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Thanks be to God. On this late summer’s day, 2016, I have the profound honor of writing a brief note for the publication of the volume which you, dear reader, hold in your hands. It’s been years in the making. I do not even recall how long ago I had requested of Christian Tiews that he consider translating this, Walther’s *magnum opus* on pastoral theology. But the task was joyously joined, and then joined by David Loy and a small host, and the outcome is a blessing beyond blessings.

There are books aplenty on pastoral theology—some quite helpful. Over my years as a pastor, I have often referred to Walther’s *Pastoral Theology*, lamenting that this seminal work still languished in obscurity, captured only in condensation or altered iteration. In the crucial matter of applying the church’s theology to life, we’d much prefer to have the original, and all of it. And now we have it. Selah!

Walther guides the reader from the path to call and ordination, through the range of congregational practice and pastoral issues and questions, to the very end of the pastor’s ministry. As the preface material of the editor and translator point out, some of the material is time-bound. The great bulk of it, however, is New Testament driven, confessionally Lutheran dripping, Luther inspired, orthodox Lutheran theologian confirmed gold. It’s pure gold. There are points here and there where one takes issue with Walther, particularly as he perhaps leans harder on an orthodox dogmatician than on Luther and the confessions, but such instances are nonetheless helpful so that we know whence we’ve come and perhaps why.

Hermann Sasse famously wrote: “It is always a sign of a deep spiritual sickness when a church forgets its fathers. It may criticize them. It must measure their teaching by the Word of God and reject whatever errors they made as fallible men. But it must not forget them. But this is precisely what appears to be happening in our century in broad sections of the Lutheran Church.”

C. F. W. Walther is the greatest Lutheran churchman in the history of the United States. There have been extraordinary individuals, to be sure (Muhlenberg and Krauth perhaps the most significant). But on the basis of two conjoined criteria, Walther is the most significant. First, with respect to orthodoxy, he is impeccable. Precisely his strength was that he desired nothing more than to be a faithful student of Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, Luther, and the orthodox Lutheran fathers—in that order. Second, as a churchman, Walther founded a church body (hardly by himself, but he was the driving force) which has confessed to this day the plenary inspiration and full authority of Holy Scripture and the consequent doctrine of the Lutheran

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Confessions. Today the LCMS is—despite all her weaknesses and challenges—continuing to recover her first love, and she is leading in a worldwide Lutheran revival, and this precisely as American culture has hit the dregs. All these years after 1847, the little beacon still shines.

O Lord, grant us a love for the faithful fathers of the Church. And grant us but a portion of their fidelity, their love for Your sacred Word, their zeal for the Gospel of Christ and the salvation of souls. With such a portion we shall be restless in proclamation until eternity. Thanks be to God for C. F. W. Walther.

Pastor Matthew C. Harrison
St. Louis
August 2016
for pastoral theology, addressing the needs of American Lutheran pastors was key” (below, p. 3).

**WHY READ WALThER’S *PASTORAL THEOLOGY* TODAY?**

In some ways, pastoral theologies are more bound to their historical circumstances than other theological works because they provide guidance to pastors carrying out their ministries in particular historical circumstances. Walther’s *Pastoral Theology* is no different. Given the fact that it was written for Lutheran pastors in the late nineteenth century, one might conclude that the work is of only historical interest today, with no guidance for contemporary Lutheran pastors. Such a judgment would be mistaken for two reasons. First, many issues Walther addresses continue to face Lutheran pastors in the twenty-first century, and for many of these issues, Lutheran doctrine establishes fairly specific boundaries for practice that are valid across historical contexts. (Walther’s discussion of who should be admitted to the Lord’s Supper comes to mind here—see below, pp. 222–32.) Walther’s *Pastoral Theology* therefore has much to say directly to Lutheran pastors in the twenty-first century. Second, Walther’s methodology offers a model for thinking about how to address the novel cases and situations that confront contemporary pastors. Walther’s appropriation of the works of pastoral theologians from earlier centuries shows us how we can appropriate Walther’s pastoral-theological work for our own day.

The breadth of Walther’s quotations bears witness to a deep respect for the wisdom contained in the writings of the theologians of earlier centuries. He quotes Luther more often and at greater length than anyone else (except for one very large quotation from Ludwig Hartmann), and he quotes Lutheran theologians more than theologians from other traditions. However, his quotations include early church fathers and even an occasional medieval theologian. This breadth of quotations may seem odd in a book intended to provide guidance to late nineteenth-century pastors in the United States. However, wherever the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, its preachers face questions about how to preach, how to administer the Sacraments, how to deal with issues of marriage, illness, death, and much more. Pastors seek to address these issues through study of the Word and consultation with one another. To ignore the wisdom of our forefathers which has stood the test of time is to ignore “older, more experienced men trained by God” (below, p. 3). Walther thus draws on a large number of sources as he seeks to address the issues facing late nineteenth-century Lutheran pastors in the United States.

