

**THE REAL AND REVELATION: THE DEVELOPMENT AND FUNCTION OF
THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN IN PHILLIP MELANCHTHON**

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculties of Theology of St. Michael's College and Wycliffe College and the Department of Theology of the Toronto School of Theology. In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael's College.

**Toronto and Oxford 1997
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The Real and Revelation: The Development and Function of the Doctrine of Original Sin in Phillip Melanchthon

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This work seeks to examine the importance of the doctrine of Original Sin in understanding Melanchthon's anthropology and then how the doctrine can also serve as a reliable indicator in relation to certain key areas of Melanchthon's theology and theological method. The conclusions derived from the thesis argue that Melanchthon is best understood not out of a proximity to proto-rationalism (the so called Melanchthon blight), but rather his proximity to an emerging Lutheranism. The work seeks to trace Melanchthon's usage of the doctrine synchronically across the familial editions of the *Loci Communes* carefully arguing the epistemological ramification of the doctrine in light of Revelation. As such, the work also attempts to explain the theological and historical motives for changes--real and apparent--within Melanchthon's thought and compare this to the emerging Lutheran orthodoxy.

For our lost baby whose eyes now truly see the real

Author's Foreword

There are two stylistic decisions made which need to be explained before one endeavours to navigate the following text. First, I have chosen to follow the Corpus Reformatorum's spelling and syntax of Latin words, even when they are in variation of generally agreed spellings or syntax. A common example is the spelling of *causa* as *caussa*. Often the *Corpus* retains archaic redundancies long corrected by more modern editors and writers. Nonetheless, I have retained the Corpus' usage in order to present a more pristine and accurate study of Melanchthon's thought. Often the editorial cleaning up by a translator is really subtle editing. Thus, the oft times awkward texts and sometimes apparently misspelt Latin. I have tried to present the text *in situ*, reducing the amount of interpretation. Secondly, when the term *loci* (as opposed to Loc*i*—the abbreviation of the text Loc*i Communes*) is used it is meant to be understood as a technical term. The term refers to Melanchthon's usage of either experiential or existential similarities (commonplaces) shared within the human condition. Of course, this will be further explained in following chapters. Nonetheless, should the reader bear these cautions in mind, some confusion will be eliminated.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“Utilis est collatio cum Evangelio et Lege Dei ac illustrat genera doctrinae.”¹

Few individuals loom as large in Western Protestant history as does Phillip Melanchthon. Indeed, other contemporaries—Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli—have precipitated much theological thought; but, with the possible exception of Luther, have had less universal impact than Melanchthon. Like the man’s interests and expertise, his influence has expanded beyond the intellectual world of the sixteenth century. His historical fingerprints are as varied as were his interests and projects. His vision of education contributed to the foundations for the modern Western University, and his work even indirectly influenced such literary icons as William Shakespeare.² Equally varied was the reception of the scholar’s works. Received with enthusiasm by Luther, his works were eventually banished from Wittenberg; and, while enjoying widespread appreciation, culminating in his being offered a teaching post at Cambridge, they were banned or shunned in France—even Protestant sympathetic France—during his lifetime. All this is a part of the complex legacy of Melanchthon. This study endeavours to re-

¹Phillip Melanchthon, *Melanchthonis Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, Corpus Reformatorum 21 Volumes (CR) eds. C.G. Bretschneider and H.E. Binseil. (Brunswick: Schwetschke, 1854) Vol. 16: 277.

²Melanchthon’s comments on, and translations of Terence became the source for the drama primer in Elizabethan grammar schools. As such, Shakespeare—who borrowed much from Terence—must have followed Terence’s structure and play writing philosophy via Melanchthon. T.W. Baldwin, William Shakespeare’s Small Latine and Lesse Greek (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944) 27.

open the question of Melanchthon's theological legacy.

Although the work is primarily an exploration of the intra-textual argumentation and methodology of Melanchthon's doctrine of original sin across his three familial editions of the *Loci Communes*, it will also interject historical circumstances and controversies which would have influenced the theologian. As such, the work is both a work of systematic theology which closely scrutinizes text and structure, as well as a work of historical analysis. It is the author's strong conviction that the intellectual life of any person is never totally excised from the greater historical context. Hence, the explored work is divided synchronically across three periods of Melanchthon's life, corresponding to the publication of his three familial editions of the *Loci*.³ The specific attention paid to the *Loci*, over and against the prolific scholar's other work, is an attempt to find a centralized focus of his thought in a particular area. Since Melanchthon was an orator-rhetorician in the best sense, often the strong polemical style of other writings confuse readers as to his method in theology. Melanchthon could both praise and condemn a classical thinker in two different contexts as he adopted what will be called an 'idiosyncratic' approach to antiquity.⁴ To

³Melanchthon's Latin texts are broken easily into three editions published with minor changes over three broad periods, but his German texts are not so easily placed. Several editions of the German texts seem to be translated by another, then Melanchthon, and on close scrutiny bear little semblance to the Latin texts. Nonetheless, the three 'families' of text are: 1521-1530; 1530/33-1543; 1543-1560.

⁴Melanchthon, for example, publicly denounced Aristotle in 1521; yet, in 1527 was teaching his *Ethica*. For some, this smacks of syncretism or inconsistency, yet closer scrutiny of this case reveals that in 1521 Melanchthon despised Aristotle's

avoid a confused accounting of Melanchthon on the topic of original sin, then, a decision to restrict study to his *Locis* seems justified in order to investigate the function of the doctrine as well as its development and influence on this theological methodology, all within a common benchmark in the *Locis*. The structure of the work will be first to examine the charges against Melanchthon as a rationalist or Protestant scholastic, and then to examine the doctrine and function of original sin in his various *Locis* to see whether he does prioritize reason over revelation. Of course, this is an exercise in methodology.

What will emerge is a solution to the centuries old controversy of what has commonly been referred to as the “Melanchthon Blight.” The function and development of the doctrine of original sin within Melanchthon’s theological methodology will show that Melanchthon was neither a proto-rationalist nor a syncretist. Instead, he will be shown to be both consistent with the Lutheran concept of the Law-Gospel dialectic and its subsequent existential conversion focus, and to have the consistent methodological approach of Scripture and revelation over reason. In short, Melanchthon will be seen “. . . to be more Lutheran than Luther.”⁵

influence in theology, especially with regard to Aristotelian eternality of the world and *analogia entis*. In 1527, he was teaching only Book V of the *Ethica* which focused on civil justice apart from the Aristotelian epistemology. To Melanchthon’s nimble mind, Aristotle’s ethics could be used, despite the Aristotelian theological hegemony he despised.

⁵Erasmus’ comment to John Laskay, 5 March 1534. *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*. Ed. P.S. Allen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) no. 2911 p 363.

The driving conviction of Melanchthon's theological method is a conviction that God's purposes are both carried out in history and revealed in Christ. A certain natural knowledge of God is possible, but clear knowledge of God and God's action is only found in revelation. Thus, there is a limit function in our capacity to know God and God's 'reality'. The limit is sin, derived from the doctrine of original sin. The "*mysterium iniquitatis*" means that any true *analogia entis* between God and human comprehension of God is naturally contraband. Anthropocentrically speaking, as our natural (fallen) relationship to God is always sin-vitiated and under wrath, what human minds can grasp of God is only our sense of alienation and difference from the divine. In short, we know *esse Dei* but not the *essentia Dei*, and fear or ignore God as a result. This is the anthropocentric witness to the 'real'—the natural realm as deduced in our sin state. However, in response to this human derivation of the 'real' is God's revelation in Scripture and Christ. In Christ does the apparently senseless—sin and evil—emerge as being under the providential control of a single will in God. In Christ is God's history in the human reality finally explained so that God's activities are seen to be manifest in and through human sin, rendering sin and its origin subservient to God's kingdom. Only in revelation is sin's "*horribilis destructo*" comprehended and seen against God's singular will. Here in the revelation of Christ is God shown to be "*pro nobis*" in grace.

Melanchthon's strong Christological focus avoids both dualism and monism.

God is consistent in action throughout history with a universal will to save, thus avoiding the concept of election, which would become so unpalatable to Melanchthon. Melanchthon retains the “hidden” and “revealed” God of Luther, showing that the human mind’s failure to discern the difference is a result of human sinfulness derived from the origin of sin. He does not see two polarized wills in God—one to elect and the other to damn—but a single will stretching out despite human freedom, and in conjunction with human freedom. Sin is an “*aliena substantia*,” an impossible possibility, a “not yet” reality that subsists in this world for the purposes of the divine glory.

As a result of this singular will of God—namely that God acts without duplicity in the actions of creation and salvation—Natural Law becomes a predicate of God’s actions (hence will). However, although Natural Law itself is a predicate to God’s will, our application and understanding of that Law, once more because of sin’s vitiation in our reasoning, is flawed. Hence, Natural Law provides a partial or incomplete witness of God, needing revelation to restore full human comprehension of even this “self-evident” truth. The Law has a function, but it is a function in the Lutheran sense of conviction without solace, and judgement without grace. Nonetheless, for Melanchthon, this permits a common ethical basis as a place where God’s transcendence breaks into human society so that there can be a human society in which a *Heilsgeschichte* can occur. Law is a divine gift, manifesting in the *imago dei* which remains despite Adam’s curse so as to restrain evil and be a pedagogy for Christ. Law

is divine philanthropy but gleaned through a glass darkly because of sin's reality. The human mind thinks that what God punishes, God cannot love. Grace through revelation, on the other hand, declares this supreme love unknowable by the Law. Once more, sin and original sin provides a boundary condition to his methodology.

Robert Schultz has commented that “. . . the doctrine of original sin may, for example, be described as a boundary problem; but the boundary may be variously located . . .”⁶. It is this thesis' contention that, in Melanchthon's case, Schultz is correct. For Melanchthon, the doctrine of original sin--in its development and function--serves as a boundary condition within his theological method that demarcates between the “real” and “revelation.” Original sin serves as the starting point for the need for revelation, and as the ending point of reason's capabilities. As a starting point it permits the Lutheran Law-Gospel dialectic to function, and unifies God's providence and human freedom. As a boundary condition or limit, it delineates between the two separate yet linked polarities of reason and revelation, both somehow founded in the gracious will of God. This thesis will examine the function and development of the doctrine of original sin. In doing so, the charge of Melanchthon as a proto or crypto-rationalist will yield to a truer picture of Melanchthon, whereby he is seen to consistently limit reason in favour of revelation in his theological approach. The doctrine of original sin will be shown to provide the scaffolding for this limit function.

⁶Robert Schultz, “Original Sin: Accident or Substance,” Historical Context in Discord, Dialogue and Concord, ed. L. Spitz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) 38.

The doctrine, itself a revealed truth claim, separates the two realms of revelation and reason or the real in Melanchthon's theological method. However, before moving to examine the doctrine's function, a survey of the charges and sources for Melanchthon's supposed rationalism must be undertaken.

Chapter Two

“Credo ut Intelligam”: The Melanchthon Blight

In a collision of the world of ideas and the world of aesthetics, Lucas Cranach the Younger captured Melanchthon's own self-conception in his 1558 painting of Melanchthon. Echoing Melanchthon's own thoughts of self-identification with Basil the Great, Cranach portrays the elderly Melanchthon as Basil who brandishes Basil's own work on justification by faith.¹ The aged reformer clearly saw himself, like his understanding of the solitary Basil, as both faithful and embattled by many powerful foes. There is little doubt that Melanchthon clearly devoted his life to an explication and application of Lutheran theology in a new age. Equally apparent was the resistance encountered, especially after the occlusion of the Reformation's initial bright light following the Peasant's Revolt, evangelical dissensions and incursions of both Catholic and Muslim armies into the Northern European states.² In addition to these 'external' threats to the nascent Lutheran identity, Melanchthon also faced numerous

¹The painting and Melanchthon's statement of congruity between himself and Basil, "*Fuit enim et ipsius cetas turbulenta et plena atrocium dissidiarum. Et in ipsum incurrit magna phalanx Arianorum, instructa Valentis Imperatoris tyrannidi. Nunc similia accidunt. . .*" is explored in Sachiko Kusukawa, The Transformation of Natural Philosophy in the Case of Melanchthon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 193.

²Martin Brecht's master work Martin Luther (3 vols.), trans. J. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994) gives an excellent account of the effects of political realities on the Lutheran reformers and their confidence. In regard to the very early stresses on the Lutheran formation to 1532: On the Peasant's War and rise of Anabaptism, see Vol. I: 141-205; on various visitations in Saxony and Thuringia and decision to form catechisms and theological training, see Vol. I: 259-273; on the Turkish threat, see Vol. I: 352-367; on the Catholic threat and Augsburg Confession, see Vol. I: 367-389.

internal challenges from within, despite a continual overall solidarity with Luther.³ Opposition to Melanchthon came from various fronts as Luther receded--partly due to the fragile state of the political realities and Luther's fiery temperament⁴, and partly due to Luther's own existential preoccupations of health⁵--and Melanchthon ascended in importance, becoming *the* Lutheran systematic theologian. Criticisms erupted not only because of Melanchthon's evangelical ecumenism, Catholic accords and reactions to various interims, but also emerged from colleagues such as Agricola, Cordatus, Flacius, and Osiander over interpretations of Lutheran dogma. The end result was a

³Franz Hildebrandt boldly, and perhaps naively, asserts that Luther only openly criticized Melanchthon on one occasion--on Melanchthon's insistence on dedicating his works to potentates who were ". . . the naughtiest boys [i.e., Henry VIII of England]." Melanchthon: Alien or Ally (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946) xviii. However, Hildebrandt's understatement--for there was open or written discord between Luther and Melanchthon at times (cf. CR 3:341; Cordatus affair or Shenk affair of 1537) --is basically correct in that Luther and Melanchthon worked in order to communicate different backgrounds and understandings into a new a cohesive Lutheran orthodoxy. Areas of discord between Luther and Melanchthon included predestination, the Eucharist and good works.

⁴An excellent example of both Melanchthon's political astuteness and Luther's heavy handedness is seen in the 1547 Treatise "*Von der Notwehr Unterricht*". Justus Menius, following Luther and at his injunction, writes the first draft during the Schmalkadic Wars, clearly accusing Papal authority of Antichrist tendencies. Melanchthon, while still defending the right of the Lutheran princes and States to defend themselves in the wars, and recognizing the impending loss by the Lutheran princes, is more politically sensitive and reformulates the arguments so as to affront neither Pope nor Emperor. Luther D. Peterson, "Justus Menius, Phillip Melanchthon and the 1547 Treatise, *Von der Notwehr Unterricht*," Archiv Fur Reformationsgeschichte (ARG) 81 (1990) 138-157.

⁵Brecht maintains that from 1525 onwards Luther was gravely affected by circulatory and emotional distress, combining into a most severe *Anfechtung* of soul and body. Brecht. Vol. I 210.

despondent Melanchthon, whose works were banned in his very own university only fourteen years after his death in 1574.⁶ In his lifetime, Melanchthon was a magnet for controversy, and it seems that history too has judged him with an equal measure of controversy. In order to understand the nature of this controversy, one must first survey the charges levelled against Melanchthon.

Reformation scholars have had various understandings of who Melanchthon was in the theological sense. For some, such as Clyde Manschrenk and Hans Engelland, Melanchthon is either a crypto-Calvinist or a proto-Calvinist.⁷ Others, especially interested in Melanchthon's humanistic background and training, see Melanchthon as an Erasmian or Christian humanist.⁸ The new breed of Melanchthonian scholars continued to cull the humanist emphasis, but instead of creating Melanchthon in Erasmus' image, saw Melanchthon as a new synthesis of the Northern humanist with the Lutheran theological worldview. Among this group are

⁶J.R. Schneider, Phillip Melanchthon's Rhetorical Conception of Biblical Authority (Lewiston: Mellen, 1990) 2.

⁷R.W. Quere's assessment of Melanchthonian studies before the late 1960's revival of Melanchthon as the proto-Calvinist or rationalist is quite correct in this opinion. R.W. Quere, Melanchthon's *Christum Cognoscere* (Nieuwkoop: DeGraaf, 1977) 6.

⁸Both Wilhelm Neuser and Adolf Sperl favour this impression of Melanchthon, especially in light of Melanchthon's concepts of government and education. See Adolf Sperl, Der Wandel im theologischen Ansatz bei Melanchthon von 1525-35 (Gutersloh: Bertelsman, 1956) 91, 141, 171-79; and Timothy Wengert, Phillip Melanchthon's Annotations in Johannem in Relation to its Predecessors and Contemporaries (Geneva: Dros, 1987) 58; also Klaus Handler, Wort und Glaube bei Melanchthon (Gutersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1968) 44-49, 86-88. One could also add Lowell Green to this list. Lowell Green, "Influence of Erasmus upon Melanchthon," Church History 43 (1974) 182-200.

Wilhelm Maurer⁹ and R. Stupperich.¹⁰ Currently, the debate centres on Maurer's thesis that Melanchthon—at least in his methodology—follows a humanist programme but that this programme is limited by Melanchthon's Lutheran orthodoxy.¹¹ Hence, the picture emerges of Melanchthon as the idiosyncratic humanist-Lutheran.

Melanchthon has also been scrutinized in terms of a grander theological schema. Hugo Grotius desired that Melanchthon be acknowledged as the father of Christian unification or ecumenism.¹² John Henry Newman, referring to Protestantism in general, commented that “we are all Melanchthonian” in his *Apologia Sua Vita*.¹³ Of

⁹Wilhelm Maurer, *Der Junge Melanchthon zwischen Humanismus und Reformation*, 2 Vols. (Gottingen: Vandernhoeck, 1967, 1969).

¹⁰R. Stupperich, *Melanchthon*, trans. W.L. Jenkins (London: Lutterworth, 1966). J. Weiss assesses the evidence of Maurer and Stupperich's anti-Erasman humanist stance in “Melanchthon and the Heritage of Erasmus,” *Actes du Colloque International Erasme*, eds. J. Chumaret et al (Geneva: Dros, 1990) 293-306.

¹¹As will be shown in the next chapter, Melanchthon's humanistic reliance on Ciceronian scepticism inherited from Italians such as Valla through Rudolph Agricola both limits and delineates his theological approach and methodology, systemizing Lutheran theology. For explanations of Ciceronian scepticism see the following: C.B. Schmitt, *Cicero Scepticus: A Study of the Influence of the 'Academica' In the Renaissance* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1972); Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (New York: Harper, 1960); J. Krentzmann, eds., *Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982) 785-808; Peter Mack, *Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

¹²C.L. Manschreck, “Preface,” *Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci Communes 1555* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965) xvi. Also see John McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism: the Ecumenical Spirit and its Persistent Expression* (London: Epworth, 1964) for a primer on Melanchthon's attempts for evangelical unity.

¹³Cited in Dewey Wallace, “The Anglican Appeal to Lutheran Sources: Phillip Melanchthon's Reputation in Seventeenth Century England,” *Historical Magazine of Protestant Episcopal Church* 52 (1983) 355.

course, what Newman was tritely observing was the “Melanchthon Blight”—the description or exposition of the Protestant faith in mental, epistemic, or rational terms—a form of Protestant Scholasticism.¹⁴ This, according to theologians such as Barth, was evident even in Melanchthon’s anthropocentric first *Loci Communes* of 1521;¹⁵ let alone the later more philosophically synthesized editions of 1533 and 1543. Barth, it appears, took his cue from Ritschl and Troeltsch who saw in Melanchthon’s ethics a precursor for their own attempt of a programme to unify Kantian metaphysics with the biblical world.¹⁶ Hence, Brunner states that Melanchthon is the father of the Protestant Double Truth Theory of Modernism, while Schleiermacher weighs in at the opposite pole, citing Melanchthon as Schleiermacher understood himself—namely, as a “Moravian of a higher type”—an anti-speculative pietist.¹⁷ From ultra-rationalist to anti-rationalist, from ultra-Lutheran (or proto-Lutheran) to crypto-Calvinist or Zwinglian, from Erasmian humanist to idiosyncratic humanist, which Melanchthon emerges from the cacophony of options?

Some categories can be easily dismissed. For example, the treatment of

¹⁴Jaroslav Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950) 27.

¹⁵Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl*, trans. B. Cozans (New York: Harper, 1959) 54.

¹⁶Schneider 3, 211.

¹⁷Schneider has a substantial citing on the Melanchthon-Schleiermacher connections and similarities. Walter Kasper considers Melanchthon’s “*pro me*” Christology to be the forerunner for Schleiermacher’s, while Bruls calls Melanchthon a “. . .theologian who thinks existentially”. Unfortunately, Schneider does not cite the Schleiermacher quote. See Schneider 211-13.

Melanchthon as a proto-Calvinist or Zwinglian is clearly aberrant for several reasons. First, it is generally agreed that although Melanchthon was in dialogue with Zwingli and later Calvin, and that some forms of theological cladism occur, Melanchthon is essentially Lutheran in theological ideologies.¹⁸ Certainly, in the key area of justification by faith, Melanchthon strikes out on his own, away from the other magisterial reformers, and, in fact, is perhaps closest to Gropper and Girolamo Seripando's proposal of double justice found in a different theological tradition than either Zwingli, or later Bucer and Calvin, would have had access.¹⁹ In short, although Melanchthon's popularity meant that he would have been read and digested by other reformers,²⁰ certainly he varied enough from both the Swiss and Genevans so as to be

¹⁸The various differences between Lutherans and the Swiss and Genevan theologies have been well documented in various categories. However, a helpful piece in the key area of justification by faith is: Alister McGrath, "Humanist Elements in Early Reformed Doctrines of Justification," ARG 73 (1982) : 5-19. McGrath explains the common humanist origins of Zwingli and Calvin but also explains the differences with respect to the Lutheran's--(Melanchthon's)--forensic justification in this key doctrine.

¹⁹Carl Maxcey, in "Double Justice: Diego Layniz and the Council of Trent," Church History 48 (1978) : 269-78, raises the interesting point, echoed by Lowell Green, that Luther's (or Melanchthon's) breakthrough might in fact be a revamped theology of double justice inherited through Christian humanism. Lowell Green, How Melanchthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel, (Fallbrook: Verdict, 1980); "Faith, Righteousness, and Justification: New Light in their Development under Luther and Melanchthon," Sixteenth Century Journal 4 (February 1973) : 65-86; "Influence of Erasmus upon Melanchthon," Church History 43 (June 1974) : 183-200.

²⁰It is estimated that over his lifetime 2.3 million copies of Melanchthon's various works circulated Europe. Ralph Keen, A Melanchthon Reader (New York: Lang, 1988) 21.

cleared of being either prototypical or their *avant-garde*.²¹

The separation of Erasmian style humanism from Melanchthon is much more difficult. Truly, Erasmus was a respected and influential friend for the young Melanchthon, but it is also true that until after Erasmus' death²² there was a cold understanding and distance between the two men after Erasmus' *De Libero Arbitrio* against Luther.²³ However, aside from a decided common interest in forging an ethical renewal and a reconciliation of antiquity with sixteenth century Europe²⁴--shared by Thomas More and other humanists--it is unfair to say that Melanchthon was secretly an Erasmian.

