

How Is Theology a *Habitus*? Voices from the Past and Why It Matters Today

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In the first volume of his *Christian Dogmatics*, Francis Pieper defines theology as a *habitus*.¹ With this definition, Pieper hearkens back to the “old theologians” from the seventeenth century and follows in their footsteps. This habitual definition of theology has become normative and is often taken as a given in Lutheran circles.

But it was not always so. That definition of theology only entered into Lutheranism a century after Luther famously nailed the ninety-five theses on the Castle Church door. And it only did so with some major misgivings that caused serious contention and led to what came to be known as the *Habitus* Controversy within Lutheranism. Those misgivings revolved around the misunderstandings that could so easily arise from the wholesale adoption of an Aristotelian concept into the field of theology.

Moreover, after its widespread adoption by the seventeenth-century Protestant theologians, it once again fell out of use, especially with the emergence and subsequent prominence of theological encyclopedias during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the view of theology as *Wissenschaft* (“academic discipline”). It resurfaced and gained renewed prominence within mainstream Protestantism in the second half of the twentieth century, in part due to Edward Farley’s seminal study on theological education in the 1980s, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*. In an effort to overcome the compartmentalization of theological education into wholly distinct and separate disciplines, Farley likened the study of theology to a *paideia*, cultivating a theological *habitus* within the theologian.² Richard Muller, a historian specializing in Reformed theology during the Age of Orthodoxy, agreed with Farley in emphasizing the formation of a theological disposition as an integral part of theological study, despite his serious reservations about Farley’s attempt to find theology’s unity in that subjective disposition and while also much more favorably inclined toward the prevailing fourfold model of

¹ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 44, 46.

² Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 152–153, 179–181.

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theological studies.³ Subsequently, the influential study published in 2006 by the Carnegie Institute, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*, also made use of the concept of *habitus*, arguing that “seminary educators seek to form dispositions and the intuitive knowledge, or habitus, of a given religious or intellectual tradition in students.”⁴ In more recent years, this habitual definition of theology seems to have influenced the work of Eileen R. Campbell-Reed and the Learning Pastoral Imagination project, a national, ecumenical, longitudinal study of ministry in the United States, launched in 2009 and currently ongoing.⁵ It seems, therefore, that a habitual understanding of theology has, once again, gained popularity.

This rise in popularity coincides with sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s use of the Aristotelian concept in the field of sociology.⁶ Bourdieu used the term *habitus* to describe the habits, skills, and dispositions an individual acquires throughout one’s life as a result of the process of socialization that shapes one’s thought and action. His social theory involving the concept of *habitus* has had a widespread influence in many fields, including that of theology and theological education. For example, the Carnegie Foundation study on *Educating Clergy* seems to draw from this socio-

³ Richard A. Muller, *The Study of Theology: From Biblical Interpretation to Contemporary Formulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 29–32.

⁴ Charles R. Foster et al., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (Stanford, CA: Carnegie Foundation for Advancement in Teaching, 2006), 23.

⁵ Learning Pastoral Imagination Project, <https://pastoralimagination.com/>. See, e.g., Eileen Campbell-Reed’s explanation in an interview in 2021 about “pastoral imagination”: “It is skilled practice. . . . We’ve made the connection to Aristotle’s idea of *phronesis*. *Phronesis* is practical wisdom. Pastoral imagination is a way of being a minister or pastor that sees into the fullness of a situation and knows what to do and takes a risk and does it.” Eileen R. Campbell-Reed and Jessica L. Anschutz, “Cultivating and Nurturing Pastoral Imagination,” Lewis Center for Church Leadership, August 3, 2021, <https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/cultivating-and-nurturing-pastoral-imagination/>.

Note that *phronesis*, according to Aristotle, is one of the five intellectual *habitus*, or virtues. There was much debate at the beginning of the seventeenth century over which of Aristotle’s *habitus* most closely characterized theology. While a few Protestant theologians (e.g., Keckermann) suggested *phronesis*, most rejected it because, according to Aristotle, *phronesis* did not deal with ultimate foundational principles, which proves problematic for theology and its focus on God and divine matters. See Glenn K. Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) and the Conceptualization of Theologia at the Threshold of the “Age of Orthodoxy”*: *The Making of the Theologian* (Göttingen: Ruprecht, 2018), 114–119.

⁶ He developed his theory of *habitus* in several works. See, e.g., Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977). For a helpful introduction to Bourdieu’s social theory, see Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (London: Routledge, 1992). Bourdieu was certainly not the first to use the concept of the *habitus* in the fields of psychology and sociology, but he is the one who developed it more fully and popularized it. For a brief history of the term over the last few centuries, see Gisèle Sapiro, “Habitus: History of a Concept,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., vol. 10, ed. James D. Wright (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015), 484–489.

logical understanding of *habitus*.⁷ In fact, habitual understandings of theology nowadays often seem more influenced by Bourdieu's sociological use of that term and less by the original Aristotelian usage of it by the seventeenth-century theologians.

This is problematic for a number of reasons. First of all, it seems to have contributed to some confusion and misunderstanding about the Aristotelian concept of *habitus* itself. Bourdieu's influential use of *habitus* linked it to his theory of *practice*,⁸ potentially leading some contemporary theologians to assume anachronistically that the old seventeenth-century theologians were emphasizing theology's practical nature over its speculative or contemplative nature when they labeled it as a *habitus*. This misunderstanding often manifests in two ways. Some mistakenly assume that the old theologians used the term *habitus*, in and of itself, to refer to a kind of affective pastoral disposition rather than a mere speculative pursuit, while others erroneously assume that they used it in an effort to emphasize the technical skills needed for ministry. However, neither of these is the case. According to the Aristotelian framework within which those old theologians were operating, a *habitus* could be speculative just as well as practical, depending on the particular *habitus*. Thus, a theological *habitus*, in and of itself, could very well be a contemplative matter, just as much as it could be a practical matter. It depended on which *habitus* one was talking about. As we will see below, it was this very ambiguity that prompted the seventeenth-century Protestant theologians to debate precisely which type of *habitus* most accurately characterized theology. Many Lutheran theologians, in particular, ultimately concluded that it was not just any *habitus* but specifically a practical one. This distinction is one of the reasons Pieper also emphasizes that the theological *habitus* must be understood as a *spiritual habitus*.⁹

Second, Bourdieu's sociological influence on a habitual understanding of theology may also be problematic theologically. As some theologians have noted, the focus on a subjective disposition shaped by mere sociological factors may neglect the role of the Holy Spirit in the shaping of the theologian.¹⁰ This has traditionally been a concern for many within the Christian tradition. It echoes similar objections raised by certain theologians during the *Habitus* Controversy within Lutheranism four centuries ago. As we will see below, they were cautious of defining theology as a *habitus*, fearing that it could overemphasize human effort in theological pursuits and lead to theological synergism. Those theologians who eventually embraced the term took deliberate steps to modify its usage to mitigate this potential danger.

⁷ Foster et al., *Educating Clergy*, 23.

⁸ He develops it most cogently in Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977).

⁹ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:46.

¹⁰ Christopher Craig Brittain, "Can a Theology Student be an Evil Genius? On the Concept of *Habitus* in Theological Education," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60, no. 4 (Nov. 2007): 142.

Third, when applied to theology, such a sociological definition may not give enough attention to the objective, normative nature of theology rooted in Scripture.¹¹ This, too, has been an important concern for many within Christianity throughout the ages. It raises important questions: What serves as the norm for theological truth? What serves as the standard for Christian morality, or what the old theologians called godliness or piety? Does it pay enough “critical attention to the limitations and blind spots” of the various social milieux?¹² If theological knowledge is seen purely as a social construct, how does it relate to faith and piety? Although long before the rise of sociology as a discipline, the seventeenth-century theologians wrestled with similar questions in their own contexts as they grappled with whether and to what extent one could understand theology as a *habitus*. As we will see below, in the early seventeenth century, of particular concern was this last question over the relation between theology and faith and piety. Could one be a theologian apart from genuine faith and the consequent life of faith? While no one endorsed such a notion, some argued that a *habitus* view of theology might inadvertently allow for it. Again, efforts were made to address and rectify any such potential misunderstandings. These insights may prove helpful in contemporary discussions.

What follows lays out the history of this term *habitus* within Lutheran theological circles, tracing its usage through the Reformation via Melancthon, who favored it, and Luther, who avoided it, through the *Habitus* Controversy of the early seventeenth century and Johann Gerhard’s conciliatory solution, and through the later seventeenth-century theologians König, Calov, and Quenstedt, who fully embraced it. The purpose here is to get at that question: What precisely do Lutheran theologians mean when they say that theology is a *habitus*?

Melancthon’s Use of the Idea of *Habitus*

Philip Melancthon, trained in Aristotelian rhetorical and logical categories, was very interested in the concept of *habitus*. He rarely uses the idea, however, in his theological writings.¹³ He does give a full and detailed explanation of the term in

¹¹ Müller, *Study of Theology*, 32–37.

¹² Brittain, “Evil Genius,” 142. For a related critique of Farley’s habitual solution, see Müller, *Study of Theology*, 26–41.

