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Defining Humanity in the Lutheran Confessions and in Lutheran Orthodoxy

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Definitions originate either in the pursuit of a scholarly, clear theology or, more often, in controversy, when there is no agreement on the meaning of a term or which entities are in the class delineated by such a term and which are excluded. Defining is, of course, not specific to theology. Part of the business of philosophy, at least since Socrates was walking the streets of Athens, involved engaging people in discussions on topics such as piety, courage, the good, and love. Neither is trying to define humanity as a distinctly theological enterprise. Plato suggested a definition of man as a “featherless biped,” which gave opportunity to one of the stunts of Diogenes of Sinope, the first punk philosopher, who presented a plucked chicken and said: “Here is Plato’s man.” Plato then amended his definition: “Man is a featherless biped with straight nails.”¹ This definition has not become classic, for good reasons. But the Greek definition of man as ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, “an animal (or living being) that has reason/language,” has become classic. In this definition, we encounter what medieval philosophers in the vein of Aristotle have called an “essential definition.” For such a definition, one needs the genus, the class of beings to which it belongs (in our case, “animal”), and the specific difference that distinguishes man from other animals, namely, that he has “logos.”² This definition has been influential in the Christian church since it was found to be consonant with the biblical witness.

We are, of course, all aware that this debate about defining man is not only an academic debate but a legal one. How “human being” is defined

¹ Diogenes Laertius, *Leben und Meinungen berühmter Philosophen*, trans. Otto Apelt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2008), 314.

² A more modern and less ambitious form of definition that aims not at defining beings but defining terms would see this as a subsection of an intensional definition, where a term is defined by class and attributes. In contrast to this, a definition by extension would be to enumerate all members of this class, e.g., “The Baltic states are Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.”

answers to a great extent, for example, how one views abortion. The widespread acceptance of abortion in late modernity shows an epochal shift in the understanding of what it means to be human. In the western world, it is another sign of the diminishing influence of Christianity in society-at-large since the Enlightenment and the end of a traditional cultural hegemony enjoyed by Christian thought.

I. Luther: Man as an Eccentric-Responsoric Being

Before we examine the Confessions, it is appropriate to have at least a look at Luther. After all, he is the foremost teacher of the Augsburg Confession (FC SD VII 34). For our topic it is especially appropriate that we look at him. Luther research in the twentieth century produced several important books on Luther's anthropology, among them Wilfried Joest's *Ontology of the Person in Luther* and Gerhard Ebeling's magisterial commentary in two tomes on Luther's *Disputation on Man*.³ Already at the beginning of the so-called Luther-Renaissance, Rudolf Hermann's book on the *simul iustus et peccator* stands out.⁴ While an adequate treatment of Luther's anthropology cannot, of course, be given here, the main points can be mentioned. Luther's understanding of man's existence is that man is an "eccentric" and "responsoric" being, to use the language of Wilfried Joest.⁵ "Eccentric" means that the center of the Christian's existence or being (and the Christian is the mode in which man is supposed to exist) is not *in* him, but outside of him. This is a statement against the traditional understanding of man as a substance, which held that a substance is something that exists independently and does not exist in something else. Otherwise, it would be an accident. But man is not a self-contained being. Consider the Lutheran understanding of the righteousness of faith. The righteousness of faith is Christ's, and it remains Christ's. We are Christians because it is ours, outside of us, imputed to us, and in it we have our being as Christians. What is central to our being as Christians is neither a substance nor a quality that inheres in our substance, but the alien righteousness of Christ *extra nos* that nevertheless defines who we are: righteous before God because of Christ's righteousness. The center is not in me, it is outside of me, thus eccentric.

³ Wilfried Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 1967; Gerhard Ebeling, *Disputatio de homine*, 2 vol. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1977-1989); see especially 2:1-3.

⁴ Rudolf Hermann, *Luthers These: "Gerecht und Sünder zugleich"* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1930).

⁵ Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther*, 233-274.

The second term Joest uses to describe Luther's anthropology is "responsoric."⁶ It means that a human being is one who is addressed by God and who answers to this word of God. The proper response, though, is created by God's address in the gospel and consists in faith. To be human, therefore, has this relational aspect that contradicts the understanding of man as a self-subsisting substance.

The sinner does not want to live as an "eccentric" being; he seeks to exist as a being that has complete self-standing, whose center is in himself. Neither is his life responsoric in the right way; rather, unbelief is the rejection of God's word, and thus he turns inward, he is curved into himself, *incurvatus in se ipse*.

Luther can, like the tradition, speak of man as a being consisting of body and rational soul. But this philosophical definition, a truth he does not reject, is not sufficient for a theological definition. It is not even a good definition in philosophy, because reason by itself does not know the efficient cause, namely, God the creator. Neither does it know man's final cause. Thinking that the goal of man is to live a good, peaceful life does not reach an appropriate understanding of man's soul.⁷ To define man truly, it is necessary to include *history* and *man's relationship to God*. Therefore, it is theology that gives the perfect definition of what man is:

Man is God's creature, consisting of flesh and a living soul, made in the beginning in the image of God without sin, so that he procreates and rules creation and never dies. But after Adam's fall, mankind is subject to the devil, sin, and death, eternal evils he cannot overcome by his powers, except when he is liberated by the Son of God, Jesus Christ (if he believes in him) and bestowed with eternal life (Theses 21-23).⁸

In his "Disputation on Man," Luther distills his definition of man to this profound truth: man is justified by faith.⁹ The specific difference between man and the other animals, which—Luther affirms along with tradition—is the *genus*, consists in that man and man alone is to be justified.

⁶ Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther*, 274–310.

⁷ We see here, by the way, how Luther uses the scheme of the four causes to define a term.

