

CHEMNITZ'S WORKS

VOLUME 7



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THEOLOGICI  
PART I



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



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# Contents

## [PART I]

Translator's Preface	ix
Dedication	1
Prelection	17
Treatise on the Reading of the Fathers or Doctors of the Church	19
Preface of Philipp Melanchthon to His Theological Topics	33
On the Use and Value of Theological Topics	37
Special Cautions or Reminders	49
<b>Locus I: God</b>	
<b>[A.] God in General</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	55
Chapter I. The Knowledge of God	60
Chapter II. The Essence of the Matter	68
Chapter III. The Definition [of God]	69
<b>[B.] God in Particular</b>	
Chapter I. The Unity of the Divine Essence	82
Testimonies on the Unity of God [Melanchthon's Text]	82
The Unity of the Divine Essence	82
Chapter II. The Trinity or the Three Persons in the Godhead [Melanchthon's Text]	86
The Trinity or the Three Persons in the Godhead	87
[Chapter] III. Controversies	91
[Chapter] IV. The Meaning and Intention of the Terminology in This and the Preceding Article	94
[Chapter] V. The Rules in the External and Internal Works of God	103
[Chapter] VI. Which Modes of Speaking Concerning the . . . Deity and the Trinity . . . Have Been Accepted . . .	110

Chapter [VII]. The Person of the Father and the Definition of the Three Persons	112
<b>Locus II: The Person of the Son of God</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	119
[Chapter] I. The Divine Nature of Christ	132
[Chapter] II. The Human Nature in Christ	164
[Chapter] III. The Personal Union of the Two Natures in Christ	178
<b>Locus III: The Person of the Holy Spirit</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	211
Chapter I. Definition of the Holy Spirit	218
Chapter II. The Principal Names and Epithets Attributed to the Holy Spirit in Scripture	222
Chapter III. Testimonies of Scripture	225
Chapter IV. Controversies	228
Chapter V. Foundations of the Two Latter Parts of the Definition of the Holy Spirit	248
<b>Locus IV: Creation</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	255
Creation	260
Chapter I. The Terms and Words Which Scripture Uses in Describing This Article	261
Chapter II. Description of Creation in Order to Formulate the Essence of This Locus	266
Chapter III. The Difference Between the Opinions of the Philosophers and the Doctrine of the Church Concerning This Article	269
Chapter IV. The Chief Controversies with Which Heretics Have Disturbed the Church Regarding . . . This Article	271
Chapter V. The Order and Mode of Creation, Completed in Six Days	276
Chapter VI. Providence . . .	285
A Treatise on Angels	298
<b>Locus V: The Cause of Sin and Concerning Contingency</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	313
The Cause of Sin	321
Chapter I. The Question Whether Sin Exists	322
Chapter II. The Chief Controversies . . . Regarding the Cause of Sin	323
Chapter III. The Correct Understanding of the Cause of Sin . . .	331

Chapter IV. Explanation of Certain Scripture Passages Which Can Be Raised in Objection	336
Chapter V. The General and Special Action of God	353
Chapter VI. Divine Foreknowledge	362
Chapter VII. The Distinction of Necessity	373
Chapter VIII. The Modes of Speaking	381
<b>Locus VI: Human Powers or Free Choice</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	393
Free Choice or Human Powers	404
Chapter I. Free Choice in Sins or Evil and Wicked Actions	416
Chapter II. Freedom of the Will in External Discipline	417
Chapter III. Contingency in Sins Which Conflict with External Discipline	422
Chapter IV. The Captivity of the Will as It Pertains to . . . [Our] Inborn Depravity . . .	425
Chapter V. Spiritual Actions	429
Chapter VI. Augustine's Distinction of Grace	433
Chapter VII. Whether in Conversion the Will is Merely Passive [and] . . . Completely Idle . . .	446
Chapter VIII. History of the Manichaeans, Enthusiasts, Pelagians, and Others . . .	453
Chapter IX. Refutation of Arguments	464
<b>Locus VII: Sin</b>	
<b>[A. Sin in General]</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	475
Sin	478
Chapter I. Comparison of Teachings	479
Chapter [II]. The Term "Sin" and Explanations of This Word	480
Chapter III. Definition of Sin	485
Chapter IV. Categories of Sin	486
<b>[B.] Original Sin</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	487
Chapter I. Names for Original Sin	496
Chapter II. Definition of Original Sin	503
Chapter III. Testimonies	513
Chapter IV. Questions of Method	523
Chapter V. Principal Corruptions of This Locus	532

Chapter VI. Arguments of the Pelagians	540
Chapter VII. Remnants of Original Sin . . . in the Regenerate . . .	550
Chapter VIII. Actual Sin [Melanchthon's Text]	564
Actual Sin	569
A Brief Analysis of a Treatise . . . [by Flacius]	578

## 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*).<sup>5</sup> It is extant both in a separate volume and in the proceedings of the councils. We must also note that in dist. 15,<sup>6</sup> 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-

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<sup>5</sup> 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).