¹³ For example, he mentions *habitus* in the earlier editions of his *Loci Communes* (Commonplaces) but only in passing. In the 1535 edition he stresses that faith includes a knowledge component (*notitia*) and adds that it also includes the “*habitus* or action of the will by which it wills to receive the promise of Christ” (Philip Melancthon, *Loci Communes* [1535], in *Corpus Reformatorum*, 28 vols., ed. K. G. Bretschneider et al. [Brunswick: Schwetschke et filium, 1834–60], 21:422 [hereafter cited as *CR*]). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. In the later 1559 edition he avoids the term, but in an appendix of “Definitions of Terms” he does identify faith as a “virtue/power of laying hold of the promises and applying them to oneself” (Philip Melancthon, *Loci Communes* [1559], in *CR* 21:751; translated as Philip Melancthon, *The Chief Theological*

his undergraduate philosophy textbook, *Erotemata Dialectices* (Questions of logic).¹⁴ The textbook was immensely popular and shaped the thinking of Protestant university students well into the early seventeenth century.¹⁵ Following Aristotle's lead, Melanchthon defines a *habitus* as "a quality developed from frequent actions in people by which they can accomplish correctly and easily those actions which are controlled and assisted by their own *habitus*."¹⁶ He then gives a concrete example. The painter Lucas Cranach possesses the *habitus* of painting. Of course, he acquired this *habitus* of painting by painting frequently so that he could paint more easily and better than other novice painters. It is important to note that a *habitus*, derived from the Latin verb *habeo* and translated from the Greek verb ἔχω, denotes a "having" or "possession" (hence, we refer to a monk's cowl as a habit), and a person gets it by frequently repeating the action that is to arise from the *habitus*. In other words, a person has to work at it. For example, the soldier comes to possess the *habitus* of bravery by frequently and repeatedly performing brave acts. One can also see from this example that *habitus* are what we often call "dispositions," or, better yet, "virtues." Furthermore, Aristotle had recognized that the various kinds of things one can assert about a thing can be divided into a number of different categories such as substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, etc.¹⁷ Like Aristotle before him, Melanchthon distinctly classifies *habitus* in the category of "quality." In other words, when one says, "This man is brave," one is claiming that the man possesses an internal quality of bravery and, if bravery is indeed a *habitus*, then the man has attained that internal quality by repeatedly working on it. Although this makes sense in day-to-day life, one can already see how the Aristotelian concept of *habitus*

Topics: "Locis Praecipuis Theologicis" 1559, 2nd ed., trans. J. A. O. Preus [St. Louis: Concordia, 2011], 158.) The passing reference is significant because virtues were *habitus* in the Aristotelian schema. Additionally, when defining *notitiae habituales* in the "Definition of Terms" of the 1553 edition, Melanchthon admits that "the obscurity concerning habits is great," and then adds that in the reborn "'virtue' can be called either the Holy Spirit himself or an emotion that springs from him. You see, the Creator must be distinguished from creation" (Melanchthon, *Chief Theological Topics*, 530–531). One can see here the potential problem of the concept of *habitus* and the possible connection with what would shortly become the Synergistic Controversy between the Philippists and the Gnesio-Lutherans.

¹⁴ Philip Melanchthon, *Erotemata Dialectices*, in *CR* 13:507–752. For a deeper analysis of Melanchthon's explanation, see Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard*, 38–50.

¹⁵ Günter Frank, "Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560): Reformer and Philosopher," trans. Brian McNeil, in *Philosophers of the Renaissance*, ed. Paul Richard (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2010), 153. See also Joseph S. Freedman, "Aristotle and the Content of Philosophy Instruction at Central European Schools and Universities During the Reformation Era (1500–1650)," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 137, no. 2 (1993): 224.

¹⁶ Melanchthon, *Erotemata Dialectices*, 535.

¹⁷ See G. E. R. Lloyd, *Aristotle: The Growth and Structure of His Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), 113.

would raise significant questions in the minds of the reformers when applied to theology.

There are many different kinds of *habitus*. Those of the body consist in exercise of the body, such as dancing or running. Melanchthon, however, is especially interested in the *habitus* of the soul. These *habitus* of the soul are often called virtues. And since Aristotelian psychology divided the soul into the intellect and the will, the *habitus* of the soul can be further divided into those of the intellect (intellectual virtues) and those of the will (moral virtues). With regard to the moral virtues, Melanchthon lays out a list similar to that of Aristotle but adds a few extra ones that are specifically “characteristic of the church of God.”¹⁸ Among these he lists “faith” (*fides*), more specifically defined as trust (*fiducia*). With regard to the intellect, Aristotle had set forth a list of the five intellectual virtues, or *habitus*: theoretical/transcendental wisdom (*σοφία* or *sapientia*), intuitive understanding (*νοῦς* or *intellectus*), syllogistic/scientific knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη* or *scientia*),¹⁹ practical wisdom/prudence (*φρόνησις* or *prudentia*), and craftsmanship/artistry (*τέχνη* or *ars*).²⁰ Each denotes a particular way in which a person is able to know the truth about things. Melanchthon follows suit, although curiously leaving out theoretical wisdom (*sapientia*) and adding in historical faith (*fides*).²¹ For both Aristotle and Melanchthon, if the moral *habitus* dispose a person to act morally and properly, the intellectual *habitus* dispose him or her to think rightly and properly. In other words, one cannot come to know something unless one first possesses the *habitus* for knowing it.

Regarding the intellectual virtues, one traditionally distinguished between the speculative intellectual *habitus* and the practical intellectual *habitus*. Theoretical wisdom (*sapientia*), understanding (*intellectus*), and scientific knowledge (*scientia*) were considered the speculative *habitus*. Practical wisdom (*prudentia*) and craftsmanship (*ars*) were considered the practical *habitus*. Especially noteworthy is the distinction between what makes a *habitus* speculative and what makes it practical. Aristotle was quite clear on this, and the early modern theologians adopted this same distinction. The distinction had to do with the kind of knowledge and the goal or

¹⁸ Melanchthon, *Erotemata Dialectices*, 538.

¹⁹ I use the word “scientific” here as derived from the Latin term *scientia* in its original Aristotelian sense. Although often translated “science” in English, it does not at all refer to what have become known as the natural sciences. *Scientia* refers to the mental disposition or aptitude by which a person logically derives valid conclusions from first principles. It refers to the process of mental syllogistic analysis by which the mind infers truths from prior truths and, thus, extends one’s knowledge.

²⁰ Aristotle lists and describes these *habitus* most clearly in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (see especially 11139b15–1140a23).

²¹ It was quite common and considered an accepted practice for philosophers at this time to revise and adapt Aristotelian thought for their particular purposes and times. See Freedman, “Aristotle and the Content of Philosophy Instruction,” 213–253.

purpose of that knowledge. The speculative *habitus* were those mental dispositions or aptitudes by which a person came to know “necessary truths”—that is, truths that cannot be otherwise. Moreover, the goal or purpose of the speculative *habitus* was the pure contemplation of those truths. In other words, the goal or end of this knowledge was found in the knowing of the knowledge itself. This was considered the highest and purest pursuit. The practical *habitus* were those mental dispositions by which a person came to know “contingent truths”—that is, truths that could be otherwise. Additionally, the goal or purpose of this knowledge was something beyond the mere contemplation of those truths. The practical *habitus* allowed a person to know a truth for the sake of acting in a certain way (practical wisdom, *prudentia*) or making certain things (craftsmanship, *ars*).

If one were to outline the various kinds of *habitus* according to Melanchthon, it would look something like this:

I. *Habitus* of the body

II. *Habitus* of the soul

A. *Habitus* of the intellect (which involve knowledge, reasoning, and understanding and lead to right thinking)

1. Opinion

2. Certain knowledge

a. Speculative intellectual *habitus* (which deal with knowledge of necessary truths for the sake of pure contemplation)

1) *Sapientia* (theoretical wisdom)²²

2) *Intellectus* (intuitive understanding)

3) *Scientia* (scientific knowledge)

b. Practical intellectual *habitus* (which deal with knowledge of contingent truths in order to act and to make things well)

1) *Prudentia* (practical wisdom)

2) *Ars* (craftsmanship)

3) *Fides* (historical faith)

B. *Habitus* of the will (which involve the affections and lead to good behavior)

1. Moral virtues

a. Faith (Christian)

b. Hope

c. Love

²² Melanchthon omits *sapientia* from his schema of *habitus*. I have included it here to more accurately reflect Aristotle’s schema and because of the central role it plays in later seventeenth-century debates over the nature of theology.

In all of Melanchthon's explanations of *habitus* in the sixteenth century, theology is never mentioned. But one can already see how later efforts in the seventeenth century to define theology as a *habitus* would have to deal with the question of how it related to Aristotle's schema. On the one hand, since the speculative *habitus* are the highest forms of knowledge and deal with necessary truths, would a theological *habitus* be mostly speculative? If so, how would one account for the fact that the Scriptures seem to emphasize the goal of salvation and good works, rather than mere contemplation? On the other hand, since the practical *habitus*, especially practical wisdom, would allow one to emphasize salvation and good works, would a theological *habitus* be mostly practical? If so, how would one account for the fact that theology seems to be the highest form of knowledge, since it deals with divine matters and necessary truths?

However, before the seventeenth-century theologians began to debate what kind of *habitus* theology was, a much more basic problem first needed to be addressed. Could the Aristotelian concept of *habitus*, in and of itself, be used in theology without undermining the foundational tenets of the Reformation? For this, we turn to Martin Luther.

Luther's Concern about the Concept of *Habitus*

While Melanchthon wholeheartedly embraces the idea of *habitus* in his philosophical works, Martin Luther tends to reject it in his theological lectures and writings. Much of this can be attributed to his approach to theology, succinctly summed up by the short phrase he scrawled on a scrap of paper shortly before his death: "We are beggars. This is true."²³ Although he was referring to the way in which one understands Scripture, Luther's last words also capture something fundamental about his approach to theology in general. Earlier in his *Lectures on Romans*, Luther had described the whole life of faith as "nothing else but prayer, seeking, and begging . . . always seeking and striving to be made righteous, even to the hour of death, never standing still, never possessing."²⁴ In other words, the life of faith is receptive, what he had elsewhere referred to as the *vita passiva*, the receptive life, whereby "God is the active subject and . . . humans simply 'suffer' (*passio*) or undergo his work."²⁵

²³ "Wir sind Bettler, Hoc est verum." Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden*, 6 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1912–1921), 5:168.

