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# How the Emerging Protestant Theology Took Shape in the Reformation Concept of Theological Studies as Enunciated by Philip Melanchthon in His Prolegomena to All Latin and German Versions of Loci

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**Abstract**: This present paper examines the rudimentary concept of Protestant theology as an academic discipline which was enunciated by Melanchthon in his prolegomena to all Latin and German versions of Loci which were indispensable in educating the next generation of Protestant divines and for disseminating the ideas of the Reformation worldwide.

**Key Words**: Philipp Melanchthon, Loci communes (Loci theologici, Loci praecipui), Wittenberg Reformation, Systematic Theology, Jean Calvin

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## Melanchthon asa 16th-Century Pan-Protestant Theologian

Despite the fact that the contemporary Protestant theology is beset with questions and doubts, it is advisable to examine the 16th-century roots of Protestant theological endeavours. For 16th-century theologians espousing the Reformation tenets, it was evident that the old, Catholic theological paradigm was challenged by Martin Luther,[1] while the foundations for a new, emerging Protestant theology as an academic discipline were laid by Philip Melanchthon who was acclaimed as Praeceptor Germaniae namely as the Teacher of the German-speaking world. In fact, Melanchthon's influence

[1] Philipp Melanchthon, "Praefatio," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae quae est summa orthodoxi et catholici dogmatis complectens doctrinam puram et veram Evangelii Jesu Christi secundum divina prophetarum et apostolorum scripta* (Leipzig: Voegelin, 1560), A2r. Reprinted in: Idem, *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (Corpus Reformatorum), vol. 9, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (Halle an der Saale: Schwetschke, 1842), 1050-1055 [No. 6932 (16 February 1560)]. Idem, *Oratio in funere reverendi viri D. Martini Lutheri* (Wittenberg: [s. n.], 1546), passim. Idem, "Praefatio," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 6, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (Halle an der Saale: Schwetschke, 1839), 155-170 [No. 3478 (1 June 1546)]. Idem, "Der ehrbaren und tugendsamen Frau Anna," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 22, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider and Heinrich Ernst Bindseil (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1855), 45-48 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)].

*extended to other European territories as well.*[2]

By his textbook of the systematic theology (Loci) and by the theory underlying that manual, Melanchthon initiated a new way of theologising which was treasured not only by the proponents of the Wittenberg Reformation. John Calvin, for instance, effected the French translation of Melanchthon's Loci which was published twice in the 16th century.[3] The translator(s) thereof could not be identified[4] but it is conceivable that Calvin himself translated Loci into French. Both editions of French Loci were almost identically prefaced by Calvin.[5] Additionally, the edition of 1551 contained a foreword[6] which was plausibly authored by its publisher Jean Crespin. The French translation of Melanchthon's Loci was based on the Latin edition of 1543. Moreover, in 1555 Calvin decided to provide a preface for the French translation of Melanchthon's commentary upon the Book of Daniel.[7]

Calvin's admiration for Melanchthon's theological enterprise is well-known and a close theological and personal bond between them has been thoroughly examined.[8] In Calvin's eyes, Melanchthon acted as a beacon to the 16th-century humanities and he was the most illustrious doctor of the renewed church founded on the Scripture alone.[9] In his writings Calvin paid homage to Melanchthon as to a pillar of Reformation theology[10] and did not hesitate to convey a sense of his profound Christian intimacy with Melanchthon publically.[11]

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〔2〕 Michael Beyer et al., ed., *Melanchthon Deutsch*, vol. 1-4 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1997—2012). Irene Dingel and Armin Kohnle, ed., Philipp Melanchthon: *Lehrer Deutschlands*, *Reformator Europas* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2011). Günter Frank and Martin Treu, ed., *Melanchthon und Europa*, vol. 1-2 (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2001—2002). Karin Maag, ed., *Melanchthon in Europe: His Work and Influence beyond Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999). Frank Pauli, Philippus: *Ein Lehrer für Deutschland: Spuren und Wirkungen Philipp Melanchthons* (Berlin: Wichern-Verlag, 1996). Heinz Scheible, ed., *Melanchthon in seinen Schülern* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997). John Schofield, *Philip Melanchthon and the English Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). Birgit Stolt, ed., *Philipp Melanchthon und seine Rezeption in Skandinavien* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1998).

〔3〕 Philipp Melanchthon, *La somme de theologie ou lieux communs*, ed. Jean Calvin (Geneva: Girard, 1546). Idem, *La somme de theologie ou lieux communs*, ed. Jean Calvin (Geneva: Crespin, 1551).

〔4〕 "Interpretatio Locorum Theologicorum Melanthonis gallica," in Melanchthon, *Opera*, vol. 22, 667-670 [F, II].

〔5〕 Jean Calvin, "Aux lecteurs," in Melanchthon, *La somme* (Geneva: Girard, 1546), 2r-4v. Idem, "Aux lecteurs," in Melanchthon, *La somme* (Geneva: Crespin, 1551), IIr-Vr. The aforementioned preface was reprinted in Corpus Reformatorum: Jean Calvin, "Préface de la somme de Melanchthon (1546)," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 9 (37), ed. Wilhelm Baum, Edouard Cunitz and Eduard Reuss (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1870), 847-850.

〔6〕 "L'imprimeur av lecteur," in Melanchthon, *La somme* (Geneva: Crespin, 1551), 5v. Reprinted in: Melanchthon, Opera, vol. 22, 683-686 [F, II (Interpretatio Locorum Theologicorum Melanthonis gallica)].

〔7〕 Jean Calvin, "Argument," in Philipp Melanchthon, *Commentaire sur le livre des révélations du propheète Daniel*, ed. Jean Calvin (Geneva: Crespin, 1555), 9-11. Again, the translator is unknown.

〔8〕 Philip Schaff, "Calvin and Melanchthon," in *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 385-398 [§ 90]. Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The Shape of His Writings and Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 29-53 [1, 2]. Günter Frank et al., ed., *Melanchthon und der Calvinismus* (Stuttgart and Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2005). Barbara Pitkin, "The Protestant Zeno: Calvin and the Development of Melanchthon's Anthropology," *The Journal of Religion* 84, no. 3 (2004): 345-378.

〔9〕 Jean Calvin, "Melanchthoni," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 17 (45), ed. Wilhelm Baum, Edouard Cunitz and Eduard Reuss (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1877), 386 [No. 2985 (13 December 1558)].

〔10〕 Jean Calvin, "Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii adversus calumnias Alberti Pighii Campensis (1543)," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 6 (34), ed. Wilhelm Baum, Edouard Cunitz and Eduard Reuss (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1867), 229-230 [Ioannes Calvinus clarissimo viro Philippo Melancthoni].

〔11〕 Jean Calvin, "Dilucida explicatio sanae doctrinae de vera participatione carnis et sanguinis Christi in sacra coena ad discutiendas Heshusii nebulas (1561)," in *Opera*, vol. 9 (37), 461-463.

In his preface to the French translation of Melanchthon's Loci Calvin recommended and endorsed Loci as an impeccable and lucid exposition of the biblical way of salvation. At the same time, Calvin admitted a difference between his own views and Melanchthon's system as far as the concept of human free will and the concept of divine predestination were concerned. This difference Calvin regarded as extraneous to the academic and theological excellence of Loci. [12]

In his preface Calvin did not espouse the idea of counting absolution among the sacraments which he attributed to Melanchthon. Actually, Melanchthon's concepts of human free will and of divine predestination as enunciated in his Loci of 1543[13] and later in his Response to the Articles of the Bavarian Inquisition (1558)[14] did not entirely coincide with Calvin's position. Nonetheless, as regards absolution, in his Loci of 1543[15] Melanchthon only pondered over a possible number of particular sacraments which would be contingent upon different definitions of the sacrament adopted for argument's sake. This approach was characteristic of his entire sacramentology. [16] To put it simply, whether absolution was classified as a sacrament or not, depended on how sacraments were defined.

[12] The same reasoning is found in Calvin's letter to the members of the city council (seigneurs) of Geneva. In that official letter Calvin tried to explain why his own views on human free will and divine predestination appeared to be at variance with those expressed in Melanchthon's Loci published and affirmed by Calvin himself. Jean Calvin, "Au Sénat de Genève," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 14 (42), ed. Wilhelm Baum, Edouard Cunitz and Eduard Reuss (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1875), 378-383 [No. 1659 (6 October 1552)]. Cf. an indictment against Calvin brought by Jean Trolliet: "Trolliet contre Calvin," in Calvin, Opera, vol. 14 (42), 371-377.

[13] Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci communes theologici* (Frankfurt am Main: Braubach, 1544), 22v-26v [De humanis viribus seu de libero arbitrio]. Ibidem, 90r-92v [De praedestinatione]. The cited edition is a reprint of 1543 edition.

[14] Philipp Melanchthon, *Responsiones ad impios articulos Bavaricae inquisitionis*, ed. Ernst Sartorius (Marburg: Krieger, 1824), 45-64 [XXII].

[15] Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci communes theologici* (Frankfurt am Main: Braubach, 1544), 104r-122r [De sacramentis].

[16] Albert Herrlinger, *Die Theologie Melanchthons in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung und im Zusammenhang mit der Lehrgeschichte und Kulturbewegung der Reformation* (Gotha: Perthes, 1879), 119-123 [I, III, B, II].

The literature on the history of Melanchthon's Loci,[17] on the development of Melanchthon's theology[18] and on the doctrinal features thereof[19] is indeed vast, not to mention studies of Melanchthon's exegesis and of his reception of the church fathers, as well as analyses of his contribution to European philosophy and education. Therefore, the present paper aims to explore the rudimentary concept of Protestant theology as an academic discipline which was enunciated by Melanchthon in his prolegomena to all Latin and German versions of Loci.

