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VOLUME 8



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THEOLOGICI
PART II



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



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Second part of the Loci Theologici of the reverend and notable
theologian Dr. Martin Chemnitz, at one time most faithful
superintendent of the church of Brunswick

Edited in the name of his heirs by Polycarp Leyser doctor of sacred
theology and successor to Dr. Chemnitz

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To Our Most Admirable and Generous Lords Who Excel in Piety, Virtue, Wisdom, and Learning, Members of the Councils and of the Senate of the Renowned Republics of Lübeck, Hamburg, Lüneberg, Rostock, and Wismar, Honorable Rulers and Benefactors, Greetings in Christ from Polycarp Leyser:

Six months ago, at the request of his heirs, I humbly offered to the illustrious leaders, the dukes of Brunswick and Lüneburg, the first volume of the Loci Theologici of Dr. Martin Chemnitz, of blessed memory. The reason for this has been given in the preface, namely, that it is a great blessing of God for the church to have had from the very beginning the chief loci of the heavenly doctrine summarized in brief fashion according to the norm by which the rest of the teaching can be more properly examined and more correctly explained. And at the same time I have shown that this method of teaching was not discovered by men but was introduced into the church by God Himself and preserved by Him up to this present time. In His name it is most appropriate that we give special thanks to Dr. Chemnitz. For in this very act he has pointed out the best method of teaching, and if our younger men will also maintain it, they can easily understand what must be taught, what omitted, what received, and what rejected in the teaching of the Christian religion, and by which testimonies of sacred Scripture the correct doctrine can be confirmed or false doctrine refuted, so that the pure and uncorrupted tradition of the true religion may be transmitted to our distant posterity. Therefore, just as many faithful teachers of the church have occupied themselves with this kind of writing to their own credit and for the fruitful development of their students, so I hope that from his first volume of sound theology those who are eager for more of the same kind of teaching have learned that our Chemnitz yields first place to none of them, but that he has so skillfully prepared his studies on these subjects that it was most proper even after his death to publish them and share them with the church.

And now, after this passage of time, most worthy and prudent men, at the urging of the same heirs, I am dedicating this second volume to your Excellencies. I believe that I would be amply rewarded if in a few remarks I might demonstrate how ungrateful the world has shown itself in all times for this highest blessing of God, a world which with its vigorous and constant defections, which we can note from the very beginning of time, has made itself unworthy of the grace of God and has absolutely deserved that God should take away all light of the truth and drown the whole world in the eternal darkness of error. I shall make only a few remarks on this matter and beg that there be no inconvenience for your Excellencies or that you be detained for too long a time. For it is my hope that this brief presentation will not be lacking in value for you.

How great a blessing of God it is that, even after our tragic fall, God comes forth from His secret dwelling place and reveals His will to us in His Word, and has deigned

to procure eternal salvation for the human race. This is something which can never be sufficiently praised or celebrated. And this great kindness ought to move man to put a higher value on this treasure and more diligently preserve it. And if man, even with his corrupted reason, would show at least some good judgment, he would pronounce that this is beyond description and horrible to hear, that the creature is departing from the will of his Creator as expressed in His Word, that he is following other paths than those which God has revealed. And yet from the very beginning man has always done this very thing, as we shall now hear.

After God had given children to Adam and Eve, the first founders of our race, there is no doubt that they very diligently set before them the heavenly doctrine of our salvation and that they were instructed above all concerning the promise of the Seed of the woman and the coming Redeemer.¹

Yet despite all their diligence they were not able to prevent their firstborn, who yielded to the urgings of the devil, in total contempt for God, from being the first not only to depart from the divinely taught doctrine but also to persecute and murder his own brother in satanic hatred, and finally in the exile (into which he was sent by God in order that he might come to himself) to lose all hope. What sorrow Cain in his apostasy brought to his parents! Who can describe it in words? For he brought great anguish into the church. But how much damage he did by his example when he rejected the Word of God Himself by his superficial, offhanded folly is seen in this one point to which Moses so strongly testified concerning the progeny of Adam, "Then men began to call upon the name of God" [Gen. 4:26]. And from this we understand that the worship of the true God was so adulterated and corrupted by the cursed offspring of Cain, to which doubtless many also from the posterity of Adam and Seth were added on account of the good fortune which they enjoyed, that finally in the times of Enoch, around the 300th year of the world, it was restored to its integrity and thus began to grow and flourish in the world again.

But this vigor did not last long. For within scarcely five or six generations, their posterity, whom God had chosen for Himself as sons, after leaving the true faith and the true worship of God and all godliness, threw themselves into every kind of sin to such a degree and so polluted the whole world with their crimes, that God undertook to purge the whole world by a universal flood.

