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Henk van den Belt

Word and Spirit in Melanchthon's Loci Communes: Searching for the Relationship between the External and the Internal

During the reformation the relationship between the Bible and the Spirit was an important issue. The theology of early Protestantism focused on the word of God, but also acknowledged the necessity of the work of the Spirit.

The word that was outwardly proclaimed as law and gospel was believed to be inwardly empowered by the Spirit.

The fifth article of the Augsburg Confession says that the Spirit is given through the word and the sacraments, as through instruments, and that the Spirit produces faith where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the gospel. The evangelical churches "condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes to men without the external word (*sine verbo externo*)".¹ The human will has some ability regarding civil righteousness, but it is powerless regarding divine righteousness. This righteousness is worked in the heart when the Spirit is received through the word, as the eighteenth article says.

In contrast to the radical reformation, the representatives of the magisterial reformation agreed that the work of the Spirit was inseparable from the external proclamation of the word of God. At the Marburg Colloquy (1529) one of the points of agreement was titled "On the Outward Word" (*Von dem eusserlichen Wort*). It stated that

the Holy Spirit, to express it clearly, gives no one this faith or his gift without prior preaching or oral word or the gospel of Christ, but only works and creates faith where and in whom he pleases through and with the word.²

The way upon which the relationship between word and Spirit was elaborated, however, later became a bone of contention. The Lutherans stressed the indissolubility of word and Spirit, of the external and the internal. The Reformed, on the contrary, underlined that the work of the Spirit was not intrinsically connected to the word, but added to it. It is too simple to say that for the Lutherans

¹ CR 26, 276; cf. Tappert, *Concord*, 31.

² Neuser, *Marburger Artikel*, 264.

the Spirit worked per verbum and for the Reformed cum verbo, because both expressions occurred on both sides, but still in general the Lutherans saw the word as a necessary condition for the work of the Spirit, while the Reformed saw the work of the Spirit as a necessary condition for the effect of the word.

In later theological discussions between Lutherans and Reformed and within both factions the adjectives externus and internus are applied to the word and the Spirit; for instance in the locus on the divine call to salvation.³ It is an intriguing question how the use of these theological terms developed. In pre-modern times externus and internus referred to the public and private spheres. This connotation influences theological uses. John Calvin, for instance, calls the witness of the Spirit the testimonium arcanum, or hidden testimony.⁴ The witness of the Spirit belongs to the invisible side of a relationship, rather than to the inside of the human subject.

In light of later disagreements between Lutherans and Reformed and of the claim that Phillip Melanchthon influenced Reformed theology and spirituality, it is interesting to observe how he exactly sees the relationship between word and Spirit.

This article studies the text of the Loci in order to analyze his views on this issue. First the 1521 edition is used to summarize Melanchthon's early ideas about the relationship between word and Spirit. Next this article presents the results of a screening of the text of several editions of the Loci for use of the words externus and internus. Finally, some developments in the editions of the Loci are studied with regard to the relationship of word and Spirit.

Word and Spirit in the 1521 edition of the Loci

The Loci communes appeared in 1521 as the first systematic exposition of Protestant theology.⁵ As a true pedagogue Melanchthon tries to make the message of the reformation teachable and learnable.⁶ The first edition of the Loci was written just before the turmoil in Wittenberg, occasioned by the Zwickau

³ Appold, *Calov's Doctrine*, 117–129.

⁴ Calvin, *Opera Selecta*, Bd. 3, 69; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, 78.

⁵ Kooiman even calls it the first protestant dogmatics (Philippus Melanchthon, 37; cf. Neuser, *Der Ansatz*, 57). The concept of loci was used by Rudolph Agricola to arrange logical arguments. Erasmus had already applied the concept to theology. Melanchthon developed the idea of loci as a tool for dialectical argumentation and deemed the concept fit for the proper communication of all knowledge. Applied to theology, however, he saw the loci as the basic truths that are inherent in the Scriptures. Because for the early Reformation Romans was the key to the whole Bible, he thought it fit to take the theological loci from his analysis of this apostolic letter (Kurovka, Philipp Melanchthon, 49).

