

CHEMNITZ'S WORKS

VOLUME 7



LOCI
THEOLOGICI
PART I



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Theology & Doctrine / Historical Theology

*This work is dedicated to my devoted
and talented wife, Delpha.*



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Translator's Preface

In 1553 Martin Chemnitz, age 31, a late vocationer who had dropped out of school at one point because of a lack of proficiency in Latin and who had financed his education by serving as a teacher, a librarian, and an astrologer, was called to the University of Wittenberg to continue some further study in theology and do some part-time teaching. He lived in the home of Melanchthon, and Melanchthon, who personally wanted him to serve on the faculty of the University, prevailed on him to lecture on Melanchthon's own *Loci Communes*, and even sat in on the lectures. A year later, in 1554, Chemnitz left Wittenberg to become the assistant or the coadjutor to the general superintendent of the churches of the city of Brunswick. Chemnitz took with him his notes on the *Loci Communes* (the title by which the work is still known today) and for the next 30 years, till his retirement in 1584, he studied and lectured on Melanchthon's great work. It is interesting that although during these years he wrote scores of theological works, some published during his lifetime and some posthumously, and some of prodigious length, such as his *Examination of the Council of Trent* (*Examen Concilii Tridentini*), and though he was engrossed in his supervisory duties, preaching and the care of his own parish and the other churches of Brunswick, and though he was one of the principal figures in the development of the Formula of Concord with all the writing of documents, the travel, and the meetings that entailed, yet he always continued to lecture twice weekly on the *Loci Communes*, and even after 30 years he had not completed this assignment which came to be called his *Loci Theologici* (*Theological Topics*). He continued his lectures on the *Loci Communes* until he could no longer climb the stairs to the lecture hall and had to hold his lectures in the sacristy of his church, the Martini Kirche in Brunswick. His work was published beginning in 1591 by his successor Polycarp Leyser and Chemnitz's two sons. The work went through 13 editions by the year 1699. One German work cited a few pages of this ponderous work in 1891, and some excerpts of Loci 6 and 7 were published in 1962 by Augsburg Publishing House in *The Doctrine of Man in Classical Lutheran Theology*.

There are several interesting points regarding this work. Chemnitz was an excellent student of the ancient Greek and Latin church fathers, and he quotes them copiously in this work, as elsewhere. This work also is filled with references to classical Greek and Latin writers, and of course is especially rich in Biblical citations and word studies, to say nothing of literally hundreds of quotations from Luther and other contemporary friends and adversaries. Yet he had

no fully developed manuscript and spoke only from brief notes. When he was approached about putting out this work in a final and polished form, he spent a little time on the task and then gave it up as a waste of time. The only reason we have this amazing work is that some of his listeners, particularly Pastor Joh. Gasmer, secretary of the pastoral *Colloquium*, who at the time of Chemnitz's death was his coadjutor and who had been in Brunswick even before the arrival of Chemnitz, took careful notes on all the lectures and turned these notes over to Leyser, who with the help of the two Chemnitz sons and his son-in-law, Pastor Jacob Gottfried, put the notes into shape for the printer. Much the same procedure was followed with the *Harmonia Evangelica*, which Chemnitz began and which was worked on by Leyser and finally completed by John Gerhard.

Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that Chemnitz, the great theologian, is one of the few men in the recorded history of the church who left a professorship and the sponsorship of a man who almost totally controlled the admission to the faculty to take a rather subordinate position as an assistant to the superintendent of a medium sized city, which was at that moment surrounded by a territory ruled over by a hostile Roman Catholic duke, Heinrich II of Brunswick, the famous "Hanswurst" against whom Luther wrote, who kept the territory surrounding the Hansa city of Brunswick in imperial and thus Roman Catholic hands until his death in 1568. Yet into this difficult situation young Chemnitz went, and here he stayed until his death, preaching almost every Sunday, guiding the advance of the Reformation both in his own city and in much of north Germany, attending countless conferences, writing theological opinions on subjects ranging from whether a widow may remarry without the consent of her brother to advising Duke Julius as to how to answer an ecumenical approach from Henry of Navarre, and playing a key role in the writing and acceptance of the Formula of Concord. He developed guidelines for the care of the widows and orphans of pastors, guided the work of those who distributed alms to the poor, and helped in the establishment of the University of Helmstedt. He set up a curriculum for the instruction in primary schools and gave supervision in the education, calling, and discipline of pastors as to their teaching and their lives. Yet he always continued his theological lectures, thus giving to us, 400 years later, a picture of how a practical church official (with a position very much like that of a bishop) dealt with the normative theology of a territorial church as well as the day-by-day preaching and teaching in the newly developing Lutheran Church. For example, this man who wrote the greatest treatise on the doctrine of Christology in the history of the Lutheran Church, could instruct his pastors in their sermon preparation not to preach long and intricate sermons on this arcane subject, but rather to stick to the simple truths of the Gospel. So in this work we see not only the fruit of the professorial study

