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Loci Theologici

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This salvation has an impact on all other areas as well. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light!" And who knows, you might be motivated to preach on a text not in the lectionary, such as, Isaiah 43:1b, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." Fear not!

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Loci Theologici

Martin Chemnitz

Translated, with an introduction by J.A.O. Preus

St. Louis: Concordia, 1989

2 volumes, paginated consecutively: 768 pp.

"*Si posterior non fuisset, prior non stetisset*"—so ran the old maxim, reportedly coined by Roman Catholics, concerning the "two Martins", Chemnitz and Luther: (freely rendered) "If the second had never arrived, the first would not have survived." In the view of many, both then and now, the phrase contains a significant truth. The dynamic, polemical, existential biblicism of Luther's theology was surely sufficient to the overthrow of the abuses of late medieval theology, but its style and unabashedly unsystematic approach did not lend themselves easily to the establishment of a full-scale churchly dogmatics. The impetus toward dogmatics came, not from Luther, but from Melanchthon, whose *Loci communes* and whose several efforts to edit and defend the *Augsburg Confession* gave ground both for development and dispute within Lutheranism. Chemnitz's *Loci theologici* took Melanchthon's *Loci* as their point of departure, but elaborated the themes of the many theological topics and, in addition, provided a solid doctrinal synthesis for Lutheranism as it moved beyond the internal disputes of the mid-sixteenth century into the era of the *Formula of Concord*. Together with his masterful study on *The Two Natures in Christ*, his *Enchiridion*, the treatise on *The Lord's Supper*, and his exhaustive *Examination of the Council of Trent*, the *Loci communes* or *Loci theologici*, as they are sometimes called, provided a doctrinal foundation suitable to the rise of orthodox Lutheranism in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Given the importance of the work of Chemnitz, the publication of this first translation of the greater part of the *Loci theologici* constitutes a theological event of some importance. As the translator notes (14), "we now possess in English more of the writings of Chemnitz than of any other Lutheran from the time of Luther himself down to the close of the period of orthodoxy." In addition, inasmuch as Chemnitz consistently cited and

rested the form, if not always the substance, of his *loci* on the 1536 edition of Melanchthon's *Loci communes*, Dr. Preus has also translated the Melanchthon *Loci* as they appear in Chemnitz's text.

The remarkable range of Chemnitz's learning, biblical, patristic, classical, and contemporary is evident from the text, all the more remarkable in view of the fact that Chemnitz himself never wrote out his *Loci* in full, but delivered them as lectures from notes. The publication of the *Loci* in 1591, under the editorial guidance of Polycarp Leyser, was possible only because of the copious notes taken by one of Chemnitz's hearers. Preus offers a fine introduction in which he deals with these issues in the context of Chemnitz's life and work. It is also worth noting that Preus has done a commendable job in identifying citations from Scripture, the fathers, Luther, and various other authors and in noting their location in accessible modern editions.

Some comment also deserves to be made on the contents of Chemnitz's *Loci* and the style of his exposition. Perhaps the most significant index to the question of style and content, and, therefore, to Chemnitz's role in the development of later Lutheran theology, is his prologue or prolegomenon "On the Use and Value of Theological Topics". Chemnitz notes that the "best way to understand this subject is to consider how necessary the church of all ages has judged" the orderly exposition of "heavenly doctrine" to be (37). First, beginning with the protevangelion (Genesis 3:15), Chemnitz indicates how, throughout the Old Testament, there are found summary statements of the promise, and throughout the New Testament, summary statements of the gospel and the Christian life. Even so, Paul offers a brief "catechetical" summary of his teaching in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "a somewhat longer explanation for the sake of clarification by adding descriptions, arguments, and refutations" in the Epistle to the Galatians, and "a full treatment and explication of the individual parts of the doctrine" in the Epistle to the Romans (37-38). Even so, in the early church, the Apostles' Creed and the various catechetical explanations of it set forth the body of Christian teaching. Chemnitz notes here, a series of patristic works, culmination in John of Damascus' *De orthodoxa fide*. He deals with the problem of scholastic theology in the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and the various medieval commentaries on it—and then argues that Luther rescued the church from the "errors and abuses" of the scholastic era when "faith became captive to reason". Finally, Melanchthon provided the church with a "complete body of doctrine which contained a summary of all the articles of faith" (38-40). Chemnitz, thus, views his own task of meditation through the theological *loci* as a continuation not only of the work of his immediate predecessors in the Lutheran church, but also as the continuation of an ancient effort, found at all times in the history of belief, to summarize and exposit the faith. His effort and, after it the effort of the Protestant orthodox writers, was to produce not only a Protestant but also a biblical and, because biblical, a truly catholic theology.