<sup>6</sup> 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.”<sup>7</sup> 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.”<sup>8</sup> 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,<sup>9</sup> 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.

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

<sup>8</sup> Re Canon III, 1.5, cf. Funk, p. 184.

<sup>9</sup> Canon 46, cf. Funk, p. 579.

## Preface of Philipp Melancthon 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.<sup>28</sup> 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

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<sup>28</sup> 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

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#### [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.

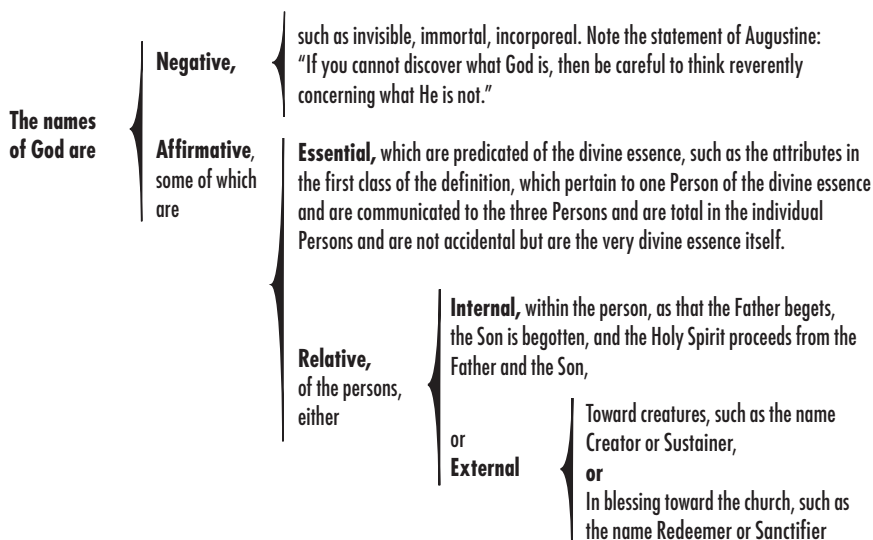
Christ leads us to the revealed God in this way. When Philip begged that the Father be shown to them, John 14:8–9, the Lord earnestly rebuked him and said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." He did not wish God to be sought by idle and vagrant speculations, but He wills that our eyes be fixed 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*

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



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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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<sup>1</sup> Tome 2 was prepared by Leyser about six months after Tome 1, in 1592. The form is the same, and the work proceeds according to Melanchthon's order.

# Contents

## [PART II]

[Dedicatory Epistle by Polycarp Leyser]	xi
[Poem in Praise of Polycarp Leyser]	xxvi
<b>Locus [VIII]: The Divine Law</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	589
<b>[A.] The Law of God</b>	
Chapter I. The Word "Law" or the Definition of the Term	591
Chapter II. Definition of the Law	596
Chapter III. The Perfect Obedience Which the Law Requires, Fulfillment of the Law	599
Chapter IV. Classification of the Laws [Melanchthon's Text]	611
Classification of the Laws	612
Chapter V. Abrogation of the Law	621
Chapter VI. Promulgation of the Decalog	632
<b>[B.] Exposition of the Decalog</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	637
Chapter [I]. How We Are to Investigate the True Meaning . . . of the Decalog	638
[Chapter II]. The Decalog	
[Melanchthon's Text]	655
The First Commandment	662
The Second Commandment [Melanchthon's Text]	682
The Second Commandment	684
The Third Commandment [Melanchthon's Text]	699
The Third Commandment	701
The Second Table [Melanchthon's Text]	715
The Commandments of the Second Table	716
The Fourth Commandment [Melanchthon's Text]	718
The Fourth Commandment	721
The Fifth Commandment [Melanchthon's Text]	734
The Fifth Commandment	735
The Sixth Commandment [Melanchthon's Text]	749

