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Errata

There is an error on page 285 in the article by Charles A. Gieschen, “The Relevance of the *Homologoumena* and *Antilegomena* Distinction for the New Testament Canon Today: Revelation as a Test Case,” *CTQ* 79 (2015). The sentence in the first paragraph that reads, “It is ironic that the two primary proof-texts . . . are both from the *antilegomena*” should read: “It is ironic that one of the two primary proof-texts for the divine nature of the Scriptures, 2 Timothy 3:15 and 2 Peter 1:21, is from the *antilegomena*.”

The Editors

Luther's *Oratio, Meditatio, and Tentatio* as the Shape of Pastoral Care for Pastors

John T. Pless

The fact that pastors also need pastoral care is inherent in the nature of the office itself. In a 1968 essay under the title, "The Crisis of the Christian Ministry," Hermann Sasse puts it like this: "God always demands from his servants something which is, humanly speaking, impossible."¹ The language of crisis was common back in 1968. Racial unrest in the United States, student protests in Europe, and the Vietnam War captured public attention. The church, of course, was not exempt; there was sweated anxiety regarding the future of the church. Things were described as being in a "crisis." It was in this period that we heard of the crisis of biblical authority, the crisis of preaching, the liturgical crisis, the crisis of church unity, and the like. There was a restlessness for new forms, and everyone was convinced that the present crisis would be resolved only by innovation and creativity. Sasse weighed in with his own essay on the crisis of the Christian ministry. What he says is instructive.

Sasse notes that we must distinguish between the "crisis which belongs to the nature of our office" and "the crisis which is conditioned by the situation of the church in a certain age."² We tend to fixate on the second crisis and can form our own catalogue of issues that might be seen as crises today: projected clergy shortage, maltreatment of pastors, clerical burnout, moral failure of pastors, lack of public trust of the clergy, and the like. More often than not, these issues are addressed programmatically or administratively in the church. That is not bad, but if that is the only approach, it is inadequate and incomplete. These are certainly real problems, but they can only be adequately addressed from the perspective of the primal crisis that belongs to the nature of the office itself. This crisis is

¹ Hermann Sasse, "The Crisis of the Christian Ministry," in *The Lonely Way, Selected Essays and Letters, Volume 2 (1941–1976)*, ed. Matthew Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 356.

² Sasse, "The Crisis of the Christian Ministry," 356.

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occasioned by the word of God itself, namely, that God uses sinners to remit the sins of sinners. Here Luther's triad of *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* comes into play, providing an orientation for how we understand the pastoral care of pastors.

Luther describes the making of theologians who can distinguish the law from the gospel in his 1539 "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings." He uses these three Latin terms (*oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio*) to describe this process. His framework was a distinct break from the popular medieval scheme for theology as *lectio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. Westhelle observes:

Luther's schema begins with *oratio*, which is more than prayer; it is all God-talk, talk of and to God when one knows that reason will not suffice. Second is *meditatio*—in which he includes *lectio*—which is not limited to meditation in the internal sense but also "external," hence engaging others in reflection. Luther does not follow the third medieval rule, *contemplatio*, but instead he brings up a very different and original concept, *tentatio*, which becomes the foremost—the "touchstone" he calls it—and the last characteristic of theological reflection.³

Thus Luther moves away from the speculative theology of scholasticism and the contemplative spirituality of mysticism. For Luther, the *telos* of the Christian life on this side of the Last Day is not a beatific beholding of the divine but suffering under the cross, which conforms the one who meditates on the Scriptures to the image of Christ crucified.

I. *Oratio*

For Luther, "Holy Scriptures constitute a book which turns the wisdom of all other books into foolishness, because not one teaches about eternal life except this one alone."⁴ *Oratio* is anchored in the reading and hearing of these Scriptures, which create faith in Christ Jesus and kindle prayer. According to Luther, this is the prayer that David models in Psalm 119:

"Teach me, Lord, instruct me, lead me, show me," and many more words like these. Although he well knew and daily heard and read the

³ Vitor Westhelle, *The Scandalous Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 35–36. See also John Kleinig, "Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: What Makes a Theologian?," *CTQ* 66, no. 3 (July 2002): 255–267, and John T. Pless, *Martin Luther: Preacher of the Cross: A Study of Luther's Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2013), 17–25.

