

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



A More Excellent Way: Philip Melanchthon's Corinthians Lectures of 1521–22

William P. Weaver

Volume 37, Number 1, Winter 2014

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1090797ar>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v37i1.21281>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)
2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Weaver, W. (2014). A More Excellent Way: Philip Melanchthon's Corinthians Lectures of 1521–22. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 37(1), 31–63. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v37i1.21281>

Article abstract

Through a critical study of Philip Melanchthon's 1521–22 lectures on 1 and 2 Corinthians, this essay evaluates his rhetorical method of reading and annotating Scripture. Building on a conventional analogy between *ad fontes* and *sola scriptura*, it investigates an equally operative analogy between *consuetudo* (linguistic usage) and what Melanchthon called the *sermo* or *mos Scripturae*, the “speech” or “usage of Scripture.” As a guide to the *mos Scripturae*, the early Corinthians lectures are an indispensable complement to his contemporary annotations on Romans. They reveal his attempt to integrate Luther's “theology of the cross” into a theory of learned reading and shed light on the composition of the first systematic theology of the Lutheran faith, the *Loci Communes*, also published in 1521. Taken together as speeches, Paul's letters to the Corinthians are unique enunciations of law and gospel, and unique examples of the “discourse of the cross.”

A More Excellent Way: Philip Melanchthon's Corinthians Lectures of 1521–22

WILLIAM P. WEAVER

Baylor University

Through a critical study of Philip Melanchthon's 1521–22 lectures on 1 and 2 Corinthians, this essay evaluates his rhetorical method of reading and annotating Scripture. Building on a conventional analogy between ad fontes and sola scriptura, it investigates an equally operative analogy between consuetudo (linguistic usage) and what Melanchthon called the sermo or mos Scripturae, the "speech" or "usage of Scripture." As a guide to the mos Scripturae, the early Corinthians lectures are an indispensable complement to his contemporary annotations on Romans. They reveal his attempt to integrate Luther's "theology of the cross" into a theory of learned reading and shed light on the composition of the first systematic theology of the Lutheran faith, the Loci Communes, also published in 1521. Taken together as speeches, Paul's letters to the Corinthians are unique enunciations of law and gospel, and unique examples of the "discourse of the cross."

Cet essai évalue la méthode rhétorique de lecture et d'annotation des Écritures saintes, à travers une analyse critique des leçons de Philip Melanchthon de 1521-2 sur la première et seconde épître aux Corinthiens. Partant d'une analogie conventionnelle entre ad fontes et sola scriptura, l'essai examine une analogie tout aussi opératoire entre consuetudo (usage linguistique) et ce que Melanchthon appelait le sermo ou mos Scripturae, le « discours » ou « l'usage des Saintes Écritures ». Les premières leçons de Melanchthon sur les Corinthiens, en tant que guide aux mos Scripturae, sont un complément indispensable à ses annotations contemporaines sur les Romains. Elles révèlent la volonté d'intégrer la « théologie de la croix » de Luther à une théorie de lecture savante mais aussi la volonté de clarifier la composition des Loci Communes, première théologie systématique de la foi luthérienne, elle aussi publiée en 1521. Prises comme discours, les lettres de Paul aux Corinthiens sont des énonciations uniques de la loi et de l'évangile, exemples uniques du « discours de la croix ».

Philip Melanchthon's lectures on 1 and 2 Corinthians, begun in Wittenberg in summer 1521 and completed by fall 1522, coincide with a decisive year for Protestant theology.¹ In 1521, Luther was condemned at the Diet of Worms

1. Aided and abetted by Luther, Melanchthon's students published an unauthorized transcription of the Corinthians lectures in 1522. Peter F. Barton edited the *Annotationes in Epistulas Pauli ad Corinthios* in volume 4 of the "Studienausgabe" (hereafter MSA), *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, 7 vols. in 9 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1951–63). All references to the Corinthians lectures are to this edition, and translations are my own. See also Philipp Melanchthon, *Annotations on First Corinthians*, ed. and trans.

and spirited away to the Wartburg, where, among other things, he translated the New Testament into German. Melanchthon, meanwhile, 24 years old, was left in Wittenberg to teach Luther's courses as well as his own, at a university that was troubled by radical elements within as well as conservative reaction from without. It was during this period, moreover, that Melanchthon wrote his first major work of theology, the *Loci Communes Rerum Theologicarum seu Hypotyposes Theologicae*; that is, "The Commonplaces of Theological Matters or the Theological Presentments."² In the same year—less famously, but of great importance for the liberal arts—Melanchthon articulated a new theory of style in a series of lectures on rhetoric.³ Transcribed by a student, these lectures were printed as the *Institutiones Rhetoricae* in four different cities in 1521 alone.⁴ So this decisive year for the Protestant Reformation was also a remarkably productive one for the young professor of Greek: lectures on 1 Corinthians, lectures on rhetoric that had a lasting impact on rhetorical theory and practice, and the landmark first version of the *Loci Communes*—all of this against the backdrop of social agitation in Wittenberg, reflected in his correspondence with Luther and Spalatin.⁵

In addition to their historical significance, delivered as they were during this dramatic time, the Corinthians lectures have a theoretical significance that

John Patrick Donnelly, S.J. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995), which is based on the text of the first edition (Nuremberg: Johannes Stuchs, [1522]).

2. The English word "presentment," common in the sixteenth century to refer to visual and even forensic exhibits, translates well the Greek word *hypotyposis*. Quintilian describes *hypotyposis* as "the expression in words of a given situation (*forma rerum*) in such a way that it seems to be a matter of seeing rather than of hearing." See *The Orator's Education*, trans. Donald A. Russell, 5 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), book 9, chapter 2, section 40. In a popular sixteenth-century handbook of figures of speech, Johannes Susenbrotus elaborates. *Hypotyposis* is a description of a person, thing, place, time or anything that can be expressed in writing or in speech. He supplies a number of synonyms more familiar in the history of rhetoric, including *enargeia*, *evidentia*, *illustratio*, *descriptio*, *effictio*, *subiectio sub oculis*. See Joseph Xavier Brennan, "The *Epitome Troporum ac Schematum* of Joannes Susenbrotus: Text, Translation, and Commentary" (PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1953), p. 83.

3. On Melanchthon's new doctrine of style, see William P. Weaver, "Triplex est Copia: Philip Melanchthon's Invention of the Rhetorical Figures," *Rhetorica* 29 (2011), pp. 367–402. On the *Institutiones Rhetoricae*, see Joachim Knape, *Philipp Melanchthons 'Rhetorik'* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), pp. 29–32.

4. Lawrence D. Green and James J. Murphy, *Renaissance Rhetoric Short-Title Catalogue 1460–1700*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 296.

5. See Heinz Scheible, *Melanchthon: Eine Biographie* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1997), pp. 61–73.

urges a reevaluation of Melanchthon's rhetorical theology.⁶ It is the extraordinary form of the letters that makes the Corinthians lectures stand out from Melanchthon's other exegetical works, which have been the object of much interest in recent decades.⁷ In a dedicatory letter to his *Paraphrase* of 1 and 2 Corinthians, first printed in 1519, Erasmus had described the Paul of these letters as a Proteus, so many his masks, so various his style and subject matter.⁸ More prudent in his evaluation, Melanchthon said that the letters flitted from topic to topic in the manner of a familiar letter.⁹ Indeed, it is the extraordinary

6. "The commentary on the Letters to the Corinthians, until now hardly noticed, forms a good record of Melanchthon's theological method during the time of the writing of the 'Loci.'" (Peter F. Barton, 1963, *MSA*, vol. 4, p. 15; Die bisher kaum beachtete Exegese der Korintherbriefe bildet einen guten Beleg für die theologische Arbeitsweise Melanchthons während der Zeit der Entstehung der „Loci“ [my translation]). Barton's appeal remains valid today, although numerous studies have illuminated other of Melanchthon's exegetical works. See below, note 7. See also Jan Bauke-Ruegg, "'Hoc est Christum cognoscere beneficia eius cognoscere.' Melanchthons 'Loci Communes' von 1521 und die Frage nach dem Proprium reformatorischer Dogmatik," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 42 (2000), pp. 267–98, esp. pp. 279–81.

7. The Corinthians lectures of 1521–22 have not had the attention that Melanchthon's other exegetical works have received in recent decades. The following are representative of illuminating studies on other exegetical works: Timothy J. Wengert, *Philip Melanchthon's Annotations in Johannem in Relation to its Predecessors and Contemporaries* (Geneva: Droz, 1987) and "Philip Melanchthon's 1522 Annotations on Romans and the Lutheran Origins of Rhetorical Criticism," in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 118–40; Manfred Hoffmann, "Rhetoric and Dialectic in Erasmus's and Melanchthon's Interpretations of John's Gospel," in *Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) and the Commentary*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert and M. Patrick Graham (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 48–78; John Schneider, "The Hermeneutics of Commentary: Origins of Melanchthon's Integration of Dialectic into Rhetoric," in *Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) and the Commentary*, pp. 20–47; Rolf Schäfer, "Melanchthons Hermeneutik im Römerbrief-Kommentar von 1532," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 60 (1963), pp. 216–35.

8. Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus, Volume 43: Paraphrases on the Epistles to the Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians*, ed. Robert D. Sider, trans. Mechtilde O'Mara and Edward A. Phillips Jr. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 17.

9. On 1 Corinthians, Melanchthon writes, "Various things are gathered in a heap, as in familiar letters many things (are gathered)," in *MSA*, vol. 4, p. 16. On 2 Corinthians, he writes, "Just as in the first epistle many things are gathered, so here too the character or composition of speech is epistolary" (ut superiori epistulae varie multa congeruntur, ita in hac character est seu compositio orationis epistolica, p. 85). Subsequent references to the Corinthians lectures are to this edition and are cited by page number in parentheses. For the significance of the familiar letter in the literary theory and practice of

form of 1 Corinthians that occupies the entirety of his introductory remarks. He demurs to summarize or even outline the letter. As he explains, “The topics of this epistle are so various, its content suggests it was written on different occasions and for different reasons.”¹⁰ The letters to the Corinthians placed a special strain on Melanchthon’s efforts to demonstrate, as he announced in his inaugural declamation of 1518, “that a certain class of literature is more useful than simply a series of unconnected items lying together”—in other words, that Scripture was not well served by the institutional theology of the day, which required students to study Scripture as parcelled up in Peter the Lombard’s *Sentences*.¹¹ How could Melanchthon illustrate, with the apparently unstructured examples of 1 and 2 Corinthians, the integrity of Scripture as persuasive speech?¹² How could he demonstrate, on the basis of such informal discourse, a more excellent way than the commentaries on the *Sentences*?