⁸ Martin Luther, "Disputatio de homine" in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1914), 39 I, 176, 7–13. Hereafter abbreviated WA. This translation and all following are this author's unless specifically noted.

⁹ Thesis 32: "Paul in Romans 3, 'We hold that man is justified by faith apart from works,' briefly sums up the definition of man, saying, 'Man is justified by faith'" (WA 39 I, 176, 33–35).

Man's uniqueness consists in his relation to God and what God does with him. It does not consist in an inherent quality; rather, it consists in the goal of his existence and in the work of God towards him. This definition is quite astonishing in that it does not reject an ontology of substance, but rather widens it. It is also a decidedly *theological* definition: man cannot be understood properly without his history and relationship to God. It is, finally, and obviously, a very *Lutheran* definition. At the center of God's relationship with man is God's act of justifying man; man is as God wants him to be when he is justified and lives in faith. Thus, God is the center of man's being, and man has his being in God's address.

Though neither the Confessions nor Quenstedt quote Luther's "Disputation on Man," I think that nevertheless central elements of Luther's anthropology are integrated in the Confessions and in Lutheran Orthodoxy.

II. The Lutheran Confessions

Anthropological Terms: Nature and Person

Turning to the Lutheran Confessions, let us first look at the terms "nature" and "person." The term "nature," as that which summarizes what man is, is most familiar from the Christological discussion. It is, though, not unique, but became a general term for what a thing is. The Confessions use "person" also for an individual human being, often synonymous with nature (FD SD I 8).¹⁰

Person denotes the whole of the human being, as contrasted with individual faculties. Therefore original sin, which affects every aspect of the human being, is the sin of the person. In quoting Luther, the Formula of Concord speaks of original sin as "sin of nature or person" (FC SD I 6). Luther uses this term, as does the Solid Declaration, to show that "man's nature and person sins, that is, that through hereditary sin as by spiritual leprosy through and through, he is completely poisoned and corrupted before God" (FC SD I 6).¹¹ Because person and nature can be used almost synonymously, original sin can also be named "sin of nature, sin of person, essential sin," so that nature, person, and the essence of man are not clearly distinguished (FC SD I 53). Obviously, at least in regard to substance, the Flacian controversy necessitated a more careful use of the term "essence," and "nature," so that nature can mean the essence of a being or the

¹⁰ In the composition with "sin," see FC SD I 44.

¹¹ All translations of the *Book of Concord* are the author's.

condition or quality of a being; it did not, however, force the authors of the Formula to reflect on the term “person” in reference to anthropology (FC SD I 51).

Similarly, in the context of the discussion of good works, the term “person” is used to state that a good work is not produced by an isolated faculty of the human being, but rather that only a good—that is, a righteous—person can produce good works. In other words, the entire human being has to be good. “For good works do not precede justification, but follow it, and the person must be first righteous before he can do good works” (FC SD III 27). “First the person has to be pleasing to God, and this alone for Christ’s sake, if also the works of that person should be pleasing to God” (FC SD IV 8). In this context, though, person is not used interchangeably with nature.

Nowhere do we find “person” used in the technical sense acquired during the Middle Ages. Boethius handed to the Middle Ages the definition of person as a substance of a rational nature.¹² In the Middle Ages, the concept of person was discussed mainly in the context of trinitarian and Christological questions, not as an anthropological term. Person is that which exists independently in itself.¹³ As we have seen, although Luther knows this philosophical definition and quotes it, he has a fundamentally different understanding of human nature.¹⁴ Man does not subsist in himself; he subsists in faith. “Faith makes the person.”¹⁵ The

¹² “A person is an individual substance of a rational nature.” Boethius, *Contra Eutychien et Nestorium*, V, 1–3.

¹³ William of Ockham defined person as *suppositum intellectuale*, writing, “A *suppositum* is a complete being that does not constitute another being, does not inhere in something else by nature, nor is it carried by another substance.” William of Ockham, 1 Sent 23, 1, *Opera philosophica et theolog.* 4, 61; quoted in B. Th. Kible, “Person. II. Hoch- und Spätscholastik; Meister Eckhart; Luther,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 13 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 7:296. The same definition also appears in Joannes Altenstaig and Joannes Tytz, *Lexicon theologicum* (Hildesheim; New York: Olms, 1974; reprint of the edition Köln, 1619). One part of the traditional definition of person is found in AC I in regard to the persons of the Trinity: person is neither part nor quality in something else, but that which subsists by itself (*quod proprie subsistit*). Such a definition is somewhat incomplete, because not everything that subsists by itself is a person. There must be a specific difference, not mentioned by Melancthon (e.g., rational substances that subsist by themselves, or beings with free will or a similar property).

¹⁴ WA 39 II, 10.

¹⁵ WA 39 I, 282, 16. Cf. Kible, “Person. II. Hoch- und Spätscholastik; Meister Eckhart; Luther,” 297ff; Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther*, 247–250. In regard to the sinner, Luther says: “Where and as long as the person is, there is sin” (WA 10 I 1, 509, 3). Kible, 298, sees here a break with the tradition. According to tradition, a person is

question as to whether the Confessions have the same understanding of person as Luther cannot be decided by the use of the word "person"; rather, the question can only be answered after a clearer picture of the Confession's anthropology has been given, since there is no technical definition of what it means for a human being to be a person in the Confessions, unlike the definition for a trinitarian person in AC I.¹⁶

Man as Creature

After this terminological investigation, the first thing to be said about man is that he is a creature. This is such a given that the Confessions rarely dwell on it. In the Small Catechism, Luther individualizes and existentializes the doctrine of creation by starting with the creation of the person making the confession: "I believe that God created me . . .," without, of course, excluding the extra-human creation: "together with all creatures." Being creature is not only something that determines the beginning of man's existence; rather, because of the daily work of God, who protects and provides for man, it is a continual relation.