⁴ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Pelican, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986), 34:285; hereafter AE.

text of Moses and other books besides, still he wants to lay hold of the real teacher of the Scriptures himself, so he may not seize upon them pell-mell with his reason and become his own teacher. For such practice gives rise to factious spirits who allow themselves to nurture the delusion that the Scriptures are subject to them and can be easily grasped with their reason, as if they were Markolf or Aesop's Fables, for which no Holy Spirit and no prayers are needed."⁵

Concerning Luther on Psalm 119, Oswald Bayer comments,

Almost from the outset, Psalm 119 takes on fundamental significance for Luther's battle with the pope, who wants to prevent him from remaining with the word through which "I became a Christian": the word of absolution. From the beginning of the Reformation, this psalm is seen as a prayer for the victory of God's word against its enemies. In fact, it is seen as a double prayer that was turned into a hymn verse in 1543: Lord, keep us steadfast in your word and curb the pope's and the Turk's sword.⁶

The Scriptures are, to use the words of Oswald Bayer, the breathing space of the Holy Spirit.⁷ Not only did the Spirit breathe his words through the prophets and apostles, but he continues to breathe in and through the Scriptures so that faith in Christ Jesus is created and sustained. In contrast to Schleiermacher, who described the Holy Scriptures as a "mausoleum of religion, a monument to a great spirit once there but no longer,"⁸ Luther understood the Scriptures as the living and life-giving word of God, the dwelling place of the Spirit.

There was a shift in 1758 when Johann Salmo Semler (1725–1791) denounced Luther's use of *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* as unscientific and antiquated monastic theology that must be replaced by what he claimed as a historical reading of the Scriptures.⁹ Semler forgot that "the exegesis of Holy Scripture cannot contradict their inspiration."¹⁰ Now Scriptures are to

⁵ AE 34:286.

⁶ Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, trans. Jeffery G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 40.

⁷ Oswald Bayer, "Theology as *Askesis*," in *Gudstankens aktualitet: Festskrift til Peter Widmann*, ed. Marie Wiberg Pedersen, Bo Kristian Holm, and Anders-Christian Jacobsen (Copenhagen: Forlaget Anis, 2010), 46.

⁸ Cited by Bayer in "Theology as *Askesis*," 38.

⁹ See Bayer, "Theology as *Askesis*," 38. For more on Semler's significance, see Roy A. Harrisville, *Pandora's Box Opened: An Examination and Defense of the Historical-Critical Method and Its Master Practitioners* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 105–113.

¹⁰ Bayer, "Theology as *Askesis*," 49.

be read and mastered without prayer and meditation. They are also rendered as ineffective weapons in the face of spiritual attack. Studied this way, they can no longer be proclaimed as words of Spirit and life. Sermons become commentaries on the text rather than proclamation of the text, occasions for the edification of religious consciousness or fortification in morality.

It is easy to see the contrast with Luther. In his Genesis lectures, for example, Luther writes, "I am content with this gift which I have, Holy Scripture, which abundantly teaches and supplies all things necessary both for this life and also for the life to come."¹¹ Luther believed the Scriptures to possess clarity, for they are illuminated by the Christ to whom they bear witness. The Scriptures are also sufficient to make us wise for the salvation that is in Christ alone. Far from being a dead letter in need of being vivified by the Spirit, the Scriptures that were inspired by the Spirit are now the instrument of his work to create and sustain faith.

II. *Meditatio*

The word of God is heard with the ear, engaging the hearts and the minds of those who receive it in faith. With the lips, this implanted word is confessed, proclaimed, and prayed. *Oratio* leads to *meditatio*, which is meditation on the word of God. For Luther, this meditation is not an exercise of spirituality that turns the believer inward in silent reflection; *meditatio* is grounded in the *externum verbum* (the external word), to use the language of the Smalcald Articles (SA III VIII 7). For Luther, *meditatio* is oral and outward, so in his Genesis lectures he states,

Let him who wants to contemplate in the right way reflect on his Baptism; let him read his Bible, hear sermons, honor father and mother, and come to the aid of a brother in distress. But let him not shut himself up in a nook . . . and there entertain himself with his devotions and thus suppose that he is sitting in God's bosom and has fellowship with God without Christ, without the Word, without the sacraments.¹²

Evangelical meditation draws one outside of himself into the promises of Christ (faith) and into the need of the neighbor (love): "Such meditation

¹¹ AE 6:329. Also, for more examples of how Luther cherishes the Holy Scriptures as God's word, see Mark D. Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand: The Relationship of Authority and Interpretative Method in Luther's Approach to Scripture* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004), 249–282; Robert Kolb, "Nowhere More Present and Active Than in the Holy Letters: Luther's Understanding of God's Presence in Scripture," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (May 2015): 4–16.

