

A Translation and Brief Commentary on Thomasius' *Christi Person und Werk*
Pages 157-166

Presented to Professor Brug

Daniel Burgess
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Professor,

Many hours have been put into making this translation readable in English yet faithful to the German. I have been faithful with my time and effort throughout the past several months, although the quantity does not show that fact. Hopefully the quality does.

Thank you and Lord's Blessings,

Daniel Burgess

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Dogmatics
February 19, 2004

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Pages 157-166

18.

If the conception of God is one presupposition of Christology, then the conception of man is the other. The question for consideration is the communion between God and man which is mediated in and through Christ. Indeed this fact is certain, wanted and caused by God, so also certain is that the man is the eternal object of his will, eternally wanted and thought by him. These divine conceptions, or-because the divine thought is at the same time will-the divine determination, of men we call his conception. He [God] is before him, that is the man, existing the same outside of time, *prius*. In it [time] he has determined what he [man] should be and become.

[Thomasiaus begins this section discussing the question: by what means does man exist? He points out the obvious fact that God exists always the same, outside of time. Yet, he seems to fall either into the double-predestination camp or the strict predetermination camp, that is, he makes man out to be nothing more than a robot without a free will. Previous to this section Thomasiaus defends the concept of a God and now begins with the assumption of the existence of man coming from this God.]

The Scripture has all, who exist outside of God, become his through the Word of the Lord: Genesis 1:1-2:3, Psalm 33:6,9. The divine Word, however is the manifestation, the realization, of the divine will, (compare with the beginning paragraph) Ephesians 1:11. Revelation 4:11: σὺ ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ τὸ θέλημα σου ἦσαν καὶ

ἐκτίσθησαν. If he has accordingly in this determination of will, which *eo ipso* is thought, layed as his foundation the entire universe, then each succession of beings is a pronouncement of the thought of God: each individual thing a *verbum visibile*. This simple truth is also always about the recognized theology and each divine determination as the divine conception. The conception, however, may become decided by the unity of thought and will. From it, then, the fathers have established their teaching of conception (see Johannes D. *Concerning Orthodox Faith*, Vol. 2, pg. 9 and Augustine L. *Concerning Divine Questions*, Vol. 83, question 46).¹ If they now, however, indicate this conception of the world, which is the original heavenly world, as an intermediary between God and the actual world as a third in the divine spirit, hence in him an actuality, then this is an aftereffect of the platonic philisophical view, which I hold as objectionable. For once it appeared through the adoption of such an ideal creation, time had to be brought into God: the original world should, indeed, have a visible, actual preexistence in him before this, as one aeon before another. Then it too easily leads to each identification of the world conception with the divine Logos, as several of the ancients came across and subsequently formed an entire system (for example: Athenagoras *Legal.* 10, Theophilus *To Autol.* 11,10 including Tertullian *Adv. Prax.* 5.6.7). If the thought of the world is a necessary element of the self-confident God, then this establishment is entirely correct. If it is not, however, then it also cannot be because it is the thought of a God who is a dissimilar being. Martensen, who otherwise consents to those theories, calls it plainly “the not divine element in the divinity.” [Martensen lived from 1808-1884. He began as a German mystic. Eventually he wrote extensively on Christian ethics and, in the nineteenth and early thwentieth centuries, his work was widely used. Martensen divided

¹ Compare the exceedingly thorough description by Staudenmaier, *Philosophy of Christianity*, Vol. 1.

his ethics into three parts: 1. General ethics, 2. Individual ethics, and 3. Social ethics. His work has been the basis for many other works in Christian ethics.] For one does not also examine why the world should even preexist in God, why it should have had an inner-divine existence. It was, therefore, pleasing for our old dogmaticians that they leave the platonic view undecided and restrict themselves to the statement: *mundus nec ab aeterno fuit, nec ab aeterno creari potuit* (Quenstadt 1, 598). The world, which stands before the divine visual perception, placed through the will of the eternal God, evolved in space and time, is none other than the actual, but certainly not merely according to its condition at the moment, but rather according to the beginning, middle, and end of its history.

19.

Whatever the conception of man may be, it [the conception] will be shown from the fact of fellowship with God, in which we stand through faith in Christ. In this communion, the distinction established by God is evident with regard to God. It will indeed need no justification if we immediately determine the creature to have existed from the creator. The idea of the creature is that which was established outside of God's being through the will of God. For this distinction is essentially the Christian faith. If man would be identical with God, whether it may be as an element of the divine essence or a divine process of evolution, then the words faith, humility, and love could no longer be about a personal relationship with God. The prayer, this soul of the Christians life, would become as a meaningless game, the religion would be changed into deification of mankind. [This religion would be as the world is now. The world puts man in the place of God. This idea permeates all of society, from the Occamists during the time of Luther

who said “*fac quod in te est,*” to the scientists of today who are trying to clone human beings.] The man is, therefore, not God, but creature, and therefore also not from the essence of God. Rather, [man] became the substance as well as the form through the will of God, not unconditionally, but conditionally by him. The forms of existence, however, are space and time. This element puts together the concept of finiteness, and mankind is accordingly placed in this category. We say: he is thought and willed by God as a finite being.