Walther’s reliance on Luther provides a good case study for understanding his use of earlier sources. His choice to quote Luther so extensively flows from two factors. First, Luther is the theological giant of the Lutheran Reformation. He certainly did not do his work alone, but his co-workers confessed that his understanding of the Gospel guided theirs and inspired their work. In fact, the theological substance of Luther’s writings is praised not only by his co-workers and Lutherans
of succeeding generations but also by many prominent non-Lutherans. Walther
goes to great lengths to point this out (see below, pp. 17–20). It stands to reason that
the man whose theological work inspired the Lutheran Reformation would also
provide important insights into the implications of this theological work for the
practical work of Lutheran pastors. This contention is only reinforced by the fact
that Luther also functioned in a variety of pastoral roles.

The second factor that led Walther to cite Luther so extensively is that several
generations of Lutheran pastors have found Luther’s practical guidance to be both
wise and helpful. It took less than forty years after Luther’s death for a collection
of passages of his pastoral guidance to be published. The collection, Conrad Porta’s
Pastorale Lutheri, was published in 1582 and, as Walther observes, went through
five editions over the succeeding 150 years. It was reprinted as late as 1842 (see
below, pp. 20–24). Numerous other collections of pastoral guidance by Luther
addressing a wide variety of cases have been published as well. Since publishers
print what will sell, the extensive publishing history of Luther’s pastoral guidance
suggests that his guidance for pastors has found a ready market over the centuries.
Even three hundred years after his death, Lutheran pastors continued to find his
guidance helpful and wise.

These same two factors help explain the other quotation choices Walther
makes. For example, he relies heavily on a variety of authorities from the Lutheran
tradition. He cites a couple of collections containing the guidance of Lutheran uni-
versity faculties, ministeria, and consistories, as well as well-received works by a
few Lutheran pastors and professors. He also cites other Christians from the early
church through the Middle Ages and all the way into the nineteenth century. His
choices were driven in part by the books available to him, but they were also driven
by his desire to draw on sources which are faithful to orthodox Christian (and spe-
cifically Lutheran) theology and which provide guidance that has proven helpful
and wise over the course of the centuries.

At the same time, by choosing sources that provide guidance about specific
cases, Walther places himself in the long tradition of Lutheran casuistry. A funda-
mental assumption of this tradition is that the guidance provided regarding past
cases can help pastors and ecclesiastical supervisors decide how to approach new
ones. Lutherans therefore collected and recorded wise advice, based on Scripture,
for future reference; pastors or ecclesiastical supervisors turned to these collec-
tions when they found themselves confronting difficult situations, even if the

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7 In fact, a topically arranged collection of Luther’s letters appeared as early as 1545—the year
before Luther died. This collection and a few other collections of Luther’s works, letters, and
statements (including his table talks) printed between 1545 and 1582 appear to have been pub-
lished to provide guidance for specific cases, although they were not necessarily meant spe-
cifically for pastors. For a history of these collections and early Lutheran casuistry in general,
see Benjamin T. G. Mayes, Counsel and Conscience: Lutheran Casuistry and Moral Reasoning
after the Reformation, Refo500 Academic Studies (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011),
pp. 28–39.
situations involved differences from the recorded cases. Walther practices this kind of Lutheran casuistry. For example, when discussing pastoral calls and church governance, Walther quotes sources that refer to the role of civil authorities. The civil authorities were involved in calls and church governance in Germany because, as indicated previously, Lutheran churches in German territories and cities were governed by the civil authorities. In most territories, a consistory made up of laymen and clergy conducted the affairs of the congregations on behalf of the territorial prince; in cities, the city council issued calls. Congregations therefore sometimes faced political pressure with regard to the calling of pastors, and pastors sometimes ran afoul of the civil authorities because of the content of their preaching and teaching. Congregations and pastors of the Missouri Synod did not generally face this kind of overtly political pressure in Walther’s day. Walther nevertheless quotes sources that address the role of the civil authorities in issuing calls and governing the church, but he shows how their guidance applies in a context like ours, in which congregations are not governed by the state.8

We see the same kind of analysis at work in Walther’s discussion of charity. As Walther points out, under the German system of territorial churches ruled by territorial princes, charity work was sometimes seen as a community task delegated by the authorities to the churches. However, the obligation of a congregation to provide for its poor is independent of the congregation’s relationship to the state. Walther thus claims that congregations in the United States should be ashamed if their members have to rely on the government, fraternal organizations such as lodges, or other congregations for support (see below, p. 349). Thus Walther takes sources written for a non-American context and shows how they apply to congregations in the United States.