⁶ Greschat, Philipp Melanchthon, 42.

prophets and Andreas von Karlstadt. This makes the further development of Melanchthon's thoughts on this issue all the more interesting. Melanchthon does not discuss the relationship between word and Spirit explicitly, but his ideas can be gathered from remarks dispersed throughout the book. In the dedicatory letter he writes that the Spirit works through the word. Melanchthon's intention is to bring theology back to Scripture, because human writings are deceptive. If the inspired prophecy and the knowledge of sacred things are worth anything "why do we not embrace this kind of literature through which (per quod) the Spirit flows?"⁷ The Latin verb *illabor* can even be translated as "to flow into" or "to penetrate"; then the Spirit flows through the word into the believer. The German translation by George Spalatin, confirms this interpretation: "...durch welche der hailig gaist in uns kumpt."⁸ God accomplishes all things by means of his word, because the Spirit or the anointing "will teach many things by the use of the Scriptures."⁹ Melanchthon opens the first edition with a discussion of free will and predestination, but in these paragraphs he does not deal with the word or with the work of the Spirit, perhaps because his main argument is psychological: the human will is enslaved to the affections.¹⁰ When Melanchthon, however, turns to the discussion of sin and salvation his pneumatology appears to be essential. At this moment he is still carefully searching how to formulate his pneumatology; the concept of the relationship between the divine Spirit and human spirit is still unclear.¹¹

In creation God moved Adam to pursue the right things through his Spirit and the Spirit would have guided all of his posterity if Adam had not fallen.¹² Original sin results from the lack of the Spirit; fallen human beings are ruled by self-love. The remedy of true conversion consists in the infusion of the Spirit into the heart. "[T]here is a sense of God, a trust in God, and love of God in those in whom the Holy Spirit has been poured out (in quos spiritus sanctus effusus est)."¹³ One can only love God if the heart is purified by the Spirit and the kindness of God is engraved on it.¹⁴ This purification is a preparation for grace. Melanchthon turns immediately from this purification to the trembling of the conscience before the

7 CR 21, 84; cf. Melanchthon, Bucer, 20.

8 Melanchthon, Haupt artickel, [4]. Because the pages of this German edition are not numbered, the numbering of the pdf-file available from the Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum (MDZ, www.muenchener-digitalisierungszentrum.de) is followed.

9 Melanchthon, Bucer, 20.

10 "Melanchthon does not prove that man is incapable of faith, but that, in everything he does, he is at the mercy of his affections" (Bizer, *Theologie der Verheissung*, 78).

11 Maurer, Melanchthon, Bd. 2, 245.

12 Melanchthon, Bucer, 31.

13 CR 21, 106; cf. Melanchthon, Bucer, 39.

14 Melanchthon, Bucer, 42.

wrath of God; the purifying infusion of the Spirit prepares the heart to accept the law.

There is a twofold turning of God to us: one preceding repentance and the other following it.¹⁵ This twofold turning solves the problem of Zechariah 1:3, where God says “Turn to me, and I will turn to you” – a favorite text for “Scholastic theology” to show that repentance lies within human possibilities. According to Melancthon, the turning of the heart that precedes the gracious turning of God is merely the effect of a previous divine act. God’s first turning occurs when he causes us to repent by the infusion of his Spirit, terrifying us and showing us our sin. The law only becomes effective through the Spirit, but instead of excluding a human reaction, the Spirit initiates it. The second turning of God answers human repentance with the consolation of the gospel. The infusion of the Spirit causes repentance, and to those who repent God declares his grace. Next to this preparatory work of the Spirit, Melancthon also underlines that the Spirit has a didactic task. A discussion of Isaiah 53 concludes with the prayer for the Spirit to open and explain these mysteries.¹⁶ When he compares his own commentary with the reading of Scripture, Melancthon writes: “The Holy Spirit is the one and only teacher, the most simple and the most definite, who expresses himself most accurately and most simply in the holy Scriptures.”¹⁷ The Spirit as a doctor synchronizes the content of the heart with the content of Scripture. This comparison disappears from the later editions of the *Loci*. In the Reformed tradition it becomes a favorite illustration of the work of the Spirit due to John Calvin, who uses the image of the Spirit as the doctor internus in his *Institutes*.¹⁸ In the *Loci* Melancthon encourages his readers to pray that the Spirit of God will reveal his gospel to their hearts; because the word of the Spirit (*verbum Spiritus*) cannot be taught except through the Spirit (*per Spiritum*).¹⁹ This work of the Spirit is tied to the proclamation of the word.