¹² AE 3:275.

does not just involve gazing at one's spiritual navel; it does not eavesdrop on the inner self."¹³ Luther, therefore, is dead set against any and all forms of enthusiasm¹⁴ that would rely on visions or miraculous appearances.

Christ once appeared visible here on earth and showed his glory, and according to the divine purpose of God finished the work of redemption and deliverance of mankind. I do not desire he should come to me once more in the same manner, neither would I should he send an angel unto me. Nay, though an angel should appear before mine eyes from heaven, yet it would not add to my belief; for I have of my Saviour Christ Jesus bond and seal; I have his Word, Spirit, and sacrament; thereon I depend, and desire no new revelations. And the more steadfastly to confirm me in this resolution, to hold solely to God's Word, and not to give credit to any visions or revelations, I shall relate the following circumstance: On Good Friday last, I being in my chamber in fervent prayer, contemplating with myself, how Christ my Saviour on the cross suffered and died for our sins, there suddenly appeared on the wall a bright vision of our Saviour Christ, with the five wounds, steadfastly looking upon me, as if had been Christ himself corporeally. At first sight, I thought it had been some celestial revelation, but I reflected that it must needs be an illusion and juggling of the devil, for Christ appeared to us in his Word, and in a meaner and more humble form; therefore I spake to the vision thus: Avoid thee, confounded devil: I know no other Christ than he who was crucified, and who in his Word is pictured and presented unto me. Whereupon the image vanished, clearly showing of whom it came.¹⁵

Visions are deceptive and deceiving; Holy Scripture is not.

Meditation is immersion into the text of Holy Scripture. It is the ongoing hearing of God's word that is read and preached so that the one who hears Christ is enlivened to trust his promises and equipped to respond to the needs of the neighbor in his calling in the world. Luther likened meditation to a cow chewing its cud. In his 1525 commentary on Deuteronomy

¹³ Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 35.

¹⁴ See Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 40. Here Bayer quotes a December 1520 Luther sermon on Genesis 28, "If they bore their way into heaven with their heads and look around they will find no one, because Christ lies in a crib and in a woman's lap. So let them fall back down again and break their necks." Bayer also writes, "Those who want to search for the Holy Spirit deep inside themselves, in a realm too deep for words to express, will find only ghosts, not God" (55).

¹⁵ Cited in Hugh T. Kerr, *A Compend of Luther's Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), 57.

14:1, he writes: "To chew the cud, however, is to take up the Word with delight and meditate with supreme diligence, so that (according to the proverb) one does not permit it to go into one ear and out the other, but holds it firmly in the heart, swallows it, and absorbs it into the intestines."¹⁶

Luther provides a practical tool for such meditation in his celebrated devotional booklet, "A Simple Way to Pray," written in 1535 for the Wittenberg barber, Peter Beskendorf. Here he suggests that a person meditate on each of commandment of the Decalogue "in their fourfold aspect, namely, as a school text, song book, penitential book, and prayer book."¹⁷ In Luther's way of meditation, one is encouraged to dwell on the text and to engage in various dimensions, including the didactic, doxological, diagnostic, and intercessory. Those who stand in front of the text are taught, brought to praise God, have their sins uncovered, and are given material for their praying.

While Luther prepared this tract for a layman, it certainly has application for the pastor whose life is given to the service of the text of Holy Scripture for the sake of proclamation and pastoral care. The Psalms, in Luther's estimation, were an especially fertile place for meditation for preachers. In his lectures on Psalm 1 (1519–1521), he states,

Therefore it is the office of a man whose proper duty it is to converse on something, to discourse on the Law of the Lord. . . . For this meditation consists first in close attention to the words of the Law, and then drawing together the various parts of Scripture. And this is a pleasant hunt, a game rather like the play of stags in the forest, where "the Lord arouses the stags, and uncovers the forests" (Ps. 29:2). For out of this will proceed a sermon to the people which is well informed in the Law of the Lord.¹⁸

The preacher is not meditating on the word simply for his own spiritual wellbeing but for those placed under his curacy in the church. He meditates on the word so that he may have something to say from the Lord to the people he is given to serve.

