

«La lingua artificiale della teologia brulica di fraintendimenti». Johann Gottfried Herder critico di Martin Lutero

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*Johann Gottfried Herder's view of the 16th-century Reformation is characterized by some ambiguity. On the one hand, he regards Luther's revolt against the doctrinal and ritualistic orthodoxies of his time as a liberation from 'spiritual despotism', on the other hand he complains about the petrification of 'formulaic theology' even within the Lutheran tradition. Thus the challenge is there, first, to consider how far Herder is right when he emphasizes the concept of liberty. The immediate response of the church authorities to Luther's insisting on the 'gospel' as the true treasure of the Christian Church seems to give Herder's view a high degree of plausibility. The second challenge is to discuss Herder's polemics against purely formalized teachings. Referring back to Luther's interpretation of the biblical psalms – which is also recommended by Herder – it can be shown that Luther rather tried to direct a believer towards a very personal self-perception in relation to God. However, since Herder links the concept of religion to his key concept of 'humanity', he raises objections against Luther's orientation towards a divine judgement in the hereafter and idealizes what he calls 'the religion of Christ' in more practical terms. In comparison with Herder, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing takes a more open stance towards the plurality of religions when it comes to reflect on the question what theological ideas Luther would be advocating 'today'.*

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La riforma del sedicesimo secolo e il pensiero teologico di Martin Lutero hanno per Johann Gottfried Herder solo un significato secondario. Certamente Herder, dal 1776, in quanto soprintendente generale del ducato di Sachsen-Weimar era stato – come lui stesso dovette scrivere con un tono di leggera autoironia – pastore luterano regolarmente ordinato di «questo piccolo paese»<sup>1</sup>, ma non era

<sup>1</sup> Lettera a Johann Georg Hamann del 20 luglio 1776 (da J.G. Herder, *Briefe. Gesamtausgabe 1763-1803* (d'ora in avanti *HB*), sotto la supervisione delle Nationale Forschungs- und Gedenkstätten der klassischen Litteratur in Weimar (poi Stiftung Weimarer Klassik. Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv), 11 vol., a cura di W. Dobbek e G. Arnold (dal vol. 9 solo quest'ultimo), Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, Weimar 1984-, vol. 3, p. 281; cfr., in proposito, anche il commento a *HB* 11, p. 647); il luogo è citato da G. Arnold, *Luther im Schaffen Herders*, in W. Dietze e W. Schubert (a cura di), *Impulse. Aufsätze, Quellen, Berichte zur deutschen Klassik und*