For a minister of the Spirit is one who condemns all hearts through the law of God, and then consoles them again through the gospel; that is efficacious through the Spirit of God (*per Evangelium, efficax spiritu dei*).²⁰

¹⁵ Melancthon, Bucer, 45.

¹⁶ Melancthon, Bucer, 35.

¹⁷ Melancthon, Bucer, 46.

¹⁸ Calvin was acquainted with the *Loci*; he used the 1521 edition for his *Institutes* in 1536 and the 1535 edition for the revision of 1539. He wrote a preface for the French translation of the 1543 edition of the *Loci* published in Geneva in 1546 (Pitkin, Protestant Zeno, 351–352). In the *Institutes* 3.1.4. Calvin calls the Spirit the *internus doctor* and Christ the *interior magister*, who inwardly draws us to himself through his Spirit (Calvin, *Opera Selecta*, Bd. 4, 5f, cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, 541f).

¹⁹ CR 21, 157; cf. Melancthon, Bucer, 87.

²⁰ CR 21, 135. The English translation incorrectly says that the minister is powerful because of

People, whose consciences are terrified by the law, would be driven to despair, the condition of the condemned, if they were not lifted up and encouraged by the promise of the grace and mercy of God, commonly called the Gospel.²¹

Both law and gospel are necessary to engender faith. The work of the Spirit is not reserved for consolation through the gospel; to the contrary, in the justification of sinners the first work of God is to make the conscience tremble. Repentance begins with the work of the law by which the Spirit of God terrifies and confounds consciences.

The justification of human beings, and therefore true baptism, is initiated by the mortification, judgment, and confusion, that are wrought by the Spirit of God through the law (a spiritu dei per legem).²²

This fear is more than only a slavish fear. No one can hate sin except through the Holy Spirit.

Those who are first terrified by the law are also drawn back and strengthened by the Spirit of God. God works both through the law and through the gospel. In the summary of the chapter on the law, gospel and faith, Melancthon says that God confounds the heart through the law (per legem) and comforts it through the gospel (per Evangelium).²³ The gospel excels as God's promise of grace, mercy, and forgiveness and as the testimony of God's goodwill toward us. God had revealed the gospel immediately after the fall; Adam was justified by the first promise.

In the discussion of grace Melancthon rejects the view that grace is a quality in the soul. Grace is God's favor, God's goodwill towards us. He distinguishes grace from the gift of grace. Grace is the favor of God and the gift of grace is the Spirit of God that dwells in the heart; not the gratia but the donum resides in the heart. "The gift of God is the Holy Spirit himself, whom God has poured out into their hearts."²⁴ Maurer sees a difference with Luther, because for Melancthon faith is the first among the gifts of the Spirit, while for Luther faith is the instrument to receive all the gifts.²⁵ Flogaus, however, interprets it as a difference in nuance; Melancthon just connects the renewing grace of God closer to the

the Spirit of God (Melancthon, Bucer, 67). The German translation has: "[...] das Evangelium tröstet das krefftig ist durch den gaist gottes" (Melancthon, Haupt artickel, [104]).

²¹ Melancthon, Bucer, 84.

²² CR 21, 153; cf. Melancthon, Bucer, 83.

²³ CR 21, 191; Melancthon, Bucer, 118.

²⁴ Melancthon, Bucer, 88.