Because of the letters’ informality, the Corinthians lectures supply an important complement to Melanchthon’s contemporary Romans lectures (with which they were originally printed in an unauthorized edition).¹³ If Romans contained for Melanchthon Christian doctrine in the form of a compendium (“doctrinae christianae compendium”) or a continuous, reasoned discourse on the major Christian doctrines (“disputationem de peccato, gratia et lege”), Corinthians presented, in an entirely different form, an example of a

Melanchthon’s day, see Kathy Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

10. “Huius epistulae sicut varii loci sunt, ita multas fuisse causas et occasiones scribendi res ipsa arguit.” *MSA* vol. 4, p. 16.

11. “On Correcting the Studies of Youth (1518),” in *A Melanchthon Reader*, trans. Ralph Keen (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 52–53. The passage is rendered more literally as follows: “For I wish to create confidence in the students that some other type of literature is more useful than that which, having been brought together, they scatter” (Volo enim fidem studiosis factam, aliud quoddam litterarum genus utilius esse, quam sit quod copulata iactant). *MSA* vol. 3, p. 37.

12. Kees Meerhoff surveys this hermeneutic principle, foundational in Protestant hermeneutics as well as Melanchthon’s method of textual analysis, in *Entre logique et littérature: Autour de Philippe Melanchthon* (Orléans: Paradigme, 2001), pp. 83–86.

13. See Wengert, “Philip Melanchthon’s 1522 Annotations on Romans and the Lutheran Origins of Rhetorical Criticism,” and Ernst Bizer, *Theologie der Verheißung: Studien zur theologischen Entwicklung des jungen Melanchthon (1519–1524)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1964), pp. 129–218.

theology-as-persuasion (in contradistinction to a theology-as-instruction).¹⁴ This theology, which Melanchthon (adopting the language of Paul) variously calls the “discourse of the cross” (*sermo crucis*), “gospel speech” (*evangelica vox*), and “gospel word” (*verbum evangelii*), supplies an important complement to the propositional, didactic form of theology that Melanchthon saw in Romans.¹⁵ As discourse, Corinthians might even be said to be more exemplary than Romans, for according to Melanchthon, God’s ordinary means of revealing himself was not through formal oration but through a familiar, colloquial style. In a later version of the *Loci Communes*, Melanchthon wrote, “Thus God has always given some sign and testimony, from the beginning going forth from his hidden throne for the sake of our salvation, revealing himself and conversing with us intimately (*familiariter*).”¹⁶ If Romans in its regularity remains the basic reference point for theology, 1 and 2 Corinthians illustrate a more familiar, even more usual communication of law and gospel.

The aim of this essay is to expand the terms in which Melanchthon’s rhetorical method of reading is evaluated by following him through the informal “epistolary” speech of 1 and 2 Corinthians. The Corinthians lectures are an important case study for a method of note-taking that Melanchthon applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Scripture and classical literature alike. Contemporary with some innovations in his theory of figurative speech, the Corinthians lectures illustrate the great range and flexibility of his method, showing that the method could be applied fruitfully even to informal discourse. They illustrate the not insignificant affective and ethical dimensions of the method.

In part 1 of this essay, the *Loci Communes* of 1521 supplies a critical background for understanding the Corinthians lectures. This early Reformation statement on Christian learning, written to supply an alternative to scholastic methods of instruction and interpretation, describes a certain disposition or

14. The quotations are taken from *Die Loci Communes Philipp Melanchthons in ihrer Urgestalt*, ed. G. L. Plitt and T. Kolde, 4th ed. (Leipzig and Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1925), pp. 63, 84. All subsequent references to the *Loci Communes* of 1521 are to this edition and are cited in parentheses by page number. Translations are my own.

15. *MSA* vol. 4, pp. 89, 104, 106; *Loci Communes*, p. 166, 196.

16. “Ita semper Deus ab initio procedens ex sua arcana sede propter salutem nostram et sese patefaciens ac familiariter nobiscum colloquens tradidit aliquod verbum et testimonium.” *MSA*, vol. 2.1, p. 175. Compare pp. 224–25, where Melanchthon decries the “infinitos labyrinthos disputationum” and “praestigiis disputationum.”

manner of Scripture that stands in stark contrast to the manner of the scholastic theologians and their subtleties. In the *Loci Communes*, this is called the *mos Scripturae*, the “usage” of Scripture.¹⁷ Melanchthon places the *mos Scripturae* in the vanguard of a contemporary debate over theological discourse, but he speaks of it as something alien, the naturalization of which into the German university lies off in the future. Indeed, in his inaugural declamation at the University of Wittenberg in 1518, he had spoken in almost mystical terms of a new “order and path of learning” (*ordine ac ductu*) that was about to sweep Germany in its providential itinerary from the ancient to the modern world.¹⁸ The early exegetical works must be appreciated, therefore, for their experimental quality, and the Corinthians lectures are especially informative, I believe, because Paul’s familiar letters to the Corinthians uniquely embody the *mos Scripturae*.

The lectures on 1 and 2 Corinthians, the subject of parts 2 and 3, supply a vital illustration of what Melanchthon meant by the *mos Scripturae*, which is only adumbrated in the exegetical sections of the *Loci Communes*. On the evidence of the *Loci Communes*, it can be expected that Melanchthon would use his lectures to train students in a type of critical judgment. And indeed this is what we find. Through an elaborate and consistent use of rhetorical terminology, Melanchthon ensures that his students appreciate the “composition and scheme of Scripture,”¹⁹ which the scholastic theologians ignore. He strives for their familiarity with Scripture’s language, which the scholastic theologians have made foreign.

Lecturing on 1 Corinthians while writing the *Loci Communes*, Melanchthon carries over much of the polemic of the latter into his exposition

17. On the topic “sin,” Melanchthon writes, “The sophists have marvelously confused even this topic, when they dispute over *relations of the reason* in sin, when they distinguish between *actual, original*, and all manner of *sin* that it would be pointless to rehearse—what is the use of compiling all the dreams that ever entered anyone’s head? But we shall briefly handle the matter and employ the term “sin” according to the usage of Scripture (*scripturae more*).” (Mire obscurarunt et hunc locum sophistae, cum de relationibus rationis in peccato disputarent, cum distinguerent de actuali peccato et originali et alia multa, quae supervacaneum est recensere. Quid enim attinet, in compendio omnia omnium somnia referre? Nos rem paucis agemus usurpabimusque vocem peccati scripturae more. [p. 81])

18. Keen, *A Melanchthon Reader*, p. 48. Melanchthon’s “ordine ac ductu” can be found in *MSA* vol. 3, p. 31.

19. “phraseos ac tropi Scripturae” (p. 91).

of Paul's antithesis between human and divine forms of wisdom. Recognizing the "forms of God"²⁰ still has the objective of refuting the subtleties of the scholastics. But this is not the primary objective in the *Annotationes*, which is instead to recognize and distinguish in Scripture its two most characteristic types of speech: law and gospel, the twin messages of Luther's theology of the cross.²¹ As I will argue, Melanchthon uses rhetorical and logical terms in the Corinthians lectures to equip students to recognize law and gospel as complementary speech genres.

Law and gospel continue to be thematic in Melanchthon's lectures on 2 Corinthians, where they appear not only as interpretive but also as productive categories. Rhetoric, similarly, takes on its more familiar guise of performing or producing speech, and not just interpreting texts. In his commendation of the "ministry of the gospel,"²² Melanchthon makes even clearer the affective and moral contributions of rhetoric to theology. Through a threefold comparison of reason, law, and gospel, he describes the limits of doctrine (bare teaching) and more closely associates the gospel with the motives of rhetoric.

1.

Generally understood today to be a guide to interpreting Scripture (through the signal example of Paul's letter to the Romans), the first version of the *Loci Communes* is also a full-frontal attack on scholastic theology.²³ The spirit

20. "formae Dei" (p. 73).

21. Law and gospel were important categories in the Romans lectures of 1522. Bizer, p. 216. Melanchthon writes in the *Loci Communes*, "All Scripture is at times law, at other times gospel" (*Tota scriptura alias lex est, alias evangelium*. [p. 143]).

22. "ministerium evangelii" (pp. 99, 115).

23. The *Loci Communes* represents "a knowledge system (*ein wissenschaftliches System*), that played a decisive role in all disciplines for more than a hundred years." Paul Joachimsen, "*Loci communes: Eine Untersuchung zur Geistesgeschichte des Humanismus und der Reformation*," *Luther-Jahrbuch* 8 (1926), pp. 27–97 (the quotation is from p. 27). For Wilhelm Maurer, who updates Joachimsen's source study, the *Loci Communes* is a "scientific manifesto" (*wissenschaftliche Programmschrift*). See "Melanchthons *Loci communes* von 1521 als wissenschaftliche Programmschrift: Ein Beitrag zur Hermeneutik der Reformationszeit," *Luther-Jahrbuch* 27 (1960), pp. 1–50. Christoph Schwöbel situates the 1521 *Loci Communes* in the immediate contexts of Melanchthon's life and work; the *Loci Communes* is a biblical theology, a Paulo-centric systematic theology, and a salvation-centred theology. See Schwöbel's "Melanchthons *Loci Communes* von 1521," in *Melanchthons bleibende Bedeutung: Ringvorlesung der Theologischen Fakultät der Christian-Albrechts-Universität zum Melanchthon-Jahr*

of Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly* (one decade old) and the pseudonymous *Letters of Obscure Men* (five years old) is very much with Melanchthon in this handbook. The scholastic theologians are "theologisters" (*theologastroi*) and "philosophians" (*philosophastroi*), epithets that were among the sweetest in the Lutheran lexicon.²⁴ They are also *sophistai*—not in the sense that Plato attacked the sophists, but in the sense that Aristophanes pilloried Socrates in the *Clouds*, as vain, obscurantist, and vicious. Luther's influence over Melanchthon is palpable.