## A Classification of Melanchthon's Prolegomena to Latin and German Loci

The number of various editions of Latin and German Loci is enormous and it can hardly be estimate[d][20] because, on the one hand, Melanchthon was on a regular basis rewriting his Loci, and on the other hand, Loci were published countless times. Since Georg Theodor Strobel[21] Melanchthon-

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[17] Hermann Hardt, "Phil. Melanchthonis Hypotyposes theologicae An. 1521 opus rarissimum," in *Historia literaria reformationis in honorem iubilaei anno MDCCVII* (Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Renger, 1717), 20-30 [IV]. Moritz Rödiger, *Insunt quaedam de Philippi Melanthonis Locis communibus theologicis propediem in Corpore Reformatorum edendis* (Halle an der Saale: Gebauer, 1829). Georg Theodor Strobel, *Versuch einer Literärgeschichte von Philipp Melanchthons Locis Theologicis als dem ersten Evangelischen Lehrbuch* (Altdorf and Nürnberg: Schüpfel, 1776).

[18] Ernst Bizer, *Theologie der Verheissung: Studien zur theologischen Entwicklung des jungen Melanchthon* 1519 – 1524 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1964). Alfons Brüls, Die Entwicklung der Gotteslehre beim jungen Melanchthon 1518 – 1535 (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1975). Friedrich Galle, *Versuch einer Charakteristik Melanchthons als Theologen und einer Entwickelung seines Lehrbegriffs* (Halle an der Saale: Lippert, 1840). Hans-Georg Geyer, *Von der Geburt des wahren Menschen: Probleme aus den Anfängen der Theologie Melanchthons* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1965). Martin Greschat, *Melanchthon neben Luther: Studien zur Gestalt der Rechtfertigungslehre zwischen* 1528 *und* 1537 (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1965). Peter Heinrich, *Die Frage der menschlichen Willensfreiheit in der Theologie Melanchthons: Eine kurze Darstellung und Beurteilung ihrer Aufnahme und Entwicklung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Loci communes* (Nordhausen: Bautz, 2003). Nicole Kuropka, *Philipp Melanchthon-Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft: Ein Gelehrter im Dienst der Kirche* 1526 – 1532 (Tübingen: Mohr, 2002). Wolfgang Matz, *Der befreite Mensch: Die Willenslehre in der Theologie Philipp Melanchthons* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001). Wilhelm Maurer, *Melanchthon-Studien* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1964). Carl E. Maxcey, *Bona Opera: A Study in the Development of the Doctrine in Philip Melanchthon* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1980). "Melanchthons theologische Entwicklung bis zur Herausgabe der Loci communes," in *Die Loci Communes Philipp Melanchthons in ihrer Urgestalt*, ed. Gustav Leopold Plitt and Theodor Kolde (Erlangen and Leipzig: Deichert, 1890), 3-56. Wilhelm H. Neuser, *Die Abendmahlslehre Melanchthons in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* 1519 – 1530 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1968). Rolf Schäfer, *Christologie und Sittlichkeit in Melanchthons frühen Loci* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1961). Heinz Scheible, *Aufsätze zu Melanchthon* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2010). Karl Sell, *Philipp Melanchthon und die Deutsche Reformation bis* 1531 (Halle an der Saale: Verein für Reformationsgeschichte, 1897). Paul Schwarzenau, *Der Wandel im theologischen Ansatz bei Melanchthon von* 1525 – 1535 (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1956).

[19] Irene Dingel et al., ed., *Philip Melanchthon: Theologian in Classroom, Confession, and Controversy* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012). Hans Engelland, *Die Frage der Gotteserkenntnis bei Melanchthon* (München: Kaiser, 1930). Gregory B. Graybill, *Evangelical Free Will: Philipp Melanchthon's Doctrinal Journey on the Origins of Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Timothy J. Wengert, *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness: Philip Melanchthon's Exegetical Dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Timothy J. Wengert, *Law and Gospel: Philip Melanchthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997).

[20] Heinrich Ernst Bindseil, *Bibliotheca Melanthoniana* (Halle an der Saale: Hendel, 1868). Editorial introductions in: Philipp Melanchthon, *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 21-22, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider and Heinrich Ernst Bindseil (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1854 – 1855). Helmut Claus, ed., *Melanchthon-Bibliographie* 1510 – 1560, vol. 1-4 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2014). "Die revidierten Druckausgaben (1542 – 1579)," in Philipp Melanchthon, *Heubtartikel christlicher Lere: Melanchthons deutsche Fassung seiner Loci theologici nach dem Autograph und dem Originaldruck von* 1553, ed. Ralf Jenett and Johannes Schilling (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012), 50-67. Georg Theodor Strobel, ed., *Bibliotheca Melanchthoniana* (Nuremberg: [s. n.], 1782). Idem, *Versuch einer Literärgeschichte*.

[21] *Ibidem*.

scholars have been dividing Loci into three versions (sing. aetas, plur. aetates) and Corpus Reformatorum embraced that practice too.

Nonetheless, the above division seems to be inadequate as far the second and third versions of Loci are concerned granted that there are two types of Loci within the second version and two types within the third version. Although Corpus Reformatorum contained both types of Loci classified as belonging to the second version,[22] in the case of the third version Corpus Reformatorum contained only the text of 1559, omitting the text of 1543 which was not identical with that of 1559 edition.[23] The latter is commonly recognised as the ultimate version of Loci, yet in 1560, shortly before his death, the final text of Loci was approved of by Melanchthon and printed as a part of Latin Corpus Philippicum.[24] To identify what version of Loci is dealt with, it is necessary to consult the text, not necessary the date of publication, given that earlier versions of Loci were occasionally released while later versions were already circulating.

Melanchthon's prolegomena (*i. e.* prefaces and dedicatory letters) scrutinised in the present essay are found in Corpus Reformatorum except for the elucidation (Argumentum) of Psalm 32 which was taken from Hessus' Psalter[25] and which was included in many editions of Loci in Melanchthon's lifetime.[26] It is not clear whether the text of that Argumentum was authored by Hessus himself or by Melanchthon who by writing the aforementioned elucidation could contribute to that new, annotated Latin Psalter. This Psalter was actually edited by Hessus and prefaced by Melanchthon.[27] The manner of placing the Argumentum in Loci would point to Melanchthon as to its author.

In 1560 Johannes Nysaeus published the logical tables based on Loci which were prefaced by Melanchthon.[28] Since Johannes Nysaeus was Melanchthon's student[29] and his book was published by Oporinus whose publishing house was renowned for printing numerous editions of Loci in Melanchthon's lifetime, the aforementioned preface should be reckoned as genuine[30] and by virtue of its content it should be counted among Melanchthon's prefaces to Loci. In that preface Melanchthon

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〔22〕 Philipp Melanchthon, *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 21, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider and Heinrich Ernst Bindseil (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1854), 253-332. Ibidem, 331-560.

〔23〕 Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "Introduction to the Second Edition," in Philipp Melanchthon, *The Chief Theological Topics: Loci praecipui theologici* 1559, trans. Jacob Aall Ottesen Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), xiii-xv.

〔24〕 Philipp Melanchthon, "Loci praecipui theologici," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae quae est summa*, 309-749.

〔25〕 "Psalmus XXXII," in *Psalterium Davidis carmine*, ed. Helius Eobanus Hessus (Strasbourg: Crato, 1544), 102-104.

〔26〕 "Argumentum," in Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci communes theologici* (Leipzig: Papa, 1546), [A8r]. Reprinted in the following editions of Loci: (Leipzig: Papa, 1548), (Leipzig: Papa, 1549), (Leipzig: Papa, 1550), (Basel: Oporinus, 1550), (Leipzig: Papa, 1552), (Leipzig: Papa, 1553), (Leipzig: Papa, 1554), (Leipzig: Papa, 1556), (Leipzig: Papa, 1557), (Wittenberg: Crato, 1558), (Wittenberg: Crato, 1559).

〔27〕 Philipp Melanchthon, "Clarissimo viro D. Eobano Hesso Poetae (1 August 1537)," in *Psalterium Davidis carmine*, 18-20. Reprinted in: Idem, *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 3, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (Halle an der Saale: Schwetschke, 1836), 393-395 [No. 1596 (1 August 1537)].

〔28〕 Philipp Melanchthon, "Piis lectoribus S. D.," in *Johannes Nysaeus, Tabulae locorum communium theologicorum Philippi Melanchthonis confectae* (Basel: Oporinus, 1560), A4v-A5r. Reprinted in: Melanchthon, Opera, vol. 9, 1024-1025 [No. 6903 (1 January 1560)].

〔29〕 Johannes Nysaeus, "Illustrissimo Principi ac Domino," in *Tabulae*, A2r.

〔30〕 Strobel, *Versuch einer Literärgeschichte*, 251-256 [Von einigen Erleuterungsschriften über die Locos].

himself admitted that he was prefacing Loci transformed into a tabular format by Nysaeus.[31] Moreover, the phrasing of Melanchthon's preface published in Nysaeus' Tabulae resembles that of Melanchthon's preface to the Latin version of Corpus Philippicum[32] which was also written in early 1560,[33] and Melanchthon's disquisition on the authority of the Scripture found in his preface to Tabulae partially overlaps with his statement (consilium)[34] from March 1560.

In the present article, Melanchthon's prefaces to the Latin and German versions of Corpus Philippicum are consulted too because they cast light upon his understanding of the emerging doctrinal texts which were to be held in high esteem (called later "symbolic books") and because they capture his insights into the formation of collections of such texts (corpora doctrinae).

Melanchthon was intent on using the prolegomena to define the new, emerging theology as an academic discipline, situating it against the ancient and mediaeval theological paradigm. In the case of Melanchthon, most of his prefaces to his own writings or to the works authored by others were concerned with methodology and verged on the meta-theory of a specific academic discipline. For instance, in his preface to Physics (1549)[35] Melanchthon explicated the phenomenon of natural sciences from the philosophical and theological perspective.

The first German version of Melanchthon's Loci was translated by Georg Spalatin[36] and published in 1522. That translation had subsequently been revised by Spalatin and printed many times by various publishers under various titles. From 1523 onwards Spalatin's preface[37] had been added to that version of German Loci. In literary terms Spalatin's rendition slavishly imitated the Latin original and in the first edition of his translation Spalatin mishandled certain passages[38] which were partially emended in the subsequent editions.

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[31] Melanchthon, "Piis lectoribus S. D.," A5r.