Dedication

To the most illustrious princes and lords, Ernest, Christian, August, Fredrick, Magnus, George, and John, sons of the most illustrious prince and lord, William the Younger, Duke of Brunswick and Lüneberg, true brothers—most clement lords,

Grace, peace, and salvation from Christ Jesus, our only source of peace and salvation!

Most illustrious princes, most clement lords: Inasmuch as I have undertaken in a humble way to offer and dedicate to your Highnesses the first volume of the *Loci Theologici* produced by that most reverend and excellent theologian, Dr. Martin Chemnitz, at one time a most diligent superintendent of this church, in the name of his sons, Dr. Martin Chemnitz Jr. and Paul, candidate of theology, therefore I consider it appropriate to set down a few points in this preface concerning this writer. For, although our author in his preliminary remarks (*prolegomena*) deals with the same matters in a certain way, yet I do not believe it a burden for earnest minds to consider some of these matters in their proper place, and it serves to enrich and strengthen them in the truth.

Thus we must also state at the outset that the church of God from its very beginning has always had special statements of doctrine which have been summarized and divided into brief topics in a definite order and methodology. According to these as norms the church has in the passage of time reviewed and examined other doctrines. Nor must we imagine that it is some recent development to produce popular statements of doctrine which control the flights of man's fancy, like those people who would prefer to play every day with some new and curious opinion rather than have the teaching kept within definite boundaries.

But for our part, we ought regularly to consider the great and indescribable blessing of God that, amid the great and sad confusion in the world He preserves, has preserved and will always continue to preserve in His church some area in which the uncorrupted Word of the heavenly doctrine will sound forth. Thus we ought humbly to consider and seriously to understand that there was never in the true church an unrestricted license to believe, speak, or promulgate whatever one wishes.

Throughout the Scriptures there are stern commands of God that in the teaching of religion we are not to follow our reason or be tossed about by every wind of doctrine, Eph. 4:14, but rather we are to be mindful of the precepts of our Lord. Scripture is constantly describing the corrupt and dissolute state of

Prelection

The ancients had a good saying, that an excess of honey increases the bile, or as the Greek puts it with greater nicety, *kai gar tou melitos to pleon estin cholē*.

Therefore, although allegories are sweet, yet it is necessary to set limits to their use. Thus Epiphanius, in criticizing the inappropriate games which Origen was playing in making everything into an allegory, made this statement, “Not every word of God must be made into an allegory, but only as He has used them. For we need to have an understanding of the theory or intention in order to possess the ability to interpret the meaning of each suggestion.”

There is a great deal of truth in this learned instruction, for in most instances we ought to retain the particular meaning of a passage which is called for by the grammatical sense or the nature and phraseology of the words. Yet he says that there is need for the theory and the sense in discerning the material. It seems to me that the term “theory” is used in consideration of the orderly sequence and the distinction of the members or parts in the whole body of doctrine, as the study of dialectics teaches definitions and differences and discerns false relationships from correct ones. But the feeling for this has to do with the experience of pious men in the use of the doctrine, in repentance, fear, faith, prayer, and their own private devotions. This aspect of the subject is understood in the practice of piety. But “theory,” that is, the consideration of a matter from the dialectical or logical viewpoint, requires training by good teachers. There have always been in the church learned men who understood the whole body of doctrine and put the various aspects of it in the order established by the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures. The great creeds were set up with this intention, so that people could comprehend with their minds a summary of the doctrine. And many have written lengthy summaries which show their theological method or skill, as Methodius did long ago and later John of Damascus. For in the case of everything which we teach we must show the beginning, the progress or development of the matter, and the purpose or end. And this should not be done sparingly, but as the ancients said, generously and clearly. With this same intention there has been written in this academy a book called *Loci Theologici*.

