

# THEOLOGICAL AXIOMS

## PART III

### Assembled by C. F. W. Walther

*Translated from the German  
by Christopher S. Doerr*

#### **Preface**

**A**s part of our Walther Bicentennial observation we are publishing what we believe to be the first English translation of Walther's *Theological Axioms*. The first two installments appeared in the Winter and Spring 2011 issues.

The axioms are best taken in small doses. Readers might want to read and ponder only one section of axioms at a sitting. Each saying is thought-provoking. The student must chew on them and digest them. Each statement presents only one side of a complex question. Statements are often supplemented by their neighbors.

The axioms are intended to lead readers into Scripture. They do not have independent validity. They flow from a study of Scripture. A correct understanding of the axioms depends on a knowledge of Scripture, not vice versa.

The axioms may form a basis for theological reflection and for discussion by pastors' study groups. As Walther concludes, "We leave it up to the readers themselves to weigh their rich and important meanings in their minds." (And, we would add, also their limitations.)

#### **XVIII. About the Holy Sacraments**

1. The means of salvation are either those that give it or those that receive it: the former are the word and the sacraments, the latter is faith. (Kromayer)
2. The means by which God gives grace are the heard word and the visible word. (Calov)
3. The sacrament is the visible word. (Augustine)
4. Take away the word and what is the water besides water? (Augustine)
5. Just as the word goes into the ears, so the outward signs are placed before the eyes, in order to stimulate the heart and move it to faith. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession)

6. The outward sign is like a painting that has the same meaning as the word that is preached and so they both accomplish the same thing. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession)
7. The outward sign is like a seal and confirmation of the word and promise. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession)
8. Through the two, through the word and the outward signs, the Holy Spirit works. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession)
9. The sacraments belong not to the law but to the gospel. (R. Teller)
10. The sacraments are, as it were, an epitome of the gospel. (Gerhard)
11. If you were a bodiless essence, then God would have given you his bodiless gifts without anything bodily; but since your soul is bound together with a body, that which is spiritual is given to you in things you can sense. (Chrysostom)
12. We should and must adhere to this, that God does not want to deal with us human beings except through his outward word and sacrament: but everything that is boasted of as being from the Spirit apart from that word and sacrament is of the devil. (Smalcald Articles)
13. You must not confuse what the word and sacraments do, insofar as they produce, nourish, and awaken faith, and what the word and sacraments do, insofar as they are the secondary instrumental cause of justification. For while in that former activity the word and sacraments have the nature of tools that God uses to produce the powers needed for faith, as well as to awaken the spiritual movements of faith; so in the latter activity, namely in justification, they are only such tools as God uses to give, share, and seal the good thing that justifies (which is Christ's obedience). (Carpzov)
14. According to every confession, baptism and the holy supper are sacraments in the true and proper sense, from which you can conclude what are the proper requirements for something to be a sacrament in the true and proper sense. (Chemnitz)
15. What is common to both Testaments is not properly a sacrament of the New Testament. (Quenstedt)
16. God has instituted only two sacraments, one of adoption and one of strengthening. (Augustine)
17. A person gets birth and clothing in baptism, nourishment and medicine in the holy supper. What more could he ask for than that? (Danhauer)
18. The sacraments of the Old and New Testaments are the same as each other with regard to what makes them efficacious and their aim, but are different with regard to their elements and what is essential to them. (Kromayer)

