach, the *studia humanitatis* were at their most human, even, for example, should they have nothing in particular to say about subjects such as philosophical or theological anthropology.¹⁴

13 James K. KITTELSON: Wolfgang Capito: from humanist to reformer. Leiden 1975, 15 ff. Capito to Bonifacius [Wolfhart], [mid-1521]: »Quoties tum votis expectivi eam dicendi facultatem quae sufficeret ecclesiasti, quoties gemui fraudem immensus scoticis commentariis, quoties reliquae farragini disputatorum theologorum navavi operam«; Basel, Kirchenarchiv: 25a, 244^v.

14 See, for example, Jeremy BENTLEY: *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament scholarship in the Renaissance*. Princeton 1983.

It is something of an irony that Luther himself, who never completely adopted the method and who learned it as he was giving his earliest lectures, should nonetheless be the one to summarize its import most trenchantly. On the other hand, perhaps this insight might be expected from one who learned the method as a beginning professor from the likes of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (circa 1455-1536) and even Erasmus at the very moment that he himself was already an adult practicing his calling.¹⁵ The point of departure is thus his appeal at Worms to »the Scriptures or evident reason«. His last two words should not – in this context in any event – be taken to posit any theological position that he held prior to his contact with the texts and also not primarily to the *ratio illuminata* that allowed the Christian to see, with the eyes of faith, the world and God's intentions for what they really were. Instead, one might substitute for his two simple words, »evident reason«, the phrase, »in a convincing manner« of treating the Scriptures. To put the matter differently, Luther was talking here about exegetical practice rather than textual hermeneutics or the grounds of ecclesiastical authority.

The telling anecdotal evidence regarding the acknowledged influence of humanist pedagogy on Luther is legion. If only by virtue of his calling as a professor of the Bible, he naturally had a high regard for the texts. Along with it came his insistence on studying the ancient languages, calling them »the sheath in which we carry this sword, the cask that holds this jewel«. He related that he followed Melancthon's lectures on Homer »in order to become a Greek«, and he began to study Hebrew on his own, to the extent that he was able to employ the Masoretic texts for his early work on the Psalms. He was so dedicated to learning Hebrew, which he never mastered, that he even went so far as to commit a noteworthy blunder in his choice of great books when he wrote his friend, Johannes Lang (circa 1487-1548), a letter in which he recounted recent the publication of Thomas More's (1478[?]-1535) »*De optimo reipublicae statu deque nova insula Utopia*«, and Erasmus's prickly defense against Lefèvre d'Étaples criticism of his notes to the Letter to the Hebrews in the Greek New Testament, and Capito's Hebrew Grammar and Psalter. He hoped Lang would send him all three but insisted, »I must have the grammar«.¹⁶

At the very least, Luther was therefore expending every effort not so much to become a humanist as to acquire all the skills at reading texts that the humanists offered. This effort bore fruit, whether it be in the references to Hebrew usage in

15 Lewis W. SPITZ: Luther and humanism. In: Luther and learning, 69-94.

16 Siegfried RAEDER: Die Benutzung des masoretischen Textes bei Luther in der Zeit zwischen der ersten und zweiten Psalmenvorlesung (1515-1518). Tü 1967, 1; WA 15, 36, 6 - 38, 31; WA Br 1, 147, 4-12 (60).

his Sermon at Castle Pleissenburg, those on the catechism, or in declarations such as, »I am the first to insist upon laying hold of the author's intention, what it is that the author wishes to tell us«. Indeed, one need look no farther than the prefaces to the books of the German Bible to find him seeking to do precisely what he said he did. Without this humanist impulse, Luther's insistence that Christ was both content and norm of the Scriptures and that the Scriptures were therefore authoritative would amount to merely to another unfounded, a priore dogmatic assertion with no more textual basis than assertions of apostolic succession and therefore of papal authority.