²⁴ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans* (1515–1516), in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1976), vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–1986), vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), 25:251–252 (hereafter cited as AE).

²⁵ Owsald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 23; see also 21–24.

This runs fundamentally counter to the very idea of *habitus*, which describes a kind of “having” or “possessing” achieved through one’s own diligent effort. On the contrary, faith is not as much about one’s own having of divine things as it is about “God’s having” of me.²⁶

Hence, it comes as no surprise that Luther’s use of and allusions to the Aristotelian idea of *habitus* tend to view it negatively, especially when used in specifically theological contexts.²⁷ This is mostly due to his concern that the concept itself runs counter to the very doctrine that the Reformation had rediscovered—that a person is justified by grace alone through faith alone.

Of the utmost concern was the idea of “infused righteousness” (*iustitia infusa*). Contrary to Aristotle, who viewed a *habitus* as an internal quality that one possessed, Luther insisted that Christian righteousness, by which a person is saved, is an external imputation: “It is a divine imputation or reckoning as righteousness or to righteousness, for the sake of our faith in Christ or for the sake of Christ. When the sophists hear this definition, they laugh; for they suppose that righteousness is a certain quality [i.e., *habitus*] that is first infused into the soul and then distributed through all the members.”²⁸ Far from an intrinsic quality that one comes to possess through diligent practice and effort, early in his career, Luther had called it an “alien righteousness,” since it belonged to Christ alone.²⁹ Later he settles on the term “passive righteousness,” for by it “we only receive and permit someone else to work in us, namely God.”³⁰ The idea of a “habitus of grace” (*habitus gratiae*) was problematic for similar reasons. Against the so-called scholastics who taught that “grace is a quality [i.e., *habitus*] hidden in the heart; if someone has it included in his heart like a jewel, God regards him, if he co-operates with his free will,” the Augustinian monk insisted that “grace means the favor by which God accepts us, forgiving sins and justifying freely through Christ.”³¹ Grace is a disposition of God, not something we possess, whether or not it be divinely infused.

²⁶ Gerhard Funke, “Gewohnheit,” in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte: Bausteine zu einem historischen Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 3 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1958), 194.

²⁷ This conclusion and the following discussion are drawn from a broad survey of Luther’s comments throughout his writings about the theological use of the Aristotelian idea of *habitus*. At times, Luther refrains from using the term *habitus* itself but clearly refers to the Aristotelian concept of *habitus* by using related terms (e.g., *qualitas*). At other times, Luther uses the term *habitus* but in a way unrelated to the Aristotelian concept (e.g., clothing, general attitude). The research presented here focused mostly on the *American Edition* of Luther’s works. A comprehensive analysis of the Latin term and its related German equivalents in the Weimar edition is still ongoing, but preliminary results confirm the conclusions presented here.

²⁸ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), in AE 26:233; see also 127–128. See also Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, 274.

²⁹ Martin Luther, *Two Kinds of Righteousness* (1519), in AE 31:297.

³⁰ Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 4–5.

³¹ Martin Luther, *Psalm 51* (1532), in AE 12:376–377.

While the refusal to label Christian righteousness and grace as *habitus* is understandable since they are external to the believer, less obvious is Luther's reluctance to use it in describing faith. After all, faith does actually reside within the soul, so the question of how it does so is a legitimate one. Nonetheless, Luther, for the most part, still hesitates to identify even faith as a *habitus*.³² There seem to be at least two reasons for this. First, Luther insisted that we understand and encounter God in the category of "relation" as opposed to any of Aristotle's other categories: "If you depart from this God whom we are placing in the category of relation and investigate Him in the category of substance or quantity, you will be overwhelmed by His majesty. If you search for Him in the category of quality [e.g., *habitus*], you will be consumed. . . . Therefore stay with God in the category of relation."³³ As mentioned earlier, according to Aristotle, as well as Melancthon, *habitus* were classified in the category of "quality"—that is, they were considered internal qualities of a person. Consequently, if faith were a *habitus*, then it would merely be an internal quality obtained by repeated practice. But, according to Luther, that will lead to the person being "consumed" because he or she is then dependent on the self. Rather, instead of encountering God through a personal quality such as one's own *habitus* of faith, Luther prefers explanations that tend to be more relational. For example, he remarks that faith "unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. . . . It follows that everything they have they hold in common."³⁴ Elsewhere he associates faith with the gift of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within the believer.³⁵

³² Luther is fairly consistent in avoiding scholastic language to describe faith. There are a few occasions where he does seem to acknowledge faith as a quality (i.e., *habitus*), but, as far as I can tell, these appear to be in passing and almost always in a context where the use of scholastic language is called for, for example, to refute the arguments of opponents (e.g., Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 132). In the academic context of his *Disputation concerning Justification*, he specifically denies that Scripture depicts righteousness, charity, or love as qualities but curiously leaves open the question of faith being a quality or *habitus* by simply saying that it is not a work (Martin Luther, *Disputation concerning Justification* [1536], in AE 34:168–169). In light of this and his enthusiastic support of Melancthon's textbook *Erotemata Dialectices*, which clearly defined faith as a *habitus*, one could perhaps make the cautious case that Luther's reluctance to use the term to describe faith was more due to the scholastic misuse of the idea than to the terminology itself. In any case, Lutheran theologians in the following generations studiously avoided calling faith a *habitus* in theological contexts, probably because of its close association with the idea of infused righteousness and perhaps also due to the fallout after the synergistic controversies. Interestingly, while avoiding labeling faith as a *habitus* in theological contexts, some fully embraced doing so in other more philosophical contexts; see Kenneth G. Appold, *Abraham Calov's Doctrine of Vocatio in Its Systematic Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 156–157.

³³ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–1545), in AE 3:122.

³⁴ Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), in AE 31:344, 348–349; see also Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–1545), in AE 5:38; and Luther, *Two Kinds of Righteousness*, 297.

³⁵ Martin Luther, *Treatise on Good Works* (1520), in AE 44:26.

But there is a second reason that Luther hesitates to identify faith as a *habitus*. The scholastics were used to viewing faith as inferior to the other virtues, especially that of love, claiming that faith is merely a formless and empty quality until it is informed and adorned by love.³⁶ For Luther, faith “is not an idle quality [i.e., *habitus*] or an empty husk in the heart,” but true faith, as trust in the promises of God, “takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself.”³⁷ In fact, by faith alone (not love!) the believer fulfills all of the law and becomes holy, righteous, and “a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.”³⁸

In short, Luther rejects the Aristotelian idea of *habitus* in the realm of theology because it left too much room for synergism, human merit in spiritual affairs. Even if divinely infused, as Aquinas claimed, a *habitus* required at least some human effort, a kind of cooperation, in order for it to be actualized in good deeds.³⁹ In other words, although throughout the millennia the concept has appealed to many as a helpful explanation for character formation, the suggestion ingrained within it that one does certain actions for those actions to become second nature—a kind of “fake it ‘till you make it” mentality—simply did not jibe well with the Reformation insistence that humans do not cooperate with God when it comes to salvation.

Reintroduction of *Habitus* into Lutheran Theology

In light of Luther’s misgivings and, at times, vehement rejection of the term as applied to faith, one may wonder how the term came to be used so commonly among Lutherans to describe theology. The occasion for its reentry into German Protestant thought and theology was a renewed interest in metaphysics that occurred toward the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁴⁰ The metaphysical question of essence naturally gave rise to curiosity about the epistemological question of knowableness. Hence, a genre of literature, bearing titles such as *Hexilogia*, *Technologia*, and *Gnostologia*, emerged around this time seeking to explain how one comes to know something. Influenced by the Italian philosopher Jacob Zabarella (1533–1589), the authors adopted and adapted an Aristotelian approach to epistemology

³⁶ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, quest. 4, art. 3.

³⁷ Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 129.

³⁸ Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*, 344, 348–349.

³⁹ See Clare Carlisle, “The Question of Habit in Theology and Philosophy: From Hexis to Plasticity,” *Body & Society* 19, no. 2–3: 66–67.

⁴⁰ For the “return of metaphysics” and its influence on German theological thought, see Max Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1939); Hans Emil Weber, *Der Einfluss der protestantischen Schulphilosophie auf die orthodox-lutherische Dogmatik* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1908).

emphasizing the five intellectual *habitus*.⁴¹ It was generally agreed that one had to possess the correct intellectual *habitus* in order to know something.⁴²

In fact, again influenced by Zabarella, this came to be applied to the individual disciplines within the university curriculum. So, for example, the Reformed professor of philosophy Clemens Timpler (1563–1624), whose works were commonly read in the German territories, specifically distinguished between external and internal liberal arts. The external liberal arts were systems of “doctrines” arranged in orderly fashion to facilitate the handing down of teachings within the respective disciplines, such as grammar, rhetoric, poetry, music, logic, history, metaphysics, physics, mathematics, ethics, and so on and so forth.⁴³ The internal liberal arts were the corresponding intellectual *habitus*—that is, dispositions or virtues within the student’s mind allowing him to learn and become knowledgeable in the various disciplines.⁴⁴ Consequently, a field of study at the university could be and often was defined both objectively as a doctrine and subjectively as a *habitus*. It is significant that such *habitus* were explicitly of the intellect and not of the will.