In a sign of the polemical, provocative nature of the 1521 *Loci Communes*, Melanchthon skips the first four, theological topics (rehearsed as they appear in Lombard's *Sentences*) and begins with the question of man and his abilities. Why this startling omission of God? He explains:

There is no reason to labour over the first, supreme headings, on God, on his unity, trinity, on the mystery of creation, and on the mode of incarnation. Tell me, in all their debate over these topics through so many centuries, what have the scholastic theologians accomplished? Haven't they, as Paul says, "become foolish in their conceits" (Rom 1:21), when they fool around their whole life with universals, formalities, cognates, and all manner of other asinine words?²⁵

Such topics, Melanchthon explains, are matters for reverence, not investigation; furthermore, they are received not through disputation but through what Paul describes in 1 Corinthians as "the foolishness of preaching" (1 Cor 1:20).²⁶

1997, ed. Johannes Schilling (Kiel: Theologische Fakultät der Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, 1998), pp. 57–82.

24. *Philosophaster* may stem from Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. George E. McCracken, 7 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), book 2, chapter 27.

25. "Proinde non est, cur multum operae ponamus in locis illis supremis de deo, de unitate, de trinitate dei, de mysterio creationis, de modo incarnationis. Quaeso te, quid assecuti sunt iam tot seculis scholastici theologistae, cum in his locis solis versarentur? Nonne in disceptationibus suis, ut ille ait, vani facti sunt, dum tota vita nugantur de universalibus, formalitatibus, connotatis et nescio quibus aliis inanibus vocabulis?" (pp. 61–62).

26. "per stulticiam praedicationis," Erasmus, *Novum Testamentum* (Basel: Johann Froben, 1519), p. 356. In a study of scriptural commentaries by Melanchthon's students, Robert Kolb shows that the *loci* method was applied primarily to preaching. Although the commentaries stem from the classroom, they have the

With this opening salvo against scholastic theology, Melanchthon states a double agenda for the *Loci Communes*: to reduce theology to those subject matters that are needful, and to reduce theology to what he eventually calls the *mos Scripturae* (the custom of Scripture). Much has been written on the first reduction, the tightly circumscribed subject matter in Melanchthon's reading of Paul. Indeed, he makes repeated reference in his contemporary writings to three supreme topics: law, sin, and grace (*lex, peccatum, gratia*).²⁷ But if the reduction of topics is pretty obvious, the methodical reduction is a more complex matter.²⁸ What use does Melanchthon make of his humanist learning in his development of a theological method, and what exactly does his interpretation of Scripture owe to humanist textual practices? These are questions on which a number of scholars have written perceptively.²⁹ Building on these studies, I wish to show that the *mos Scripturae*, the "usage of Scripture," is a key concept, one particularly important for understanding Melanchthon's contemporary lectures. The humanist practice of observing characteristic usage allowed him to understand law and gospel as the two characteristic "forms of the cross,"³⁰ a phrase he used in his lectures on 1 Corinthians (see part 2, below). These forms, finally, would govern theology in both theory (interpretation) and practice, or the "ministry of the gospel" (part 3).

pulpit primarily in view. See Kolb's "Teaching the Text: The Commonplace Method in Sixteenth Century Lutheran Biblical Commentary," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 49 (1987), pp. 571–85.

27. See Schwöbel, p. 67. Where in Romans, Melanchthon asks rhetorically, did Paul philosophize about the mysteries of the Trinity, the mode of incarnation, the *creatio activa* and *creatio passiva*? "Of what does he speak then? Indeed of law, sin, grace, on which topics alone the knowledge of Christ hangs." (At quid agit? Certe de lege, peccato, gratia, e quibus locis solis Christi cognitio pendet. [pp. 63–64]) These three topics comprise between one-third and one-half of the 1521 *Loci Communes*.

28. On the methodical reduction of the *Loci Communes*, see Maurer, "Melanchthons *Loci communes*," and Schwöbel, p. 68. Schwöbel describes the *Loci Communes* as an outgrowth of Melanchthon's anthropology, especially his doctrine of the passions. See pp. 69–77.

29. My attention to the *mos Scripturae* as illustrated by the *Loci Communes* and in the contemporary lectures emphasizes aspects that were not developed in important studies of Melanchthon's view of Scripture and tradition during this early period. See Wengert, *Philip Melanchthon's Annotations in Johannem*; Wengert, "Philip Melanchthon's 1522 Annotations on Romans"; John Schneider, *Philip Melanchthon's Rhetorical Construal of Biblical Authority: Oratio Sacra* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990); and Siegfried Wiedenhofer, *Formalstrukturen humanistischer und reformatorischer Theologie bei Philipp Melanchthon*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt and Munich: Peter Lang, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 119–60.

30. "formae crucis" (p. 21).

On one level, the phrase *mos Scripturae* asserts Scripture as an authority. It makes explicit something that is widely recognized in studies of the Renaissance and Reformation, that the humanist doctrine *ad fontes*, or the return to authoritative textual sources, informs the Lutheran doctrine *sola scriptura*.³¹ On another level, the *mos Scripturae* asserts more than simply the authoritative text. It asserts the manner in which the authoritative text is taken as an authority. The text is authoritative not as a lexicon but as speech, so that its authority is located not in univocal terms and propositions but in linguistic patterns and rhetorical configurations.³² It is these, the patterns and configurations, that constitute a standard for interpretation (i.e., an authority) in humanist study of classical texts, and it is these by which Melanchthon attempts to define theological terms in the *Loci Communes*. The *mos Scripturae* describes the linguistic habits of Scripture by which Melanchthon refutes the subtleties of the scholastics in the *Loci Communes*.

The *mos Scripturae* is, in the first place, antithetical to the *mos philosophorum*, the “fashion of the philosophers.”³³ At several places in the *Loci Communes*, Melanchthon parrots the late scholastic theologians, especially Gabriel Biel and Duns Scotus. Just as the *Letters of Obscure Men* parodies the solecisms and bombast of the adversaries of Johannes Reuchlin, the *Loci Communes* mimics the logical distinctions by which false theologians (“pseudothelogoī”) obscure the plain sense of Scripture. Here’s an example under the heading “On the Power and Effect of Sin.”³⁴ Melanchthon has argued that because of unseen motives of the heart, all apparent human excellence is worthless. He then refutes a different position:

But here I have to refute what those godless sophists bellow, whenever they pollute these lucid declarations [of Scripture]. It is true that man, according to his nature, “meritoriously” cannot do well. This is how they

31. For Schwöbel, *ad fontes* is the “point of convergence” between humanism and Lutheran reform, and *scriptura sui interpretis* is its logical consequence. See p. 65.

32. “It must be stressed that *understanding* for Melanchthon signifies not only understanding of content, but always understanding of the discursive structures as well.” Knape, p. 2.

33. For the antagonistic shape of Melanchthon’s early thought, see Wiedenhofer, vol. 1, pp. 116, 132ff. Melanchthon’s reading of scriptural terms cannot be separated from the humanist-scholastic debate that played out dramatically in German universities.

34. “Vis peccati et fructus” (p. 85).

talk. So they fabricate a double good, a meritorious and a not meritorious, lest the philosophical *virtues* of the free will, those external appearances of virtues, be proven *vices*. What impiety! Is this not a verbal sleight of hand (*κυβεία* verborum), to fabricate a good, at one time meritorious of eternal life and at other times not?³⁵

Melanchthon reviews again the evidence of Scripture, especially the Old Testament, to show that human works are neither good nor meritorious but altogether wicked. The trifles of the sophists, he says, are easily refuted from the testimony of Scripture. He concludes, “The godless sophists were not estimating works by the motives of the heart; rather, they were judging in their philosophical manner (*philosophico more*). No wonder they hallucinate.”³⁶ The *mos philosophicus* is thus not simply erroneous but vicious. It is not just a mistaken manner of proceeding but a human manner of proceeding, vitiated by all the wickedness and deceptiveness of the human heart.³⁷

Contrary to the *mos philosophicus*, Melanchthon commends not *sola Scriptura* but the *mos Scripturae*. Parallel to his caricature of the sophists, I would argue, he writes in the *Loci Communes* a *prosopography* of Scripture, a delineation of its personality on the evidence of its language.³⁸ The discursive habits of Scripture, its genres, schemes, and tropes, are lost on the sophists and

35. “Obiter incidit confutandum, quod impii isti sophistae hic ogganniunt, cum diluunt has tam claras sententias, verum esse, hominem secundum naturam non posse bene agere meritorie – sic enim loquuntur. Itaque duplex bonum fingunt, meritorium et non meritorium et in hoc tantum, ne philosophicas liberi arbitrii virtutes, externas istas virtutum umbras, oporteat eos vitii arguere. O impietatem! Annon est haec illa *κυβεία* verborum, fingere bonum, alias meritorium vitae aeternae, alias non meritorium?” (pp. 89–90).

36. “Impii sophistae non aestimabant ab affectibus cordis opera, sed philosophico more de iis iudicabant, quod in causa fuit, cur hallucinantur” (p. 91).

37. No philosopher escapes Melanchthon’s mordant irony or his unrelenting division between “inner” and “outer” virtue. Socrates, Xenocrates, Zeno—all the Titans of human excellence conceal vicious intentions behind their apparent virtues. Furthermore, their vices are communicable to the unwary. See *Loci Communes*, p. 86.