III Evangelical Theology in the Lecture Hall

As noted, Luther learned the methods of the *studia humanitatis* at the same time that he labored over the texts while developing his evangelical theology. But the question has another side: »What may have happened with respect to those, both professors and students, who, as it were, learned evangelical theology from Luther but were first trained in the manner of humanist pedagogy?« For present purposes, one example may serve to illustrate the fruit that can be picked while answering this question, but it must focus on the main point, namely, their actual understanding and use of the Biblical texts. The potentially productive instance concerns Melanchthon and one of his students, Johannes Marbach (1521-1581), who became President of the Company of Pastors in Strasbourg and was also a member of the theological faculty at the Gymnasium. The *pièces justificatives* are his lectures on John in the context of Melanchthon's »*Annotationes in evangelium Johannis*« as background. The texts may be found, for Melanchthon, in the »*Corpus reformatorum*« and, for Marbach, in a manuscript from the Cursius collection at Tübingen.¹⁷

The simple existence of these texts does not, however, establish an irrefutable, positive relationship between master and student with regard to their pedagogical form or their theological content. In the first place, the documents are too physically dissimilar – one polished, the other in a student's notes, one published, the other utterly unreworked – to allow an easy comparison. Nor are they identical in their treatment. On the other hand, they do include elements with which to test the influence of the *loci method* at work. In addition, circumstances were

¹⁷ CR 14, 1043-1220; COMMENTARIA EIUSDAM D. D. JOAN. MARBACHII IN EVANGELISTAM JOANNEM; Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek, Mc 181.

nearly ideal for a documentable transference of both methods and doctrines from teacher to student. Melanchthon's commentary of 1523 was republished in 1542, Marbach delivered his lectures between August 9, 1546 and January, 1547.¹⁸ In addition, Marbach, who received his doctorate in 1543, with Luther chairing the final disputation, was a student at Wittenberg during the appropriate period and could have had access to Melanchthon's edition of the »Loci theologici recens cogniti« that same year. The most important fact, however, is that he was not just another student in Wittenberg, but a senior, advanced student, the kind that could be counted upon both to comprehend and to apprehend all that he could from the master.

The final proof, if such a thing is possible, comes from reading Marbach's lectures and Melanchthon's *Notationes*. One aspect of them, which is not to be found in Luther's academic commentaries, is striking at the outset. Each presented his findings in the form of an oration. They thus began with assertions regarding the spirit and the whole of John's account. For Marbach, in agreement with Melanchthon, its central argument was that, by becoming human in Christ, God saved humanity from sin. With respect to God, John began by declaring that »Christ had His essence«, and, with the word, *apud*, distinguished God and Christ as persons. In standard fashion once more, he declared that the »*officium Christi*« was an »*Officium creationis et recreationis*«. ¹⁹ In this manner, what could easily have become a standard disquisition on the nature of Christ or a further explication of the second article of the ecumenical creeds, became instead a soteriological appeal that was closely bound to the text. This opening statement of Marbach's perspective on John then continued to inform the whole of his lectures to their very end, where he concluded that, whereas Matthew, Mark, and Luke were *historiae*, John was a *consilium* that preached the incarnation and its benefits. So far, he and his teacher agreed on both method and substance.²⁰

18 The editions of »Philipp Melanchthon: *Annotationes in Evangelium Ioannis*« see VERZEICHNIS DER IM DEUTSCHEN SPRACHBEREICH ERSCHIENENEN DRUCKE DES XVI. JAHRHUNDERTS: VD 16. Bd. 13. S 1988, 285-287 (M 2473-2485). The most recent work is Timothy J. WENGERT: *Philip Melanchthon's Annotationes in Joannem in relation to its predecessors and contemporaries*. Genève 1987, esp. 259-265 for the publication history.

19 *Commentaria ... Marbachij ...*, 1^a-3^a.

20 *Ibid*, 160. According to Wengert: *Philip Melanchthon's Annotationes ...*, 186-189, the grace of God in Christ that led to salvation through faith was the beginning, the substance, and the end of John's Gospel, i. e., an all-pervasive, single-minded argument both in detail and in specifics.