Erasmus' linguistic influence on the Reformation was crucial--for some, such as Lowell Green, all crucial²⁵--but there are still great variances between Erasmus and

²¹We will return to the question of Melanchthon's independence after examining his unique usage of the dogma of original sin.

²²Melanchthon delivered his warm praise in *Oratio de Erasmo Rotterodamo* in August, 1537. CR 2: 271-301.

²³Maurer and Stupperich hold that Erasmus' *De Libero Arbitrio*, in fact, was a covert attack against Melanchthon's 1521 first edition of the *Loci* and not against Luther; cited in Weiss 293.

²⁴Leon Halkin gives the following definition of Humanism:
The arts of the Renaissance attracted disciples not copyists. . . . The mental universe of the humanists was not that of Aristotle and Cicero, Plato and Augustine, it was the contemporary world. . . . [The humanist] wanted to reconcile Christianity with antiquity without confusing them.
Leon Halkin, *Erasmus: A Critical Biography*, trans. J. Tonkin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 13.

²⁵Lowell Green argues that Melanchthon "discovered" justification by faith or imputed/forensic justification by combining Erasmus' grammar of the legal language

Wittenberg. First, Erasmus clearly had an affinity for Origen and Origen's allegorical interpretation, especially the tropological application of Scripture, which was not shared by the Wittenbergers.²⁶ Second, Erasmus had a strong Platonic tendency as seen in both his *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* and *Laus Stultitiae*²⁷ so that he held a strong dualism in our investigated area of sin and its origin. As a result, for Erasmus, the strong dichotomy of spirit and flesh meant that an intermediating agent--the soul of intellect--had to be neutral between the two polarities and hence, free to choose either as guided by reason. Original sin, then, is not a real sin but a calamity to be avoided and therefore a sin of imitation, not inheritance. Erasmus is certainly far from the Wittenberger's concepts of captive will, inherited and real guilt, and the anti-Pelagian stress of original sin.²⁸ Of course, others have clearly illustrated the sizeable differences between Erasmus and the Lutherans in the areas of the Sacraments and Ecclesiology

of justification with Luther's Christological focus. Green, *Influence* 190 and other works by Green cited in the bibliography.

²⁶E.P. Meijering points out that the Wittenbergers tended to favour the Latin fathers over the Greek fathers for theological and non-rhetorical reasons. Origen was a favourite of Erasmus, but distrusted by Melanchthon and Luther because of overemphasis on free will and a lack of *sensus literalis*. E. P. Meijering, *Melanchthon and Patristic Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1983) 83-84. Also see Melanchthon's 1521 comment on Origen: "*Ex Origine, si tollas, inconcinnas allegorias sententiarum sylvam, quantum erit reliquum?*" *Loci Communes* (LC)(1521), CR 21:83.

²⁷John Payne, *Erasmus: His Theology of the Sacraments* (USA: Bratcher, 1970) 35-39. Gordon Rupp points out that Melanchthon rejected the Florentine Platonists explicitly. Gordon Rupp, *Phillip Melanchthon, A History of Christian Doctrine*, ed. C. Jones (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978) 374.

²⁸Payne 40-42.

rendering my attempts moot²⁹. Clearly, then, although Erasmus may have ‘hatched an egg’, Luther and Melanchthon were ‘birds of a different theological feather’.

Just what influence was Erasmus on Melanchthon? Maurer and Stupperich are closest to the truth when they argue that Melanchthon was an “idiosyncratic humanist”. Certainly he took from his humanist forbearers respect for antiquity, linguistic acumen, and measures of forbearance and concord. Nonetheless, Melanchthon also created—in conjunction with Luther—a new synthesis of Lutheran epistemology,³⁰ and a systematized theology.³¹ Melanchthon’s lifelong zeal to create a synthesis of the new wine and the old wine without bursting the wine skin was problematic and often compounded by socio-political pressures outside of his control, as we shall later examine. In temperament he was milder than his ex-monk friend and more adept at subtlety than Luther, seeking the middle ground more often. However, despite this idiosyncrasy, Melanchthon did not create a theological system that was without cohesive method or *ad hoc* despite his personality and external pressures. Instead, he saw in the *oratio sacra* of the Bible the key for understanding and ordering the whole of cosmic history which, in turn, became his method in theology and

²⁹Additional works which explore the Erasmian difference include Schneider’s critique, based on Maurer’s earlier reputation, of Siegfried Wiedenhofer’s thesis that Melanchthon was essentially Erasmian; Schneider 34 (cf. Maurer 171-172).

³⁰Risking a gross oversimplification of Kusukawa’s thesis, Melanchthon was responsible for transforming natural philosophy (and philosophy in general) in European Protestant universities into a Lutheran synthesis. Kusukawa 1, 101, 177.

³¹Manschrenk. Christian Doctrine vii.

philosophy. In proposing a limited continuity between revelation and reason Melanchthon's problems begin, and the idiosyncratic humanist-reformer is often charged by lesser lights as a theological rationalist. By understanding Melanchthon's methodology, and then examining the boundary condition and function of his dogma of original sin within that framework, one can begin to solve the "Melanchthon blight". The key to that seemingly locked door is Melanchthon's belief of "*credo ut intelligam.*"

Chapter Three

Melanchthon's Theological Method: "*Spiritus Sanctus non est Scepticus*"

In order to understand Melanchthon's theology, one must first understand the methodological underpinnings of his theology. Melanchthon's debt to humanism was a fascination with and appreciation of method. Like many of his age, he was confounded by the extreme logic and impracticality of the state of philosophical and rational pursuit, which was caricatured by Erasmus and replaced by Valla's style of Italian humanism. For humanists, scholasticism seemed without use or merit in the business of everyday life and piety.¹ The scholastic supremacy of logic in the *Quadrivium* bore bitter fruit, mistaking Christ for Aristotle, and holding the church captive to metaphysics over revelation.² The thrust of the humanist complaint was that the practical foci of philosophy—natural and moral—were eclipsed and obscured by unnecessary sophist speculation, driven by its own demons of logical syllogisms and propositions. What was needed was a new way of thinking, a reattachment of *logos* with *pathos* and *ethos*—a reconnection of rhetoric and dialectic. Or, as Zeno put it, an invitation of rhetoric's open hand over dialectic's closed fist of certainty³—in short, a revival of Ciceronian epistemology.

¹Valla's agenda was ". . . to dispense with metaphysics, disputation, linguistic formalism and the whole institution of Aristotelian dialectics"; quoted in Mack 15.

²Erasmus' complaint, echoed by Luther's 1517 Scholastic Disputation, in the Laus Stultitiae Payne 9. For additional similitude and dissimilarity between the humanists and Magisterial reformers, see Alister McGrath, Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) 32-59.

³Mack 7.

Undoubtedly the Ciceronian Renaissance of the late fifteenth century in Italy and its spread to the Northern humanists is one of the major influences in the background noise of the Lutheran Reformation. Even the generally philosophically reluctant Luther praised Cicero's contribution to human culture and thought life.⁴ According to the Wittenbergers, Cicero's contribution to human culture did not merely consist of his contributions to civil law, but included an epistemological framework of scepticism, which created what Popkin has labelled "fideistic sceptics."⁵ In turn, this fideistic scepticism—a belief that human truth claims were subjectively influenced—allowed the Lutherans to develop a two-tiered epistemic certitude concept of revelation over general human experience. The latter category, in later Protestant theology, splits into the rational or positivist traditions, and the subjective fideism of 'existentialists' such as Luther and later thinkers such as Schleiermacher.⁶

Cicero himself inherited two traditions of scepticism from the ancient Greeks. The form of scepticism known as Academic Scepticism derived from the Platonic Academy, and intended to show that the absolute certitude of any proposition was impossible. Hence, knowledge could only be fortified opinion. Over and against this

⁴John McNeil, "Natural Law and the Teaching of the Reformers," Journal of Religion 26 (July 1946) 170.

⁵Popkin 25.

⁶This is an area of work which, according to Popkin (7), is grounded in Luther's understanding of certainty being tied to his own existential conviction of truth. The possible priority of conscience over revelation becomes a conundrum in this case. In a very real sense, Popkin suggests that Luther created or opened the Pandora's box for the modern '*crise pyrrhionienne*'.

opinion was Pyrrhus' rival school. The Pyrrhonian sceptic held that since all knowledge was insufficient for ascertaining certitude, just as the Academics had held, it was consequently argued that no real judgement could ever be made or even attempted. This, of course, resulted in a refusal to enter into any final epistemic claim and a stoical resolve merely to live without the boundaries of any epistemological system. The Pyrrhonian system tended to manifest itself most frequently in Greek thought, while Cicero reinterpreted and renewed the Academic scepticism in his own philosophical system.⁷

Augustine, in turn, picked up the Ciceronian schema with its Platonic underpinnings of dialectic and thus was one source of transmission to the Lutheran reformers.⁸ However, Cicero was also a favourite of Italian humanists such as Valla and Pico della Mirandola. The transmission of *Cicero Scepticus* to the humanists most probably occurred in the form of his three major works on Philosophy and Rhetoric: *Academica*, *De Natura Deorum*,⁹ and *De Inventione*.¹⁰ This, in turn, created a humanism which was able to solve the epistemological Gordian knots of the Aristotelian hegemony by "... refusing to make definitive statements on any particular

⁷Popkin i-xv.

⁸Popkin ix.

⁹The transmission of *Cicero Philosophus* was his *Academica* and *De Natura Deorum*. Schmitt 18.

¹⁰The transmission of Cicero's rhetorical style was the standard text for almost all Masters' students in Northern and Italian Universities, *De Inventione*. Mack 4.

issue and by suspending judgement.”¹¹ Of course, this was not necessarily a crisis of authority, but merely a way of distinguishing between what is useful for life and piety over what is merely epistemological window-dressing. For the humanist, true certitude was found in but one locus--the Church and her teachings.¹² All else was mere sophistry and the tool by which that scholastic Gordian knot was to be cut was the razor of rhetoric infused into dialectics. This belief would be found also in Melanchthon.

Cicero picked up the classical confrontation between Plato and Aristotle’s views on rhetoric and dialectic. Dialectics, for both thinkers, was essentially a way of defining knowledge. Plato, holding that being and hence truth, is determinate--but only in the divine mind--felt that absolute knowledge could only be approximated. The role of dialectics was to stabilize such absolute truths with our sense perceptions via cognitive hypotheses which best reflect or approximate the desired universals. Thus, dialectics is essentially a philosophical technique.¹³ Aristotle rejected the

¹¹Schmitt 7.

¹²If such a two tiered, or double theory, of truth is a product of humanism--shunned by Erasmus et al--then Brunner is correct in holding Melanchthon as the great systematician of Lutheran thought responsible for the theory. However, if Melanchthon both shares the general humanist milieu, but, as we shall see, is more nuanced than the humanists in general by not framing the two tiers into necessary opposite poles (revelation against reason), then Brunner is in danger of overstating the effect of Melanchthon. It would be sensible to see the Enlightenment’s rationality as a humanist offspring as opposed to a Melanchthonian Blight.

¹³Plato was suspicious of pure rhetoric (sophistry) isolated from logic or dialectic because rhetoric taken alone does not have to either cause or reflect the good. Hence, Plato’s scoffing of poetics and drama in The Republic. T.H. Irwin, *Plato: The*

contention of universals since what is real can only be what is in being (that is, expressed by categories). Hence, Platonic dialectical reasoning, by default, is a poor method preoccupied with the non real universal. Instead, the proper procedure for accruing knowledge is the appropriate placing of experience into logical categories. Thus, for Plato, dialectics was the placing of particular claims of knowledge into universal truths; while for Aristotle, dialectics was the placing of particular claims of knowledge into appropriate categories. Cicero follows the Platonic schema in that he considered dialectics--the attempt to unify many parts--to be closely linked with rhetoric or persuasion, but without the Platonic all encompassing structure of universals. For Aristotle, the linkage of dialectics is purely logic and structure--finding common points of knowledge and applying them within the self as mind. For Plato, dialectics must be joined to rhetoric because both reflect a greater truth (good) to be disclosed, albeit veiled¹⁴. Hence, Plato's philosopher uses all components of the human persona to persuade and discover knowledge. The Platonic method, or Socratic method is the form of *elenchus*. For example, the statement, "A jealous man cannot be a wise man" can be explained as follows. In the Aristotelian system, the dialectical

Intellectual Background, Cambridge Companion to Plato. Ed. R. Kraut. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 67-68. For Plato on knowledge, N.P. White, *Plato on Knowledge and Reality*. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976) 89-115.

¹⁴White 102. Friedrich Solmsen summarizes Aristotle's critique of Plato's infused dialectic and rhetoric: "Throughout [his Topics] Aristotle proceeds on the assumption that dialectic deals with arguments and propositions taken from the realm of opinion". "Dialectic without the Forms", *Aristotle on Dialectics*. Ed. G. Owen. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968: 55.

approach considers the topic (locus) of the statement's validity to be considered from the category of substance. Since experience teaches that substances which are different are necessarily different, it follows that the proposition must be true. A Platonically derived or Ciceronian approach combines *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos* to search out for a more universal experience of truth. Rhetoric moves the thinker into considering not only the truthfulness of substances, but also whether one knows that a jealous man can be wise or not.¹⁵ The main concern is not absolute certainty, but probability and persuasion guided by "reasonableness."¹⁶ Here the Academic Scepticism of Cicero lights on Plato's considerations on the role of dialectic and rhetoric.

For the humanists and Melanchthon, the rejuvenation of Ciceronian epistemology was a fresh wind into the sails of a hijacked Aristotelianism.¹⁷ The Aristotelian method majored in minor things, failed to address the only surety found in the sacred Scriptures, and completely deserted the real world of ethics and civil policy.¹⁸ Hence for the humanist, wisdom is to be merged with prudence rather than logical contemplation removed from the world. Rhetoric's place over sterile syllogistic reasoning required psychological knowledge and archetypes derived from the arts,

¹⁵Example cited in Mack 137-38.

¹⁶Krentzmann 798.

¹⁷Melanchthon believed that Aristotle has been subverted in his epistemological foundationalism, and that the Aristotelian synthesis of pure logic as dialectic could only be rescued by a rejoined rhetoric. Schneider 56-67.

¹⁸Quirinius Breen, "The Subordination of Philosophy to Rhetoric in Melanchthon", ARG 43 (1952) 13-16.

from which knowledge could be assembled .¹⁹ Ciceronian epistemology, as filtered through the humanists to Melanchthon, included the following assumptions. First is the assumption that there exists in every mind a natural light of reason (*naturalis lux in intellectu*) which coincides and interacts with general experience as perceived through the senses. However, because experience is multiplex, knowledge must be fortified across a large band of experiences. Second, this innate natural light permits knowledge of principles in both *theoria* (speculation) and *praxis*—of *principia speculabilia* in mathematics and *principia practica* of ethics. Third and following the other points, the marriage of rhetoric—access to common experience and persuasion via a method of argumentation—and dialectics—the application of syllogisms—allows knowledge in its fullest spectrum, encompassing humanity and the greater world.²⁰ The Ciceronian epistemological system is one, then, which permits access to the “real” world in a manner that is denied by the Aristotelian system. Evidence for knowledge can occur in various ‘alogical’ manners, history, emotion—and as we shall see—revelation. What Cicero provides is a hierarchical manner by which truth claims are understood in a vast meta-narrative of humanity (and God). Of course, a proper method must be derived in order to solve the question of authority within the hierarchy to avoid epistemic chaos. At this point, Melanchthon shows his genius and

¹⁹Breen. Subordination 21; and Schneider 74-77. In a real sense Melanchthon precedes Heidegger’s “existentials”.

²⁰Pelikan 33-34. Hans Engelland, “Introduction to Phillip Melanchthon,” On Christian Doctrine xxiii-xxix.

commitment to revelation.

In his preface to the 1521 *Locj*, Melanchthon writes of his desire to create a theological resource which is not a "Summa" but ". . . an exercise in method."²¹ Like Luther, he was fully aware of the traumatic effect that the superiority of philosophy had over the 'intra-textual' world of the Bible:

*Nam perinde atque his posterioribus ecclesiae temporibus
Aristotlem pro Christo sumus amplexi, ita statim post
ecclesiae auspicia per Platoniam philosophiam Christiana
doctrina labefactata est.*²²

Melanchthon was determined to find a new method, a way of finding a happy median between the faith world of revelation and the everyday world of the senses as expounded by the philosophers. In addition, his love for antiquity--and respect for it--also fostered in him a conviction that, although limited by sin, human culture and arts echoed a faint revelation of the *imago dei*. The first step was a Ciceronian turn in overthrowing the Scholastic superiority of dialectic over rhetoric.

As other humanists had complained, the sheer sterile philosopher's goal of speculating on the nature of things was easily detached from the world of human society. Simply put and easily observed in medieval Scholasticism, metaphysics often seemed disjointed from good citizenship.²³ For the humanist like Melanchthon, it

²¹LC (1521) CR 21: 81, 83.

²²LC (1521) CR 21: 86.

²³In 1558 Melanchthon revisits the 1485 exchange between Ermolao Barbaro and Pico della Mirandola on the roles of rhetoric and dialectics. Melanchthon writes his "Reply to Pico on behalf of Barbaro", reasserting Barbaro's claim that philosophy of

seemed nonsensical to engage in any activity not allowing human society to be positively lived out. Furthermore, since the human person was far more than sheer intellectual prowess, any system of argumentation must also encompass the whole person--emotion and reason. However, as a Christian theologian, Melanchthon also held two additional tenets in tension: first, that fallen humanity is in a state of rebellion and occlusion from God;²⁴ and second, that what is necessary for this bondage to be broken was a revelation of God in two forms--Law and Gospel.²⁵ Hence, Melanchthon's method must find a median between the axis of human common experience and divine revelation in the Bible and Incarnation. For Melanchthon, the key was the supremacy of rhetoric--the Lutheran Law-Gospel movement to action--over dialectic; but also a method that uses dialectic as a limiting boundary, navigating

dialectic must not only be joined to rhetoric, but must also be subordinated to rhetoric. Breen, "The Subordination of Philosophy to Rhetoric in Melanchthon," ARG 43 (1952) : 15.

²⁴"*Quae filii irae nascimur, fit ut sine spiritu dei nascamur. Quandoquidem in homine non est spiritus dei, nihil nisi carnalia sapit, amat et quaerit.*" LC (1521) CR 21: 114.

²⁵There is a two step process in conversion: First, God terrifies the conscience through Law; and then, God reveals mercy in Christ and consoles the sinner with Christ. This is the Lutheran Law-Gospel dialectic.

"Duplex est conversio dei ad nos, altera praeit respicientiae nostrae, altera sequitur. Quae praeit ea fit cum deus non resipiscere facit ad flatu spiritus sui, cum ostensio peccato nos terret, conturbatque. At quae sequitur conversio, fit cum modum finemque poenarum faciens, consolatur nos declaratque palam sese favere nobis."

LC (1521) CR 21: 111.

between the boundaries of sacred Scripture and creeds.²⁶

This method was Melanchthon's humanist inheritance via Rudolph Agricola, acquired most probably while studying in Heidelberg.²⁷ The application of Melanchthon's 1519 humanistically derived *De Rhetorica* provided the "... scaffolding around the new edifice of Lutheran theology ..." encountered at Wittenberg.²⁸ Melanchthon's approach to rhetoric was clearly ideal for his new role as a systematician of Luther's theology.²⁹ Melanchthon stated that the proper approach to rhetoric had three components: *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*.³⁰ The *inventio* was the defining of the question to be investigated and then distilled out in a concrete action. In this sense, the *inventio* coincided with Aristotle's predicates or categories as universals to be explored (but also differed in application).³¹ However, the *loci* of the *inventio*, unlike Aristotelian rhetoric were, for Melanchthon, universals not restricted

²⁶In the second and third editions of the *Locj*, Melanchthon will include the creeds (Nicene, Apostles', and Chalcedonian) as sources of dialectical boundaries. See CR 21: 255 and 21: 606.

²⁷Schneider 13-20.

²⁸Schneider 5.

²⁹Texts on Melanchthon's rhetorical approach include: Frank Gunter, *Die Theologische Philosophie P. Melanchthons* (Leipzig: Benno, 1990); Joachim Knappe, *Rhetorik: Phillip Melanchthon* (Tubingen: Niemayer, 1993); Peter Fraenkel, *Testimonia Patrum: The Function of the Patristic Argument in the Theology of Melanchthon* (Geneva: Dros, 1961), and previously cited works of Schneider and Mack.

³⁰Schneider 68-72.

³¹This is the role of dialectics in Aristotle. Quirinus Breen, "The Term *Loci Communes* and *Loci* in Melanchthon," *Church History* 16 (1947) : 200-201.

merely to logical syllogisms but could also include reference to 'real things' such as common literary (*res gestae*) and historical narratives (*usus historiarum*).³² Thus, the *loci communes* of the *inventio* extends beyond Aristotle, reaching back to Plato, and picks up Cicero in holding the *loci* to be basic human realities or human threads of experience which must be shown to be probable.³³ The functions of the *dispositio* and *elocutio* are to explicate and encourage actions according to the truth of the *loci*—to engage the heart and the mind.

Almost immediately, one can see the attraction of such a system to Melanchthon's nimble mind. Particularly appealing was the inclusiveness of the method. It attached itself to heart and mind even as he felt that the *sermo et verbo* of Christ engaged both heart and mind. Furthermore, it allowed the Bible to be viewed as a grand unified history telling of the true will of God in Christ and was found to be echoed, or shaded, in the common experience of all humanity. For example, the *scopus* of the Bible was the book of Romans—the *crux interpretum*—from which all of salvation or *Heilgeschichte* history could be interpreted.³⁴ In the Romans text was the seed from

³²Peter Mack, in his chapter on Melanchthon's rhetoric, points out that Melanchthon has broadly Aristotelian *topoi* or *loci* but like Valla and Agricola expands the *loci* to broader categories of demonstration (*genus demonstrativum*), and authority (*genus deliberativum*). This allows the 'common places' to be truly common. Mack 358-363. Unfortunately, this also denatures Breen's 1947 argument above that Melanchthon is using the term *loci* in an exclusively Aristotelian sense.

³³Schneider 74.

³⁴Maurer shows that Melanchthon's 1521 *Loci* evolved from a 1520 obelisk of the Sentences and Melanchthon's Commentary on Romans; Schneider 206. Cf CRI: 155, CR 21: 85.

which Melanchthon's entire theological system grew: Law and Gospel. Furthermore, such a *Heilsgeschichte* allowed the entire history of humanity to serve also as an exploration of the rhetorist's *loci*. In such a great history as God's, stretching from creation to the present day of all nations, was the providential hand of God seen—a single unifying will—which culminated in Jesus revealed as God's final word.³⁵ Thus all of history, but especially the corrective revelation of God, becomes a *loci communes* for the *oratio* of God to a fallen world with the hermeneutical *scopus* being justification in Christ.

However, Melanchthon does not simply make all *loci* equal. There is a two-tiered system of truth, revelation and human penetration into that greater reality.³⁶ For Melanchthon, the hierarchy is ranked with revelation (or Christocentrism) over reason and experience:

Nam demonstrativa methodus progreditur ab iis, quae sensui subiecta sunt, et a primis notitiis, quae vocantur principia. Hic in doctrina Ecclesia tantum ordo quaeritur, non illa methodus demonstrativa. Nam haec doctrina Ecclesia non demonstrationibus sumitur, sed ex dictis, quae Deus certis et illustribus testimoniis tradidit generi humano, per quae immensa bonitate se et suam voluntatem patefecit.