Walther’s Pastoral Theology thus provides two kinds of guidance for Lutheran pastors in the United States (and perhaps in other Western societies) in our own day and age. First, in matters in which doctrine draws fairly clear boundaries around practice, Walther gives contemporary pastors clear guidance for pastoral practice: how to proceed with respect to admission to Communion, use of non-Lutheran sponsors at Baptism, the necessity of the call, and much more. Second, Walther models the tradition of Lutheran casuistry, which can be used to apply his work to novel cases.

Our own age is, in many ways, the heir to Walther’s age. The “frenzy for freedom” (below, p. 126) of the German-speaking revolutionary movements in Walther’s day has won the day in our own. The United States is as much a mission field in our day as in Walther’s day, if not a greater one. The panoply of other church bodies has only multiplied, and a panoply of other religions and alternative spiritualities has blossomed alongside it. The variety of entertainments which can and do tempt God’s people away from preaching and God’s Word has only increased. For

8 See, e.g., below, p. 48 n. 17 and p. 422 n. 7.
this reason, Walther’s *Pastoral Theology* will provide us with helpful, wise advice in many cases. Yet Walther’s method may also offer guidance about how to reason about the new challenges we face. Assistive reproductive technologies offer hope but raise important theological questions that need to be answered on the basis of Scripture. Homosexual behavior and gender dysphoria present new challenges in pastoral care. Even the case of conjoined twins raises new questions for us. Walther worried only about whether to baptize one or both of the children (see below, p. 152), but now that medical care permits them to live into adulthood, we will be faced with different questions. May the Spirit of all Wisdom use the present work to help us face these challenges.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I have incurred a number of debts both before and while editing this work. The people of Zion Lutheran Church in Bolivar, Missouri, helped me learn how to be a pastor. They would have been better served had I studied this work before the Lord called me to serve them. Like the translator, the Rev. Christian C. Tiews, I am indebted to the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Mayes (at Concordia Publishing House until nearly the end of the project, though now at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana) and to Mrs. Dawn Mirly Weinstock of Concordia Publishing House for invaluable assistance throughout the process. The Rev. Dr. C. J. Armstrong of Concordia University Irvine has provided assistance translating Latin titles and phrases. Ms. Madeline Upchurch and Ms. Taylor Kelso have provided helpful editorial assistance. My colleagues at Concordia University Irvine have supported and encouraged me throughout the process, as have my parents and parents-in-law. More than anyone else, however, it has been my wife, Mary, and our children who have borne the burden of this work. I thank them for their patience and encouragement.

It is my prayer that this work will be a blessing to all the members of Christ’s Church by providing wise, God-pleasing guidance to those whom God has called as their pastors and shepherds. It is my hope that the final form of the translation is both accurate and intelligible. Where it is not, the final responsibility lies with me.

David W. Loy
Irvine, California
June 14, 2016
ARTICLE ONE

DEFINITION OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY

Pastoral theology is the God-given (θεόσδοτος), practical disposition of the soul, acquired (acquisitus) by certain means, by which a minister is equipped to perform all the tasks that come to him in that capacity validly (rato), in a legitimate manner (legitime), to the glory of God, and for the advancement of his own and his hearers’ salvation.

COMMENT 1

Pastoral theology, like theology in general, can be reckoned to the category of the disciplines, and even a certain kind of book bears the name. However, what is called pastoral theology in these cases is such in an only improper, relative sense, that is, only in a certain relation, under certain circumstances, in an accidental manner (per accidens), namely, when taught or when recorded in a written work. Before this can happen, however, it must already be present in the soul of a person. However, since understanding a matter requires primarily knowing what it actually, absolutely—that is, apart from all relations and accidents—essentially and originally (principaliter) is, we, along with the older, orthodox teachers of our church, begin with the definition of pastoral theology as it is constituted when viewed subjectively or concretely, that is, as it inheres in a subject or a concrete individual who is rightfully called a theologian. For that reason, we do not call it a discipline or a book, which it is in an only metonymical sense (that is, according to the figure of speech in which an effect bears the name of its cause or a container the name of what is contained in it), but rather a disposition.

COMMENT 2

First, when we call pastoral theology a disposition, this is to show that it is not simply an aggregate of known facts, but rather a disposition or quality of the soul, a proficiency that transforms it with respect to its object. This should suggest right at the beginning the concept of that “skill” (ἐξάρτισις) and “fitness” (ἰκανότης) which the apostle requires of a minister when he writes: “that a man

1  die Lehren. In this context, academic disciplines or branches of knowledge. DWL
2  Zufälligkeiten. In this context, a technical term for nonessential characteristics. DWL
3  ihren, probably referring to the object of pastoral theology rather than to the soul. DWL
of God” (a theologian, according to Luther, Walch 5:1086f.) “may be complete, equipped” (ἐξηρτισισμένος) “for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17) and “that we are sufficient” (ἡ ἱκανότης ἡμῶν = “our sufficiency”) “is from God” (2 Cor. 3:5).  