¹⁶ AE 9:136.

¹⁷ AE 43:209. Also note Brecht's observation: "Nowhere is the connection between order and freedom in Luther's practice of prayer so clearly seen as in his advice for Master Peter." Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church 1532–1546*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 14.

¹⁸ AE 14:296.

III. *Tentatio*

For Luther, meditation does not take place in a spiritual vacuum in isolation from the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. God uses *tentatio* (spiritual affliction, trial, and temptation) to drive away from the self and toward his promises alone. Bayer captures Luther's thought:

Anyone who meditates can expect to suffer. Luther once again also allows Psalm 119 to prescribe this experience. Therefore in light of this third rule, he expects students of theology also to see themselves in the role of the psalmist who "complains so often about all kinds of enemies . . . that he has to put up with because he meditates, that is, because he is occupied with God's word (as has been said) in all manner of ways."¹⁹

For Luther, meditation is anchored in the First Commandment. To use the words of Albrecht Peters, "God's First Commandment, however, confiscates this center of our entire human nature for itself. God, as our Creator, calls our heart out of clinging to what is created and demands it for itself in an exclusive and undivided way. Here the First Commandment and the Creed interlock."²⁰ It is only this confiscated heart, fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things that is free to pray in the fashion that God commands and promises to hear. Such prayer is not easy; it involves struggle, for "when we meditate on the first commandment we are involved in a battle between the one Lord and the many lords (cf. 1 Cor. 8:5f)."²¹ To meditate on the First Commandment and to pray from it is to let God be God, but for the flesh, the world, and the devil, such meditation is a declaration of war.

Tentatio is no stranger to those who serve in the pastoral office. Luther understands this *tentatio* as a spiritual affliction that drives faithful servants to rely on the sure and certain promises of Christ alone. Commenting on Genesis 32:32, Luther says, "our Lord Jesus Christ, tested Jacob not to destroy him but to confirm and strengthen him and that in his fight he

¹⁹ Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 60.

²⁰ Albrecht Peters, *Commentary on Luther's Catechisms: Ten Commandments*, trans. Holger Sonntag (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 118. Also see John Maxfield: "For Luther idolatry is the self-enslaving false worship of a heart turned in on itself, of religious piety shaped by self-will and thus works righteousness in any number of ways, of substituting human reason for the revelation of God in the divine Word." John Maxfield, "Luther and Idolatry," in *The Reformation as Christianization: Essays on Scott Hendrix's Christianization Thesis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 168.

²¹ Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 62.

might more correctly learn the might of the promise."²² God does his work under opposites: "When God works, He turns His face away at first and seems to be the devil, not God."²³

Temptation, which is entailed in the *tentatio*, is necessary for the Christian life in general but especially for preachers of the word. Luther says in a "Table Talk" of 1532,

I did not learn my theology all at once, but had to search constantly deeper and deeper for it. My temptations did that for me, for no one can understand Holy Scripture without practice and temptations. That is what the enthusiasts and sects lack. They don't have the right critic, the devil, who is the best teacher of theology. If we don't have that kind of devil, then we become nothing but speculative theologians, who do nothing but walk around in our own thoughts and speculate with our reason alone as to whether things should be like this, or like that.²⁴

The experience of temptation prepares and equips the pastor to serve as an "instructor of consciences" in the sense that he must have the capacity to distinguish the law from the gospel, directing the afflicted away from the erratic and errant movement of the conscience from excuse-making to accusation. A conscience ceases to rationalize sin or be terrorized by the law only when it comes to rest in the forgiveness of sins:

Therefore I admonish you, especially those of you who are to become instructors of consciences, as well as each of you individually, that you exercise yourselves continually by study, by reading, by meditation and by prayer, so that in temptation you will be able to instruct consciences, both your own and others, and take them from the law to grace, from active righteous to passive righteousness, in short from Moses to Christ. In affliction and in the conflict of conscience, it is the devil's habit to frighten us with the law and to set against us the consciousness of sin, our wicked past, the wrath and judgment of God, hell, and eternal death, so that he may drive us into despair, subject us to himself, and pluck us from Christ.²⁵

Like the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, who speaks of the comfort that we give to others in their afflictions as flowing from the comfort that we ourselves have received from Christ, Luther speaks out of the *tentatio*

²² AE 6:144. Here see Mary Jane Haemig, "Prayer as Talking Back to God," *Lutheran Quarterly* 23 (Autumn 2009): 270-295.