[32] Melanchthon, "Praefatio," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae quae est summa*, A2r-A4r.

[33] To be precise, the preface to the Latin version of Corpus was written in February 1560, whereas the preface found in Nysaeus' logical tables-in January 1560.

[34] Philipp Melanchthon, "De norma iudicii in Ecclesia," in *Opera*, vol. 9, 1081-1083 [No. 6964 (March 1560)].

[35] Philipp Melanchthon, "Clarissimo viro," in *Initia doctrinae physicae* (Wittenberg: Crato, 1567), A2r-A6v. The Physics without the preface is reprinted in: Idem, Opera quae supersunt omnia (Corpus Reformatorum), vol. 13, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (Halle an der Saale: Schwetschke, 1846), 179-412; whereas the displaced preface -in: Idem, *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 7, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (Halle an der Saale: Schwetschke, 1840), 472-477 [No. 4603 (29 September 1549)].

[36] Philipp Melanchthon, *Die Hauptartikel und vornehmsten Punkten der ganzen heiligen Schrift*, trans. Georg Spalatin (Strasbourg: [s. n.], 1522).

[37] Georg Spalatin, "Gottes Gnade und Frieden wünscht allen Christen," in Philipp Melanchthon, *Anweisung in die wahrhaftige heilige Schrift Gottes*, trans. Georg Spalatin (Augsburg: Grimm, 1523), A1v. Reprinted in: Melanchthon, *Opera*, vol. 22, 7-10 [E, I, a (Prima aetas Germanicae translationis Locorum Melanthonis)].

[38] For example, "[...] siquidem hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia eius cognoscere [...]" was initially misinterpreted as "[...] das ist den Herrn Christum erkennen seine Gottheit erkennen [...]", while in the edition of 1523 -translated correctly as "[...] das ist den Herrn Christum erkennen seine Wohltat erkennen [...]". Philipp Melanchthon, "Loci communes seu hypotyposes theologicae," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 85 [Prima Aetas]. Idem, "Von den gemeinen Orten, Artikeln oder klaren Anzeigungen der heiligen Schrift," in *Die Hauptartikel und vornehmsten Punkten der ganzen heiligen Schrift*, B1v. Idem, "Vorrede," in *Anweisung in die wahrhaftige heilige Schrift Gottes*, 5v.

The second version of Loci was translated[39] into German and prefaced[40] by Justus Jonas and released for the first time in 1536, while the German translation of the third version prepared by Jonas but refined by Melanchthon was published in 1542. The title page of that edition stipulated that in 1542 Melanchthon again proofread and refined the translation.[41] Since that edition stemmed from 1542, it is arguable whether that note might imply that Melanchthon proofread former German translations of his Loci. In the next editions the date of Melanchthon's proofreading was adjusted accordingly.

The proposition that Melanchthon was involved in refining German translations of his masterpiece is plausible in view of his long-standing, close cooperation both with Spalatin and with Jonas.[42] The examination of the Olomouc (German: Olmütz) manuscript of German Loci[43] proved that Melanchthon himself prepared a draft of the German translation of the third version of his Loci which was later utilised by Jonas. The relationship between Melanchthon's rendition and the earlier German translation devised by Jonas but proofread and refined by Melanchthon still awaits further scrutiny especially in view of Melanchthon's own comments.[44]

The note on the title page of 1542 edition ("in 1542 again proofread and refined by Melanchthon"), which represented the third version of Loci, might suggest that Jonas had access to the Latin original of the third version before its official publication in 1543. The final text of the third version of German Loci endorsed by Melanchthon was contained in the German Corpus Philippicum.[45]

Speaking of numerous editions of German Loci belonging to every single version, it should be noted that while revising their translations, Spalatin and Jonas were not only refining their German but also took the opportunity to implement minor changes which were meanwhile made by Melanchthon in the new Latin editions. In the present paper German translations of Loci are construed as auxiliary to and illuminative of the Latin original and therefore are referred to occasionally.

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[39] Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci communes das ist die vornehmsten Artikel Christlicher Lehre*, trans. Justus Jonas (Wittenberg: Rhau, 1536).

[40] Justus Jonas, "Dem durchlauchtigsten hochgeborenen Fürsten und Herrn Johann Friedrich, Herzog zu Sachsen," in Melanchthon, *Loci communes das ist die vornehmsten Artikel*, A2r-A4v.

[41] Philipp Melanchthon, *Die Hauptartikel Christlicher Lehre zusammen gezogen*, trans. Justus Jonas (Wittenberg: Rhau, 1544). The cited edition is a reprint of 1542 edition.

[42] Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten, *Nachrichten von merkwürdigen Büchern*, vol. 31 (Halle an der Saale: Gebauer, 1754), 408-411 [MDCCCCXXXI, No. 2193]. Samuel Leigh Sotheby, *Observations upon the Handwriting of Philip Melanchthon* (London: Davy, 1839), passim. The latter book documented Melanchthon's notes on German translations of Loci owned by him.

[43] Robert Stupperich, "Melanchthons Deutsche Bearbeitung seiner Loci nach der Olmützer Handschrift," in *Mededelingen: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks*, vol. 36/7 (Amsterdam and London: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1973), 351-370. "Einleitung," in *Melanchthon, Heubtartikel christlicher Lere: Melanchthons deutsche Fassung seiner Loci theologici nach dem Autograph und dem Originaldruck von* 1553, 17-73.

[44] Philipp Melanchthon, "Laurentio Mollero (Hildesiae docenti Evangelium)," in *Opera*, vol. 7, 1137 [No. 5266 (16 November 1552)]. Idem, "D. Georgio Principi in Anhalt," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 8, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (Halle an der Saale: Schwetschke, 1841), 58 [No. 5359 (30 March 1553)]. Idem, "Dav. Chytraeo," in *Opera*, vol. 8, 607 [No. 5871 (14 November 1555)].

[45] Philipp Melanchthon, "Hauptartikel Christlicher Lehre im Latein genannt Loci Theologici," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae das ist ganze Summa der rechten wahren christlichen Lehre des heiligen Evangeliums nach Inhalt göttlicher prophetischen und apostolischen Schriften* (Leipzig: Voegelin, 1560), 371-783.

## Christian and Jewish Endeavours to Systematise Religious Instruction in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages

A systematic (topical) value of Melanchthon's Loci can be discerned by situating that manual against the ancient and mediaeval endeavours to systematise religious instruction within the Christian and Jewish traditions. Although the religious literature produced by the ancient church was vast and diverse, initially it was not abundant in the presentations of the Christian doctrine which could be construed as systematic from the contemporary point of view. Naturally, the contemporary concept of systematicity was largely formed in the late Antiquity or in the early Middle Ages, depending on a specific chronology adopted with reference to a particular region. Needless to say that the inception of the mediaeval period was less conspicuous in the Byzantine Empire than in the West.

The ancient church fathers were preoccupied with explaining and fortifying what was perceived by them as an orthodox Christian doctrine. This happened predominately through edifying or polemical expositions of basic Christian concepts[46] or of specific ideas,[47] through commentaries upon the Apostles' Creed (Western church)[48] or upon the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (Eastern church),[49] through sermons and through catechetical[50] or evangelistic[51] lectures and tracts.

In the first half of the 7th century, Maximus the Confessor,[52] the Greek church father, composed a theological compendium called "Chief Topics" (Κεφαλα ία δι άφορα). As a matter of fact, a literal Latin translation of that Greek title would be "Loci praecipui". The latter phrase was used by Melanchthon as a title for the second and third versions of his Loci.[53] Notwithstanding a mediocre deployment of theological content, Maximus' work was a harbinger of the systematic era within the Byzantine theology. This era was exemplified by the monumental exposition of the Christian doctrine prepared by John of Damascus[54] in the first half of the 8th century.

In the Western church presentations of the Christian essentials by Ambrose[55] and by Augustine of Hippo[56] were conspicuous for their systematic treatment of doctrinal content. The tradition of such

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[46] Origenes, "Περί Αρχ ών," in PG, vol. 11, 115-414. Eusebius Caesariensis, "Demonstratio evangelica," in PG, vol. 22, 13-794. Lactantius, "Divinarum Institutionum libri septem," in PL, vol. 6, 111-822. Ambrosius Mediolanensis, "De fide ad Gratianum Augustum libri quinque," in PL, vol. 16, 527-698. Augustinus Hipponensis, "De doctrina Christiana," in PL, vol. 34, 15-122. Idem, "Enchiridion ad Laurentium sive de fide, spe et charitate liber unus," in PL, vol. 40, 231-290.

[47] A vast literature arising from the trinitarian and christological controversies belongs to that category.

[48] Rufinus, "Commentarius in Symbolum Apostolorum," in PL, vol. 21, 335-386.

[49] Theodotus Ancyranus, "Expositio Symboli Nicaeni," in PG, vol. 77, 1313-1348.

[50] Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, "Catecheses," in PG, vol. 33, 331-1060. Idem, "Catecheses mystagogicae quinque," in PG, vol. 33, 1059-1128.

[51] Eusebius Caesariensis, "Praeparatio evangelica," in PG, vol. 21, 21-1408.

[52] Maximus Abbas, "Κεφαλα ία δι αφορα θεολογικ α τε κα ι ο ίκονομικ α," in PG, vol. 90, 1177-1392.

[53] Calvin named his masterpiece after Lactantius' work. Cf. Lactantius, "Divinarum Institutionum libri septem,".

[54] Joannes Damascenus, "Expositio fidei orthodoxae," in PG, vol. 94, 789-1228.

[55] Ambrosius Mediolanensis, "De fide ad Gratianum Augustum libri quinque,".

[56] Augustinus Hipponensis, "Enchiridion ad Laurentium sive de fide, spe et charitate liber unus,".

comprehensive expositions of Christian belief was continued by the Latin church fathers in the early Middle Ages[57] until the emergence of new theological genres called "Sentences" and "Summas".