The issue of man as God's creature played a role in the Flacian controversy. One of the arguments used against Flacius' identification of man's substance with sin was that since man is created by God, original sin therefore cannot be the substance of man, since a substance is either God or a creature created by God (FC SD I 55). Man remains a creature also after the fall, and since God is not the creator of sin, the substance of man cannot be identified with sin (FC SD I 38). Being a creature and being a sinner are therefore not the same. Creation and fall have to be distinguished; sin is not some inescapable condition given with creation. After the fall, though, it is much harder to distinguish between creation and sin. The distinction has to be made, but not in such a way that certain aspects of man can be seen as purely creaturely and others as corrupted by original sin. Rather, everything man does, thinks, and is, is corrupted by original sin. The distinction between sin and creation is made by the gospel, not by the law. In the light of the law, man has to consider himself completely sinful. The rejection of Flacius' teaching that original sin is the substance of man is not made on the basis of an analysis of man's

incommunicable; what makes a person is in the person. Here, though, what makes the Christian a person does not rest in himself, but rather in God.

¹⁶ See the extensive monograph by Gunter Wenz on the Confessions, *Theologie der Bekenntnisschriften der lutherischen Kirche*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996–1997), where the author provides several remarks on the trinitarian concept of person (1:555, 563, 638) and a summary of Luther's concept of person (1:104), but nothing on the concept of person as it is used in the Confessions.

existence, finding there evidence of his creaturely goodness that is to be distinguished from sin. Rather, it is derived from the article on creation, the Christological statement that Christ, according to his human nature, is consubstantial to the rest of humanity, and on the nature of redemption, which does not consist in an exchange of substances. To put it differently, it does not mean that justification and resurrection are in some way the end of the human being as human being and the transition to another being. The distinction between creature and sin has to be believed on the basis of God's word. From this follows, though, the truth that "pure human nature" is never open to our observation. "Pure" is here understood as "human nature in itself" (*an sich*) and also equates with sinlessness. Such a nature can be construed by abstraction, that is, by taking away sinful actions, because sin not only consists in acts but is also a corruption of man's being. This is one of the reasons why, as seen in Luther's description of Adam in his lectures on Genesis, any reconstruction of the pre-fall condition of man beyond the statement that there was no sin and that man was in perfect harmony with God remains highly speculative.

The Substance of Man—Body and Soul

Though it is not the main emphasis when the Confessions speak of man, they nevertheless presuppose that man is made of body and soul and that the category of substance, therefore, can be used to describe man. In his explanation of the First Article in the Small Catechism, Luther lists "body and soul" first in his enumeration of all that God has given to man. Both body and soul are affected by original sin (SA III I 11). Rejected is the opinion that the rational soul in its highest faculties is substantially original sin (FC SD I 1). Rejected, therefore, is also the opinion that in conversion and regeneration the rational soul has to be annihilated and a new soul created out of nothing (FC SD I 81). Here the traditional terms for rational soul (*vornunftige Seele* or *anima rationalis*) are used, admittedly not in a description of the Formula's position, but nevertheless indicating that dichotomism, not trichotomism, is assumed here—namely, that man consists of body and rational soul, not of body, soul, and spirit."¹⁷

¹⁷ The traditional distinction between body and soul is also found in the description of the Lord's Supper as a "food for the soul, nourishing and strengthening the new man." See LC V 23: the Lord's Supper is given to sustain faith, and faith is associated with the soul, not with the body. See also Ap IV 304: faith does not only consist in the intellect, namely as knowledge, but also as assent in the will—both, of course, powers of the soul.

Man as Sinner

Thus, man after the fall is qualified as a sinner. The language of *Personensünde* (sin of the person) shows that sin is not simply affecting certain aspects of man, but everything in him. This radical view of man as sinner leads to the Flacian controversy, since it quite naturally raises the question whether sin and creature can still be distinguished. The Lutheran Confessions continue the distinction between original and actual sin as it was developed in the Latin west. Original sin is described as man being without faith in God, without fear of God, and with concupiscence (AC II). This definition is rejected by the Roman Catholic Confutation, since faith in God cannot be present in infants, who nevertheless have original sin. AC II defines or describes original sin in two different ways: first, by speaking relationally of a lack of faith and fear toward God, and second, by ascribing a quality to man. Obviously, while the two are not independent, they can be distinguished, as the later discussion with Rome showed. In the Christian, concupiscence continues to exist, though in regard to the relational descriptions of original sin there is a radical change. It is in the very essence of being a Christian that one believes or trusts in God and fears God. To this day, the question of original sin and how it relates to the Christian is a point of controversy with Rome. The sinner is, in one sense, in agreement with himself: his inner being and his relation to God are harmonious. The believer, on the other hand, lives in an inner conflict: the corruption of his nature and his faith are not in agreement: there is a struggle going on. The unity of his being is not a matter of experience but of faith and hope: he will be one, once God will have dealt with his sin and stripped him of it in death, but not before. The unity of his being is therefore eschatological.

Original sin manifests itself primarily in ignorance of God, lack of faith and fear of God, hatred against God's judgment, despairing of grace, putting one's trust in earthly things, etc. (Ap II 8). Concupiscence means to seek carnal things against the will of God—not only the lust of the body but also carnal wisdom and righteousness—and to despise God (Ap II 26). Melancthon emphasizes over and again that concupiscence not only deals with the lower appetites of the soul, such that it could be reduced to bodily desires, but also manifests itself and thus affects especially and foremost the highest faculties of man, his search for truth, wisdom, goodness, and God.