²³ AE 7:103.

²⁴ AE 54:50.

²⁵ AE 26:10.

that he himself had experienced. The judgment of Walther von Loewenich is on target: “The secret of Luther’s proficiency in pastoral care was that he himself had known what it was like to experience attacks of despair [*Anfechtung*].”²⁶ Only as one who himself was comforted by the gospel could Luther be a comforter to the afflicted and despairing.

IV. *Oratio, Meditatio, and Tentatio* in the Pastor’s Life

Luther’s triad of *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio* shapes the ongoing life of the pastor as he is forever dependent on the power of God’s promises. The crosses and afflictions of the pastoral life drive the pastor to meditate on the words of the Lord, and God’s word opens his lips for confession, prayer, praise, and proclamation, with the confidence that the divine word accomplishes God’s purposes and does not return to him empty.

Here we see that Luther’s triad is also reversible. The *tentatio* drives us to the *meditatio*, which in turn enables the *oratio*, the calling on the name of the Lord. Spiritual attack disables and deconstructs all of our own resources; we are left without anything but Christ and his absolving word. In that word the conscience takes refuge, delighting in it day and night, to use the language of Psalm 1, and finding in it a gift more precious than gold and silver and sweeter to the taste than honey, to use the imagery of Psalm 119:72, 103. It is this word that opens the lips for prayer and proclamation.

At this point, it might also be observed that the catechetical core—the Ten Commandments, Creed, and Lord’s Prayer—follows the contours of the *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio*. Robert Kolb has observed that the Decalogue sets the agenda for Christian praying, and the Lord’s Prayer for Christian living.²⁷ Along these lines we might also say that *oratio* encompasses the prayer that grows from God’s command and promise. *Meditatio* is a meditation on the works of the Triune God, and *tentatio* is that life lived under the cross, which is characterized by the Lord’s Prayer, where we pray the seven petitions that describe our wretchedness and promise God’s mercy. Luther’s theology of prayer is a reflection of the theology of the cross. James Nestingen writes:

²⁶ Walther von Loewenich, *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work*, trans. Lawrence Denef (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 359–360. See also Lennart Pinomaa, “The Problem of Affliction,” in *Faith Victorious: An Introduction to Luther’s Theology*, trans. Walter J. Kukkonen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 89–100; Mark D. Thompson, “Luther on Despair,” in *The Consolations of Theology*, ed. Brian S. Rosner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 51–74.

²⁷ Robert A. Kolb, *Teaching God’s Children His Teaching: A Guide for the Study of Luther’s Catechism* (Saint Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 2012), 103.

The Ten Commandments set out the requirements of the creaturely life, incumbent by creation; the Creed declares the gifts of the Triune God; the Lord's Prayer gives voice to the circumstances of the believer living in a world of the *nomos* (law) in the hope of the resurrection. . . . Luther's explanations of the Lord's Prayer arise from such an analysis of the situation of faith. Barraged by the relentless demands of the law, under assault by the powers of this age yet gripped in the hope of the gospel, the believer learns "where to seek and obtain that aid." So, while exposing the Lord's Prayer at its first level, as instruction in how to pray, Luther is at the same time describing the contention in which faith lives, giving language for the rhythm of death and resurrection that is the hallmark of life in Christ. At this level, the Lord's Prayer is a cry wrung from the crucible, an exposition of the shape of life lived under the sign of the cross in the hope of the resurrection.²⁸

Each petition of the Lord's Prayer is a diagnosis of our neediness and a promise of God's mercy.²⁹