³⁵The issue of the two wills of God—*ordinata* and *revelata*—is explored later. Briefly stated, Melanchthon rejects such a duality of purpose in God's providence and instead sees an obscured ability to see the *deus absconditus* of the cross because of human sin. Humanity can see the natural revelation of God (*deus revelatus*) but not the full glory of God. Hence, only the 'backside' of God is seen. This is typically Lutheran in approach. See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. R. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) 25-32.

³⁶"*Ni scias in quem usum carnem induerit et cruci adfixus sit Christus, quid proderit eius historiam novisse?*" LC (1521) CR 21: 85.

*In Philosophia, . . . , caussae certitudinis sunt Experientia universalis Principia et Demonstrationes, ita in doctrina Ecclesiae certitudinis causa est revelatio Dei.*³⁷

Nonetheless, he is free in method to look to all the witness of God which ultimately corresponds to the final word of God in Christ Jesus. Thus, Melanchthon must find a limit from which to evaluate these other sources of 'revelation' in human history and experience. Still, what is this limit? The limit, or at least the human component to this question, is found in his doctrine of original sin and the effects of sin on reason, and Natural Law.³⁸ The roots of his methodology and doctrine of original sin are seen clearly even in his 1521 *Loci Communes*, but are especially pronounced in the late editions of the *Loci*. To these last editions we now turn to examine the function of the doctrine of original sin.

³⁷LC (1543) CR 21:603. Note the correlation Melanchthon makes in subsuming the *loci philosophia* into *loci revelata*. For Melanchthon, there is not two truths, but only one which is set forward in Scripture and Christ. However, Brunner and Barth are correct in that Melanchthon does start with the human operation of knowing. The charge of anthropocentrism perhaps is too strong in Melanchthon, but is expanded later in Protestant thought.

³⁸The two-fold truth theory of modernity has in its basic agenda an over optimistic view of the powers or limits of human rationality and an underestimation of the role of sin or evil. It is deliciously ironic that the great keeper of the modern ideal--Kant--has to resort to a form of original sin in his epistemology to account for evil. Goethe summarizes Kant's folly: "Having spent a long life cleansing his philosopher's cloak of many a prejudice, he soiled it shamefully with the stain of radical evil so that Christians too might feel themselves obliged to kiss his hem." Quoted in Henri Rondet, *Original Sin*, trans. C. Finegan (Shannon: Ecclesia Press, 1972) 200.

Chapter Four

Original Sin and Sin as a Boundary Condition: *“Homo est Spoliatus in Gratuitis et Vulneratus in Naturalibus”*

It is perhaps strange in a diachronic study, to start with Melanchthon's most mature discussions of original sin--those written in his third edition family of the *Loci Communes* and other texts after 1543. However, only by beginning with the fullest blossom of his thought and then tracing its development from 1521 will he be exonerated him from the accusation of the “Melanchthon Blight.” For many, Melanchthon underwent two crises of thought which created the blight. The first crisis was the radical shift from humanist to reformer or humanist to Lutheran. According to Maurer, this occurred sometime after arriving at Wittenberg and lasted until at least the late 1521 Zwickau prophet controversy.¹ Melanchthon's failed leadership in the crisis

¹Maurer Vol. I 67-102. Maurer's thesis is that sometime after the arrival and crisis of the Zwickau Prophets, Melanchthon, having had his leadership shaken, retreated to the arts. This begins Melanchthon's return to humanism. Others who follow the thesis include: Kukasawa 53-64; and Wengert 57-59. However, others such as Sperl see not a loss of confidence in Melanchthon as theologian per se, but rather a concern by Melanchthon to help found an ethical base for the Lutheran theology over student rioting and Antinomian tendencies. Sperl 171-179. Regardless of the reason for the shift--an area to be more closely explored--Melanchthon does not abandon his teaching of theology nor his publication of theological texts. For example, his 1533 second edition of the *Loci* was occasioned by new insights from his Commentary on Colossians (CR 12: 691-6; CR 2: 457). In addition, Wengert (32) points out that in 1522-23, Melanchthon lectured on Romans, Corinthians, Matthew, John, and Genesis. However, Melanchthon does refuse the Elector's request of 1524 to teach theology full time (Brecht 105). Melanchthon's shift to a more humanistic teaching load can be explained in at least three ways: (1) a desire to return to a vacant and needed area within the university; (2) a deference to Luther and other ordained professors; (3) a decided lack of confidence and an internal intellectual shift to humanism. Since he never abandoned theology--neither writing nor lecturing (via notes for others such as Caspar Crucigar)--it seems that Maurer's hypothesis is the least forceful. When one

resulted in his decided recommitment to his hidden humanistic thought and eventually lead to a synergism of humanism and Lutheranism—forever sabotaging, according to the Gnesio-Lutherans, the Lutheran Church. Hence the blight, as the hyper-rationality or naturalism of the humanists surrounded a Lutheran orthodoxy which never quite coherently sustained itself. However, if what Melanchthon did was to use a humanistic methodology to organize the Lutheran theological emphasis, and if the doctrine of original sin provides an important ‘boundary condition’ in that intellectual scaffolding, then looking at the end point and moving backwards to the initial works of 1521 can show unity without the charge of a subversive synergism. If such a diachronic unity is manifest, then the dual crisis hypothesis fails, and Melanchthon is exonerated.

As Melanchthon’s method is a humanistic appeal to the *loci communes* of human reality, but framed in the *a priori* certitude of the Scriptural revelation², then the dogma of original sin plays an important role in establishing a boundary between the “reality of our senses” and the “reality of God.” However, as we shall see in his use of the doctrine of original sin, the two “realities” are not competing, but the revelational true reality of God subsumes the rationality of even the philosophers who ignore the locus of sinfulness:

considers the training of Phillip, his deference to Luther, and the socio-political reality surrounding the mid-1520's (cf. Antinomianism, Anabaptism, Orlamunde and the other visitations of 1524-1528; Brecht 259-73), it seems reasonable to understand the humanist shift in a different light.

² *Ut certa est cuilibet sano haec sententia: Bis quatuor sunt octo, est enim naturalis notitia ut principiorum; ita sint certi nobis et immoti articuli fidei, comminationes et promissiones divinae. . . .* LC (1543) CR 21: 604.

Sed quia res sunt extra iudicium humanae mentis positae, languidor est assensio, quae fit quia? mens movetur illis testimoniis et miraculis et iuvatur a Spiritu Sancto ad assentiendum. Etsi autem Philosophia docet dubitandum esse de his, quae non sunt sensu comperta, nec sunt principia, nec sunt demonstratione confirmata, ut licet dubitare seu epecheis Haer- et aliquo in mentibus in hac naturae humanae corruptione ingens confusio dubitationem de Deo, quibus repugnandum est et opponendae sunt sententiae a Deo traditae.³

For Melanchthon, the overcoming of such confusion is a proper method--observed in the *Heilsgeschichte* of the Bible⁴--and understood by a proper understanding of the Law-Gospel dialectic. In unwrapping the dialectic, he must first appeal to the essential problem of why revelation is needed.

In order to avoid a Manichean-style dualism⁵ or a double will in God,⁶ Melanchthon must first prove that God's providential design has always been self-disclosure, and that sin--concrete and real--has made our own attempts to find evidence of that gift impossible. In short, reason or human intuition of God can be of some use

³LC (1543) CR 21: 605.

⁴LC (1543) CR 21: 606.

⁵Melanchthon felt that many Anabaptists or Enthusiasts were such Manichean dualists: LC (1543) CR 21: 658.

⁶Melanchthon is aware of the danger of positing a dual will in God such as is found in the Reformed tradition. He will refuse to hold a "*voluntas arcana or beneplaciti*" which discloses God's true will (election) and a "*voluntas revelata or signi*" in which God wills sin (reprobation). Instead, Melanchthon will hold that there is but one single will in God--hence his marriage of Natural Law, the Decalogue, and God's will. See G. Berkouwer, *Sin: Studies in Dogmatics*, trans. P. Holtrop (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 56-60.

but must be framed or parsed accordingly:⁷

*Conditum est genus humanum ac deinceps ideo redemptum est, ut sit imago et templum Dei celebrans. Vult enim Deus agnosci et celebrari, et fulsisset illustris et firma notitia Dei in mentibus hominum, si natura hominum mansisset integra. . . . Sed humane mentes in hac corruptione natura in magna et tristi caligine vagantur quaerentes, an sit providentia et quae sit Dei voluntas.*⁸

Having explained his central thesis—that something has impeded the ability of humanity’s knowledge and experience of God—Melanchthon moves to provide proof of his statement in sin. However, in doing so, he must also explain the “biblical *a priori*” of sin—that “*Deus non est causa peccati.*”⁹

The exoneration of God from causing sin—either directly or indirectly—is never shown by Melanchthon to be a rationally or naturally derived proof. Instead, it is a Scriptural witness that stands above the scrutiny of human minds and is only seen backwards through the doctrine of original sin, through the reality of sin, and through the Christological lens of human history. In fact, what can be naturally known of God’s relationship to humanity is the wrath of God, which is seen through the Law: “*Et quanquam utcunque mens humana agnoscit Deum punire sotes, tamen de*

⁷Participation theology, rekindled by interest in Augustine and Eriugena’s understanding of self-participation within the Trinity, similarly attempts to bring God back into a positive relationship in creation without blurring human sinfulness. This reduces the tendency to see Christ in either interventionist or exemplarist terms. See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) 422-431.

⁸LC (1543) CR 21: 607.

⁹Berkouwer 27-63.

reconciliatione nihil novit sine revelatione divinae promissionis.”¹⁰

How Melanchthon moves from the “*mysterium iniquitatis*” and its effect on the shaded human mind (*tenebrae humanae mentis*) to the biblical *a priori*—*Deus non est causa peccati*—is by appealing from *loci communes* to explain both the existential and rational histories of individuals and even humanity. Once he has established his *inventio*, he then moves to the Scriptural revelation and Christological explanation in order to move the hearer to faith. Hence, method meets theology.

In his 1543 *Loci* text, Melanchthon’s experiential *loci* are sub-boundaries in his greater boundary of sin. The *loci* function as rhetorical access points of common agreement from which Phillip is able to build a suprastructure of Biblical and creedal witness. They are framed even in the structure of the text itself as witnessed in the following figure.

See Figure A

As the figure illustrates, Melanchthon uses a developing structure in his topics, moving the reader from the self evident to the revealed. He begins with naturally deducible claims in *De Deo* and *De Creatione*. The claim “God exists” is examined and followed

¹⁰LC (1543) CR 21: 608.

Figure A

Locus Experience
(Human sensory reality--gift of vestigial glory)

Boundary Condition
(Status of existential and intellectual confusion. Source of human multiplicity and chaos.)

Divine Revelation on Real Nature of Reality

Christological *Cru*x interpretum

A. *De Deo, De Creatione*
"Knowledge that God is, but not of God as merciful" (609).

Fallen humanity's inability to see/ understand God except through revelation and Christ.

C. *De Tribus Personis Divinitatis*
God is mercy in Christ (653).

H. De Filio

B. *De Causa Peccatum et de contingentia*
1. Evil exists;
2. We are free to do evil;
3. We know evil to be wrong.

D. *De Viribus et libero arbitrio*

"Monstret nobis beneficia filii Dei, qui missus est, ut destruat opera Diaboli, qui triste vulnus fecit in humana natura"

E. *De Peccato*

F. *De Peccato Originis*

G. *De Lege*

LAW

GOSPEL

**LAW-
GOSPEL
DIALECTIC**

Heilsgeschichte/Providential Hand of God: In the cross, sense given to the senseless

(Romans 5: 8-21)

Legend:

bold = Experiential loci

bold = Revelational loci

text = Christological loci

by a second naturally deducible claim that human evil exists (*De Causa Peccatum*). These experiential topics (*loci communes*) lead to a knowledge of what Melanchthon calls the function of the Law--the understanding that "God is, but not that God is merciful." Hence, true knowledge of God as merciful in Christ (Gospel) hits a limit boundary which is not able to be penetrated by reason. The next sections of the text explain the reason for this same limit (*De Tribus Personis Divinitatis, De Viribus et Libero arbitrio, De Peccato, De Peccato Originis, and De Lege*). As a result, revealed truths found in the latter topics function to explain the true nature of the experiential *loci*. His final section--*De Filio*--links the two seemingly disparate *loci* of reason and revelation backwards in time in a vast Christological *Heilsgeschichte*. Thus, the Lutheran Law-Gospel dialectic is seen even in Melanchthon's structural approach.

Another danger Melanchthon must, in his explanation of sin and its origin, carefully avoid is the Pelagian tendency of positing a passive source for human irresponsibility. He recognizes that the Pelagian claim that we are merely carriers--not participants--of a mortal disease contracted by a long past ancestor potentially undercuts the supremacy of Christ's work. For Melanchthon, the gospel means we are sinners, not merely potential sinners. In short, sin can have no alibi, it must be owned and claimed by each person according to the biblical witness (Romans 5: 12). Furthermore, Melanchthon must prove that sin--its total reality as a senseless nothingness--can only be understood from the perspective *post Christum*. Thus, like

Barth,¹¹ the formal or noetic component of sin is only ever truly understood when we know Jesus Christ:

*Vera et pia sententia: . . . , Deum non esse causam peccati, nec velle peccatum, nec impellere voluntates ad peccandum, nec approbare peccatum. Imo iram adversus peccatum maxime ostendit filius Dei, qui apparuit ut victima fieret pro peccato et ostenderet Diabolum esse auctorem peccati et sua morte iram ingentem Patris placeret. Non igitur Deus causa est peccati, nec peccatum est res condita aut ordinata a Deo, sed est horribilis destructio operis et ordinis divini.*¹²

However, also like Barth, Melanchthon understands sin materially as both real and an “impossible possibility.”¹³ Hence, sin is a human reality, self evident but apparently without meaning unless explained from the lens of God.

Nonetheless, Melanchthon also desires to be clear in another respect. Seeing the danger of dualism in the Anabaptist camps and the resultant ‘election’ concepts which permitted all manner of Antinomianism, Melanchthon also does not want to create a

¹¹John Webster, “The Firmest Grasp of the Real: Barth on Original Sin,” Toronto Journal of Theology Vol. 4-1 (1988) : 20.

¹²LC (1543) CR 21: 644.

¹³It is a tribute to the genius of Thomas Aquinas that this very same point is explored in Thomas’ synthesis in his Sententiarum and later Summa of Anselm’s and Lombard’s definition of original sin’s material and formal components. Melanchthon in his 1530 Augsburg Confession would indicate his own agreement to Aquinas’ definition by directly quoting Aquinas. See Peter Lombard, Libri IV Sententiarum (Florence: Bonaventure Press, 1916) LII d.26 c.4-5 and Anselm, De Conceptu Virginali et Originali Peccato Cap. 27 (Migne: Pl 158) 461. For Aquinas, see Summa Theologiae (Rome: Marietti, 1950) I-II 82-3c. Melanchthon’s agreement: Heinz Mackensen, “The Debate between Eck and Melanchthon or Original Sin in the Colloquy of Worms,” Lutheran Quarterly II-I (February 1959) : 42; and Phillip Melanchthon, “The Apology of the Augsburg Confession”, The Book of Concord: Confessions of The Evangelical Lutheran Church, trans. T. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959) II.28.

present world which is a theological doppelgänger¹⁴ of a greater ultimate reality in Jesus Christ. This world, its *ethos* and *praxis*, is real as well. Instead, he wants to unify the two “realities” but explain the material world through the prism of revelation so as neither to neglect this world nor make it irrelevant in the life of God. Thus, he starts with the doctrine of God in his explanation of sin.

Utilizing his *oratio sacra* approach—a fusion of experiential *loci* and revelation—Melanchthon asks what can be known about God. Instantly, he encounters the first dialectical problem—the ancients all admit something of God, but share little accord as to the true nature of God.¹⁵ Thus, God is both “self-evident and hidden.”¹⁶ Nonetheless, it stands that God may be known by divine acts—in natural creation and history and in salvation history. In this sense, God’s acts are predicates of divine nature.¹⁷ Avoiding the question of revelation, Melanchthon turns his thought to

¹⁴ While the fallen world is true folly and blotted by sin, for Melanchthon, it is not deceptive in the appropriate areas of the natural sciences. Thus, the world has true natural epistemological content (i.e., two times four equals eight), but due to our sin vitiated reasoning capabilities, it also provides the source for our spiritual existential crisis. Therefore it is a source of multiplicity and chaos despite continuity in the natural realm to Natural Laws. This is akin to the Thomistic conception that paradise was not substantially (i.e., in areas of the laws of Nature)—different from present reality. In this sense the same physical laws apply then and now. The human component to knowledge is the source of confusion especially when applied to the reality that is God. This is the anthropocentric *Heilsgeschichte*—the descent of the human soul to despair—not an epistemological or sceptical crisis.

¹⁵LC (1543) 21: 607.

¹⁶LC (1543) 21: 608.

¹⁷LC (1543) 21: 638.

various *loci communes* of human experience. What does common human experience refer to when it refers to God? There are several “self-evident” truths: first, God must exist. Second, this God is an “other” who sustains and creates. Third, this God punishes evil. In summary, the natural person has a “knowledge that God is, but not of God as merciful.”¹⁸

God’s existence is a self-manifesting truth in Melanchthon’s thinking. All of human history—from literature to philosophy and everyday superstition—bears evidence, pure and irresistible, to this simple truth. This truth is the result of gift, a gift which remains even in the darkest heart and testifies to the conscience of the presence of “an other.” This is the *imago dei* in humanity.¹⁹ Still this inchoate gift, even as a gift, leaves the recipient in a terrible state simply because the knowledge of the other is incomplete. In fact, it is a knowledge that ultimately terrifies because it deduces that this “other” must be so unlike the human mind that it must, in fact, be a perfect mind. Here Plato is introduced: “*Platonica haec est: Deus est mens aeterna, causa boni in natura.*”²⁰ Hence the first common place—that ‘God is’—is attested to by the greatest of human thinkers.

Were Melanchthon to stop at this juncture, he would be guilty of

¹⁸LC (1543) 21: 609, 642. This manifests itself in Paul’s Romans 1: 18-23 text, according to Melanchthon.

¹⁹Melanchthon returns to the *imago dei* in the *De Viribus et Libero Arbitrio* subsection.

²⁰LC (1543) 21: 610.

anthropocentricism by making God in human likeness. Instead, he proceeds to use the “common place”—God is the eternal mind and cause of good—to illustrate the Law-Gospel dialectic. This knowledge of God as eternal mind and cause of goodness needs additional unpacking to be understood correctly:

Quanquam autem Platonica descriptio adeo erudite composita est, . . . , tamen quia nondum ita describit Deum, ut se patefecit ipse, requirenda est alia illustrior et propior descriptio. . . . Sit igitur haec altera descriptio: Deus est essentia spiritualis, . . . , Pater aeternus qui filium imaginem suam ab aeterno genuit. . . . Haec descriptio propius recitat, quis sit Deus, et deducit nos ad patefactionem divinam, sicut in Ecclesia semper haec doctrina tradita est.²¹

To explain why more revelatory information is required, Melanchthon explores the nature of this simple statement: God exists. Creation, as seen in Romans 1: 18-23, testifies to God’s existence just as Plato indicated. However, because of human sin in reason, Plato could not explain who God is in character and nature just as the Stoics failed to explain the nature of God’s reality:

Infirmetas humana, etiamsi cogitat Deum esse conditorem, tamen postea imaginatur, ut faber discedit a navi extracta et relinquit eam nautis, ita Deum discedere a suo opere, et relinqui creaturas tantum propriae gubernationi. Haec imaginatio magnam caliginem offundit animis et parit dubitationes.²²

Thus, even the simplest consideration of God’s existence and necessary character then creates the confusion that eventually terrifies the human psyche. The various philosophical opinions in this matter, the best of any philosophical school, instead leads to either a dejected fatalism or a moral disinterest when attempting to grapple with

²¹LC (1543) 21: 610.

²²LC (1543) 21: 638.

God's character and interest in humanity and human history.²³ Melancthon shows that the simplest *locus communis*, of the existence of God, instead of bringing comfort, brings both existential confusion as to the nature of that omnipotent being, and epistemological confusion as to the nature of this world. It is this second concern to which he turns his thoughts next.

The second "common experience" addressed is not only that God exists, but also that that God must be both sustainer and cause of this world. Or, put another way, that whatever has come to exist is decided by God, who brings and sustains order from chaos.²⁴ It follows, then, that if God were capricious, natural order would be equally capricious, rendering human society untenable or unlivable. Chaos or entropy cannot rule the cosmos. Thus, natural reality must be somehow related to an archetypal mind (*mentum architectatricem*)²⁵ from which Natural Law derives its root. God cannot be wholly abstracted from creation; natural laws cannot be capriciously ordered, nor can the moral fibre of the universe. Instead, some natural knowledge of God in creation must remain to avoid epistemological and moral chaos:

*Notitiae naturales sunt verae. Esse Deum naturaliter omnes fatentur; Ergo haec notitia vera est. Haec minor esset illustrior, si natura non esset corrupta, sed confirmanda est ceteris argumentis quae recitari. . . .*²⁶

²³The Stoic and Epicurean options. LC (1543) 21: 638.

²⁴LC (1543) 21: 641.

²⁵LC (1543) 21: 642.

²⁶LC (1543) 21: 642.

Knowledge of God "*ex effectibus*" includes two more common places: the natural order and the moral law.

Both concepts flow from the overarching concept that "God is", and are easily seen as necessary and self-evident in human culture, even fallen human culture. For Melanchthon, there is no sense in denying what is true--that two multiplied by four equals eight, or that human or civil life demands certain moral tenets to be universally held, for instance. These are examples of "*notitiae naturales*," held deeply in the *imago dei* of the human mind, and found in the archetypical mind of God. Furthermore, there is a unity of the cosmos, and this unity is God's providential hand: ". . . *sunt indicia providentiae quod Deus respiciat homines, puniat atrociora scelera et aliquibus opituletur, ut foecunditas terrae indicat Deum hominum vitae consulere.*"²⁷ This unity is seen in the achievements of human history, in God's interaction with and freedom within that history,²⁸ from which truths of natural and moral order are echoed. Here are common places of a different type of *Heilsgeschichte*, of a witness to God's being as a guarantor of natural and moral order given to all generations across all time and in all places.

However, this knowledge of God, although fundamental and rudimentary, fails in yet another decidedly Lutheran *locus communis*. This common experience is the failure of such knowledge--albeit necessary--to explain or disclose the evil, disorder

²⁷LC (1543) 21: 643.