The Sixth Commandment	750
The Seventh Commandment [Melanchthon's Text]	760
The Seventh Commandment	760
The Eighth Commandment [Melanchthon's Text]	770
The Eighth Commandment	770
The Ninth and Tenth Commandments [Melanchthon's Text]	778
The Ninth and Tenth Commandments	780
<b>[C.] The Fulfilling of the Decalog . . .</b>	<b>789</b>
<b>[D.] Natural Law</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	793
Natural Law	798
<b>[E.] The Use of the Law</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	800
The Use and Purpose of the Law	803
<b>[F.] The Honored Position of the Law, Against the Antinomians</b>	<b>808</b>
<b>[Locus IX]: The Difference Between Precepts and Counsels</b>	
Omitted	811
<b>[Locus X]: Revenge</b>	
Omitted	811
<b>[Locus XI]: Poverty</b>	
Omitted	811
<b>[Locus XII]: Chastity</b>	
Omitted	811
<b>Locus [XIII]: Justification</b>	
[A.] Introductory Remarks	813
[B.] The Gospel	
[Melanchthon's Text]	816
[Chapter] I. The Gospel	818
[Chapter] II. The Proper Doctrine of the Gospel, That Is, the Definition of the Subject	822
[Chapter] III. The Common Definition That the Gospel Is the Preaching of Repentance and the Forgiveness of Sins	828
[C.] The Need for the Promise of the Gospel	
[Melanchthon's Text]	833
[Chapter I]. The Need for the Promise of the Gospel . . . and the Similarity Between the Law and the Gospel	837

[Chapter II]. All the Saints in All Ages . . . Have Been Saved by One and the Same Gospel	838
[D.] Grace and Justification	
[Melanchthon's Text]	846
Chapter I. The Controversies	850
Chapter II. The True and Proper Point at Issue in This Topic	874
Chapter III. The Vocabulary of Justification	876
[E.] The Word "Faith"	
[Melanchthon's Text]	898
[Chapter I]. The Word "Faith"	906
[Chapter II]. The Definition of Justifying Faith	925
[Chapter III]. Faith Is a Sure Confidence, Contrary to the Popish Dogma of Doubt	937
[F.] The Word "Grace"	
[Melanchthon's Text]	955
[Chapter I]. The Word "Grace"	965
[Chapter II]. The Term "Freely"	979
[Chapter III]. The Word "Imputation"	982
[Chapter IV]. The Works of the Law	988
[Chapter V]. The Exclusive Expressions	1003
[Chapter VI]. The Term <i>Sola</i>	1006
[Chapter VII]. The Testimonies of Scripture	1018
[Dedicatory Epistle by Polycarp Leyser]	1044
<b>Locus [XIV]: Good Works</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	1051
Good Works	1071
The First Question. Which Works Must Be Done?	1074
The Second Question. What Kind of Good Works Should the Regenerate Perform, and How Can They Be Done?	1086
The Third Question. Whether, Why, and How the Good Works of the Regenerate Please God	1088
The Fourth Question. Why Are Good Works to Be Done?	1091
The Controversy as to Whether the Good Works of the Regenerate Are Necessary [Leyser's Comments]	1110
[The Controversy: Are Good Works Necessary?]	1111
The Arguments of the Adversaries [Melanchthon's Text]	1185
The Arguments of the Adversaries	1202

<b>[Locus XV]: The Difference Between the Old and New Covenants</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	1225
The Difference Between the Old and New Covenants	1240
<b>Locus [XVI]: The Difference Between Mortal and Venial Sin</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	1255
The Difference Between Mortal and Venial Sin in the Regenerate	1263
Chapter I. The Scripture Passages Underlying This Doctrine	1264
Chapter II. The Terms by Which This Difference Is Explained	1266
Chapter III. Definition of the Matter	1271
Chapter IV. The Bases of the Definitions	1280
Chapter V. The Use of This Doctrine	1282
Chapter VI. The Antithesis to This Doctrine	1284
<b>Locus [XVII]: The Church</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	1287
The Church	1301
Chapter I. The Terminology	1302
Chapter II. Question: Is There a Church?	1306
Chapter III. Definition of the Church	1307
Chapter IV. Teachers and Hearers in the Church	1312
<b>Locus [XVIII]: The Sacraments</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	1355
The Sacraments in General	1361
<b>Locus [XIX]: Baptism</b>	
[Melanchthon's Text]	1363
Baptism	1370
<b>Locus [XX]: The Lord's Supper</b>	
Omitted	1374
<b>Locus [XXI]: Marriage</b>	
Omitted	1374
<b>Theses [On Various Subjects]</b>	
Omitted	1374
<b>Scripture Index</b>	1375
<b>Subject Index</b>	1423