Of course, this placed theology in a bit of a quandary. Was it a discipline similar to other disciplines at the university? If not, then why was it studied at the university? If so, then it must be some sort of knowledge and, therefore, should be considered subjectively as a *habitus*. But what distinguished it from the other disciplines? After all, although taught at the university like other disciplines, it seemed that theology was somehow different, not just in terms of content but also in terms of how one acquired theological knowledge. As Timpler himself admits, some argued that theology should not even be numbered among the liberal arts for this very reason: “It is not proper to number theology among the liberal arts, if it is established not from natural but supernatural principles. Neither is it arrived at or established from the light of natural senses and reason, or from human study and effort, but it is revealed to men by the supernatural light of the divine word.”⁴⁵ Labeling it as a *habitus* like any other discipline, acquired through one’s own hard work and diligent effort, underestimated the sinful corruption of the human mind and opened the door to a

⁴¹ Although Aristotle’s influence was certainly widely felt throughout the schools and universities of central Europe in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is also important to recognize a wide variety of uses and adaptations of Aristotle’s writings. See Freedman, “Aristotle and the Content of Philosophy Instruction,” 213–253.

⁴² Bengt Hägglund, *Die Heilige Schrift und ihre Deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards: Eine Untersuchung über das altlutherische Schriftverständnis* (Lund: Gleerup, 1951), 47–49. See also Funke, “Gewohnheit,” 238–239.

⁴³ Clemens Timpler, “Technologia, Seu Tractatus Generalis, De Natura & Differentis Artium Liberalium,” in *Metaphysicae Systema Methodicum* (Hanover: Perrius Antonius, [1604] 1616), 1–3; for the various disciplines, see 26–28.

⁴⁴ Timpler, “Technologia,” 30–31.

⁴⁵ Timpler, “Technologia,” 27.

kind of theological synergism, whereby a person could presumably make progress in spiritual matters completely apart from God's intervention. This was precisely what caused Luther's misgivings about the idea of faith as a *habitus* a few generations earlier.

In any case, the term did make its way into Protestant theological thought, first among the Reformed and then into Lutheran circles. Balthasar Meisner (1567–1626) seems to have been one of the first Lutheran theologians to make use of term in defining theology in the first volume of his systematic textbook, published in 1612.⁴⁶ Notably, however, he adds the explicit qualification that it is a *habitus theosdotos* (“God-given *habitus*”) in an effort to express how the source of theology is different than that of the other university disciplines.

The *Habitus* Controversy in Lutheranism and the Problem of a Theological *Habitus*

But another problem soon presented itself. What was the relation between theology and such things as faith and piety (godliness)?⁴⁷ After all, if theology were similar to the other university disciplines that did not necessarily implicate such things as faith and piety, could one also learn theology apart from faith and divorced from piety? An important question at this time arose over whether or not the nonbeliever could arrive at a true understanding of theology—that is, the possibility or impossibility of a *theologia non renatorum* (“theology of the unregenerate”). In fact, in the first volume of his systematic compendium, Meisner had even conceded such a possibility when he first labeled it as a *habitus* in 1612.⁴⁸ Of course, no one at this time, least of all Meisner, believed that studying theology apart from faith was a good thing, but the fact that he even suggested the possibility reveals a shift in the way scholars were beginning to view theology and how one acquires theological knowledge. Curiously, in the third volume of the same series, published in 1623, Meisner no longer mentions such a possibility when describing theology.⁴⁹ It is likely that this was due in part to a dispute that had since arisen over this very topic.

⁴⁶ Balthasar Meisner, *Philosophia Sobria, hoc est, Pia Consideratio Quaestionum Philosophicarum*, vol. 1 (Giessen: Nicolas Hampelius, 1612), sec. 2, chap. 2, quest. 1, assert. 2, p. 457.

⁴⁷ *Pietas*, or “piety,” was a commonly used word during this period in history and did not, at this time, carry with it the connotations, positive or negative, that have come to be associated with the term because of the later “Pietist movement.” In any case, I have chosen to use the word “piety” because it seems the closest translation of *pietas*.

⁴⁸ Meisner, *Philosophia Sobria*, vol. 1, sec. 2, chap. 2, quest. 1, pp. 454, 458. For a more deeply nuanced understanding of Meisner's conceptualization of theology in its context, see David R. Preus, “The Practical Orthodoxy of Balthasar Meisner: The Content and Context of His Theology” (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2018).

⁴⁹ Balthasar Meisner, *Philosophia Sobria, hoc est, Pia Consideratio Quaestionum Philosophicarum*, vol. 3 (Wittenberg: Nicolas Hampelius, 1623).

The question of how theology should be viewed in relation to faith and piety was a matter of serious debate throughout the first two decades of the seventeenth century, with related disputes flaring up over the role of philosophy and reason within theology. On the one side, theologians such as Johann Arndt insisted on an inseparably close relation between theology and faith/piety and warned repeatedly about the dangers of an unduly academic theology focused purely on disputation: “The practice of academic theology is the exercise of faith and of the Christian life or sincere piety. . . . Therefore, let the beginning of true learning be piety, fear and true knowledge of God, serious prayer and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Without these things experience confirms that the study of books is most unfortunate and comes to the saddest end.”⁵⁰ Arndt’s four books on *True Christianity* (1606–1610) reiterating this same theme were the most widely read devotional works throughout Europe at this time. On the opposite extreme, philosophy professors such as Cornelius Martini (1594–1621) at the University of Helmstedt, who was partly responsible for reintroducing Aristotelian metaphysics into Lutheran thought,⁵¹ and the later theology professor of the same university Georg Calixt (1613–1658) clearly tended to emphasize the role of natural reason in theology and deemphasize its relation to faith and the pious life.

The mounting tension over this issue came to a boiling point in what has been called the *Habitus* Controversy within Lutheranism.⁵² Sigismund Evenius, the newly commissioned rector of the *Gymnasium* (university-preparatory school) in Magdeburg, organized a disputation on November 20, 1622, treating the topic of the relation between philosophy and theology. Johannes Kotzebue, a local pastor in Magdeburg, defended the theses. The theses presented theology as an academic discipline and, consequently, defined it as an intellectual *habitus*. In doing so, they also indicated that theology, similar to other disciplines at the university, could be carried out independent of the Holy Spirit, because its goal was simply familiarity with the truths of the faith that could be obtained through hard work, diligent study, and talent.⁵³ In fact, to defend their position, Evenius and Kotzebue even referenced Meisner’s previous recognition that one could study theology apart from faith.

⁵⁰ Johann Arndt, “Dissertatio D. Johannis Arnds, theses 2 & 22,” in Johann Gerhard, *Aphorismi Sacri Praecipua Theologiae Practicae Complectentes* (Jena: Tobia Steinmann, 1616); originally published in 1597 as a separate tract.

⁵¹ Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik*, 240; also Kenneth Appold, “Academic Life and Teaching in Post-Reformation Lutheranism,” in *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675*, ed. Robert Kolb (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 89.

⁵² For an insightful analysis of the *Habitus* Controversy, including what led up to it and its repercussions throughout Lutheranism, see Markus Friedrich, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft: Theologie, Philosophie und gelehrte Luthertum um 1600* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

⁵³ Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 195, 303–304.

Unlike Meisner, however, they notably neglected to describe the *habitus* of theology as God-given, *theosdotos*.⁵⁴

At the disputation was another pastor from Magdeburg, Andreas Cramer. Although not officially part of the proceedings, Cramer felt obligated to enter into the debate. He argued vehemently that such a view of theology distorted its very nature. For him, theology was closely associated with, if not identical to, saving faith. Labeling theology as a *habitus*, he insisted, essentially separated it from any intervention of the Holy Spirit and divorced it from such things as faith and piety. In retrospect, Cramer held a strongly pessimistic view of humanity and believed that the flesh, including the mind, was under the constant dominion of the devil and, therefore, opposed to God.⁵⁵ This contrasted rather sharply with the idea of an intellectual *habitus* as proposed by Evenius. Following the lead of some of the other Lutheran philosophy professors at his time (e.g., Georg Gutke at the University of Wittenberg), Evenius assumed that the mind was simply an “empty slate” that could readily be filled with the necessary *habitus* if one worked hard enough at it.⁵⁶

Hence, one can see that, from Cramer’s point of view, there were two fundamental problems with a theological *habitus*. Firstly, it jeopardized the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from works by leaving open the possibility of a kind of theological works-righteousness by which one could make headway in spiritual matters apart from God’s intervention. It tended to place too much confidence in the natural abilities of the theologian. In this regard, Cramer seems to have shared Luther’s previous concern over the use of *habitus* in the arena of theology. But there was another related problem unique to the context of the early seventeenth century. Cramer also complained that any talk of a theological *habitus* treated theology as an academic pursuit like any other discipline at the university that did not require faith and the resulting pious life. For Cramer, this was simply unimaginable. On the contrary, he maintained that just as Christ was given through faith and dwells in the heart, true theology must always take place “in the heart of the person.”⁵⁷ Any legitimate study of theology necessarily involved saving faith.

In retrospect, the debate itself shows that the way in which people defined theology and envisaged its study was beginning to evolve. Luther, for instance, some seventy years earlier, would surely have never even left open the possibility of a person studying Christian theology apart from faith. On the contrary, faith was inherently indispensable to his threefold method of how to study theology: prayer,

⁵⁴ Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 304.

⁵⁵ Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 195, 290–295.

⁵⁶ Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik*, 246; Sascha Salatowsky, *De Anima: Die Rezeption der aristotelischen Psychologie im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 2006), 365.

⁵⁷ Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 195, 306.

meditation, and trial.⁵⁸ It is telling that, generally speaking, Luther's famous remarks regarding the proper way to study theology began to fall out of use around the same time that it was becoming popular to treat theology as a mere academic discipline.⁵⁹ Melancthon, for his part, never attempted a definition of theology, per se, but he had hinted that faith was indeed a *habitus* in his theological works and very clearly labeled it as such in his philosophical writings. It is telling, however, that Melancthon specifically identifies faith as a *moral habitus* seated in the will, not an *intellectual habitus* of the intellect.⁶⁰ It seems, then, that for Melancthon, as well as for Luther, theology could never be understood merely as an academic discipline.

