Polemics and Dialogue in
John Gerhard’s Confessio catholica

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Theological controversies frequently degenerate into battles in which opponents lose sight of the need to come together to seek the truth. When used properly, however, controversy can also become a dialogue that leads to new knowledge and more profound theological analysis. Theology has often reached its intellectual and spiritual peaks in works that are polemical in defending a position against opponents: Irenaeus against the gnostics, Athanasius against the Arians, Thomas against pagan philosophers, Martin Luther against the Spiritualists, against Erasmus, and against the Scholastics. The objections of opponents force us to clarify viewpoints; a dialogue makes us evaluate alternatives with respect to their relative validity. Naturally, dialogue does not require face-to-face engagement. Confrontation can and often does occur in literary exchanges in which the views of the distant opponent are evaluated relative to one’s own position. It is important to distinguish purely negative polemic from confrontations that aim to demonstrate by clear arguments which of two or more alternatives best corresponds to the criteria one has established.

Even after the Reformation began there were attempts to move from one-sided polemics to a dialogue. For example, some of the discussions at the Diet of Augsburg (1530) led to agreement on several points. Yet the Roman *Confutatio* took a negative polemical stance in the attempt to refute the *Confessio Augustana*. Unfortunately, the genuine dialogue had no long-lasting positive result, as the emperor unilaterally made the Roman refutation the official position of the diet. The general council which should have discussed these issues in the 1530s was never convoked and when the *Tridentinum* finally gathered it was a purely Roman Catholic forum in which the evangelical position was anathematized point by point. A response to Rome from the evangelical side did not issue from any official council. Rather, it came through the contribution of an individual theologian, Martin Chemnitz, whose *Examen*
Concili Tridentini (1566–73) demonstrates an objectivity and intellectual acuteness which rises above one-sided polemics. Chemnitz' contribution was apparently received with respect by his opponents, and there was no organized effort to defend the Tridentinum against his critical examination. Rome's attempts to counter evangelical theology entered a new stage with Cardinal Robert Bellarmine's lectures, given during his eleven years as professor of Controversy in Rome, published under the title Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei, adversus huius temporis haereticos (Disputations on Controversies in the Christian Faith, Against Heretics of Our Time, Ingolstadii 1586–1593). They were highly polemical and aimed to refute those called "nostri temporis haeretici," which means in the first place the Lutherans, then also the Reformed, and supporters of the Radical Reformation. Bellarmine's Disputationes gained a unique significance as a source for Roman Catholic theology in its opposition to the evangelical. Thereafter, Protestant handbooks in dogmatics dealt mainly with Bellarmine when they wanted to reproduce and refute the Roman point of view. To the detriment of inter-confessional dialogue Roman theology was presented in the polemical form used by Bellarmine. Perhaps his polemical style caused the discussion to get lost in endless details, but this phenomenon was also a reflection of the style of the Baroque period.

A New Program for a Dialogue

John Gerhard showed a new and surprising approach to Roman-Lutheran dialogue when he published a series of disputations between 1631 and 1633, entitled Bellarminus orthodoxias testis (Bellarmine as witness of the true doctrine). This series took for its motto a line from 3 Esdras "super omnia vincit veritas" (the truth triumphs over all, 1 Esdras 3.12). Gerhard wanted to demonstrate that even in the most controversial issues at hand, Bellarmine actually supported the evangelical truth. Thus, even those biased against Lutheran theology could find in Bellarmine good arguments for the faith as defended by the Lutherans — the original catholic faith. The book was published in three parts, the second
of which was dedicated to the bishop of Själland, Hans Poulsen Resen, who sent twenty-four ducats to the author as thanks for the dedication.\(^3\) The series served to prepare the way for a monumental project, accomplished in the years 1634–1637, the last three years of John Gerhard’s life: the extensive work *Confessio catholica*, here presented in more detail as a means of shedding light on the theme of polemics and dialogue.