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.<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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!<sup>2</sup> 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

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<sup>2</sup> 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

# Scripture Index

OLD TESTAMENT				
	<b>GENESIS</b>		633, 835, 839, 848, 917, 1020, 1028, 1155, 1250, 1355	6:14 263
1	154, 255, 264, 267, 276, 585, 1128	3:16	341, 519, 757	8 520, 521, 1163
1:1	58, 89, 90, 154, 277	3:18	344	8:15 1134
1:2	58, 59, 89, 90, 213, 223, 225, 236, 237, 267, 274, 277	3:19	281, 292, 536	8:20 1063
1:3	84, 90, 265	3:22	90	8:21 431, 466, 489, 498, 520, 521, 580, 640, 787, 787, 840
1:9	58, 1303	3:23	281	8:22 286, 291
1:11	279	4	633, 852, 1261	9 1297
1:12	291	4:1	839	9:2-3 744
1:14	153	4:3-4	632	9:5 749
1:20	281	4:4	840	9:6 737, 738, 744, 748, 796
1:21	281	4:5	852	9:25 731, 733
1:24	281	4:6	633, 740	9:26 840
1:26	89, 90, 104, 105, 263, 267	4:6-7	852	9:26-27 733
1:27	291, 466	4:7	469, 568, 634, 840, 852, 1070, 1241, 1261	9:27 732
1:31	263, 268, 273, 314, 332, 466	4:9	634	11-15 996
2	701	4:10	576, 633, 748	11:7 90
2:2	526, 714	4:12	749	11:20 853
2:2-3	263	4:13	852	11:31 674, 996
2:3	279, 632, 701, 1037	4:13-15	633	12 917
2:4	277	4:20-21	725	12:1 67
2:5	236, 279	4:21	334	12:1-3 841
2:6	282	4:26	37, 632, 840, 852	12:2 1249
2:7	264, 282	5:1	510	12:3 37, 778, 835, 853, 917, 1029, 1216, 1297
2:15	633	5:3	466, 510, 515	12:13 774
2:17	67, 359, 360, 851, 1250	5:24	840	12:17 759, 760
2:24	633, 757	5:29	840	13:14-15 749
3	302, 586, 1144	6	520	14:18-20 841
3:5	90	6-8	580	14:22 692
3:6	332, 1275	6:2	633	15 917, 1015, 1106, 1174, 1215
3:11	1007	6:3	249, 343, 367, 373, 520, 633, 1310	15:1 835, 902, 917, 997, 1215, 1216
3:12	323, 381	6:4	685, 759	15:5 916, 917, 1215
3:13	323, 334	6:4-5	633	15:6 834, 841, 902, 903, 960, 1052, 1106
3:15	37, 67, 165, 230, 307, 489, 493,	6:5	466, 520, 634, 640, 787	15:13-14 373
		6:5-6	332, 372	15:14 1215
		6:5-7	673	15:16 351, 373, 576, 1215
		6:8	975	
		6:12	173, 520	