38. The speaker (*persona*) of a text was central to Erasmus’s hermeneutics. See Jacques Chomarat, *Grammaire et rhétorique chez Érasme*, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 581–86, 683–90. Melanchthon’s effort to present Paul as a speaker is especially evident in the lectures on 2 Corinthians, where Paul “commends” himself and his ministry and amplifies his speech *a persona*, from his person/character (pp. 86, 93).

need to be recovered for a new generation of learners. “Truly we have forfeited to the philosophian *doctores* not just the meaning of Scripture but indeed its language (*sermo*).”³⁹ The *Loci Communes* is in part an attempt to acquaint the reader of Scripture with the *mos Scripturae*, especially the reader who might be allured or perplexed by the subtleties of the theologians.⁴⁰

Melanchthon’s treatment of Paul’s use of *caro* (“the flesh”) illustrates an alternative theological discourse, the *mos Scripturae*. He examines the word *caro* immediately following his general treatment of the power and effect of sin (summarized above). He argues that *caro* refers to the whole (natural) man and not just part, as the philosophers contend. Consequently, Paul’s condemnation of the flesh in Romans 8 is a condemnation of man’s best works. To preserve something of the form of Melanchthon’s method, I first will present his arguments in the order that they appear in the *Loci Communes*, and then discuss their relative importance in a rhetorical theology.

To demonstrate that *caro* in Romans 8 refers to all human nature and not a part or faculty of man, Melanchthon first notes that it appears in a comparison with *spiritus*:

In chapter 8, after arguing that we cannot accomplish the law, [Paul] makes a comparison of flesh and spirit, teaching that the flesh is entirely liable to sin, while the spirit is life and peace. But here the sophists, being completely ignorant of the composition and scheme of Scripture, call the flesh “the sensitive appetite.”⁴¹

The sophists wrongly interpret the meaning of *caro* because they do not recognize the figure of speech (*collatio*, “comparison”) in which it appears in Romans 8. This figure of speech allows Melanchthon to further specify the meaning of *caro*: “In scripture, ‘caro’ means not just the body, that is a part of a man, but the whole man, body and soul. Furthermore, wherever it [*caro*] is

39. “Verum dedidimus non modo scripturae sententiam, sed et sermonem, doctoribus philosophastris” (p. 92). For further indictments of the sophists’ ignorance of the rhetoric of Scripture, see pp. 97, 104, 106, 111, and 130.

40. See pp. 106–07.

41. “In capite octavo, postquam disputaverat non posse legem a nobis fieri, confert carnem et spiritum, docens carnem esse prorsus obnoxiam peccato, spiritum autem esse vitam et pacem. Hic sophistae vocant carnem appetitum sensitivum, oblipti phraseos ac tropi scripturae” (p. 91).

juxtaposed with spirit, it includes the best and most excellent virtues of human nature apart from the Holy Spirit.”⁴² He generalizes not just from the use of *caro* in Scripture but from its typical appearance in a figure of speech. It is a remarkable method: to settle the meaning of a term based on its usage within a habitual type of utterance.

He then considers the word in the context of the whole letter. He reduces the letter to an argument and then imagines a sophistical refutation:

[Paul] is accustomed to argue in this way: “The flesh cannot fulfill the law; therefore, there is need for the Spirit to fulfill the law.” But if we take “the flesh” to refer to part of man only, then how does Paul’s enthymeme hold? For it could be parried as follows: “Although the flesh could not fulfill the law, some better part of man could do it. Therefore, there is no need for the Spirit to fulfill the law.”⁴³

The disputation is rehearsed not for its own sake but to make the clear logic of Paul’s letter appear all the more sensible. In a final argument, returning to the verbal habits of Scripture, Melancthon discusses several synonyms of *caro*, that is, other terms that Paul uses “indiscriminately” (*promiscue*)⁴⁴ to refer to human (sinful) nature. These include “the old man” (*vetus homo*), “the body of sin” (*corp[us] peccati*), and “exterior man” (*exterior homo*). With an appeal to common sense, Melancthon seems to attribute to Paul a *copia verborum*, an abundance of verbal discourse by which he uses many synonyms to describe one thing.⁴⁵

42. “Non enim corpus, partem hominis, sed totum hominem, tam animam quam corpus, scriptura voce carnis signat, et quoties cum spiritu confertur, significat optimas naturae humanae ac praestantissimas vires citra spiritum sanctum” (p. 91).

43. “Sic enim solet argumentari: Caro non potuit legem implere, ergo spiritu est opus, qui impleat. Ibi si carnem pro parte hominis tantum usurpemus, quomodo consistet Pauli enthymema? Posset enim eludi ad hunc modum: Etsi caro legem facere non potuerit, potuisse tamen meliorem aliquam hominis partem, atque ita spiritu non fuisse opus ad implendam legem” (p. 92).

44. See p. 93.

45. Erasmus opens his instructions for verbal *copia* with a discussion of synonyms. See *Collected Works of Erasmus: Volume 24: Literary and Educational Writings 2*, ed. Craig R. Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 307–19. For Erasmus, synonyms are not entirely identical in meaning but have uses in different contexts. See Chomarat, vol. 2, pp. 721–23.

This interpretation of *caro* gives an idea of what Melanchthon means by the *mos Scripturae*. As stated above, the *mos Scripturae* is antithetical to the *mos philosophorum*. Melanchthon's treatment of the term *caro* is therefore controversial, and his arguments must be seen as part of a forensic debate, a destruction of his adversary's definition and a confirmation of his own. Given this adversarial context, it is natural that Melanchthon's interpretation of the term would resemble elements of classical legal and rhetorical arguments, especially *interpretatio scripti*, the interpretation of the intent of the law.⁴⁶ But he also clearly intends to instruct; and to turn the reader against the sophists, he draws on demonstrative rhetoric, or perhaps "didactic" (a genre that he added in 1521 to the classical three: forensic, demonstrative, deliberative). For instance, when he draws an antithesis between the (praiseworthy) *mos Scripturae* and the (blameworthy) *mos philosophorum*, he seems to exceed a strictly legal controversy and enter into a demonstrative or didactic context. The controversial context of considering a case "from both sides" (*in utramque partem*) gives way to a more assertive antithesis of mutually exclusive opposites. The logical and rhetorical composition of Scripture constitutes a personality, a *prosopon* with which one can become familiar. Interpreting a term, in this context, does not involve closing a (controversial) gap between a written text and the writer's intention, but rather recognizing meaning in the articulations of a text as if in the gestures, habits, and characteristic utterances of a speaker. The adversarial context in which Melanchthon describes the speech of Scripture belies the non-adversarial, familiar context in which he seeks to know and understand Scripture.

An epochal controversy over the liberal arts is inscribed in the very term he uses to characterize the "manner" of Scripture. For *mos* was part of a constellation of words including *consuetudo* (custom) and *usus* (usage) used by humanists to describe linguistic usage, and Melanchthon's notion of Scripture having its own "manner" or "fashion" is redolent of theories of literary education handed down by quattrocento humanism.⁴⁷ In Italy, imitation of examples

46. See Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and Its Humanist Reception* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 7–19. Missing in Melanchthon's dispute with the sophists, however, is an application of "equity," a central element of classical *interpretatio scripti*. As discussed below, much of Melanchthon's method seems to lie beyond this (largely forensic) tradition of interpretation.

47. Kees Meerhoff draws attention to Melanchthon's early reading of Angelo Poliziano and provides a synthesis of his eclectic method in "Philippe Melanchthon (1497–1560): Entre rhétorique et théologie,"

of classical Latin had been touted as a new and better means of (learned) language acquisition, an alternative to rote memorization of rules codified in verse grammars like the *Doctrinale* of Alexander de la Villa Dei, which continued in popularity into the new era of print. Examples of classical Latin usage were the basis of not just a new pedagogy but also a new kind of authority in the liberal arts: the authority of linguistic usage. Culled from the remains of ancient eloquence, examples of words in context became authoritative through *a posteriori* reasoning. Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantiae Linguae Latinae*, which had a long and successful run in the printing press, exemplified the new learning as applied to grammar.

Actual language usage was not authoritative in grammar alone; it was also for humanists a philosophical concern. For humanists like Valla and Rudolph Agricola, nonsensical propositions and unreal scenarios were a sign that scholastic logicians had removed themselves not only from human discourse but from reality, the very thing (*res*) they were supposedly investigating. For the humanists, the sophistication of scholastic reasoning came at the terrible cost of misrepresenting the world. The aim of humanist dialectic was to restore to the logical examination of things an accessible, correct, and real language.⁴⁸ For Valla, this consisted in eliminating a number of superfluous logical categories and distinctions. For Agricola, it consisted in breaking the strict, abstract confines of logic and franchising a wide range of real discourse to dialectical description and classification.⁴⁹ In the influential *De Inventione Dialectica*, Agricola describes logical and rhetorical types of argumentation as two faces

in *Entre logique et littérature*, pp. 9–24. Maurer describes the (lifelong) influence of humanist grammar on Melanchthon's thought in *Der junge Melanchthon zwischen Humanismus und Reformation*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967–68), vol. 1, pp. 49–56. “To the extent that Melanchthon distinguishes between knowledge of speech and reality, he makes speech and likewise grammar the basis of all understanding” (p. 55; Und indem Melanchthon dabei zwischen Sprach- und Sachwissenschaft trennt, macht er die Sprache und damit die Grammatik zur Grundlage aller Erkenntnis).

48. For Valla's view of linguistic usage (*consuetudo*) in philosophy, see Victoria Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 85–88; Peter Mack, *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 38–39; Lodi Nauta, *In Defense of Common Sense: Lorenzo Valla's Humanist Critique of Scholastic Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 45–47.

49. Agricola writes the *De Inventione Dialectica* in a jocular style for all literate souls. He draws his examples from domestic life as well as classical oratory, and he frequently denigrates the overly sophisticated modes of the academy. For Agricola's reading method, see Mack, pp. 227–33.

of the same verbal coin. He commends a common technical vocabulary for the understanding and, more importantly, use of both.⁵⁰

In both grammar and logic, then, humanists were touting a new source of authority, an authority that resides not simply in the testimonies of classical Latin eloquence (*ad fontes*) but more importantly in the learned soul's ability to discern varieties of style and meaning through an acquired familiarity and prudence (*iudicium*).⁵¹ The unsystematic quality of Valla's *Elegantiae Linguae Latinae*, which takes the form of a loosely organized lexicon, and the third book of Agricola's *De Inventione Dialectica*, on "use," are important indications of a new locus of authority in the new learning. Authority henceforth is a function of experience and practice, and it resides outside the established institutions of learning.⁵²

The humanist-scholastic debate was thus in large part a debate over authority in the liberal arts, a debate that cannot be reduced to the slogan *ad fontes*.⁵³ If there is a historical analogy between *ad fontes* and its Reformation counterpart, *sola Scriptura*, there is an equally operative analogy between *consuetudo* and the *mos Scripturae*, the authoritative basis of Melanchthon's rhetorical theology. Although it appears to us as a systematic theology, the *Loci Communes* might be viewed more accurately, from a historical point of view, as an attempt to construct Scriptural authority on the edifice of humanist grammar, that is, from a careful observation of Scripture's linguistic habits. "The time is coming," writes the young professor in one of his more prophetic modes, "when the use (or practice) of scripture will become more intimate (*familiarior*) to you, and you will have no trouble whatsoever in refuting the subtleties of the sophists."⁵⁴ The

50. Mack, pp. 190–226.

51. For the humanist analogy of rhetoric and prudence, and the theological issues it entailed, see Kahn, pp. 39–51.

52. Joachimsen describes Agricola's anthropology and epistemology as important philosophical background to Melanchthon's 1521 *Loci Communes*. "*Loci Communes: Eine Untersuchung*," pp. 33–53. Maurer takes a more cosmopolitan view of the sources of Melanchthon's thought in "*Melanchthons Loci communes*."

