

When Gryphius points to the centrality of religion in his writings, he emphasizes the interrelationship between art and theology in his works. Literary activity implied to him a personal involvement in a process which brings about moral perfection. The contemplation of noble ideas and the artistic portrayal of virtuous men have a cleansing, therapeutic affect upon the poet's person and life. All his writings are pervaded by a distinctly Christian ethos which provides unity among all his works. Likewise, the theological motifs running through the individual pieces of his writings impart to them their peculiar character and provide unity and coherence within them.

All sources are unanimous in portraying the poet as a deeply religious man who tries to find existential meaning through his commitment to the Christian faith with emphasis on private devotions. Gryphius champions the Christian cause with personal vigor and determination, but has at best only silence and at worse biting scorn for exclusively denominational causes. In harmony with his open-minded attitude toward the world around him, his theology proves to be eclectic in nature and manifests a supra-denominational character.

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THEOLOGICAL MOTIFS AND THEIR FORMATIVE ROLE IN THE WORKS OF ANDREAS GRYPHIUS

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Indiana University, 1974

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The difficulties of dealing with the existential problems of the first half of the seventeenth century directed Gryphius' attention toward religion and theology in the hope to find meaning for life and communion with the transcendental power which controls man's temporal and eternal destiny. Consequently, woven into Gryphius' works is an abundance of theological motifs such as God and Satan, freedom and determinism, providence and fate, sin and grace, and suffering and death.

This variety of theological motifs is the result of Gryphius' open-minded attitude toward the world around him. He had contact with theologians of various denominations including those of the Catholic Church. He also was receptive to the New Philosophy as advanced by Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Descartes. His studies at the University of Leiden confronted him with a wide range of views on religious as well as scientific subjects.

The theological motifs in his German-language works reflect the religious diversity of his day. First, although Gryphius cannot be called a rigidly orthodox Lutheran, his writings reflect a strong influence by Lutheran theology. Second, his works likewise contain views which are not consistent with Lutheran theology of that period. Motifs such as the sovereignty of God, the depreciation of man, and the irresistibility of Grace may be said to fit better into Calvinism. Third, there is also evidence indicating a rather strong tendency toward the Irenic movement which transcended Protestant denominational divisions. Lastly, ideas such as the divine creation of man, man's dual nature, man's fall and depravity, and the incarnation and atonement are "neutral" in character and espoused by all major Christian churches. This diversity indicates that the poet's supreme concern was not a particular theological system, but rather the sacredness of the human judgment in search of the truth.

This theological diversity, however, encompasses irreconcilable opposites which can be explained only by accusing the poet of either compartmentalization or ambivalence. Such opposites appear when Gryphius advocates both freedom of the will and its enslavement, the conditionality of salvation and the irresistibility of the grace of God, and the idea of the "grausame Gott." It is difficult to decide whether Gryphius compartmentalized these opposites or whether they reflect an ambivalence which he experienced. The present author believes that the evidence suggests the latter. The poet moves between these mutually exclusive positions without finding solace in either.