# Subject Index

BY JAMES A. GAU

- absolute will, 176
- Absolution, 711, 876, 884, 892, 914, 924, 935, 938, 945, 1035–36, 1062, 1198–99, 1310, 1357, 1361
- academic philosophy  
(comprising Middle Platonism and Renaissance Neoplatonism), 34, 368, 659, 667, 940, 943, 950, 1198
- accident, 59, 70, 74, 78–80, 102, 255–59, 270, 277, 289, 296–97, 310, 405, 423, 464, 472, 494, 524, 536, 540, 545, 687, 689, 702, 730, 747, 794, 918, 964, 1055, 1062, 1064, 1066, 1146, 1229, 1235, 1245, 1256, 1359
- action of God, general 266, 287, 297  
arguments concerning, 355–62  
in the godless, 351  
*status controversiae* on, 361–62
- action of God, general and special, 78, 353–62, 435  
definitions of, 120, 256, 353–54  
distinction between, 353–55  
primary and secondary causes, 358–62
- actions, despotic, 419  
preferential, 419
- actual sin, 316, 332–33, 476–77, 483–87, 498, 515, 531, 536–38, 546, 551, 564–86  
categories of, 575–78  
Melanchthon on, 571
- Adimanthus (Manichean), 348
- adultery, 384, 431, 535, 546, 569, 577, 600, 604, 619, 621, 637, 639, 642, 651, 695, 715–60, 763, 782, 793, 796, 802, 998, 1064, 1068, 1077, 1081, 1242, 1259, 1286, 1296  
spiritual, 714, 762
- Aepinus, 1009, 1203
- Aeschines, 875, 912
- Aetius, 143, 908
- affections, 393
- Aginnensis, Phoebadius, 95
- Alexander (of Alexandria), 142, 229
- Alexander of Hales, 462, 513
- Alexander the Great, 270, 315, 393, 475, 565, 661, 721, 750, 955, 1228, 1256
- Algazel, Mohammed, 289
- allegories, 17
- Alphonsus de Castro, 474, 486
- Ambrose, 24, 27, 29, 71, 74, 102, 134, 169, 175, 283, 292, 343, 356, 364, 374, 381, 385, 386, 413, 416, 427, 435, 442, 450, 466, 485, 501, 502, 505, 516, 520, 543, 552, 561, 573, 584, 651, 689, 738, 775, 868, 871–73, 892, 924, 947–48, 979, 982, 989–90, 1009, 1012–14, 1102, 1119, 1169, 1185, 1269, 1292, 1327, 1342
- Anabaptist, xi, xiii, 35, 133, 144, 166–68, 233, 300, 396, 455–56, 494, 539, 546, 567, 591, 691–92, 807, 825, 860, 1017, 1078, 1080, 1088, 1103, 1107, 1124, 1137, 1140, 1145, 1169, 1175, 1178, 1244, 1254, 1264, 1279, 1282, 1286, 1289, 1292, 1296, 1298, 1300, 1302, 1309–10, 1313, 1320, 1326, 1352, 1360, 1364, 1366–70, 1373
- analogy of faith, 13, 32, 53, 103, 337, 387–88, 470–73, 542, 559, 872, 1104, 1112, 1166, 1346
- Andreae, Jacob, xiii, 16
- angels, 22, 48, 58–59, 75, 79, 81, 87, 101, 113–14, 145, 161–62, 164, 166–69, 177, 181, 198, 217, 231, 234, 240, 255, 272–76, 283–85, 298–311, 314, 322, 334–35, 352, 383, 447, 598, 602, 673, 680, 692, 714, 716, 733, 823, 863, 874, 941, 944, 1005, 1012, 1055, 1071, 1085, 1110, 1146, 1179, 1239, 1281–82, 1319, 1334  
blessings of as comfort to Christians, 307–9  
“cherubim,” 302  
condition of, 300–303  
conflict between good and evil, 303–7  
creation of, 283  
evil, 48, 301  
having free choice, 407–10, 470  
“seraphim,” 302  
“spirits,” 221–22  
value of doctrine, 310–11
- anhypostatio*, 140
- Anomeans, 143
- Anselm, 376, 478, 515, 538, 873, 1273  
on definition of sin, 478, 501–2, 506–10, 515, 529, 544
- antichrist, 6, 671, 721, 814, 969, 1317, 1341
- Antinomian, 592, 622, 804, 808–9, 828, 830, 833, 1080, 1091, 1095, 1106, 1107, 1136–38, 1148, 1150, 1162, 1175