The complete title of the book is: *Confessio catholica, in qua doctrina Catholicæ et Evangelica, quam ecclesiae Augustanae Confessioni addictæ profitentur, ex Romano-Catholicorum scriptorum suffragiis confirmaitur* (The Catholic Confession, in which the Catholic and Evangelical Doctrine, which is Confessed by the Churches Adhering to the Augsburg Confession, is Confirmed by the Support of Roman Catholic Authors). It was published in four volumes during the years 1634–1637 and republished in a completely revised edition in 1679. A slightly shortened version was published in 1661 and again in 1668.\(^4\) This work was regarded highly by Gerhard’s contemporaries. His earlier works were said to have outdone others, but in the *Confessio*, he was said to have outdone himself.\(^5\) The several editions of the *Confessio* during the seventeenth century attest to the importance of the book at that time, but later it fell into disuse, like so many other outstanding theological works of the period. In a letter of August 30, 1636, Gerhard wrote to Matthias Hoe van Hoenegg that he had doubts whether the *Confessio* would bear fruit in proportion to the effort he expended during so many years of writing it. But, he added, it would be quite enough for him if he could show others a way of convincing opponents of the celestial truth using their own confession and hypotheses.\(^6\) Gerhard’s aim was clearly a fruitful dialogue instead of an unilateral polemic. But the spirit of his age was not amenable to his efforts. The divisions between different confessional communities, as confirmed by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, presented an entirely new set of conditions than had existed previously between the various religious parties, especially on the literary level.

During the years Gerhard completed the *Confessio catholica*, he himself experienced the ordeals brought on by the Thirty Years’ War. At the beginning of 1636 he was captured by the Swedes but
was released by the intercession of General John Banér. In November of the same year his country estate was plundered by the Swedes; the livestock was stolen and some of the buildings were burnt down. On February 5 of 1637 the imperial forces invaded Jena and stole his household goods, including expensive gold and silver goblets after someone betrayed their hiding place. On the day fire destroyed his country estate, Gerhard was engaged in work on the last chapter of the book of Job for an edition of the Bible. In his diary he says that he took for himself God’s words of blessing to Job following the trials he had endured. It is almost incredible that even under such conditions of war he could find the calm and the peace of mind needed for this gigantic work of genuine dialogue. From early morning until evening Gerhard worked at collecting references from the writings of Roman Catholic authors he had at his disposal.

In the best edition (that of 1679, carried out by his son, Johannes Andreas Gerhard), the *Confessio catholica* is a folio of 1594 pages. It would correspond to about twenty-four volumes of 250 pages each, using the typographical surface of contemporary dissertations as the gauge. This is obviously larger than the three volumes of Bellarmine’s *Disputationes*. Three years were needed to complete the printing of Gerhard’s book, a testimony even to the impressive skills and capacity of the era’s type composers and printers.

The first volume of *Confessio catholica* was dedicated to Duke Wilhelm of Saxony. The dedication letter aids the reader in understanding the work’s intent. It contains the usual compliments for the addressee. Duke Wilhelm was appointed by Gustaf II Adolf to be the local commander of the Swedish armies, and for Gerhard it is among the Duke’s credits that: “the great king Gustaf Adolf, defender of Germany’s liberty, did not hesitate to set Your Highness as highest chief and appointed You to be the second after himself in the armies.” The letter mentions the common accusation of the Romans that the Lutherans cannot be the true church as they do not stand in the line of succession from the apostles but rather date only from the beginning of the Reformation in 1517, but are rather a false and inauthentic one. According to Gerhard this is an inaccurate picture. The true doctrine, which the Reformers brought to light, had been in evidence for centuries,
among the Waldensians, for instance, the movement of opposition formed in southern France during the late twelfth century. They criticized the church in her decay but stood firm regarding the Bible and all the articles of the Creed. Gerhard then proceeds to give a detailed analysis of the doctrine of the Waldensians and documents their growth and significance. Besides the Waldensians, there were also many other groups during the last years who resisted the errors of the papists despite dangers and threats. A primary objective of the Confessio catholica is to bring the witness of these groups to the light and thus to show that the true message of the church and those who confess it had always been present. 

Rules of Argumentation

Gerhard takes as his point of departure a passage in the writings of Ireneaus in which it is emphasized that the Jews gave clear witness about what happened to Jesus, even though they remained his enemies. Ireneaus concludes: "It is an irrefutable proof, which drags clear evidences even out of opponents". The Confessio catholica is like an enormous building with a huge number of rooms clearly separated from each other. Some rooms are reserved for the writer's own point of view wherein he presents a thesis and an explanation of the thesis (ekthesis). Other rooms are open for the Roman point of view. But in most rooms both Lutheran and Roman Catholic authors are invited to bear witness together to the catholic evangelical truth. How this is achieved is best shown by a detailed analysis of a specific section. First, however, the overall character of the entire work should be summarized, albeit simply and briefly due to the work's complex structure.