Chemnitz next provides, by way of three diagrams or schema of the organization of theology, an example of the way in which early orthodoxy

attempted to understand and appreciate the architecture of theological system. The "subject of theology," writes Chemnitz, "is the knowledge of God" understood either in terms of the divine essence or of the divine will as manifest in God's outward works. In the manner of Agricola's logic, Chemnitz offers subdivisions of these topics: the divine essence can be discussed in terms of its unity, the trinity of persons, or the "internal works" of God; the work of God in terms either of creation or "the sustaining of our fallen nature, its restoration, conversion, justification, sanctification, [and] glorification" (41). Two other more elaborate schema offer a view of the knowledge given in Scripture as a knowledge of God or of man (with attendant subdivisions) and of the teaching of Scripture concerning God and his works, this time in greater detail (42-43). The schema, then, offer an overview of the topics themselves in their logical relationships.

Once these relationships are understood, Chemnitz cautions, each *locus* ought to be examined and understood in itself, but never in such a way as to obscure its place in the whole, and never without due consideration of its own "fundamental principle" and internal logic. Each *locus* must, moreover, be firmly grounded on its Scriptural foundations or *sedes* and constructed in an awareness of how "fanatical men" have attempted to corrupt or confuse doctrinal points. Chemnitz also warns against attempts to demonstrate one's own learning with "games and paradoxes" and insists that "our minds" should "grow in doctrine and piety at the same time" (45-47). In all of these formulae and observations, Chemnitz's work provided a model for the cautious, churchly style of early Lutheran orthodoxy and a firm basis for the advancement of a fully Lutheran dogmatics.

As noted above, the translation is not quite complete: the *loci* dealing with "The Difference Between Precepts and Counsels", "Revenge", "Poverty", "Chastity", "The Lord's Supper", and "Marriage" are omitted, as are a set of appended theses on miscellaneous subjects. The section on the Lord's Supper was never completed by Chemnitz and we have, from Dr. Preus, a fine translation of Chemnitz's separate treatise on the Lord's Supper. The other omitted *loci* are, as Preus comments, of less interest to contemporary Christians—granting, for example, that the *locus* on marriage is concerned largely with "forbidden degrees of marriage". Nonetheless, one must regret, if only slightly, the incompleteness of the translation.

One must also regret—somewhat more—the way in which the problem of Melancthon's contribution to Lutheran orthodoxy and, more specifically, to Chemnitz's *Loci theologici* has led the translator to omit the complete translation of Melancthon's 1536 *Loci communes* that he indicates is also available from his hand. This edition is the longest and fullest form of Melancthon's *Loci* and it has never before been translated: it contains, for example, the famous addition of the proofs of God's existence to the *locus* on creation. This, of course, is now available in Preus's translation of Chemnitz—Preus omits, however, Melancthon's text for the various *loci* not translated out of Chemnitz and, in addition, he omits the eleven *loci* of Melancthon that would have been included in Chemnitz's system following the *locus* on marriage had Chemnitz lived to complete the work.

Whatever one's theological judgement on Melancthon, the historical value of the 1536 *Loci communes* is incontestable—and hopefully, Dr. Preus will someday see fit to publish his entire translation.

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Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society

E. Earle Ellis

Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989

This book is part of a renewed conversation around the question of Christian ministry. Why this conversation now? First, probably because the search for vital church life and mission inevitably leads to the issue of ministry and the church. Second, with renewed consideration of ministry comes increasing awareness that this is an ecumenical issue because of the variety at this point among the churches. And third, in particular this study takes up the question of whether ministry is church centred or directed to the world. Specifically, the aim in this book is to deal with five aspects of ministry in the Pauline churches: (a) definition of ministry within Paul's theology, (b) ministry and gifts from the ascended Christ, (c) ministry and the role of women, (d) ministry and church order or office, (e) ministry and the church in the Greco-Roman world.

The first part of the book offers solid insight on ministry as an expression of the realm of God. It would have been helpful to develop more fully the connection between ministry represented by Jesus (as the servant) and by Paul. This could have helped to clarify a further point briefly addressed in the book, to what extent is the concern with office (rather than function) in Christian ministry. In the section under "the Spirit and the gifts" the author discusses the "four functions" of the Spirit: incorporate the believer in Christ, produce the fruit of Christian character, provide the gifts to enable ministries, and being the source of power for resurrection. Under ministry and the gifts of the Spirit there is a helpful discussion of diversity (various forms of ministry) and unity. There is a lack of clarity on whether difference in the order of ministry means difference in status (46). There is emphasis on the order of ministries in Paul: the ministry of apostle is prior to that of teacher. Is there an intended correlation between order and status? Ellis is illuminating in showing how the gifts of the Spirit (in ministry) are related to the fruit of the Spirit (50–52). Similarly in his discussion of women and ministry, he deals directly with the question of equality and subordination (taking up some of the key texts). We may agree that both have a place in Pauline theology, but his argument for an element of hierarchy and the definition of "headship" as "authority" is not