Johann Gerhard's Conciliatory Solution: A "God-Given *Habitus*" That is "Mostly Practical"

The conflict went beyond the 1622 disputation and led to a literary battle, with both sides taking to the printing press.⁶¹ As is often the case with such scholarly debates, the conflict also began to play out on a more popular level with Cramer gaining the support of some of the local pastors from Magdeburg and the surrounding region. Within that region sits the smaller village of Quedlinburg. It so happens that Cramer had served as the rector of the school in Quedlinburg from 1606 to 1613

⁵⁸ Luther explains the "right way to study theology" in his *Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings* (1539), in AE 34:283–288.

⁵⁹ The connection between the decline of Luther's famous "method" and the rise of defining theology as a *habitus* merits further study, but it seems generally to be the case. See Chi-Won Kang, *Frömmigkeit und Gelehrsamkeit: Die Reform des Theologiestudiums im lutherischen Pietismus des 17. und des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts* (Giessen: Brunnen, 2001), 120–121. Georg Calixt, for instance, refrains from using Luther's "method." This is not surprising in light of his more academic approach to theology, but we also find no mention of it in the advice about theological study from such Wittenberg professors as Johann Förster (1576–1613), Leonard Hütter (1563–1616), and Johann Hülsemann (1602–1661). See Marcel Nieden, *Die Erfindung des Theologen: Wittenberger Anweisungen zum Theologiestudium im Zeitalter von Reformation und Konfessionalisierung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 231–232.

⁶⁰ Melancthon, *Erotemata Dialectices*, 538. In placing it among the moral *habitus*, Melancthon defines it thus: "Faith is knowledge by which we embrace with firm assent the entire teaching that God has handed down to his church and, in it, the promise of reconciliation, which we grasp and through which we receive the forgiveness of sins by trust [*fiducia*] in the Son of God." Melancthon had also categorized a kind of faith among the intellectual virtues, but he is clearly referring to a kind of historical faith that is other than the faith of the Christian believer. For a deeper analysis, see Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard*, 45–50.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Johann Kotzebue and Sigismundus Evenius, *Enodatio quaestionis de habitu theologico, Das ist: Kurtze und Einfeltige Erörterung aus und nach Gottes Wort der new entstandenen Frage: Ob die Theologia oder Wissenschaft der heyligen Schrift, welche von tüchtigen Predigern und Lehrern erfordert wird, ein habitus oder Fertigkeit und Geschicklichkeit von göttlichen Dingen zu handeln, könne und möge genennet werden?* (Magdeburg: Betzel, 1623); and Andreas Cramer, *Kurtze Erinnerung vom Grunde des wahren Christenthumbs, darinn die Apologia Kotzebuvii abgelehnet wird* (Magdeburg: Pohl, 1623).

and, incidentally, had been succeeded by Kotzebue until his own dismissal around 1620. The sharp differences in how each approached education were already evident early on. On the one hand, Cramer viewed the school's sole objective as the faith-education of the students, such that "any education outside of faith and without contributing to the strengthening of faith is of the devil."⁶² His eventual dismissal seems to have been due in part to the poor performance of the school during his tenure. On the other hand, his successor, Kotzebue, was later dismissed for "syncretistic disputes," seemingly because of his affinity with the theology of Calixt, who tended to distance theology from faith and piety.⁶³ The point is that the villagers of Quedlinburg were not only aware of the later *habitus* controversy taking place in the neighboring city of Magdeburg but were also quite likely embroiled in the ongoing dispute that had been simmering for some time even before it came to the fore in the disputation on November 20, 1622.

Quedlinburg also happened to be the hometown of Johann Gerhard. By the early twenties, Gerhard was already becoming a prominent voice in Lutheran circles. After having served as ecclesiastical superintendent of Heldburg and then regional superintendent of Coburg, he was called by the University of Jena in 1617 as a professor of theology. Even as a superintendent he had already established himself as a prolific writer and had published quite a few significant works before accepting the offer at the university, where he continued writing and publishing.

One such writing was a five-volume series on what he called the *Schola Pietatis* (School of piety), the purpose of which seemed to have been, at least in part, to offer a kind of corrective to Johann Arndt's four books *On True Christianity*, which had been criticized by some for making inappropriate use of unscriptural sources.⁶⁴ In a dedicatory letter introducing the second volume of *Schola Pietatis*, Gerhard offers a brief excursus that seems to address the controversy at hand. This is evident from both the context and the content. Gerhard penned the letter on October 17, 1622, amid the mounting tension that would eventually erupt into a full-scale conflict sparked by the disputation a month later. The letter was addressed to Dorothea Sophia and Anna Maria, both daughters of Friedrich Wilhelm, the former Duke of Saxony. Duchess Dorothea Sophia (1587–1645) was Abbess of Quedlinburg and, one can assume, quite aware of the theological tension simmering under the surface within her territory.⁶⁵ Throughout the letter Gerhard insists on the need for both

⁶² As quoted in Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 319.

⁶³ Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 189.

⁶⁴ Erdmann Fischer, *The Life of John Gerhard* (1723), trans. Richard Dinda and Elmer Hohle (Malone, TX: Repristination, 2000), 371–373.

⁶⁵ The duchess was not only the ruler of the city of Quedlinburg and surrounding territory but also the abbess of the Lutheran abbey in that same city. At this time, Lutherans continued to practice the female monastic life in Quedlinburg.

intellectual knowledge and practical piety as integral to true Christianity. Although he does not use the term “theology” in the letter or directly mention the names of any involved, he adamantly rejects the extreme positions of those who would spiritualize the faith to the point of disregarding the need for correct knowledge and pure doctrine, on the one hand, and those who would intellectualize the faith to the point of dismissing the need for pious, godly living, on the other hand.

Addressing the first extreme, the Jena professor argues that, without true faith, piety “has no status” or validity or place (*hat nicht Statt*).⁶⁶ In other words, unless one’s godly life flows from faith, such works, although seemingly good, are essentially worthless. And “genuine, true faith” consists of three parts: conceptual knowledge as drawn from God’s word (*notitia*), willing assent and commitment to these truths (*assensus*), and trust and confident assurance in God’s promises of grace and forgiveness (*fiducia*).⁶⁷ He then cites a long list of Bible passages that warn against false teaching and underscore the importance of pure doctrine. In so doing, Gerhard is clearly emphasizing the intellectual-knowledge dimension of faith. He then concludes, “It is a totally useless, mad delusion [*ein ganß vergeblicher Wahn*] what many people think; namely that it is sufficient for one to busy himself with godliness and good works, even though he does not concern himself much about purity of doctrine [*die Reinigkeit der Lehre*] and lets others do battle and fight over that. For true, God-pleasing godliness and proper God-pleasing good works can have no status [*können keine Statt haben*] without faith[-knowledge].”⁶⁸ Gerhard then goes on to reject the second, opposite extreme. Just as a godly life without faith and its requisite knowledge is worthless, “so also it is useless if a person wants to boast about pure doctrine and proper faith but does not show this by works and instead with his pure faith wants to knowingly lead an unholy, unclean, sinful life.”⁶⁹ Again, he cites a similarly long list of Bible passages, but this time the emphasis is clearly on the life of godliness that flows from faith.

⁶⁶ English translations are from Johann Gerhard, *Schola Pietatis: The Practice of Godliness* (1622), 2nd ed., ed. Rachel Melvin, trans. Elmer Hohle, 2 vols. (Malone, TX: Repristination, 2013), 2:11, 14. For the German version, see Johann Gerhard, *Schola Pietatis, Oder Übung der Gottseeligkeit*, ed. Johann Georg Walch (Nürnberg: in Verlegung W. M. Endters seel. Töchter und J. A. Engelbrechts seel. Wittib., 1736), 220, 222.

⁶⁷ Gerhard, *The Practice of Godliness*, 2:10–11 (= Gerhard, *Übung der Gottseeligkeit*, 219–220). This medieval threefold way of conceptualizing faith was introduced into Lutheran thought by Melancthon and was commonly used by the seventeenth-century Lutheran theologians, though with some variations. See Jaroslav Pelikan, “The Origins of the Object-Subject Antithesis in Lutheran Dogmatics: A Study in Terminology,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 21, no. 3 (1950): 94–104.

⁶⁸ Gerhard, *The Practice of Godliness*, 2:13–14 (= Gerhard, *Übung der Gottseeligkeit*, 222).

⁶⁹ Gerhard, *The Practice of Godliness*, 2:14 (= Gerhard, *Übung der Gottseeligkeit*, 222).

Gerhard seems to view this “faith-knowledge” (*notitia*) as the equivalent of “theology,”⁷⁰ so in this letter he is actually dealing with the proper relation between theology and piety. He emphasizes the need for both but in such a way as to distinguish them one from another (against Cramer, who would equate them) while also establishing an integral and indispensable connection between them (against Euenius and Kotzebue, who would separate them). That connection is none other than fiducial trust in God’s promises of grace and forgiveness (*fiducia*).⁷¹ Within his threefold concept of faith, theological knowledge about God always leads to fiducial trust in God and his promises.⁷² And within his concept of piety, fiducial trust always gives rise to good works.⁷³ Hence, the true Christian cannot have one without the other.

Nowhere in the letter or, for that matter, in any of his translated writings thus far, has Gerhard referred to theology as a *habitus*. In fact, he refrains from doing so even in his advice on the proper *Method of Theological Study*, a series of lectures delivered in 1617 shortly after his arrival at the University of Jena and published three years later in 1620.⁷⁴ This is noteworthy since other Lutheran theologians (e.g., Meisner) had done so a decade earlier.