In the first half of the 12th century Hugh of Saint Victor composed his "Summa sententiarum".[58] From then on, mediaeval theologians were keen either on devising their own "Sentences" or on writing commentaries upon Peter Lombard's "Sentences"[59] which enjoyed considerable popularity even in the early 16th century. Subsequently, in the 13th century Thomas Aquinas began to popularise his concept of theological summa organised according the dialectical method (question -thesis cum arguments -antithesis cum arguments-adjudication).

The preponderance of "Sentences" and "Summas" did not eliminate other forms of systematic presentation of Christian doctrine. For instance, Peter Abelard's "Sic et non"[60] was a highly philosophical and theological disquisition, yet his "Theologia Christiana"[61] was a communicative compendium resembling those of the ancient church fathers.

Although every "Summa" or "Sentences"should be studied in its own right, generally speaking, those forms of theological discourse put the emphasis on a philosophical argumentation to the detriment of the exegesis of the sacred writings. Moreover, neither ancient nor mediaeval Christian theology reflected upon the theological significance of systematising the Christian essentials and none of pre-Reformation theologians anticipated that the way of selecting and arranging the doctrinal content might be concomitant with theological tenets underlying any attempt at systematisation.

The Jewish traditionwas focused on experiencing the LORD's Covenant with Israel which was recorded in the multi-layered religious literature (such as Midrashim or Talmudim)[62] that had been solidifying at least since the Siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD. On account of the orthopraxy characteristic of Judaism, the Jewish religious tradition for a long time had not felt the need to delineate and to systematise the essentials thereof except for liturgical expression.[63] Plausibly, the systematic expositions of the Jewish way of living[64] were precipitated by the encounter with the systematic methods of arguing religious ideas which were employed in Islam and in Christianity. Nonetheless, the mediaeval discussion about the status and function of the Thirteen Principles propounded by

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[57] Vincentius Lirinensis, "Duo Commonitoria," in PL, vol. 50, 637-686. Fulgentius, "De fide seu de regula verae fidei ad Petrum liber unus," in PL, vol. 65, 671-706. The latter was also attributed to Augustine: Augustinus Hipponensis, "De fide ad Petrum sive de regula verae fidei," in PL, vol. 40, 753-780.

[58] Hugo de Sancto Victore, "Summa sententiarum," in PL, vol. 176, 41-174.

[59] Petrus Lombardus, "Sententiarum libri quatuor," in PL, vol. 192, 521-962.

[60] Petrus Abaelardus, "Sic et non," in PL, vol. 178, 1339-1610.

[61] Petrus Abaelardus, "Theologia Christiana," in PL, vol. 178, 1123-1330.

[62] Ferdinand Weber, *System der altsynagogalen palästinischen Theologie aus Targum, Midrasch und Talmud* (Leipzig: Dörfling and Franke, 1880), passim.

[63] The comparison of the Rabbinic siddurim to the Karaitic ones proves that the liturgical texts, which from the contemporary perspective could be viewed as doctrinally significant, were common to both traditions. In view of the moment of the separation of the Karaite movement from the Rabbinic Judaism it is arguable that some texts contained in the siddurim were circulating prior to the aforementioned division.

[64] Saadia Gaon, *Glaubenslehre und Philosophie*, ed. and trans. Julius Fürst (Leipzig: Wigand, 1845). Judah Halevi, *Kitab al Khazari*, trans. Hartwig Hirschfeld (London: Routledge, 1905). Maimonides, *Führer der Unschlüssigen*, vol. 1-3, trans. Adolf Weiss (Leipzig: Meiner, 1923-1924). Abraham ibn Daud, *Das Buch Emunah Ramah oder Der erhabene Glaube*, ed. and trans. Simson Weil (Frankfurt am Main: [s. n.], 1852). Joseph Albo, *Buch Ikkarim: Grund-und Glaubenslehren der Mosaischen Religion*, trans. Wolf Schlessinger and Ludwig Schlesinger (Frankfurt am Main: [s. n.], 1844).

Maimonides demonstrates that the systematisation of religious propositions was not indispensable to the Jewish tradition which was perpetuated, preserved and transmitted by non-systematic forms of a religious literature, by practising the Law and by worshipping the LORD.

## God's Word as the Sole Source and Means of the Saving Knowledge of God

In his prolegomena Melanchthon highlighted the supreme and unique authority of the Scripture within the church and defined the relationship between the Bible and other texts relevant in doctrinal terms. Furthermore, he propounded the method of biblical interpretation which he considered credible and implied by the Scripture itself.

In Melanchthon'sview,[65] the Scripture, which he identified as a written form of God's Word,[66] was the sole source and means of the saving knowledge of the Divinity for human beings. Consequently, every single statement concerning a Christian belief or a Christian life had to be grounded in the Scripture in which, according to Melanchthon, the saving self-revelation of God towards humankind was fully and sufficiently enshrined.

Melanchthon maintained that by adhering to the Scripture as to the sole source of the saving knowledge of God, the church was retaining its biblical (whence orthodox) identity as envisaged in Ephesians 2:19-20. For that reason, Melanchthon commonly referred to the Scripture as to the "prophetic and apostolic writings or books" in order to emphasise that the church irrespective of its historical or regional form must be founded upon the Bible from which all Christian doctrine should originate and by means of which the complete self-revelation of the saving face of God was laid bare to humankind.

From Melanchthon's standpoint,[67] theologians, who either taught contrary to the Scripture or conveyed a message not attested in the Bible, were to be considered heterodox. Accordingly, not only a proposition adverse to the Scripture but also a proposition not substantiated in the Scripture should be considered heterodox. Therefore, Melanchthon was passing strictures on divines who dared to "fabricate the doctrine(s)", namely, to make assertions which could not be proved from the Bible.

In his opinion, theScripture itself laid claim to the church and imposed its uncompromising authority on the church. Therefore, by evoking terms such as "ecclesiastical doctrine" or "doctrine of the church", Melanchthon recalled that the biblical doctrine in its pure form was the only one which was supposed to be professed by the church regardless of its historical or geographical setting.

Realising that some knowledge of God, to be precise, a limited[68] knowledge of the divine Law, could be known from the universe and from human innate moral awareness (the conscience), and

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〔65〕 Philipp Melanchthon, "Iuxta pio atque erudito viro D. Tilomano Plettenero," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 81-84 [Prima Aetas]. Idem, "Loci communes," in Opera, vol. 21, 253-255 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Piis et studiosis scholasticis," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 341-348 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Loci communes theologici," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 347-349 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Pio lectori," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 601-604 [Tertia Aetas]. Idem, "Praefatio," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 603-607 [Tertia Aetas]. Idem, "Der ehrbaren und tugendsamen Frau Anna," 45-48. Idem, "An den Christlichen Leser: Vorrede," in *Opera*, vol. 22, 47-52 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)]. Idem, "Piis lectoribus S. D. ," A4v-A5r. Idem, "De norma iudicii in Ecclesia," 1083 [No. 6964 (March 1560)].

〔66〕 Thus, Melanchthon recognised the Scripture as inspired by the Holy Spirit.

〔67〕 Melanchthon, "Pio lectori," 601-604. Idem, "Praefatio," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 603-607 [Tertia Aetas].

〔68〕 On account of the original sin, as Melanchthon taught.

therefore was available apart from the Scripture, Melanchthon[69] clarified that the Bible was the sole repository of all saving knowledge of God, to wit, of the entire message concerning the salvation of sinners (the Gospel).

Given the absolute primacy of the Scripture over the church, Melanchthon[70] avowed that no other text could be equated with the Bible or might approximate to the Bible. Therefore, Melanchthon stated that his Loci were meant not to entice the audience away from the study of the Bible but rather, by acting as a guide to the essentials of the biblical teaching, to entice the readers to plunge into the Scripture and to guard the absolute authority thereof. For that reason, some editions of Melanchthon's German Loci were titled "Anweisung in die wahrhaftige heilige Schrift Gottes" (*i. e.* an introduction to the true and holy Scripture of God).[71] The position of Loci as utterly subservient to the Scripture was also underscored both by Spalatin[72] and by Jonas[73] in their forewords to the German renditions. While working as a systematic theologian and as an exegete, Melanchthon was concerned that his expositions of the Christian doctrine or his biblical commentaries might be perceived by some readers as competing against the Scripture.

In the edifice of Melanchthon's theology non-biblical texts of paramount importance can be divided into the ecumenical creeds and the documents produced by the 16th-century Wittenberg Reformation. The ecumenical creeds, *i. e.* the Apostles' Creed, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed and the Athanasian Creed, were regarded by Melanchthon as an accurate summary of the biblical doctrine and as a trustworthy recapitulation of the distinctive points of the biblical message functioning as a token (symbolum) of the doctrinal orthodoxy.[74] Melanchthon affirmed that the ecumenical creeds were handed down as a comprehensive and comprehensible epitome of biblical teaching which ought to be professed by the church without reservation.

Therefore, Melanchthon[75] did not hesitate to admit that the Scripture cum the ecumenical creeds, which were thought of as duly encapsulating its message, was the perennial fountainhead of the Christian teaching on the stipulation that the Scripture was the only source, while the symbols were merely affirming, reflecting and epitomising the biblical message. The Scripture as the sole source of doctrine was evoked in an exhaustive subtitle of Corpus Philippicum which was designated as "the summary of the orthodox and universal articles of faith embracing the pure and true doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to the divine writings of the prophets and apostles" (summa orthodoxi et catholici dogmatis complectens doctrinam puram et veram Evangelii Jesu Christi secundum divina prophetarum et apostolorum scripta). Thus, the ecumenical creeds, which

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〔69〕 Melanchthon, "Loci communes theologici," in Opera, vol. 21, 347-349 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Loci communes," in Opera, vol. 21, 253-255 [Secunda Aetas].

〔70〕 Melanchthon, "Iuxta pio atque erudito viro D. Tilomano Plettenero," 81-84. Idem, "Loci communes," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 253-255 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Praefatio," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 603-607 [Tertia Aetas]. Idem, "Der ehrbaren und tugendsamen Frau Anna," 45-48.

〔71〕 E. g. Melanchthon, *Anweisung in die wahrhaftige heilige Schrift Gottes*.