19. All the histories in the Old Testament show that the good and merciful God in his superabundant grace always gave, along with the word, also an outward, visible sign of his grace and set it up so that through such an outward sign and work, as through a sacrament, the people would remember that their God intended to be kind and gracious and so their faith could be all the more certain. (Luther)
20. Although there were in the Old Testament only two proper and enduring sacraments, according to the strict and specific meaning of the word,<sup>1</sup> there were nevertheless more temporary sacraments in the Old Testament, visible signs and testimonies to the invisible God, given for the purpose of strengthening faith. (Gerhard)
21. A sacrament is a ceremony or outward sign or work, through which God gives to us according to the divine promise to which that ceremony is attached: on the other hand, a sacrifice or offering is a ceremony or work that we give to God in which we honor him. (Apology A. C.)
22. When the word is added to the element, then it is a sacrament. (Augustine)
23. In their administration of the sacraments, the servants of the church are distributors of someone else's kindness. (Gerhard)
24. God does everything: the priest only lends his tongue and hand. (Chrysostom)
25. What harm does the bad servant do you if the master is good? (Augustine)
26. Nothing has the nature of a sacrament when it is not used in the way God instituted. (Melanchthon)
27. The administration of the sacrament consists in it being both given and received. (Gerhard)
28. Faith does not make it into a sacrament, but makes it salutary. (Kromayer)
29. The sacraments are powerful without faith, but not salutary without faith. (Carpzov)
30. We condemn the whole hoard of scholastics who teach that the sacraments distribute grace to those who do not bolt the door against it, simply because they go through the motions, even though they use the sacrament without good feelings, that is, without faith. (Apology A. C.)

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<sup>1</sup>He is probably referring to circumcision and the Passover, but in some respects all the sacrifices were sacraments. Other lesser signs were the washings, etc.

31. If the sacrament gives me grace just because I receive it, then truly I have found grace by my works and not by faith. (Luther)
32. In the use of the sacrament, it is faith, not the sacrament, that makes us pious before God. (Apology A. C.)
33. In general, nothing that belongs to the word of the gospel is to be denied the sacraments, since the sacraments are the visible word. (Gerhard)
34. Faith is just as much a result of the sacraments as it is the instrument by which they are received. (Quenstedt)
35. A single thing has various aims. (Apology A. C.)
36. The sacraments are identifiers of one's confession. (Wittenberg)
37. You must not pass off subordinate aims as the primary aim, nor set them in opposition to it. (Gerhard)
38. God has bound human beings, not himself, to the arrangement. (Kromayer)
39. That which has been instituted to provide grace is binding for the one who wants to be saved, not for the one who saves. (Scherzer)
40. Not the absence of the sacraments, but the despising of them, is what damns. (Bernhard)

### **XIX. About Holy Baptism**

1. What God appoints and commands must not be something useless, but something sheerly exquisite, even if to all appearances it were more trifling than a stalk of straw. (Luther's Large Catechism)
2. Baptism is nothing other than God's word in water, appointed and ordered by him. (Smalcald Articles)
3. All water has already been consecrated by Christ at the Jordan. (Augustine)
4. You do well to distinguish between the administration of baptism and the mode of administration: the administration is necessary, the mode of administration is arbitrary. (Gerhard)
5. In the administration of baptism do not look at who does it but at what he does. (Kromayer)
6. Being baptized in God's name means you are baptized not by men but by God himself. (Luther's Large Catechism)
7. There is a distinction between an act being correct and an act being valid.<sup>2</sup> (Dannhauer)

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<sup>2</sup>All that is essential to the validity, that is, to the reality and power of baptism is that it be a Trinitarian baptism with water and with the words Christ commanded. It

8. Fewer things are necessary for a baptism to be valid than for it to be performed in a proper manner. (Dannhauer)
9. There is much that is relevant to the administration of baptism that can be missing when it is administered without making it invalid. (L. Hartmann)
10. Heretics who retain what is essential to baptism have legitimate baptisms, but in an illegitimate way. (Kromayer)
11. When a thing has been received unjustly, any benefit from it belong to the rightful owner not to the illegitimate possessor. (Dannhauer)
12. Do not flatter yourselves because we do not consider your baptism invalid. It is not yours: it belongs to the whole church. (Augustine)
13. Rebaptizing someone heretical is by all means a sin: rebaptizing someone orthodox is the most frightful transgression. (Augustine)
14. It is not a transgression to repeat someone's baptism when he does not know whether he has been baptized. (Leo the Great)
15. It is better that your baptism be repeated than that you remain in doubt over whether or not you already received baptism. (Kromayer)
16. The church ordinances do not rule over the sacraments, but serve them. (Quenstedt)
17. The church ordinances have been established because of the sacraments, not the sacraments because of the church ordinances, which can therefore give way if need be. (Gerhard)
18. The necessity for the sacrament of adoption is greater than for the sacrament of strengthening. (Dannhauer)
19. The most extreme case of necessity is when a man either would die without baptism or his baptism has to be administered by a man who is not in the public ministry. (Gerhard)
20. Baptism is not our work, but God's. (Luther's Large Catechism)
21. You cannot derive any incontrovertible proof by using words that have not been taken from scripture. (Conrad Dietrich)
22. We do not agree with those who say that God has put spiritual power into the water so that it is through the water that sin is washed away. (Smalcald Articles)
23. We do not agree with those who teach that baptism washes away sin because the will of God stands by it, meaning that this wash-