⁷⁰ This was pointed out initially by Johannes Wallmann, *Der Theologiebegriff bei Johann Gerhard und Georg Calixt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1961), 33–36. Wallmann calls it *Glaubenserkenntnis*, which, despite the awkwardness of it, translates into English as “faith-knowledge.”

⁷¹ For a helpful diagram and fuller explanation of the relation between theology and piety according to Gerhard, see Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard*, 177–184; and Glenn K. Fluegge, “Johann Gerhard’s Transitional Concept of *Theologia*,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 109 (2018): 243–252.

⁷² Gerhard cannot conceive of a theological knowledge of God apart from fiducial trust. Such empty knowledge would not be “theology” per se but “vain discussion” about God. See Johann Gerhard, “On the Nature of Theology,” in *On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture*, trans. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, vol. Exegesis 1 of *Theological Commonplaces* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018), sec. 26. Although he makes use of the commonly accepted threefold conceptualization of faith, he posits an “indivisible bond” between the “parts” of faith such that they are indispensably, integrally, and seamlessly connected in the one psychological faith event (Johann Gerhard, *On Justification through Faith*, trans. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Joshua J. Hayes and Heath R. Curtis, vol. 19 of *Theological Commonplaces*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018], sec. 69; see also secs. 67–81). See Wallmann, *Theologiebegriff*, 36, 104, 117; and Martti Vaahtoranta, *Restauratio Imaginis Divinae. Die Vereinigung von Gott und Mensch, ihre Voraussetzungen und Implikationen bei Johann Gerhard* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1998), 215, 218.

⁷³ That the concept of “piety” included fiducial trust and other associated internal movements of the heart had already been established by Gerhard in the first volume of his *Schola Pietatis*: “Indeed, [piety encompasses] also the font and source of this holy obedience; namely, true, proper, contrite repentance and the true living faith in Christ” (Gerhard, *The Practice of Godliness*, 1:10–11 [= Gerhard, *Ubung der Gottseligkeit*, 2]). See also Rhenanus Hupfeld, *Die Ethik Johann Gerhards: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der lutherischen Ethik* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1908), 9; and Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard*, 181; for a detailed analysis of Gerhard’s understanding of piety, see Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard*, 124–128.

⁷⁴ See below, n. 80.

Then, in 1625, shortly after the *Habitus* Controversy and perhaps as a result of it, in his preface “On the Nature of Theology,” Gerhard concedes and, for the first time, uses the term to identify the genus of theology: “If we must assign to theology some genus from the intellectual conditions [*habitus*] that Aristotle enumerates, among them all, wisdom most closely approximates its nature. But were one to make an absolute consideration, he would define it more accurately as a ‘God-given habit’ [*habitus θεόσδοτος*] than through a genus drawn from Aristotle’s intellectual conditions.”⁷⁵ Similar to Meisner before him, Gerhard recognizes the inherent synergistic tendencies of Aristotle’s schema of *habitus* when it comes to defining theology and, consequently, creates a wholly new genus: a God-given *habitus*.⁷⁶ By qualifying the theological *habitus* as “God-given” Gerhard means to say that true theological understanding does not simply come about through one’s own hard work and diligent study but through the illumination of the mind worked by the Holy Spirit through the word.⁷⁷ This addressed Luther’s previous misgivings about Aristotle’s *habitus* jeopardizing the doctrine of justification by faith alone. But what about Cramer’s related concern about divorcing faith and piety from theology? For this, Gerhard immediately explains that theology is “more practical” than speculative because “the ultimate end of theology is not bare knowledge [*γνώσις*], but action [*πράξις*].”⁷⁸ This he shows through a list of quotations from Scripture and past theologians culminating in a final quotation from the medieval theologian Jean Gerson (1363–1429) whereby he insists that the theologian must “transfer” what he understands intellectually into the “affection of his heart” and the carrying out of good works.⁷⁹

Gerhard apparently considered the language of this final quotation from Gerson definitive, because he expressly includes it in his final definition of theology at the end of the preface:

Theology (considered habitually and concretely) is a God-given *habitus* conferred on a person by the Holy Spirit through the Word by which he is not only

⁷⁵ Gerhard, “Nature of Theology,” sec. 10; brackets in the original.

⁷⁶ This being said, Gerhard’s understanding of the God-given nature of theology goes beyond that of Meisner, viewing Scripture not only as the source of all theology (something that Meisner also claimed) but also as an efficacious means of grace that creates faith and gives rise to piety as an integral part of what happens when one engages in studying theology. See Hägglund, *Heilige Schrift*, 209–210, 242–255.

⁷⁷ For Gerhard’s theory of religious epistemology, especially his understanding of “illumination” and how it differed from that of other contemporary and later theologians, see Hägglund, *Heilige Schrift*, 212–218; and Bengt Hägglund, “Illuminatio—Aufklärung: Ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte,” in *Chemnitz—Gerhard—Arndt—Rudbeckius: Aufsätze zum Studium der altlutherischen Theologie*, ed. A. Bitzel and Johann Anselm Steiger (Watrop: Spenner, 2003); cf. Appold, *Calov’s Doctrine of Vocatio*, 134–135.

⁷⁸ Gerhard, “Nature of Theology,” secs. 11–12.

⁷⁹ Gerhard, “Nature of Theology,” sec. 12.

instructed in the knowledge of divine mysteries through the illumination of the mind, so that in a salutary way he transfers what he understands into the affections of the heart and the carrying out of [good] works, but concerning those divine mysteries he is also rendered apt and ready to both inform others about the way of salvation and free the heavenly truth from the corruption of adversaries, so that people might be led to the kingdom of heaven, glowing with true faith and good works.⁸⁰

Compared to subsequent definitions by later Lutheran theologians, Gerhard's is much longer and, admittedly, somewhat cumbersome. This is likely the case because he is including elements from both sides of the debate going on within Lutheranism at that time. Most notably, he accepts theology as a *habitus* and, therefore, concedes that it is an intellectual endeavor that includes things like instruction, knowledge, and intellectual understanding. As such, it does indeed belong in the university curriculum. However, the necessary and automatic result of that instruction is the transfer from the intellect to the affections of the heart—that is, feelings of the will,⁸¹ where trust is kindled in the redemptive work of Christ, giving rise to a life of piety. In short, by this definition Gerhard addresses the concerns of both Evenius and Kotzebue, on the one hand, and the objections of Cramer and his supporters, on the other.

⁸⁰ Author's translation from the Latin edition: Johann Gerhard, *Prooemium de Natura Theologiae*, in *Ioannis Gerhardi Loci Theologici cum pro Adstruenda Veritate tum pro Destruenda quorumvis Contradictentium Falsitate per Theses Nervose Solide et Copiose Explicati*, ed. E. Pruss (Berlin: Gust. Schlawitz, 1863), p. 8, sec. 31. For a structural analysis of this definition mapping out the vertical and horizontal flow of its various parts, see Fluegge, *Johann Gerhard*, 153. For the reasons for translating *exsecutionem operis* as “the carrying out of [good] works,” see Fluegge, “*Theologia*,” 251n81. For further justification, note that in this part of his definition, Gerhard is clearly referencing Jean Gerson's *Consolation of Theology*, which he had cited earlier (sec. 12) to emphasize the godly life as the practical end of theology. Prior to this, he had also made the same reference in his *Method of Theological Study* when insisting that the student of theology must sincerely pursue piety as a necessary prerequisite for theological study. See Johann Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, appendix in Johann Gerhard, *On Interpreting Sacred Scripture and Method of Theological Study*, trans. Joshua J. Hayes, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, vol. 1–2 of *Theological Commonplaces* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 140. In this context, Gerhard is clearly referring to the carrying out of good works rather than the performance of one's ministerial duties. See also Mark Stephen Burrows, *Jean Gerson and “De Consolatione Theologiae” (1418): The Consolation of a Biblical and Reforming Theology for a Disordered Age* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 135–143.

⁸¹ The “affection [*affectus*] of the heart” is a subpart of the will that gives rise to passion and desire for the things perceived by the senses or, in this case, understood by the intellect. See Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 29.

Later Lutheran Theologians and the “Professionalization” of Theology

Also noticeable in this final definition is the dual orientation of theology’s aim.⁸² “Directly . . . [and] immediately,” as Gerhard had earlier described it, theology aims at the personal formation and edification of the theologian’s own faith life.⁸³ Both the way in which he has arranged his final definition and comments from his other works seem to indicate that the former pastor and then superintendent viewed the aim of theology as, first and foremost, the salvation and spirituality of the theologian himself. Then and only then, building on this prior personal transformation, is theology’s aim that the theologian be enabled to “indirectly . . . [and] mediately” lead others to salvation.⁸⁴ In other words, professional ministerial practice must be preceded by and flow from personal spiritual growth.

This is a significant point, because one of Cramer’s sharp criticisms of a purely academic approach to theology was that it tended to focus externally on leading others to faith rather than focus inwardly on the personal rebirth and spirituality of the theologian.⁸⁵ And this was indeed the case, not just for the philosopher Cornelius Martini and theologians like Calixt and Kotzebue, but even for the Wittenberg theologians, who had otherwise taken an intermediate position between the two sides of the debate.⁸⁶

For instance, Gerhard’s friend and colleague from the University of Wittenberg Balthasar Meisner defined theology similarly to Gerhard as a “God-given practical *habitus*.” However, there is a noticeable difference in that it lacks the Jena professor’s intentional focus on personal salvation and spirituality: “Theology is a God-given practical *habitus* existing in the mind of the theologian, and guiding him so that he may lead fallen people through true religion to eternal blessedness.”⁸⁷ He contrasted

⁸² This dual orientation and how it sets Gerhard apart from later theologians was first noticed by Walter Sparr, *Wiederkehr der Metaphysik* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1976); Walter Sparr, “Die Krise der Frömmigkeit und ihr theologischer Reflex im nachreformatorischen Luthertum,” in *Die lutherische konfessionalisierung in Deutschland: Wissenschaftliches Symposium des Vereins für Reformationgeschichte 1988*, ed. Hans-Christoph Rublack (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1992), 54–82. Nieden more recently coined the terms *auto-praxis* (“self-oriented practice”) and *allo-praxis* (“other-oriented practice”) to describe this dual orientation; see Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 192.

