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## *Table of Contents*

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<b>The Highest and Ultimate Gift of God: A Brief History of Concordia Publishing House in the German-Era LCMS</b> Charles P. Schaum .....	3
<b>Taking the Pulse of Theology in the Missouri Synod: A Look at Publications from Concordia Publishing House</b> John T. Pless .....	27
<b>Chemnitz, Gerhard, Walther, and Concordia Publishing House</b> Roland F. Ziegler .....	43
<b><i>Luther's Works</i>: A Monument for Centuries to Come</b> Lawrence R. Rast Jr. ....	51
<b>The Early Christian Appropriation of Old Testament Scripture: The Canonical Reading of Scripture in 1 Clement</b> James G. Bushur .....	63
<b>A Debatable Theology: Medieval Disputation, the Wittenberg Reformation, and Luther's Heidelberg Theses</b> Richard J. Serina Jr. ....	85
<b>"Exulting and adorning in exuberant strains:" Luther and Latin Polyphonic Music</b> Daniel Zager .....	97

<b>The Useful Applications of Scripture in Lutheran Orthodoxy: An Aid to Contemporary Preaching and Exegesis</b>	
Benjamin T. G. Mayes .....	111
<b>Pastoral Formation in the 21st Century: The Pedagogical Implications of Globalization</b>	
Lawrence R. Rast Jr. ....	137
<b>Theological Observer</b> .....	157
Books, Always Books: Reflections on the 150th Anniversary of Concordia Publishing House New Developments in the Trend toward Lutheran Classical Education in the LCMS	
<b>Book Reviews</b> .....	177
<b>Books Received</b> .....	191

#### **Editor's Note**

This year marks the 150th anniversary of Concordia Publishing House. Since her founding, she has supported the church in a number of ways, most especially through the publication of materials used to proclaim God's word. The Editors now take this opportunity to thank Concordia Publishing House for her work, in general, and for supporting the publication of this issue in particular. May the Lord grant Concordia Publishing House increased blessing in service to him.

The Editors

## **Chemnitz, Gerhard, Walther, and Concordia Publishing House**

**Roland F. Ziegler**

Hermann Sasse wrote in 1954, “It is always a sign of 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 have made as fallible men. But it must not forget them. But that is precisely what appears to be happening in our century in broad sections of the Lutheran Church.”<sup>1</sup> The reason for the forgetfulness Sasse identified is partly sociological: Western societies especially change fast, so that the felt distance from the past not only becomes greater and greater but such change also creates the impression that the past is useless for the tasks and challenges of the present. At best, the past is a museum piece, preferably set in our scene as a spectacle.

Sasse, though, calls forgetting the fathers of the church “a sign of deep spiritual sickness,” not simply a consequence of rapid societal and technological change. Sasse is primarily talking in this essay about the Lutheran fathers of the nineteenth century, the fathers of the independent confessional Lutheran churches in Germany and the confessional Lutheran churches in North America and Australia. Those fathers fought for the Lutheran confessions and a Lutheran Church that accepts the teachings of the Book of Concord as scriptural and thus rejects any communion in holy things (*communicatio in sacris*). When a church forgets them, even reviles them, it also undergoes a change in teaching and theological orientation.

It can be a nice touch to commemorate the fathers of the church in liturgical calendars, but far more important is to read them. For these fathers were teachers and preachers, and as such they are to be remembered and appreciated. Concordia Publishing House has done a service not only to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in publishing works of Martin Chemnitz, Johann Gerhard, and C. F. W. Walther, but to the Lutheran church worldwide. With English being *de facto* the lingua franca, these translated works—originally written in the old lingua franca, Latin (which is now accessible only to specialists) or in German (the language of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for roughly the first ninety years of its

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Sasse, *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters, vol. 2, 1941–1976* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 229.

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existence)—enable Missourians to reconnect with C. F. W. Walther, their most important father of the nineteenth century; Martin Chemnitz, one of the foremost theologians of the generation after Luther; and Johann Gerhard and his massive dogmatics.

### Chemnitz

Not all works in this series are new translations and editions. The works of Chemnitz, for the most part, are republications of earlier translations. Volumes 1–4 contain Fred Kramer’s translation of the *Examination of the Council of Trent*, first published by CPH in 1971–1986;<sup>2</sup> volume 5 contains Luther Poellot’s, J. A. O. Preus’, and Georg Williams’ translations (respectively) of *An Enchiridion* (1981), *The Lord’s Supper* (1979), and *The Lord’s Prayer* (1999);<sup>3</sup> volume 6 contains *The Two Natures in Christ*, translated by J. A. O. Preus and first published in 1971;<sup>4</sup> and volumes 7 and 8 contain the *Loci*, also translated by J.A.O. Preus and first published in 1989.<sup>5</sup> These volumes are thus simply a repackaging of previous publications, not revised editions. That is a pity, especially in the translation of the *Examination of the Council of Trent*, in which annotations are sparse and there was no attempt in modern editions to identify the numerous patristic and scholastic references quoted by Chemnitz. In this day and age, perhaps such an enterprise could be done collaboratively as a wiki project on the Internet by volunteers.