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would not be proper to ask a false teacher to baptize a child but it would not make the baptism invalid. Sneaking in and baptizing children without their parents' consent would not be proper but it would not make the baptism invalid. A frivolous attitude by the pastor would not make the baptism invalid, but it would be a sin on his part.

- ing away only happens through God's will and not at all through the word or water. (Smalcald Articles)
24. Baptism is efficacious as an instrument. (Dannhauer)
  25. Where does the water get such great power from that it touches the body and washes clean the heart, except from the word which does it all?—And not just because it is uttered, but because it is believed. (Augustine)
  26. Not baptism, but faith in baptism saves. (Aegidius Hunnius)
  27. Sin is forgiven in baptism, not so that it isn't there anymore, but so that it is not charged to your account. (Augustine)
  28. In the water of baptism faith is either given or nourished, since to him who does not have it it is given and on him who already has it it is bestowed in fuller measure. (Jerome)
  29. Although many are actually reborn through the word before being baptized, baptism is none the less actually and properly the washing of rebirth; just as many hear the word who were already reborn previously [in baptism], however, the word is and remains none the less that spiritual and enduring seed through which we were reborn.<sup>3</sup> (Gerhard)
  30. For adults (who believe) baptism indeed is not what first imparts rebirth to them, but it increases and seals that rebirth in them in an efficacious way. (Quenstedt)
  31. My faith isn't what makes baptism, but what receives baptism. (Luther's Large Catechism)
  32. Misuse does not take away the essence of a thing, but confirms it. (Luther's Large Catechism)
  33. If baptism were not correct in itself, you could not misuse it. (Luther's Large Catechism)
  34. Although not all adults are reborn through baptism, namely those who strive against the working of the Holy Spirit and hinder it through their hypocrisy, the baptism does not cease to be in and of itself a means of rebirth: you could clearly use the word as an example of the same. (Gerhard)
  35. If hypocrites were converted through the preaching of the word, then they would begin to possess the goods which were once stored away for them at their baptism, as it were: goods which, before they repented, they had neither possession nor use of. (Aegidius Hunnius)

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<sup>3</sup>It makes no difference whether faith comes first through the word or first through baptism.

36. Sin and the old Adam are killed in baptism in such a way that they no longer rule over you. (Gerhard)
37. We can be bathed quickly, but a return to health requires a lengthy cure. (Bernard)
38. Scripture speaks of the (saving) efficacy of baptism in the past, present, and future tenses. (Gerhard)
39. Many impiously jump out of the ark of baptism into the sea of destruction, but the ship itself remains undamaged, and if by God's grace they turn back to the ship, they don't have to find their own plank on which to float to the seaport of salvation, but they have the old unshattered ship itself, out of which they fell. (Chemnitz)
40. Baptism can be repeated, not by the act of receiving a new baptism, but by faith, by grabbing hold of the old baptism again. (Kromayer)
41. Whoever has not been born cannot be reborn. (Quenstedt)
42. Those whom Christ wants to have brought to him may not be withheld from baptism. (Gerhard)
43. Those to whom the promise of the covenant belongs must also through baptism be accepted into the covenant of God. (Gerhard)
44. As the word does not benefit when it is not combined with faith, yet nonetheless it is and remains valuable as the means of salvation whereby faith is enkindled in the heart of man; so also baptism does not benefit without faith, yet nonetheless it is valuable as the means of salvation by which the Holy Spirit intends to enkindle, increase, and strengthen faith in those who do not strive against his working. (Gerhard)
45. Baptism is responsible for doing two things for children:<sup>4</sup> first, through it, as through an instrument, faith is enkindled, and second, through baptism that same faith is confirmed and guaranteed, as with an official seal. (Gerhard)
46. Baptism is necessary not only by virtue of the necessity of what has been commanded, but also as a necessary means; however, this is by virtue of a necessity established by God's order, not an unconditional necessity. (Dannhauer)
47. No one unbaptized will enter the kingdom of heaven—By “no one unbaptized”, I refer to one who has deprived himself of baptism, not to one to whom baptism has been denied. (Dannhauer)
48. Not the lack of the sacrament, but unbelief in the sacrament, damns. (Dannhauer)