Second, when we call pastoral theology a practical disposition, this is to show that it is not a theoretical disposition, not a science, which has knowledge as its final goal, and that it is not practical merely in general on account of its goal—which, like the goal of theology in general, is to lead the sinner to salvation through faith—but also in a narrower, eminent sense on account of its special object, which consists of the practice, the activity, or the official acts of a minister—in a word, of ecclesiastical ministry (ministerium ecclesiasticum)—in accord with the apostolic requirement already cited that a man of God be equipped from God’s Word “for every good work” pertaining to his ministry, namely, as the immediately previous verse says, “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Among the more recent theologians, the sainted Dr. Rudelbach speaks about this in a published lecture as follows:

You recall that we, along with the older [theologians], characterized theology as a practical disposition. We cannot give up this definition; it is the living core of our observation. Theology is practical through and through—practical in its roots, means, and connections. However, we are still justified in calling those disciplines (catechesis, homiletics, and liturgics) practical in the narrower sense—not as if they alone should be put into action, but because they chiefly present the Word in its immediate movement. However, we will also be justified in assuming a practical summary—a derivative current, as it were, where all of the source connections run together—in every series of theological disciplines, and how else could this be expressed in the first series than by the term pastoral science

4 When Heb. 5:12 demands of the Christian Hebrews “that, because the Gospel had been preached to them for so long, they should have been teachers rather than schoolchildren, since they had been Christians for such a long time that they should have been teachers” (Luther: “masters”) “over the others” (Gerhard), and when in verse 14 a ἐξις—that is, a disposition, a proficiency (Luther: “habit”)—is ascribed to those who reach this level of maturity by virtue of which they have “powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Heb. 5:14 [ESV]), then there is no doubt that, according to God’s Word, theology in general should be reckoned to the category of proficiencies (ἐξις, habitus). Johannes Fecht therefore writes: “That theology is a proficiency, and a practical one at that, is shown clearly in Heb. 5:14. For while the mature understanding of all Christians ‘in the word of righteousness’ or in the Christian teaching of obtaining righteousness in Christ Jesus is addressed here, if this [understanding] is nevertheless a ‘proficiency’ of those who in diligent reading and observing of the Word have ‘powers of discernment trained by constant practice’ by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, then theology itself will delight all the more in this title, because it intends not only to gain righteousness and salvation for oneself but also to plant them in others” (Philocal. sacr., Rostock, 1708, p. 1). CFWW

5 Wissenschaft
(or, better yet, pastoral theology)?

Now the latter imparts doctrine along with life (and [this is] always so with the conveying discipline⁷), carries the results of the former into the latter, and does not make them living (which they must be in themselves, if they are of the right kind), but instead shows their living force. (see “Über den Begriff der Theologie und den der Neutestamentlichen Isagogik,” in the Zeitschrift edited by Rudelbach and Guericke, 1848, no. 1, pp. 27–28)

Third, when we call pastoral theology a God-given practical disposition, this is to show that it is a supernatural disposition obtained not though human strength and human effort but only through the working of the Holy Spirit; it has justifying faith as a prerequisite; and only one who stands in grace, who is born again, can have it. As the apostle expressly says: “Who is sufficient for these things? . . . Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant” (2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5–6). This is why Deyling, among others, writes concerning it in his pastoral theology:

It is called a God-given (θεόσδοτος) disposition because it contains the gifts of sanctification and of the ministry, which may not be separated from each other. Both graces and gifts⁸ are supernatural. Their conferral and distribution is explicitly attributed to God, from whom all good gifts come (James 1:17), or to the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4; 2 Cor. 3:5). The gifts of the ministry have their origin in the assisting (adsistente) and teaching or external grace of God. However, the gifts of sanctification—for example, repentance, faith, and holiness of life—are from the indwelling and habitual grace of the Holy Spirit. (Institut. prud. past., edited by Küstner, Leipzig, p. 2)

Furthermore, Johann Gerhard writes as follows:

Although fervor in godliness is required of all Christians in general, respectability of morals, rectitude of life, and a serious and sincere godliness must nevertheless be the norm above all and in a special way for those who have devoted themselves to theology and either intend to obtain the ecclesiastical office or already administer it.

(1) “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” says the royal singer in Ps. 111:10, which his son, the king of great wisdom,⁹ repeats in Prov. 1:7

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6 “According to this concept (which, however, more or less departs from most of the earlier conceptions), pastoral science is simultaneously the culmination of the practical” (in the narrower sense) “disciplines. . . In pastoral science the catechist, the preacher, the liturgist stands there in one person and binds himself firmly to the church and every individual person, soul in it. This is the fundamental concept at the heart of the exceptional work of J. L. Hartmann, Pastorale evangelicum (Nürnberg, 1732, quarto).” CFWW

7 ausleitende Disciplin

8 Charismen und Gaben

9 The royal singer is King David; his son is King Solomon. CCT
and 9:10. Therefore, where there is no true fear of God—this foundation of sincere godliness—true and heavenly wisdom is also not present.