⁸³ The “proximate end” of theology is eternal life, either the formation leading one to it or the actual attainment of it. In either case, this aim of theology has a dual orientation. It can be carried out “either directly or at least indirectly, either immediately or mediately” (Gerhard, “Nature of Theology,” sec. 26; see also sec. 12).

⁸⁴ Gerhard, “Nature of Theology,” sec. 26; again, see also sec. 12.

⁸⁵ Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 306–309.

⁸⁶ The theologians from University of Wittenberg published a response (*Gutachten*) refuting Cramer’s view and claiming that theology could legitimately be defined as a *habitus*. However, contrary to Kotzebue, they stressed the necessary role of the Holy Spirit. See Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 305.

⁸⁷ As cited in Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 192n108.

this externally focused definition with that of Reformed theologian Bartholomew Keckermann (1572–1609), who had earlier defined theology as a *habitus* of personally “coming to salvation,”⁸⁸ and ultimately rejected it because it would mean that “theology is primarily a *habitus* of those hearing [i.e., students] and those to be saved but not of teachers. If this is the case, no one can come to salvation unless he is a theologian or is equipped with the *habitus* of theology, which is absurd. Therefore, theology is not the doctrine of coming [*pervenire*], which is for students, but much more of leading [*perducere*] or promoting to salvation, which is for teachers.”⁸⁹ Meisner is quite clear here. Only teachers are theologians, and they are theologians inasmuch as they lead others to salvation through their teaching. His contemporaries and coworkers at the University of Wittenberg Johann Förster and Leonhart Hütter also adopted a more externally focused view of theology and its purpose.⁹⁰ This is markedly different from Gerhard, who seems to have believed that every Christian can be and is a theologian in view of faith, by which he or she “knows and assents to the articles of faith.”⁹¹

Later Lutheran theologians followed in the same vein as Meisner. For instance, a generation later Johann König (1619–1664) defined theology as “an intellectual practical *habitus* drawn from the written word of God about true religion so that by its work *sinful people are led* through faith to life.”⁹² Similarly, Abraham Calov (1612–1686) claimed that “theology is a practical *habitus* of knowledge drawn from divine revelation about true religion, by which *people after the fall are to be led* through faith to eternal salvation.”⁹³ And Johann Quenstedt (1617–1688) defined it as “an intellectual, God-given, practical *habitus* conferred on a person through the word of Scripture by the Holy Spirit about true religion, by which *people after the fall are to be led* through faith in Christ to eternal life.”⁹⁴ One notices that all three of

⁸⁸ “Theology is a religious prudence of coming to salvation” (Bartholomew Keckermann, “Systema Sacrosanctae Theologiae,” in *Operum Omnium quae Extant*, vol. 2 [Geneva: Petrus Aubertus, 1614], bk. 1, chap. 1, p. 67). See also Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 212, 219.

⁸⁹ Meisner, *Philosophia Sobria*, vol. 3, 192.

⁹⁰ For a detailed analysis of their *Consilia* on the study of theology, see Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologen*, 164–186.

⁹¹ Gerhard, “Nature of Theology,” sec. 4. Gerhard views theology as having three “forms,” as Wallman puts it: the faith-knowledge of the everyday Christian, the ministry of pastors, and the work of academic theologians. This wider view of theology distinguishes him from other theologians such as Calixt or, as seen here, even from Meisner. See Wallmann, *Theologiebegriff*, 42–44.

⁹² Johann König, *Systema Positiva Acroamatica* (Rostock: Joachim Wild, 1675), chap. 1, sec. 7; emphasis added.

⁹³ Abraham Calov, *Systema Locorum Theologicorum* (Wittenberg: Hartmann, 1655), bk. 1, chap. 1, sec. 1; emphasis added.

⁹⁴ Johann Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica: Siva Systema Theologicum* (Wittenberg: Quenstedt & Schumacher, 1685), bk. 1, 16; emphasis added.

these later definitions view the practical effect of theology as externally focused on *leading others* to salvation. Gerhard's definition does indeed use similar language in its final phrase but only after he makes sure to emphasize that theology first effectuates an internal transfer from the theologian's head to his own heart, something that is conspicuously missing in the later definitions.

Surely, none of these later theologians would ever have imagined an unbelieving theologian as a good, or even acceptable, scenario. Nor did they undervalue the importance of faith and piety, for the student or the teacher.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, the nuanced difference in the orientation of their definitions seems to reveal a slight shift in how they conceptualized theology and its implementation. These later Lutheran theologians also tended to differentiate between the *habitus* of theology and that of "true religion,"⁹⁶ relegating "true religion" to all true Christians and reserving the theological *habitus* for clergy and teachers. In this way, they sought to emphasize the importance of faith and the pious life, while also underscoring the academic rigor, professional responsibility, and concern for orthodox teaching that characterized the theologian. Such a distinction also unwittingly rendered personal faith an incidental rather than necessary and essential part of theology and theological study and opened the door to the possibility, undesirable as it was, of an unbelieving theologian.⁹⁷

In addition to theological considerations, it seems that certain social factors may also have been at play here. Some have seen this subtle shift toward an external focus on professional ministry as the result of a widespread "professionalization" of clergy happening throughout Europe.⁹⁸ Although it differed from one region to another and was not yet akin to modern professions, throughout the seventeenth century clergy began to emerge increasingly as a distinct social group characterized by

⁹⁵ The commonly accepted view that mid- to late-Orthodox theologians were unduly "functionalistic" in their approach to theology and less concerned with personal faith and piety can and has been taken too far, as pointed out by recent scholars. See, e.g., Kenneth G. Appold, "Abraham Calov on the 'Usefulness' of Doctrine: Blueprints for a Theological Mind," in *Hermeneutica Sacra: Studien zur Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift im 16. Und 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Torbjörn Johansson, Robert Kolb, and Johann Anselm Steiger (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 295–312.

⁹⁶ This differentiation can be seen as early as Meisner's "doctrine of religion"; see Kenneth Appold, *Orthodoxie als Konsensbildung: Das theologische Disputationswesen an der Universität Wittenberg zwischen 1570–1710* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 241–265. For Calov's use of the term, see Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, vol. 1, *A Study of Theological Prolegomena* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), 207–215.

⁹⁷ Cf. Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 243.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Sparn, "Krise der Frömmigkeit," 72–74; and Walter Sparn, "Zweite Reformation und Traditionalismus. Die Stabilisierung des Protestantismus im Übergang zum 17. Jahrhundert," in *Retrospektive Tendenze in Kunst, Musik und Theologie um 1600: Akten des interdisziplinären Symposiums 30/31 März 1990 in Nürnberg*, ed. Kurt Löcher (Nürnberg: Pirckheimer, 1991), 127–131; cf. Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 241–242.

higher levels of education, more rigorous preparation, heightened vocational awareness, and a growing acceptance of commonly expected pastoral duties beyond that of preaching the word.⁹⁹ Undoubtedly this influenced the self-perception of clergy at this time, which may have, in turn, influenced their conceptualizations of theology.

These later definitions would have been wholly unsatisfactory to the likes of Cramer. In fact, they seem somewhat different from how Luther viewed the study of theology over a century earlier. Although the Wittenberg reformer never attempted a definition of theology, *per se*, and wrote relatively little on the subject compared to the lengthy treatises on it by later theologians, his threefold method of studying theology (*oratio, meditatio, and tentatio*) emerged from a more monastic approach to theology that viewed it as nearly identical to personal faith and, therefore, its “study” as the purview of all Christians.¹⁰⁰ While it is true that some of these later Lutheran theologians from the mid-seventeenth century (e.g., Calov) do reference Luther’s famous method in their discussions about theology, none of them arrange their entire proposed methods of study around it as Gerhard himself had done in his *Method of Theological Study*.¹⁰¹ This would seem to be more in line with how Luther envisioned it, although direct comparisons between time periods are

⁹⁹ For the general trend in Europe toward the “professionalization” of the clerical office, see C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schütte, “Introduction: The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe,” in *The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe*, ed. C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schütte (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1–38, as well as the other essays in this same volume; Luise Schorn-Schütte, “Priest, Preacher, Pastor: Research on Clerical Office in Early Modern Europe,” *Central European History* 33, no. 1 (2000): 1–39. For the professionalization of theological studies, see Olaf Pedersen, “Tradition and Innovation,” in *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 2, *Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ed. W. Rüeg and H. De Ridder-Symoens (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 474–478. For the increasing levels of clergy education, see Thomas Kaufmann, “The Clergy and Theological Culture of the Age: The Education of Lutheran Pastors in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in Dixon and Schorn-Schütte, *Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe*, 120–136.

¹⁰⁰ See Bayer, *Theology*, 21–27; Marcel Nieden, “Theologie—Rechtfertigung des Theologen? Anmerkungen zur ‘Methodus Studii Theologici’ Johann Gerhards von 1620,” in *Zur Rechtfertigungslehre in der Lutherischen Orthodoxie*, ed. Udo Sträter (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlaganstalt, 2003), 55–69; and Appold, *Calov’s Doctrine of Vocatio*, 50. Appold calls Luther’s famous method of theological study a “form of the life in faith.”