²⁵ Melancthon, Bucer, 362.

Spirit.²⁶ Perhaps both positions are not too far apart; when discussing these differences, one must not forget that Luther appreciated the Loci. True faith is to be distinguished from implicit or historical faith, which is merely an opinio. Historical faith does not assent to the word of God and is not moved by it, but true faith constantly assents to every word of God. This is only the case when the Spirit renews and illumines the hearts.²⁷ Trials reveal the difference between hypocrisy and the work of the Spirit. Believers can know whether we have received the Spirit of God, because the fruits of the Spirit witness to them that he dwells in their hearts. Melancthon, however, warns against focusing too much on oneself: "So no matter how you evaluate yourself, see to it first of all that you believe."²⁸

Melancthon's view of the relationship between the word and the Spirit in the 1521 Loci can be summarized in a few points. 1) Through sin human beings have lost the Spirit of God, the remedy consists of an infusion and restoration of the indwelling of the Spirit; grace is the favor of God and the gift of grace is the Spirit of God that dwells in the heart. 2) The Spirit is the teacher of believers and the interpreter of Scripture, who is both present in the word and in the believer and flows into the hearts of believers through the word. 3) Through the law and through the gospel the Spirit is efficacious in justification resulting in the mortification and vivification of the believer. Sometimes the gospel or the promise is said to justify the believer, but it always is the Spirit that empowers the word.

In the last sentence of the Loci Melancthon confesses that he is afraid that his disputations will draw readers away from Scripture. We must flee from all human commentaries in sacred matters like the plague, because the teaching of the Spirit cannot be drunk in purity except from Scripture itself. For who has expressed the Spirit of God more appropriately than he himself.²⁹

Analysis of Externus and Internus in the Loci

The relationship between word and Spirit in later theological discussions often is characterized by the words externus and internus. This evokes the question whether Melancthon uses these terms in this respect. To analyze how the words function in Melancthon's theology, the text of the Loci has been screened for these terms and their conjugations. A helpful tool for this purpose is the text of

²⁶ Flogaus, Luther, 13f.

²⁷ Melancthon, Bucer, 92.

²⁸ Melancthon, Bucer, 117.

²⁹ Melancthon, Bucer, 152.

the Corpus Reformatorum, digitalized in the Melanchthonis Opera Database.³⁰ The editor of the volume containing the Loci, Heinrich Ernst Bindseil (1803–1876), divides the editions of the Loci into three generations, the first starting in 1521, the second in 1535, and the third in 1543. Although the development of the Loci is rather complicated, because each generation consists of several different editions, the three generations in the Corpus Reformatorum offer a general impression of the overall development.

The digitalized text only gives four hits for *internus* in the first edition – or rather the first generation of editions – and one in the third.³¹ Melanchthon uses the word rarely anyway; *internus* occurs less than eighty times in all the volumes of his Opera. In the Loci the reference is mostly to the heart or the affections of the heart in opposition to the outward works. In the discussion of the free will – which Melanchthon fiercely rejects in the first edition – he remarks: “God does not look at external works but at the internal impulses (*interni motus*) of the heart.”³² The main reason Melanchthon rejects the *liberum arbitrium* lies in the fact that the emotional part of the heart is not subject to the will. Internal affections (*interni affectus*) are beyond our power (*potestas*); experience shows that the will is unable to control hate or love.³³ In his summary of the chapter on the *liberum arbitrium*, he concludes that – related to predestination there is no freedom “neither in external nor internal acts (*nec in externis nec in internis operibus*), but all things take place according to divine determination.”³⁴ In the second edition (1522) this phrase is lacking in the summary; he only says that even according to the judgment of nature there is no freedom in the affections.³⁵ The other occurrences of *internus* are more or less maintained.³⁶ The very early rephrasing of the doctrine of predestination shows that Melanchthon was wrestling with the subject.

The last time he uses the term in the first edition is in a list of sins that are revealed by the law: “external, internal, hypocrisy, unbelief, love of self, and

³⁰ Melanchthon, Melanchthonis.