(2) James distinguishes between spiritual and fleshly wisdom (James 3:15). The former he calls that which comes down “from above” and describes it as “pure,” “peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.” The latter, however, he calls “earthly,” human (ψυχικὴν), “demonic.” Therefore, where that fruit and those qualities which are attributed to heavenly wisdom are not present, heavenly wisdom itself is also not present.

(3) “Wisdom does not enter an evil soul, and it does not inhabit a body that is enslaved to sin,” says the author of the Book of Wisdom in 1:4. Therefore, where sins are allowed to rule, one hopes in vain to obtain heavenly wisdom.

(4) The Holy Spirit is that true and internal Teacher who guides into all wisdom (John 16:13; 1 John 2:27). The internal Teacher has His professorship in heaven. However, He does not live in a heart enslaved to sin.

(5) Whoever walks in the darkness of sin and loves it cannot strive for the light of spiritual knowledge. Therefore, the apostle declares with great seriousness in 2 Cor. 4:4 that “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers”—that is, those who love the darkness of sin—“to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.”

(6) True theology consists more of an attitude (in affectu) than of mere knowledge. Scaliger claims that we are more like God Most High through goodness than through wisdom. “They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works,” says the apostle regarding false theologians and false Christians in Titus 1:16. From this it undoubtedly follows that true and saving knowledge of God consists not only of words but also of works, not of mere confession by the mouth but also of the attitude of the heart and of the performance of the deed.

(7) “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you,” says the apostle in Eph. 5:14. Thus a true and saving enlightenment cannot occur among those who, overtaken by spiritual lethargy, take delight in the dead works of sin.

(8) The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth (John 14:17). However, everything that is in the world is the flesh’s desire, the eyes’ desire, and arrogant living; therefore, where one still indulges in such things, the Spirit of truth has no room. Moses could not draw near to God without first removing his shoes (Exod. 3:5). The people of Israel were not permitted to hear the Law until they had purified and prepared themselves (Exod. 19:10). Likewise, he who is engaged in theology must remove the clothing of the old Adam.

(Johann Gerhard, Methodus studii th., Jena, 1654, pp. 14–17)

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10 The ESV translates this term as “unspiritual,” but Walther follows Luther in using the word menschlich (“human”). CCT

11 Also known as the Wisdom of Solomon. CCT
Luther therefore also writes as follows:

Sham Christians can put on the adornment and cover of big, beautiful works of love. But the true teaching and confession of Christ is impossible without faith; as St. Paul says (1 Cor. 12:3): “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” No sham Christian or schismatic spirit can understand this teaching. How much less can he truly preach it and confess it! Even though he might perceive the words and imitate them, still he does not hold to them or keep them pure. His preaching always betrays the fact that he does not have it straight. He slobbers all over it by stealing the honor from Christ and claiming it for himself. Thus the most reliable index to a true Christian is this: if from the way he praises and preaches Christ the people learn that they are nothing and that Christ is everything. ([Sermon on the Mount], on Matt. 5:16; Erlangen Ed. 43:82–83)

Furthermore, Luther writes: “I experience this personally [and] daily see in others how difficult it is to distinguish the doctrines of Law and Gospel from each other. Here the Holy Spirit must be master and teacher, otherwise no person on earth will be able to understand or teach it. This is why no pope, no false Christian, no enthusiast can distinguish these two from each other” ([How Law and Gospel Are to Be Thoroughly Distinguished], 1532; Erlangen 19:238).

Finally, Luther writes:

When a preacher seeks glory and riches, it is impossible for him to be able to preach or believe rightly, as the Lord Jesus also says in John 5[:44], where He says, “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another?” Whoever strives for glory in the preaching office and wants to be regarded by the world as great, learned, and wise—he is an unbeliever. If he is himself an unbeliever, how can he preach rightly? He must certainly keep quiet about everything that may hurt his glory and prestige among the people, and he will always pour his leprosy and poison into the wine and lie about it. When that occurs, then the preaching office is impure. ([Sermons on Matthew 18–24], 1538; Erlangen 44:266f.)