〔72〕 Spalatin, "Gottes Gnade und Frieden wünscht allen Christen," A1v.

〔73〕 Jonas, "Dem durchlauchtigsten hochgeborenen Fürsten und Herrn Johann Friedrich, Herzog zu Sachsen," A2r-A4v.

〔74〕 Philipp Melanchthon, "Vorrede," in *Opera*, vol. 22, 51-62 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)]. Idem, "Piis lectoribus S. D.," A4v-A5r. Idem, "Serenissimo Principi D. Henrico Octavo," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 333-340.

〔75〕 Melanchthon, "Der ehrbaren und tugendsamen Frau Anna," 45-48. Idem, "Piis lectoribus S. D.," A4v-A5r. Idem, "Piis et studiosis scholasticis," 341-348. Idem, "Pio lectori," 601-604. Idem, "Praefatio," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 603-607 [Tertia Aetas]. Idem, "Vorrede," in *Opera*, vol. 22, 51-62 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)].

were contained in that collection of Melanchthon's writings (Corpus Philippicum), were a part of the summary and exposition of the doctrine which was construed by him as derived from the Scripture alone.

Treating of the relationship between the Bible and the church fathers, Melanchthon[76] mentioned that in the Scripture as in the sole fountainhead of the divine wisdom the doctrine was revealed and laid down. This doctrine was subsequently epitomised in the ecumenical creeds, while the church fathers proved to interpret that doctrine more or less adequately. The ecumenical creeds were also held in high esteem by some of Melanchthon's associates who would say that the Christian doctrine was embodied in the Scripture and in the ecumenical creeds, yet only the "prophetic and apostolic writings" (*i. e.* the Bible) could enjoy the status of God's voice (vox Dei) and could be received as such.[77]

Melanchthon[78] did not advocate the apostolic authorship of the Apostles' Creed but settled for the statement that the aforementioned creed was formulated by the church in the apostolic age. Nonetheless, Melanchthon's approach to those three creeds, which he termed ecumenical, ignored their historical context because neither the Apostles' Creed nor the Athanasian Creed was acknowledged as ecumenical by the Eastern church which unwaveringly cleaved to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed in its original Greek wording (scilicet without "Filioque") as to the only ecumenical symbol of faith endorsed by the ecumenical councils. To buttress the unique status of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, Eastern theology distinguished between that creed and the doctrinal definitions (formulae) made by the ecumenical councils. In short, Melanchthon's concept of the ecumenical creeds was a sheer product of Western mediaeval theology which eo ipso hindered any dialogue with the Eastern church in the 16th century.[79]

Melanchthon did notaccord to the documents of the 16th-century Reformation the same status which he assigned to the ecumenical creeds but rather construed the confessions of faith made by the proponents of the Reformation as a remedial work which in his opinion was a preliminary attempt at renewing the visible church by bringing it into compliance with the pure Christian doctrine embodied in the Scripture alone and genuinely mirrored in the ecumenical creeds.

Among the doctrinal texts produced bythe 16th-century Wittenberg Reformation Melanchthon[80] especially appreciated his own Augsburg Confession and its derivatives namely the Apology of the Augsburg Confession and the Saxon Confession. Although the Augsburg Confession, which was a public declaration of faith made by German princes and city councils, was authored by Melanchthon and consented to by Luther, Melanchthon did not inflate the status of that confession against the authority of the Scripture or against the position of the ecumenical creeds. Rather, Melanchthon asserted that the stark deviation of the Catholic

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〔76〕 Melanchthon, "Serenissimo Principi D. Henrico Octavo," 333-340.

〔77〕 E. g. Paul Crell, "Pio lectori S. D.," in *Orationes aliquot recitatae in Academia Witebergensi eo tempore quo praelectiones publicas reverendi et clarissimi viri Philippi Melanthonis obitu huius interruptas aliqui ex professoribus de consilio Academiae continuare ceperunt* (Wittenberg: Creutzer, 1560), G1v-G2r. Cf. Melanchthon, "De norma iudicii in Ecclesia," 1081-1083 [No. 6964 (March 1560)].

〔78〕 Melanchthon, "Vorrede," in *Opera*, vol. 22, 51-62 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)].

〔79〕 *Acta et scripta theologorum Wirtembergensium et Patriarchae Constantinopolitani D. Hieremiae quae utrique ab anno MDLXXVI usque ad annum MDLXXXI de Augustana Confessione inter se miserunt* (Wittenberg: Crato, 1584), passim.

〔80〕 Melanchthon, "Praefatio," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae quae est summa*, A2r-A4r. Idem, "Admonitio ad lectores," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae quae est summa*, A5r-A6v. Idem, "Vorrede," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae das ist ganze Summa*, A2r-A3r. Idem, "Serenissimo Principi D. Henrico Octavo," 333-340. Idem, "Der ehrbaren und tugendsamen Frau Anna," 45-48. Idem, "An den Christlichen Leser: Vorrede," 47-52. Idem, "Vorrede," in *Opera*, vol. 22, 51-62 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)]. Idem, "Erinnerung des Lesers," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae das ist ganze Summa*, A4r-A5v.

mediaeval church from the biblical standards as understood by the Reformers necessitated the work of renewal to which Confessio Augustana contributed significantly as the instrument for rediscovering, formulating, disseminating and enacting the biblical teaching.

Melanchthon viewedhis other writings purely in terms of their educational potential to transform the life and mind-set of next generations in compliance with the biblical doctrine and in accordance with the Reformation concept of the vocation which affirmed and promoted Christians' involvement in all social, educational, economical and political affairs. Thus, the Reformation assigned a supermundane value to the mundane activity by which Christians were said to serve the Creator of the universe who was believed to endow every single human being with his or her station in life.

For Melanchthon,[81] a theological practice involved a continual and collective dialogue because in his view doctrinal issues should be brought up for constant discussion among Christian literati within the parameters defined by the authority of the Scripture in order to avoid an unnecessary discord and in order to reach a consensus. It should be noted that, according to Melanchthon, not only professional theologians but also Christian rulers and illustrious representatives of the entire society were authorised to participate in such a theological discourse because in his opinion the Christian community as such was responsible for the purity of the religious life.

Melanchthon appealed to the ecumenical councils which delineated the patristic orthodoxy, presuming that the collective and dialogical manner of solving theological controversies and of formulating doctrinal statements could provide a broad basis for Reformation theology. Affirming the authority of Scripture and the credibility of the ecumenical creeds, Melanchthon was prone to construe other theological propositions as provisional so that they might continue to be revisited and examined in the light of the Bible. As for his own doctrinal statements, Melanchthon did not consider them infallible but rather urged other theologians to evaluate his writings freely and openly from the perspective of biblical authority.[82] The only credit, which Melanchthon was willing to take, was that for expounding the Scripture, particularly, the biblical message concerning the salvation of sinners (the Gospel), in a systematic way. This Melanchthon saw as his own contribution to the Reformation initiated by Luther.[83]

Since in Melanchthon's opinion the Scripture lentcredence to the ecumenical creeds and was the sole criterion for the verification of theological propositions, he was attentive to the method of the biblical interpretation. For Melanchthon,[84] any certainty in the sphere of the doctrine could be derived only from the Scripture interpreted according to a simple, unequivocal and unchangeable meaning inherent in the linguistic and historical setting of the biblical text. Consequently, to treat the Bible as perspicuous in doctrinal terms, it was necessary to rely on its most natural sense which would have to be rooted in the literary and historical context. Therefore, Melanchthon was opposed to far-fetched interpretations of the Bible especially to the allegorical method.[85] In his opinion, the

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〔81〕 Melanchthon, "Praefatio," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae quae est summa*, A2r-A4r. Idem, "Serenissimo Principi D. Henrico Octavo," 333-340. Idem, "Piis et studiosis scholasticis," 341-348. Idem, "Pio lectori," 601-604.

〔82〕 Ibidem. Idem, "Der ehrbaren und tugendsamen Frau Anna," 45-48.

〔83〕 Melanchthon, "Piis et studiosis scholasticis," 341-348.

〔84〕 Melanchthon, "Piis lectoribus S. D.," A4v-A5r. Idem, "De norma iudicii in Ecclesia," 1083 [No. 6964 (March 1560)].

〔85〕 Melanchthon, "Iuxta pio atque erudito viro D. Tilomano Plettenero," 81-84.

allegorical interpretation was inadmissible because it consisted not in discovering a reliable meaning enveloped in the text but rather in fabricating a meaning at a reader's discretion. Such an approach Melanchthon regarded as subjective and as potentially deceptive.

Animadverting upon the allegory as an illicit method of the biblical interpretation, Melanchthon[86] cited Epiphanius of Salamis[87] who in his view disapproved of an excessive use of the allegory attributed to Origen. Actually, in the passage quoted by Melanchthon Epiphanius did not challenge Origen personally but rather admitted that the allegorical method, which was widely accepted and cherished by the Greek church fathers, should be used within the parameters defined by the doctrinal authorities of the imperial church. In the next sentence Epiphanius stated that regardless of an adopted method of the biblical interpretation the Scripture alone could not be acknowledged as sufficient in doctrinal terms because in his opinion the Bible must be interpreted in light of the ecclesiastical tradition and must be supplemented by that tradition.