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<sup>4</sup>WFW: The office (*Das Amt*) of baptism toward children is twofold.

49. Willing is given credit for doing, where the doing has been precluded by necessity. (Bernard)
50. The sponsors lend the children their mouth, not their heart. (Kromayer)
51. It is Christ who gave us this distinction in the word, between that which was to come, that which came, and that which is here: the same sort of difference is also between circumcision, John's baptism, and Christ's baptism. (Gerhard)
52. Christ was baptized, not to be made holy by the water, but to make the water itself holy. (Ambrose)
53. The indelible mark (which the sacrament is supposed to imprint on its recipient) is indelible because it was never written. (Gerhard)

### **XX. About the Holy Supper**

1. The words of institution are the basis of proof [for the real presence]: the doctrine of the personal union of both natures in Christ and of the seating of the human nature at God's right hand the basis of refuting opposition. The former expresses that it is God's will, the latter that it is possible: the former shows that the body and blood *are* present, the latter that they *can be* present. (Gerhard)
2. God has and knows many different ways to be someplace and not just the one conjured up by those who base their faith on their feelings, the one the philosophers call *localem* or spatial. (Luther)
3. Christ's one body has three different ways, that is, all three ways, to be somewhere: first, comprehensibly or bodily; second, incomprehensibly or spiritually; and third, divinely or in a heavenly way. (Luther)
4. If those who base their faith on their feelings could present from any language on earth an instance where "is" means the same as "signifies," then they shall have won. (Luther)
5. Second, it is also not true that such a figure of speech as Oecolampadius has suggested (that "body" means "symbol of the body") is used in a single speech or language in the entire world, and whoever brings me a settled example that it is, I will let that person have my head. (Luther)
6. (Those who think they see a figure of speech in the words of institution) are short of great minds, so that when it comes to the rhetoric and grammar that you teach in elementary schools, or, as they call it, figures of speech, they don't look at it right. (Luther)
7. The choice of words, "this is my body," follows the rules of presenting something to somebody: the subject indicates the whole thing



- together, the predicate only mentions what is more important and less perceptible to the senses. (Gerhard)
8. The demonstrative pronoun “this” (in “this is my body”) refers not only to the bread, but to the whole thing together. (Gerhard)
  8. These are different statements: “This is my body,” and, “The bread is my body.” The first is used in scripture, the other does not occur in scripture: the first is Christ’s choice of words, the other that of church teachers. (Gerhard)
  10. The outward symbols in the Old Testament sacraments were only the kind that pointed to heavenly things, but in the New Testament sacraments the outward symbols are the kind that impart and have about them heavenly things. (Gerhard)<sup>5</sup>
  11. The earthly bread, when it receives God’s invocation, is no longer ordinary bread, rather it is an object of thanksgiving made up of two things, one earthly and one heavenly. (Irenaeus, *adv. haer.* IV, 18:5)
  12. The words “which is given for you” show not the nature but the reality of Christ’s body. (Hoepfner)
  13. The body of Christ is given in the holy supper, not just insofar as it is resurrected, living, and glorious. *Or* The body of Christ is given in the holy supper, not just insofar as it is resurrected, but as living and glorious. (Hoepfner)
  14. When we say that the body of Christ is present in the supper essentially or materially, we are expressing the object or the reality of its presence, not the manner in which it is present, about which we say that it is supernatural, mysterious, spiritual, and inscrutable. (Hoepfner)
  15. We sometimes say, “Christ’s body is *in* the bread,” with this simple idea in mind: our faith wants to confess that Christ’s body is present. (Luther)
  16. You must not mix together the union of natures, the union of persons, and the sacramental union. (Gerhard)
  17. In the holy supper everything that belongs to Christ is present, but only his flesh and blood are present sacramentally. (Dannhauer)
  18. Not Christ’s soul or divinity, but only his body, is distributed with the bread; although, neither the natural union of body and