The references to Roman Catholic authors in Gerhard's work are inexhaustible in number. He writes in the midst of a library with texts from the whole medieval and recent Roman Catholic tradition. In a chapter of his foreword (Prooemium, chapter III) he mentions some specific authors who can be reckoned as representatives of an Evangelical standpoint within the Roman Catholic church and tradition. He talks in this connection about Gregory the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux and Walafrid Strabo in the medieval tradition. For the Reformation period, he mentions,
among others, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Beatus Rhenanus, Ludovico Vives, Georg Cassander and Georg Witzel. They can all be used as support for his main argumentation about the continuity of the evangelical catholic tradition. But his references are in no way limited to critics of the established Roman theology. His main spokesman is remarkably enough Bellarmine himself. Furthermore, many of the renowned teachers of scholastic theology can be taken as a background—positively and negatively—for the evangelical faith, the faith that is also the "catholic faith" in the fullest sense of that word.

The first book presents the evangelical and the Roman perspectives, starting with the former, with the principle and means of the "in the true sense catholic religion." The central point is that the Holy Scriptures are a sufficient foundation and norm and rule to settle controversies; Gerhard also deals with the earlier evolution of doctrine, the significance of the Reformation and the means by which our (evangelical) religion is expanded. In a similar manner, this first book then treats the principles of the Roman Catholic religion, the pope's authority, and Holy Scripture's place among the papists. Then it deals in detail with the questions of tradition, the authority of the councils, the church fathers and scholastics, the ecclesiastical customs, the legends of the saints and so on.

After this introductory treatment of the two perspectives, the heart of the work treats various loci, where a great space is given to the particularly Roman points of doctrine. The first group has the following headings: De verbo Dei, De Christo, De Pontifice Romano, De consiliis, De ecclesia. The second group of loci deals almost exclusively with Roman Catholic points of doctrine: De clericis, De monachis, De laicis, De purgatorio, and so forth. The final group is divided into these headings: De poenitentia, De extrema unctione, De matrimonio, De gratia primi hominis, De amissione gratiae et statu peccati, De gratia et libero arbitrio, De justificatione, De bonis operibus in particulari.

If we compare this layout with the one Gerhard used in his Loci theologici, we notice that most of the loci are also present here, except for those related to the eschatological end of time. Those received an unusually large place in the Loci. But an important reason for their omission here may also be that they were missing in Bellar-
mine’s *Disputationes*. Gerhard’s layout of the *loci* (*Liber II Specialis*) follows to a large degree Bellarmine’s layout in his *Disputationes*. This is an indication of the importance given to Bellarmine’s work in the interconfessional dialogue. What is new with Gerhard is that he not only takes Bellarmine as an authoritative source for the Roman point of view among many other Roman theologians, but also claims that arguments supporting the evangelical faith can be extracted from Bellarmine, just as Irenaeus claimed that arguments supporting Christ could be drawn from the Jews.

Gerhard’s way of arguing changes slightly depending upon the question at hand, but the usual pattern is as follows: in the thesis he presents briefly the point of view, either the evangelical or the Roman, which is defended in a certain question. Then, he offers a fuller explanation of the thesis (*ekthesis*), occasionally exposing an antithesis, but always stressing the arguments in defense of the thesis, followed by the objections of the opponent. From a formal point of view this method is well known from the contemporary dogmatic literature. But the novel, and somewhat surprising, development in the *Confessio* is that quotations and sources in support of the Evangelical beliefs or in opposition to the Roman beliefs come primarily from Roman Catholic authors. This feature makes the *Confessio* a dialogue with substantial literary value rather than being merely a polemic account.

The two opposing points of view are the “catholic religion” (*religio vere catholica*) which is the evangelical position and the “Papist or Roman-Catholic religion” (*religio Pontifica sive Romano-Catholica*). As the presentation unfolds it is almost always the Roman authors, from the scholastics to contemporaries, who bear witness to the evangelical truth and who discussed help to undermine the Roman standpoint. The author’s further contribution, in addition to collecting these arguments, is to organize them logically and to develop their consequences.