Chemnitz’s *Examination of the Council of Trent* is to this day the most extensive Lutheran engagement with the Council of Trent. And although the Roman Catholic Church of today is not quite the same church as in 1563, Chemnitz’s discussion is still helpful today in seeing the Lutheran difference over against Rome. When one starts reading the *Examination of the Council of Trent*, one has to get used to the style of the theological writing of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Shortness and conciseness are not necessarily virtues. Writers quote extensively from opponents and supporting authors, and an aim for exhaustive completeness may leave the modern reader somewhat exhausted. On the other hand, the modern reader is not challenged by enigmatic brevity or wooly generalities. A modern reader

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, trans. Fred Kramer, vols. 1–4 of *Chemnitz’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion/The Lord’s Supper/The Lord’s Prayer*, trans. Luther Poellot, J. A. O. Preus, and Georg Williams, vol. 5 of *Chemnitz’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J. A. O. Preus, vol. 6 of *Chemnitz’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. J. A. O. Preus, vols. 7–8 of *Chemnitz’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008).

who delves into the *Examination of the Council of Trent* would be well advised to read parallel the pertaining section of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which presents (relatively) concisely the contemporary position of the Roman Catholic Church, so that the reader is aware of changes and modifications in modern Roman Catholicism.

More accessible for the modern reader is *An Enchiridion*, a summary of doctrine for the examination of pastors in the form of questions and answers. One should not make the mistake of thinking that *The Lord's Supper* is an exhaustive study of the Lord's Supper since, among other things, it does not fully engage Reformed objections to the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament. This is, nevertheless, a timely book, especially for our age, in which a symbolic understanding of the Lord's Supper has overwhelmed many churches calling themselves Lutheran and where it would be a ridiculous euphemism to call some theologians *Crypto-Calvinists*. The exposition of the Lord's Prayer gives us another side of Chemnitz, not as the dogmatician and polemicist but as the preacher and catechist, and is a good place to start reading Chemnitz.

The *Loci*, which came from lectures that Superintendent Chemnitz gave to pastors in Braunschweig on Melancthon's *Loci*—a permanent continuing education program, so to speak—can serve this purpose still today. *The Two Natures in Christ* is a densely argued defense of the communication of attributes against the Reformed. For many today, this doctrine is only a historical item without present relevance. Maybe Chemnitz can be a help in rediscovering its relevance inside and outside the Lutheran church.

Newly translated is the 1569 *Church Order for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel*, coauthored with Jacob Andreae,<sup>6</sup> and the *Apology of the Book of Concord*, coauthored with Timotheus Kirchner and Nicolaus Selnecker.<sup>7</sup> The *Church Order* gives a fascinating picture of how churches and schools were organized in the sixteenth century. As all church orders, they were promulgated by the civil authorities and were part of the civil law of the land. It gives insights in how the Lutheran church existed in a state church system and sheds light on the challenges for the fathers of the Lutheran churches in North America when they had to organize churches without the help of princes and magistrates.

The *Apology of the Book of Concord* is an answer to Reformed attacks on the Book of Concord. It gives mainly an extended defense of the doctrine of the *genus*

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Chemnitz and Jacob Andreae, *Church Order for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel*, trans. Jacob Corzine, Matthew C. Harrison, and Andrew Smith, ed. Jacob Corzine and Matthew Carver, vol. 9 of *Chemnitz's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Martin Chemnitz, Timothy Kirchner, and Nicolaus Selnecker, *Apology or Vindication of the Christian Book of Concord*, trans. James L. Langebartels, ed. Kevin G. Walker, vol. 10 of *Chemnitz's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018).

*maiestaticum* and of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The *Apology of the Book of Concord* can serve as an in-depth resource for the study of the Formula of Concord. Circuits that have a Confessions study could make use of the *Apology* in their study of FC VII and VIII.

### **Gerhard**

The translation of Johann Gerhard's *Dogmatics* is a monumental enterprise. The longest Lutheran dogmatics ever written, on scale in the Protestant realm only comparable to Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, it will be the first full translation in any language ever. It is superbly edited and annotated. Its sheer size is intimidating, though. Who is going to read all that? Just as "every journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step," so also the reading of Gerhard begins with reading a chapter a time. Like any dogmatics, Gerhard is contextual. He uses the methodology of his time, and the reader soon learns to expect that subjects are analyzed by the scheme of the four causes: effective, formal, material, and final, with instrumental as sub-cause thrown into it.

