

SECTION 26

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Introduction

Just as modern scholars often praise F. C. Baur for being one of the first NT scholars to treat Romans as an occasional letter, they regularly pillory Melanchthon for treating Romans as an abstract summary of the gospel. In such attacks on the Preceptor of Germany, references to his writings are frequently brief and undocumented. Typical of this approach is the following quote from J. C. Beker's article in *The Romans Debate*: "Although the tendency persists to view Romans as a dogmatics in outline, or as a version of a *compendium doctrinae Christianae* (Melanchthon), Romans is actually a profoundly occasional letter."¹ Karl P. Donfried, Peter Stuhlmacher, Arland J. Hultgren and Lucien Legrand make similar references to Melanchthon's compendium quote, though none of the above authors cites the source of his quotation.² Do these brief undocumented references to Melanchthon's writings accurately convey the reformer's view of Romans? The purpose of this short essay is to investigate Melanchthon's compendium quote, and more broadly his hermeneutical approach, to determine if modern NT scholarship has represented him accurately.

The Famous Compendium Quote

Eduard Schweizer is one of few scholars who correctly notes that Melanchthon's compendium quote is from the introduction to the reformer's 1521 edition of the *Loci Communes*.³ The quote is found in section 2.1.7 of *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl* and page sixty-nine of the English rendering of the *Loci* by Charles Leander Hill. What exactly is the context of this quote and what did Melanchthon mean in referring to Romans as a compendium of Christian doctrine? Let us begin by providing a fuller version of the quotation:

In the Epistle to the Romans, when he drew up a compendium of Christian doctrine, did Paul the author philosophize about the mysteries of the Trinity, the mode of the Incarnation or about "creation active and

¹ J. C. Beker, "The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in Karl P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate* (rev. ed.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 327.

² Karl P. Donfried, "Introduction 1977," in *The Romans Debate*, xli; Peter Stuhlmacher, "The Purpose of Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, 231; Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from His Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 9; Lucien Legrand, *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 121. Though Renan does not specifically name Melanchthon, he alludes to the compendium quote: "Ce n'est plus l'Épître aux Romains qui est le résumé du christianisme, c'est le Discours sur la montagne" (Ernest Renan, *Saint Paul* [Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1869], 570).

³ Eduard Schweizer, "The Church as the Missionary Body of Christ," *NTS* 8 (1961-62) 1; cf. L. Ann Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation*, JSNTSup 55 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 14-15.

passive?” On the contrary, what does Paul do? He reasons most certainly about the Law, Sin, and Grace. Topics, I say, on which alone the knowledge of Christ depends.⁴

The above passage comes soon after another frequently quoted portion of Melanchthon’s Loci:

I do not see how I can call that man a Christian who is ignorant of the remaining topics such as the power of sin, the law and grace. For by them is Christ properly known, if indeed this is to know Christ, [namely], to know his benefits and not as they teach, to perceive his natures and the mode of his incarnation.⁵

From looking at the compendium quote in its original context, it is clear that Melanchthon is contrasting Paul’s discussion of the more pragmatic aspects of the Christian’s experience (law, sin, and grace) with discourse over the minutiae of trinitarian doctrine or similarly obscure theological subjects (i.e., topics the scholastics preferred to discuss). Melanchthon asserts that Paul addresses practical matters which affect the conscience and daily life as opposed to abstract or non-soteriologically significant doctrines. This meaning of compendium doctrinae Christianae differs from the sense given to the term in modern scholars’ reference to it. Arguably, irresponsible quotation of the Loci has led modern readers to believe that Melanchthon thinks Paul presents the reader of Romans with a full-orbed presentation of Christian doctrine. This is not what Melanchthon says.