We can see that by the Flood the church was purged from error and wickedness. For there remained only one man with his small family, the race reduced to eight souls, so that it might be hoped that this seed of the future church, which had witnessed the horrendous wrath of God against all ungodliness, would bring forth nothing in

¹ This paragraph illustrates the great dependence of Chemnitz and Leyser on Luther. Chemnitz's handling of the early history of mankind resembles that of Luther in his *Lectures on Genesis*. For example, note Amer. Ed., 1.243ff. and many other places.

God's field except pure holiness. But what happened? Scarcely had the ground dried up and men again had begun gradually to multiply, when immediately in Ham, the author of all fornication both spiritual and bodily, the third part of the human race was cut off. And a little later the posterity of Japheth was washed away and lost the true doctrine of God. And not long afterward also the family of Shem, which was the particular, holy possession of God, was nearly completely swallowed up by this new kind of piety and this flood of impiety which was worse than the previous kind, except for Melchizedek, who along with a few others held on to the pure worship of God and among the countless defections of the rest stood straight and uncorrupted. Why, because not even Abraham, the father of all believers, along with his leading people, was immune to the abomination of idolatry, but when God wanted to keep him safe, He was compelled to call him from the deep mire of idolatry [Joshua 24:2].

And almost all of these things took place while Noah was still alive, serving both as ruler and father as well as high priest. Thus how often can we imagine that the good father groaned, how often did he wet his grey beard with tears, when he saw his sons and grandsons so swiftly after the rebirth of the human race falling back into the old wickedness and vices (on account of which the world had perished in the Flood)? Think of what kind of corruptions of teaching, what cleverly devised lying vanities, the wicked progeny of the wicked Ham produced! What about the kingdom of Nimrod, what kind of morals did it have in which the king did not present himself as a king and a father as he should have done, but as a hunter of men, that is, he did not protect men as men for their true salvation, but like wild beasts he subjected them to himself on account of his desires and forced them to a godlessness by which they were made subject to eternal death!² How did the eyes and the mind of our first parent view all these things? What words and threats did he use to condemn these things! We must believe that he in no way remained silent, as a dumb dog, in the face of these profane defections. But he accomplished less than he had hoped, sad to say. Men are indeed flesh, and by the cunning and the malice of the devil they sought vanity and loved the darkness of error more than the light of truth [John 3:19].

Yet lest the sacred seed entirely perish and the worship of God be completely done away, God Himself explicitly repeated to Abraham the heavenly doctrine, and the great diligence of himself and his family was so commendable that He gave oaths that it would be impossible for his posterity ever to lose the doctrine. But even then there was no constancy in holding to their father's religion among them, so that soon Ishmael in the time of Abraham and Esau in Isaac's time, while the patriarchs were still alive, fell away and almost completely lost the knowledge of the true God, or so obfuscated it that very few of their posterity had even a small taste of it. Likewise, the posterity of Jacob the heirs of the unique promise of blessing, in addition to the

² Here compare Luther on Nimrod, Amer. Ed., 2.197ff.

LOCUS [VIII]

The Divine Law

[MELANCHTHON'S TEXT]

The Law is a teaching given by God, which directs what we are to be like, what we are to do, what we must omit. The Law requires perfect obedience toward God. It pronounces that God is angry and punishes with eternal death those who do not present perfect obedience. This definition is taken from the law of God itself and from many statements of Christ. The Law contains precepts and promises to which are added the condition of complete fulfillment of the Law. Likewise, the threats. Precepts are spoken regarding complete obedience: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength," Deut. 6:5. Likewise, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," Lev. 19:18. Again, "You shall not covet," Ex. 20:17. And the warning says, "Cursed is he who does not abide by the words of the Law to do them," Deut. 27:26. Again Christ says in Matt. 25:41, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire."

First it is necessary to give this warning, that there is a great and immeasurable difference between human law and divine law. But just as the people could not see the shining face of Moses and looked at him behind a veil, so the minds and eyes of all men see the law of God from a distance. Nor do they understand what the nature of the judgment is, but they universally think that the teaching pertains to outward works in the same way that they consider the precepts of Phoclydes or Theognis. But there are more reasons for giving and revealing the divine law than this, as shall be mentioned later. Thus we should not regard the law of God as the Decemvirales tables of the Romans, which perished many centuries before, along with their legal system and their courts. But the law of God is an eternal and immovable rule of the divine mind and a judgment against sin, a judgment impressed on human minds, often proclaimed by the voice of God, of which Christ says, "I have not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it" [Matt. 5:17].