53. This is not the place to argue the actual novelty of humanist practice—that is, to show that the literary example actually replaced the normative precept in the humanist classroom. My concern is with ideology: the appeal to a different kind of authority in humanist polemics.

54. "Futurum enim est, ut, ubi familiarior tibi scripturae usus fuerit, nullo negotio quascunque sophistarum argutias diluas" (p. 105).

Loci Communes contains indications of a method but remains very experimental. The omission of the theological topics and initial topic of man, the most provocative aspect of the work, might also be taken as a sign of its provisional quality. It may have been in prudence that Melanchthon demurred to establish a theology on the basis of an authority so untested—not Scripture, I mean, but the *mos Scripturae*.

2.

Studies of the *Loci Communes* of 1521 have described it primarily in relation to Romans, and with good reason—by Melanchthon’s own account, the work grew out of his 1520–21 lectures on Romans, that central document of the Reformation. But it was while he was lecturing on 1 Corinthians that Melanchthon actually wrote the *Loci Communes*. Surely this first attempt at a theological synthesis was not untouched by his contemporary reading of 1 Corinthians. Probably the letter informed, perhaps it retarded, his discursive and theological procedure in that groundbreaking work. For Melanchthon saw 1 Corinthians as the rhetorical negative of Romans. In a summary “Argumentum” of the letter printed at the head of the *Annotationes*, in fact, he begins by describing the letter to the Romans, on which he had just completed lecturing.⁵⁵ Romans is written in the didactic genre. It contains a precise account of justification by faith, as if the entire lesson of Scripture were gathered into one place. Romans is all the things that the letters to the Corinthians are not. What Romans is to formal academic controversy, Corinthians is to the unstructured, spontaneous, and intimate discourse of the familiar letter.⁵⁶ Grasping for the theme or an outline of the letter, Melanchthon appears momentarily flustered by his inability to produce the cardinal doctrine of nascent Lutheran theology, justification by faith.

Although 1 Corinthians does not present a “coherent,” “continuous” discourse, there is still need for the exercise of judgment and discrimination on the part of the reader (not to mention the teacher, on whom more below).

55. See p. 16.

56. In the *Loci Communes*, Melanchthon compares Romans to Paul’s other letters. Romans is an “index” of all Scripture, while all the other letters are deliberative (παραίνετικαί), teaching the law. “There is no letter, however, that does not touch on arguments of the gospel, as the diligent reader will observe” (quamquam nulla sit, in qua non alicubi attingat evangelii rationes. Id quod per sese diligens lector animadvertet. [pp. 144–45]).

Melanchthon clearly states the problem in the “Argumentum”: parts of 1 Corinthians explain the law, and parts declare the gospel. But he does not state which does which; instead, these twin enunciations of Scripture must be shown “in their places” (*suis locis*).⁵⁷ That is, there is no formal help from classical oratory or even topical help from formal logic in sorting out law and gospel as types of enunciation. Law and gospel must be heard, in a sense, and not just seen—felt, and not just known. It is in the “composition and scheme of Scripture”⁵⁸ that each type must be recognized, and the genres, figures, and topics—that is, the elements of speech—are helps to recognition.

Law and gospel are frequently compared in the *Annotationes*. They were categories that Luther developed in his exegetical lectures in the 1510s and that Melanchthon adopted as early as his 1519 lectures on Matthew’s gospel.⁵⁹ They are still regarded as characteristic elements of Lutheran exegesis and preaching.⁶⁰ Together they comprise the complementary messages that reveal justification by faith, beginning with the law that exposes human sin and threatens divine judgment, followed by the gospel that reveals God’s mercy and Christ’s “alien” righteousness. “Justification,” Melanchthon writes on the topic of faith in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, “begins from this work of the law: fear. As in the cases of David and Paul, so it appears with all the saints. But God [then] raises up the elect and shows them his promise, by which believers are justified and reconciled.”⁶¹ As if in answer to the threats of the law, the gospel consoles. In a

57. See p. 16.

58. “phraseos ac tropi Scripturae” (p. 91).

59. For an overview of law and gospel in Luther’s early exegesis, with references to recent work, see Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 50–59. Michael S. Whiting makes a thorough investigation of the subject in *Luther in English: The Influence of His Theology of Law and Gospel on Early English Evangelicals (1525–35)* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), pp. 17–70. For Melanchthon’s application of law and gospel in the Matthew lectures (1519), see Schneider, *Oratio Sacra*, p. 148. For his developing theology of law and gospel, with a focus on the *Loci Communes* and the lectures on Matthew and Romans that preceded it, see Bizer’s *Theologie der Verheißung*. Building on Maurer’s work, Bizer locates a “breakthrough” (*Umbruch*) in the representation of law and gospel in the writing of the *Loci Communes*. See pp. 78–85. For the use of the categories in the commentaries, see pp. 94–96, 218.

60. Mark Allan Powell, “Law and Gospel and the Interpretation of Scripture,” in *Lutheran Perspectives on Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2010), pp. 36–58.

61. “Orditur iustificatio ab hoc opere legis: a timore. Sicut in David et Paulo, immo in omnibus sanctis apparet. Sed electos Deus per spiritum sublevat et ostendit eis promissionem, cui credentes iustificantur

telling comparison of law and gospel, Melanchthon heaps up synonyms to represent the exuberant, abundant quality of the gospel: “On the other hand, this is the efficacy of the Spirit: First it illuminates, discovers sins, and perplexes [...] and then again it consoles, revives, pacifies, rejoices, arouses, and reassures.”⁶² In his list of the offices of the gospel, Melanchthon doubles the number of offices he attributes to the law. It is a fitting bias, anticipating Paul’s comparison of the old and new covenants in 2 Corinthians 3. These twin messages or “forms of the cross” (as Melanchthon describes them in the *Annotationes*) supply a basic framework for biblical interpretation. Their hermeneutical role is especially evident in the Corinthians *Annotationes*, where Melanchthon does not rely on formal structures, such as one would find in a formal oration of disputation, for guidance.⁶³

What are the characteristic marks of law and gospel? Can they be recognized (even classified) as speech genres, such that one might know them not only by their content but also by characteristic styles? The more Melanchthon uses rhetorical terms to describe Paul’s enunciations of law and gospel, the more he gives the impression that yes, both may be known by style as well as content.

Before showing their differences (a major concern of the *Annotationes* on 2 Corinthians), it is imperative to show their common source in divine wisdom over and against human wisdom. This is the major antithesis that informs the *Annotationes* on 1 Corinthians. Law and gospel share characteristic patterns. Together they are opposed to philosophy and scholastic theology, which Melanchthon explicitly compares to the “philosophy or theology of the false apostles”⁶⁴ attacked by Paul. Furthermore, law and gospel are (at the very least) not incompatible with the aims and motives of rhetoric. On Paul’s verbal antithesis “not in speech but in power” (1 Cor 4:20), Melanchthon writes in the *Annotationes*:

et pacificantur” (p. 65).

62. “Econtra efficacia spiritus haec est: Primum illuminat et detegit peccata et confundit Rursum etiam consolatur, vivificat, pacificat, exhilarat, erigit, et confirmat” (p. 25). See for comparison p. 37: “the spirit is efficacious and powerful for both perplexing and consoling” (spiritus efficax et potens ad confusionem et consolationem).

63. Their urgency in the interpretation of informal discourse might be reflected also in Melanchthon’s later lectures on the Proverbs. See Schneider, *Oratio Sacra*, p. 161n61.

64. “philosophiam aut theologiam pseudapostolorum” (p. 35).

“Speech” signifies not elegance of speech but probable reasons of philosophy—or rather the knowledge of the gospel without the Spirit. “Power” signifies the efficacy or dynamism (*energia*) of the Spirit. The apostle is saying that he is not about to fool around with philosophy or the theology of the false apostles, but that he is about to prove the Spirit. For the Spirit manifests itself in teaching (*doctrina*) and living (*vita*). No one but who possesses the Spirit and lives in the Spirit can teach spiritual matters. [...] Therefore, just as the apostle passes judgment on the Corinthians, so now one might pass judgment on scholastic doctrine.⁶⁵

Paul’s castigation of the Corinthians, who gave up the gospel for philosophy, and his threats to prove his words by his deeds, found an ardent admirer in the young humanist and reformer. As in the *Loci Communes*, two discursive “usages” or “habits” are at loggerheads, and they are equally verbal, doctrinal, and moral. Furthermore, rhetorical usage (*elegantia orationis*) appears in opposition to philosophy, on the side of the gospel. Probably mindful of the Greek word translated by *sermo* (*logos*), Melanchthon makes a contentious interpretation of *sermo*. In order to forestall an apparent antithesis between learned speech (see 1 Cor 1:18) and the efficacy of the Spirit, he translates it contrary to its typical, favourable meaning in humanist usage (i.e., “speech” or “discourse”). The conflict is not between rhetoric and the Spirit, as it would appear, but between philosophy and the Spirit.