How are we to define original sin in terms of the traditional ontological categories? As concupiscence, it is not a substance, but rather a corruption of a substance and therefore a quality in man. As such, it is an accident, as are all entities except substances in Aristotelian categories. But

even though the Formula admits the validity of the substance/accident scheme, it attempts to safeguard against any understanding of original sin as accident or quality that would affect only part of the substance of humanity. Rather, it is an accident that affects the entire man (FC SD I 21). In the end, the Formula assumes a certain distance from the philosophical understanding of accident, even though, of course, the term is philosophical. There remains the impression that substance and accident as basic ontological categories are not quite adequate to understand original sin correctly (FC SD I 60).¹⁸

The Image of God

The image of God is for many in the Christian tradition the central distinction of man from other animals. Since Irenaeus, Genesis 1:27 was understood in the sense that the Hebrew terms *צֶלֶם* and *דְמוּת* refer to two different things, so that “image” and “likeness” are to be distinguished.¹⁹ Likeness consists in ethical perfection, image in rationality and freedom of the will. The likeness of God was lost after the fall, the image of God was retained by man. Luther broke with this exegetical tradition and held that image and likeness denote the same object. This is expressed in his translation of Genesis 1:26: “Laßt uns Menschen machen, ein Bild, das uns gleich sei” (“Let us create man [in] an image that is like us”).²⁰ In his lectures on Genesis, Luther argued for this understanding, and in the Lutheran Confessions we find the same position. It is affirmed, of course, that man was created in the image of God (FC Ep VI 2).²¹ Melancthon identifies the image of God and likeness in his discussion of original sin. It consists in original righteousness, as the scholastics said, or, in the words

¹⁸ But what about unbelief? Is lack of faith and fear of God also an accident? It could probably be said so, but one does not want to imply an understanding of faith as a quality in man. This is the case even though Luther, for example, states that trust of the heart is what makes God (LC I 2-3) or the previously mentioned statements by Melancthon that faith is not only knowledge but also trust.

¹⁹ Cf. David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man* (London: Collins, 1973), 28.

²⁰ Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Die Deutsche Bibel*, 15 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1906-1961), 8:39. In the marriage booklet, Luther quotes Genesis 1:27-28 in a slightly different translation: “Gott schuf den Menschen ihm selbs zum Bilde, ja zum Bilde Gottes schuf er ihn . . .” *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963) 533, 37-38 (hereafter BSLK). Here, too, Luther does not use different terms to translate *צֶלֶם* and *דְמוּת*; rather he uses “image” for both.

²¹ This is in the context of the discussion on the third use of the law. The law was written in the heart of man before the fall since Adam and Eve were created in God’s image.

of Paul, in the knowledge of God, righteousness, and truth (Eph 5:9; Col 3:10, Ap II 15–19).²² This position is repeated in the Formula in the article on original sin, paraphrasing the Apology. Original sin is the complete lack of the created hereditary righteousness in paradise or of the image of God, according to which man was created in the beginning in truth, holiness, and righteousness (FC SD I 10). That means that the Confessions teach unambiguously that the fall results in the loss of the image of God and that the fallen man in his sinful state is without the image of God.²³ The image of God, though, is regained once a person becomes a Christian. To acquire the knowledge of God, fear of God, hope, or love means therefore that the person is transformed into the image of God (Ap IV 351).²⁴

If the image of God is equated with original righteousness, then there is at least a relational aspect of the image of God in Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. “While Catholic theology interpreted *imago* to refer to man’s resources as a created, rational being, and *similitudo* to refer to the supernatural likeness, given by grace, the Lutheran Confessions interpreted both as the consequences of man’s unbroken relationship to God and the resulting reflection of God’s essence.”²⁵

The New Man

Talking about humanity means, as we have seen, talking not simply about a human nature that always stays the same; it is, rather, telling a story about human beings. This story, of course, would not be complete if we did not talk about the new man. The Formula quotes Luther’s preface to Romans on the origin of the new man: “Therefore faith is a divine work in us that changes us and gives birth to us anew and kills the old Adam, makes us into entirely new men in heart, mind, attitude, and all powers and brings the Holy Spirit with it” (FC SD IV 10). The new man is,

²² Strangely enough, Melancthon claims Irenaeus for his position, which is only possible since Melancthon identifies that which Irenaeus says about the likeness with the image of God.

²³ “Of fallen man the Confessions do not teach that he is in the image of God and at the same time not in the image of God. The image of God and the loss of the image are not placed in dialectical antithesis, like creatureliness and corruption. Rather, the fact that fallen man is at the same time wholly a creature and wholly corrupt is given this unambiguous significance: He has lost the image of God.” Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 47. Cf. Wenz, *Theologie*, 2:99.

²⁴ Wenz, *Theologie*, 2:230.

²⁵ Holsten Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confession: 1529–1537* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 132.

therefore, truly a new man, not only the infusion of some qualities in the old man. That is only possible if he is constituted not by himself, but by the Holy Spirit, thus having his being outside of himself. Here we see how the Confessions take up Luther's understanding of a person. Faith, which receives the promise, constitutes the new man: "This happens when they believe the promise of Christ, that on account of him they may have forgiveness of sins. This faith rises up in those who tremble, and comforts and receives the forgiveness of sins, justifies and makes alive" (Ap IV 62). Additionally, there is the aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit after the new man has been constituted, with an internal renewal, i.e., the killing of the old man and the creation of new impulses in him.