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<sup>5</sup>Since the dogmaticians teach elsewhere that the Old Testament sacraments were real means of grace, this statement must refer not to the blessings of the sacrament, which are the same in both testaments, but to the elements present. There was no real presence of Christ in the Old Testament sacrifices as there is in the Lord’s Supper.

- soul nor the personal union of the Godhead with Christ's body ceases. (Hoepfner)
19. When Christ instituted the holy supper, he was definitely still in the *state* of humiliation, but he was not making use of that state. (Quenstedt)
  20. (At the institution) Christ sat spatially at the table with the disciples, but was sacramentally present in the supper's bread and wine. (Hoepfner)
  21. Each individual communicant receives the entire body of Christ, not just a part of it, and drinks all the blood of Christ, not just a drop of it. (Hoepfner)<sup>6</sup>
  22. The earthly object and the heavenly object are both received through one and the same instrument [the mouth], but not in one and the same manner. (Quenstedt)
  23. Only Christ's body and blood are received sacramentally with the mouth of your body: the whole Christ is received spiritually with the mouth of your faith. (Quenstedt)
  24. The receiving instrument is natural and bodily, but the way of receiving is neither natural nor bodily: therefore, sacramental eating is called oral in view of the instrument. (Gerhard)
  25. Christ's body is distributed with the bread and his blood with the wine, not because it is believed, but so that it may be believed. (Quenstedt)
  26. You should not ascribe (magic) power to reciting the words of institution, as if you make Christ's body and blood present through a power mysteriously inherent in those words. (Gerhard)
  27. Just as the statement, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth," was spoken only once, but has been powerful in nature for all time so that it is fruitful and increases in number; so also the statement, "This is my body, this is my blood," was spoken once, but still to this day and into the future it is powerful and effects the presence of his true body and blood in the church's supper. (Chrysostom, cited in the Formula of Concord)
  28. Christ did not (first) say, "This is my body, eat," but rather, "Eat, this is my body." (Hoepfner)
  29. Christ gives through his speaking and speaks through his giving. (Luther)

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<sup>6</sup>The point seems to be that Christ's body and blood are not divided up into little pieces like raisins in raisin bread. Scripture does not really address this issue.

30. The sacramental union happens only in the distribution.<sup>7</sup>  
(Quenstedt)
31. The sacramental union is temporary. (Hoepfner)
32. The sacramental union is not an unconditional union, but is one bound to a specific arrangement and determined by the sacramental act. (Hoepfner)
33. The breaking of the bread is not an act that belongs to the essence (of the supper), but an act that is helpful to it and is part of the preparation for it, which you are therefore free to carry out either in or before the supper. (Quenstedt)
34. For a communion to take place, the two things that are united must both be present. (Quenstedt)
35. Nothing is properly said to be in communion with itself. (Gerhard)
36. The doctrine of transubstantiation terminates the very nature of the thing that it deals with. (Gerhard)
37. We believe, teach, and confess that in the sacrament of the eucharist there is a true, real, and substantial presence, administration, eating, and drinking of the body and blood of Christ; that this presence is not because the substance of the bread has been changed into the body nor of the wine into blood, which they call transubstantiation; nor is the bread personally united to the body, the way the divine and human natures are united in Christ; nor does the body spatially or permanently adhere to the bread or the blood to the wine outside their use in the supper; nor is the body spatially confined within the bread; nor is it an “embreading”<sup>8</sup> or an embodying in the bread; nor is it a combination of substances, by virtue of which the bread is fused together with the body into one physical lump and likewise the wine with the blood; nor is it a natural containment or concealment of a little of the body under the bread, nor anything fleshly or physical like that; nor is it a climbing down from heaven and from the right hand of God which is afterwards followed by a climbing up into heaven again to the right hand of God. (Calov)
38. “Eat” is said to the same persons as “drink” is; therefore, you must either give the whole sacrament only to the priests or both elements must be given also to the laity. (Gerhard)

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<sup>7</sup>The “moment of presence” has been a much discussed issue in Lutheranism. Though we hold no dogmatic view about this issue, Walther followed the dogmaticians in believing that it took place only with the distribution.