Although certain material has already been treated at length in the account of the Nicene Creed, yet in the meantime, while this account is still in the process of completion, a reading of these loci is useful. For it is useful to have the same things repeated in different books. As you know, Socrates is described in Xenophon, and they both teach the same things on the same matters. Nor

Treatise on the Reading of the Fathers or Doctors of the Church

A PRELIMINARY EXPLANATION OF THE *LOCI COMMUNES*. WITTENBERG

Friends have insisted that I give a brief comment regarding my thinking on the reading of the fathers. For although one could with great usefulness speak at length on the way to read the fathers safely, and could demonstrate the fruitfulness of such study in addition to the study of the sacred canonical Scriptures, yet in this present instance it is necessary to speak only briefly concerning the writings of certain individual fathers. For it is useful, even necessary, that one who is about to read them has in advance a method worked out in his mind and knows what is especially important in the individual fathers and what stands out, where dangers need to be avoided, and in which areas they speak correctly and usefully. This kind of comparison will be profitable in order to see the occasions when they spoke somewhat improperly, when something should be eliminated as less than helpful, and how a later age might correct something which had arisen in time of controversy. This subject has many uses and values, but it requires a man not only of much reading, but particularly also of singular wisdom, to whom has been given, as it were, an overview of the form of doctrine in the church of all ages. Therefore others can seek benefit from a treatment of this subject. And for my part, in order that I might satisfy the requests of my friends, I will say a few things about certain individuals whose works I have had occasion to see and read. But I shall speak only of those writings which have come down to our own time, and regarding the others, which have suffered with the passage of time, we should consult the work of Jerome on ecclesiastical writers, *De Viris Illustribus* [MPL 23.601–720], which Augustine also recommended for our reading.

The most ancient writing has the title *The Canons of the Apostles* (*Canones Apostolorum*).⁵ It is extant both in a separate volume and in the proceedings of the councils. We must also note that in dist. 15,⁶ ch. “Sancta Romana,” it clearly states that the book called the *Canon of the Apostles* is apocryphal. And Epiphanius, *De Haer.*, 3.1, “Haer. 70” [*Panarion*, MPG 42.356], says, “The regulations (can-

⁵ The Apostolic Canons or Constitutions. For fuller bibliographic details cf. Quasten, *Patrology*, 1.37 and 74; also F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Paderborn, 1905).

⁶ Decrees of Pope Gelasius, cf. MPL 59.157ff. on 6th general council; also note Quasten, *Patrology*, 3.447; Cayre, *Patrology*, 1.514; and *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, pp. xxviii.

ons) of the apostles were under debate by many people, but not spurious.” Note also dist. 16, where Isidore says, “The canons were known by heretics under the name *Constitutions (Compositi) of the Apostles*, and although some useful things were found in them, yet they were classed among the apocrypha.”⁷ But as time went on they received 50 canons, later 60, and finally at the 6th Council, ca. A.D. 677, 85.

A gloss also makes marvelous efforts to reconcile these differences. Of the older fathers no one, to my knowledge, recognizes the force of these canons except Epiphanius, who works up a great sweat trying to reconcile them with Paul. Paul says, “If a virgin marries, she has not sinned,” 1 Cor. 7:28. But the canon says, “She has sinned, if she turns to marriage after she has once decided on virginity.”⁸ Cyprian knows nothing of this canon. For he says in Bk. 1, Epist. 11 (62) [MPL 4.378], regarding those who have professed virginity, “If they do not wish to persevere, or if they cannot, it is better that they marry than that they fall into the fire of their lusts.” Even the very style of the Canons is not apostolic but is the kind of speaking which is found in the writings of Dionysius. There are many statements which cannot be approved, such as the fact that they suggest rebaptism. For they say, “The baptism of the heretics is the baptism of the devil.” Then note dist. 32,⁹ where it is noted that Stephen, pope of Rome, in opposition to Cyprian suggests a contrary tradition, namely, that those who have been baptized by heretics or schismatics are not to be rebaptized. In Canon 85 [Funk, p. 591], likewise, the three books of Maccabees are included among the canonical books, although the entire ancient church testifies to the contrary. Again, it makes threefold immersion in baptism a necessity [Canon 50; Funk, p. 579], and other matters. Yet it is a very ancient writing and contains some useful points, such as material on the communing of the laity which Eck uses to try to prove that the Eucharist in one kind is established on the basis of these canons.