This method is so far removed from typical dogmatic discussions and current hermeneutical principles, that it may be helpful to examine the epistemological presuppositions in the background. The fundamental presupposition is the objective fact of language, that a true statement can be freed from the author’s opinions and experiences. This general notion of language is then combined in
the field of theology with the conviction that the evangelical truth has such a luminous intensity that it shines through, even where the darkness of wrong ideas tries to overshadow it. This is argued especially in the work of Bellarmine; while using all his force to attempt to undermine the evangelical doctrine, the Cardinal nevertheless ends up testifying on several points to the truth of the evangelical faith, the true catholic religion.

The teaching on principles in the first book is characteristic. First, it treats the principle of the evangelical-catholic religion: "perfectio Scripturae," that is, that the Word of God in the prophetic and apostolic writings perfectly teaches what is necessary for salvation. Thus, Scripture constitutes the only rule and standard during controversies over the faith which may occur in the church. There is an antithesis to this thesis, namely, when someone holds that another tradition complements the written word of God. The thesis (nostrae sententiae suffragantur) is supported by many testimonies from Roman authors, from Gregory the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux, canon law, a series of scholastics right up to Luther's time, as well as a series of Roman theologians during and after Reformation. Then the opponents' objections are treated. They are answered not by Lutheran arguments but by testimonies from Roman theologians. For example, in opposition to Scripture's perfectio, someone could argue that it is impossible to support infant baptism from the Scriptures; this would indicate that Scripture does not suffice as normative for the faith. However, against this Gerhard produces a whole series of Roman texts, which argue for infant baptism from Scripture.

In a very detailed exposition, the Roman Catholic teaching on fundamentals is viewed from the perspective of pertinent authorities: Scripture, the tradition, the councils, the Fathers, jus canonicum, the scholastics, and natural reason. Gerhard begins with papal infallibility, which he considers the foundational principle in the Roman religion. He gives a remarkably full and exact explication of this principle and demonstrates that for the Romans the other principles — the Scripture itself, the authority of the church, the councils' decrees and the Fathers' testimonies — are rooted in the pope's right of interpretation and thus his infallibility, when he ex cathedra promulgates some doctrine of faith and morals. That such
is the case is established only from Roman documents. For us today, who generally link the dogma of infallibility to the First Vatican Council and its formulation in 1870, it might be surprising that infallibility is already a requirement for Bellarmine and other theologians of his time, even though the Council of Trent passed over it in silence. Following his discussion of this primary principle, Gerhard added a section of more than thirty pages which argues for the pope’s “fallibility” (*de pontificis romani fallibilitate*), again using only quotations from Roman theologians and examples based on acknowledged errors made by a number of popes on various questions. With so many straightforward instances of error on the part of many popes in questions of faith, Gerhard considers that he has shown that the principle of papal infallibility is uncertain even within the Roman convictions about a legitimate papacy.

*The Clarity of the Scriptures*

To present Gerhard’s method more fully, I here focus on a single section, which deals with a particular controversial question but also touches on many important layers of the argument. It illustrates clear points of contact but also important differences between the two sides. The section selected deals with Scripture’s clarity and its interpretation; it is a part of the article on God’s Word, among the first of the *loci*. The fundamental thesis on the clarity of the Scriptures is well known: the Scriptures clearly reveal both the articles of faith which must be known in order to attain salvation and also the moral commands of God.

To clarify this thesis a series of explanations is set out: 1) Clarity applies to the dogmas of faith and to the moral law’s commands; other matters may be presented obscurely. 2) Dogmas and commands are not always presented clearly at first sight, but they are clearly given somewhere “*verbis propriis, claris et perspicuis*.” 3) Clarity does not eliminate the need for perseverance in study and meditation on what is read, or other means of discerning meaning. 4) A matter might be obvious in one passage and unclear in another. 5) What is not said expressly and clearly anywhere in the Bible is not a matter necessary for salvation. 6) The doctrine of
clarity does not exclude the need to pray for the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment, because of the innate darkness of the soul.\(^7\) The Scriptures are clear only for those who have no obstacles such as a poor knowledge of the language, or certain prejudices, or who, by virtue of youth, are unable to discern the meaning. \(^8\) The mysteries of the faith are by nature obscure, but the Bible presents them adequately for understanding. “Res Dei sunt obscurae, res Scripturae sunt perspicuae” (Luther). This notion is explained by others as follows: \(^9\) The clarity and obscurity of the Scriptures can be spoken of in two ways: speaking of the mysteries themselves or their transmission. The mysteries themselves are above our understanding, and not to be pondered by inquisitive reason. They are transmitted, however, in a clear way that can be embraced in faith. \(^10\) In summary, the clarity of Scripture means that through Scripture considered in its totality it becomes apparent what ought to be embraced and what ought to be rejected in matters necessary to salvation.