In this respect, Melanchthon's reference to Epiphanius was taken out of context and was harnessed to Melanchthon's Reformation agenda. Clearly, Melanchthon was intent on emphasising that even the ancient church fathers were not pleased with an excessive use of the allegorical method and therefore he resorted to Epiphanius' remark. Let us examine the passage as cited[88] in Greek and as paraphrased[89] by Melanchthon in Latin. This passage was subsequently quoted by Bartholomäus Keckermann,[90] the 16th-century Protestant luminary from Danzig, who drew on Melanchthon's preface and who provided another Latin translation of that piece:

| Original (PG) | Quotation by Melanchthon | Quotation by Keckermann | Latin paraphrasis by Melanchthon | Keckermann's Latin rendition | English translation of the Greek original (PG) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ἀ λλὰ πάντα τὰ θεῖ α ῥ ήματα οὐ κ ἀ λληγορίας δεῖ ται, | τὰ θεῖ α ῥ ήματα οὐ πάντα ἀ λληγορίας δεῖ ται, | τὰ ῥ ήματα θεοῦ οὐ πάντα ἀ λληγορίας δεῖ ται, | Non trans for manda sunt omnia dicta in all egorias | Verba Dei non egent allegoriam | However, all divine words do not signify an allegory |
| ἀ λλὰ ὡ ς ἔ χει. | ἀ λλ᾽ ὡ ς ἔ χει. | ἀ λλ᾽ ὡ ς ἔ χει. | sed ritenenda est nativa verborum significatio in lege, promissione gratia et articulis fidei | sed | but [they should be taken] as they stand. |
| Θεωρίας δὲ δεῖ ται καὶ αἱ σθήσεως, | Θεωρίας δὲ δεῖ ται καὶ αἱ σθήσεως, | Θεωρίας δὲ δεῖ ται καὶ αἱ σθήσεως, | [...] opus esse sensu et speculatione | potius iudicio et speculatione | Thus, [all divine words] signify a theory and an insight |
| εἰ ς τὸ εἰ δέναι ἑ κάστης ὑ ποθέσεως τὴ ν δύναμιν. | εἰ ς τὸ εἰ δέναι ἑ κάστης ὑ ποθέσεως τὴ ν δύναμιν. | εἰ ς τὸ εἰ δέναι ἑ κάστης ὑ ποθέσεως τὴ ν δύναμιν. | | ad cuiusque dicti scopum seu argumen tumper spiciendum. | so that a power of every single proposition couldbe known. |

Melanchthon's Latin paraphrasis of Epiphanius' comment coincided with Melanchthon's

〔86〕 Melanchthon, "Piis lectoribus S. D.," A4v.

〔87〕 Epiphanius, "Panarium sive Arcula adversus octoginta haereses," in PG, vol. 41, 1047-1048 [II, I, Adversus Apostolicos (Haeresis XLI sive LXI), VI].

〔88〕 Melanchthon, "Piis lectoribus S. D.," A4v.

〔89〕 Melanchthon, "De norma iudicii in Ecclesia," 1083 [No. 6964 (March 1560)].

〔90〕 Bartholomäus Keckermann, *Rhetoricae ecclesiasticae sive Artis formandi et habendi conciones sacras libri duo* (Hanau: Antonius, 1606), 68-69 [I, VII, IV, 2].

assertion that the ancient and mediaeval theologians ventured to apply the allegorical method of the biblical interpretation to the doctrinal issues in order to vindicate theses which otherwise could never be argued from the Scripture. In fact, Melanchthon[91] charged Catholic theologians with the statement that the Scripture was vague about the Law and the Gospel, and he countered it by declaring that if the Scripture was interpreted properly, it was indeed explicit about the distinction between the Law and the Gospel which in his opinion underpinned all articles of faith.

Melanchthon's opposition to the allegorical method of interpretation primarily arose from his commitment to entrench the perspicuity and sufficiency of the Scripture in the realm of the Christian doctrine. In the next section we will discuss the hermeneutic relevance of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel which, according to Melanchthon, was not simply one of the articles of faith but rather the category ensuring a proper perception and application of all articles of faith.

Pondering Epiphanius' remark, Melanchthon[92] observed that through experience mediated by senses human beings were able to learn what words signified. Thus, the very experience disclosed to human beings what was meant by words such as life, death, fear, sorrow or delight. For Melanchthon, although the experience empowered people to capture what the words denoted, the text was invested with a definite meaning not by its original or contemporary readers but rather by its historical and literary setting. Therefore, Melanchthon argued that any experience on a reader's side could only illustrate the biblical text without altering or influencing its genuine meaning which, as inherent in the text, was not to be created but rather to be discovered by the audience.

For Melanchthon,[93] the authentic signification of the text was not crafted by the process of analysing it or drawing inferences from it. In his view, human senses were occupied with discovering the meaning of words, while human reason was tasked with drawing inferences from them and with enunciating and organising concepts on that basis. Therefore, Melanchthon contended that the process of analysing and systematising theological data did not affect their veracity but rather put various elements of the biblical doctrine in order just as bricks must be put together properly and according to a blueprint to construct a durable building.[94]

Nowhere in his works Melanchthondid espouse the idea that the Scripture should be interpreted according to non-biblical texts (such as church confessions, for example) because this would imply that the outcome of the biblical interpretation was posited prior to the linguistic and historical study of the text. Rather, Melanchthon maintained that the linguistic and historical analysis of the Scripture would eventuate and culminate in the teaching embodied in the ecumenical creeds. Actually, he could not imagine that results of the proper exegesis of the biblical text might be at variance with the "ecclesiastical consensus" which he identified with the ecumenical creeds.

Melanchthon's handling of the ecumenical creeds was ahistorical not only because he treated all three creeds as ecumenical but also because he detached them from the patristic legacy. Since Melanchthon found in writings of the church fathers many propositions, which were in his opinion orthodox, and some, which were heterodox, he had to separate the ecumenical creeds, which he called

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[91] Melanchthon, "Piis lectoribus S. D.," A4v-A5r. Idem, "De norma iudicii in Ecclesia," 1083 [No. 6964 (March 1560)].

[92] Supra.

[93] Supra.

[94] Melanchthon, "Vorrede," in Opera, vol. 22, 51-62 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)].

the "pure testimonies of the early church", from the entire patristic legacy which in his view should be examined critically and utilised only as far as it conformed to the biblical teaching as understood by the Reformers. Historically speaking, neither the Greek church fathers nor the Eastern church upheld such a position because they perceived the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed as an eminent part of the indivisible patristic legacy embracing writings of the Greek church fathers and the Byzantine liturgy.

## An Existential Orientation of Melanchthon's Theological Enquiry

Melanchthon defined the function of theology as conveying the divine voice perpetuated in the Scripture by communicating the biblical message in an orderly and efficient way. To carry out that task, Melanchthon employed the category of loci qualified as communes, praecipui or topici which played a prominent role in the ancient,[95] mediaeval[96] and Renaissance[97] dialectics that combined the contemporary disciplines of logic and rhetoric.[98] In his non-theological writings Melanchthon developed the theory of loci as focal points (capita, elementa) which could be used as a means of organising the material in the humanities.[99] In fact, Melanchthon advanced the rhetorical concept of

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[95] Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata Graece*, ed. Julius Petzholdt (Leipzig: Boehme, 1839), 27-34 [VII]. Cicero, "De inventione rhetorica," in *Opera ex editionibus Oliveti et Ernesti*, vol. 1 (London: Rodwell, 1820), 59-122 [II]. Idem, "De oratore," in *Opera*, vol. 1, 191-289 [II]. Idem, "Orator," in *Opera ex editionibus Oliveti et Ernesti*, vol. 2 (London: Rodwell, 1820), 12-14 [XIV-XV]. Idem, "Topica," in *Opera*, vol. 2, 71-97. Idem, "De finibus bonorum et malorum," in *Opera ex editionibus Oliveti et Ernesti*, vol. 3 (London: Rodwell, 1820), 31-62 [IV]. Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata Graece*, ed. Arnold H. L. Heeren and Georg Veesenmeyer (Nuremberg: Lechner, 1812), 28-31 [VI]. Priscianus, "De praeexercita mentis rhethoricae ex Hermogene liber," in *Libri omnes* (Basel: Bryling, 1545), 871-873 [De loco communi]. Quintilianus, *De oratoria institutione libri XII*, ed. Claude Capperonnier (Paris: Coustelier, 1725), 93-97 [II, IV]. Ibidem, 285-307 [V, X]. Ibidem, 660-662 [X, V]. Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata*, ed. Christoph Eberhard Finckh et al. (Stuttgart: Loeflund, 1834), 95-100 [VII].

[96] Boethius, "In Topica Ciceronis," in *Dialectica*, ed. Martianus Rota (Venice: Gryphius, 1549), 223-260. Idem, "De differentiis topicis," in Dialectica, 261-272.

[97] Rudolf Agricola, *De formando studio: Epistola ad Jacobum Barbirianum* (Paris: Calvarin, 1550). Idem, *De inventione dialectica, ed. Johann Matthias Phrissemius* (Paris: Porte, 1554), 1r-143r [I/I-II/XIX]. Erasmus Rotterdamus, *Ratio seu compendium verae theologiae* (Basel: Froben, 1519), 177-179. Idem, "De duplici copia verborum ac rerum commentarii duo," in *Omnia opera*, vol. 1 (Basel: Froben, 1540), 76-77 [II, Loci communes]. Ibidem, 86-91 [II, Ratio colligendi exempla].

[98] Quirinus Breen, "The Terms ⟨Loci communes⟩ and ⟨Loci⟩ in Melanchthon," *Church History* 16, no. 4 (1947): 197-209. Peter Mack, *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 320-333 [XVI]. Robert Kolb, "The Ordering of the Loci Communes Theologici: The Structuring of the Melanchthonian Dogmatic Tradition," *Concordia Journal* 23, no. 4 (1997): 317-337. Idem, "Melanchthonian Method as a Guide to Reading Confessions of Faith: The Index of the Book of Concord and Late Reformation Learning," *Church History* 72, no. 3 (2003): 509-514 [III]. Martin Leiner, "Die Anfänge der protestantischen Hermeneutik bei Philipp Melanchthon: Ein Kapitel zum Verhältnis von Rhetorik und Hermeneutik," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 94, no. 4 (1997): 468-487. Siegfried Wiedenhofer, *Formalstrukturen humanistischer und reformatorischer Theologie bei Philipp Melanchthon*, vol. 1-2 (Bern: Lang, 1976), passim.