If formless as discourse, 1 Corinthians nonetheless exhibits the “forms of the cross,” a phrase that greatly illuminates Melanchthon’s use of rhetoric in biblical exegesis. Commenting on Paul’s phrase *sermo crucis* (1 Cor 1:18), he writes, “This place cannot be understood other than by comparing the forms of the cross with the forms of human wisdom.”⁶⁶ Expanding upon Paul’s sense of the gospel as a characteristic speech (*sermo*), Melanchthon attributes

65. “Sermo significat non elegantiam orationis, sed probabiles rationes philosophicas: Immo etiam evangelii cognitionem sine spiritu. Virtus significat efficaciam seu energiam spiritus. Dicit autem apostolus se non moraturum vel philosophiam vel theologiam pseudapostolorum, sed exploraturum spiritum. Apparet enim spiritus et in doctrina et in vita. Immo nemo nisi habens spiritum et vivens spiritu potest spiritualia docere.... Itaque sicut de Corinthiis erat iudicaturus apostolus, ita nunc iudicatur de doctrina scholastica” (p. 35).

66. “Porro hic locus intelligi non potest nisi collatis inter se formis crucis et formis humanae sapientiae” (p. 21).

to the cross not just speech, but characteristic forms (*formae*).⁶⁷ Like the *mos Scripturae* that opposes the *mos philosophorum* in the *Loci communes*, the *formae crucis* are understood by opposition to the forms of human wisdom.

Law and gospel are the “forms of the cross” par excellence. In his comment on chapter 13, verse 12, “Now we see as in a glass, darkly,” Melanchthon identifies law and gospel as the “forms of God,” which are known obscurely in this life. He explains:

When he says “in an enigma,” he designates the word for that faith, or the form of that knowledge, by which God is known, but this is an obscure term. I call “the word of faith and of God” that (word) which is powerful in our hearts in the Spirit of God. God’s righteousness and wrath are known, when the law disturbs with fear. The pity and gifts of God are known, when the heart is touched by the evangelical word of grace. But this knowledge is yet obscure. These forms of God are yet obscure, because they are not entirely comprehended.⁶⁸

Obscure though they remain on the epistemological level, the “forms of God” clearly take shape in this passage as the law and gospel: the law that terrifies and the gospel that reassures.⁶⁹ Law and gospel take many shapes, as the *Annotationes* make clear. In Melanchthon’s commentary on the exodus signs in chapter 10 (an interesting place of comparison with allegorical interpretation, which Melanchthon had mostly discarded by this time), the crossing of the red sea *enacts* the offices of the law, while the cloudy pillar *enacts* the offices of gospel. Here both law and gospel appear in the form of “evangelical signs”

67. In later, related uses of *formae*, Melanchthon uses the word to describe both visual and verbal images. For the cross itself or “Christ crucified” as the “most foolish form,” see p. 24. For law and gospel, or the “word (*verbum*) of faith and of God,” as “the obscure forms of God,” see p. 73.

68. “Quod dicit: ‘in aenigmate,’ designat illius fidei verbum, illius cognitionis formam, qua cognoscitur Deus, sed obscurum verbum est; voco verbum fidei et Dei id, quod efficax est spiritu Dei in cordibus nostris. Iustitia Dei et ira cognoscitur, cum terret lex. Misericordia et divitiae bonitatis cognoscuntur, cum tangitur cor verbo gratiae evangelico, sed adhuc illa cognitio obscura est. Adhuc formae illae Dei sunt obscurae, quia non comprehenduntur totae” (p. 73).

69. Christology is a major concern of the *Annotationes* on Corinthians, where Christ appears simultaneously as a verbal and visual “form.” The image (*imago*) of the crucified Christ makes known at once the wrath of God and the mercy of God, thus performing both offices of law and gospel. See p. 28; also pp. 22, 60, 79, and 83–84.

(*evangelica signa*, distinct from allegorical signs because their significance lies in their action or effect, animated by the same creative, divine word that elsewhere enacts the same offices through speech⁷⁰). Similarly, the Eucharist performs the office of the gospel in a sacramental sign. In his comment on Paul's instructions for the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11:17, Melanchthon writes that it is a "sign of vivification that is presented to overwhelmed consciences."⁷¹ But if they take physical shape as evangelical and sacramental signs under the old and new covenants, law and gospel primarily take verbal shape, and it is for recognizing these "forms of the cross" that Melanchthon draws extensively on the discursive arts.⁷²

It is in this light, I believe, that we must approach the extensive rhetorical vocabulary that Melanchthon uses in the *Annotationes*. Drawn into the service of Luther's "theology of the cross," rhetorical observation here aids in the recognition, demarcation, and recollection of the complementary speech genres of law and gospel. To mark the boundaries of speech in 1 and 2 Corinthians, Melanchthon deploys an elaborate terminology, drawn from three spheres of the *artes sermocinales*: letter writing, rhetoric, and logic. Table 1 lists the technical terms that appear in the lectures on 1 Corinthians, distributed into three classes: genres, figures of speech, and topics of invention. Melanchthon observes 17 genres of writing in 23 different places, 17 figures of speech in 27 different places, and 14 topics of invention in 22 different places. Table 2 contains a similar list for the lectures on 2 Corinthians. Here Melanchthon discovered a more articulate use of rhetoric. He finds 22 genres in 41 different places, 19 figures of speech in 36 different places, and 7 topics of invention in 9 places. Not grammar (philology), not philosophy, but rhetoric supplies the main technical vocabulary for Melanchthon's lectures on the Corinthians correspondence. His lectures, especially in their printed form, function as an "index"—not of topics like our modern indexes, but of

70. See p. 54.

71. "signum vivificationis, quod adhibetur desperabundis conscientii" (p. 58).

72. "Those who have undertaken mortification, and now battle with the flesh and its lusts, have need of consolation, which comes first through the word (*verbum*) and then through the eucharist, that there might be some sensible sign of this word, and that we might be more certain about the will of God" (qui coeperunt mortificari et iam cum carne conflictantur et concupiscentiis eius, habent opus confirmatione, ea fit primum per verbum, tum, ut sit aliquod sensibile signum illius verbi, quod de voluntate Dei certiores simus, per eucharistiam. [p. 58]).

the rhetorical strategies of the text.⁷³ What is the purpose of such an index? It is not to compute law and gospel, as if these “forms of the cross” could be quantified as so many genres, figures, and topics. It is rather an attempt to locate the experience of law and gospel in certain enunciations of Scripture, and to appreciate the verbal art and texture that make these enunciations distinctive. In the Corinthians lectures, this rhetorical characterization of law and gospel is especially urgent, for it helps (again) to recognize, distinguish, and recollect the continuous, complementary messages of law and gospel within the apparently discontinuous, informal letters. One example will serve to show what I mean.

The last word on 1 Corinthians recorded in the *Annotationes* is Melancthon’s comment on 1 Corinthians 15:55, “Death is swallowed up in victory.” It was perhaps an intentional coda, stopping well short of the end of Paul’s letter, for he describes the phrase as the heart of the gospel message:

This is a tremendous comparison (*collatio*) of death, sin, and law: sin perplexes, and death is perplexity. But sin perplexes through the law. For it is the proper duty of the law (*proprium legis officium*) to reveal sin and to judge it as revealed. Sin perplexes – Romans 4: “The law works wrath.” For a law shows what is to be done, but it does not extend the power of doing. And since we are incapable of doing, it condemns. So, just as law is the sentence (*irrogatio*) of death, the gospel is the promise (*promissio*) of life. It [the gospel] is nothing other than a sermon on this saying (*sententia*): “death is swallowed up in victory.”⁷⁴

73. Wengert similarly describes Melancthon’s lectures on the Gospel of John as supplying the reader with an “index” or “scaffold.” See *Philip Melancthon’s Annotationes in Johannem*, pp. 167–212: “The index ... used the tools of dialectic and rhetoric to focus the text’s simple and certain meaning upon the important soteriological issues of the day. Not in spite of, but because of the presence of dialectic and rhetoric, Melancthon’s index to Scripture was intended to be as unobtrusive as possible, guiding the reader back to the ‘simple and certain’ meaning of the text” (p. 212). I would simply place more emphasis on Melancthon’s presentation of Scripture as speech. In his discussion of the marginal “index,” Volkhard Wels describes a different use, drawing (I think) an unhelpful comparison with the commonplace book, in *Triviale Künste: Die humanistische Reform der grammatischen, dialektischen und rhetorischen Ausbildung an der Wende zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Weidler, 2000), p. 182.

74. “Egregia collatio est mortis, peccatis, legis: peccatum confundit, confusio mors est. Confundit autem peccatum per legem. Nam proprium legis officium est ostendere peccatum et iudicare ostensum, peccatum confundit Rho. 4.: ‘Lex iram operatur.’ Nam ostendit quidem lex, quid sit faciendum, sed vim

This last word on 1 Corinthians abounds with a verbal description of the passage, which begins with a quotation from Isaiah 25:8—a *sententia*, meaning not (as sometimes) “thought” or “idea” but the formal unit of discourse, “saying” or “utterance.” The saying occasions Paul’s comparison (*collatio*) of law, sin, and death, a figure of speech that is facilitated by the topics of property (*proprium*) and duty (*officium*). These literary and rhetorical devices are not the substance of the gospel message, and of course they are not unique to the gospel message. They appear here, and throughout the notes, as signposts, a Renaissance-Reformation guide to the perplexed, that they might recognize the work of death and perplexity being done in them by the threatening, judging, and sentencing law, and that they might be comforted by the complementary word, speech, and consolation of the gospel.

“Not in speech but in power [is found] the kingdom of God.” Understood as an attack on prevailing forms of speech, the saying was of great importance to Melancthon. He made the Greek text of this verse the epigraph to the 1521 *Loci communes*, where it appears as a kind of motto or envoi: *ouk en logoi all’ en dunamei*. This choice suggests continuity between the Romans lectures, the *Loci communes*, and the Corinthians lectures, all bound by an interest in God’s efficacious word in contrast to the prevailing forms of thought, speech, and teaching in scholastic theology. Scripture is speech and must be heard first as speech before it can be understood and applied. The *mos Scripturae*, a stumbling block to scholastics and foolishness to theologians, is an indispensable guide to resolving its meanings and experiencing its power.⁷⁵

faciendi non praestat. Ideo cum facere nequeamus, condemnat. Porro, sicut lex mortis est irrogatio, ita evangelium vitae promissio. Nec aliud nisi praedicatio huius sententiae: ‘absorpta est mors in victoriam’” (p. 84).