Old man and new man are not subsequent phases but, rather, simultaneous descriptions of man's existence, as Luther explains in the Small Catechism regarding the daily drowning of the old Adam and raising up of the new man (SC IV 12). But what is the difference between old and new man? In what way does man change and in what way does he stay the same? From the preceding we already know that man stays the same in his substance, i.e., that he is an embodied soul. The change is therefore not in the category of substance (FC Ep II, 14; SD II, 81). The cause of the new man is the Holy Spirit acting through the word: God makes alive through his word (Ap XII 4).²⁶ Thus, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to give new life; it is not a result of human works (Ap IV 130, 195; VII 14; XVIII 9; FC SD II 25; III 22; VI 1). The beginning of this new life can also be described as justification. After the preaching of the condemning law and the terror it creates in the hearts of the unbeliever, the comfort of the promise of the forgiveness of sins is received.

The consequences of the new being concern the entire man. He is now qualified as a believer. God changes the will of man so that man obeys the will of God (FC SD II 6). New impulses in man are created (Ap IV 125, 348, 349; FC SD IV 10). The freed will can now cooperate with God in doing good works and does good works voluntarily. As such, the new man is not under the law, but lives in the law (FC Ep VI 6, 11; SD VI 1; SD II 85; Ap IV 175; Ap XII 82). At the same time, the old Adam is still there. The renewal of man is incomplete; neither the renewed will nor the new impulses are the only reality in man. Original sin as corruption still spawns sin, so that the sinful flesh is a reality in this life and will be destroyed only in death. As such, the law continues to accuse also the Christian (FC SD VI 14).

To summarize the existence of the new man: the new life is created by

²⁶ Cf. FC SD XI 69. This includes, of course, also the sacraments, since they too are speech acts (FC SD II 5, 65; Ap IV 190).

the Holy Spirit and defined as faith in the promise. It results in a change in man regarding the knowledge of God, his will, and also spiritual impulses, without nevertheless eliminating completely the corruption caused by original sin.

III. Lutheran Orthodoxy: The Example of Johann Andreas Quenstedt

The Place of Anthropology in the Dogmatic System

We turn now to anthropology in the dogmatics of Johann Andreas Quenstedt (1617–1688), who treats the doctrine of man in two different places.²⁷ The first is a relatively short section of sixteen pages in the locus on creation. Immediately following his treatment on angels and before the doctrine of providence, Quenstedt provides a relatively short anthropology.²⁸ Here, man is distinguished according to how he comes into being, for which the four causes give the outline, plus the additional point of the time of creation (namely, during the hexaemeron, on the sixth day). In regard to man as he exists now, his internal constitutive principles and his different statuses are to be considered. The producing cause of man is the triune God. The material cause of Adam is the dust of the earth, and of Eve the rib and soul of Adam. The mode of production is discussed; the goal of man is the glory of God and eternal salvation. The essential principles of man are distinguished in matter and form (*forma physica*). The matter is an animated body, before the fall impassible and immortal. The form is the rational soul. The states of man are the states of innocence, misery, glory, and damnation. This is all that Quenstedt says in this context in the affirmative. He continues with a polemical treatment of the topic as he examines the following questions: 1) Was Adam the first man? 2) Does man have three parts, body, soul, and spirit? 3) Is man's soul nowadays created by God, or is it propagated through transferal?

That Quenstedt has considerably more to say about man becomes evident in the second part of his dogmatics, which is dedicated entirely to anthropology. Here, his focus is on the states of man and not on his essence. Man is the subject of theology—cast down from his first happy

²⁷ First published in 1685, I am using Johann Andreas Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica sive Systema Theologicum*, 4 vols. (Wittenberg: Sumptibus Johannis Ludolphi Quenstedii, 1691). For a brief introduction to Quenstedt, see Robert Preus, *Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), 1:62–63.

²⁸ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, I, XIII (1:511–517).

state into misery—who is to be led to God and to eternal salvation.²⁹ It might be somewhat strange that man is the subject of theology, and we might suspect that it is heading the way towards the Enlightenment and Barthian accusations against orthodoxy. In his discussion of the subject of theology, Quenstedt identifies three ways of answering the question.³⁰ The first is the subject of inherence or name (*denominationis*); second, the subject that is treated; third, of operation. The subject of inherence is twofold again: first, *subjectum quod*—it is man in whom the habit of theology inheres; the *subjectum quo* is the mind and intellect in which the habit of theology dwells; second, the *subjectum tractationis seu considerationis* (subject that is treated or considered). This is what we mostly think of when we talk about the subject of theology, since it is synonymous with the object of theology. These are the matters of theology that are divinely revealed, insofar as they pertain to eternal salvation. This is also known as “the true religion.” Note here again that since theology is for Quenstedt a practical science, the subject matter is not simply God and what can be known about him; rather, theology is in its very nature soteriological. The subject of operation, or who is acted upon, so to speak, is sinful man. Since theology as a habit is practical, it aims toward leading a person to salvation. Thus, when Quenstedt calls sinful man the subject of theology, he does not dissolve theology into anthropology, saying that theology talks only about man; rather, he says that sinful man is the one to be taught, the *subjectum operationis*. Thus, for Quenstedt the main interest in theological anthropology is not in the substance of man, but rather in the history of man and, more specifically, his history in relation to God, namely, as the one who has fallen into sin and is brought back to God.

The Image of God

Before examining Quenstedt’s view of the image of God, we must first engage Robert Jenson’s misinterpretation concerning the teaching on the image of God in Lutheran orthodoxy. Jenson, in his *Systematic Theology*, references Johann Gerhard: “Man is made in the image and similitude of God, which distinguishes him from all other corporeal creatures.”³¹ Though Jenson deplores the stress on the image as the specific difference of humanity as it is traditional in theology, he is willing to live with it since it is “too rooted in the tradition now to be displaced.”³² Jenson goes on to

²⁹ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, II, 1, 1, thesis I (2:1).

³⁰ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, I, I, 1, thesis 37 (1:12–13).