The antithesis to the stated doctrine is that, on the one hand, the Scriptures do not give the details of everything necessary to salvation and that, on the other, they become clear only when interpreted by the church and its traditions. The antithesis is often summed up in the saying that the Bible is like a “nasus cereus,” a wax nose, that can be twisted by various interpretations; that is, the Scripture are ambiguous and obscure in most instances. This is the opinion ascribed to Bellarmine, but the controversy goes further than this.

Under the heading “Our position is supported by” (Nostrae sententiae suffragatur), Gerhard describes how the Roman authors themselves have argued that Scripture is a light and that faith’s dogmas and commands are presented with complete clarity in it. Such clarity is especially attributed to the Bible. In other words, clarity concerns the summa of Scripture, the rule of faith epitomized in the words of the catechism: the Decalogue, the Creed, Our Father, the institution of the sacraments. Even opponents agree that the Scripture is a “stabilis regula fidei.” By virtue of its nature such a standard cannot be obscure or difficult to grasp. Where there are still objections by the opponents (Exceptiones ad-
versariorum), Gerhard almost always responds in the words of other Roman authors.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Questions on Interpretation}

The other main thesis concerns questions about interpretation. Scripture's sense must be drawn from the Scripture itself; that is, the best interpretation of Scripture is the one required by Scripture itself.\textsuperscript{18} The explanation of this thesis is important: 1) A mere comparison between different texts is not the only method, but is combined with others and put under the rule of faith, which is handed down by Scripture's clear texts. 2) The Holy Spirit's sense shall not be separated from the words of Scripture, but shall be sought in the words themselves and drawn out of them. 3) An adequate interpretation means that our concepts match the divine sense expressed in the divine word. The sense of Scripture is also not to be understood abstractly, that is, as it is present in God alone or in human beings alone, but rather concretely and relationally, that is, as the real meaning is both revealed in God's Word and also present in the humans who learn and receive the Word. The one is not without the other; through the Word the concepts (\textit{conceptus}) become consonant in God's Spirit and in the humans who receive the Word. This point is important in that it reveals the fundamental idea on relational language and words found in older hermeneutics. In the context of the theological controversy at hand, its importance is that it excludes the claim that the proper interpretation of Scripture can only be the one furnished from the outside, by the church.

The third main thesis, which also concerns the conditions of interpretation, states that every biblical passage has only a single literal sense. \textit{Unus tantum est cujusque loci Biblici sensus literalis}.\textsuperscript{19} Because this raises a point that is very difficult to interpret within Lutheran hermeneutics,\textsuperscript{20} it is important to see how the thesis is explained more fully (\textit{Ekthesis}). Gerhard does not mean that one denies different inferences and different accommodations from the same text, nor does he exclude that in some texts there is both a literal and an allegorical or mystical sense. However, the thesis denies a double literal sense in a single text. It also insists that some words may be equivocal but that the syntactical context eliminates
the equivocation. Gerhard makes reference to the Roman theologian Melchior Cano who noted that: "There are many passages of the Bible, which even the most quarrelsome cannot turn to another sense."\textsuperscript{21}

One might expect to find disagreement with this point, first and foremost in the medieval pattern of the four-fold interpretation of Scripture. However, this pattern does not actually contradict Gerhard's main thesis. Differing senses can in themselves be seen as accommodations or applications of the one literal sense, and Gerhard also mentions many cases where the Romans themselves accept the proposition of a single literal sense. The question becomes complex when it is applied to prophetic words or, for example, to words of the Psalms which are interpreted christologically. The \textit{sensus literalis} does not mean what present-day historical interpretation might infer from a passage, but rather what the divine intentions were at the beginning, when the passage was given by the Holy Spirit. Such a definition of the \textit{sensus literalis} can be found among Roman Catholic theologians. A philosophical principle is also added to the theological point of view: the sense in a sentence (\textit{sensus} or \textit{significatio}) is its "form" in the Aristotelian meaning. Thus the \textit{sensus literalis} is the form of a biblical sentence, and it is a given that something's \textit{forma essentialis} can only be unique.