²⁸"*Deus est liberrimum agens, servat sui operis ordinem, et tamen multa propter homines mitigat*" LC (1543) CR 21: 639.

and wickedness in our world.²⁹ In fact, this knowledge creates a false testimony of ourselves and of God. Regarding ourselves, it permits us to consider God as either purely transcendent or disinterested, and permits us to think that human powers can merit God's obligation.³⁰ This results in a confusion of one's justification between "*coram homine*" or "*coram deo*."³¹ In addition, such thinking also views God as either the cause of evil in a cosmos divinely dictated without any true human freedom to act,³² or as a powerful enemy whose wrath regarding our evil threatens us with each passing moment. Thus, human beings are either puppets, or free from a "shipbuilder who has abandoned the project",³³ or in terror of a God who exacts punishment for crimes against natural order. Of course, all options are finally existential crises--*Anfechtungen*--which either render life unpalatable or unbearable.³⁴ All this is the

²⁹LC (1543) 21: 643.

³⁰Melancthon's critique of the Pelagian nature of Scholastic theology or "Bielism": LC 21: 663-64.

³¹The two-fold process of self-justification is not only in terms of meriting eternal life, but also whether one's conscience is cleared before human witness or divine witness. Melancthon cites the case of Alexander the Great's murder of Clitus as proof of the folly of self-justification even before human witness. Alexander, who grieved his crime, was still guilty because the focus of his guilt was his breaking of human law, not divine law. LC (1543) 21: 665.

³²Stoical resolve to a fatalistic universe is both against common sense, and the Church. LC (1543) 21: 650-652.

³³LC (1543) 21: 638.

³⁴*Id enim est in mente tenebrae, hoc est, non habere illustrem notitiam et firmum assensum de providentia, comminationibus et promissionibus divinis; Et in voluntate est aversio, id est, sine metu, fiducia, dilectione Dei esse, . . . , quae congruebat*

function of the Law, largely bracketed out as the remnant of God's order within fallen creation and humanity which speaks partially of God's being, but not of divine character. Hence, he says "*Lex est Paedagogus.*"³⁵

The first set of *loci communes*, a common experience of Natural Law, referring to God's being and freedom, then hits another set of *loci communes*--the problem of evil and of rational deductions of God. The vestigial gift of God in humanity and creation creates an existential crisis when human rationality attempts to equate self-evidential truth to truths of the divine nature. The final result of these attempts--as witnessed to in the common history of human culture³⁶--are idolatry, multiplicity, and chaos. For Melanchthon, human reality, apart from revelation, is then truly the sphere in which fantasy or fantastical opinions operate, if taken solely from an anthropocentric point of view. Thus, Melanchthon sees in human mental operations a built-in law of failure whose only function, aside from the divine gift of some cognition of Natural Law to permit some form of human society, is to prompt the greater question of all people of conscience throughout history--"is this all that there is?" Fallen humanity simply is incapable of placing God's providential hand, as dimly seen by Natural Law

legi

naturae, sed vagis et errantibus inclinationibus ferri extra ordinem contra Deum.
LC (1543) 21: 645.

³⁵LC (1543) 21: 654.

³⁶One of Phillip's favorite techniques is to cite classical examples of human folly or misconstrual of the gospel. This occurs frequently in the last two edition families of the *Loci*, but rarely in the 1521 edition. This is the "*res gestae*" and "*usus historiarum*" of his rhetorical approach of "*oratio sacra*."

and order, into a proper understanding of God's character and purposes without divine aid.³⁷ Nonetheless, before moving to the fortress of revealed truths whereby Christ on the cross makes sense of the apparently senseless,³⁸ Melanchthon must also explain another common experience—that we, with free will, do evil.

If the divine reality is that God is merciful but also all powerful, then how does one explain the problem of sin? Human responsibility in performing evil acts is a *locus communis*, borne out in countless accounts of history and tragedy. There is no dispute that when humans do evil, it is humans who, freely and willingly, participate in the act. This is the basis of the entire jurisprudence system, and the foundation of civil society. Nonetheless, the biblical claim of original sin potentially has a moral escape hatch, a way of placing blame not on our willing actions, but on our nature.³⁹ This notion of original sin must also combine with the biblical claim of Providence so as to exonerate God's possible causation of sin.⁴⁰ Of course, for Melanchthon, the only satisfying answer to such a dilemma is the Christological lens of the cross which explains the history of God's acts within a world riddled with sin and the doctrine of original sin. However, before he brings revelation to bear, he must find traces of *loci communes* which prepare the hearer to receive the good news of the cross. The image of a shaded

³⁷LC (1543) 21: 658.

³⁸LC (1543) 21: 646.

³⁹Quoting Romans 5: 12, "*Hebraica phrasis est, peccaverunt, id est, rei sunt et habent peccatum, rem malum et damnatum.*" LC (1543) 21: 670. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁰The biblical *a priori*—God does not cause sin.

or wounded mind is the chosen metaphor by which Melanchthon will examine the limits of the three experiential or phenomenal *loci communes*: first, evil exists; second, we freely do evil; and third, we know evil to be wrong.

Indisputable from human history is the existence of evil. However, the truly wise question the order of this evil—whence the confusion, wickedness, calamity, and death?⁴¹ The various opinions in answering that question include that the material world is itself evil, or human nature is itself intrinsically evil, or that things simply are because of blind fate or luck without rhyme or reason.⁴² If these options are combined with the universally held notion that “God is,” then God—bound by necessity as the first cause—is the author of evil. Once again, this possibility of a mad or dualist God whose own will is the source of evil renders existence not only dangerous but meaningless; it creates an “*infinitos labyrinthos*” of the psyche and terrorizes the soul. The human mind peering into the chasm of evil is faced with the possibility that God is the author of evil. The very same Being on whom life relies is now revealed as a capricious or malevolent demon. Human deduction on evil without Revelation has a lethal effect on the inner life of a person. Furthermore, if the other *locus communis*—we do evil—is also true, and if God is not the cause of evil, but of goodness as postulated by Plato and others, then the human relationship to that God is one of wrath

⁴¹LC (1543) 21: 643.

⁴²*Ac Philosophi partim in materia, partim in voluntate humana causas collocant, partim ad fatum transferunt, quod dicunt esse necessariam connexionem primae causae et omnium secundarum, Physicarum et voluntatem.* LC (1543) 21: 644.

and ire. Once more, humanity is caught in a crisis without additional information—that God neither wills nor causes sin, hates sin, but also has rectified the “*horribilis destructio*” of its effects through Christ. In Christ, sin is explained.⁴³

The second and third *loci* of common experience—that we freely do evil, and that evil is wrong—are also self-evident, again both in conscience and in human concepts of justice. However, once again this natural truth butts against an invisible barrier. With his continual appeal to the *res gestae* of history and the arts, Melanchthon repeatedly points out that all nations see the confusion and reality of sin: “*Etsi omnes gentes vident horrendam confusionem, vitia et calamitates tristissimas generis humani, ac sentiunt onus peccati. . .*”⁴⁴ Thus, Alexander mourned the murder of Clitus,⁴⁵ Oedipus his own actions;⁴⁶ and, Achilles’ self-glorification is universally denounced.⁴⁷ The reality of our participation in evil is also found in the tenets of civil or political law—a divine gift left inchoate.⁴⁸ Were humans not the agents of evil, then morality would not need to be enforced, but instead would be natural and uniformly practised. Human law (*ius gentium*) witnesses to our participation in evil. However, once more,

⁴³LC (1543) 21: 644.

⁴⁴LC (1543) 21: 665.

⁴⁵LC (1543) 21: 665.

⁴⁶LC (1543) 21: 675.

⁴⁷LC (1543) 21: 676.

⁴⁸LC (1543) 21: 665.

this truism flows into a crisis, hits a boundary condition of both rationality and conscience. Here only “ . . . *Ecclesia docet, et unde sit et quid peccatum et audit verbum dei de ira divina et de poenis praesentibus et aeternis.*”⁴⁹ The limits of the “shaded mind” can only see sin in terms of punishment and external deeds with regard to civil morality:

*Nec arguit Ecclesia tantum externas actiones, pugnantes cum Lege Dei aut ratione, sicut Philosophia, sed arguit radicem et fructus, interiorem caliginem mentis, dubitationes de voluntate Dei, aversionem voluntatis humanae a Deo. . . . Haec est concio prosus aliena a politicis iudiciis.*⁵⁰

Once more, the question of the very first *locus communis*—“who is this God?”—raises its existential head. Certainly human reason can ascertain both its own participation in, and cause of sin, and even posit that evil acts should be punished for the good of civil society. Nonetheless, what if this God, at least, has the same standards as human civil society—can anyone stand under the divine indictment? On both accounts—external good and internal motivations (shared by the peripatetic philosophers)—humanity falls miserably short. The result is easily comprehended, either ignore God or fear God. In either case, one falls into idolatry because God’s true purpose in creation—God’s mercy in Christ—is hidden from the scrutiny of human reason beyond an existential black hole.

Melanchthon holds out the classical Lutheran concept of Law-Gospel dialectic in his use of *loci communes* gleaned from human history. By seizing onto the common

⁴⁹LC (1543) 21: 665.

⁵⁰LC (1543) 21: 665.

history of human culture and its universal affirmation of God's existence, and the presence of, and our participation in, evil, he is able to show that reason, if left alone, will never be able to solve the grand existential crisis that must fall to each thinking individual regarding the true nature of God. Thus, in a very real sense, this sensory realm is the realm of fantasy that raises more questions than answers, that creates long dark "tea times" of the soul, and finally is only unriddled when explained through the Christological reality of God's providential hand in the *Heilsgeschichte* of redemption. Only here is manifest the "*beneficia filii Dei*" painted across the great canvas of human history. In this sense, Melanchthon fits very neatly into the Lutheran camp as he expands Law to be an inclusive human *loci communes* left inchoate in human nature by divine providence so that humanity can adduce certain natural truths--God exists, as do moral and natural order. However, like all functions of Lutheran Law concepts, this natural or vestigial *imago dei* is both mirror and hammer in reflecting a tiny sliver of God's reality, but smashing human pretension regarding true knowledge of God. In short, Law creates a punishing or malevolent God to whom obedience must be woodenly given, but for whom all efforts must ultimately fail. Luther's words--where can I find a merciful God?⁵¹--function well in Melanchthon's use of the *loci communes*. Of course, only the gospel provides the answer.

Thus far we have examined, from the last family of Melanchthon's *Locis*, the function of the doctrine of original sin and sin in the application of his appeal to

⁵¹ "Wie kriege ich einen gnadigen Gott?" Source not identified by Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988) 72.

Ciceronian rhetoric. We have seen how Melanchthon posits not a two-tiered system of truth, but a single system explained from the viewpoint of revelation into human epistemology because of the presence of sin in the rational powers. For Melanchthon, only Christ provides the answer to the *Anfechtung* raised in the human ordering of reality. It now falls to examine the function of the doctrine of original sin within the realm of revelational truths, how the doctrine manifests both in historical and systematic terms diachronically across his works and thought. Once more, here questions of the Melanchthon blight will be raised--whether he detracted from Lutheran orthodoxy in either a syncretist or rationalist manner. In order to examine these concerns, we return to the natural chronological order of the *Loci Communes*, beginning in 1521.

**Chapter Five: 1521 Loci Communes
 “Est ipse, pene ut ita dixeram, ipso Luthero lutheranior”--Erasmus on
 Melanchthon**

The first edition of the Loci Communes, which includes the family of texts widely published from 1521 to 1530, was the first systematic theology of the Lutheran movement. Their authorship was surprising in that they were written neither by Luther nor Wittenberg’s other biblical scholars nor theologians, but rather by the young humanist-philologist Melanchthon who had, himself, just two years earlier received his own theological Baccalaurate training. Over Melanchthon’s lifetime he would substantially revise the Loci Communes—twice in 1530-1533, and again in 1543. Thus, the Loci Communes have a family resemblance in one of three periods.¹ The expansion of the Loci Communes through the three editions is substantial, as is the general structural *loci*, with Melanchthon adding more biblical and classical citations. The 1521 edition is heavily indebted to Melanchthon’s reliance on the Pauline Romans text in form and outline,² while the 1530/33 edition emulates the order of the Church creeds³

¹Remember that Melanchthon’s Latin texts are easily grouped into three editions, but his German texts are not so easily placed. As mentioned earlier, several editions of the German texts seem to be translated by another, then Melanchthon, and on close scrutiny bear little semblance to the Latin texts. Nonetheless, the three ‘families’ of text are: 1521-1530; 1530/33-1543; 1543-1560. Some work is needed to be done on the text’s transmission and variant editions, especially the German texts.

²LC (1521) CR 21: 81

³LC (1530) CR 21: 254-255.

and adds additional Pauline glosses from Colossians.⁴ The final edition, the lengthiest, follows the second in structure, but with material added in various sections. In each period, Melanchthon will elucidate, clarify, and expand the central tenets laid out in the 1521 edition as he, and the Wittenberg movement, both encounter external opposition and answer internal inconsistencies. In this sense, Melanchthon's theology is occasioned by external forces beyond his personal theological growth. However, whether his theology alters so as to be either markedly non-Lutheran or synthetic to either Catholicism or other theological systems, is open to debate. It appears that once his methodological approach is exposed and then combined with an awareness of his historical context, Melanchthon is found to be consistent across the three editions--at least in the doctrines or boundary condition of original sin, and sin in general, which concern us. It is essentially a Lutheran doctrine.

The basic structure concerning sin is consistent across all three editions, even accounting for Melanchthon's additional topical indices of *De Deo* and *De Creatione* in the second edition of the *Loci* because of his appeal to the creeds:

⁴CR 2: 456, CR 5: 332.

1521	1530/33	1543
	<i>De Deo</i> <i>De Creatione</i>	<i>De Deo</i> <i>De Creatione</i>
	<i>De Causa Peccati</i>	<i>De Causa</i>
<i>Peccati</i>		
<i>De Hominis Viribus</i> <i>Viribus</i> <i>adeoque Libero arbitrio</i> <i>Arbitrio</i> <i>De Peccato</i> <i>De Lege</i> <i>De Evangelio</i>	<i>De Hominis Viribus</i> <i>t De Libero Arbitrio</i> <i>De Lege</i> <i>De Peccato</i> <i>De Evangelio</i>	<i>De Hominis</i> <i>et De Libero</i> <i>De Peccato</i> <i>De Lege</i> <i>De Evangelio</i>

The 1530/33 structural dissimilarity, accounting for the credal import of *De Deo* and *De Creatione*, is simply the reversal of the sections on sin and law following the powers of human freedom, and the addition of a section before human freedom which deals with the cause of sin. As Melanchthon in 1521 is heavily dependent on the Pauline structure of Romans, it is quite apparent that his order of exposition would be similar with human freedom, human sinfulness, the Law and the Gospel.⁵ The 1530

⁵According to Melanchthon's exegesis the *crux interpretum* of Romans was the text Romans 1: 18-23, which Melanchthon regarded as the *scopus* of the entire document. In his *propositiones* of the text, Melanchthon--based on the *scopus* text of Romans 1:18-23-- sees the order of the text as: The Gospel accuses all people to be freely under God's wrath, and then acquittal for the repentent by the Gospel. Hence, the order is accusation-repentance-justification. Of course, Melanchthon also picks up the Abrahamic and Law theme of chapters 2-5 of Romans. Therefore, the greater theme of justification (*Heilsgeschichte*) is marked out not only in terms of wrath-forgiveness (Law and Gospel dialectic) but also in regard to sin's reality and the Law's failure to achieve what Christ has achieved. In this sense Melanchthon, based on Romans, needs both the experiential--the failure of the Law in light of sin--and the revealed. T.H.L. Parker, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans, (1532-1542)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986) 2-3, 96-99.

introduction of the articles of faith in the creeds, attempting to legitimize the Lutheran movement in wake of the late 1520's and early 1530's, necessitates, after *De Creatione*, a section briefly to explain the fatal flaw of creation--sin-- in order to absolve God of its authorship. The reversal of law and sin is also explainable by the Lutheran dialectic of Law-Gospel, reversing the Romans structure so that Law precedes Gospel. The final structure, with the reversal to the 1521 structure of sin then Law, is perhaps the anomaly which needs most explanation. Nonetheless, what one discovers, even with a casual glance at the structure of all three editions, is Melanchthon's programme of using the Lutheran Law-Gospel dialectic and his own rhetorical methodology of *loci communes* for a consistent approach to theological method, the Scripture, the role of reason, and revelation. Once again, foundational to his theological approach is his understanding of the doctrine of original sin and sin: "*Reliquos vero locos, peccati vim, legem, gratiam qui ignorarit, non video quomodo Christianum vocem. Nam ex his proprie Christus cognoscitur.*"⁶

Melanchthon begins his 1521 *Loci* with a discussion of the powers of the human will or person. Having accepted the Romans sub-theme that all are under the wrath of God, he begins his discussion with an explanation of human freedom in light of God's sovereignty, and the biblical *a priori*. His goal is a combination of two ideas, human responsibility understood from experiential *loci communes* and God's sovereignty understood through revelation. In short, he asks how humans are responsible for their

⁶LC (1521) CR 21: 85

own sin in a providential cosmos. In the backdrop of his thought, he is also aware that it is exactly at this juncture—the conjoining of God’s and human freedom—that much of the dominant semi-Pelagianism of his time derives its own justification.⁷ In his typical mood of 1521, Melanchthon simply refuses to speculate on the nature of human-divine freedom, but rather simply states that some human acts are free acts. Moreover, as free acts, they are then acts which are indeed worthy of condemnation and reproach. Melanchthon is primarily concerned with the Pauline claim that we are sinners by nature (Romans 5: 12); hence speculation on contingency in action or separation of human powers is ultimately irrelevant:

Parum civile videbatur docere necessario peccare hominem; crudele videbatur reprehendi voluntatem, si non posset se a vitio ad virtutem convertere. Ideo et plura viribus humanis, quam par erat, tribuere et mire variarunt, cum rationis iudicio viderent ubique refragari scripturas.⁸

Here Melanchthon carves out one tenet of his methodological approach: human speculation cannot explain the reality of God in revelation. He refuses to engage in

⁷The issue of human freedom can be considered the cause of the Scholastic maxim, “*si homo facit quod in se est, Deus ei non denegat gratiam*”, popularized in the work of Biel and others. According to the Scholastics, in order to absolve God’s causation in human sin, human freedom must be a given. Thus, as Ockham posited, avoiding the Averroist threat, God’s necessary freedom and human necessary freedom can only be explained in a dual *potentia/ ordinatio* in God; the *potentia absolute dei* and *potentia ordinata dei*. In the absolute power of God, all is causal while in the ordained power of God, what is ordained is the salvific mechanism of co-operating and operating grace (*necessitas coactionis*). Here, humanity is free, but God “bound”. See Lawrence Murphy, “Gabriel Biel and Ignorance as an Effect of Original Sin in his *Canonis Missae Expositio*” *ARG* 74 (1983) : 5-57; Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham*. Vol 2. (Indiana: Notre Dame, 1987): 1267-1337; and Rondet 122-175.

⁸LC (1521) 21: 86.

speculation on the nature of human powers with the Scholastic tools of appetites and the separated powers of cognition and will.⁹ Instead, he chooses to collapse the human into two components which explain the Scriptural tenets of Law-Gospel, freedom and nature.

Melanchthon collapses human nature into two parts—the faculty of cognition (*vim cognoscendi*) and the faculty of affections (*vim adfectibus*). In these two powers are explained the Law-Gospel dialectic, and whether it can be said, or in what manner, that humanity is free: “*Haec oportuit monere quo facilius postea indicari posset legi ac gratiae discrimen, imo quo certius etiam cognosci posset non qua sit penes hominem libertas.*”¹⁰ The faculty of knowing, which will later be fully developed as the inchoate gift of natural law, is the mind’s ability to know what deeds ought to be done: “*Pertinent autem ad vim cognoscendi lex, id est cognitio faciendorum.*”¹¹ Here the human person is free to choose acts within the power of their will¹²—to eat or to live in good society, for example. This type of freedom—to choose external deeds—is what the philosophers rightly teach on the subject of human freedom and contingency.¹³ From

⁹LC (1521) 21: 86.

¹⁰LC (1521) 21: 87.

¹¹LC (1521) 21: 87.

¹²Freedom properly belongs not to cognition, but to conforming to the will informed by cognition—the power of choice. LC (1521) 21: 87.

¹³“*Et in hanc externorum operum contingentiam defixerunt oculos philosophastri, qui libertatem voluntati tribuere.*” LC (1521) 21: 90.

the perspective of natural judgements—the cognition’s informing of the will as to the end of an act—a person can be said to be free: “*si ad opera externa referas voluntatem, quaedam videtur esse iudicio naturae libertas.*”¹⁴

The second distinction made by Melanchthon is the faculty or powers of the affections (*vim adfectuum*). It is in the affections, the orientation of motive, the fundamental disposition of the individual towards God and others, that humanity is not free. Here is the locus of both sin and virtue. The will is torn between two poles. The first is the cognition which informs it as to an action, while the second pole consists of the affections or, as the Scripture names the affections, the heart. Hence, the inner workings of human affection is the biblical equivalent to the heart.¹⁵ Here in the heart, humanity is not free but bound by selfish desire (self-love) so that even apparently externally evident good acts such as charity are merely guises for misdirected self-love.¹⁶ Internal affections—marred by original sin¹⁷—are neither in our power (*nego in*

¹⁴LC (1521) 21: 93.

¹⁵*Verum quia deus non respicit opera externa, sed internos cordis motus, ideo Scriptura nihil prodidit de ista libertate. . . . Quid enim est voluntas, si non adfectuum fons est? Et cur non pro voluntatis vocabulo cordis nomen usurpamus? Siquidem Scriptura potissimam hominis partem cor vocat, adeoque eam in qua nascuntur adfectus.*

LC (1521) 21: 90.

¹⁶LC (1521) 21: 91.

¹⁷*Dicemus autem de adfectibus plura mox, ubi de peccato originali agemus.*
LC (1521) 21: 93.

*potestate nostra esse*¹⁸), nor capable of rendering us justified before God against whom they ultimately rebel.

For Melanchthon, the Scholastic error was the confusion of the affections--fundamental disposition of the heart--with the Aristotelian concept of an independent or autonomous will.¹⁹ If the will is bound or held hostage to the affections and not held to be independent of "the heart", then one easily sees that no person is free in avoiding the curse of sin. For, the *infirmiorem naturae* is not a cognitive process--this is still intact in the ability to choose elicited acts--but rather an internal disposition which fights against the good or God. Even if an act has a good end, it is still ontologically evil because of our hearts' internal root of sin.²⁰ The affections, the seat of sin, rule over the will and, in this sense, the will is bound.

Four components can be seen in Melanchthon's first foray into the nature of humanity. First, is his rejection of reason--in this case Aristotle and Scholasticism--when the intellectual paradigm opposes Scriptural revelation. For Melanchthon, the failure of Aristotelian anthropology was the decided omission (or optimism) in the key area of the internal or the heart's disposition to sin--a biblical tenet. Thus, he reinterprets Scholastic notions as to the faculties and powers of humanity. Secondly, he uses the Law-Gospel dialectic in showing that mental or cognitive awareness of right

¹⁸LC (1521) 21: 92.

¹⁹"*Quod si vocabulo cordis . . . quam Aristotelico vocabulo voluntatis, facile cavissemus hos tam pingues tam crassos errores.*" LC (1521) 21: 92.