³¹ The Melanchthonis Opera Database is not completely accurate, but it is the best digital tool for Melanchthon’s works at this moment. The occurrence in the summary of the chapter on the *liberum arbitrium*, discussed below, was not found by searching with “*intern**”. So there are at least five occurrences in the first aetas, while the database offers only four hits.

³² CR 21, 90; cf. Melanchthon, Bucer, 27.

³³ CR 21, 90; cf. Melanchthon, Bucer, 27. The next occurrence of *internus* is quite similar; Melanchthon acknowledges that there is some freedom in the choice of external things, but denies that internal affections are in our power (CR 21, 92; Melanchthon, Bucer, 29).

³⁴ CR 21, 93; cf. Melanchthon, Bucer, 30. Also in the unauthorized edition of his introduction to Paul’s Epistle, the so-called *Lucubrationcula* (1520) – one of the predecessors of the Loci – he says that from the perspective of predestination – the will is not free either in the external works or in the internal affections (CR 21, 13/14).

³⁵ CR 21, 96.

³⁶ CR 21, 94f.

contempt for or ignorance of God – which are certainly the very roots of all human works.”³⁷ The term disappears in later generations because Melanchthon rephrases the paragraphs on predestination. The only occurrence of *internus* in the third generation of the *Loci* states that both external and internal impulses are ineffective if the will is turned away from God.³⁸ Thus, *internus* is hardly used in the *Loci* and if it is, it functions as an adjective for the affections in the context of the early discussion of the *liberum arbitrium*. It is not used for the work of the Spirit.

Externus, to the contrary, is used quite often; the *Melanchthonis Opera Database* lists 303 hits for the several generations of the *Loci* only.³⁹ In the editions of the first generation the adjective is mostly connected to *opus* or *opera*. In a rhetorical question, for instance, Melanchthon asks: “But what place do external works have in Christian teaching if the heart is insincere?”⁴⁰ Or, he states that to think the Ten Commandments refer to external works only is a mistake.⁴¹ In all other cases in the first generation the word *externus* determines words related to works, such as observations, obligations, and ceremonies.⁴² It has a negative tone; the externals are opposed to the heart. Ancient philosophers, sophists, and scholastics are fascinated only by externals.⁴³ Monks understand the Christian life from the appearance of external works, instead of spiritually.⁴⁴ In the second generation this changes slightly; *externus* is still often connected with *opus*, but in many cases the adjective *civilis* is added.⁴⁵ External deeds belong to the neutral sphere of civil righteousness. The magistrate, for instance, is not only responsible for the second table of the law, but also for the first, as far as external discipline is concerned and must punish “external offence of religion like manifest idolatry and blasphemy, impious doctrine and perjury.”⁴⁶ This change in emphasis runs parallel to the introduction of the distinction between divine justice and the civil justice.⁴⁷ According to Heinz Scheible this shift is

37 CR 21, 153; Melanchthon, Bucer, 82.

38 CR 21, 646.

39 Of these hits 81 occur in the first, 74 in the second, and 114 in the third generation. The pages 253–332 of the volume contain fragments of the 1533 edition; these fragments offer an extra 26 occurrences of *externus* and its conjugations. The reservations regarding the accuracy of the database (see note 6) also apply here.

40 CR 21, 92; cf. Melanchthon, Bucer, 29.

41 CR 21, 121; cf. Melanchthon, Bucer, 54.

42 For instance, *externae observationes* (CR 21, 199), *externus onus* (CR 21, 225), *externae ceremoniae* (CR 21, 123).

43 CR 21, 113; 115; 123; cf. Melanchthon, Bucer, 46; 48; 56.

44 CR 21, 127; cf. Melanchthon, Bucer, 60.

45 E. g. CR 21, 374; 380; 396; 429.

46 CR 21, 553.

47 Cf. Greschat, Philipp Melanchthon, 57f.

rooted in Melanchthon's changing views on predestination.⁴⁸ In light of the use of *externus* for the word in the Augsburg Confession, the fact that it is never connected to *verbum* in the second generation of the *Loci* is remarkable.