[99] Philipp Melanchthon, *De rhetorica libri tres* (Cologne: Cervicornus, 1525), [s. p.] [I, De locis communibus]. Reprinted as: Idem, "De locis communibus ratio," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 20, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider and Heinrich Ernst Bindseil (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1854), 695-698. Idem, *De dialectica libri quatuor* (Strasbourg: Mylius, 1545), 168-199 [IV, De locis]. Idem, *Erotemata dialectices* (Wittenberg: Schleich, 1584), 224-351 [IV]. Reprinted in: Idem, *Opera*, vol. 13, 641-752 [IV]. Idem, *Elementorum rethorices libri duo* (Wittenberg: Ruehel, 1592), 65-70 [I, De locis communibus]. Reprinted in: Idem, *Opera*, vol. 13, 451-458 [I, De locis communibus]. Idem, "Compendiaria dialectices ratio," in *Opera*, vol. 20, 748-764 [IV, De locis]. Idem, *Institutiones rhetoricae* (Strasbourg: Hervag, 1523), 11r-12r [De locis communibus]. Idem, "In Ciceronis Topica scholia," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 16, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider and Heinrich Ernst Bindseil (Halle an der Saale: Schwetschke, 1850), 807-832.

loci which were traditionally defined as reservoirs of arguments, and he viewed loci as the universal method of arranging the material in the humanities.

In Melanchthon's system, loci theologici (theological topics) served as focal points for theological discussion and instruction, and they were construed by Melanchthon as implied by the Scripture itself. Thus, by adhering to theological topics designated by the Bible, a student of the Scripture could be certain that he or she would be focused on what the Bible itself was focused.

According to Melanchthon, every theological topic should be studied from the perspective of Christ's work of salvation.[100] Consequently, the most incomprehensible features peculiar to the Christian concept of the Godhead such as the doctrine of the Trinity[101] were to be adored by Christians instead of being inspected in philosophical terms. For Melanchthon, the substantial knowledge indispensable to the Christian identity presupposed that the individual human being considered himself or herself a sinner (the Law) and accepted the free gift of salvation earned by Christ for sinners (the Gospel). Thus, all elements of the doctrine were to be explored from the viewpoint of Christ's work of salvation as far as they were revealed and embodied in the Scripture.

In his prolegomena Melanchthon criticised the main theological compendia brought forth by the church fathers (Origen,[102] Rufinus of Aquileia,[103] Fulgentius[104] or John of Damascus[105]) and by the mediaeval theologians (Peter Lombard[106] and Thomas Aquinas[107]). Melanchthon did not denounce them for departing completely from the biblical truth, because he realised that to a considerable degree those works contained what he recognised as the biblical teaching, but rather accused them of losing sight of the concept of salvation as central to Christian theology. According to Melanchthon, the vast majority of the ancient and mediaeval theologians became absorbed in philosophy, either by asking questions which could not be answered on the ground of the Bible or by adducing scriptural passages as proof in philosophical discussions.

Examining the focal points, which in his opinion were supplied by the Scripture, Melanchthon paid attention to the Epistle to the Romans and to the Book of Genesis. Actually, Melanchthon himself admitted[108] that the first version of Loci (1521) originated from his early notes on the

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[100] Melanchthon, "Loci communes seu hypotyposes theologicae," 83-85.

[101] Melanchthon's attitude towards the patristic concept of the Trinity was not ambivalent but clearly affirmative because he objected not to the doctrinal content thereof but rather to the philosophical, complex disquisition on the Godhead as embarked on by the Western mediaeval theologians. Peter Fraenkel, *Testimonia Patrum: The Function of the Patristic Argument in the Theology of Philip Melanchthon* (Geneva: Droz, 1961), passim. H. Ashley Hall, *Philip Melanchthon and the Cappadocians: A Reception of Greek Patristic Sources in the Sixteenth Century* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), passim. Eginhard P. Meijering, *Melanchthon and Patristic Thought: The Doctrines of Christ and Grace, the Trinity and the Creation* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), passim.

[102] Origenes, "Περὶ Ἀρχῶν,".

[103] Rufinus, "Commentarius in Symbolum Apostolorum,". In Melanchthon's days that work was attributed to Cyprian of Carthage.

[104] Fulgentius, "De fide seu de regula verae fidei ad Petrum liber unus,". In Melanchthon's days that work was assigned to Augustine. Augustinus Hipponensis, "De fide ad Petrum sive de regula verae fidei,".

[105] Joannes Damascenus, "Expositio fidei orthodoxae,".

[106] Petrus Lombardus, "Sententiarum libri quatuor,".

[107] In the early 16th century an impact of Thomas' Summa on the Western theology was feeble as compared to that of Lombard's Sentences which still held sway in Melanchthon's time.

[108] Melanchthon, "Iuxta pio atque erudito viro D. Tilomano Plettenero," 81-84.

Epistle to the Romans[109] in which Loci of 1521 were undoubtedly outlined and in which the foundations for Protestant theology as an academic discipline were laid.

It is legitimate to say that initially Loci were devised by Melanchthon as an explication of theological topics which in his opinion were accentuated in the Epistle to the Romans. This epistle Melanchthon viewed as the ideal summary of the Christian doctrine[110] though neither the epistle itself nor the ancient church accorded such a status to the Book of Romans. In fact, an undisguised elevation of Corpus Paulinum to the status of the hermeneutic hub of the Christian Scriptures was distinctive of the Reformation divines but unknown to the ancient church except to Augustine and to some of his proponents. The Eastern church construed the Pauline Epistles and other books belonging to the Christian Scriptures as complementary voices, bringing the entire collection of the sacred writings unique to Christianity into balance, and if any prominence was given by the Greek church fathers, it was given to the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John.

Melanchthon stated that a series of narratives found in the Book of Genesis (1-3) unveiled the essentials of the Christian doctrine by treating of the creation, human fall into sin and the promise of salvation (Genesis 3:15).[111] For him, all articles of faith could be perceived and applied properly only if the distinction between the Law and the Gospel was observed. Consequently, the Law was defined as God's will concerning human life by virtue of which every human being was assessed by God and either blessed in reward for fulfilling the divine precepts perfectly or punished for any breach of the divine commandments. On account of Adam's and Eve's fall into sin Melanchthon argued that every human being was conceived and born as a sinner deserving eternal damnation.

The Gospel, on the other hand, was defined as God's message of the remission of sins for Christ's sake which according to Melanchthon was proclaimed for the first time immediately after Adam's and Eve's fall and recorded in Genesis 3:15. On that occasion, it should be noted that the Jewish exegetical tradition did not expound Genesis 3:15 as prophetic of the messianic seed, while the Christian Scriptures never interpreted that passage with reference to Christ. Nonetheless, the christological reading of Genesis 3:15 was distinctive of the Wittenberg Reformation, yet doubted by Calvin.[112]

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[109] Philipp Melanchthon, "Lucubratiuncula," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 11-50. Idem, "Theologica institutio in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 49-60. Those early notes should not be confused with Melanchthon's mature commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans. Idem, "Commentarii in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 15, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (Halle an der Saale: Schwetschke, 1848), 495-796. Idem, "Enarratio Epistolae Pauli ad Romanos," in *Opera*, vol. 15, 797-1052.

[110] Melanchthon, "Loci communes seu hypotyposes theologicae," 83-85. Idem, "Loci communes," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 253-255 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Serenissimo Principi D. Henrico Octavo," 333-340. Idem, "Piis et studiosis scholasticis," 341-348. Idem, "Praefatio," in Opera, vol. 21, 603-607 [Tertia Aetas]. Idem, "Vorrede," in Opera, vol. 22, 51-62 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)]. Idem, "Brevis discendae theologiae ratio (1530)," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 2, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (Halle an der Saale: Schwetschke, 1835), 456-461 [No. 953]. Arno Schirmer, *Das Paulusverständnis Melanchthons* 1518-1522 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1967), passim. Timothy J. Wengert, "The Rhetorical Paul: Philip Melanchthon's Interpretation of the Pauline Epistles," in *A Companion to Paul in the Reformation*, ed. R. Ward Holder (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 129-164.

[111] Melanchthon, "Loci communes," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 253-255 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Loci communes theologici," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 347-349 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Vorrede," in *Opera*, vol. 22, 51-62 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)]. Idem, "Praefatio," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 603-607 [Tertia Aetas].

[112] Jean Calvin, "Commentarius in Genesin," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus Reformatorum*), vol. 51 (23), ed. Wilhelm Baum, Edouard Cunitz and Eduard Reuss (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1882), 69-72 [Genesis 3:15].

Melanchthon taught that the clarity of the presentation both of the Law and of the Gospel was progressing throughout the Scripture. Thus, the Law, which was engrafted in human heart at the moment of the creation, was put into writing as attested in the Book of Exodus (the Sinaitic legislation), while the initial promise of the messianic seed in Genesis 3: 15, as interpreted by Melanchthon, was fulfilled in Jesus to whom the Christian Scripture were said to bear testimony.

For Melanchthon, every proposition (Lehre) or narrative (Geschichte) found in the Scripture was indicative either of God's will embracing human life and its consequences (the Law) or of God's favour to sinners based on Christ's atonement (the Gospel).[113] Disregarding a common patristic presupposition, that the Hebrew Bible was equal to the Old Covenant (i. e. the Law), while the Christian Scriptures were identical with the New Covenant (i. e. the Gospel),[114] Melanchthon announced that both the communication of God's demands (the Law) and the communication of God's mercy (the Gospel) were distributed among all books of the Scripture. Moreover, he tried to interpret narratives in the Tanakh, even those purely historical, either as an account of God's disapproval of Israel's trespasses (the Law) or as an account of God's approval of his Chosen People based on the divine covenant of grace (the Gospel).

As a renowned humanist Melanchthon insisted that the relationship between the arts and theology, which he counted among the arts as well, should be defined clearly in order to be mutually beneficial.[115] For Melanchthon, every academic discipline must invent its method of arranging its material properly in view of the cause-effect relationship because otherwise no learning or teaching would be possible within the compass of that discipline. In his opinion, God created human beings to act and to proceed in an orderly and efficient way.[116] Granted that theology was defined as a study of the sacred texts bearing testimony to the religious phenomena, Melanchthon claimed that such a study must involve the use of human reason because every text would await interpretation.