As noted, Marbach opened his lectures by stating these main themes that he found in John and repeated them at the end of his labors. Only in between did he move to an exposition of individual elements in the text, while in so doing he followed the same organizational pattern. For example, in his discussion of the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, Marbach called it an »exemplum iustificationis«, an example of justification. Its essence was that »Christ comforts and justifies this woman terrified by the Law«, an explanation from which he drew two conclusions. In passing, he observed that fulfilling the ceremonial or human law did not result in »completed faith« that carried justification. Given the controversial centrality of the Law and human works of the Law, this much might be expected. But Marbach carried the discussion forward to declare that John here presented the Law as a »paedagogia ad Christum ducens«, »a narrow road leading to Christ«. Here was the second use of the Law, and here fundamental agreement with his teacher persisted.²¹

As a lecturer and practicing exegete, Marbach thus went from the general locus to the pastoral fruit of the story, and back to an extended restatement of the locus. The result was the theological assertion – which he did not develop – that the text illustrated the first two uses of the Law and the entire Law-Gospel dialectic. Whatever else may be said of Marbach's work, it presented complex theological material in an eminently biblical, teachable, and thereby, memorable form. In any case, there can be little wonder that the new professor was doing what beginning professors the world over do: he was teaching as he was taught, although in less detail.²²

Earlier in this essay, it was noted that to be true to the subject requires putting the treatment of texts at its center, while leaving to one side the theological doctrines to be found in dogmatic or controversial works. It is, however, unwise to ignore such material completely, especially when confronted with the circumstance that saw Melancthon's 1543 *Loci theologici* published in Wittenberg while Marbach was present. On the other hand, for the present, the exact theological content of his lectures or even their faithfulness to John is not at center stage. To put the distinction differently, matters of interpretation cannot be torn loose from

21 *Commentaria ... Marbachij* ..., 32^r-37^r: »paedagogia ad Christum«, as a function of the Law in dealing with the Samaritan woman.

22 Melancthon, the professional pedagogue and rhetorician, was more self-conscious about the method than was Marbach, the young theologian. Thus, as Wengert: *Philip Melancthon's Annotationes* ..., 174, n. 28, observes, Melancthon noted the repetition in J 1, 2 and termed it a complexus, while *Commentaria ... Marbachij*, 2^r, ignored it.

their mooring in the exposition of the text; the pilings are simply too deep to allow it. The point instead is that the original conduit to Marbach for Melancthon's theological, as well as his teaching methods, on the Gospel of John was in all likelihood his teacher's *Notationes*, and not the *Loci*.

The relationship between formal doctrines and academic exegesis nonetheless remains vexing. It is particularly troublesome in a second or third generation theologian and churchman – in this case Marbach – who never exhibited the slightest interest in original thinking on even relatively or hitherto undiscussed topics in evangelical theology. Throughout his career, he intended to be, and was, orthodox, even if his objectives in this regard required him to be silent until he knew which way the winds of orthodoxy were blowing. Someone of this set of mind might be expected, then, in his exegetical work to have repeated Wittenberg's teachings on controverted questions, provided they were either subjects of widespread discussion and preferably of near resolution among Lutheran theologians.

Seen in this light, his lectures exhibit a certain peculiarity with respect both to what he did and what he did not include. For example, with regard J 6, 63, he said not a word about the Lord's Supper, not even to the Lutheran point that this text was irrelevant to the debates regarding the elements of bread and wine. Instead he summarized it merely as pointing up »the inconstancy of the people«, »the Christian doctrine and fundament of the whole Christian religion« and the need to »be vigilant lest we become the occasion for the doubt that leads to despair.«²³

Marbach deserted his carefully chosen role of the follower in another way: he included an extended treatment of election and predestination, which he began as soon as his text would allow it. He amended the expression, »the light of men«, at J 1, 4 to read, »he illumined all men of the world«. With due reference to J 1, 9 he reiterated that Christ »illumined all men«. As a counterweight to the threat of despair, he may even have turned the fear of the eternal decree into an impetus for salvation. He thus read J 1, 14, »and the Word became«, in light of the preceeding verses, according to which becoming a child of God had nothing to do with an earthly decision, but was an act of God, and concluded, »Here, therefore is the dread which makes us children of God«. Thus, God's decision or the eternal decree was Christ and belief in Him.²⁴

23 *Commentaria ... Marbachij ...*, 68^v f, summarized as »de inconstantia populi; sit christiana doctrina, at fundamentum totius religionis Christianae; vigilantes, ne incidamus tentationem«.