W. G. Kümmel argues that we should not consider Romans a “compendium of Christian doctrine,” as Melanchthon does, because Paul does not deal adequately with eschatology and Christology. Nor does the apostle even mention church order or the Lord’s supper.⁶ Ironically, Melanchthon’s quote, which Kümmel cites as a simplistic misunderstanding of Romans, actually presents roughly the same view of Romans as Kümmel. The letter is not an abstract summary of all aspects of Christian belief and practice; this is what the scholastics would have meant by a “compendium of Christian doctrine.” Melanchthon, on the other hand, means a collection of soteriologically-

⁴ MWA 2.1.7. The Latin original: “Paulus in epistola, quam Romanis dicavit, cum doctrinae christianae compendium conscriberet, num de mysteriis trinitatis, de modo incarnationis, de creatione activa et creatione passiva philosophabatur? At quid agit? Certe de lege, peccato, gratia, e quibus locis solis Christi cognitio pendet.” The English translation is by Charles Leander Hill (Philip Melanchthon, *The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon*, trans. C. L. Hill [Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1944], 69). The standard critical editions of Melanchthon’s writings are K. Bretschneider and H. Bindseil (eds.) *Corpus Reformatorum: Philippi Melanthonis Opera, quae supersunt omnia*, 28 vols. (Halle [vols. 1-18], Brunswick, NJ [vols. 19-28]: Schwetschke, 1834-60; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1963), and Robert Stupperich (ed.) *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, 7 vols. (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1951-75). These series are abbreviated as CR and MWA.

⁵ MWA 2.1.7. The Latin original: “Reliquos vero locos, peccati vim, legem, gratiam, qui ignorarit, non video quomodo christianum vocem. Nam ex his proprie Christus cognoscitur, siquidem hoc est Christum cognoscere beneficia eius cognoscere, non, quod isti docent, eius naturas, modos incarnationis contueri.” English translation: Hill, 68.

⁶ Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 17th ed., trans. Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 312.

significant and pragmatically valuable teaching on the Christian life.

Two other caveats should be made when using the compendium quote to explain Melanchthon's hermeneutic. First, one should remember that the quote is taken from the reformer's systematic theology rather than from one of his commentaries on Romans. While the *Loci* is based on Romans, it was intended to be more of an abstract synthesis. Second, the reference to Romans as a compendium doctrinae Christianae is missing from later editions of the *Loci*, and thus Melanchthon himself may have been uncomfortable with possible misunderstandings of his words.

Melanchthon as New Testament Commentator

As we turn to Melanchthon's commentaries to investigate his hermeneutical approach, we must remember that he wrote prior to the rise of the critical method and its historical consciousness. Thus, Melanchthon was most concerned with the current-day application of the biblical text (i.e., the reforming result of biblical study). A "commentary on Scripture" to Melanchthon meant something quite different from modern biblical scholars' use of the term "commentary."⁷ Melanchthon's approach generally respects the original historical context, yet is most concerned with the enduring didactic value of the text. To discover this enduring value of a biblical book, Melanchthon argues, one must understand the author's purpose in writing, or one can easily get mired in the misinterpretation of individual verses taken out of context. Melanchthon explains his exegetical approach in the *Praefatio* to his commentary on Colossians:

Just as it is usual for other works to begin with the establishment of their theme, so it is with Paul's letters: the reader is first to be shown, what subject is under discussion, what the status of the letter is, what--as the Greeks say--is hypokeimenon [what is presented]. The purpose of this is so that he should know what to look for in the book as a whole, and what to expect from it. You will not be reading profitably, if you simply abstract isolated statements from it. It should be read as a single continuous address, so that there may be drawn from it one established statement that is capable of strengthening and teaching the conscience. Those who are [forever] departing from the general scope and purpose of the book as a whole fail to do this.⁸

⁷ See Timothy J. Wengert and M. Patrick Graham (eds.) *Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) and the Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); also see Kenneth Hagen, "What did the Term *Commentarius* mean to Sixteenth-Century Theologians?" in Irena Backus and Francis Higman, eds., *Théorie et pratique de l'exégèse* (Geneva: Droz, 1990): 13-38; chapter 2, "Les Commentaires de l'écriture," of Jean-François Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* (Geneva: Droz, 1997), 71-92.