²⁰LC (1521) 21: 90.

and wrong is somehow remnant or vestigial in the human person functioning to convict or terrorize the conscience. Therefore, a person is both sinner and sinned against, or violator and victim. Thirdly, Melanchthon does not dismiss testimony from non-biblical sources when they explain or buttress a biblical testimony. Here we see his use of experiential or historical *locus communis*.²¹ Finally, Melanchthon avoids dualism in positing either two wills in God or a present dual reality. This reality is both the one from which we are judged faithful or not, as well as the location of God's providential *Heilsgeschichte*. Predestination, in particular, is not a source of explanation but a source of arcane mystery.²² Instead, this reality into which revelation history bursts, is the place from which the limits and confines of human inquiry of God and self are to be explored. The present world is the world of the Law, not to be wholly scorned but limited; the reality of God is the intrusion of divine being into the fallen world so as to illuminate darkened minds. Hence, there is no true *analogia entis*, but only a limited horizon requiring *analogia fides*, or, perhaps, *revelata*.

Following his discussion on the nature of the human person, Melanchthon moves to sin. Once again, he starts by juxtaposing human inquiry and biblical confession regarding sin. The sophist-Scholastic distinction between actual and

²¹Melanchthon picks up on the Greek classical theme of hubris in explaining self-love, using Alexander as an example. LC (1521) 21: 90-91.

²²LC (1521) 21: 93. Here Melanchthon finds company in the overarching Nominalist refuge of Predestination. The rationale for the stress is to maintain divine and human freedom, and also to rescue Christology from Averroist-derived Nestorianism or Docetism. Alister McGrath. "Anti-Pelagian Structures of 'Nominalist' Doctrines of Justification", Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis 57 (1981) 107-119.

original sin have obscured the understanding of sin and its effects in the Church. Hence Melanchthon's critique of his Roman Catholic contemporary's (especially Eck) understanding of baptism.²³ Instead, the Scriptural witness--found in the doctrine of original sin--is that fallen humanity is, and does, sin: "*Est enim et originale peccatum plane actualis quaedam prava cupiditas.*"²⁴ If one wishes to introduce any concept of distinction between original sin and concupiscence, then the only Scriptural application is that original sin is the source or propensity²⁵ from which we are dragged to sin. Actual sins, borne out of concupiscence, are the fruit of our sinfulness of nature: "*Sed tam actuale quam originale vitium, peccatum simpliciter vocat, quanquam nonquam ea quae nos actualia peccata, vocet fructus peccati, ut ad Romanos Paulus solet.*"²⁶ The seat of this impulse to sin is the heart, which earlier was argued to be the seat of our affections influencing the will. Since the root of our sin is our heart, it follows that our primary sin must be directed against the Law of God. Sin is a

²³Melanchthon understood the Roman Catholic sacrament of Baptism as maintaining that in the baptized, not only is the guilt of original sin remitted, but also that the baptized has the remission of actual sins, although concupiscence remains. The remnant concupiscence, however, ". . . cannot injure those who consent not, but resist aided by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." Canons and Decrees of Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session V, Canon V (London: Burns & Oats, 1848). The Lutheran position holds that since concupiscence is always an act of rebellion or mistrust of God, it is always an actual or punishable sin. Melanchthon, "The Apology of the Augsburg Confession" II.28 in Tappert.

²⁴LC (1521) 21: 97.

²⁵"*Peccatum originale est nativa propensio et quidem genialis impetus et energia, qua ad peccandum trahimur. . . .*" LC (1521) 21: 97.

²⁶LC (1521) 21: 97.

depraved affection, a disordering of the heart, (and subsequently the mind) away from the knowledge of God revealed in God's Law.²⁷ Of course, this raises additional inquiries: "What is the source of this sinful disposition?"; and, "How does it relate to God and to God's Law?"

The source of this sinful disposition is the inheritance of Adam's sin.²⁸ This biblical truth of Adamic imputation (Genesis 6: 5, Psalm 50: 7) has both a phenomenal and noumenal component to its claim. The phenomenal component is the self-evident truth of evil and sin in the world. The presence and recognition by Philosophy and civil law, of the necessity for Law (civil or human) speaks also of the reality of sin. If sin were not a reality, the Law and tenets of civil justice would not be necessary. Instead, people would naturally always do what is right. Thus, the phenomenal evidence of original sin--actual sin--manifests itself in the first use of the Law as the coercion of the conscience.²⁹ The understanding of Law--the divine ought--remains as a "shadow virtue" (*virtutem umbrae*) poured out on all nations and peoples despite the noumenal component of original sin.³⁰ The noumenal or revelational component to

²⁷*Pravus adfectus, pravusque cordis motus est contra legem dei, peccatum.*" LC (1521) 21: 97.

²⁸*Sicut in Adam omnes moriunter, ita in Christo omnes vivificabuntur. . . . Praeterea si omne desiderium cogitationem humani cordis vanum est et parvum omni tempore . . . necesse est cum peccato nascamur.*" LC (1521) 21: 102.

²⁹*Quis est autem omnium hominum, secundum naturam, qui non aegre ferat coherceri legi. Quod si nunc non sentis, nihil refert, erit enim quam certissime senties, quam indignetur animus cupiditates suas leges coherceri.*" LC (1521) 21: 102.

³⁰LC (1521) 21: 100.

understanding original sin is the Christological focus in Melanchthon. His exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15: 22 and Romans 5: 12-13 refer both to the end of sin in Christ and to the solidarity of the Incarnation with humanity. Original sin must be inherited because it ends and is defeated in Christ. The blessing and solidarity (*humanitas assumpta*)³¹ of Christ to fallen humanity is archetypal of the curse and solidarity of humanity in Adam: “*Quod si non est obnoxia peccato prima nativitas, quid attinet renasci? Imo si carnis nativitas bona est, quid attinet renasci ex spiritu?*”³² Original sin, in its scope, is then only really explicated in revelation. Reason sees its effects, but always, because reason is itself impaired, confuses the extent and source of sin. Since original sin is a sin of nature, which will need further nuancing to hold Christ’s solidarity in the Incarnation, it is also a sin of inner disposition. It can neither be controlled, nor atoned for by the infected. It must be excised and its nature replaced by another’s perfect obedience--imputed or forensic justification.

Now Melanchthon can provide a broad summary of the doctrine of sin and original sin. The popular “confusion” or teaching on evil acts carried in the collective culture and minds of Philosophers are partly correct in acknowledging the reality of

³¹The Nominalist rejection of all extra-mental universals specifically challenged the orthodox consideration of the hypostatic union. Ockham avoided Nestorianism or Docetism by making the particular *homo*--Jesus the Nazarene --the substance of the union while the *logos* assumed the form of *humanitas*. Hence the universality of the Incarnation into a particular man. Melanchthon also has a similar viewpoint, derived from Romans 5:12, that one man created sin while another redeems it. Alister McGrath, “*Homo Assumptus, A Study in the Christology of the Via Moderna*”, *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis* 60 (1984) 283-97.

³²LC (1521) 21: 99.

sin. However, since they choose to partition human nature into a hierarchy of intellect, will, and sensitive appetites,³³ they confuse the intellect's ability to choose the good with moral rectitude before God. Hence the preoccupation with external action. However, if the biblical witness is considered, then one realizes that both *Heilsgeschichte* and explicit reference argue against the natural deductions. The heavenly history of God in Christ Jesus--the purposed and atemporal solidarity of the Incarnation with humanity--means that human nature is sin, inherited from Adam. Furthermore, the biblical paradigm of heart, will, and intellect means that even properly deduced moral decisions³⁴ are still vitiated with sin because the heart itself--as the seat of the human soul--is in rebellion to God's Law. Reason or intellect is flesh, and flesh is sin-vitiated.

The extent of human sinfulness is total in scope and effect; however, it must also be carefully differentiated so as not to be total in substance. Because Melanchthon argues that we are sin, he needs to delineate between humanity as substantially sinful and sinful in substance. This will become a major issue for him in the later Flacian controversy of 1549.³⁵ Nonetheless, in 1521 Melanchthon does allude to the difference

³³LC (1521) 21: 104.

³⁴Even properly deduced moral decisions are incapable of being justifying because they assume an improper motive. Instead of seeking to please God, the choices are rooted in self-love, manifesting as human tenets of virtue. LC (1521) 21: 102.

³⁵Matthieus Flacius Illyricus broke with Melanchthon and Wittenberg in 1549 over several issues, summarily accusing Melanchthon of syncretism and Lutheran heterodoxy. Among the chief concerns of Flacius was that original sin meant that the will was totally bound and that sin is the core of human substance and not an accident.

of original sin as being "*carientiam iustitia originalis*", and not "*totius corruptus*."³⁶

Although he needs not address the Christological implications of sin being human substance, in the 1521 edition, he does demonstrate a familiarity with the theological implications with his tacit approval of the Scholastic (and traditional) claim that original sin was a privation (hence accident) of original justice. It is enough, and perhaps slightly naive, that in his 1521 edition he merely refers to the biblical claim of our natures being in rebellion to the order of God witnessed on two accounts--Christologically and phenomenologically, or via the Bible and experience.

If, as our thesis maintains, part of Melanchthon's theological method allowed for a prominent role--but one subordinated to revelation--for both *loci communes* in the broad Ciceronian sense, as well as for reason, then Melanchthon must account for a consistency between Natural and Divine Law (will). Undergirding this methodological approach is a deeper theological conviction, borne out of his exegesis of Romans 1: 18-23, that God has not left this world without a witness of divine will. Combined with the additional biblical testimony of chapters 2-5 of Romans dealing with Natural Law (Romans 2: 14-16) and Mosaic Law (chapters 3-5), he must find an anthropocentric answer to the biblical claim of universal witness, sin, and finally

He was condemned by later Lutheran councils as heretical in this view. Oliver Olson, "*Flacius Illyricus*," *Shapers of Religious Traditions in Germany, Switzerland, and Poland*, ed. J. Raitt (New Haven: Yale Press, 1981) 2 - 13.

³⁶Note the implicit agreement but qualification as well: "*Proinde cum Sophistae docent, peccatum originale esse, excisside favore dei et carere originale iustitia, debeant addere quod cum absit a nobis Dei Spiritus et benedictio, maledicti simus.*" LC (1521) 21: 106.

responsibility. Thus, after discussing the nature and cause of original sin, he turns to its corollary—Natural Law.

Paradoxically, Law—as in the Lutheran synthesis—functions primarily to show what reason cannot possibly know: “*Quae sit illa cognata cordi impuritas, pravitas, nequitia, quam peccatum originale vocamus, deplorantque omnes sancti ut non sentiat ratio, palam fiet cum lex revelabitur.*”³⁷ Or, put in another form, the “topic” of Law, in Melanchthon’s system, is to clearly show the extent and power of sin, or to show a knowledge that sin is: “*Locus de legibus non paulo clarius aperiet vim rationemque peccati, siquidem peccati cognitio lex esse dicitur.*”³⁸

The first step in understanding Law is to understand the differentiated manifestations of the single originating will from which Law as a *genus* derives. In the greater context, Law is the will of a good, perfect and omnipotent divinity. However, in the creation, from an anthropocentric judgement, it manifests itself in a threefold manner. The 1521 edition posits the divine will as Law; and, predicated in God’s acts in human and creation history, assumes three forms: Natural Law (*legum naturales*); Divine Law (*legum divinae*); and Human Law (*legum humanae* or *ius gentium*).³⁹ However, with his introduction of the three nomenclatures, Melanchthon also introduces the problem of Law—if natural, then why is God’s true will (i.e., his salvific

³⁷LC (1521) 21: 115.

³⁸LC (1521) 21: 116.

³⁹LC (1521) 21: 116.

mercy) not able to be deduced by reason?⁴⁰ Of course, his answer will be that Law functions to show precisely the limits of reason.

Natural Law is found in humanity in the form of conscience. It is the vestigial gift of God and functions, at least partially, to shape character and permit human society:

*Est in gentibus conscientia factum defendens vel adcusans, est igitur lex. . . . Est itaque Lex naturae sententia communis cui omnes hominis pariter adsentimur, adeo quam Deo insculpsit cuiusque animo, ad formandos mores adcommodata.*⁴¹

Appealing once more to the *loci communes* of human learnedness, Melanchthon points out that this concept was shared both by Plato and Cicero.⁴² Thus, a common consensus of first principles—either in mathematics or morals—derive, even for the pagan mind, from a conviction that there exists an inchoate knowledge of some moral law (or physical law) in the “*mentibus hominis.*”⁴³ However, Melanchthon also adds that Cicero and Plato both refused to acknowledge the limitations of human reflection on the exact content, or sense of the divine character, behind the gift of Natural Law—an

⁴⁰*Nam cum naturales dicantur, oportebat a rationis humanae methodo earum formulas colligi per naturalem syllogismum. Id quod nondum video a quoquam factum, et haud scio an omnino possit fieri, nempe usque adeo capta, occaecataque*

ratione humana.

LC (1521) 21: 116.

⁴¹LC (1521) 21: 116.

⁴²LC (1521) 21: 117.

⁴³LC (1521) 21: 117.

underestimation of sin.⁴⁴

Natural law can be distilled down to three basic tenets that, in essence, are concrete habits (*habitus concreatus*)⁴⁵ not invented by human ingenuity but instilled in the mind by divine intervention. Once again, classical thought meets Scriptural revelation in holding that: (1) God is to be worshipped; (2) Life should be valued and preserved; and (3) Human society should be directed for the good of all.⁴⁶ The classical *loci communes* include Aristotle (quoted) and Cicero in Melanchthon's choice of "*colendus est*," derived from Cicero's *De Deorum Natura*.⁴⁷ The biblical witness is the *crux interpretum* of Romans 1: 18-23, and, as we shall see, the Decalogue. In addition, these three natural Laws generate the *ius gentium* of human culture.⁴⁸ Thus, as Aristotle, Plato and others have pointed out, the basis of human laws--*ius gentium* or *ius civile*--are reflections on each of these three greater Natural Laws.⁴⁹ Of course, the

⁴⁴LC (1521) 21: 117.

⁴⁵Note Melanchthon's borrowing of the Scholastic vocabulary of *habitus*. This could imply, as I think, that Melanchthon sees Natural Law as a gift of grace.

⁴⁶"*Deus colendus est. Quia nascimur in quaedam vitae societatem, nemo laedendus est. Poscit humanas societas, ut omnibus rebus communiter utamur.*" LC (1521) 21: 117.

⁴⁷It is noteworthy that Melanchthon chose neither the Vulgate's Romans text rendering "*glorior*" (cf Romans 1: 21), nor the Decalogue's "*adoro*" in referring to the first duty of humanity. His choice of Cicero's "*colo*" is a conscious attempt to build a bridge between revelation and reason. (c.f. Deut. 11:1 "*amo*").

⁴⁸LC (1521) 21: 118.

⁴⁹LC (1521) 21: 119.

reflection or application of the *ius gentium* can be confused so as to obfuscate the founding precept--hence the *ius gentium* is not infallible nor capable of any direct indications of the salvific will of God.⁵⁰

The approach or similitude of the Natural Laws to the specific manifestations of God's will in the Decalogue of the Old Testament allows Melanchthon to investigate what he denotes Divine Laws. Divine Laws are those laws ordained--revealed--in the Scriptures, especially in the Old Testament, regarding human duty to God and others. In a very real sense, Divine Laws are glosses on the larger metanarrative of the Natural Law, in that Divine Laws explicate the specific nature of the Natural Law. Divine Law categorically defines the content of Natural Law. Divine Law breaks into three subcategories: moral, juridicial, and ceremonial: "*Divinae Leges sunt, quae per Scripturas canonicas a Deo sancitae sunt. Ordines earum tres fecerunt, sunt enim aliae morales, aliae iudiciales, aliae ceremoniales.*"⁵¹

Moral laws consist of the Decalogue (*quae Decalogo praescriptae*) and are extensions of the first command to worship God. However, because the implication that worshipping God entails trusting and loving God, the fulfillment of the first command is impossible without divine aid.⁵² The Decalogue, then, is really two tables: the first speaks of the divine-human relationship; while the second speaks of the

⁵⁰LC (1521) 21: 131.

⁵¹LC (1521) 21: 120.

⁵²LC (1521) 21: 121-122.

deontological human-human relationship. The parallels to the Natural Law are as follows:

Decalogue	Natural Law	Locus	Agent
Precepts 1 - 3	1) Worship God	Internal act	Revelation Holy Spirit
Precepts 4 - 10	2) & 3) Life preserved, and civil life	External act	Reason Human mind

As the above table illustrates, Divine Law flows in congruity with Natural Law on two points. The first convergence speaks of the human ability to deduce that civil society requires basic laws of self preservation, and mutual cooperation. Although the Decalogue most clearly speaks to the content of the laws in the second table, human reason is capable, via inchoate divine gift, of deducing the form of the Laws. As a result, the second table is concerned with the external act, or the restraint of evil. The second convergence is the convergence of the first table and the first Natural Law—that God is to be worshipped. Here, according to Melanchthon, is where sin affects reason’s ability to properly deduce and apply the laws.⁵³ Since true worship of God, as revealed in the Decalogue and Scripture, involves love for, and trust in God, it then follows that in humanity’s fallen state it is impossible to fulfill. Or, simply put, in order to fulfill the first table of Divine Law, one must have divine aid to overcome sin. Nonetheless, if the content cannot be comprehended by reason, the deontic form remains in the natural

⁵³LC (1521) 21: 122.

understanding that “God is”. At this point, the dialectic of Law-Gospel resumes so that Law breeds a knowledge of failure to meet the command and this, in turn, leads to the Gospel. Thus classical thought marries the Lutheran understanding of the Law-Gospel dialectic. Even in Melanchthon’s convergence of Natural Law and the Decalogue, he is able to maintain what would become Lutheran-style orthodoxy.

The remaining subcategories of divine Law--juridical and ceremonial--are enveloped as *adumbrata*. Both pertain to the pre-gospel Jewish people and regulate the worship and civil life of the Jewish *cultus*. These laws are now abrogated in particular, but stand as guiding precepts.⁵⁴ The remaining category of human laws--*ius gentium* or *ius civile* (includes *ius pontificae*)⁵⁵--fall under the derivation of the greater Natural Law. These Laws, when consistent with Natural (and Divine) Law, are then able to be held as divinely ordained, and their instrument in the magistrates are equally ordained.⁵⁶ This prefigures Luther’s two kingdom theology.

Melanchthon’s conception of the interrelationship of Law in its components of natural, divine, and human can be hierarchically arranged as follows:

⁵⁴LC (1521) 21: 128-129. The moral Divine Law is not abrogated (21: 193).

⁵⁵By placing Papal laws into the category of *ius gentium*, Melanchthon is able to maintain that the Pope is under a greater law in both Divine and Natural Law. Clearly, Papal suppression of emergent Lutheran orthodoxy goes against both. Hence, Lutherans are able to justify schism and self-defense. LC (1521) 21: 130.

⁵⁶LC (1521) 21: 130. Melanchthon quotes Romans 13: 1-3 as a justifying text.

Realm of Revelation	Realm of Reason
1st Table	Natural Law ↓ ↓
2nd Table ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒	⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ moral teachings ↓ <i>ius gentium</i>

What is surprising in the 1521 edition is Melanchthon's understanding of the transmission of the Divine Law into the greater civil international society. He seems to postulate an almost continual active historical consciousness of the origin of humanity through human agency. He contends that the story of Adam and Eve was orally passed to all nations so that along with a vestigial Natural Law, human society uniformly has a collective memory of Genesis:

Vides enim praeter naturalem Legem, quae impressa est mentibus humanis, ut opinor, etiam leges latas esse a deo Adamo. . . . In hunc modum legis naturae cognitionem instaurabat praedicatione continua Spiritus dei, quae iam obscurabatur excaecatis peccato mentibus humanis, ita ut mihi pene libeat vocare legem naturae non aliquod congenitum iudicium, seu insitum et insculptum natura mentibus hominum, sed leges acceptas a patribus et quasi per manus traditas subinde posteritati.⁵⁷

In this concept of both active revelation by the Holy Spirit and human oral tradition is the prefiguring of Melanchthon's later developing concept of *Heilsgeschichte*—the single strand of God's providential hand in Law and Gospel. Already Melanchthon begins to dismiss the possibility of a double will in God and instead moves to a single

⁵⁷LC (1521) 21: 140.

uniform will and continuity in God.

Finally, what does the Law do? For Melanchthon, it provides the basis for civil society, even in the fallen world, and provides the rock on which human pretences are smashed. Regarding the proper function of the Law, it is to reveal sin. Since none are able to fulfill the Law--human or divine--the Law accuses and terrifies the conscience: "*Legis proprium est, ostendere peccatum, adeoque confundere conscientiam. Ad Rom. 3:20 Per Legem cognitio peccati. Conscientiae agnoscenti peccatum, et confusae per legem, Evangelium ostendit Christum.*"⁵⁸ The limit to a proper knowledge of the Law is sin. Sin is the fruit of original sin and manifests as a fundamental disordering of the human-divine relationship. Humanity was created to love God, but fallen humanity cannot. Hence in the inchoate remnant of the intended relationship is the gift of the *imago dei*--a knowledge of the Law. This knowledge, however, allows deduction that "God is", but not that "God is merciful". This is the human dilemma and the function of original sin as a boundary condition.

In summary, Melanchthon's 1521 *Loci Communes* clearly demonstrate the methodological and theological approaches that will identify Melanchthon as consistently Lutheran and coherent throughout his career in the doctrine of original sin. First, his methodology posits a hierarchy of revelation over reason, but permits access to *loci communes* in the Ciceronian sense in order to demonstrate his concept of God's providence and nearness in history. Second, the reality of sin is always

⁵⁸LC (1521) 21: 190.

explained through the Christological lens of the Incarnation as the doctrine of original sin must then be inherited, and not imitated. For Melanchthon, as Christ is the last Adam, then Adam must be the progenitor of our sin. In this way, only Christ gives meaning to the summation of human experience and reality by explaining God's relationship to sin. Lastly, the point of contact between the two realms of revelation and reason is a limit horizon in which the contact point is primarily an existential experience of conviction and not an intellectual assent. It therefore appears that Schleiermacher was correct—Melanchthon was a “pietist of a higher type”.⁵⁹

⁵⁹c.f. footnote 17, chapter 2.

Chapter Six: 1530, 1533 Loci Communes
“Sed meo iudicio necesse est in methodo veritatis dogmatibus munire conscientias Scripturae testimoniis.”

Despite the success of his 1521 Loci Communes, Melanchthon began the task of expanding and revising it sometime in the late 1520's.¹ A semi-completed text was extant in 1530,² but not until 1533 was the completed work published in Wittenberg. The 1533 edition, and its subsequent thirteen editions to 1541, were, in Melanchthon's view, his theological masterwork. In his November 1539 Testamentum, fearing death from illness, he wrote: *“Ut scripsi in Locis Communibus, et Romanis postremae editiones, in quibus explicare de singulis articulis sine amiguitate conatus sum dicere, quod sentio.”*³ Clearly, two questions arise from the publication of the newest edition: “Why the new work?”; and, “Did Melanchthon change his theology?”⁴

The marks of his 1521 family of editions can be generally summarized in broad categories. First, there is a decided reluctance by Melanchthon to enter into speculative theology. Instead, his methodology will centre on the biblical witness and general

¹CR 2: 456.