Also, the Canon has some knowledge of the way in which the creed was drawn up by the apostles and how it got its name. Therefore men came along who introduced certain other ideas, and in order that they might in a plausible way foist them upon the church, they called them Apostolic Canons because Paul says in Phil. 3:16, “Let us walk by the same rule” [Textus Receptus] (*tō autō stoicein kanoni*). Others use the term “arrangement” (*diataxis*), because Paul says in 1 Cor. 11:34, “The other matters I will arrange when I come” (*diataxomai*). These points are worthy of note.

⁷ Isidore of Pelusium, d. 449, Egyptian abbot; cf. Cayre 1.498; also MPG 78.177ff.

⁸ Re Canon III, 1.5, cf. Funk, p. 184.

⁹ Canon 46, cf. Funk, p. 579.

Preface of Philipp Melanchthon to His Theological Topics

Human beings are so created by God that they understand numbers and order, and in the learning process they are much aided by both numbers and order. Thus, in teaching a subject, the order of the various parts must be demonstrated with singular care, and we must indicate the beginning, the progress, and the goal. In philosophy they call this process the “method.” In those subjects which are taught using demonstration, this procedure has been accepted, but not in the teaching of the church. For the demonstrative method proceeds from those things which are subject to the senses and from the first understandings or the “principles.” At this point, in the teaching of the church we seek only the order but not the demonstrative method. For the teaching of the church is not derived or drawn from demonstrations, but from those statements which God has given to the human race in sure and clear testimonies through which in His great kindness He has revealed Himself and His will.

In philosophy we seek the things which are certain and distinguish them from the things which are uncertain. And the causes of certainty are universal experience, the principles, and demonstrations. But in the teaching of the church the cause of certainty is the revelation of God. And we must consider what meaning has been given by God to a subject. For example, it is clear to any sane person that “two times four is eight” is a true statement. This is natural knowledge based on the principles. Likewise, we have certain and immovable articles of faith, namely, the divine threats and the divine promises. It is equally certain that whoever repents of his sin has forgiveness for the sake of the Son of God, that his prayer is heard, and that he has been made an heir of eternal life. But the causes of certainty are different. The mind with its own judgment sees the correct meaning regarding the numbers; but the articles of faith are certain because of revelation, which is confirmed by the sure and clear testimonies of God—for example, by the resurrection of the dead and many other miracles. But because these matters are beyond the judgment of the human mind, the assent is more sluggish, although the mind is moved by those testimonies and miracles and helped by the Holy Spirit in order that it may assent.

Even if philosophy teaches that there must be doubt about those things which are not perceptible to the senses and are not principles and are not corroborated by demonstration (so that, for example, it is permissible to doubt or suspend judgment as to whether the only cause of a cloud is a hollowness, or why a

On the Use and Value of Theological Topics

Because it would be unbecoming to approach such a matter as an exposition of theological topics without some prefatory remarks, with unwashed hands, as it were, therefore I am pleased to begin with a few statements regarding the use and value of these topics. I will not deal with the subject at length or in full detail (for who is the man who cannot talk too much?), but I will only touch on a few points and show to the younger scholars, at least, the fountains from which they may draw if a fuller treatment of this material seems necessary.

The best way to understand this subject is to consider how necessary the church of all ages has judged the use of this kind of writing to be, in which the heavenly doctrine is summarized in an orderly, proper, and clear manner. To demonstrate this I will note down only a few brief points.

At the very beginning, when the Son of God announced to our first parents the mystery of the promise of the Gospel which had been hidden from eternity in the bosom of the Father, He gave a brief summary of the doctrine of the Gospel in Gen. 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; and He will crush your head and you will bruise His heel."

And there is no doubt (in order that I may silence the others) that Enoch (of whom it is written in Gen. 4:26 that, after some time had passed, he began in public meetings to call upon the name of the Lord) had explained in great detail the doctrine of the cause of sin, the corruption of human nature, the reign of the devil, redemption, and faith in the Mediator, etc.²⁸ However, these points were not described at length in the writings of Moses, because this brief summary had been given by the Son of God in the beginning as a canon and rule, indeed as a fountain of the entire doctrine which He had set forth for His people.

Concerning the teaching of the patriarchs, which they had doubtlessly given often and in lengthy statements, Moses adds very little except the brief summaries which clarified God's repeated revelation of the promise of the Mediator to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, e.g., Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 28:14; 49:10.