⁸ MWA 4.211. The Latin original: "Sicut in aliis scriptis principio constitui solet, quod sit argumentum operis, ita in Paulinis epistulis primum monendus est lector, qua de re dicatur, qui sit cuiusque epistulae status, quod, ut Graeci dicunt: u(pokei)/menon, ut, quid petere et exspectare ex toto scripto debeat, sciat. Nec utiliter legeris, si tantum mutilatas sententias inde excerpteris, totius orationis series cognoscenda est, ut inde colligatur certa sententia, quae munire conscientiam et docere possit, quod, qui non faciunt, ii saepe in universum aberrant a totius scripti scopo ac proposito." The English translation above is by D. C. Parker (Philip Melanchthon, *Paul's Letter to the Colossians*, trans. D.C. Parker [Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989], 29). C. Joachim Classen notes that Melanchthon, in his biblical commentaries, is interested in helping the reader understand "the intention of the letter as a whole, the general line of⁸ the argumentation and the structure of particular arguments" (C. Joachim Classen, "St Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric," in Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, eds., *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1993], 274). Cf. T. H. L. Parker, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans 1532-1542* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 4-5.

In order to determine properly the guiding purpose of a biblical book Melanchthon employs his knowledge of classical rhetoric.⁹ The reformer's treatment of Romans in his 1540 commentary is a prime example of this approach.¹⁰ Melanchthon names the two major propositions in Romans as: [1] sin exercises universal dominion over humanity (Rom 1:18),¹¹ and [2] God justifies unmeriting sinners by faith (Rom 3:21f.).¹² In submitting the remainder of his exegesis to these guiding propositions, Melanchthon agrees with his prior statement in the *Loci*, i.e., that Romans is a compendium of Christian doctrine—an exposition on the essential matters of salvation.

While Melanchthon views Romans as primarily a document about salvation, it remains an occasional letter to him. A brief look at his treatment of Romans chapter 1 confirms this fact. Melanchthon does not simply apply the text; he repeatedly notes Paul's first-century context.¹³ Then, Melanchthon makes an explicit comparison to his own time period—drawing out the implications and significance of Paul's intended meaning. Melanchthon's clear understanding of this distinction between the original context of Romans and his own time is emphasized by the phrases with which he introduces the comparisons to his own time period, e.g., “In the same way . . .” (*Eodem modo . . .*),¹⁴ “So also at this time . . .” (*Ita et hoc tempore . . .*),¹⁵ and “Now let popes and monks be compared with the picture Paul paints” (*Iam ad imaginem Pauli conferantur Pontifices et Monachi*).¹⁶ A careful reading of Melanchthon's commentary will confirm this pattern. While Melanchthon's primary concern is to uphold the truth of the gospel by attacking falsehoods of his day and leading readers to a proper understanding of the gospel, the text of Romans remains for him a letter written by a first-century apostle to a

⁹ Schneider writes, “. . . Melanchthon construed Scripture literally as sacred rhetoric, *oratio sacra*, and that detailed tracing of how this construal governed his hermeneutical processes and systematic formation of doctrine is indispensable both to understanding and to assessing him and the prevailing historiography” (John R. Schneider, *Philip Melanchthon's Rhetorical Construal of Biblical Authority: Oratio Sacra* [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990], 6).

¹⁰ The 1540 commentary is found in volume 15 of *Corpus Reformatorum*. Fred Kramer recently translated this work (Philip Melanchthon, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. F. Kramer [St. Louis: Concordia, 1992]). This commentary is a revision and expansion of Melanchthon's earlier *Commentarii in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (Wittenberg: 1532). The 1532 edition is most easily accessed in volume 5 of MWA. See Schäfer's excellent article on this earlier edition (Rolf Schäfer, “Melanchthons Hermeneutik im Römerbrief-Kommentar von 1532,” *ZTK* 60 [1963] 216-235).

¹¹ CR 15.561 (*Evangelium arguit omnes homines ac pronunciat omnes sub peccato esse . . .*). Cf. the 1532 edition, MWA 5.69 (*omnes homines [sunt] sub peccato*).

¹² CR 15.586-87. Cf. the 1532 edition, MWA 5.99 (*Fide iustificamur*).