³¹ Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2:53. Jenson is citing Gerhard’s *Loci theologici* II, 8, 13.

³² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 53.

point out that the difficulty of the Lutheran position is that after the fall “it appears that fallen humanity, having lost perfect righteousness, must now be at best partially human.”³³ In a footnote, Jenson charges Lutheran orthodoxy with a move towards “a real semi-Pelagianism”: “Indeed, in a most ironic reversal.” Jenson continues,

Identification of the image of God as actual righteousness exerted strong pressure on Reformation scholastic theologians toward a real semi-Pelagianism. If they were not to say that the image and so our specific humanity is simply gone, then they had to posit a continuing actual righteousness in fallen humans also prior to justification.³⁴

This is a rather serious accusation, for which Jenson brings no reference to prove that the orthodox fathers endorsed semi-Pelagianism or that they did so because of their view of the image of God.

There are several problems with Jenson’s statement. First, it assumes that when Gerhard states that man is created in the image of God and that this fact gives him—before all bodily creatures—a specific and proper dignity, then the image of God is what makes man a man. In traditional metaphysical language, this claims that the image is equated with man’s substance or at least something intrinsic as an essential attribute that cannot be lost. But Gerhard explicitly discusses the topic of the ontological status of the image of God. The third chapter in the locus *de imagine dei* is titled “The image of God has not been man’s substance.”³⁵ The image of God, were it a substance, could be the entire man, his soul, his body, an essential part of the soul, or a substance that is different from the human substance. All these options are rejected by Gerhard. The substance of man, that which distinguishes him from all other beings, is that he is a composite being of a rational soul and a body.³⁶ There is therefore no problem saying that after the fall Adam and his descendants are still human, since to be human and to have the image of God are not the same. Jenson creates a problem the orthodox dogmaticians did not have.

Let us now return to Quenstedt. The image of God is the central term for the treatment of the first state of man, the state of integrity. The image

³³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 55.

³⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 55.

³⁵ Johann Gerhard, *Loci theologici*, 4 vols., ed. Johann F. Cotta (Tübingen: Sumptibus Johann Georg Cotta, 1763), loc. IX (3:267–268).

³⁶ Gerhard, *Loci theologici*, IX, proemium, 12. This definition of human nature recurs in Gerhard’s treatment on the human nature of Christ. See Gerhard, *Loci theologici*, loc. IV, 78 (6:400).

of God in man is not an essential image, as a son is called the image of a father.³⁷ In man, it is, properly speaking, the interior integrity and rightness of the powers of man that can also be called original righteousness. Improperly, it can be used for a certain general likeness in which man's soul expresses something divine, or also the dominion over the earth, as some of the older theologians used the term.³⁸ Quenstedt continues his analysis by using the scheme of the causes: the efficient cause is the entire Trinity, the internal motivating cause is the goodness of God, the matter of the image of God is totally rational man, primarily partial the rational soul, secondarily partial the body of man, in so far as it is formed by the soul. The form of the image of God is in man's conformity with God, which encompasses all the powers and faculties of the soul and the integrity of the body. This perfection is first found in the soul, concerning the intellect in the knowledge of God, and in wisdom, concerning the will in its conformity with God's holiness and liberty. Finally, in the appetites the conformity is found in chastity, purity, and sufficiency (*autarkia*). In a secondary way, the image of God is found in the impassibility of the body and its immortality and in the dominion over the other animals. The goal (*finis*) of the image of God in regard to God is the communication of the divine goodness and the demonstration of God's goodness and wisdom; in regard to man it is the knowledge of God and the love and celebration of God. In summary, the definition of the image of God is that "the image of God is the natural perfection that consists in the outstanding conformity with the wisdom, righteousness, immortality, and majesty of God, divinely concreated with the first man, to the perfect knowing, loving and glorifying of God the creator."³⁹

So much for the positive part. In the second, the polemical part, nine questions are discussed. 1) Was man originally created in a neutral state, i.e., neither good nor evil? 2) Was the first man created with a dissenting and rebellious sensitive and rational appetite? 3) Was Eve also created in the image of God? 4) Was the image of God the substance or a substantial form? 5) Did the image of God consist in wisdom, righteousness, and holiness? 6) Did the image of God consist also in immortality and impassibility and in dominion over the other animals? 7) Was original righteousness a supernatural gift or rather the natural perfection of the first man? 8) Was immortality in the first man a supernatural gift? 9) Has the

³⁷ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, II, I, I, thesis 5 (2:2).

³⁸ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico* II, I, I, thesis 7.8 (2:3). The existence of the image of God is proved by Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1; Colossians 2:10; Ephesians 4:24; and Wisdom 2:23.

³⁹ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, II, I, I, thesis 24 (2:9).

image of God been lost and destroyed by the fall of the protoplaste? Of these points, I will address only two: whether the image of God was the substance or the substantial form of man (question four), and whether the image has been lost by the fall (question nine).

Concerning Quenstedt's fourth question, on the image as substance or substantial form, what does he mean by a substantial form? In scholastic Aristotelian philosophy, things consisted of matter and form. Every existing being consists of a substantial form and first matter.⁴⁰ Matter does not exist without form; the form is what gives a thing its distinctiveness. Thus, Quenstedt's point is that the image of God is neither substance nor substantial form, i.e., neither the entire man nor a part of man, but an accidental perfection in the essence of man, namely, the rightness and integrity of all powers of body and soul.⁴¹ In this context, Quenstedt rejects also the idea that the *imago dei* is the human nature of Christ. Man was not created in the image of the human nature of Christ but in the image of God, namely, his righteousness and holiness.⁴² Rejected also are those scholastics who saw the image of God in the threefold faculties of the soul: intellect, will, and memory.⁴³ Of course, here Flacius is also rejected with his position that original sin is the substantial form of man.⁴⁴