However, he stands as a creature in a personal relationship with God, or at least he can and should. And therein the majesty of mankind is to be nobility before all other earthy creatures, his inborn dignity. He must, therefore, qualify for this relationship, to be organized for it. In other words, he must possess the capacity of receptivity and spontaneity for divine influence-wherein we can establish this as in the I, or, the same, the personality. But this I rests on the basis of a corporeality of the spiritual nature, which is likewise bound with his consciousness and combined together as a unit. In this nature, which existed before his personal will and knowledge, which has not produced itself from itself, but rather in which it has its roots, in which the human I has its substantial basis of life, in it lies all the corporeal and spiritual power that constitute the essence of man (*natura humana*), the hidden treasure chamber of the human life. The I receives its contents from him [God], his peculiar definiteness, through which it is and will be precisely this human I. Truly it, again, is distinguished from him and made the object of his will and his determination. Both spheres, the personal and natural lives, united through a mysterious bond, stand in constant interaction with one another: each region has its relative freedom, each has its relative unfreedom. As therefore a life of

man has two sides, which are not detached from one another but still are distinguished, so is the nature which is rooted in the personality. It is also two-parted, or better, two-sided: body and soul, body and spirit. Both are there for the other, both form together the entire man. The body is the organism for the spirit, the means of its self-depiction and self-operation, penetrated throughout and subject to it. This, the power of receptivity and spontaneity is the principle of the higher life, which has his central main point in the heart, which pours itself out in the I. Accordingly, this peculiarity stands in the organic connection with the entire external nature, of which he is positively the center and which comprises the stipulations for his natural existence. But it is also high over him, belonging to the kingdom of consciousness and freedom, for both have opened, both are combined with one another. All, because he is personality, we say, is not: it has. For the personality is not a special substance, rather, it is the power of his essence that is inborn in him, and from the condition of unconsciousness, which is the beginning of life, evolves and becomes with him, an inconceivable wonder. Precisely therein now, the personality is related with God, who is the absolute personality of divine kind, it is not one essence with him, but his equality over-against the entire material world. What we above in section eight recognized as the elements of the personality: will, knowledge, life, we find also here again, only in an unwandering succession. For with us is the true nature, the substantial life, the first, given before, and first raises itself from the ground to the unrestrained self-determination and self-awareness.

In this triad of psychology lies the capacity to recognize God, to determine his will for himself, and to take it up in his heart. Consciousness of God, moral freedom, life-relationship with God. [Here Thomasius seems to be saying that man can make the

decision to believe in God. It is difficult to understand where he stands on decision theology. In the next few sentences he goes on to say that the elements which permit man to know God, are definitely limited in man.] But truly, God as the absolute personality in his will, knowledge, and life likewise is absolutely unrestricted as absolutely he is restricted through himself: man possesses all three only in a limited way. They come in us as actual activity only through the anticipated influence of God. As they divide indirectly through the outside world, they come to pass directly through his immanence in man (the conscience). This matters concerning the consciousness of self as well as concerning the consciousness of God. We do not possess the power-the power of self-decision, the freedom of self-determination-in the moral realm to begin purely on our own and to initiate the relationship with God. We do possess only the capacity, taking up for ourselves his imparting love, but also to keep rejecting it. What did the Christ say in connection with grace? -that he was always first affected by it, only then may it lay hold of him. The same is applicable to the universal relation of man to God: he lived bodily as immaterial from and through God, through whom the Spirit of God was testified about, whose impulse he can decide to be either for or against. Meanwhile, as he also, in fact, determined himself, normal or abnormal, that he possesses this self-power, that he is personally, consciously, free essence. Therein exists his continuing relationship with God, and so we ought to say, "the divine concept of man is the creature-like personality." In other words, it is the divine thought, the absolute personality portrayed in the limitations of creatureliness and finiteness.

Now it belongs, however, essentially as a peculiarity of the nature, in which the personality is rooted, to be organized and determined in its class of nature, to make it

clear in a multitude of individuals distinct from each other. These individuals naturally have a unity in which they have a common kind, since they all are descended from the same one descendant. The individual man, although a self-standing individual and as such is spiritual peculiarly constituted as corporeal, exists yet always only as a member of this whole, the humankind, which is not a atomic aggregate of details, but rather is a living unity. Hereupon, explaining more closely our above-mentioned assertion: that the divine determining cause is the mankind, the absolute personality, represented in the entirety of a realm of members and still a consistent organic created personality, in which organism is portrayed one great spiritual-corporeal life.-The previous is the God-ordained means for this relationship of man among one another.