²The 1530 edition of the partial Loci Communes can be found in CR 21: 253-334.

³CR 3: 826.

⁴The changes of his theology can be broken down into several smaller pieces (e.g., views on specific sacraments), or examined as a whole. I will try to examine the doctrine of original sin specifically, and determine whether his whole methodology had been altered.

accessible self-evident truths.⁵ Secondly, in the area of the doctrine of original sin, he tends to view original sin as primarily concupiscence. Certainly, he tacitly acknowledges the medieval distinctions regarding its formal and material elements, but by and large, his primary concern in 1521's *Loci* is to explain how the dogma practically functions in the life of the believer. The end result was an explanation of the doctrine in light of actual sin. The 1530, 1533 editions, equally broadly speaking, make more of both philosophical analysis and investigate the specific doctrine of original sin much more carefully and distinctively. Hence the question arises whether he imports illicit philosophical speculation into his anti-speculative theology of 1521.

It will be the contention of this chapter that Melanchthon neither abandons nor subverts his 1521 methodology nor betrays his emerging Lutheran orthodoxy. Instead, what one discovers in the second edition of the *Loci*, is the Lutheran response to both historical and theological controversies which force the Wittenberg faction to begin the very difficult work of self-definition. The basic tenets of Melanchthon's methodology--the biblical approach as *oratio sacra* and experiential *loci communes*--locked together in an epistemological hierarchy which aims to demonstrate the providential hand of God in human history, remains the same as in 1521. What changes is his appreciation of

⁵Breen (*Loci Communes*, 204-207); Kusukawa's (70-72) thesis that Melanchthon, in this second period, began to use a Ciceronian structure in his epistemology seems to be undermined if Melanchthon's rhetorical methodology is shown to be evident even in 1521. The Ciceronian criterion of certainty: (1) innate *principium*; (2) experience; and (3) syllogistic conclusions, are at once operative and limited in Melanchthon's theological method. All three are existent in the 1521 edition, but limited by the doctrine of original sin and the need for revelation. Thus, other reasons besides humanistic influence must explain the subsequent editions of the *Loci*.

method within dogmatic construction--the attempt, within Scriptural boundaries, to explicate Christian doctrine. This 'second order theology' neither supplants Christian self-description nor qualifies the first order approach and priority of God's speaking to us, but rather attempts to function as a synthesis of the meta-narrative that is God's speech to us in both revelation and reason. The three major challenges to Lutheran self-identity were internal management, the Anabaptist threat, and the Catholic counter response. Of course, one might also add general evangelical self-identity amongst the magisterial camps, but this figured less in the 1520's than post 1530.⁶

With the dismissal of medieval style Catholicism in the Lutheran sphere of influence, many tenets of the medieval world disappeared in civil law, education, and general questions of authority. Rejection of Rome meant a like rejection of the Church's interpenetration into society as a stabilizing or solid anchor. The Lutherans found themselves not only having to present a coherent theological self-description, but also having to refound most of the civil structure usurped from medieval Catholicism--law, governance, and even education.⁷ The emergence of the Anabaptist movements, even as early as 1521, acutely demonstrated that not only was esoteric theology at stake, but

⁶After the Augsburg Confession and the Smalkaldic League's formation, the issue of evangelical unity was of paramount importance especially to win England. See McNeill 163-188.

⁷By 1526 the Lutherans had begun already the ambitious role of reformulating the educational system of Lutheran Europe. Melanchthon figured prominently in the role of the Arts with his sense of History and Literature as living memories. For an example of Melanchthon's educational programme see *In Laudem Novae Scholae* (1526) CR 11: 107-11.

even social order. The Wittenbergers wore many hats, reforming both Church and State. Melanchthon, like Luther, also engaged in many tasks, including renovating, at the Elector's request, Saxon universities and their educational system. In addition to the general need to solidify some measure of civil-educational structure, the Lutheran reformers also needed to address the acute problem of their own adherents' failure to reform either morally or ethically. The Parish visitations beginning as early as 1524 (Orlamunde) and continuing to 1527 (Thuringia)⁸, revealed that the Lutheran reform would not be as simple as "purely preaching" the new theology, but would involve much more.

Moral laxity or indifference and doctrinal ignorance moved Melanchthon to tears during his 1527 visit to Thuringia.⁹ By 1527, it was clear that Lutheranism needed a stronger ethical basis as a way of mollifying nervous Princes (following the 1525 Peasant's revolt) and instilling confidence in Lutheran clergy. The Lutheran response was an explosion in the mid-1520's of works dealing with issues such as civil rights, political governance, and catechisms and church articles. It was an intense time of creative energy as Wittenberg was in the process of identifying the character of the Lutheran worldview in all areas, not just theology. The period was a time of systematizing and synthesis --a marriage of the new biblical world of Wittenberg with the medieval world of the German peoples.

⁸Brecht (Vol 1) 259-273; C.S. Meyer, "Melanchthon's Visitation Articles of 1528", Journal of Ecclesiastical History 23-4 (Oct 1978): 309-322.

⁹Kukusawa 63.

Another destabilizing force was the rise of the Anabaptists or Enthusiasts, culminating in the disastrous Peasant's Revolt of 1525. Omitting the civil-political ramifications of the Anabaptist or "*Schwärmer*" groups, they also posed an incredibly complex question to the magisterial reformers as to the plain sense of the Scripture. The issue of tradition or "*sensus literalis*"--the Anabaptist claims to both biblical supremacy and individualistic interpretation--underscored the need for self-identity. Surely, for many such as Karlstadt, the Anabaptist Scriptural understanding was the logical and only extension of the 'rediscovery' of the Bible. Doctrinal challenge arose from a near enemy, one who claimed the self-same method of biblical witness in theology. To this, the Wittenbergers were challenged to defend their theology and method.¹⁰

The third major area of Lutheran self-definition rose quite late in the 1520's, but would eclipse the other two threats by the end of 1530. This was the new interest of Charles V for an unified Christendom in light of the incursions of Islamic Turks. The Catholic counter threat, until the March 11, 1530 summons of the Elector John, was always a very real possibility but was averted by a mentality of "mutually assured sense of destruction." Simply put, there was little to be gained by warring against Catholic princes.¹¹ With the summons, a new mutual enemy presented itself,

¹⁰For a summary of Lutheran-Anabaptist interactions: John Oyer, Lutheran Reformers Against the Anabaptists; Luther, Melanchthon, and Menius. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964).

¹¹Brecht summarizes the political landscape of 1525-1530 (Vol 1: 352-363) as one of deadlock between the European princes.

threatening all of Europe--Evangelical and Catholic. Peace must now be found, and found quickly between the divided theologies. The Christian princes were united in a single purpose--to defend themselves against the threat of foreign incursion--and so the theologians were ordered to find an accord in their schismatic theologies. The Augsburg Confession was the attempt, orchestrated by Charles V, to find such a compromise.¹² Now the Lutherans were forced to find agreement with their decade-old foe, a new process of positive definition over the older practice of negative definition regarding Catholicism.

By 1530, Melanchthon would have pressures from three areas to develop a systematic Lutheran theological self-identity. The internal pressure to replace the vacuum left by medieval Catholicism as the foundational stone of society meant that theology extended into politics, education, and economics. The "*Schwarmers*" challenged any simplistic recourse to the biblical witness and showed the acute need for second order theology in light of 'fundamentalistic' and individual interpretation. Here was a crisis of authority. Lastly, the political reality also forced the Wittenbergers to consider, perhaps for the first time since the Bull *Exsurge Domine*, points of congruity with Catholic counterparts against a decidedly non-Christian foe. All of these factors, demonstrated by Melanchthon's self-conscious rebuttal and thoughts in key areas of the 1530, 1533 *Loci Communes*, culminated in Melanchthon's new edition of the *Loci*. Here would be an attempt to demonstrate Lutheran orthodoxy, continuity

¹²Brecht (Vol 1) 365-400.

with Rome, and distinction from the Radicals.

In his 1530 edition of the *Loci Communes*, Melanchthon is quite conscious of the need for Lutheranism to have a theological method. This method needed to accomplish several things. First, it needed to be conscious of the Scriptural testimony, and also show a continuity with the ancient fathers of the Church.¹³ The limit to the interaction of the Fathers with the Scripture is simply the priority of Scripture over human deductions. Any Church Father (or creed) must be in agreement with the Scripture, at times creating an idiosyncratic use of the Fathers.¹⁴ The rationale for such priority is equally simple—only Scripture is able to teach or inflame the heart.¹⁵ Thus, Melanchthon hopes to found a method which accomodates the “*ordo Scriptorum*” and human reflection. The *ordo Scriptorum* is the revelation of God in the entire history of humanity from *Creatio* to *Evangelio*, as primarily understood from the biblical witness. Furthermore, this *ordo Scriptorum* parallels human reflection on this same history, but always faintly and imperfectly. True method then involves both attention to the Scriptural “*ordo*” and attention to the witness in creation itself. To ignore one over the other is to fall into the trap of the Enthusiasts, or of the moral philosophers.¹⁶ The

¹³“*Sed meo iudicio necesse est methodo veritatis dogmatibus munire conscientias Scripturae testimoniis, ad haec etiam ostendere quid vetustissimi scriptores in ecclesia senserint.*” LC (1530) 21: 254.

¹⁴Meijering 10.

¹⁵LC (1530) 21: 254.

¹⁶LC (1530) 21: 255.

Enthusiast or Anabaptist's biblicism fails in seeing traces of God's order and signs (*liber*) in the natural world, while the philosopher seeks God only as knowledge of the ethical life; neither possesses the true knowledge of God in Christ:

Haec Methodus non progreditur a priore, hoc est, ab arcana natura Dei ad cognitionem voluntatis Dei, sed cognitione Christi et misericordiae revelatae ad cognitionem Dei. In hac cognitione exercere et confirmare animos longe melius est quam philosophari de arcana natura Dei.¹⁷

What in 1521 was a background understanding of *Heilsgeschichte* in Melanchthon's mind, derived from Romans, now explicitly is declared to be theological method. This method is a hierarchical arrangement of knowledge--from revelation to reason, from *Heilsgeschichte* to human history, and from Scripture to tradition. The need for self-description now makes explicit what was implicit in 1521.

The 1533 edition of the *Loci Communes*, which expands the incompleted 1530 edition, stresses the point of distinction and method even more clearly. Once more, Melanchthon will follow the methodology gleaned from sacred history regarding the nature and dignity of humanity, the origin and punishment of sin, and the promise of the Gospel.¹⁸ Only in sacred history--revealed Scripture--are God's acts seen clearly to

¹⁷LC (1530) 21: 256.

¹⁸*Ac si quis propius considerabit ipsam seriem sacrorum librorum animavertat aptum esse eorum oeconomiam. Primum initio concionatur de rerum primordiis, docet mundum a Deo conditum esse, describit hominis naturam et dignitatem, monstrat initium, causam, et poenas peccati. Describit et initium Evangelii, quomodo initio promissum sit semen, quod liberaret nos a tyrannide diaboli-- hoc est peccato et morte.*

demonstrate the coming promise of Christ which then in turn explains history.¹⁹ Christian self-understanding begins with that history of God (*Heilsgeschichte*). However, this same God necessarily is in fallen history, moving and guiding it with divine providential hands so that the empirical history of the senses is a part of the will (Law) of God. However, once again these considerations are but a part, blurred and marred by sin, of the greater method of Scripture:

*Sed Christiani scire debent, etsi hi Philosophici loci ad partem aliquam Legis Dei recte referuntur, tamen ingens discrimen inter doctrinam Christianum et Philosophiam esse, et requirendas hic esse alias res multos maiores, ignotas Philosophiae, ut mox apparebit in catalogo locorum.*²⁰

In the two editions of 1530, 1533, Melanchthon has now clearly defined his method of theological reflection. The theologian is to begin with Scriptural revelation, but since the Scripture itself speaks of a divine providential hand and expanding human knowledge of God's will (in Israel), the Christian thinker likewise can explore the human world to find evidences of this divine history. However, since human artifices are but shadows of the divine history as fully revealed in both Christ and the fallen, proper caution must be undertaken. Thus, Melanchthon not only uses classical "second order" theological reflections--the creeds (*symboles fidei*)--but also continues his appeal to the Ciceronian *loci communes* of experience. The result is self-definition and placement within the Christian Church's traditions, and also integration into the

LC (1533) 21: 347-8.

¹⁹LC (1533) 21: 349.

²⁰LC (1533) 21: 347.

material world in congruity with the universal church, as well as contribution to civil order.

The 1530 and 1533 editions of the *Loci* alter slightly in their order of topics from the 1521 edition, due to Melanchthon's desire to place the Lutheran confession within continuity with the historic Catholic Church and its creeds.²¹ He therefore introduces two new topics: *De Deo*, and *De Creatione*, following the order of the symbols of the faith.²² Functionally, the subsection *De Deo* allows Melanchthon to respond to Anabaptist threats on the Trinity,²³ to continue his programme of the universal locus of "God is", and to show that God is only understood fully in Christ.

For Melanchthon, there is a distinction between the "*sapientia Christianorum*" and the rational enquiry of human minds. Certainly, once again, the human mind is capable of knowledge of an "*arcana natura dei*," but true knowledge is found in "... *cognitione Christi et misericordiae revelatae ad cognitionem dei. In hac cognitione exercere et confirmare animos longe melius est quam philosophari de arcana natura*

²¹The sub-sections of the 1530, 33 *Loci*, in order, are: *De Deo*, *De Creatione*, *De Causa Peccati*, *De Hominis Viribus et De Libero Arbitrio*, *De Lege*, *De Peccato* and *De Evangelio*. See Chapter 5 page 53 for a chart of alterations.

²²LC (1530) 21: 255; LC (1533) 21: 349. This desire to be placed into historical or doctrinal continuity with the ancient church allows Melanchthon to begin to use substantial works of the ancient fathers in defending and delineating Lutheran orthodoxy.

²³Many Anabaptist movements were deemed non-Trinitarian, or at least ambiguously heterodox in Christology. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: (Vol Four) Reformation of Church and Doctrine (1300-1700)* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 320-331.

*dei.*²⁴ Thus, in 1530, he still holds the primacy of revelation over rational deduction, allowing for an inchoate sense of God's existence without full knowledge.

In 1533, he expands the *De Deo* subsection specifically to account for the vestigial divine impressions in the concept of Natural Law, maintaining that the true knowledge of God—God's divine and salvific will—is obscured by sin:

*Etsi enim sunt vestigia quaedam divinitatis impressa rerum naturale, tamen tanta est infirmitas humanarum mentium, ut non satis afficiantur illis vestigiis, cumque vident bonis male esse, et malis bene esse, dubitant an Deus curet res humanas an vero omnia casu eveniant. Praeterea illa voluntas Dei, cuius cognitio ad salutem necessaria est, nullo modo potest ratione deprehendi, videlicet, quod Deum velit remittere peccata.*²⁵

Furthermore, just as the word of God in Christ is a sign (*signis a Deo*) of God's nature and will, so also does creation contain a sign of God's nature and will. The signs in creation, however, are left in "*horrendes tenebras,*" and subsequently require additional revelation in order to understand God's true will for salvation.²⁶ Once again, Melanchthon uses the tension between natural powers, vestigial gifts of God, and revelation, to find an experiential *locus communis* in his readers. Certainly one's natural powers can deduce the proposition "God exists" by reason alone. The proposition, however, fails to elucidate the nature of the deduced divinity as to whether that divine being "*curet res humanas.*"

In both the 1530 and 1533 editions, the answer to whether God cares or not, or

²⁴LC (1530) 21: 256.

²⁵LC (1533) 21: 351.

²⁶LC (1533) 21: 351.

whether God is the cause of all things, leads to one of two conclusions. The first is that God is the cause of all things, but that must include evil. It follows naturally that God is evil. The second natural deduction is that God is good, but that this life (or material Universe) has evil within it. Here God is either malevolent or not really omnipotent. Thus Melanchthon introduces the problem of Manicheanism in *De Deo*.²⁷ In fact, both editions have exactly the same text dealing with the mental deduction of Manicheanism. Evidently what Melanchthon is attempting to prove is that the simple rational proposition "God exists," if carried to natural consequences or syllogistic conclusions, renders God charged with either malevolence or impotence. Afterwards, he mounts neither a metaphysical nor a rational defense to absolve God, stating that the charge of Manicheanism is reputed by the Trinity. The Trinity--with its Christological emphasis--reveals the true will of God as revealed from both Scripture and the Church fathers' testimony.²⁸ Hence, "*secunda ratio*," God is in danger of being charged with evil, but "*secunda Scriptura*," God is exonerated and revealed, in Christ, via the Trinity, to be involved in the whole human history both as "*gubernator*" and saviour. The Lutheran dialectic of God's "hidden" and "revealed" work (will) is not considered a duality in the will of God; but, rather a false cognition due to human infirmity to see the continuity in Christ. This is combined with the methodical approach of *loci communes* allowing Melanchthon to argue simultaneously from

²⁷LC (1530) 21: 257; LC (1533) 21: 353.

²⁸LC (1530) 21: 258-270; LC (1533) 21: 352-367.

experience, and then limit that same experience in light of revelation . Of course, Melanchthon still posits the priority (and necessity) of revelation over reason. The problem in comprehension is sin's anthropocentric starting point.

These same themes are reiterated in the subsection *De Creatione*. Once more, the dialectical tension of God's existence and nature²⁹--deducible by reason--and human evil and freedom must be accounted for. Once more, Melanchthon uses the rational common experiences "What exists must have a cause;" and, "Evil exists, but God is all powerful;"³⁰ to show that the epistemological and existential crisis derived from those human deductions can only be reduced or resolved if balanced against Scriptural revelation. Only the Scripture teaches that God is both good and acting to resolve the problem of human evil in Christ. Only in Scripture, as testifying to Christ, is God exonerated and shown to make sense of the empirical reality.³¹ This follows his argumentation of the 1521 *Locci*.

The question next turns in his argument, to "*De Causa Mali*" wherein Melanchthon introduces a careful, and limited metaphysical distinction that was not present in his 1521 *Locci*. In 1521, Melanchthon was primarily concerned with arguing from the real--"Sin exists"--and then backwards to "Sin is a result of human freedom and consequently of original sin." His 1521 experiential *locus communes* on the cause

²⁹LC (1530) 21: 271; LC (1533) 21: 367.

³⁰"*Si enim natura non potest agere nisi Deum eam assiduo agitet, sequi videtur, Deum auctorem esse peccati.*" LC (1530) 21: 271; LC (1533) 21: 367.

³¹LC (1533) 21: 373.

of evil simply allowed him the rhetorical appeal to the Scripture to explain the everyday experience of right thinking peoples. Now the religious landscape had changed, the Anabaptist movement had used a similar appeal to *sola Scriptura* from rhetorical experiences, but deduced a different conclusion on the cause of evil. For many Anabaptists sin was considered only as a "*res positiva*," and only as a real thing, not an original sin, but an actual sin. If only an actual sin, then baptism should only occur on repentance rendering infant baptism merely superstitious or ineffective.³² As a result, in the subsection *De Causa Mali*, Melanchthon is going to introduce, along with his 1521 *Loci Communes'* methodology, metaphysical distinctions of actual and natural sin:

*Ita facilius putant declarari posse, quod Deus non sit auctor peccati, cum peccatum non significet rem positivam sed defectum. Et huius defectus causa est voluntas ipsa deficiens ac non resistens in obiectio in quo debebat resistere, sed delabens in aliud deficendo.*³³

Faced with the choice of either making human nature intrinsically evil or evil in substance (the Anabaptist option), or of following the Catholic distinction of sin as a manifestation of a privation of God's first gift (*carientiam iustitia originalis*), Melanchthon opts for the second recourse. To explain human responsibility for evil, the freedom of God and God's exoneration of the biblical *a priori*, Melanchthon resorts to metaphysics.

³²Melanchthon's first work against Anabaptism, *Adversus Anabaptistas Phillipi Melanchthonis Iudicium*, was published in January of 1528. Oyer 144.

³³LC (1530) 21: 272; cf LC (1533) 21: 371.

Firstly, sin is not the substance of humanity nor the intention of God in creation. Instead, it is an “accident” in the Aristotelian sense of existing contingently in another substance. Before the fall, human wills were free to choose the good and God. This gift of freedom is the source of present and past human contingency.³⁴ However, in the first parents was also the gift of the Holy Spirit—a constant self-revelation of God—in order to declare to and aid the first parents in their pursuit of the good. Sin (and our sin nature) is the result of the first parents’ misuse of that first freedom, and therefore, an accident of original justice—the power of choice. Later, Melanchthon will expand the theological implications of the doctrine, but now he simply argues for the evidence of human causality and free will.

In addition to showing that sin is a defect resulting from the loss of a natural gift of nature, he also shows how that same gift, although obscured, still manifests itself *post peccatum*. *Post peccatum*, contingency in the selection of God’s good, still exists as the vestigial remnant of Law ascertained by our conscience. Humanity was free to choose God, but fell. Nevertheless, this freedom of choice before God—an innate consciousness of God—remains in human culture as a by-product of our concept of Law.³⁵

³⁴“*Et quidem voluntate nostra ante peccatum libera fuit. Est autem libertas voluntatis causa contingentiae nostrarum actionum.*” LC (1533) 21: 372; cf LC (1530) 21: 273.

³⁵“*Deinde concedendum et hoc est, quod Scriptura tribuat homini, nunc etiam post peccatum, libertatem aliquam diligendi ea, quae sunt subiecta rationi, ad civilem iustitiam efficiendum.*” LC (1533) 21: 372; cf LC (1530) 21: 273.

Melanchthon's introduction of a qualification derived from a metaphysical distinction does follow his basic agenda of methodology and doctrinal supremacy. In his 1533 edition, to avoid placing moral or natural philosophy over Christian doctrine, he adds that even though the moral philosophers rightly deduce much on the freedom of the human will from Natural Law and conscience, only the word of God can explain God's will and purposes explicitly.³⁶ Nonetheless, the distinction introduced does set the 1530 and 1533 Melanchthon apart from his 1521 counterpart. The distinction is precipitated by Melanchthon's requisite need to begin addressing Lutheran theological orthodoxy in light of other reformed movements, Catholicism, and the Radicals. What he imports in 1530 and 1533 are classical methodologies and distinctions on issues which buttress the Lutheran theological self-identity. Once more the idiosyncratic Melanchthon emerges.

A similar pattern is detected in the next topical section, *De Humanis viribus seu de Libero Arbitrio*. As in the topical subsection, *De Mali*, Melanchthon retains his basic methodological approach and distinctions between reason and revelation but also explicates further, at certain key points, what earlier in 1521 would be simply declared as true. Once again, motivation for such recourse need not be explained in terms of humanistic syncretism, but rather as extension of methodology in light of self-identification.³⁷

³⁶LC (1533) 21: 370.