Later God Himself showed that He is the best creator of this method, when He wrote the entire doctrine of the Law, that is, His immeasurable wisdom, on two small tablets, so that all the prophets might marvel at the order of His

²⁸ Chemnitz here and in many similar places follows Luther's method of handling the Genesis text. Many statements in Chemnitz sound like quotes or paraphrases from Luther. Here see Luther on Gen. 4:26, Amer. Ed. 1.327ff.

LOCUS I

God

[A.] GOD IN GENERAL

[MELANCHTHON'S TEXT]

The human race has been so created and then so redeemed that we as the image and temple of God might celebrate the praises of God. For God wills to be known and worshiped. A clear and firm knowledge of God would have continued in the minds of men if our nature had remained unimpaired. And afterward, after Adam and Eve had been received into grace, there is no greater or better work of man than to have true knowledge of God, to pray to Him, and to proclaim Him, as it says in Ps. 149:1 and Ps. 118:17. Therefore the first and highest concern of man would be to learn the true teaching concerning God, just as also the First Commandment specifically demands this duty. But human minds are wandering, in the corruption of their nature, in a great and tragic darkness, seeking whether there is a God or a providence or what the will of God is. And although it has been impressed on human minds, in accordance with the judgment of both honest men and fools, that there is a God who commands obedience and regularly punishes vicious crimes with vicious punishments in this life, as many clear and undebatable testimonies show, yet our minds are tortured with horrible doubts because they see that good people as well as the evil are often oppressed and burdened down with enormous calamities.

Although in some way the human mind understands that God punishes the guilty, yet it knows nothing about reconciliation without the revelation of the divine promise. Thus we are overwhelmed by our punishments and argue against those things which have accidentally befallen mankind, or we wonder why God has burdened our weak nature with so great miseries. Pericles thought that the pestilence which had befallen Attica had come perhaps primarily from the contagions of nature. He did not recognize that the punishment came from God. Oedipus understood that he was being punished by God, but he knew absolutely nothing about the forgiveness of sins.

From these clear testimonies we seek a God who has revealed Himself, and we separate ourselves from the heathen and from all those who are ignorant of the Gospel, and in our prayers we consider which God we invoke and where and why God has revealed Himself. We are not unsettled in our minds as the heathen are or those who run to graven images; nor do we think in a negligent and cold

manner concerning the revelation of God, but we realize that it is a great benefit and a sure testimony that He wills to help us. Therefore Paul points us to the revelation of 1 Cor. 1:21, "Since the world through its own wisdom did not know the wise God, it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe." In other words, because our minds are unsettled, even when we observe the beautiful order which has been so wisely established among all creatures and when we note the instructions which we have received from the Architect of it all, we still remain in doubt about providence, whether we are received by God, whether our prayers are heard or help is given. Therefore, although the voice of the Gospel has gone out by which God reveals Himself, still the largest part of the human race ridicules this as a fable. But some do believe it. They have learned to recognize Him correctly, to pray to Him properly, and they are thus the recipients of eternal life, of righteousness and glory, etc.

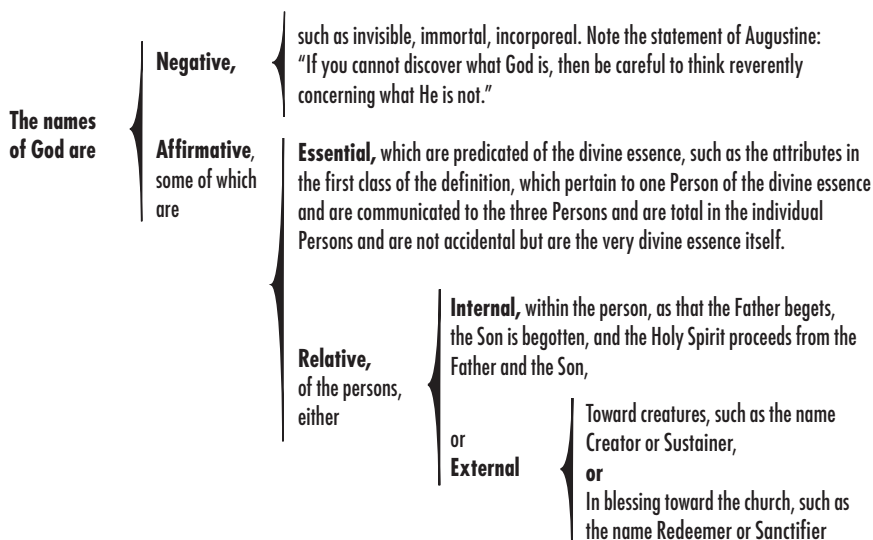
Christ leads us to the revealed God in this way. When Philip begged that the Father be shown to them, John 14:8–9, the Lord earnestly rebuked him and said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." He did not wish God to be sought by idle and vagrant speculations, but He wills that our eyes be fixed on the Son who has been manifested to us, that our prayers be directed to the eternal Father who has revealed Himself in the Son whom He has sent, and in the Gospel which has been given by the God who accepts us and hears our prayers for the sake of His Son our Mediator.