Therefore we must consider the difference. Human law only demands or forbids external works. Philosophy sometimes teaches that more is required, such as that the action be an honorable one and not merely external or simulated, but an upright judgment in the mind and in the will a free choice or decision for acting correctly. Therefore the Law demands a certain prudence or moderation of the emotions and the actions, which is properly called "ethics." But this law does not accuse our natural uncleanness, nor does it pronounce judgment on all the sins which are in conflict

with the First Table—the doubting of God, the heart which lacks fear and love for God, our weakness of faith, and evils like this which cling in our nature.

But the law of God not only requires outward action or that love which comes from bridled emotions, of which the philosophers speak, but it commands that our nature obey God perfectly, have an unshaken knowledge of God, true or constant fear of Him, firm trust in God, and a burning love for Him. But because the nature of man is not such, the voice of the Law is the judgment of God, condemning the sin in our nature. Paul is expressing this concept when he says, “The Law is spiritual” [Rom. 7:14], that is, it is not only a civil wisdom giving commandments concerning our outward actions in our life in society, but it is a far different teaching, which demands spiritual actions, strong knowledge concerning God, a burning and perfect love, as the Law says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” [Deut. 6:5].

But the monks speak of the law of God as they do of civil righteousness; they say that the law of God is satisfied through this civil or philosophical training, that is, through outward works and whatever the will attempts to do, even though in the mind doubts remain and in the will and heart many evil inclinations still exist. And they taught that these doubts and corrupt desires are not sins.

Therefore they imagine that men are righteous and pleasing to God because of the works which they think satisfy the law of God; they have not taught that men are righteous in the sense of having been reconciled to God and pleasing to Him by faith for the sake of our Mediator, Christ. But Paul refutes these pharisaic errors and affirms that this weak nature of man cannot satisfy the law of God nor placate the wrath of God nor take away sin through the works of the Law. But he affirms that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, has been sent to take away our sins and give us righteousness and eternal life, as we shall discuss more fully under the proper locus.

[A.] THE LAW OF GOD

First of all, let the sequence and order of the loci be considered. For since sin is *anomia*, that is, whatever is in conflict with the law of God, it is necessary that those loci concerning the Law and sin be very closely joined together. For it is useless to deal with the doctrine of sin, nor can we understand what sin is, unless it is shown that what is not in conformity with the rule of righteousness in the mind of God is sin. Also concerning free choice, there are too many philosophical arguments in the church where the doctrine of the Law is not involved as the true object of human efforts.

Furthermore, this doctrine precedes the locus on justification if we follow the best and most necessary order. For the Gospel consists in the proclamation of the merits and benefits of the Son of God, but these are defined in terms of the fulfillment of the righteousness of the Law and deliverance from the curse of

[B.] EXPOSITION OF THE DECALOG

[MELANCHTHON'S TEXT]

A reverent consideration of the Decalog is most useful and spiritually uplifting. For it contains so complete and sublime a teaching that it can never be satisfactorily understood or exhausted. More and more we must come to detest the ravings of those who imagine that they can satisfy the law of God or even do more than it requires. These are not the voices of men, but they have been sown by the devil, who by this kind of bitter humor plays with the human race which has fallen from its dignity and purity. For when God shows in His law the condition in which human nature was created, from whence we have fallen, and into what miseries and darkness we have been degraded, the devil, as if playing with us, spreads abroad voices which ironically try to minimize the law of God. Therefore the reverent should know that the errors of the Pharisees and the monks are not inconsequential, and they should pray God that the veil of our hearts, which hinders us from seeing the law of God properly, might be drawn away, for we must seriously consider it as being the voice of God which contains far greater things than we can completely comprehend.

Above all we must consider these four points concerning the Law.

In the first place, the Law instructs as to the purpose for which human nature was created and what the dignity and purity of man was like in which he was created. For human nature would have been as this Law describes him, with full knowledge of God, always worshiping Him, always obedient to Him, always in all his works looking to His presence and guidance, observing the righteous order of things in all his actions, without any wickedness or calamities or death.

In the second place, the Law instructs us concerning our present wretched state. For we now see that our nature has fallen from its original honorable position, is in conflict with the Law, is filled with darkness and contempt for God, without any order, filled with corrupt desires of every kind. We also recognize that our sin is the cause of death and immeasurable disasters. But yet we do not understand our wretchedness, nor do we really hear the Law unless with true terror and suffering we recognize the wrath of God against sin. When this happens, we begin to a slight degree to understand the Law of God and the wretchedness of our human condition. As David cries, the wrath of God could not be endured if God wished to punish sin in keeping with our merits. "If You should mark iniquities, O Lord, Lord, who shall stand?" Ps. 130:3. Our sins are more numerous and greater in each of us than can be understood. Furthermore, note the emphasis of the passage, "Who shall stand?" No one has such strength that he can bear the calamity of our human condition, which is the punishment for our sins. Just as David felt the penalties of his adultery—the killing of his sons, the treason of a son, the marriages which were polluted by incest, the exile, the overthrow of his cities, and other incalculable evils—so in his