It follows from this that originally the image of God was a quality in man. According to Quenstedt, and unlike many modern theologians, it does not consist in relationality; neither does it consist in faith, as Melancthon taught. The image of God, properly speaking, is lost after the fall. What about the restitution of the image of God? If justification is not the infusion of new qualities in man, then justification and the restitution of the image of God cannot be the same.⁴⁵ We find, therefore, the restitution of the divine image not in the article on justification but in the article on the renewal of man. "The immediate effect of the renewing is the renewal (*instauratio*) of the divine image, or inherent sanctity; the mediate effect, good works."⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Cf. F. C. Copleston, *Aquinas: An Introduction to the Life and Work of the Great Medieval Thinker* (New York: Penguin Books, 1955), 89-90; Joseph Gredt, *Elementa Philosophica Aristotelico-Thomisticae* (Freiberg: Verlag Herder, 1937), 1:210.

⁴¹ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, II, I, IV, thesis (2:17).

⁴² Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, II, I, IV, ekthesis 11 (2:18).

⁴³ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, II, I, IV antithesis 4 (2:18). This position is later attributed to Tertullian, diverse Origenists, and Andreas Osiander (2:19).

⁴⁴ Quenstedt refers to Flacius, *Clavis*, s.v. "imago." Cf. Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Clavis scripturae sacrae* (Basileae: Apud Heinricpetrino, 1628), 414-417.

⁴⁵ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, III, VIII, I, thesis 3 (3:514).

⁴⁶ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, III, XI, I, thesis 12 (3:635).

Traducianism and Creationism

Since a hot-button issue like abortion has commanded so much of the church's attention in recent years, it may be helpful to examine the topic in light of Quenstedt's definitions. Abortion was not a controversial issue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The *Constitutio criminalis Carolingia*, the first criminal code in Germany, issued in 1532 by Emperor Charles V, punished a woman who had aborted a child with the death penalty if the child was "alive"; if the child was no longer alive, the punishment was left to the court.⁴⁷ Behind this distinction is most likely the philosophical doctrine, received in the medieval Roman church, that the embryo does not have a soul from the very beginning. According to Thomas Aquinas, the soul is infused into the embryo after forty days in the case of males and ninety days in the case of females.⁴⁸ This doctrine depends on two things. First, it relies on the philosophical doctrine that the soul is the form of the body; thus, where the body is not yet formed, there is no soul. Second, it depends on creationism, namely, the doctrine that every human soul is created directly by God and that therefore there is a special act of ensoulment at some point. Creationism was the predominant theory in Roman Catholicism, although Tertullian and perhaps Augustine held to traducianism, the position that the body and soul come into being through the parents; they are, so to speak traduced, or handed over, in procreation. This Thomistic position made it possible to view abortion in early pregnancy not as the killing of a human being since, according to this theory, the fruit of the womb in the early stage of pregnancy is not yet a human being. This position was put forward in 1970 by Father Joseph F. Donceel, S.J.⁴⁹ The church's magisterium has, of course, rejected this position in recent times. It acknowledged, however, in its "Declaration on Procured Abortion" (1974) that in the Middle Ages there were different opinions about the status of the embryo before and after ensoulment. On

⁴⁷ "Peinliche Halsgerichtsordnung Kaiser Karls V." (Constitutio Criminalis Carolina), § 133; http://www.llv.li/pdf-llv-la-recht-1532_peinliche_halsgerichtsordnung_carolina_.pdf (accessed January 20, 2013). Cf. Günter Jerouschek, "Die juristische Konstruktion des Abtreibungsrechts," in *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, ed. Ute Gerhard (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1997), 254–255.

⁴⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Sentences*, trans. Ralph McInery; Bk. III, dist. 3, q. 5, a. 2, *Responsio*. <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/Sentences.htm> (accessed February 17, 2014).

⁴⁹ Joseph F. Donceel, "A Liberal Catholic View," in *Abortion in a Changing World*, vol. 1, ed. Robert E. Hall (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 39–45.

the other hand, the group Catholics for Choice claims this theological tradition as the rationale for their pro-abortion stand.⁵⁰

Lutherans, for the most part, have been traducianists, holding that there was no act of ensoulment that occurred after conception. From the moment of conception, the infant was an embodied rational soul, a human being in the full sense of the word, unlike the dominant opinion in scholasticism.⁵¹ The debate between creationism and traducianism is not explicitly referenced in the Confessions, but Quenstedt discusses the point and affirms traducianism—namely, that the fruit of the womb is a human being from the moment of conception, also with the argument that otherwise the incarnation would not have happened at the moment when Mary conceived Christ.

Quenstedt and the Eccentric-responsoric Nature of Humanity

Does Quenstedt have any concept of the “eccentric-responsoric” nature of man? He does, but not in his treatment of the image of God or in his section on anthropology. Rather, it can be found in the discussion of the Christian’s righteousness, which is not an inherent quality but the imputation of Christ’s righteousness or the merit of Christ grasped by faith.⁵² Christ’s righteousness does not become our formal righteousness. It does not inhere in the subject, but is nevertheless truly ours by imputation; thus, we are formally justified. It remains extrinsic to us and remains ours as the extrinsic righteousness. It is intrinsic to us by imputation, not by becoming a quality. Quenstedt draws the parallel to the relationship of man’s sin and Christ: man’s sin is Christ’s by imputation. They are extrinsic to him insofar as they are not qualities inhering in Christ, but are nevertheless his, so that he is judged guilty of them.⁵³ The renewal of man, the interior righteousness, either habitually in the soul or actually in the good works of the Christian, follows the imputation and is to be distinguished.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ For the position of the Vatican, cf. “Declaration on Procured Abortion,” November 18, 1974; http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19741118_declaration-abortion_en.html (accessed January 21, 2013). For the position of Catholics for Choice, cf. “The Truth About Catholics and Abortion” (Washington, D.C.: Catholics for Choice, 2011), 5; <http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/topics/abortion/documents/TruthaboutCatholicsandAbortion.pdf> (accessed January 21, 2013).