In the third "generation" this positive line is prolonged, although *externus* is still often used to denote external works in opposition to spiritual obedience.⁴⁹

Again *externus* applies to the civil order; "the magistrate is the minister of God to keep honorable external discipline and peace in its realm."⁵⁰

It is striking in the third generation of the *Loci* that *externus* is applied to the word and the sacraments. Melanchthon calls baptism an external sign or ministry that is connected to the preaching of the word.⁵¹ Both word and sacraments are external marks (*notae*) of the church.⁵² The ministry in the church is public and external.⁵³ And in reference to Romans 10:8, he says that "Paul speaks of the external word or the ministry as the sounding voice of the gospel (*de verbo externo seu de ministerio sonante vocem Evangelii*)."⁵⁴ In the context of the arguments for infant baptism he writes: "There is no election of those who are not engrafted into the church by external call (*vocatio externa*)."⁵⁵ Melanchthon applies Paul's admonition to test the spirits to the Anabaptists; whose teaching in his opinion is from the evil spirit.⁵⁶ His first argument against their error is that the promise of grace and eternal life also pertains to infants, because they belong to the church and *extra ecclesiam* there is no remission of sins. Children ought to be baptized because they belong to the kingdom of God, or the church, where those who are chosen are gathered through the outward word.

Similarly, in his discussion of the Lord's Supper, Melanchthon emphasizes the necessity of faith in the promises of the gospel. He rejects the view that the sacraments work *ex opere operato*, because the sacraments merely are added to the promise.

For that reason the external voice of the gospel sounds, that the hearts accept [Christ] by faith, as Paul says: 'Faith is from hearing.' So also the external performance of the sacrament is displayed for that reason, that the hearts are admonished and faith is aroused, not as a goal in itself or a cause of reconciliation.⁵⁷

48 Scheible, Melanchthon, 152f; cf. Scheible, Aufsätze, 16f.

49 E. g. CR 21, 702.

50 CR 21, 1011.

51 CR 21, 472; cf. 857.

52 CR 21, 506.

53 CR 21, 555.

54 CR 21, 850.

55 CR 21, 859.

56 CR 21, 856f. For the German text cf. CR 22, 460. The Latin editions of the third aetas are more elaborated than the German. The phrase on the external call does not occur in the German editions.

57 CR 21, 866.

In order to make the picture complete other terms would have to be analyzed. For instance, the term interior occurs more often than internus in the Loci, although it also never applies to the work of the Spirit.⁵⁸ Research on the words innerlich and eusserlich in the German editions and on the Latin equivalents might also offer some further insights.⁵⁹

The analysis of the use of the two words shows that internus is rarely used by Melancthon and in the Loci not applied to the work of the Spirit. This is remarkable in light of its later function in protestant theology, where the testimonium internum of the Spirit became a coined phrase.⁶⁰ The adjunctive externus develops from a negative denotation of “externals” to a more neutral word. In some rare cases it is applied to the word and the sacraments, but only in the latest editions of the Loci.⁶¹ This is striking in light of its use in the Augsburg Confession and of the importance of the external word in the polemics with the Radical Reformation.

Word and Spirit in the Developing Text of the Loci

For a comparison of the first edition of the Loci with the later editions with respect to the relationship of word and Spirit, it is important to remember that not only the text, but also the structure of the whole book, developed. The original loci, taken from Paul’s letter to the Romans, are law and gospel, sin and grace.⁶² In later editions Melancthon adds a discussion of other loci, like the unity of God, the Trinity, and Christology. Some of the changes regarding the relationship between the word and the Spirit flow immediately from this changing structure. In the second generation Melancthon, for instance, inserts a discussion of the Trinity.

According to Melancthon, the confession “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” means believing “that he bears witness by the gospel in the church,” and “that he is efficacious through the word teaching and quickening those who believe

58 For interior* the Melancthonis Opera Database gives 3 hits for the first, 17 for the second and 43 for the third generation. For exterior* it offers 8, 14, and 13 hits respectively.