Fourth, when pastoral theology is called a disposition acquired by certain means in our paragraphs, this is to show that we are not dealing here with the extraordinary theological disposition which was bestowed on the apostles and prophets through immediate enlightenment and provision, but with one which,

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12 Far from [saying] that these quotations contradict the doctrine that Word and Sacrament retain their power to convert and save even [if they come] from the mouth and hand of an unconverted preacher, the same Luther writes instead, among other things, as follows: “Wherever this ministry is at work and points to Christ as the Lord, this is most certainly the preaching of the Holy Spirit, even if he who carries out this ministry does not have the Holy Spirit for himself, for the ministry is without the means of the Holy Spirit” (Church Postil, sermon for Trinity 10; Erlangen 9:209 [cf. AE 78:337, paragraph 23; WA 22:179]). For however certain it is that an unconverted preacher can teach falsely in many ways, it is nevertheless also equally certain that, whenever he really proclaims the true Word, it does not become a dead letter or powerless noise in his mouth. CFWW
although effected by the Holy Spirit, is nevertheless acquired mediately, which the apostle has in mind when he writes: “Devote yourself to reading.” Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy with the elders’ laying on of hands. Practice this, immerse yourself in it, so that your progress in all things is manifest. *Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching; persist in these articles. For by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers*” (1 Tim. 4:13–16). Ludwig Hartmann therefore writes: “What Tertullian once rightly said about Christians—that they are not born but made (*Christiani non nascuntur, sed fiunt*)—is also true concerning faithful ministers and teachers of the Church, who require a long preparation and an extensive course of study if they are to enter such a lofty ministry suitably. For here, mere personal reputation or seriousness and holy living are insufficient; rather, theological knowledge is required as well” (*Pastorale ev.*, Nürnberg, 1697, p. 237).

Finally, the apostle tells us that the general and specific goal attributed to pastoral theology in its definition really belongs to it when he says, “Whatever you do, do *all to the glory of God*” (1 Cor. 10:31) and “by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim. 4:16).

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13 Here and throughout, Walther and those he quotes understand this verse to refer to private (rather than public) reading of Scripture. DWL

14 Cf. *Apology* 18 (ANF 3:32). DWL
immediately cease to be a call. If, for example, someone used gifts to win the favor of those by whom he will be called to the ministry, then he is acting illegitimately to this extent and in this respect, yet his call does not therefore cease to be a divine call, assuming that everything else is correct. Thus, in the papacy, the clerics alone—that is, the pope with his bishops—had snatched for themselves the right to call ministers, which was illegitimate, in fact, tyrannical. Nevertheless, the call of the ministers under the papacy did not cease to be a divine call. (Loc. de ministerio eccl., § 75)

Even a call to a heterodox church, in which preaching the doctrines of man alongside the Word of God would be required, is valid, if everything else is in order with respect to the first.\footnote{in Betreff des ersteren—perhaps a reference to the first way in which a call could be illegitimate according to the immediately preceding quotation from Gerhard. DWL} On this matter, compare the writings of our [theologians] concerning the validity of the call that Luther received in the Roman Church, especially the glorious work by Dr. Nicol. Hunnius, Offenbarlicher Beweis, daß Dr. Martin Luther zu des Pabstthums Reformation rechtmäßig von Gott sei berufen worden (Wittenberg, 1628; reprinted in 1717 by Löscher). Incidentally, Hülsemann quite correctly writes: “What we have said about the ordination of papal priests—that the accompanying command to offer sacrifices on behalf of the living and the dead defiles it but does not make it invalid—this should always be understood with the condition included in the text: so long as primarily the authority to teach God’s Word and administer the Sacraments is conferred on those to be ordained. For if this condition is missing, then the ordination is not merely besmirched but is also invalid” (Praeclectt. ad Breviar., ch. 19., thes. 8).

**Comment 2**

**Legitimacy of the Call**

For the call to a preaching office to be not only valid but also legitimate requires above all that the man called has not forced his way in, snuck in, and sought the office in crooked ways—through persuasion, by using partisan jealousies, or even through bribery—but has instead been compelled by others, out of obedience to God and love for neighbor, to accept the call extended to him without any meddling on his part. We again permit Luther, who was experienced in the Word and the ways of God, to speak first. He writes:

> This also includes those who are aware concerning themselves that they have great skill and believe it would be very dangerous if they did not teach others, [who] claim they would be burying the talent\footnote{Centner, translation of τάλαντον in Matt. 25:14–30. The double entendre present in English is not present in German or Greek. DWL} entrusted to them in the ground and think that they must expect a serious judgment of the Lord along with the lazy servant (Matt. 25:18, 24ff.; Luke 19:20ff.). In this way the

WA 5:257, 259–60; Jer 23:32
devil uses ridiculous lies to deceive the thoughts and imagination of these people, who, instructed from this verse,16 should know that we are not the ones who are teaching and that our word should not be taught and preached, but that our mouth serves His Word alone, if He will have us and will call us to it. He [the psalmist] says here: “You, You have established an authority; they have not, we have not.” Accordingly, the Gospel says in Luke 19:13ff., Matt. 25:14ff. that the master who traveled abroad called his servants and gave them his goods and distributed the talents among them. For this reason you, too, should wait until you are called; in the meantime, do not aspire to a preaching office, do not force yourself in, for your skill will not cause you to burst. God speaks in the prophet Jeremiah in 23:32: “I did not send the prophets nor did they run . . . .” This affliction concerns and attacks many of them, so much so that they become extremely weary of their call and their estate and regret it. The devil toys with them in order to make even those who began well restless—finally consuming them with weariness and laziness. Therefore, whoever is called, let him open his mouth and receive the Word about Christ; let him be the tool and not the master. But the one who is not called, let him ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His harvest (Matt. 9:38). . . . But concerning [the fact] that we said no one should teach in the congregation unless he has been called to it by God, and that everyone knows what kind of call of God that is, note in this regard: It is God’s call if one is ordered or called to the preaching office apart from—in fact, even against—his own will by the power of his rulers,17 whether ecclesiastical or secular. For there is no authority except from God, as St. Paul says in Rom. 13:1. Therefore, what both—rulers and authority—command no doubt is there, because God Himself is commanding it. Dear friend, do not doubt it: If God wants to have you, He will certainly look for you. In fact, He will send down an angel from heaven to lead you to it (if it were necessary).