Gerhard is in constant conversation with Reformed and Roman theologians; the Socinians, anti-Trinitarians of the time, are also engaged. Numerous quotations from church fathers are included. All this gives the reader a wealth of material; Gerhard's *Loci* are a library by themselves. But is there a practical value beyond the historical interest? There are two questions: what is the practical value of studying dogmatics, and how does Gerhard's *Dogmatics* fulfill this task? Dogmatics explicates the content of the Christian faith as it is given in the Holy Scriptures in the context and controversies of one's time. It is, in a way, "higher catechesis."

Since every pastor has to teach the Christian faith, in so doing, he does dogmatics. Admittedly, a dogmatics textbook does so on a level and in a detail that is beyond most teaching in the congregation. But as any teacher knows, the teacher has to know more and to think through things before he teaches. Dogmatics is practical because its task is to articulate the truth of what Christianity teaches, and this is a basic task of the church. Gerhard's *Loci*, with their detail and thorough engagement with Scripture, are still a helpful exposition of the Christian faith. Their polemical parts, even if not all of Gerhard's questions are still living questions, shed further light on the truth of the Christian faith. In that sense, Gerhard's work is a classic dogmatics. That is, it is worthwhile to engage beyond its immediate context, because it continues to be stimulating and helpful. Of course, there are issues that contemporary dogmatics have to tackle that are not on Gerhard's horizon. Modern science is just in its infancy, and the questions that science and scientism pose to Christianity are not dealt with in, for example, Gerhard's teaching on creation, nor is historical criticism and the issue it raises in connection with the doctrine

of Scripture. Many years ago, William Weinrich in “‘It is not Given to Women to Teach’: A *Lex* in Search of a *Ratio*” criticized Gerhard’s argumentation against women’s ordination as “very likely founded upon his own historical context, and—let us say it forthrightly—an androcentric viewpoint. Obviously, such arguments bears no persuasive power today.”<sup>8</sup> The list could be continued. The dogmatic enterprise continues. Hopefully, Gerhard in translation will now be an interlocutor in that dogmatic enterprise and a help for pastors in their teaching of the faith. Maybe a good way to start is with Gerhard’s volume on the law, which contains an extended exposition of the Ten Commandments, and the volume on the gospel.

In his volume *On the Law*, Gerhard argues for the distinction between moral law and political and ceremonial law. He then gives a detailed exposition of the Ten Commandments. Some of the applications are not our questions, as when he discusses in his chapter on the Fourth Commandment whether an illegitimate child must honor his/her father and mother. The question in what way the Third Commandment is part of the moral law shows a change in Lutheranism and foreshadows some of the issues that resurfaced in the nineteenth century in American Lutheranism. In the volume *On the Gospel and Repentance*, Gerhard first discusses what the gospel is in distinction from the law, concluding with this definition: “The Gospel is the second part of the heavenly teaching about man’s salvation and the more noble part. It is contradistinct from the Law and is unknown to mankind by nature. Rather, it comes to us from the secret bosom of the heavenly Father through His Son and has been proclaimed in the church at all times of the world. In it all the free forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life are offered and presented to those who truly believe in Christ the Mediator, to the salvation of mankind and to the glory of God.”<sup>9</sup> The second part of the volume is dedicated to repentance—the working of law and gospel in the individual. Maybe a thorough study of these two volumes could provide helpful clarification in the present debates on law and gospel.

### Walther

The recent edition of Walther’s works consists of volumes that have been newly translated and volumes that have been previously translated and are repackaged. Among the new translations are Walther’s evening lectures on law and gospel in a

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<sup>8</sup> William Weinrich, “‘It is not Given to Women to Teach’: A *Lex* in Search of a *Ratio*” (Fort Wayne, Ind.: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1993), 33. See also Johann Gerhard, *On the Ministry: Part 1*, trans. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 271.

<sup>9</sup> Johann Gerhard, *On the Gospel and On Repentance*, trans. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T.G. Mayes and Heath R. Curtis (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 140.

modernized translation<sup>10</sup> and *Church and Office*, formerly translated as *Church and Ministry*.<sup>11</sup> Both books have been extensively used in the Missouri Synod.

Walther's evening lectures on Law and Gospel have been retranslated, among other reasons, to do justice to the more conversational style which in W. H. T. Dau's translation becomes "a flowing, literary British style."<sup>12</sup> The new translation might thus enable the reader to freshly encounter this classic. It is not, however, without its shortcomings. On pages 184 and 204, there are annotations that state that Walther "specifically means a male member of the laity" and "specifically refers to a man" when the word "Laie" is translated. This annotation is somewhat misleading. In the nineteenth century, one could still use the masculine in the general sense, and when one looks up "Laie" in Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, one finds the word used for male and female persons. Secondly, it is not Walther's intention to say that female Christians cannot absolve, as he states in Thesis IX:

Now that forgiveness of sin has been acquired as stated, not only does a pastor have a special commission to proclaim it, but also every Christian—male, female, adult or child—is commissioned to do this. Even a child's Absolution is just as certain as the Absolution of St. Peter—yes, even as the Absolution of Christ would be, were He again to stand visibly before people and say, "Your sins are forgiven."<sup>13</sup>

*Church and Office* has the distinction of being adopted as official position of the LCMS twice. The latter should be reason enough for every pastor to be familiar with it. Walther's *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology* was available as a shortened translation and has been now fully translated and well edited.<sup>14</sup> Here we see how Walther appropriates the resources of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century German Lutheranism for the Lutheran church in nineteenth century North America. After an introduction, Walther deals with the call and entry into the ministry, then with the pastor and the means of grace: the sermon, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Marriage and divorce and confirmation follow, then pastoral care, church discipline, the administration of a congregation, and the life of the preacher. Much of the material is still pertinent, but there are also issues where the cultural changes had an impact on pastoral care, as in regard to announcement for communion, a practice

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<sup>10</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *Law & Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *Church & Office*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Walther, *Law & Gospel*, xii.

<sup>13</sup> Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 187.

<sup>14</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, trans. Christian C. Tiews, ed. David W. Loy (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).



that has all but disappeared, or the view of engagement, which for Walther is tantamount to marriage.

In *Church Fellowship* (2015),<sup>15</sup> Walther's essays on confessional subscription, the role of the Confessions for fellowship among Lutherans, and "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1879," given at the first convention of the Iowa District in 1879 and running to a hundred pages, are collected. The essays are a side piece to *Church and Office*, spelling out the ecclesiology of Walther. They reward the reader with a careful exposition of the nature of confessional subscription and impress upon him the importance of doctrinal unity in a church body and for fellowship between church bodies.

*All Glory to God* (2016) is a collection of convention essays from 1873 till 1886 under the topic "The doctrine of the Lutheran church alone gives all glory to God, an irrefutable proof that its doctrine alone is true."<sup>16</sup> These essays are presented to pastors and laypeople and are therefore not overly technical, though theologically quite meaty. As the introduction to the volume states, Walther never wrote a textbook on dogmatics, but these essays are somewhat a substitute for it in what they cover. After treating the word of God, they essentially show the soteriological concentration of Walther's theology: they treat the origin of sin, death, hell and damnation, divine providence, the universal grace of God, reconciliation and redemption, justification, regeneration and sanctification, the means of grace, conversion, and predestination. The last two essays on prayer and earthly authorities are concerned with the Christian life.

Predestination take up almost two hundred pages in *All Glory to God*, but Concordia Publishing House gives us a separate volume containing Walther's writings connected with the predestinarian controversy in *Predestination* (2018).<sup>17</sup> Some of the theological controversies of the nineteenth century are still alive, like church and ministry, church fellowship, the nature of confessional subscription, and the doctrine of Scripture. But, for whatever reason, predestination or election is not one of them. Included in this volume of Walther's works are the minutes of the two general pastoral conferences of the Missouri Synod in 1880 in Chicago and in 1881 in Fort Wayne, the only occasion when all the pastors of the LCMS were invited since the issue was deemed so important and threatening to the unity of the LCMS. These minutes show the struggle for a correct understanding of FC SD XI. What was at stake was the pure gratuitousness of salvation, even if the Lutheran doctrine of election leads to a logically not quite satisfactory statement: the elect are saved by God alone, but the damned are damned because of what they did. Election is

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<sup>15</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *Church Fellowship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *All Glory to God* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 1.

<sup>17</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *Predestination* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018).

particular and the effective cause of salvation, but there is no corresponding reprobation that is the effective cause of damnation. Included in the volume are “The Controversy Concerning Predestination” and “The Doctrine Concerning Election,” directed to a wider audience to explain to laypeople what is at stake. A sermon on predestination on Eph 1:3–6 concludes the volume. Here Walther gives an example regarding how the doctrine is to be preached and to be used by Christians as comfort, admonishment, and warning.

Walther is renowned as a church leader, teacher, and polemicist. But he was also a pastor and preacher. The edition of his sermons on the gospel (*Gospel Sermons*, 2 vols., 2013) show this part of his work and give an example of the homiletical application of his orthodoxy—how he taught, comforted, and admonished his congregation. These sermons can still be read devotionally, and hopefully they still can be a help for a pastor who reads them in his sermon preparation.

Though there is more material in these republished and newly translated works than most people have time to read, the hope is that many will read *some* of it and that doing so will benefit them in their ministry. Learning from the Lutheran fathers does not mean simply repristinating them—which is not a possible option anyway—but to interact with them and learn from their insights (and from their mistakes!) as we address the theological tasks and challenges of the present. In so doing, we honor our fathers’ memories with a mind for the present work to which our Lord has called us.