The fourth thesis is aimed at the fact that efficient and certain proofs for theological questions can be drawn only from the \textit{sensus literalis}. On that point it must be added that this concerns proofs in the strict sense, and that a figurative meaning can become a \textit{sensus literalis}, as for instance, when the New Testament applies a prophetic word to Christ or to the Christian church.

Finally the fifth thesis states: "that even the consequences of sentences of the Holy Scripture can be counted as articles of the faith." Gerhard finds strong support for this statement in, among others, the words of Bellarmine: "what can obviously be deduced from the articles of faith belongs also to faith." But it is doubtful that Gerhard would agree when Bellarmine goes on to say that only the authority of the church can warrant the right interpretation.\textsuperscript{22} This is the dilemma in Gerhard’s method: an isolated sentence does not always represent the deeper underlying structure.
Unity in wording does not always match a fundamental unity in the question. This a difficulty which is inevitable in all inter-confessional dialogues that deal with questions of faith and interpretation of the Bible. For Gerhard, however, a fundamental prerequisite is that the Word, the truth to which the language testifies, exists as something primary in relation to the one using the language. The text or word can convey a reality that transcends the one intended by the author.

Conclusion

John Gerhard’s *Confessio catholica* was written just over ten years before the Treaty of Wesphalia in 1648, which consolidated the separation between different confessions in Europe, a separation long in the making. Gerhard’s work appeared as a brilliant attempt to break open the deadlocked situation, to build a dialogue by using even the writings of opponents to forward a theological position which at a deep level supported the “catholic” faith. At the same time, Gerhard clarified without compromise the existing differences in opinions and divergences in doctrine. Gerhard’s research and the enormous collections of material he drew from, while typical of their time, represent a type of erudition that has slipped into oblivion. Yet what remains as an exemplary pattern for polemics and dialogue in questions of faith is Gerhard’s consistent quest, throughout age-old controversies, for support for the “confessio catholica” — the evangelical truth, which is the sum of the Scriptures and the permanent rule for the faith.

NOTES


2 Compare Otto Ritschl, *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus* IV (1927), 236f Regarding exemplary objectivity in polemics Ritschl likens Chemnitz’ work to Gerhard’s *Confessio catholica*, and on the Roman side to Robert Bellarmine’s *Disputationes*

3 The information on the work *Bellarminus orthodoxas testis* comes from Erdmann Rudolph Fischer, *Vita Ioannis Gerhardi* (Lipsiae, 1723), 478f

5. Fischer, Vita, 407.

6. Fischer, Vita, 546f.: Fateor me saepe dubitare, an fructus ex hoc scripto in ecclesiast redundans exaequet laborem, quem edem per annos aliquot impendi. Quicquid sit, abunde mihi sufficit, viam aliis monstrasse, quomodo ex propria confessione & hypothesi adversarn coelestis veritatis convinci possint.


8. Confessio catholica (1679) 1ff. The dedication letter is dated January 1, 1634.


10. Confessio catholica (1679) 14ff.


12. Confessio catholica (1679) 413ff. The principle of infallibility is defined as follows: Primum & summum religiosis Pontificia, qua talis, principium hoc est, Pontificem Romanum, upote Christi in terris Vicarium & Petri in Sede Apostolica Successorem ex Cathedra pronunciantem esse in tradenda fidei & morum doctrina infallibilem, ad eoque ab omnibus Christianis sine ulteriori disquisitione oboedienter audendum.


14. The call of Johannes Tauler for a reformation and Saint Brigitta's Revelationes with her strong critiques of the pope are cited as examples of critics exposing the decay of the Roman doctrine. Confessio catholica (1679) 39b.

15. Confessio catholica (1679) 413–429.


17. Confessio catholica (1679) 416.


19. Confessio catholica (1679) 421b.

20. For the meaning of "sensus literalis," see Bengt Hagglund, Die heilige Schrift und ihre Deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards (Lund, 1951) 223ff.

21. Confessio catholica (1670) 421b. Melchior Cano, Loca theologica, lib. 1, cap. 2: "esse nonulla Scripturarum loca, quae in alium sensum trahi ne a contentiosissimis quidem possint" Opera (Venice, 1759) 74b. Cano makes this remark during a vigorous defense of the idea that the existence of many interpretations forces us to rely on the tradition of the church for proper understanding.

22. Confessio catholica (1679) 429a. See Bellarmine Disputationes (Ingolstadt, 1586) 1, 187ff. (De verbo Dei, Lib. IV, cap. 9).