75. Beginning with his comments on Paul’s antithesis of “spiritual” and “carnal” man, Melancthon repeatedly remarks that only those who have experienced the effects of law and gospel can discern them (as the forms of the cross). Paul’s comparison of the unspiritual and spiritual man is in 1 Corinthians 2:14–16. See pp. 29, 35, 46–47, 59, 69. Summing up the first topic of the letter, the antithesis of spiritual and carnal wisdom, he writes, “As for those who have not felt the true and effective consolation of the conscience, they do not understand the fruit and power of the gospel” (Deinde, qui non senserunt consolationem conscientiae veram et efficacem, ii non intelligunt fructum et vim evangelii. [p. 29]). For an attack on scholastic philosophy in terms used in the *Loci communes*, see pp. 61–62: “Cavendus enim est sophistarum mos discernendi vocabula in tot modos: capitur proprie, capitur improprie, capitur large et stricte. [...] omnia illa phantasmata sophistarum sunt insaniae falsae et imposturae.” (One must be on guard against the sophists’ habit of carving up terms into so many modes: [a term] is grasped

The index is the means by which Melanchthon describes the habits, gestures, and figures of the *mos Scripturae*. It supplies a modicum of the critical judgment that he applied in his reading, and that he wished his students to develop. Not *sola Scriptura* but an acquired familiarity with Scripture as speech constituted authority to the Greek professor, whose efforts at reform at this time seem primarily aimed at the university. For his academic audience, Melanchthon wished to set a new standard of erudition in the liberal arts, one that could rival late scholastic logic for its sophistication, and yet serve and not displace the enunciations of Scripture. “A more excellent way show I unto you,” he seems to be saying in the Corinthians lectures: not philosophy but rhetoric would reveal the language of Scripture.

3.

In the *Argumentum* of 2 Corinthians, Melanchthon extends a rhetorical description of the two letters begun in the *Argumentum* of 1 Corinthians. It is no longer the comparison between the “didactic” oration to the Romans and the unstructured letter to the Corinthians that concerns him. Here, 2 Corinthians (equally unstructured) is an epistolary complement to 1 Corinthians:

In the first epistle Paul harshly rebuked the Corinthians, because although having been justified, they did not at all rejoice in the Spirit, and they quickly returned to the lusts of the flesh. That is, they engaged in disputes with each other, they fondly flattered themselves about their gifts, and they welcomed among themselves an incestuous adulterer. This rebuke (*obiurgatio*) greatly troubled the Corinthians, just like loving sons tend to be troubled, if their father should correct them. This general sorrow among the Corinthians prompted this second letter from Paul. For it was fitting (*conveniebat*), that the loving father console the children whom he had wounded. These days the clergy merely wound.⁷⁶

properly, it is grasped *improperly*, it is grasped *generally* and *strictly*. . . . all such imaginations of the sophists are false and fraudulent ravings.)

76. “Priore epistula acerbè obiurgavit Corinthios Paulus, quod iam iustificati frigerent, adeoque nihil fererent spiritu, et sensim ad carnis desideria redirent; quod inter se similitates exercerent; quod sibi de donis pueriliter placerent; quod inter se incestum scortatorem foverent. Ea obiurgatio vehementer conturbavit Corinthios, non aliter atque solent pii filii turbari, si se pater corripere. Hic Corinthiorum

Nowhere in the lectures do we find Melanchthon trying to summarize 1 Corinthians in logical form, as he summarizes Romans in the *Loci Communes*. He does, however, compare 1 and 2 Corinthians to two types of the familiar letter: rebuke (*obiurgatio*) and comfort (*consolatio*).⁷⁷ The second letter is to the first what the gospel is to the law—a reassuring, restorative, life-giving answer to the doubts and confusion introduced by a judicial inquiry into one’s guilt. Melanchthon never explicitly makes the comparison, but the symmetry of *obiurgatio* and *consolatio* on the one hand and *law* and *gospel* on the other is unmistakable. That Paul performs the offices of a loving father to his children, correcting and reassuring them, only makes the analogy with the “forms of the cross” more evident. In his note on the name “father” in 2 Corinthians 1:2, Melanchthon writes that Paul joins the evangelists in proclaiming the “father of pity and consolation.”⁷⁸ He later quotes in two different places Romans 8:15, where Paul describes the Spirit of adoption that cries “Abba, Father.”⁷⁹

In the *Annotationes* on 2 Corinthians, the antithesis between the *formae crucis* and the forms of philosophy gives way to a more subtle comparison between the “ministry of the law” and the “ministry of the gospel.” Human wisdom, including the distinctions and absurdities of the scholastic theologians, recedes into the background, and it is the efficacious word under two covenants or ministries that comes now into focus.⁸⁰ No more coherent or continuous in its topics than the first letter to the Corinthians, the second further illustrates the harmony of rhetoric and the *sermo crucis*. Focusing on Melanchthon’s commentary on the fourth *locus* of the letter, “this most memorable passage on the ministry of the gospel and its effects,”⁸¹ I wish to explore the implications of a threefold comparison between reason, law, and gospel. Rhetoric, again

communis dolor et hanc posteriorem epistulam Paulo extorsit. Conveniebat enim, ut filios pius pater consolaretur, quos afflixerat. Nunc episcopi affligunt tantum” (p. 85).

77. MSA, vol. 4, p. 85. In applying contemporary epistolary theory to the interpretation of Scripture, Melanchthon was following the example of Erasmus in the *Paraphrases*. See Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*, pp. 92–95.

78. “[p]at[er] misericordiarum et consolationis” (p. 87).

79. “Abba, pater” (pp. 94, 114).

80. By my count, he makes only one reference to the “scholastics” in the notes on 2 Corinthians, though human wisdom is occasionally invoked to put the divine law in perspective. See p. 97, on the false doctrine of satisfaction.

81. “hunc locum maxime memorabilem de ministerio evangelii et eius efficacia” (p. 115).

allied with the gospel as an instrumental force of persuasion, now appears superior not only to philosophy, but even to theology. Very tellingly, as he gains some perspective on the doctrinal work of Romans and the *Loci communes*, Melanchthon begins to equate the ministry of the law with bare “doctrine,” and the ministry of the gospel with human emotions.

Four topics (*loci*) are numbered in the *Argumentum*, and they are found predominantly in the first five chapters of 2 Corinthians. These may be summarized in a list:

- 1) Of penance (2:5–11)
- 2) Of the difference between the old and new covenants, or between law and gospel (3:6–18)
- 3) The example of generosity of the Macedonian church (chapter 8)
- 4) The ideal (*forma*) of the bishop, or on the ministry of the gospel (2:16–5:12).⁸²

After listing these topics, Melanchthon says that they do not represent all the topics of the loosely organized letter; Paul discourses on suffering and other topics throughout.⁸³

The fourth topic is listed in the *Argumentum* as “the ideal of the bishop” (*forma episcopi*) and is later taken up in the notes (at 2 Cor 2:16) as “of the

82. “De poenitentia, cum incestus ille scortator post poenitentiam recipitur, quem ante excluserat; Deinde discrimen veteris ac novi testamenti, legis et evangelii; Tertius, exemplum liberalitatis Achaicarum ecclesiarum; Quartus, forma episcopi” (p. 85).

83. See p. 85. At first glance, there is no obvious rationale for the ordering of the four topics. They do not appear to follow the order in which they are handled in the letter, the example of the Macedonians’ generosity being the most obvious misplacement, and they cannot be said to be arranged by importance, although the fourth (and last) topic occupies more of the text than any other and will clearly emerge as the most important in the *Annotationes*. Melanchthon may have followed, however, the text of 2 Corinthians 2 in this enumeration of topics. Following his instructions for restoring the penitent sinner in vv. 5–11, Paul mentions in quick succession the gospel of Christ (v. 12), his visit to Macedonia (v. 13), and his work as an apostle (vv. 14–17). Perhaps Melanchthon followed the order of this passage in arranging the four topics of his *Annotationes*, taking 2 Corinthians 2:5–17 as Paul’s own *argumentum* of the letter. If this is Melanchthon’s rationale, it suggests that in outlining the *loci* of a text, he observed the order of enunciation in the text—something other than the order of its form or content. Lists of topics appear in many of Melanchthon’s lectures and notes, but I have not compared them in their ordering. Melanchthon appears to have supplied a list of topics for 1 Corinthians, but these are not preserved in the *Annotationes*.

ministry of the gospel.”⁸⁴ It will occupy most of Melanchthon’s attention, and it may be said to represent his primary interest in the second letter.⁸⁵ Indeed, it encompasses other topics, including the treatment of the penitent sinner, the difference between law and gospel, and the various passages on suffering. With the ministry and the minister of the gospel in focus, the issue is not receiving or understanding the gospel message but proclaiming and living the gospel message. If rhetoric assisted in the 1 Corinthians lectures in familiarizing oneself with the “forms of the cross,” here rhetoric is called on to describe the office of the true bishop over and against the “false apostles.” There is a subtle but important shift from the “forms” to the “ministries” of law and gospel. In moving from 1 Corinthians to 2 Corinthians, the *Annotationes* thus describe a classic order of learning, at least as conceived by humanists: from reception to production, or from observation and interpretation of examples to imitation and performance (in this case preaching).

The fourth locus begins with Paul’s “commendation” (*commendatio*) of his ministry. *Commendatio* is a particular type of praise, in which one praises another for performing his or her duty well. As in 1 Corinthians, the gospel is known primarily by its effects. Now Paul rehearses those same effects or duties of consoling, reassuring, vivifying, etc., not for the sake of distinguishing them from human philosophy, but more urgently for amplifying and assisting the work of consolation:

84. “Quartus hic epistulae locus est de ministerio evangelii” (p. 99). “Atque hic finit hunc locum maxime memorabilem de ministerio evangelii et eius efficacia” (p. 115). “Hactenus antithesin ministerii litterae ac spiritus produxit obiter interspargens de ministris” (p. 116).