¹⁰¹ Gerhard, *Method*, 138–146, 239–241. In this regard, Gerhard follows the earlier example of David Chytraeus (1530–1600); see Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 91–95, 231–232. For Gerhard’s prominent use of Luther’s famous triad, see Kang, *Frömmigkeit und Gelehrsamkeit*, 110–119; and Nieden, “Theologie.” Steiger has suggested that Gerhard has almost made Luther’s triad the title of his entire book by placing a detailed explanation of it near the beginning. See Johann Anselm Steiger, *Johann Gerhard (1582–1637): Studien zu Theologie und Frömmigkeit des Kirchenvaters der lutherischen Orthodoxie (Doctrina et Pietas)* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1997), 145.

admittedly difficult to make, since Luther's method seems to have been intended to happen primarily outside of the university classroom.¹⁰²

Unsurprisingly, just as Meisner had already suggested early on, some Lutheran theologians a century later did indeed suggest that theology (i.e., the teaching of theological matters) could be done (not that it *may* be done) by an unbelieving theologian and, hence, accepted the possibility of a *theologia non renatorum*, as undesirable as that may have been. John George Neumann, a rigid Orthodox Lutheran theologian who had previously served as a philosophy professor at the University of Wittenberg, published a major theology textbook in 1718 in which he defines theology, similar to earlier theologians, as a God-given practical *habitus* but notably concedes the possibility of an unregenerate theology in the case of the lapsed.¹⁰³

Although Neumann's proposal was undoubtedly in reaction to the increasing popularity of Pietism, it reveals an interesting development in how theology was being viewed in the early 1700s. The challenge of theology has always been to maintain the relation and tension between spirituality and scholarship, between "the heart and the head."¹⁰⁴ Here one notices that the heart and the head seem to have drifted apart. This trend became increasingly pronounced throughout the eighteenth century, as the Pietists squared off against the Rationalists of the Age of Enlightenment, the Pietists emphasizing the "heart" and the Rationalists insisting on the "head." These divergent ways of conceptualizing theology in the eighteenth century can be traced back already to the early seventeenth century and, perhaps, as some have argued, even further back to the Reformation itself.¹⁰⁵ In any case, it should come as no surprise that the catalyst for the Pietist movement, Philip Spener (1635–1705), republished and wrote forwards for several of Cramer's writings toward the end of the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁶ He also wholeheartedly embraced

¹⁰² The difficulty stems from the fact that before and during Luther's time, university studies in theology were seldom a requirement for ordination or ecclesiastical ministry, whereas by the time of Gerhard this was increasingly becoming the norm; see Kaufmann, "Clergy," 127–132. Hence, neither Luther's nor Melancthon's advice on theological study were necessarily tied to the university. Furthermore, even as university theological studies became increasingly important, it was commonly expected well into the seventeenth century that university theology students would be engaged in daily independent private studies centered on personal reading and summarizing of Scripture and categorizing its content topically. This private self-learning was considered the backbone of their theological studies, even more foundational than public classroom lectures. This begins to change the further one gets into the seventeenth century. See Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 238–240, 244–246.

¹⁰³ See Preus, *Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 1:228–232.

¹⁰⁴ Bayer, *Theology*, 9.

¹⁰⁵ See Wallmann, *Theologiebegriff*. On the basis of a close analysis of the primary texts, Wallmann traces two lines of approach to understanding theology within Lutheranism. The first proceeds from Luther through Gerhard to Spener and the Pietists. The second goes from Melancthon through Calixt to Selmer and the Rationalists.

¹⁰⁶ Friedrich, *Grenzen der Vernunft*, 314–315.

Luther's threefold method, as did the Pietists who came after him.¹⁰⁷ Nor is it surprising that theologians such as Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693–1755) and the “father of German rationalism,” Johann Salomo Semler (1725–1791), ceased using Luther's threefold method right around the time when it was becoming increasingly popular to categorize theology as a *Wissenschaft* within the university curriculum, a move arguably anticipated by the use of *habitus* to define theology already a century and half earlier.¹⁰⁸ This rationalist approach to theology throughout the following century would open the door to what would eventually give rise to the religious-studies departments of current universities, in which Christianity is studied alongside all other religions and taught by professors for whom personal Christian faith is optional. The heart and the head have been sundered.

Contemporary Issues

Attempts have abounded to bring back together these two strands of theology. One contemporary effort often focuses on ministerial skills as the definitive solution. Commonly found in modern disciplines like nursing and education, this “clerical paradigm,” as some have called it, has become increasingly used in theological studies, whereby theology is united by a common end—the techniques of ministry.¹⁰⁹ That students of theology acquire the ministerial skills necessary to serve as effective pastors has always been a concern of theological educators within Lutheranism, tracing back to the Reformation, but in early Lutheranism it tended to happen less formally, mostly outside of formal theological studies, and it was certainly not viewed as that which united theology. The current “technical studies” approach to theology at some seminaries and universities would not only have been entirely unacceptable to Cramer and his supporters, but it is also notably different from what the later seventeenth-century Lutheran theologians were proposing. Although their conceptualizations of theology tended to be externally focused, theology for them was still oriented toward faith and salvation, albeit of the parishioner rather than the

¹⁰⁷ Kang, *Frömmigkeit und Gelehrsamkeit*, 270–274, 362–366.

¹⁰⁸ For the decline of Luther's triad in university programs of theological study, see Kang, *Frömmigkeit und Gelehrsamkeit*, 58–60; and Nieden, *Erfindung des Theologens*, 81n40. For the development of and debate around the idea of theology as *Wissenschaft*, see Johannes Zachhuber, “Wissenschaft,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought*, ed. Nicholas Adams, George Pattison, and Graham Ward (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 479–498; and Johannes Wischmeyer, “Continuity and Change: The Study of Protestant Theology in Germany between Reformation and the Humboldtian University Ideal,” *Communio Viatorum* 47, no. 3 (2005): 240–256.

¹⁰⁹ Farley, *Theologia*, 61; see also 49–72. For a comparison of different ways of uniting theology, see Glenn K. Fluegge, “The Doctrine of Justification as the ‘Unifying Center’ of Theology and Missions,” in *Die eininde Mitte: Theologie in konfessioneller und ökumenischer Verantwortung*, ed. Christoph Barnbrock and Gilberto da Silva (Göttingen: Ruprecht, 2018), 554–568.

self.¹¹⁰ It was not oriented toward a set of skills or techniques as is sometimes the case today.

This functional understanding of theology has recently come under increasing critical scrutiny by some who have pointed out that it exacerbates the problem rather than provides any lasting solutions.¹¹¹ Orienting the discipline of theology toward ministerial techniques, they argue, orients it toward something that lies external to it and leads to a permanent disjunction between the theory of theology and what should be its necessary practical dimension. The common side effect is that “practical theology” consists increasingly of skills training derived from other nontheological disciplines (e.g., leadership, rhetoric, education, strategic planning, counseling, organizational psychology), while theology becomes something theorists do in their ivory towers. This then leads to some seminary graduates wondering how theology is in any real way relevant to their day-to-day ministries later in life.

In searching for a solution to this enduring problem, some have proposed refocusing theology on *paideia*, understood in the classical sense of “understanding related to the cultivation of character and culture.”¹¹² According to this model, engaging in theology would cultivate the necessary *habitus* that underlies the theologian’s life and profession, including involvement in later ministerial activities. The proposal is definitely laudable and provides a helpful corrective. However, as we have seen, the reintroduction of the concept of *habitus* into Protestant theology already four centuries ago reveals that it is not a definitive one-stop solution in and of itself. It, too, has a complex and, in many ways, troubled history.

For example, many who use the term today to define theology take their cue from the seventeenth-century Protestant theologians but fail to realize that these former theologians were expressly envisaging an *intellectual habitus* related to Aristotle’s *intellectual* virtues. As such, a habitual understanding of theology, as Cramer and his supporters feared, could lead to an overintellectualized theology whereby personal faith and piety become secondary at best. Here, theology would become “secularized” in that it would focus on the individual’s personal work and studious effort and less on the intervention of the Holy Spirit, who works not just knowledge but saving knowledge that engenders faith and the pious life. Apparently it is in reaction to this potential misunderstanding of theology that theologians like Pieper have insisted that theology is a *habitus spiritualis*, emphasizing that theology as *habitus* “presupposes, besides natural gifts, personal faith in Christ.”¹¹³

¹¹⁰ See Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003), 119–121.

¹¹¹ See, e.g., Farley, *Theologia*, 49–72; and Muller, *Study of Theology*.

¹¹² Muller, *Study of Theology*, 29; see also 214–220; and Farley, *Theologia*, 152–156.

¹¹³ Pieper, *Dogmatics*, 1:46.

As mentioned at the beginning of this essay, some more recent theological educators, such as those who conducted the recent study on *Educating Clergy*, make use of the *habitus* concept in ways similar to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to express the societal or group habituation that goes on when it comes to the formation of the clergy. But the past still has lessons to teach. Almost in contrast to an intellectual *habitus*, such a sociological *habitus* could leave theology devoid of any normative content and unattached to any normative sacred texts. In some ways, this is why the seventeenth-century theologians reintroduced the concept of *habitus* into discussions about the nature of theology in the first place—to underscore the fact that it does indeed have a specific content that can and must be understood, in part, by the intellect, similar to other academic disciplines. Moreover, a theology merely derived from the socialization of one's own social group could still leave one wondering what role God plays in any of it. In this regard, it may be appropriate to reintroduce into the ongoing dialogue the seventeenth-century proposal of a *habitus* that is specifically *God-given*, an idea that seems conspicuously absent from present-day discussions.

In any case, the past sets the stage for the future. Engaging directly with these seventeenth-century theologians may help chart a way forward in the ongoing conversation about what theology is and how one goes about forming the theologian.