³⁷Melanchthon's use of Scriptural quotations substantially increases in the second family of editions and this trend continues in the last family editions. Typically where

In his explanation of human free will and powers, Melanchthon once again uses the dialectic between human freedom (we do evil freely) and God's providential hand. Evil is the result of human activity and never God's passive or active will. Thus, Melanchthon is able to return to an experiential *locus communis*—evil is our own. Just as in the 1521 edition, Melanchthon states that the rational deduction of this point of knowledge is either fatalism³⁸ or existential uncertainty,³⁹ Melanchthon's statement that the human person is both free and bound once more rests on his essential distinction between the powers of the intellect and the appetites (*vis cognoscendi et vis appetendi*).⁴⁰ The intellectual power is the locus of freedom in that it remains as an inchoate gift to ascertain the good—the basis of Law.⁴¹ Here humanity is free, but only with regard to external acts. The appetitive power, however, is the concupiscence of human flesh and it is habitually disjointed from the order or will of God. As a result, the heart—the joined intellect, will, and appetite—desires neither God nor the good necessarily, instead always choosing self-love over God.⁴² Here the human is bound by

one or two key verses sufficed in 1521, he now adds several pages of Scriptural exegesis.

³⁸LC (1533) 21: 372.

³⁹LC (1533) 21: 374.

⁴⁰LC (1530) 21: 275.

⁴¹LC (1530) 21: 275. Melanchthon adds a section derived from Cicero distinguishing the *logos* from the *opmen* (reason from appetites). Both united are the heart. This is dropped in the 1533 edition.

⁴²LC (1530) 21: 276.

sinfulness. It is the internal actions of the heart, the innate tendency to self-love, that creates sin in the human agent. Even if the goal of a deed is morally correct, the internal disposition of the heart away from God is still enough to merit damnation. Thus, it can be said that the human agent is free and bound.

However, Melanchthon has not demonstrated how this dual human tension can absolve God of participation in the first fall of humanity-- can God be said to have not necessarily willed the fall? Instead, Melanchthon must argue that this fallen nature was neither willed nor caused by God. To do this, he adds text dealing with the vestigial nature of the *imago dei* in the human race. Certainly humanity fell from a privileged state before God--this is incontrovertible. But, how is the fallen world related to that first state? Of course, the doctrine of original sin addresses this precise question. However, before moving to that doctrine, Melanchthon mentions another point of contact between the pre-fall and post-fall realities. Before the fall, humanity was given contingent freedom in order that it might choose the revealed good of God. This gift manifests as a knowledge of what is good, or a predisposition to attune the mind to God, and a knowledge of right or wrong. In our fallen state, this gift still functions, albeit greatly impaired:

*Multa vestigii, multae mirificae imagines Dei in naturam impressae sunt in quibus agnoscere deus voluit, ut suo loco dicemus. Has obruit naturae corruptio ut nullam firmam notitiam de Deo mentes naturaliter concipiant.*⁴³

No longer is the *imago Dei* able clearly to hear the voice of God; this has been lost with

⁴³LC (1530) 21: 276; cf LC (1533) 21: 374.

the fall; but, the continuity of the two realities--pre-fall and fall--is joined by this vestigial gift.

Instead of God willing or participating in the fall, we find God's purpose being fulfilled despite the first parent's contingent act. God's singular will--obscured from human minds because of the fall--is shown in the retention of this human dignity. Since our concept of Law--Natural, moral, or *ius gentium*--is a mirror and hammer of God's will in Christ, one can then extrapolate backwards from Christ revealed to see that God neither willed nor caused sin.⁴⁴ The existence of a "*iustitiam carnis*" declares, as shown in Romans 1: 18-23, that there is a universal call of the Spirit and Gospel and that the Law itself is propaedeutic to that call.⁴⁵ Melanchthon, by seeing in the concept of Natural Law a link between the pre-fall and post-fall worlds, is able to declare God to have but one will. This will can only be finally understood from the vantage point of Christ. Of course, the limiting boundary is the very problem of sin. Nonetheless, the singular will of God testifies that God neither caused nor willed the fall, but rather intervened so as to nullify its final effects.

This expansion of the 1521 *Loci* serves Melanchthon well, while still incorporating the basic methodology and Christological stresses found in the earlier *Loci*. By enhancing the function of Natural Law, he also enhances the application of said Law in the key area of ethics. Here a response to Antinomianism and Radicalism

⁴⁴LC (1530) 21: 280.

⁴⁵LC (1533) 21: 376.

is being formulated so as to solidify civil order. Melanchthon will never say that civil justice, or good works, are salvific,⁴⁶ but will hold to the unifying principle of Law as gift and responsibility showing God's singular will in Christ through creation. On the human side, this gift manifests as freedom to choose external acts, but on the divine side—due to original sin—the gift simply refers to the wrath of God.

Having spent considerable time explaining the limiting nature of human rationality pertaining to knowledge of God, Melanchthon now turns to the limiting factor—sin. Until this point, he has been utilizing the dual methodology of experiential *loci communes* alongside the biblical witness to explain how it is possible for God and humanity both to operate freely and necessarily. The unifying thread in the tapestry is God's providential hand—a singular will—which guarantees and functions to maintain human contingency and divine sovereignty. This singular will is only understood backwards through human history when ascertained through God in Christ. Christology functions to give resolution to human history and experience, giving clarification to concepts which were, previously, only dimly grasped because of sin.

On the topic *De Peccato*, Melanchthon once more appeals to the common experience of “we do sin” as partial evidence for the biblical claim that we are sinners before God. However, historical realities force him to introduce careful distinctions into his thought to provide Lutheranism some self-distinction. In the section *De*

⁴⁶The fulfillment of “*civilibus moribus*” does not function as an acquittal of sinful nature, but does function as proof of a limit for reason as in 1521. LC (1530) 21: 281. For Melanchthon's views on good works, see Maxcey *Bona Opera*.

Peccato, Melanchthon points out that the church has often gone astray regarding sin and its origin. The dominant error centres on treating sin only as an external deed, as a deliberated deed.⁴⁷ Here, Melanchthon initiates the process of self-definition over Catholicism whereas earlier in the *Locj*, he argued against Anabaptist style dualism. In order to discuss what sin is, since it is universally acknowledged that it exists, one must “ . . . *dividitur peccatum in peccatum originis et actuale.*”⁴⁸

The problem in understanding sin is not in deriving a definition by reason, but understanding how reason itself is invitiated by sin; in short, our ignorance of our ignorance.⁴⁹ It is easily understood that sin is a diversion from Law, and hence a willed act. This definition, common both to Philosopher and Scholastic, is partially correct:

*Et cum has maximas pestes non cernat, somniat lege Dei tantum iustitiam civilem requiri, nec peccata esse ulla alia praeter civilia delicta, dende huc detorquent imperiti quaedam dicta, videlicet naturam bonam esse, item peccatum non esse peccatum nisi sit voluntarium.*⁵⁰

There is no doubt that sin against Natural Law, as Natural Law is a predicate of God’s will, is sin. However, for Melanchthon to maintain that sin is purely volitional is to

47 Ideo et nos hunc locum suscepimus explicandum praesertim cum aliter iudicet scriptura de peccato quam humana ratio seu philosophia seu leges politicae. Itaque singulari prudentia in loco opus est. Nam et theologi multi hic lapsi sunt qui peccatum intellexerunt tantum civiliter de factis.

LC (1530) 21: 284. The subsections *De Peccato* and *De Peccato Originis* occur word for word in both the 1530 and 1533 editions. Hence, from now on I will refer only to the 1530 edition. The 1533 sections are found in 21: 278-388.

⁴⁸LC (1530) 21: 284.

⁴⁹LC (1530) 21: 285.

⁵⁰LC (1530) 21: 285.

imply, as did the Scholastics, that the nature of humanity is such that it can independently obey the Law and be without sin.⁵¹ The semi-Pelagian position often raised in such considerations bucks against the biblical revelation of Christ and grace alone: "*Deinde quia fingunt Lege Dei tantum requiri civilia opera, item homines iustos esse propriis operibus, abolent Evangelium de misericordia, abolent doctrinam de fide.*"⁵²

The Scholastic doctors' problem was their failure to discern the extent of the curse (*reatus*) in the imputation of the first parents' fall. Instead of the imputation of sin being an intrinsic and dispositional curse to doubt, hate, and flee from God, the Scholastics taught that the *reatus* was a ". . . *imbecillitatem in natura, hanc vocant formitem.*"⁵³ The scope of the curse was not total in disposition but a wounded infirmity which remained as an inert concupiscence. Concupiscence, by itself, was not damnable unless acted upon.

Over and against this, Melancthon claims that original sin is not only an imputed curse,⁵⁴ but also a perpetual disease which rebels against God and is itself

⁵¹"*Ceterum docent naturam hominis posse obedire Lege Dei et sine peccato esse.*"

LC (1530) 21: 285.

⁵²LC (1530) 21: 285-6.

⁵³LC (1530) 21: 285.

⁵⁴*Nos contra sic sentimus. Peccatum originis non tantum esse imputationem seu reatum sed etiam natulae hominis corruptionem, qua fit ne possimus vere obedire lege Dei et sine peccato esse. . . . Haerent in natura hominis ignoratio dei, dubitatio, diffidentia, odium dei et alii morbi pugnantes cum Lege Dei.*

worthy of damnation.⁵⁵ Hence, it is neither inert nor passive, but an active disordering force from within human nature itself. However, if this is true, then how can humanity be responsible for said sinful nature? Here the biblical *a priori*--“*Deus non est causa peccata*”--must be distinguished. However, before proceeding to this point, Melancthon carefully reviews the Church’s understanding of original sin and shows his continuity with that tradition.

Following Anselm, Melancthon states that original sin is the loss of original justice, thus avoiding Manichean dualism. Original justice meant that the first parents had: (1) integrity of body and soul (that is, no concupiscence); (2) clear knowledge of God; and (3) perfect obedience, trust in, and love for God.⁵⁶ Subsequently, Anselm, like Bonaventure, correctly stated that original sin is both a defect--loss of original justice--and a subsequent concupiscent disordering: “*Sic interpretatur Anselmus ipse definitionem, ut ostendat se et defectus et concupiscentiam complecti.*”⁵⁷ Following the loss, Adam’s natural integrity was altered so that he was now under the wrath of

LC (1530) 21: 286.

⁵⁵“*Non actum aliquem sed perpetuum morbum.*” LC (1530) 21: 286.

⁵⁶*Anselmus recte definit peccatum originis cum ait, esse carentiam iustitiae originalis. Hic iustitia intelligatur non tantum imputatio seu approbatio sed etiam in ipsa natura hominis integritas virium animae et corporis, certa notitia dei et obedientia, perfectus timor, fiducia, amor Dei.*

LC (1530) 21: 286.

⁵⁷LC (1530) 21: 286.

God.⁵⁸ Thus, the nature of humanity was intrinsically altered and this alteration--the loss of original justice--was under the wrath of God.⁵⁹ At this juncture, the Scholastics veer from the Lutherans by asserting that concupiscence, by itself, is not a punishment of the fall but a simple by-product. Lutherans, on the other hand, see concupiscence--with its self-imposed and demonic tyranny--as a fundamental part of the curse of the fall:

*Scholastici concupiscentiam faciunt poenam peccati non peccatum. Non concupiscentiam dicimus et poenam lapsus Adae et peccatum in nascentibus, est et mors poena sed praecipua poena est tyrannis diaboli cui subiecta est natura hominis propter peccatum.*⁶⁰

Here Melanchthon begins to pick up his argumentation against Eck which derives its origin from the Augsberg Confession, the Catholic Refutatio, and Melanchthon's subsequent Apologia.⁶¹ The Catholic over Lutheran considerations on baptism flow from this very point of divergence.⁶²

⁵⁸LC (1530) 21: 287.

⁵⁹"*Ita posterii propagatione contrahunt vitium originis, hoc est et rei sunt et habent vitiosam naturam.*" LC (1530) 21: 287.

⁶⁰LC (1530) 21: 287.

⁶¹See Melanchthon and Eck's debate on original sin in: Heinz Macheson, "The Debate between Eck and Melanchthon on Original Sin at the Colloquy of Worms, 1541", The Lutheran Quarterly 11-1 (1959) 42-56.

⁶²Melanchthon's concept of baptism follows:
In Baptismo remitti reatum et tamen manere ipsum morbus, . . . , sed non imputatur credanti. Praeterea cum datur Spiritus Sanctus concipimus novos et pios motus, quibus aliqua ex porte corrigi morbus incipit, atque ita per omnem vitam luctandum est cum hoc morbo dupliciter. . . . Et necesse est scire haec

It is at this point of divergence that Melanchthon's theological methodology most clearly reveals the triumph of his biblicism over rationality. The Scholastics, like the Philosophers, fail precisely in distinguishing between the limits of rational inquiry and the fulness of revelation. Since both the Philosophers and the Scholastics confuse the nature of sin as being restricted to the realm of external act, and not internal disposition, both miss the point of the doctrine of original sin--to show God's merciful dealing in Christ:

Fiunt enim cum dubitatione etiamsi sapientissime disputant de Deo--Xenophon, Plato, Cicero, Pomponis Atticus tamen dubitant utrum placeant Deo. Et certe in summis afflictionibus iudicant se negligi et deseri a Deo praesertim cum agnoscunt aliquam suam culpam, cum sentiunt se urgeri iudicio Dei. Etsi enim habeant notitiam legis de Deo quam docet lex naturalis, tamen notitiam Evangelii non habent, quod Deus gratias remittat peccatum, quod certa sit remissio peccatorum, quod gratis Deo placeant.⁶³

If one merely begins to understand sin and its origin from a purely cognitive point of view, the end result is a works-righteousness apart from grace. This is the commonality between the pagan philosopher and Catholic theologian who hold that concupiscence is not a dispositional and actual (that is, punishable), sin. Both overestimate the ability of the human mind to extricate itself before God. Both

esse peccata, res vere dignas damnatione quod ad ipsius morbi naturam attinet, sed tamen, ita non imputari, si fide misericordiam apprehendamus. Nisi enim hoc peccatum agnoscamus, neque beneficium Christi intelligi neque exerceri fides potest.

LC (1530) 21: 290.

⁶³LC (1530) 21: 291.

underestimate the depth of human sin and ignore Scriptural revelation. In contrast, Melanchthon sees himself in continuity with the true Church across history because he uses the doctrine of original sin in a manner which holds two revealed truths in mind. First, the biblical witness is that Christ is the second Adam (Romans 5: 12). Secondly, all of human nature—including reason—is sin-vitiated. Sin is a self-evidential reality but its origin is an article of faith. Original sin is not explained in terms of induction—even Ciceronian—but only explained from the lens of *post-Christum*. For Melanchthon, the all-invasive nature of sin in origin—which involves concupiscence and defect—is a result of the totality and completion of the work of Christ. The forensic imputation of salvation corresponds to the forensic imputation of guilt in Adam—just as Christ is, so was Adam’s fall. Only in the gospel is an answer found to the question of certainty, and this is understood from the cross backwards, through the *Heilsgeschichte* of God. Secondly, the Scholastic/Philosopher confuses the extent of the sin’s damage to human nature. As a result, the thinker tends to misunderstand the pedagogy of God in the Law. As it is true that there remains a vestigial imprint in human nature *post-peccatum*, and as it points to God, the Scholastic then postulates that reason itself must be left untainted. However, the biblical stress is that reason—all of humanity—is tainted, and that the remnant of Natural Law is both gift and tutor or taskmaster. As gift, it allows civil and moral governance; but as tutor, it shows God’s wrath towards evil acts: “*Et hanc paedagogiam ornat Deus egregiis praemiis corporalibus et econtra violationem*

*Legis externam punit gravibus poenis corporalibus et aeternis.”*⁶⁴ This is the testimony of *Lex Naturae*⁶⁵ *et experientia* unaided by the gospel witness in Christ. Only with the revelation of Christ can the true scope and origin of sin be understood. Here Melanchthon finally and decidedly acquits himself of the “Melanchthon Blight” by showing, in the doctrine of sin and original sin, the necessity for revelation to limit reason.⁶⁶

The doctrine of original sin, as understood in the first series of subsections in his *Loci Communes*, functions, for Melanchthon, as a boundary demarcating the point at which reason can no longer penetrate the mysteries of God, but simply receives truth. Nevertheless, as was seen in his explanation of the Trinity, Melanchthon did not deny the use of philosophy when it allowed greater doctrinal precision. Furthermore, Melanchthon was not anti-speculative in the sense of simply parroting biblical claims, but firmly believed in God’s will as manifested throughout God’s creation; and also believed that human reason could never fully grasp the mystery. It is only “*in Christum*”--the fullness of God’s will--that human reason is fully informed. By

⁶⁴LC (1530) 21: 292.

⁶⁵*Nam haec ipsa opinio est quaedam Lex Naturae, scilicet, sentire quod pro benefactis praemia reddat, pro malefactis poenas.”* LC (1533) 21: 387.

⁶⁶Melanchthon continues to expand the concept of Natural Law, as in 1521's *Loci*. The stress remains the same as in 1521, with Natural Law equating to Divine Law in general form. (*Lex Naturae est notitia legis divinae, naturae hominis indita*) LC (1533) 21: 398. Melanchthon does introduce a new trifold use of the Law. First, it restrains evil (21: 405); second, it accuses of sin (21: 405); and finally, it teaches the justified how they should live (21: 406). The last use (*usus elenchthus*) is the root of the Cordatus or Antinomian dispute.

positing a singular unifying will of salvation in God, Melanchthon is able to order the confused world of the senses hierarchically to the world of God's reality. It is here the Lutheran dialectic of Law and Gospel occurs, placing him decidedly into what would later be defined as Lutheran orthodoxy.

Chapter 7 - *Loci Communes* 1543:

*"[Homo] non amat Deum, quia etiamsi statuit esse Deum, tamen dubitat, utrum curet, exaudiat et adiuvet nos, . . . , sed poenas esse iudicat sclerum, certe Deum punientum non amat."*¹

In 1543, Melanchthon returned to writing yet another substantially expanded edition of the *Loci Communes*. During the intervening years between the second edition of 1533 and the third edition of 1543, he found himself still embroiled in the dual task of contra-distinction and self-identification. The late 1530's had been trying years, with internal Lutheran dissention via Agricola,² Schneck,³ and Cordatus⁴ being exacerbated by the rise of Catholic hegemony once more in the political life of Europe.⁵

¹*Liber de Anima* (1553) CR 13: 156.

²Johannes Agricola disputed with both Luther and Melanchthon between 1528 and 1537 over the abrogation of moral laws in the rejuvenated. Manschrenck. *Christian Doctrine* xviii.

³In 1536, Jacob Schenk charged Melanchthon of holding Catholic sympathies involving communion. Melanchthon believed, in some circumstances, that the cup could be withheld from believers, especially if the congregation was elderly and used to a single element. Luther reprimanded Melanchthon's view. Brecht. Vol. 2 153-155. However, in the Augsburg interim of 1548, Melanchthon would maintain the necessity of the chalice for the laity. Maxcey. *Bona Opera* 181.

⁴Conrad Cordatus, hearing Caspar Crucigar lecture with Melanchthon's notes, accused Melanchthon of believing that good works were causal to salvation. Luther sided with Melanchthon's claim that good works were necessary (following new life) but not causal. Brecht. Vol. 2 148-152; Maxcey. *Bona Opera* 196-282.

⁵The years 1540-48 would see the failure of various Protestant religious colloquies and the strengthening of Catholicism with the Jesuits (1540), Trent (1546-52), the Schmalkaldic War (1546-47), and the subsequent interims. As Evangelical unity became less and less feasible, the Catholic unanimity loomed over the Evangelicals as a divided Evangelical Church could not withstand the political and military success of the Empire.

Thus, it is not surprising that Melanchthon returns to his *Locis Communes* in order to continue the delineation of the “*Ecclesiae Witebergensis*” against the Catholic polemics of Eck and Cochlaeus, who were joined, in 1553, by the Lutheran Osiander.⁶ The central concerns for Melanchthon in 1543 are revealed in his choice of respondents in his new edition of the *Locis*. In Eck, he has his strongest and most able opponent theologically, especially in the key areas of original sin and baptism.⁷ In Cochlaeus, he responds to the charge that Lutheranism--with its rejection of Papal authority-- has opened the proverbial Pandoras’ box of chaos leading to widespread European Antinomianism as seen in the radical shift.⁸ Finally, to Osiander he responds to charges of denaturing Lutheran tenets of justification and the Eucharist with Catholic and Swiss heresy. Thus, the same program found in 1530 and 1533 requiring both self-definition against other theologies and congruency with the greater “*Ecclesiae Catholicae Christi*” is the impetus of Melanchthon’s return to the *Locis Communes*.

It is no surprise then that the same concerns that preoccupied his mind in 1530 and 1533 are still central in the third edition⁹. Examples include his stance against Antinomianism--either Lutheran (via Agricola) or Anabaptist--which he equates with

⁶LC (1543) 21: 601.

⁷See Machesen.

⁸Lutheranism, according to Cochlaeus, was the work of “deformers.” Carter Lindbeck, *The European Reformations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) 15.

⁹The sub-sections of the 1543 *Locis*, in order, are: *De Deo*, *De Creatione*, *De Causa Peccati*, *De Hominis Viribus et De Libero Arbitrio*, *De Peccato*, *De lege* and *De Evangelio*.

Manicheanist duality.¹⁰ And as in 1530 and 1533, his solution is to posit a singular providential will in God throughout creation, revealed and understood in Christ. Here in the unified will of God are both human and divine freedom guaranteed, so that the concept of Law functions propaedeutically for that divine will. As a result, Law, as deduced from reason, is necessary both before rejuvenation and rebirth as well as afterwards in the believer's life.¹¹ This effectively rebuts the charge of Antinomianism. Secondly, Melanchthon will continue to distinguish the priority between philosophy and revelation in matters of faith. Of course, in the key area of sin and its origin, he follows the argument of 1533 in holding that Eck's Scholastic error is a fundamental misconstrual of reason (philosophy) over faith. Revelation then is required in order to understand the mind of God, although reason can be informed by revelation accordingly: "*Sed quia res sunt extra iudicium humanae mentis positae, languidior est assensio, quae fit, quia mens movetur illis testimoniis et miraculis et iuvatur a Spiritu Sancto ad assentiendum.*"¹² Furthermore, as was shown earlier, Melanchthon's

¹⁰Melanchthon equates Stoicism to Manicheanism and Anabaptism in that all confuse the duality of human and divine interaction rendering human existence as somehow materially evil or fatalistic. Cf. *De Aristotle* (1543) 11: 657. Also see citation of LC (1543) 21: 606: "*Quam varii furores nunc sunt Anabaptistarum, qui multum habent contagii Manicheorum.*"

¹¹Whether Melanchthon has fully rejected predestination by the mid-1540's is open for debate. Certainly it appears that he refuses to enter into speculation on the "*arcana natura dei.*" Instead, Melanchthon, as he wrote to Calvin, (CR 5: 109; 7: 932; 8: 916; 9: 467), argued that there is no secret will in God but that God's promises in Christ are universal. Manschrenk. *Reason and Conversion* 179.

¹²LC (1543) 21: 605.

Lutheran dialectical methodology is still evident in the 1543 *Locj*. This chapter will focus on the function of the theology of original sin, showing it to be in congruity with both the 1521 and 1530-33's editions, and, as before, clearing Melanchthon of the charge of blight.