punishments he learned to understand this verse, “Who shall stand?” Yet these present evils are not worthy to be compared with eternal punishments. Thus, as often as we recite this verse, “If You should mark iniquities, O Lord, Lord, who shall stand?” we should understand that the wrath of God against sin is real and beyond measure, and we should regard the whole law, and consider what mountains of punishment have been laid upon the human race, and regard our own and our common troubles and pray God that He would mitigate His wrath which no one can endure or bear. If He put forth His wrath, men would have to crumble and perish in present and eternal punishments. Likewise, similar passages in the psalms warn us concerning the true understanding of the Law and the knowledge of our sin and the wrath and punishments of God.

In the third place, the Law by implication quietly instructs us concerning the restoration of the human race and concerning eternal life. It further points out to what greater excellence we are recalled. For because God has repeated the word of the Law after the fall of our nature, He surely wills that the Law in some way be fulfilled. Therefore there will be a restoration of the human race and there will be an eternal life. Because we see that in this life the law of God is not satisfied, the teaching concerning this restoration is more clearly set forth in the promises.

In the fourth place, when we have thus considered how great is the misery of the human race under the oppression of sin, the wrath of God, and death, and have understood that the voice of the Law is a sentence, a chain, a witness, and the messenger of His unspeakable wrath, we must always turn from this area to the Son of God and consider His sacrifice, which alone has endured this wrath for us, undergone the burden of the Law, and pleased the Father. We must consider the benefits of the Son of God, which He poured out to cover our sin. Also we should know that we are called by the Son of God Himself in order that once again that purity described in the Law might begin to take root in us, as we shall indicate later in the proper locus.

CHAPTER [I]: HOW WE ARE TO INVESTIGATE THE TRUE MEANING . . . OF THE DECALOG

So great is the brevity in the individual precepts of the Decalog that Moses called them “words” (*verba*), Deut. 4:12; 10:4; Ex. 34:28. Yet within this brevity is included whatever pertains to loving God and our neighbor, and these brief statements should be the rule and measure by which we recognize what sins are, Rom. 3:20. Similarly Christ in Matt. 15:3, when His disciples were transgressing the traditions of the Pharisees, defended them as not sinning, because they were not committing anything against the Decalog. In 1 John 3:4 it says, “Whatever is not lawlessness is not sin.” Paul says in Col. 2:16, “Let no one judge you in food or in drink.” Thus it is manifest from Matthew 5 alone that the precepts of the

Decalog are synecdochical, that is, they represent the ordering and prohibiting of more things than are expressly mentioned in the Decalog.

As a result of this at all times there have arisen great controversies concerning the correct explanation of this subject, with some interpreting the synecdoche in a broad sense and others in a narrow. For which of the prophets did not contend with hypocrites concerning the proper meaning of the Law? In the time of the ministry of Christ the Pharisees were continuing the synecdoche of the precepts of the Decalog as if only those were great sins and worthy of death which were expressly mentioned in the Decalog. But the rest of the sins, such as anger, jealousy, and things of this kind, were minimized, things which God would not punish with hellfire. In our own times certain men have argued that simple fornication is not a sin, because the Sixth Commandment says only, "You shall not commit adultery." Eck contends that an act of concupiscence is sin only when the desire is obeyed with full consent, because the Tenth Commandment says, "You shall not covet the servants, fields. . . ." The more recent Jews restrict idolatry, which is forbidden in the First Commandment, only to the use of statues and images, because of an appendix which had been added to the First Commandment. Likewise, when they do not pronounce the great name of God, Jehovah, and will not write it with all the letters, they think that they are completely fulfilling the Second Commandment. How widespread this notion is even among Christians, that the Sabbath is sanctified by outward laziness, because the Decalog says, "You shall not labor!" On the other side, certain people extend this synecdoche too widely and try to include everything under it. Thus in days gone by the Pharisees under the pretext of the commandments of God pushed their traditions onto the people, on the grounds that they thus might be more easily observed. Likewise now in our age the papists try to include their Masses and their theatrical worship system under the Third Commandment.

Thus it is right and necessary to add that the Decalog must always be understood as its explanation is given to us in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures. For God in 10 words has summarized all the wisdom of the moral law, not in such a way that each person is free to devise whatever interpretation he wishes, but with His own voice He has included His own synecdoche of the Decalog with definite boundaries in the explanations given in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures.

Because there is no opportunity for each person to gather these explanations which are spread around in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and to apply them properly to the precepts of the Decalog, learned men have given us certain rules which demonstrate the basic principles for a smooth and methodical way whereby a definite and complete explanation of the individual commandments

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