59 For innerlich* the Melancthonis Opera Database gives 19 hits and for eusserlich* 411 hits in the German editions of the Loci (CR 22).

60 Melancthon uses the phrase incidentally. He writes, for instance, that it is possible to discern the visible church from the external testimonies of the word of God and the sacraments, but “the internal witness (internum testimonium) is the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals.” (CR 25, 892f).

61 In his *Explicatio Symboli Nicaeni* (1557), Melancthon does use the phrase *verbum externum* a few times (CR 23, 451; 491; 529; 544; 565).

62 This appears clearly from two essays on Romans that precede the Loci, namely *Lucubratiuncula* and *Theologica institutio in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*. CR 21, 3–49; 50–59, they also identify law and gospel, sin and grace as the main loci (Breen, *The Terms*, 208).

(*efficacem esse per verbum, docentem et vivificantem credentes*).⁶³ The German text of the third generation remains close to the second generation of the Latin Loci; the text is a revision by Melanchthon of the translation of Jonas.⁶⁴ In that German translation he says the Spirit is the Paraclete or *Advocatus*, who not only stands next to us as a lawyer, but also dwells in our hearts when we accept God's word.⁶⁵ In the third Latin aetas he comments on the promise in Isaiah 59:21 that the Spirit will never leave the church of God. The prophet affirms the church will always remain, "and it remains there, where the voice of the gospel sounds and there will always be the efficaciousness of the Holy Spirit."⁶⁶ We know that "God is truly efficacious through his word (*per verbum suum*) in the hearts of the believers and that he kindles eternal life in them."⁶⁷

Due to the continuous change of structure it is difficult to trace the development of a specific part of the book. For the topic of the relationship between word and Spirit, at least one exception can be made. From the first to the last editions, Melanchthon discusses the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. In 1521 he asserts that, while the Old Testament is a promise concerned mainly with material things and under the condition of the righteousness of the law, "The New Testament is nothing else than the promise of all good things without regard to the law and with no respect to our own righteousness."⁶⁸

The difference lies in the unconditional character of the gospel.

Melanchthon acknowledges that a distinction can be made between the moral, the judicial, and the ceremonial law, but he denies that the moral law has not been abrogated. At this point he is influenced by Luther and distances himself from Erasmus.⁶⁹ Christian freedom is total freedom from the demands and curse of the law, including the moral law of the Ten Commandments, because Christ took away the curse. Christianity is liberty, because those who do not have the Spirit of Christ cannot perform the law, but

those who have been renewed by the Spirit of Christ now conform voluntarily even without the law to what the law used to command. The law is the will of God; the Holy Spirit is nothing else than the living will of God (*viva voluntas dei*) and its being in action.⁷⁰

63 CR 21, 366. Cf. "*spiritus sanctus efficax est per Evangelium*" (CR 21, 280), "*Et Spiritus sanctus ibi efficax est per verbum*" (CR 21, 376), "*verbum est instrumentum, per quod Spiritus sanctus efficax est*" (CR 21, 468).

64 He once confessed in a personal letter to David Chyträus (1530–1600) that he found the final revision of this German translation better than the Latin Loci (CR 22, 31/32).

65 CR 22, 93.

66 CR 21, 632.

67 CR 21, 632.

68 Melanchthon, Bucer, 120.

69 Maurer, Melanchthon, Bd. 2, 315.

70 CR 21, 195; cf. Melanchthon, Bucer, 123.

Regenerated by the Spirit, the living will of God, Christians spontaneously do what the law demands. The Spirit takes over the role of the voluntas. In this first edition the relationship between the outward word and the inward work of the Spirit is presupposed but not elaborated on.