What are the implications for the pastoral care of pastors? First, Luther did not understand this triad as individualistic or private. Broadly speaking, they take place within the context of life of the church. Bayer has pointed out the parallel between Luther's ordering of the seven marks of the church enumerated in Luther's treatise "On the Councils and the Church" and the *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* of the Wittenberg Preface, both of which were written in the same year. The *oratio* and *meditatio* are embraced in the first six marks: the holy word of God, Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, the office of the keys, the calling of ministers, and prayer/public praise/thanksgiving to God. The seventh external sign is "the possession of the sacred cross."³⁰ This sign is the *tentatio*. For Luther it means that Christian people

must endure every misfortune and persecution, all kinds of trials and evil from the devil, the world, and the flesh (as the Lord's Prayer indicates) by inward sadness, timidity, fear, outward poverty, contempt, illness, and weakness in order to become like their head, Christ. And the only reason they must suffer is that they steadfastly

²⁸ James Nestingen, "The Lord's Prayer in Luther's Catechism," *Word & World* 22, no. 1 (2002): 39–40.

²⁹ In his *Explanation of the Lord's Prayer for Simple Laymen* (1519), Luther described the Lord's Prayer as "seven reminders of our wretchedness and poverty by means of which man, led to a knowledge of self, can see what a miserable and perilous life he leads on earth" (AE 42:27).

³⁰ AE 41:164.

adhere to Christ and God's word, enduring this for the sake of Christ.³¹

More narrowly, we see the triad in the context of the ministerium.

While our spiritual fathers spoke more frequently than we commonly do of the "ministerium," it is a word in our collective vocabulary that we would do well to recover, especially when we think of the pastoral care of pastors. Years ago Ulrich Asendorf spoke of the pastoral office as a brotherly *Amt*. We are not isolated spiritual entrepreneurs, but we are brothers bound together under the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. And under their regency, we are accountable to one another. We are to have one another's backs, to use the slang. This is not a hermeneutic of mutual pastoral suspicion, nor is it a matter of mouthing the mantra "we've got to trust one another."³² It is a watching out for the brother, but not something that would make his fulfilling the responsibilities given to him unnecessarily difficult. It is also being there for him with the courage to call him to repentance and the compassion to console him with word of the cross. In this way, pastors are also comforting one another with the comfort that they have received from Christ, to paraphrase Paul's language in 2 Corinthians.³³

The *tentatio* is sure to come for the pastor, but he need not face it alone. God gives us brothers and fathers in the office, not simply as companions to dispel loneliness, but as men who will be for us the ears and mouth of Christ Jesus. Such mutual conversation of the brethren is not an occasion for a mutual pity-party, but it exists for the exercise of God's law and his gospel, so that we are called to repentance and faith even as we bear the cross in our various callings. Churchly implications of this are to be found in the practice of visitation, for which we have circuit visitors. The change in nomenclature is a welcome one. Counselors are called in when people are in crisis. Visitors look in to see how things are going not only in times of difficulty or in a period of transition but in the ongoing life of the pastor. Whether it is the circuit visitor or another brother in office, pastors also need a father confessor.

Second, *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* frame the pastor's life of prayer, study, and suffering. The pastor lives with Holy Scriptures as a child in a

³¹ AE 41:164-165.

³² In the New Testament, Christians are never directed to trust one another. We are instructed to love, forgive, edify, admonish, encourage, restore, and bear with one another but never to trust one another. Trust is reserved for God alone.

³³ See the excellent discussion of this comfort in Mark Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 22-30.

cradle, to borrow Luther's language.³⁴ It is here that we learn how to listen to God and to call upon him. It is being nestled in the Scriptures that we learn how to preach and to pray and to suffer. It is this study to which the Apostle beckons Timothy, when in 2 Timothy 2:15 he urges him to present himself as a workman who has no need to be ashamed, "rightly handling the word of truth." This is what Bayer calls "*askesis*" or the exercise of faith.³⁵ It is essential for the spiritual soundness of the pastor. Such study and prayer are not leisure-time activities, a retreat from the world of supposedly "real ministry," but instead they are essential for both the pastor and his hearers, and they cannot be divorced from the cross that is borne for the sake of the office.

Pastoral care of pastors will shepherd pastors to live within Luther's triad: *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* rather than seeking alternative ways, self-chosen and self-directed, of serving God's holy people.

³⁴ Cited by Bayer, "Theology as *Askesis*," 46.

³⁵ Bayer, "Theology as *Askesis*," 35.