Despite the overall congruity with the earlier editions, new emphases are also found in this edition of the 1543 *Locj*¹³. In particular, one notes Melanchthon's enhanced and prolonged Christological focus in the subsections *De Deo* and *De Peccato*. Another striking dissimilarity to earlier editions is Melanchthon's usage in *De Creatione* of an ontological argument for God's existence. Of course, even here the theme of knowledge of God--"esse Dei"--is juxtaposed to the revelatory theme of "essentia Dei". The two are related, but without revelation the "essentia Dei" is finally unknowable because of original sin and its effects on human reason.

In 1543's text of *De Deo*, Melanchthon reiterates the theme of God's singular will--post-fall and pre-fall--that humanity should have knowledge of God.¹⁴ This

¹³One notes in the various family editions between 1521 and 1543 a two fold expansion. The first is an expansion of biblical texts and the second an appeal to Church fathers and reasoning from their witness.

¹⁴*Ideo conditum est genus humanum ac deinceps ideo redemptum est, ut sit imago et templum Dei celebrans. Vult enim Deus agnosci et celebrari et fulsisset illustris et firma notitia Dei in mentibus hominum si natura hominum manisset integra. . . . Sed humane mentes in hac corruptione natura in magna et tristi caligine vagantur quaerentes, an sit providentia et quae sit Dei voluntas.*

theme provides the experiential *locus communis* of his methodology from which Melanchthon moves from the real to the need for revelation. The essential problem in the retention of the knowledge that “God is,” is whether this God—deduced as the eternal and good mind¹⁵—punishes evil or not.¹⁶ For Melanchthon, based on the natural knowledge that God exists, the world can be divided into either believers or unbelievers, depending on their response to additional and requisite revelation. The unbeliever, having only rational access to a natural knowledge of God, either creates God in self-image, or as Muslims, worship a wrathful God in perpetual state of doubt of said nature.¹⁷ The ‘natural theologian’ knows only of God’s Law and hence wrath. Opposite to this is the believer whose Christological component instead holds “*Christus deducit nos ad patefactum Deum*”¹⁸ to find mercy. Thus, the believer armed with Scriptural and revealed truths finds God’s clearest will in Christ. Nonetheless, the singular will of God is still manifest in the Law-Gospel dialectic but Melanchthon claims the unaided human mind can only fixate on the Law (wrath) component.¹⁹ Of course, Melanchthon does not seem to conceive of a world or people in which the Christian revelation of Christ, either propaedeutically in the Law or via the Scripture, is

LC (1543) 21: 607.

¹⁵LC (1543) 21: 610.

¹⁶LC (1543) 21: 608.

¹⁷LC (1543) 21: 609.

¹⁸LC (1543) 21: 608.

¹⁹LC (1543) 21: 611.

absent. For the modern mind this seems quite naive. Melanchthon takes his cue from the claims of Romans 1:18-23 of a universal witness.

As in earlier editions, Melanchthon is able in *De Deo* to repudiate both Manichean style dualism and Antinomianism with his conception of the singular manifestation of God's will in human history via the Law-Gospel dialectic and Christological understanding. As before in this uniform will, human freedom and moral obligation meet divine freedom and Providence. The reputation of Antinomianism is also resumed in his discussion on creation.²⁰

In *De Creatione*, he posits nine arguments for the conclusion, "God exists."²¹ In these arguments, he explores the proper placement of natural deduction in creation, Natural Law and revelation. These proofs: design; human intelligence; innate sense of Law; conscience; political society; infinite regression; and final cause; all point the human mind to the simple conclusion of God's existence. This is the limit of natural deduction, even for the highest of minds. However, as observed in Stoical or Epicurean philosophy, conclusions resultant from such considerations as to the nature of God are ones of fear, disinterest, or dualism.²² Again, God can only be truly understood as God in the revelation of Christ, showing the manifestation of God's will in all of human history. Thus, when viewed from revelation there is no dual or false

²⁰For a detailed analysis see Chapter 6. Once more, Melanchthon demonstrates little novelty in ideas, merely expanding proof texts for earlier seminal arguments.

²¹LC (1543) 21: 641-643.

²²LC (1543) 21: 638.

will in God--Manichean duality is defeated and Providence raised.

In the subsection, another surprising consideration of God's providential will occurs, which appears quite out of place and requires noting. Amongst his proofs for God's existence, he includes the category of prophecy (*futurorum eventum*) as proving God's existence. In wishing God to be immanently connected to creation--and the Church--Melanchthon adds this proof of God's providential hand, manifest in human stories (mainly biblical) of divine intervention. This surprising and false 'ontological' argument appears to echo Melanchthon's belief in the common history of God and humanity, allowing his experiential appeals to the *usus historiarum*. Accordingly, history occurs because God is in, and above history, guiding it to its fulfilment in Christ. In addition to buttressing his belief in an universal and providential history, this also secures a pastoral confidence in God's immanence. Hence, alongside the ontological style arguments Melanchthon posits a single will in a providential God in continuity throughout all history.²³

Melanchthon then turns to sin in the subsections *De Causa Peccato* to *De Peccato* following the subsections *De Deo* and *De Creatione*. As indicated earlier in *De Deo*

²³*Nona a futurorum eventum significationibus. Certo monstrantur futuri eventus*

non modo per prodigia, quae gentes movebant, quorum alia alias causas habent,

sed multo magis per vaticinia in Ecclesia, ut Balaam, Iesaias, Ieremias, Daniel praedixerunt mutationes et successiones regnorum. Necessesse est igitur aliquam mentem esse praevidentem eas mutationes et praemonstrantem.

LC (1543) 21: 643.

and *De Creatione*, the providential will of God, understood unaided by revelation, leads the thinker to a Manichean dualism regarding evil and contingency.²⁴ Yet our human “real” also declares that it is we who do evil and do so freely. How is this explained in light of God? Once again, the answer is a revealed truth in Christ:

*Imo iram adversus peccatum maxime ostendit filius Dei, qui apparuit, ut victima fieret pro peccata et ostenderet Diabolum esse auctorem peccati, et sua morte iram ingentem Patris placeret. Non igitur Deus causa est peccati, nec peccatum est res condita aut ordinata a Deo, sed est horribilis destructio operis et ordinis divini.*²⁵

Sin, in its manifestation to our sensory reality, as in the earlier *Loci*, must be a defect or privation of a gift of God. As a result, sin can be declared as not willed nor caused directly by God: “*Ideo recte dicitur: Peccatum est defectus seu privatio, ut Dialectici loquuntur.*”²⁶ However, the question remains--if sin is a defect or privation, then why are humans responsible (*cur irascitur Deus nihilo*)? At this point, Melanchthon turns to answer two controversies specific to 1543. The Flacian controversy which regarded sin as humanity’s substance, and the continuing dispute with Catholic thinkers as to the nature of original sin and its effects. Once more, his methodology of moving from experience--(“we sin”)--to revelation--(“we are ourselves guilty before God”)²⁷--is evident. Of course, he will also need to use reason to explain and discover new

²⁴LC (1543) 21: 643.

²⁵LC (1543) 21: 644.

²⁶LC (1543) 21: 645.

²⁷The biblical *a priori*: *Deus non est causa peccata.*

insights on revelation.

The response to these two controversies then is not a retreat to logic or Protestant Scholasticism, but the expansion of the witness of revelation. Using two broad revelational claims in the Incarnation and imputed justification, Melanchthon explains the tensions within the reality and revelation of sin and responsibility. Revelation ordered and understood explains unclear or confused revelation. In reply to Flacius, Melanchthon felt that since Jesus is the final answer to our sin, then his solidarity with Adam²⁸—shown in Paul—and the new birth must be a restoration to something lost.²⁹ As a result, sin can neither be humanity's substance (or else God in the Incarnation is sin), nor merely an inclination, but has to be both an inclination (concupiscence) and a loss of gift or curse (*reatus*). If sin is our substance, then the redeemed (and Christ) must be ontologically different from present fallen humanity, a new genus. If this is true, the Incarnation becomes a cruel hoax and we are not saved, for God cannot save what God cannot assume. Furthermore, to Catholic opponents, if original sin is merely an inclination, then it might be possible without grace for one to avoid sin. This renders grace irrelevant, and again renders the Incarnation the same. Adding additional strength to his arguments, Melanchthon points out that his is the teachings of the Church Fathers in Augustine, Hugo, and even the recent Bonaventure³⁰

²⁸LC (1543) 21: 667-668 (esp. Romans 7:25 and 5:12).

²⁹LC (1543) 21: 671.

³⁰LC (1543) 21: 669.

as well as the testimony of the Scripture.³¹ Doctrine then explains doctrine. Thus, the failure to correctly understand the doctrine of original sin, as he argued in 1530, 1533, is a misappropriation of reason in the realm of revelation. The Pelagian or Flacian mistake is a failure to recognize the Christological importance of the doctrine of original sin and instead consider only the “real” consequences of it as concupiscence.³²

For example, he argues that the “*Monachi*” correctly distinguish between the formal and material elements of original sin, but fail to comprehend the entire testimony of Scripture—that Christ explains all of revelation—and confuse the reality of sin and our voluntary participation in sin with Christian doctrine and practice.³³ Sin as derived from a correct understanding of the doctrine of original sin allows both a retention of human and divine freedom. The original gift of freedom (*natura integrae*) with its full assent to the knowledge and love of God (*originalis iustitia*) is permuted *post lapsum* to a vestigial *natura vulnerata* which is still free but now ontologically cursed or under wrath.³⁴ As a result, fallen humans are capable of “*iudicio forensi*” (in external acts), but never of being justified before God as a result. The monks (and Eck’s) “*fomite peccati*” of original sin, then, is not the punishment of

³¹LC (1543) 21: 669.

³²LC (1543) 21: 673.

³³LC (1543) 21: 674.

³⁴“*Poenae peccati originis sunt mors corporis et aliae ingentes calamitates quae ex humana ignorantia et omnium virium fragilitate oriuntur: item ira Dei et aeterna damnatio.*” LC (1543) 21: 674-5; cf 21: 672.

God on Adam's sin, but the result of the punishment. The punishment of God for Adam's sin was, and is, eternal severance and wrath, resulting in natural human ignorance of God's true will in Christ.

The Pelagian move to reduce the doctrine of original sin so that concupiscence is the only voluntary component is rebutted by Melanchthon's insistence that concupiscence is the consequence of a greater natural--and hence voluntary--affection in the curse of Adamic imputation.³⁵ Misappropriating philosophical concepts such as "storge"³⁶ with respect to God undermines the Church's total Christological focus on "beneficii Christi." For Melanchthon, only when the doctrine of original sin is expanded with the doctrine of Christ can one adequately elucidate the reality of sin, and our blame and participation in it, with God's freedom and omnipotence. Justification by faith combined with the knowledge of Christ and his benefits illuminate the doctrine of original sin which, in turn, explains the reality of sin. The revealed illuminates the real and the real's inability to comment on the revealed.

Combining the sum of the preceding chapters, one can clearly see the function of the doctrine of original sin and its place in Melanchthon's methodology of *loci communes*. Instead of finding an increase in speculative theology per se, one finds a clarification of simple themes found in 1521's *Loci* but buttressed in 1530 and 1543's

³⁵For a closer examination of the argumentation against Eck, see Chapter 6 on the 1530 and 1533 *Loci Communes*.

³⁶LC (1543) 21: 677. Melanchthon states that any remnant of human philanthropy is really a vestigial gift of God's divine philanthropy in permitting a knowledge of Law.

Loci by Scriptural, credal, and classical arguments. There is no doubt that Melanchthon freely accepts philosophy (or reason) in its role of dialectics--defining and shaping terms--but instead of seeing a rationalist, what emerges in the limiting function of the doctrine of original sin, is a bracketing of reason by revelation. In particular, reason or rationality is only employed to explain the need for revelation as understood in the concept of the Law and Gospel dialectic. Revelation, through the gospel, explodes the pretence of reason in the Law. The cornerstone of the dialectic is Christ revealed in the singular and providential will of God. Hence, Christology illuminates all doctrine and speculation on said doctrine.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion
*Christus complexus est summam doctrinae Evangelii*¹

Doctrine, as argued by Yale's George Lindbeck, is the theologian's (and the Church's) attempt to be both faithful to and applicable from between the 'intra-textual' world of one's faith and to the 'extra-textual' world in which we live.² As such, it follows that it is not only a propositional explication of any doctrine that delineates the doctrine's value, but also the function of said doctrine in the goal of being both faithful and applicable. Meaning, then, is not merely dogmatic recapitulation, but rather is "thick." This means any doctrine has a context. This context attempts to conjoin both construction (application) and description (faithfulness) in order to exert a larger domain of meaning over the whole of the theologian's (and Church's) reality.³ Hence, for Melanchthon, the question in our search of original sin is whether he devalued or imposed an alien meaning on the 'intra-textual' world of the Christian faith. Or conversely, as I have argued, did he insert the 'intra-textual' into the 'extra-textual'? Which occurred--the absorption of the text into the world or the world into the text?

Certainly it must be granted that Melanchthon in his credal formulation of the doctrine of original sin is within the orthodox "intra-textual' tradition. His 1552

¹CR 21: 284.

²George Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984) 112.

³Lindbeck 117.

appendix to the Locj verifies this:

*Peccatum est, quicquid pugnat cum Lege Dei. Haec brevis definitio in Epistola Ioannis tradita est, quae dextre intelligatur. Potest autem his verbis explicari. Peccatum est defectus vel inclinatio vel actio pugnans cum Lege Dei et ream facien creaturam aeternae irae, nisi fiat remissio propter Mediatoream.*⁴

In this definition of sin, Melanchthon underscores the doctrine of original sin as curse (privation of original justice), rebellion against God's Law (concupiscence) and deserving of eternal punishment by itself. All of these claims we have noted derive from the doctrine of original sin. Furthermore, the doctrine functions to illustrate that without divine aid no natural capacity can lead a person to a knowledge of God in Christ.⁵ Again, this is a central tenet for Melanchthon's doctrine of original sin. Melanchthon continues to be orthodox in his Lutheran sense, and as we have seen, decidedly Lutheran in his credal formation and function.

However, there is a development in the doctrine as indicated in other chapters during Melanchthon's career. Recognizing that a real historical world and its unique issues surrounded him and Wittenberg, one can begin to account for development and refinement by Melanchthon. In his 1521 editions the anti-speculative Melanchthon is driven by his reliance on the structure of Paul's Romans and a confidence in the Biblical witness of *sola Scriptura* so that he naively asserts credal or biblical propositions as

⁴LC (1552) CR 21:1077.

⁵"*Sed non potest tollere ex mente dubitationes et ex corde vitiosas inclinationes sine luce Evangelii et sine Spiritu Sancto. . . . Evangelium est praedicatio poenitentiae et promissio, quam non novit ratio naturaliter, sed revelata divinitus . . .*" LC (1552) 21: 1078.

being clearly and self-evidently true. With the rise and threat of other reforming movements, each claiming a similar access to the same text but with different outcomes religiously and civilly, he is forced to delineate and demarcate more carefully the Lutheran 'intra-textual' developing orthodoxy. The end result of this is the blossoming of a methodology which subsumes earlier propositional functions. The stress, in Lindbeck's terminology, becomes applicability as well as faithfulness.

Melanchthon's methodology with its limiting function of the Bible as *oratio sacra* allowed him to explore both the revealed and the real. There is most certainly a hierarchy in the methodology with the revealed--Christ as God's fullness--ascending so as to explain the real. However, this same Christ, as the will and act of God, is also glimpsed in the providential will and act of God in human and cosmic history. Thus, the 'intra-textual' world of the Church is aligned, as a plumbline, to the 'extra-textual' world of human experience--*loci communes*. The humanist Melanchthon teaches the theologian Melanchthon and vice versa in this idiosyncratic anthropocentrism. Nonetheless, is this idiosyncratic anthropocentrism worthy of the charge of the "Melanchthon Blight"?

Melanchthon's acquittal to the charge of humanistic rationalism or Protestant Scholasticism is apparent on several accounts. First, never does Melanchthon make or imply the claim that any form of human reason, cognition or intuition is superior or has primacy in matters pertaining to faith. Instead, one finds both theologically and epistemologically a Lutheran approach to faith and reason. Theologically, Melanchthon uses and expands the Lutheran Law-Gospel dialectic so as to explicate the

foundation of ethics with not merely Christian but universal criteria.

Epistemologically, Melanchthon places reason subservient to the task of revelation, a handmaiden, whose usefulness, like Luther, is limited in what it can know. Reason's abuse in theological method occurs when it is juxtaposed to or rivals revelation. Hence Melanchthon *qua theologus* is Lutheran, which explains Luther's support for Melanchthon beyond the mere tenets of friendship.⁶

If the "Blight" refers to Melanchthon's idiosyncratic approach to integration, then the charge is partially justified. We have also seen Melanchthon's usage of experiential *loci communes* in buttressing, not supplanting, the claims of revelation. This is, by nature of the approach, inconsistent. For example, Melanchthon felt quite confident in borrowing Ciceronian epistemology and ignoring certain contrary theological considerations in the same system. Equally idiosyncratic was Melanchthon's approach to other theological systems within the Christian family. His sacramental theologies and Ecumenism often appear inconsistent and selected. It appears that Melanchthon, unlike Luther, had a disposition which made him more prone to syncretism within certain limits. Of course, these limits were essentially his developing Lutheran orthodoxy with its stress on the Law-Gospel dialectic in which the doctrine of original sin acted as a boundary condition.

Returning to the charge of anthropocentrism, from Barth and Brunner, once

⁶Many Lutheran biographers claim that Luther's affection for Melanchthon meant that Luther overlooked Melanchthon's heterodox tendencies. This, I believe, is a gross simplification of the integrity, personality and zeal of both men. Luther was never one to mince words nor to maintain friendship over principle.

more one finds a partial acquittal. Melanchthon does begin with the human person in his theological method in areas such as Natural Law and ethics, but he also frames human abilities with the need for revelation. In short, revelation limits reason. This may be at times an uneasy marriage in which Melanchthon sacrifices propositional clarity for a diluted application (in formation not function) into the 'real' world. However, this technique did allow Melanchthon to present and explain the Gospel and its claim on the human reality. Melanchthon with his belief in a providential God manifest in Christ strives to bridge the two realms of God and humanity.

"Credo ut intelligam" wrote Melanchthon as his theological agenda. Believing the Gospel's claim to be the truest reality, meant for Melanchthon, that the Christian God penetrated and saturated this doppelgänger reality. Thus, God is present, immanent and transcendent, guaranteeing both human knowledge and history. The doctrine and function of original sin--understood not only positivistically but through the great lens of Christology--served, as Schultz claimed, as a boundary condition between two realms of the real. As a boundary condition it delineated where humanity could proceed in ethics and providential common history, and where God's revelation is needed to explain the same. The doctrine of original sin, then, is both an epistemological boundary and a theological boundary. In both senses Melanchthon utilized the doctrine to create a coherent Lutheran orthodoxy which Luther tacitly and explicitly endorsed. Amongst the pantheon of great Christian theologians, Melanchthon belongs in the first rank.

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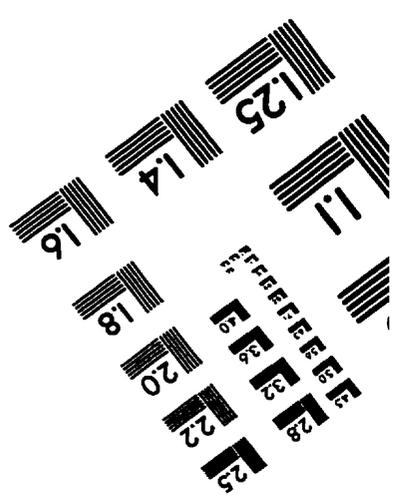
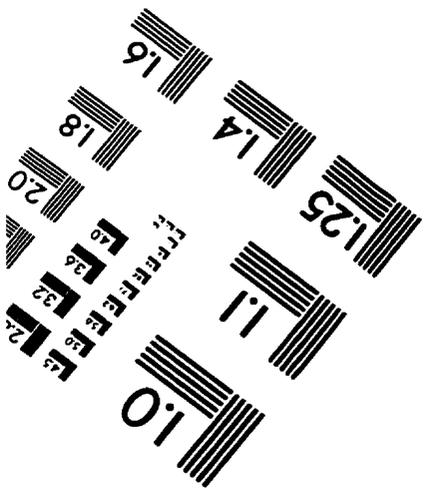
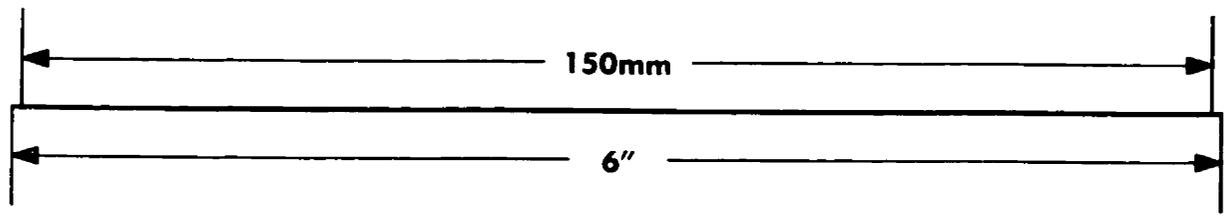
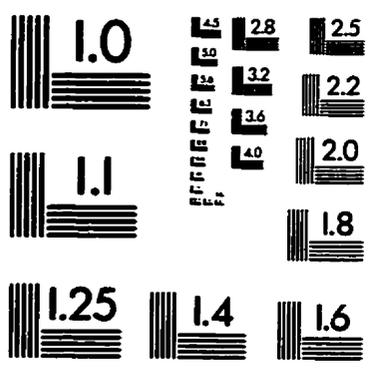
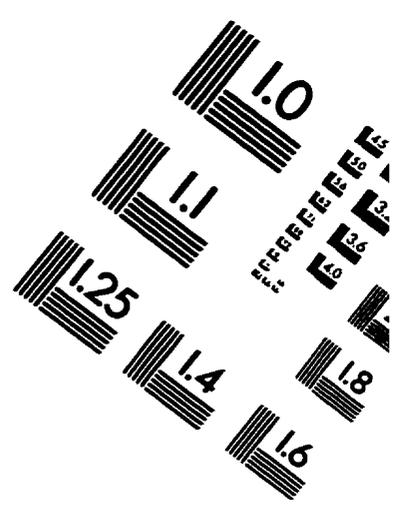
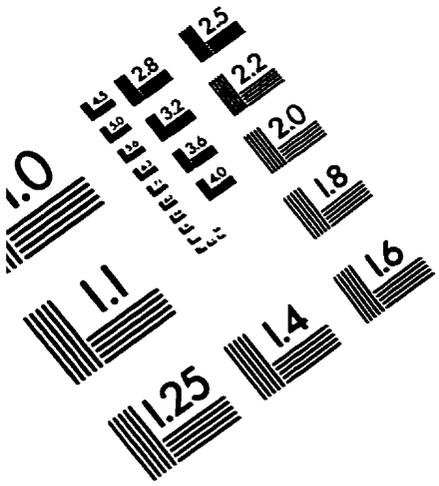
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