And I believe this is the reason why neither bishops nor priests18 nor monks are teaching the Word in the church these days, that there are absolutely none left who wait for God’s call, but they all run and chase after parishes and pulpits, after prebends and fiefdoms,19 after easy living and full bellies,

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16 Walther inserts “(Psalm 8:3)” here. In English translations, this corresponds to Ps. 8:2. DWL
17 Luther is speaking here as the circumstances of his environment at the time (1519) demanded. It goes without saying that what Luther says above about ecclesiastical authorities applies here in America to congregations, which have the right to issue calls. For what the ecclesiastical authorities appointed by the state did over there as guardians of the congregations, that is what independent congregations do here in virtue of the divine authority itself, which belongs to them originally. See above, Luther, p. 34, comment 1. CFWW
18 Pfaffen, a derogatory term. Also below. CCT
19 Pfarren und Predigtstühlen . . . Präbenden und Lehen. A prebend was a position at a collegiate church or cathedral that included a stipend derived from renting out the land owned by the church. Lehen (“fiefdom”), in this case an Altarlehen, was land owned by or for the benefit of a church; income from renting out the land likewise supported the priest called to the church. DWL
so that now at this time the defining characteristic of not only monks but also bishops and priests is either despair or a lazy and comfortable life.$^{20}$ You will not understand this divine call any better than if you pay attention to the histories of Holy Scripture and of all the holy men. For those who taught on the basis of God’s call have always done great things, such as the saints Augustine, Ambrose, and, before them, the holy apostle St. Paul. ([*Operationes in duos Psalmorum decades*], on Ps. 8:3;\textsuperscript{21} Walch 4:761, 767f.)

*Luther* speaks in a similar way in the *Church Postil* on the Gospel for St. Andrew’s Day:

There are two kinds of calls into the preaching office. One is done *without means* by God; the other, through men and also by God. The first should not be believed unless it is authenticated by miraculous signs. . . . In fact, even if you do a sign for us, we still want to see in advance what your doctrine is, whether it also agrees with the Word of God, for false prophets can also do signs, as Moses told the Jews (Deut. 13:1–4). [. . .]

The second kind of call is done through men and yet at the same time also by God, that is, *through means*. And it is a *calling of love*, as, for example, when a man is called from the multitude as a bishop or preacher, of whom one sees that he has the Word of God and can also share it with others through his teaching and preaching. *In that case be very careful that there is not also envy,*\textsuperscript{22} *that one is somehow forcing his way in to preach, whether on account of his belly or for the sake of honor,* for it is dangerous, and it will never end well. If you are learned and understand God’s Word well, if you also think you want to present it to others in an honest and useful way, wait! If God wants to have it, He will certainly find you. Dear [friend], do not let the skill cause you to burst. God has not forgotten you; if you are supposed to preach His Word, He will certainly call you in His time. *Don’t give Him a goal, a time, or a position, for He will compel you [to go] where you do not want to, and you will not end up where you would like to be.* [. . .]

If you were wiser and smarter than Solomon and Daniel, you should still flee as if from hell before speaking even one word unless you are called and commanded to do so. Believe me, *no one will accomplish anything useful by preaching except he who is commanded and forced to preach and to teach apart from his will and desire.* For we have only one master, our Lord Jesus Christ, who alone teaches and brings fruit by means of His servants whom He has called to this task. But whoever teaches without being called does not teach without harm to both himself and his hearers, because Christ is not with him. (Walch 11:2547–48, 2549)

\textsuperscript{20} Exactly as in many ways now in America, where many for whom nothing would work out also become preachers out of despair or, plagued by an aversion to work, out of pure laziness; then not only ignorant congregations but even unscrupulous synods also open the doors to the sheep pen for them. CFWW