24 *Ibid*, 4^v-6^r. »Hic est igitur metuum quod facit nos filios dei.«

COMMENTARIA

Eiusdem .D.D. Ioan:

Marbachij in Evan-
gelistam Ioan-
nem.

1546.
9. Augusti.

Lucam et Marcum voluminis petimittre, propterea
q̄ i in Marco sunt 7 Luca, plerumq̄ sunt in Mattheo
quaq̄. Sed si duo cum Mattheo principaliter confiteri
possint nullo negotio. Continuum Ioannis.

Ex si forte vult exprimi, q̄ si scribi si gloria est
in alio id facit glorio, 7 placet tunc diuinitate gratia
Socraticos, 7 tam conuentionem discernit. Propter q̄
miracula est 7 scientia, 7 probatur tunc q̄ diu-
initatem, 7 tam et dicitur 7 vult dicitur a for-
tissimum.

De Personis Ioannis.

Hac N. loco

prophetae polim, fuit filius zebedei, fuit Iacobi ap̄li, 7 fuit ab Hb.
in quibus illa vult occidit, ut in actis. Item tunc pulchre et salubre
vult possunt ob-
feruari.

coram reuerent, 7 alio pulchre est sanguinis tunc.
fuit fuit reuerent, 7 fuit piscator dicitur cum fuit
vicar ad placuit a Christo. Ex 10. vult q̄
tunc, id pulchre tunc miracula 7 doctrina, 7 habet
vult 7 in matre habet, q̄ fuit singulari
vult, q̄ licet si aliquid vult. Singulari
tunc est vult, alio in matre fuit ad e. d. d.

To this point and beyond, Marbach's full understanding of predestination and election was either not yet clear to him or something that he was holding very close to his chest. But he soon became both precise and insistent on the matter. Thus, he had nothing to report on the subject when he first encountered J 3, 18, »he who does not believe is condemned«, other than to repeat his earlier tentative remarks about Law and Gospel. But the discussion at J 5, 16-23 about the relationship between the Son and the Father suddenly brought clarity and certainty to Marbach's understanding of the eternal decree. As an introduction, he declared that »Jesus is teaching us about the will that was heretofore hidden«. Then he, or the student taking the notes, labelled an entire section, »Voluntas revelata et occulta«. He also referred directly to Ephesians 1 and asserted, »we are not to explore after this will. However, the revealed will is to be investigated, as it is in the Word of God where all are called to repentance.« He went out of his way to clear up what had by now become an oversight with respect to J 3, 18. According to Marbach, Jesus's words from the wheat field to the Pharisees »do not fight against« this text, which stressed »believing the gospel and being saved«. Even the grumbling of Jesus's adversaries on the subject of the bread of life, Marbach now called a story »concerning predestination and election.« He concluded, »Judgment is to be rendered after Christ is revealed, which is [to say] that he pronounces universal promises.«²⁵ In this way, and in good humanistic rhetorical fashion, Marbach tied the exegesis of the entire text back to his opening remarks.