Thus from the very beginning God is always proceeding from His secret throne for the sake of our salvation and is always revealing Himself and speaking to us in a fatherly way, delivering to us some word as a witness to which He binds the minds of men, in order that they may be certain that He is truly the eternal God, our Creator, who has revealed Himself through this word and testimony. Thus in the First Commandment He binds the people to the word which sounded forth on Mount Sinai and which served to lead the people out of Egypt, "I am the Lord your God, who led you out from the land of Egypt," Ex. 20:2. All of the marvelous acts which took place in connection with the Exodus are testimonies to the presence of God. This same God gave the promises concerning the Mediator, for whose sake the patriarchs knew from the beginning that their prayers were heard. Thus their prayers were limited to this God who in leading them out of Egypt revealed Himself and gave the promises of the Mediator, as David said in Ps. 110:1, 4. Thus since Christ has been delivered, crucified, and raised again, and since the light of the Gospel has been recognized, we make this witness our own, we keep our gaze on this Son, and we learn from Him these two points: who God is and what His will is.

Thus we wisely and eagerly separate our worship from that of the heathen, the Turks, and the Jews. For true worship differs from false worship particularly

But his reasoning would be better and more in agreement with Scripture if all these names were distributed into these four kinds of definition.

The distinction used in the schools can also aid this study:



We should note that there is a popular distinction of the scholastics, taken from the *Thesaurus* of Cyril, 1.1 [MPG 75.24ff.], where he teaches that there is a distinction between those things which are said about the substance of God as to what He is and what He is not, and the relationship of God, referring to either the distinction of the persons or their relationship to created beings.

Certain Bible verses pertaining to the individual parts of a subject and to each locus appear in subsequent pages, and some of them are set forth in the text of the *Loci Communes* of Philipp.

Second, the methods of speaking in regard to this mystery must be noted. (1) Certain things are predicated of the divine essence and are common to the three persons. These are called attributes. (2) Certain things are predicated individually of the persons and are called relationships, properties, or concepts, in order to distinguish the persons of the Deity from one another. (3) Certain things are predicated of the action of God, whether universal or special; also certain things are spoken of God in a relative sense and are said only of one person alone or of

LOCUS III

The Person of the Holy Spirit

[MELANCHTHON'S TEXT]

The term “spirit” in general refers to the state of being in motion, or nature, or a moving force; and we must take note of the variety of uses in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, so that we do not carelessly mix up all these different ways in which the term “spirit” is used. Sometimes it means winds, sometimes the life spirit of man, sometimes it refers to movements or forces created by men, both good and evil. In this case it refers to a spiritual essence, that is, a living, intelligent, incorporeal, efficacious being. God is a spirit. In this setting the term is applied in common both to the Father and other persons of the Godhead. Therefore, we must be selective in gathering prooftexts and judge prudently when Scripture is actually speaking about the Holy Spirit, whom the Gospel announces has been given to us through Christ in order to sanctify and vivify our bodies, and whom the church confesses is a divine person, who makes alive and justifies.

And so it is to be affirmed that the Holy Spirit is a person. For many impious and bold men in various churches have contended that the Holy Spirit is not a person but merely signifies a motion created within people, or certainly signifies the powerful Father moving without another person [being involved].

To this blasphemous sophistry the true church brings in opposition passages given us in Scripture, the first and clearest of which is the divinely given revelation set forth in the baptism of Christ, where we can clearly discern the three persons. The Father says, “This is My beloved Son,” Matt. 3:17. There is thus one person of the Father and a second of the Son. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove. Now if the Holy Spirit were only a motion created among animate things, He would not appear in a special bodily form; or if it were the Father Himself, John would not have specifically designated the Holy Spirit when he says, “Upon whom you see the Holy Spirit . . .” John 1:33.