\textsuperscript{21} In English translations, this corresponds to Ps. 8:2. DWL

\textsuperscript{22} *Schalksauge*, that is, the eye with which a cunning, envious servant regards the possessions of his master; cf. Mark 7:22 Luth. DWL
However, neither are those legitimately called who first come without a call but bring it about by their artifices that they are regularly called afterward, as Luther writes about the sneaks [in his comments] on Exod. 3:1: “Yes, they can certainly come and sneak in behind the backs of the people and keep talking for so long that they are elected and called afterward; one can easily talk the people into this with words. But they are thieves, murderers, and wolves (John 10:1)” ([Auslegung über etliche Capitel des 2. Buchs Mosis]; Walch 3:1077). Karlstadt had such a call. Luther writes about him:

When, however, he alleges, together with the Orlamünders, that he has been elected by them as their minister, and thus externally called, I answer: To me it doesn’t matter that they afterward have elected him. I speak about his first coming. Let him produce letters to show that they at Orlamünde have summoned him from Wittenberg and that he did not himself run over there. Dear friends, if being called means that I, out of a sense of duty and obedience, run to another city, and thereafter place myself in so favorable a light and persuade the people to choose me and oust another, then I say that no principality is so great, but that I would be prince therein and drive out the incumbent. How easy is it not to persuade a people? That is not the way to extend a call. It is to promote faction and rebellion and to despise authority. (Against the Heavenly Prophets; Walch 20:230)

There can nevertheless be instances in which offering oneself for a call is not only not against conscience and does not call into question the legitimacy of the call, but is actually a sign of a true, divine call according to 1 Tim. 3:1 and Isa. 6:8. Let us hear our reformer on this as well. He writes:

Yet one should also not reject those who muster the courage with blessed, good intentions to strive neither for their benefit or pleasure, nor for their praise, nor for a comfortable, easy life, but instead strive only to teach and preach God’s Word—even though they are rare. In fact, one should praise such men, as St. Paul says in 1 Tim. 3:1: “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.” He explains why he is speaking in this way soon after in vv. 2ff., saying, “Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded . . . .” All of this pertains to an overseer. Now whoever desires this desires a noble task. For such a ministry wants to have someone who can despise honor, life, and all goods, for it is a ministry of the Truth who proclaimed and spoke beforehand in Matt. 10:22: “You will be hated by all for My name’s sake.” Since those who are placed in it by force against their will hardly tolerate this, one hopes in vain that a man who sought it on his own or who is not internally moved by special grace to seek such an office will tolerate it. ([Operationes in duos Psalmorum decades], on Ps. 8:3; Walch 4:769f.)

23 Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486–1541), formerly Luther’s colleague and supporter at the University of Wittenberg, had come to oppose Luther in 1521–22. DWL

24 In English translations, this corresponds to Ps. 8:2. DWL
**Article 32a**

**Rules for Pastoral Visits to the Sick**

According to our most experienced theologians, the most important rules for pastoral care when visiting the sick are as follows:

First, so that a minister of the Church who is summoned to a sick person does not immediately approach the matter as with unwashed hands (as people say) or inappropriately, he can most fittingly make his beginning with the patient with the saying from Matt. 10:30 that the little hairs on our heads are numbered, etc., and then tell the sick person that such illness, or whatever kind of condition it is, therefore was not sent to him by accident or without the foreknowledge of our God, but everything was sent in accord with His counsel and will. [The sick person] should thus also receive and accept these things and not doubt that, whether this illness should be for life or for death, it will be for the best for him, if only we submit to it rightly. After that should then follow a further account of the reason God cares to burden us with illness and similar conditions. (Felix Bidembach, late court preacher in Stuttgart, *Manuale ministrorum ecclesiae, d. i. Handbuch für die jungen angehenden Kirchendiener*, 1603, p. 647)

**Comment**

When visiting a sick person for the first time, the preacher should of course first address the people living in the house who receive him and, after expressing his sympathy, immediately offer a word of exhortation and, according to the circumstances, comfort—in part so that those who have to do with the sick person are also put in the proper mind-set that is beneficial for him [the sick person]. When the preacher approaches the sick person himself, he should obviously begin his conversation with him with a greeting, with the assurance of his
sympathy, and with a compassionate inquiry into the condition of the one suffering. Gottfried Olearius notes concerning this:

Just as the clergyman is generally received and accepted by one of the relatives when he comes to a patient, so the word of admonition and comfort must first be provided to them as well to foster their good mind-sets, with which they for their part can be beneficial for the sick person. But such must occur with the distinction which the good and bad lifestyle of the same presents, insofar as it is known to the pastor. But when the physician of souls comes to the sick person himself, then he will make the beginning with a sincere greeting in which he can either wish the necessary assistance for patience, physical healing, and sanctification of the soul in general from Him who is a God of life, light, help, and comfort, or he may specifically form his greeting and good wishes according to the circumstances of the moment—except he should not delay all too long with this. Then he can give himself material for conversation with a short expression of his sympathy and an inquiry into the condition of the patient. (Collegium pastorale, d.i. Anleitung zur geistlichen Seelencur, Leipzig, 1718, quarto, pp. 839ff.)