¹³ I do not want to overstate this point. Admittedly, one could find many sections of Melanchthon's commentary which at first glance seem far removed from the historical context of Paul's letter. I would argue, however, that underlying Melanchthon's extended application of the text is always a knowledge of the text's origin.

¹⁴ CR 15.549.

¹⁵ CR 15.554.

¹⁶ CR 15.555. I am following Kramer's translation here (68).

first-century congregation in Rome.¹⁷ In fact, authorial intention remains key for Melanchthon because it is only the author's intention to construct his letter according to a rhetorical scheme which can justify Melanchthon's over-arching hermeneutic.¹⁸

Melanchthon also notes the importance of authorial intent in his commentary on Colossians. This quotation needs to be reproduced here because it so clearly presents Melanchthon's apologia of his rhetorical approach:

It may perhaps seem inept of me, to relate Paul's prose to rhetorical conventions. But it is my opinion that the Pauline style of writing can be better understood, if the series and dispositio of each section is taken into consideration. For the material itself shows that Paul did not write completely without any order or ratio. He has his loci in which he prepares the minds of the readers; he has his particular method of teaching and of explanation. Not to notice this in our exposition would be simply doing what the Greeks call jumping in the dark or, as Chrysostom says, *nyktomachein* [fighting in the dark].¹⁹

An Evaluation of Melanchthon's Rhetorical Hermeneutic

Calvin and Erasmus criticized Melanchthon for twisting the biblical text to fit his rhetorical scheme.²⁰ The modern scholar Rolf Schäfer has made a similar accusation.²¹ Nevertheless, Melanchthon's familiarity with classical rhetoric and cautious scholarship should give us pause before impugning his motives. The reformer wrote three handbooks on rhetoric and three works on dialectic--all in Latin.²² Few, if any, modern rhetorical critics could claim such familiarity with their subject matter.

¹⁷ CR 15.546.

¹⁸ CR 15.495. Cf. CR 1.1044. See Schäfer's account of Melanchthon's evolving view of Paul's rhetorical background and intentions (Schäfer, "Melanchthons Hermeneutik," 218f.)

¹⁹ MWA 4.214-15. The Latin original: "Videar fortassis ineptus, si Pauli sermonem ad rhetorica praecepta conferam. Ego tamen sic existimo intelligi melius posse orationem Paulinam, si series et dispositio omnium partium consideretur. Neque enim omnino nullo ordine aut nulla ratione scripsit Paulus, id quod res ipsa ostendit. Habet suos locos, quibus praeparat animos, habet suam quandam docendi et narrandi rationem, quam in enarrando non animadvertere, quid aliud est, quam quod Graeci dicunt: in tenebris saltare, seu ut Chrysostomus ait: *nuktomaxei=n*." English translation by D. C. Parker, Colossians, 32.

²⁰ John Calvin, *Iohannis Calvini Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, ed. T. H. L. Parker (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 2.45-50. In an October 1534 letter to Sadoletto, Erasmus wrote, "Miseram Commentarios Melanchthonis, non vt illos imitareris (nec enim alibi magis torquet scripturam, vtcumque miram professus simplicitatem), sed quum illic commemorantur variae multorum opiniones, sciebam tuam prudentiam illinc excerpturam quod ad mentis Paulinae faceret cognitionem." (PSA XI, 45). In June 1533, in a letter to Boniface Amerbach, Erasmus wrote, "Venditur istic commentarius nouus Philippi Melanchthonis in Epistolam ad Romanos; in quo sibi placet—et multa praeclare dicta fateor. Sed in multis displicet. Torquet multa, arroganter reiicit Origenem et Augustinum, non pauca transilit. Legi quaterniones aliquot." (PSA X, 244-45). PSA is the standard abbreviation for the 12 volume set, P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, and H. W. Garrod, eds., *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterdami* (Oxford: University Press, 1906-58).

²¹ Schäfer, "Melanchthons Hermeneutik," 222.