So also at Pentecost the Holy Spirit appeared in a particular bodily form. These revelations did not take place in vain; indeed, they are preeminent blessings from God in which God reveals Himself to the church and testifies that the Holy Spirit is a person.

To these testimonies are added passages concerning Baptism: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” Matt. 28:19, that is, I bear witness that you have been received by God whom I invoke upon you,

LOCUS IV

Creation

[MELANCHTHON'S TEXT]

God willed to become known and to be recognized. Therefore He created all creatures and in the process used great artistry to convince us that things do not just exist by accident, but that there is an eternal mind, an architect, a good and righteous One who watches over and judges the deeds of men. But, although this consideration of universal nature does indeed teach us about God, as I shall discuss again later, yet at the very beginning let us direct our mind and our eyes to all of the testimonies by which God reveals Himself to His church—to His leading out from Egypt, to His voice sounding at Sinai, to Christ raising the dead, His own resurrection and ascension into heaven, to the voice of the eternal Father saying about Christ, “Hear Him,” and to the sending of the Holy Spirit. These testimonies have been published and set forth so that in the weakness of our nature they may more clearly teach, strengthen, and convince us. Therefore our minds should always be fixed on a consideration of these testimonies, and, having been strengthened by them, our minds should meditate on the article of creation and finally should consider the evidences of God which have been left in nature.

Now the article of creation set forth expressly in Genesis 1 and in many other passages states that God, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the co-eternal Son and the Holy Spirit, created out of nothing the heaven and the earth, the angels, men, and all other physical things. Thus it is also said of the Son in John 1:3, “All things were made by Him” (that is, the Son). And concerning the Holy Spirit in creation it is said in Ps. 33:6, “By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the power of them by the breath (Spiritus) of His mouth.” Furthermore, that things were created out of nothing is taught by this statement: “He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it was created,” Ps. 33:9. Under the speaking or commanding of God things came into being. Thus they were not made of some previously existing material, as the Stoics with their two eternal principles, mind and matter, have imagined. But when God speaks, even though things do not exist, they come into existence, and when John says, “All things were made by Him,” he is refuting the Stoic notion which imagines that matter was not created. We must keep these things in mind in the church regarding the article of creation.

But not enough has yet been said about this very important article. The weakness of humanity, even if it recognizes that God is the Creator, yet afterward imagines that

LOCUS VII

Sin

[A. SIN IN GENERAL]

[MELANCHTHON'S TEXT]

Although all nations see the horrible confusion, vices, and grievous calamities of the human race and feel the burden of sin, yet only the church of God teaches both where sin comes from and what it is and hears the Word of God concerning divine wrath and present and eternal punishments. And though human wisdom teaches us how to guide morals [and] disapproves and punishes actions against common reason, yet it does not recognize what is inherent in the consideration of sin, namely guilt before God or the wrath of God. Alexander saw that he had acted shamefully when he killed Clitus and he mourned as a result, because he made a judgment contrary to nature, but he did not mourn because he had offended God or because he was guilty before God. But the church points out the wrath of God and teaches that sin is a far greater evil than human reason thinks. Nor does the church reprove only external actions which are in conflict with the law of God or reason, as philosophy does; but it reproves the root and the fruit, the inner darkness of the mind, the doubts concerning the will of God, the turning away of the human will from God and the stubbornness of the heart against the law of God. It also reproves ignoring and despising the Son of God. These are grievous and atrocious evils, the enormity of which cannot be told. Therefore Christ says, "The Holy Spirit will reprove the world of sin, because they do not believe in Me, and of righteousness because I go to the Father, and of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged" [John 16:8–11].

This message is entirely alien to civil judgments. Therefore He says that the world is reproved by the Holy Spirit, by the voice of the Gospel, not by human and civil judgments; and it is reproved of sin, namely for despising the Son of God, because people spurn the Gospel [and] the benefits of Christ, so that they do not come to God through faith in His Son but remain in everlasting doubt and flee from God or with horrible audacity dream up cults and idols.

Then He says, "He also reproves the world of righteousness" [John 16:10]. For wise men think that righteousness is some kind of universal discipline or obedience in keeping with laws, as they say. But the Gospel brings a far different righteousness. For this human discipline does not remove death, but the righteousness before God, by which God reckons us as righteous, accepted, and heirs of eternal life, abolishes