This changes quite rapidly. Already in the later editions of the first generation Melancthon defines the New Testament as the gospel or the proclamation of grace and therefore also as the donation of the Spirit.⁷¹ The gospel is the ministry of the Spirit and proclaims the remission of sins.⁷² The shift to the external word is even stronger in the following generations of the Loci. "The New Testament is the promise of justification and eternal life, given because of Christ."⁷³ The law contained a temporal promise for Israel, but the gospel contains eternal promises; it grants new righteousness and eternal life through Christ and "it so forgives the sins, that it simultaneously quickens and renews the heart through the Holy Spirit."⁷⁴ The emphasis switches from the indwelling of the Spirit as a new will to the proclamation of the promise through which the Spirit renews the heart. The third generation even adds the word "preaching" to the definition.

The New Testament is the preaching of the remission of sins (praedicatio remissionis peccatorum) and the gift of eternal life and new righteousness, as well as the annihilation of sin and death because of Christ the Mediator.⁷⁵

Considerations and Conclusions

In the development of the Loci Melancthon switches from an emphasis on the work of the Spirit to an emphasis on the outward word of God. Further research is necessary to explain fully why this development took place in his thought. Some answers seem obvious; the early switch from a spiritual or rather Spirit-ual understanding of justification to the emphasis on the proclamation of the gospel and its promises is most probably evoked by his confrontation with the representatives of the Radical Reformation. According to Melancthon the Anabaptists taught that they were righteous before God because of their inner illumination and rapture.⁷⁶

According to Maxcey a similar development took place in Melancthon's thoughts on faith and works; the growing emphasis on righteousness as something extra nos was triggered by the controversy on justification with Andreas

71 CR 21, 202.

72 CR 21, 204.

73 CR 21, 455.

74 CR 21, 455.

75 CR 21, 806.

76 CR 22, 322f.

Osiander, who saw righteousness as an inherent quality flowing from the indwelling of Christ in the believer.⁷⁷

Melanchthon's changing views of predestination and the free will might also have influenced the development of his thoughts on the relationship between Word and Spirit. The Loci of 1521 teach that there is no freedom in external or internal acts from the perspective of predestination, but in later editions Melanchthon becomes more concerned about the Stoic idea of necessity than about the Scholastic doctrine of free will.⁷⁸ The early emphasis on the infusion of the Spirit through the word can more easily be combined with the strong rejection of free will, whereas the emphasis on the outward word naturally goes along with the human responsibility to believe the proclamation of the outward word.

In the later editions Melanchthon maintains the distinction between outward and inward actions; but instead of saying that the will cannot obey and love God at all, he says that it needs the help of the Holy Spirit. To work in the heart of human beings, the Spirit needs the word of God through which it speaks and it also needs the consent of human will. The three causes for salvation which Melanchthon mentions in the third generation of the Loci – the Holy Spirit, the word of God, and the human will – have led to the accusation of synergism, but the causes should not be explained as equals; only the Spirit is the *causa efficiens*.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the word as instrumental cause becomes more prominent in the development of the Loci, as the analysis of the use of *externus* illustrates.

The question of how Melanchthon's view of word and Spirit relates to Reformed theology and spirituality cannot be answered only from an analysis of the Loci, but a few conclusions are justified. In the first edition the remedy of sin consists of an infusion of the Spirit through the word (*per verbum*). The Spirit also is the teacher and interpreter of Scripture. This work of the Spirit is not expressly called inner or internal as opposed to the outward word.

The adjunctive *externus* is not used for the word in the early editions of the Loci; only in the third generation it is applied to the word and the sacraments. The development of the text of the Loci underlines a growing emphasis on the outward word, for instance in the paragraphs on the Spirit and in the definition of "New Testament".

If it is typically Lutheran to see the word as a necessary condition for the work of the Spirit, and typically Reformed to see the work of the Spirit as a necessary condition for the effect of the word, then Melanchthon develops from a more Reformed to a more Lutheran emphasis on this particular point.

⁷⁷ Maxcey, *Bona Opera*, 83; 290.

⁷⁸ Meijering, Melanchthon, 134.

⁷⁹ Meijering, Melanchthon, 134f.