²² They are: *De Rhetorica libri tres* (Wittenberg, 1519), *Institutiones Rhetoricae* (Hagenau, 1521), and *Elementa rhetorices libri duo* (Wittenberg, 1531), *Compendiaria Dialectices* (Leipzig, 1520), *Dialectices libri quator* (Hagenau, 1528), and *Erotemata dialectices* (Wittenberg, 1547). See Classen, 271

Contrary to criticism, Melanchthon does not blindly apply his rhetorical hermeneutic to every biblical text. In fact, Melanchthon freely admits that 1 Corinthians does not fit a rhetorical scheme and that “the letter is not coherent in the way that Romans is.”²³ In investigating 2 Corinthians, Melanchthon employs some rhetorical categories, but says the letter’s structure is “mostly obscure and badly connected.”²⁴ In his 1559 *Enarratio Epistolae Pauli ad Colossenses*, Melanchthon mostly abandons the earlier rhetorical outline that he used in his 1527 commentary on Colossians; at least, he makes little mention of it.²⁵ Also, for Melanchthon, OT prophetic speech sometimes provides the basis for Paul’s rhetoric, rather than classical patterns.²⁶ Moreover, when classical rhetorical categories and terms do not adequately describe Paul’s speech, Melanchthon is not hesitant to coin new terms.²⁷ For example, the reformer finds the three standard categories of rhetoric (forensic, epideictic, deliberative) inadequate to describe Romans and other biblical books, and thus proposes a new fourth category, *genus didascalicum*.²⁸ It must be remembered that “rhetoric” for Melanchthon was not primarily a series of classical forms, but “speaking correctly and elegantly.”²⁹

Such a complex rhetorical approach to the NT might be unexpected from a Reformation scholar, especially since recent articles on rhetorical criticism assume that ancient rhetorical categories were “rediscovered” in the twentieth century. Many scholars seem to think that Paul organized his letters with a knowledge of classical rhetoric, some of the church fathers understood his approach, and then the church was plunged into the dark ages of allegorical exegesis and proof-texting for church dogma.³⁰ James Muilenburg’s 1968 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature is often cited as the impetus for the modern flowering of rhetorical criticism.³¹ Within the field of NT studies, scholars look to Hans Dieter Betz as a modern pioneer in this “rediscovered discipline.” Betz first introduced his rhetorical approach to Galatians in an August 1974 lecture at the 29th General Meeting of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* at Siguna (Sweden).³² Betz’s 1979 *Hermeneia* commentary on Galatians applies in more detail the rhetorical analysis he originally proposed in his 1974 lecture.

²³ MWA 4.16 (noted by D. C. Parker, *Colossians*, 21).

²⁴ MWA 4.86 (noted by D. C. Parker, *Colossians*, 21).

²⁵ CR 15.1223-82 (noted by D. C. Parker, *Colossians*, 23).

²⁶ CR 15.561.

²⁷ Classen, 273-74.

²⁸ CR 13.423-25 (or *genus didacticum*).

²⁹ CR 13.419 (from *El. rhet.*).

³⁰ Augustine used oratorical paradigms for biblical interpretation in his *De doctrina christiana* (A.D. 426). See Gerald A. Press, “*Doctrina* in Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 17 (1984) 98-120; James Jerome Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 47-63; C. Clifton Black II, “Keeping up with Recent Studies: Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation,” *ExpTim* 100 (1988-89) 255.

³¹ For Muilenburg, rhetorical criticism is “. . . the study of the characteristic linguistic and structural features of a particular text in its present form, apart from its generic rootage, social usage, or historical development” (e.g., looking at word repetition, *inclusio*, chiasmus, parallelism, and poetic devices) [Black, “Rhetorical Criticism,” 253].

³² Classen (“*St Paul’s Epistles*”) writes of Betz, “. . . as Professor Betz stresses the novelty of his method [in his commentary], it seems obvious to ask why it was not discovered and used before or, as he mentions Luther, Melanchthon and Lightfoot in a footnote, were they the first and what did they do?” (268).