85. No sooner does he wrap up this locus than he begins to look for the end of the letter. At chapter 6, verse 1, he writes “So far he has drawn an antithesis of the ministries of letter and spirit, interjecting various things about the ministers [of each]” (Hactenus antithesin ministerii litterae ac spiritus produxit obiter interspargens de ministris. [p. 116]) and he proceeds to explain that the remainder of the letter shifts to moral instruction (*paraenesis*), it being a typical economy of Paul’s to begin with doctrine and proceed to moral instruction. The last eight chapters detain Melanchthon and his students for about half the time spent on the first five. He seems in haste to wrap it up, identifying chapter 7 as the “conclusion” of the letter and again chapter 10 as the “last part” of the letter, which he compares to a period (pp. 118, 125). No record is left of his lecture on the final, thirteenth chapter, which he sums up in a note on chapter 10 as being “on morals” (p. 125). Perhaps that was all he needed to say. Annotations on these later chapters repeatedly warn against taking good works as anything other than the “fruit of faith” (*fructus fidei*, p. 125).

Such commendations of the ministry of the gospel are necessary for confirming faith and shoring up consciences with trust, not only because (grace) is new and foreign to the flesh, but *because grace is never sufficiently amplified to troubled consciences*. Always the human mind conceives of God's mercy something less and narrower than it ought.⁸⁶

Using rhetorical means, Paul amplifies the consolation of the gospel. It is a work of accommodating the subject matter, the message of God's "foreign" (*alienus*) grace, to a particularly fragile audience, a people of troubled conscience who tend to be threatened rather than consoled. It is a work of rhetorical invention and style, drawing on copious discourse in both kinds, of words and argument, to persuade and move this audience with emotion and reason.

Amplification was a critical means by which Melanchthon distinguished rhetoric from the complementary verbal art of logic, whose primary aim was instruction.⁸⁷ Amplification was much on his mind in the period of the Corinthians lectures. In his contemporary lectures on rhetoric, recorded in the 1521 *Institutiones Rhetoricae*, he introduced a new class of figures of speech, eventually called the "figures of amplification" (*schemata amplificationis*), which were figures "of both words and thought" (*tum verbis, tum sententiis*).⁸⁸ (Figures had conventionally been divided between figures of words and thought.) In my view, Melanchthon was looking beyond conventional boundaries and classifications to accommodate the extraordinary *energia* of the Spirit, or the *efficacia* of Scripture, into his teachings on rhetoric. In the lectures on rhetoric, this resulted in conceptual breakthroughs of the first order. Melanchthon expanded the boundaries of rhetoric in both directions—franchising logical, instructional speech in one direction (the *genus didascalium* or "teaching kind") and the flights of ingenuity in the other (the "figures of amplification"). Both discoveries transcend conventional (dichotomous) comparisons of thought and word, invention and style. The contemporary lectures on Romans and Corinthians,

86. "Sunt autem necessariae huiusmodi commendationes ministerii evangelii ad confirmandam fidem et erigendas fiducia conscientias, non modo, quod usque adeo novum et alienum a carne sit, sed quod conscientias afflictiis gratia non potest satis amplificari. Semper concipit mens humana minus et angustius aliquid de Dei misericordia, quam debet" (pp. 99–100).

87. See Weaver, pp. 383–87.

88. *Institutiones Rhetoricae* (Basel, 1523), sig. D1v. The phrase "schemata amplificationis" is found in Brennan, p. 67.

and Melanchthon's deeply felt experience of law and gospel in both their didactic and emotive forms, must have had something to do with these discoveries.

There is no indication anywhere in the *Annotationes* that Melanchthon did not prize clear teaching, which is thematic in the Romans lectures and the *Loci Communes*. But his attention has turned in 2 Corinthians to the limitations, and even the depredations, of teaching (*doctrina*), and this must represent an advance on the antithesis of forms of the cross/forms of philosophy that governs the *Annotationes* on 1 Corinthians. Writing on Paul's *collatio* (comparison) of letter and spirit in chapter 3, he compares the "ministries" of law and gospel. As doctrine, both law and gospel appear as "the letter":

Littera means quite simply teaching, however it is written: law, gospel, knowledge of the law, knowledge of the gospel, performance of the law, performance of the gospel—indeed every work done by the instruction of the letter and not by the vivifying Spirit.⁸⁹

Far from being neutral or harmless, this knowledge (of both law and gospel) without the animating Spirit is the letter that kills (2 Cor 3:6). It still remains superior, in a qualified way, to human wisdom. Comparing their duties, Melanchthon says, "There is a certain glory of the law, if you compare it to human teachings or reason. Reason is entirely ignorant of God, while the law is the testimony of God and teaches how God is to be honoured."⁹⁰ But far superior is the ministry of the gospel. Paraphrasing Paul's direct appeal, Melanchthon says, "the gospel is not merely the preaching of some doctrine, but it is the gift (*donatio*) of the Holy Spirit. I am no minister of the letter but of the Holy Spirit. In other words, I don't teach, I give the Holy Spirit."⁹¹ In a final comparison drawn from this passage, Melanchthon amplifies the glory of the *ministry* of the gospel. If the law has a greater glory than human wisdom, because it teaches true knowledge, it has a lesser glory than the gospel, which

89. "LITTERA simplicissime significat doctrinam, nempe quidquid scribitur: lex, evangelium, cognitio legis, cognitio evangelii, simulatio legis, simulatio evangelii littera sunt; adeoque omne opus, quod littera docente, non spiritu vivificante fit" (pp. 101–02).

90. "Est aliqua legis gloria, si ad humanas doctrinas, ad rationem conferas. Ratio est prorsus ignara Dei, lex testimonium de Deo est et docet, quomodo sit colendus Deus" (p. 105).

91. "[E]vangelium non est praedicatio doctrinae alicuius tantum, sed est donatio ipsa Spiritus sancti, Minister sum non litterae, sed Spiritus sancti, id est: non doceo, sed dono Spiritum sanctum" (p. 103).

imparts the justifying Spirit. The latter is the only efficacious word, effecting what it teaches.

As Melancthon attempts to fit the supernatural, spiritual word to the lived experience of humans, he makes some observations on human psychology. He distinguishes “spirit” from soul, mind, and body. It is the seat of the affections, and it is where the divine Spirit operates. On 2 Corinthians 5:4, for instance, he distinguishes this special sense of “spirit”:

These must not be compared as if the spirit is just the understanding that moves, just as reason or conscience moves the impious. Rather, the spirit is the living fire of the heart, truly sorrowing under the burden of the sinful flesh, as the apostle exclaims, “Who will rescue me from the body of this death?”⁹²

This passage and others in the *Annotationes* seem to show a heightened attention to the affective dimension of human experience, illustrated here in verbal form by an outburst (*exclamatio*).⁹³ There is late in the *Annotationes* an even more forceful iteration of these concerns, in Melancthon’s comments on chapters 10–12, which he describes as a *periodus* or “complete sentence” that contains a vehement plea to beware the false apostles.⁹⁴ Indeed, he describes the “entire passage” as “the most spiritual of all Paul’s writings.”⁹⁵ In these last pages of the *Annotationes*, we find a recapitulation of the comparison between the ministries of law and gospel, but now with the passion that animated the earlier antithesis, in 1 Corinthians, of the *formae crucis* and the forms of human wisdom. No less than he had denounced the philosophers, Melancthon here denounces the religious party, the theologians who have knowledge without the Spirit. Amplifying the power of the gospel by a twofold comparison, with

92. “Neque haec ita intelligenda sunt, quasi spiritus sit cognitio tantum, quae moveat, sicut ratio vel conscientia movet impios, sed est vivax aestus cordis, vere dolens de onere corporis peccati, sicut exclamat apostolus: ‘Quis liberabit me de corpore mortis huius?’” (p. 114).

93. See also Melancthon’s comment on 1 Corinthians 15, which like 2 Corinthians 5 treats the resurrection (pp 83–84). Here Melancthon compares the human “spirit” [spiritus] with the human “soul” [anima] both of which make use of the body. But where the soul is the seat of natural joy and sorrow, the spirit is the seat of divine joy and sorrow.

94. p. 125

95. “Estque hic totus locus omnium, quod ego sciam, apud Paulum spiritualissimus” (p. 126).

human wisdom and divine learning, it is a fitting “period” to the three years of teaching preserved in Melanchthon’s 1522 *Annotationes*.⁹⁶

**Table 1: Units of Discourse in Melanchthon’s
Annotationes on 1 Corinthians⁹⁶**

Genres	Figures of Speech	Topics of Invention
familiaria	benevolentia	ocasio***
gratulatio	discrimen	pugnancia
confirmatio	collatio****	a poena
exordium	antithesis*	a beneficiis
consolatio	contentio	ex maiore**
obiurgatio***	allusio	ab exemplo***
increpatio	sententia*	a debito
admonitio	emphasis	a dissimili
dehortatio**	imago	a reverentia
hortatio	figura*	a fine
reprehensio	ironia**	ab utili
improbatio	auxesis	a conditione
confutatio	amplificatio	a simili
argumentum	extenuatio	proprium
ratio*	accomodatio	officium
quaestio	coacervatio	
ratiocinatio	antisagoge	

96. In order of appearance in the *Annotationes*, with asterisks for repeated uses.

**Table 2: Units of Discourse in Melanchthon's
Annotationes on 2 Corinthians⁹⁷**

Genres	Figures of Speech	Topics of Invention
argumentum***	benevolentia	a persona*
exordium	congeries	ab affectu
ratio****	occupatiuncula	a gratiarum actione
consolatio***	amplificatio*	ab exemplo*
narratiuncula	occupatio*****	ex antecedentibus signis
propositio*	comparatio	occasio
commendatio*****	collatio****	ab officiis
epilogus***	contentio	a possibili
correctio	castigatio	
exclamatio	antithesis*****	
admonitio	descriptio	
conclusio	repetitio*	
excusatio	forma loquendi	
hortatio	paraenesis*	
consilium	figura sermonis	
exhortatio	periphrasis	
obiurgatio	citatio	
obtestatio	periodus	
obsecratio	apostrophe	
castigatio		
invectus		

97. In order of appearance in the *Annotationes*, with asterisks for repeated uses.