- Antinomianism, 439, 1123, 1146
- Antoninus, Marcus, 721
- Antoninus, Pius, 82, 329
- Apelles, 861, 928
- Apollinarianism, 172–74
- Apollinaris, 172–74, 182
- Apollonia, 745
- Apology of the Augsburg Confession, 8, 24, 415, 462, 504, 508–11, 550–51, 561, 573, 828–29, 936, 1095–97, 1107–8, 1110, 1121, 1125–26, 1133, 1150, 1160, 1162, 1164, 1172–73, 1177, 1180, 1208, 1270, 1273, 1361
- apostles, teaching of, 38
- Apostles' Creed, 17–18, 20, 22–23, 35, 39, 40–41, 105, 215, 261, XXV, 285, 906, 928, 1027, 1161, 1304–5
- apostolic writings, 5
- apostrophe, 29
- Aprian, 880
- Aquinas, Thomas. *See* Thomas Aquinas
- Arcadius, 669
- Arcesilaus, 34
- Arianism, 143, 229
- Arians, 26, 28, 97, 99, 106, 115–16, 130, 142–46, 153–54, 158, 163–64, 172–73, 175, 177, 216, 243, 267, 275, XXI, 660, 1298
- arguments of, 155–57
- positive response to, 155–57
- Aristotle, 92–93, 220, 269, 275, 286, 293, 362, 423, 481, 518, 533, 603, 781, 848, 881, 922, 969, 1128, 1139, 1186, 1343
- Arius, 27, 35, 95–97, 115, 126, 139, 142–44, 146, 176, 193, 207, 229, 231, 1291
- ark of the covenant, XV, 614, 616, 630, 674, 679, 813, 1084, 1134, 1238
- Asotus, 602, 1244
- Aspasia, 735
- Athanasian Creed, 17–18, 26, 111, 159, 165, 180, 209, 240
- Athanasius, 25–27, 85, 95–97, 99–100, 109–11, 115–16, 159, 165, 172, 203–5, 586, 680–81, 869, 926
- atonement, xiii
- Augsburg Confession, xii, 8, 43, 331, 389, 391, 415, 435, 509, 550, 573, 578, 580, 583, 587, XXV, 828–30, 936, 1045, 1048, 1094–97, 1102, 1121, 1125, 1132, 1136, 1145, 1150–51, 1160–64, 1169, 1172, 1180, 1185, 1306
- Augsburg Interim, xi–xii, 438–39, 531, 814
- August, elector of Saxony, 1
- Augustine, 3, 13, 19, 22, 25, 27–32, 41–42, 45, 50, 52–53, 66, 70, 73, 78–80, 84, 87, 90, 92–93, 96, 99–102, 104, 107–9, 111–12, 115–16, 133–35, 154, 157, 168, 170, 180, 186, 188, 218–19, 222, 238–39, 241–43, 262, 273–75, 277, 284, 286, 288–92, 296, 323–29, 331, 336, 338, 340, 342–43, 348–50, 352–54, 356–59, 361–68, 370–71, 374–76, 378, 380–87, 389–90, 407–11, 413–17, 419, 425–28, 431–38, 440–46, 456–69, 471–74, 481, 485–87, 493, 497–98, 500–502, 504–7, 510–12, 514–17, 524–38, 540–46, 548–49, 552, 554–61, 570–71, 574–75, 577, 579, 581–84, 596, 601, 603, 606–8, 610, 625, 635, 651, 664, 679, 681–82, 694–95, 697–98, 744–45, 753, 766, 768, 774–77, 786–87, 813, 818, 823–24, 838, 854, 872–73, 877, 881, 892, 895, 903, 908, 925–26, 928, 941–42, 946, 954, 967–68, 970–72, 980, 982, 990–91, 993–94, 1001, 1006, 1010–11, 1016–17, 1028, 1038, 1079, 1081, 1086–88, 1093, 1113–16, 1118, 1122, 1128–29, 1140–41, 1143, 1152, 1158, 1175, 1178, 1213, 1217, 1241–42, 1270, 1272–74, 1280, 1283, 1285, 1292, 1296, 1305, 1311, 1322, 1332, 1343, 1346, 1348–54, 1361, 1367, 1371
- Aurelian, 84, 92, 140–41, 324
- Aureolus, Peter, 513
- Ausonius, 140
- autoousios*, 117
- Balbus Quintus Lucius, 62
- Baptism, 22, 25, 31, 58, 60, 86, 88, 98, 120–21, 163, 182, 211, 217, 225, 228–29, 246, 495–96, 530–32, 540, 543, 549, 550–52, 611, 745, 829, 861, 863, 868, 871, 892, 894, 914, 937, 945, 1016, 1020, 1038, 1148, 1298, 1310–11, 1314, 1326, 1330, 1343, 1350–53, 1355, 1361, 1363–73
- blessings of, 60
- of Christ, 58, 86, 88, 211, 217, 225
- formula of, 228–29, 246, 225
- of infants, 495, 527, 536–39, 549, 550, 1292, 1365–67
- of John, 1365
- and original sin, 554–59, 562–63, 579
- and promise, 60
- signs of, 1364–65
- as sum of Gospel, 120–21