IV Peroration

The text itself, therefore, drove Marbach to state, at last, what became the full Lutheran doctrine of election and predestination, as it was later set forth in article 11 of the »Formula of concord«. Here was humanist pedagogy at work in the elaboration of evangelical theology. Assertions by scholars such as Werner Elert (1885-1954) that this doctrine developed as if by some sort of internal necessity may be true, but, if so, the driving engine was not the logic of systematic theol-

25 *Commentaria ... Marbachij ...*, 50^v-55^v. 67^v: »... docet nos de voluntate prius arcane«, »Distinguerimus autem voluntatem dei: alia est occulta, et siquidem hanc deus iudicet in occulto. alia est revelata et siquidem hanc voluntatem super neminem iudicet, sed soli filij exempli gratiam.« With respect to the hidden will: »Sed de hac voluntate hic non per nobis scrutandum Sed de aperta eius voluntate est investigandum, vt in [verba] dei, ubi omnes vocantur ad poenitentiam.« »Iustitium est faciendum a posteriore Christo revelato, quod est proposuit promissiones universales.«

ogy. The loci method and the text alone led Marbach, perhaps reluctantly, to a fully developed teaching on God's will, hidden and revealed. Above all, the young theologian was by no means simply plucking the doctrinal fruit from Melanchthon's orchard. In this regard, by far the most important observation is that Melanchthon in his *Notationes* had nothing whatsoever to report about election and predestination in the context of John. Instead, he reserved the matter for the *Loci communes* where he developed it ever more fully from 1521 to 1543. But he did so in terms that were foreign both to his student and to the »Formula of concord«. For Melanchthon, predestination was a pastoral elaboration on the bondage of the will, while for his student it concerned the hidden and revealed acts of God.²⁶

In addition, this very teaching in exactly these words entered the Reformation in Strasbourg, survived the controversy with Giralomo Zanchi (1516-1590) during the early 1560s, was enshrined in the »Consensus between the theologians of the church and professors of the school« in 1563, and served Strasbourg as one of its confessional norms until subscription to the »Formula of concord« in 1598. The fruits of humanist pedagogy thus survived not only in the Academy but also in the »Formula of concord« and therefore in orthodox Lutheranism generally.

With this much established, the final point ought to be obvious. It presents something of an irony. A movement and a method that was at its base anti-dogmatic and whose practitioners were certainly no friends of professional theologians provided the means by which biblical commentaries could speak to theological issues as occasion required. Thus, the method *itself* did not lead directly

²⁶ Thus, in 1521, he wrote, almost in passing, »Si ad praedestinationem referas humanam voluntatem ...«; CR 21, 93. It secured a separate locus in 1533, but with the same point: »Neque ex ratione, neque ex lege, sed ex Euangelio iudicandum est de praedestinatione«; CR 21, 330 f, and in 1543, he added an element of consolation (from the concluding remarks in Luther's *De servo arbitrio*?): »Ceterum, de effectu electionis teneamus hanc consolationem, Deum, volentem non perire totum genus humanum, semper propter filium per misericordiam vocare, trahere et colligere Ecclesiam et recipere assentientes, atque ita velle semper aliquam esse suam Ecclesiam, quam adiuvat et salvat«; CR 21, 920. See Werner ELERT: *The structure of Lutheranism. Vol. 1: The theology and philosophy of life of Lutheranism: 16th and 17th centuries* (*Morphologie des Luthertums. Bd. 1: Theologie und Weltanschauung des Luthertums; hauptsächlich im 16. und 17. Jh. (engl.)*)/ transl. by Walter A. Hansen. StL 1962, 133: »In a certain sense, the eleventh article of the Formula of Concord is a synthesis of the trains of thought of Melanchthon and Brenz. ... Here one can totally disregard the question whether this was demanded by the confessional tensions of the moment in history. ... No, the writers of the confession must have felt an inner compulsion to establish their doctrine of predestination.«

to »theologizing« the biblical text, nor did the use of loci as such »turn the texts into a theological textbook«, as Wengert and others maintain.²⁷ Instead, humanist pedagogy provided the means for testing new doctrinal statements against the Biblical texts and led, in this instance, to the rejection of the Reformed conception of the eternal decree. The loci method thus made clear that the Scriptures had both utility and teeth.

27 Wengert: Philip Melanchthon's *Annotationes* ..., 191.