⁵¹ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, II, XII, II, qu.2 (1:519–527) discusses the issue of creationism vs. traducianism.

⁵² Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, III, VIII, II, qu. IV, thesis (3:539).

⁵³ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, III, VIII, II, qu. IV, XII (3:540).

⁵⁴ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, III, VIII, II, qu. V Objectionum Διάλυσίς, II (3:544).

What about the responsoric aspect of man? This leads to the discussion of faith in Quenstedt's dogmatics, a topic that he addresses in his discussion on justification. In the polemical section, the role of faith as instrumental cause is argued.⁵⁵ Justifying faith is distinguished from any other type of faith, such as the dead faith of hypocrites, historical faith, or *fides miraculosa*, the faith that believes that God can do miracles. Excluded are also faith as a *habitus* (a formation of the soul) in the heart of the Christian, faith as summary of the Christian doctrine, and reflexive faith—faith that reflects on itself. Justifying faith is not a quality or action in man; rather, it exists in the category of relation. It looks at the merit of Christ, grasps it, and appropriates it to the person. Justifying faith is thus the faith of the person; it is not a *quality* in the soul of the person or an *action* of the person but rather a description of a *relation*. Thus, justifying faith is to be considered *ut est in sanguine Christi, sive prout relative spectator* (as it is in the blood of Christ, namely, as it is viewed in relation to it).⁵⁶ This is a strange way to put it. Faith subsists not simply in the believer, though it is his faith, but in the object of the faith, taking here “blood of Christ” as shorthand for “forgiveness of sins on account of Christ’s death.” The point, nevertheless, is that justifying faith here is not defined as a *habitus* or a quality in the soul, but rather as a relation. This faith is also a gift from God that man cannot produce by himself.⁵⁷ In the chapter on repentance, Quenstedt defines faith thus:

By the word faith . . . we do not understand *epignosis* or knowledge in the mind by which we know divine things, nor *synkatathesis* or assent, through which we believe God and his word, but *prosdegma* or a faithful apprehension, whereby we apply and appropriate to us the suffering and death of Christ, and thus his blood-stained merit.⁵⁸

Faith is clearly distinguished from knowledge and assent. The language of apprehension and application can lend itself to misinterpretation as categorizing faith as man’s action. This simply shows how difficult it is to describe the nature of faith or, to that extent, the nature of the believer without making faith a quality or action of man and, at the same time, express that it is the person who believes.

⁵⁵ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, III, VIII, II, qu. VI (3:547–552)

⁵⁶ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, II, VII, II, qu. VI, Objectionum Διάλυσις (3:552).

⁵⁷ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, III, II, qu. 4, Fontes Solutium, IX (3:40).

⁵⁸ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico*, III, IX, I, thesis 9, nota IV (3:583).

IV. Conclusion

What are we to make of this historical overview? First, even though Lutheranism received the traditional philosophical—and that is equivalent to what we would call today scientific—definition of man as rational animal as being compatible with the biblical description of man, it nevertheless deemed that definition to be insufficient. Man had to be defined historically, namely, as a being who comes from God, falls away from him, and is reconciled to him. That includes the belief that man has to be defined as a being who exists in a unique relationship with God—as the being who has sinned and who is justified. History and relation become important categories, all the while not discarding the traditional philosophical categories of substance and accident that are actually enshrined in the Book of Concord. Contrary to large segments of Christianity, be it Roman Catholic,⁵⁹ or contemporary Reformed theology, for Lutherans the image of God is not seen as an inherent factor in man that distinguishes him even after the fall and describes his essence.⁶⁰ It is curious that even among some Lutherans the statement “through the fall man lost the image of God” seems to cause uneasiness, even though it is a confessional statement. In many Christian circles, “the image of God” seems to become *the* term to express what it means to be human. According to the Lutheran Confessions, the sinner who has lost the image of God is still a human being. Furthermore, Quenstedt explicitly denies that the image of God is the substance of humanity. The continuity of man is on the one hand in his substance, namely, body and soul, and on the other in the continued special relation God has to man and therefore man has to God. Man is the only being to whom God speaks the gospel, and man is the only being who is called to faith.

This view of man is not the majority opinion today. In regard to the substance of man, body and soul, the materialistic preoccupation of western civilization over the last two hundred years has made this view of man less and less convincing in general culture. Evolutionism did its part to destroy the traditional understanding of humanity, and materialism brings

⁵⁹ As documented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2003), §1702: “The divine image is present in every man.”

⁶⁰ As seen in Anthony A. Hoekema’s monograph on anthropology, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986): “Though, as we have seen, the Bible teaches that man’s fall into sin has seriously perverted the image of God in him, it also teaches that fallen man is still to be regarded as an image-bearer of God” (98). For the traditional Lutheran view on this point, cf. Werner Elert, *The Christian Ethos* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 226. For Luther’s view, cf. Albrecht Peters, *Der Mensch* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1979), 43–49.

with it atheism. Here apologetics has an important task to show that materialism is not the only rationally defensible worldview, but that a universe that includes God and the soul makes more sense. In regard to the special relationship of God to man as the being that is to be justified, this view is only plausible to those who believe the gospel, that is, to Christians. Conversion to Christianity will therefore not only lead to the true knowledge of God but also to a true understanding of humanity. And not only that, the gospel makes us truly human. It turns sinful man from an unhappy god into a true human being.