Melanchthon argued that the method of loci, which was widely used in the humanities and which was advanced by him, could easily be applied to Christian theology. In fact, he supposed that the ecumenical creeds could be viewed as a product of an implicit use of that method because in those documents the rudiments of the Christians faith were gleaned from the Scripture and summarised according to the sequence of God's operation in the universe (creation -redemption -sanctification).[117]

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[113] Melanchthon, "Vorrede," in *Opera*, vol. 22, 51-62 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)].

[114] As a matter of fact, the labels "Old Testament" and "New Testament" were not implied by those two collections of the sacred texts but rather invented by the early Christian church. Those pernicious appellations not only contravened the views on the Hebrew Bible expressed in Corpus Paulinum and in the Epistle to the Hebrews but also must be considered derogatory from the Jewish perspective.

[115] Melanchthon, "Brevis discendae theologiae ratio (1530)," 460-461 [No. 953]. Idem, "Vorrede," in *Opera*, vol. 22, 51-62 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)]. Idem, "Loci communes seu hypotyposes theologicae," 83-85. Idem, "Loci communes," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 253-255 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Vorrede," in *Opera*, vol. 22, 57-58 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)]. Idem, "Serenissimo Principi D. Henrico Octavo," 333-340. Idem, "Loci communes theologici," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 347-349 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Piis et studiosis scholasticis," 341-348.

[116] Melanchthon, "Praefatio," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 603-607 [Tertia Aetas].

[117] Melanchthon, "Loci communes seu hypotyposes theologicae," 83-85. Idem, "Loci communes," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 253-255 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Loci communes theologici," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 347-349 [Secunda Aetas].

For Melanchthon,[118] the arts and theology could enrich one another because theology might benefit from the expertise of the arts in the method of organising the material and in the field of the interpretation of sacred texts. Moreover, the arts could facilitate the pursuit of the civil uprightness and help cultivate the civil morality. Thus, by fostering loci philosophici such as justice, temperance or beneficence, philosophy could to a certain degree explore things appertaining to the divine Law. On the other hand, theology was able to adjudicate spiritual matters which could be reached neither empirically nor logically.

Melanchthon was aware that the arts, especially philosophy, might influence theology in terms of its focus and content. Therefore, he acknowledged the message about the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake as the cornerstone of theology which in his opinion should revolve around the assertion that by his life Christ fulfilled the Law in lieu of humankind (the active obedience), whereas by his death Christ experienced the penalty for humankind's transgressions (the passive obedience). As a consequence of that vicarious substitution, sinners were said to be declared not guilty in God's sight.

For Melanchthon,[119] the arts and theology differed as far as their sources were concerned. Accordingly, all the arts except for theology verified their propositions either logically or empirically. These means of verification Melanchthon called the demonstration. Thus, the empirical verification consisted in the experience, whereas the logical verification was based on the logical principles which Philip considered innate. In theology, as Melanchthon claimed, the verification consisted in establishing whether a given statement could be substantiated by the Scripture interpreted according to its most natural (whence historical and literary) sense or not. Since the Scripture was designated by Melanchthon as the sole testimony to the saving self-revelation of God, a given statement was true if it could be argued from the Bible.

In Melanchthon's opinion, human heart could be convinced, that God's message was true, only by the Holy Spirit operating by means of that message, while the acceptance of the divine communication touching human sin and divine grace was said to cause a believer to recognise the Scripture as God's revelation (testimonium internum Spiritus sancti). Melanchthon contended that the Gospel disclosed God's favour to the world which human beings could know neither by experience nor by reason but solely by virtue of the divine revelation perpetuated in the Scripture.[120] Therefore, only the Gospel was intrinsically empowered to make those, who were exposed to its message, accept it, by bringing them to faith. Thus, certainty in the arts except for theology was natural as wrought either by rational arguments or by empirical evidence, while in theology certainty was supernatural as created by the Spirit operating by God's Word.

Melanchthon remarked that genuine faith could not be regarded as a personal opinion resting on empirical or logical assumptions because faith as a sensible or rational inference would be vulnerable

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[118] Melanchthon, "Serenissimo Principi D. Henrico Octavo," 333-340. Idem, "Vorrede," in *Opera*, vol. 22, 57-58 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)]. Idem, "Loci communes theologici," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 347-349 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Praefatio," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae quae est summa*, A2r-A4r.

[119] Melanchthon, "Praefatio," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 603-607 [Tertia Aetas].

[120] Melanchthon, "Loci communes," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 253-255 [Secunda Aetas].

to doubt leading either to impiety or to despair.[121] Rather, genuine faith was, for Melanchthon, a firm and steady knowledge of the divine truth and a constant commitment to God's Word as to the revelation of God's benevolence towards humankind. Therefore, faith was said to rule out any doubt or uncertainty.

Consequently, Melanchthon[122] rejected epistemological scepticism as exemplified by ancient Pyrrhonism which advocated doubting every statement or refraining from making any assertions. Thus, such a sceptical approach must disregard a tradition which, for Melanchthon, was the knowledge accumulated by the past generations. In Melanchthon's view, the ancient legacy both in the humanities and in theology should be treasured, yet evaluated critically from the perspective of the sources peculiar to every academic discipline. In the case of theology Melanchthon accorded the status of the sole source of the credible saving knowledge of God to the Bible, admitting that the biblical teaching was subsequently mirrored in the ecumenical creeds.

Melanchthon argued that a sceptical stance could never be taken on the religion because it would nullify the divine assurance, that sinners were declared righteous in front of God for Christ's sake. In his opinion, the Holy Spirit created and sustained such an assurance in human heart through the means of grace and this assurance was the very essence of the Christian religion. In the case of the humanities exclusive of theology Melanchthon permitted of a doubt or of a suspension of assertions if there were no rational or empirical premisses to draw any inference or to make any assertions.

## Conclusion

Melanchthon's Loci became the standard compendium by means of which generations of Protestant divines were instructed and edified. Luther did not object to this fact but rather appreciated the potential of Loci, realising that without Melanchthon's theological and educational insights the Wittenberg Reformation could not be fortified, might not expand beyond German-speaking territories and probably would not continue beyond Luther's own life.[123]

To a considerable degree Melanchthon enunciated what is now commonly known as a doctrinal legacy of the 16th-century Wittenberg Reformation and unlike Luther, he was eulogised by Calvin as well. Between 1518 and 1519 Melanchthon[124] formulated the Reformation concepts of free will, of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, of the forensic nature of justification,[125] of the

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[121] Ibidem. Idem, "Loci communes theologici," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 347-349 [Secunda Aetas]. Idem, "Serenissimo Principi D. Henrico Octavo," 333-340. Idem, "Praefatio," in *Opera*, vol. 21, 603-607 [Tertia Aetas]. Idem, "Vorrede," in *Opera*, vol. 22, 51-62 [Tertia Aetas (Loci Theologici Germanice)].

[122] Ibidem.

[123] Martin Luther, "De servo arbitrio (1525)," in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 18 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1908), 601. Idem, "Vorrede zu Melanchthons verdeutschter Auslegung des Kolosserbriefs," in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 30/II (Weimar: Böhlau, 1909), 68-69. Idem, "An Melanchthon (Wartburg, 9. September 1521)," in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Briefwechsel)*, vol. 2 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1931), 382-386 [No. 428]. "Kaspar Heidenreichs Nachschriften (Winter von 1542 auf 1543)," in *Martin Luther, Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Tischreden)*, vol. 5 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1919), 204-205 [No. 5511].

[124] Melanchthon, "Lucubratiuncula," 11-50. Idem, "Theologica institutio in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos," 49-60.

[125] Lowell Clark Green, *How Melanchthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel: The Doctrine of Justification in the Reformation* (Fallbrook: Verdict Publications, 1980), passim.

Christian freedom and of the means of grace which subsequently solidified into his Loci of 1521. By 1518 Luther was not preoccupied with those topics and did not offer any systematic exposition of them. In the case of the concept of human free will in the spiritual sphere Luther's De servo arbitrio of 1525 could be viewed as an explication of Melanchthon's disquisition on that topic from his Loci of 1521. Actually, Luther himself did not deny that he drew upon Philip's masterpiece.[126]

Froma historical perspective, the reception of Melanchthon's writings, for instance in Scandinavia, overshadowed that of Luther's tracts. Given that Luther himself avowed his own inaptitude to create any systematic exposition of theological tenets peculiar to the Wittenberg Reformation,[127] Melanchthon's Loci were the instrument indispensable for educating the next generation of Protestant divines and for disseminating the ideas of the Reformation worldwide.

Although a theological programme presented in Melanchthon's Loci could not withstand the test of the Enlightenment humanities inclusive of the Enlightenment theology, his interpretation and systematisation of the doctrinal tenets, which he identified in the Scripture, served the purpose of the 16th-century Reformation. Ultimately, religious symbols and concepts like all symbols and concepts are devised in a specific community at a specific time and in a specific place. Thus, Melanchthon's monumental work proved to be essential to the origin and formation of Reformation theology of the 16th century as an academic discipline and it paved the way for the further evolution of Protestant theology which demonstrated its remarkable ability to adapt to new and indeed every-changing circumstances.

〔126〕 Luther, "De servo arbitrio (1525)," 601.

〔127〕 Martin Luther, "Vorrede zum 1. Band der Wittenberger Ausgabe der Deutschen Schriften (1539)," in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 50 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1914), 657-658. Idem, "Vorrede zum ersten Band der Gesamtausgabe der Lateinischen Schriften (Wittenberg 1545)," in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 54 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1928), 179.

**中文题目：**

# 如菲利普·墨兰顿在其对所有德语和拉丁语版本的 LOCI 前言中所阐明的那样，新兴新教神学关于神学研究的改革概念是如何形成的？

**岳诚轩**

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**摘要：**本文研究新教神学作为一个学科体系的基本概念，就如菲利普·墨兰顿在其给 Loci 所有的德语及拉丁语版本的前言中所阐明的那样，对于教育下一代新教神学和在世界范围内传播宗教改革来说，这是不可或缺的。

**关键词：**菲利普·墨兰顿；Loci communes (Loci theologici，Loci praecipui)；维滕贝格改革；系统神学；约翰·加尔文