During the two decades following Betz's commentary, modern rhetorical criticism has blossomed. Numerous NT scholars have attempted to dissect Paul's rhetoric in Romans, usually with little or no acknowledgment of non-contemporary approaches (e.g., Melanchthon). Wilhelm Wuellner pioneered this modern rhetorical approach to Romans, and was followed by many others, including David E. Aune and Robert Jewett. Jewett's article, "Following the Argument of Romans," is possibly the best known contemporary rhetorical foray into Romans.³³ In this article, Jewett says he hopes the rhetorical method will provide an objective approach to understanding Paul's argument and highlight the letter's occasional nature. Jewett sees the rhetorical approach as corrective of theologically-driven understandings of Romans.³⁴ Jewett concludes that the letter is an ambassadorial one, in which ". . . Paul aims to provide a theological argument that will unify the competing house-churches in Rome so that they will be willing to cooperate in a mission to Spain, to be mounted from Rome."³⁵ In contrast to Melanchthon, Jewett contends, "If one were to pose the traditional question of the 'high point' or 'climax' of Romans, it is surely to be found in the peroration in chapters 15-16 rather than in the abstract, doctrinal themes of the earlier part of the letter."³⁶ Jewett would agree with Schäfer that Melanchthon's interpretation of Romans is driven by outside theological concerns. One might question whether Jewett's rhetorical approach is not equally conditioned.

Dunn gives a balanced summary of modern rhetorical approaches to Romans:

The key fact here is that the distinctiveness of [Romans] far outweighs the significance of its conformity with current literary or rhetorical custom. Parallels show chiefly how others wrote at that period; they provide no prescription for Paul's practice and no clear criterion by which to assess Paul; and the fact that no particular suggestion has commanded widespread assent in the current discussion suggests that Paul's style was as much or more eclectic and instinctive than conventional and conformist.³⁷

In agreement with Dunn, we judge "the new rhetoric" to hold greater promise than classical rhetoric for understanding Paul's letters. Rather than seeking to fit Paul's letter's into a classical rhetorical mold, "new rhetoric" looks for distinctive patterns and markers within the apostle's speech and then lets these divisions guide our outline of Paul's thought.³⁸ Melanchthon approaches this flexibility of the new rhetoric with his openness to coining new terms, abandoning rhetorical schemes when they are not helpful, and looking to the OT as a pattern for Paul's speech.

³³ Robert Jewett, "Following the Argument of Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, 265-77.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 265-66.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 266.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 276-77.

³⁷ James D. G. Dunn, "The Formal and Theological Coherence of Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, 245-46.

³⁸ Hansen argues that the successful application of "the new rhetoric" to Paul's letters show that the observation-based elements of rhetoric are what make Paul's letters fit a rhetorical outline. Hansen notes that classical rhetoricians composed their rhetorical manuals based on observations of what did and did not work in speech. Quintilian compared the rhetorician observing rhetorical patterns to a doctor noting the medicinal properties of herbs (G. W. Hansen, "Rhetorical Criticism," in G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin and D. G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993], 822-24).

Conclusion

As we saw at the outset of our study, Melancthon is often presented as a simplistic misinterpreter of the Scriptures. Yet, in examining Melancthon's actual writings and secondary studies of his rhetorical hermeneutic, we have discovered that the reformer is more exegetically sophisticated. Melancthon does not present Romans as a systematic theology dealing with all topics of Christian theology, such as eschatology, the Lord's Supper, and church order.³⁹ He treats the text as a presentation of the gospel (i.e., soteriologically-significant and pragmatic doctrine). Though Melancthon's rhetorical approach may seem forced at times, it arguably presents the major themes of Romans accurately.⁴⁰ The reformer's approach allows us to look at Romans as a unified message--something the framing epistolary brackets of the letter encourage (Rom 1:11-17, 15:14-33).⁴¹

³⁹ Contra Kümmel's unfounded accusation (Introduction to the NT, 312).

⁴⁰ Melancthon's emphasis on justification in Romans is really not that different from some modern scholars. For example, see Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme*, NovTSup 68 (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

⁴¹ For a further defense of the importance of these framing brackets, see Jervis. (See n. 3 for a full citation of Jervis.)