Proof from Scripture. That in his conception, man falls under the category of creature. This is understood from Scripture itself. Compare Genesis 1:26 and Revelation 4:11. He is a creature who, as all others, has his sole basis of being in the creative Word of God. Also, his soul has been made through this Word, not emanating from the essence of God. The Genesis 2:7 passage obtains its nearest clarification through the Numbers 16:22 passage (compare Hebrews 12:9), where God is called ὁ πατήρ τῶν πνευμάτων, Zecharia 12:1, where he is called the creator of the human soul, and Isaiah 42:5. Isaiah 38:16, where the human soul is indicated as created. Separate through the determining distinction between the human as the created and the divine soul, as it pervades through the entire Scripture, and especially Exodus 35:31, Numbers 11:17-25, Romans 8:14-16, 1 Corinthians 2:11, as in the prayers of the pious go out to the Spirit of God: Psalm 51:13, 2 Kings 2:9. 2 Corinthians 7:1 speaks even concerning a defilement of the human soul, yet, let passages as Ephesians 4:23, 24 penetrate and command the universal corruption of the

entire personality of mankind to a renewal of the soul, τῷ πνεύματι, which will be determined exactly as the human through the addition τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν. If, however, the spirit of corruption is accessible, then it can neither be the Spirit of God nor an emanation from God. That is the error of most mystics, just as dangerous in practical as well as theoretical consequences. I myself have articulated a similar view in my Christological collection from the year 1845, they were, however, withdrawn in the later revision.

Whatever is relevant to the essence of man, thus I do not distinguish, as has become the custom as of late, between nature and spirit, but rather, with the Scripture, between body and soul: Psalm 73:26, 84:3; Matthew 6:25, 10:28, or between body and spirit: Psalm 143:4; 1 Corinthians 5:3,5. Both body and spirit are essentially distinct from one another. The body is formed out of the minutest elements of earthly material. The soul was created before and was made alive first through the communication of the spiritual principle of life. It is, therefore, entirely erroneous to consider the body as the product of the soul, as the result of the souls, or, as one also says, as the projection of the same into space.² On the other hand, soul and spirit are not two distinct substances. Otherwise death would not indicate the giving up of the soul: Genesis 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21; Acts 15:26, compare 20:10,11, as well as the giving up of the spirit: Psalm 31:6; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:58, compare Luke 8:55. Otherwise the ψυχαὶ and the πνεύματα of the deceased could not be the same: compare 1 Peter 3:19; Hebrews 12:23 with Revelation 6:9, 20:4. Rather designate both, which are a spiritual principle of life of man, according to his two sides, accordingly, the double-sidedness of his entire worldly station. In ψυχή the element of individuality and responsibility fit better, in πνεῦμα that is the power of life, which is from the freedom and the relationship in the higher world,

although not exclusively. This distinction is touched upon, although not entirely, when Luther makes the same distinction in his exposition on the Magnificat: “The first part, the spirit, is the highest, deepest, noblest part of man, by which he has become able to understand the incomprehensible, invisible, eternal things and is, in short, the house in which the faith and Word of God dwell. The second, the soul, is even the same as the spirit according to the nature, but still in a different work, namely in one that makes the body alive and works through it . . . and it is its manner, not to understand the incomprehensible things, but to judge and recognize whatever is according to reason.”³

[Luther does not say that spirit and soul are distinct, per se. He does say that the work done by the spirit/soul can be easily distinguished into two parts: one grasps faith and understands the hidden things of God, the other uses reason to discern temporal and earthly things. They are two different works done by the one thing.] I do not hold trichotomy, with Meyer, as having Biblical basis; also I do not find the basis in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (compare Harless *Ethics* pg. 30).⁴ Therefore, I distinguish thus, on the one hand, between body and spirit. I understand on the other hand, both together in the name *natura*, according to the convenient language use, which is also the most suitable for Christology. Certainly, the biblical $\phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ is only in agreement in certain respects. This *natura*, under which I understand the entire continued existence of the

² Compare the thorough exposition in Delitzsch’s *Biblical Psychology* pages 64, 170.

³ Hofmann determines the distinction thus: spirit may be designated as the working of the breath of life, soul as the being of life; spirit as the power working in movement, soul as an existing being in movement, pg. 257.

⁴ What Delitzsch a. a. D. 61-70 asserts *for* it has convinced me very little, with the peculiar kind of relationship he understands between spirit and soul. To him the soul is the result of the spirit, almost the immaterial life-light, the mediator between spirit and body, the image of the relationship, in which the divine $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ should stand to God. –I find neither the last theory nor the basis for the theory concerning the relationship of the spirit to the soul in the Scripture. Meanwhile, psychological views are not dogmatic sentences. In any case, the view concerning the relationship between soul and spirit—that both may be

spiritual life established by God, I set then against the I. Thus, I distinguish further between the natural life and personal life, a distinction which is set out by the Scripture and the fact of our consciousness. Compare the beautiful explanation by Delitzsch, *Psychology*, 113-117. —We fairly relinquish a further proof of our simple anthropological determination to the Scripture, because this does not have the intention “to give a doctrine of nature concerning man” (Harless, a. D. pg. 5).

[Basically, a person cannot divide spirit and soul. Nor can a person understand the connection of body to soul or how the brain works in connection to the soul. Some things God has kept hidden from human beings, this is one.]

separated from one another in death-is in grievous error. Thus Stroebel recently did in the *Writing of the Times* concerning Guericke.