<sup>8</sup>We could translate “Einbrodung” as “impanation,” but it seems the German theologians coined their own German word for it instead of using a Latinized term. Same thing with the next line where we could translate “consubstantiation,” but the German has the unusual word “Beiwesung.”

39. In 1 Cor. 10:20-21, the apostle speaks not about what happens but about what should happen.<sup>9</sup> (Quenstedt)
40. The sacramental eating is the means: the spiritual eating, the goal. (Gerhard)
41. The unworthy eat the body of Christ sacramentally, but they are not thereby mystically united (with Christ).<sup>10</sup> (G. Koenig)
42. There is only one kind of unworthy guest, namely he who does not believe. (Formula of Concord)
43. Just as Christ's body and blood were the ransom money of redemption, so in the holy supper they are the means of appropriating the forgiveness of sins that was already attained. (Carpzov)
44. What the sun distributes, its rays also distribute. (Quenstedt)
45. You are correct to consider Christ's body and blood as the seals affixed to the bequests of the New Testament. (Gerhard)
46. Christ did not institute the sacrament as our priest, but in accordance with his kingly office, for as our king he distributes through the sacrament what he obtained as our priest. (Hoepfner)
47. Making alive is not a natural action of the flesh of Christ, like burning is an action of fire, but a free action; however, it will make alive everyone who receives it by genuine faith. (Gerhard)
48. With his Father Christ has only a union of essence, with his assumed humanity only a personal union, and with the pious only the mystical union. (Koenig)
49. We are said to be members of Christ's body, of his flesh and of his bone, not physically, nor by virtue of having the same nature, but as an analogy.<sup>11</sup> (Koenig)
50. We receive Christ's body and blood, not with the aim that they should be changed into our body and into our blood, but as weapons and implements with which the Savior has overcome and

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<sup>9</sup>This means it is possible that Christians may commune at a foreign altar, but it is not permissible to do so. It is a sin to do so.

<sup>10</sup>"G. Koenig" is not mentioned in R. D. Preus' theologians list in Vol. I of *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, but J. Koenig is. According to the 1954 *Lutheran Cyclopedia*, J. Koenig "wrote *Theologia Positiva Acroamatica*, which became the basis of most of the dogmatic lectures of the 17th century, especially of Quenstedt's *Theologia Didactico-Polemica*." It has been suggested that the "G. Koenig" is a typo for the famous "J. Koenig". But there is a Georg König (1590-1654) who wrote *Centuria Vindiciarum Sacrarum: In qua Difficiliora Scripturarum Loca, Veteris & Novi Testamenti illustrantur, & a falsis interpretamentis vindicantur Studio & opera Georgii König*. He may be the man cited here.

<sup>11</sup>That is Christ directs the church as the head directs the body.

triumphed over our enemies, sin, the world, and the devil, and which offer us the most effective means of resistance against the onrush of all enemies. (Koenig)

51. The flesh of Christ is not given to us in the supper so that it would help with the metamorphosis of our flesh into the flesh of Christ. Rather it is offered to our mouths so that it might from there reach our souls and be grasped hold of with strong faith and the whole person might be made sure of the resurrection. That is, now through this means we have been restored again to the communion of grace, brought to life from spiritual death, and so at the day of resurrection through that same means we will be awakened from bodily death and restored to the life of glory. (Koenig)
52. Believe, and you have eaten. (Augustine)

Please help your unworthy servant, Lord Jesus!

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The last installment of this translation  
will be in the next issue of the *Quarterly*.

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