

REVIEW ARTICLE: THE CHURCH AND THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY

by C. F. W. Walther

Reviewed by John F. Brug

The Church and the Office of the Ministry: A Study Edition, by C. F. W. Walther. Matthew C. Harrison, editor. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2012. 495 pp. hc. \$34.99, \$23.99 in lots of 10 or more.

The appearance of this review must establish some sort of record. This is at least the fourth time that this book, now over 150 years old, has been reviewed in the *Quarterly*. Part of this repetition is due to new editions: a new German edition in 1911, an English translation by J. T. Mueller in 1987, and this new study edition. But the more important reason for the repeated reviews is the long-running and never entirely resolved discussion (or would it be more accurate to say “controversy”) over the doctrines of church and ministry in the churches of the Synodical Conference. This new version is especially significant since in it the present president of the Missouri Synod has edited and commented on one of the key writings of the first president of the Missouri Synod. This makes it necessary for a review of this new edition to consider three issues: the merits of the new edition, the views which Walther expresses in this edition through his own theses and explanations and through the numerous quotations which he has assembled from the Confessions, from Luther, and from the Lutheran fathers, and finally, the role this study edition can play in a fresh discussion of the issues of church and ministry.

First of all, it can be said that this edition is a significant improvement over the previous English edition. The translation is “new and improved,” especially in giving the reader clear, precise information about the underlying German and Latin terms for church and ministry. In addition to what the publisher calls a “new reader-friendly updated translation” this study edition provides the following helps for readers who want to make a careful study of the text:

- introductions to each thesis by the editor Matthew Harrison,
- footnotes explaining terms and history,
- side-notes highlighting texts from the Bible, the Lutheran Confessions, Martin Luther, and Johann Gerhard,

- very extensive helps for those who want to get back to the original documents, including free downloadable data charts,
- a glossary of key German and Latin terms,
- an index of authors cited in the volume,
- an index of scriptural references,
- a topical index,
- appendices which include supplementary documents such as the responses of Grabau and Löhe to Walther's position.

The volume seems sturdy, and production quality is very good. In reading through the volume I noticed only one typo. A note on page 375 has the date 1893 where the context requires 1839. Some specific examples of improvements will be noted in the discussion of specific issues which follows.

An irony of the protracted debate over church and ministry in the Synodical Conference was that all the major participants on both sides of the debate expressed their agreement with Walther's *Church and Ministry*. WELS participants in the discussion have always asserted their essential agreement with Walther's book. In the middle stage of the controversy during the first decades of the 20th century¹ August Pieper, one of the WELS protagonists, commented:

We have that one man, Walther, to thank for the greater share by far of all that we have. Wisconsin contributed much less, though its contribution is not insignificant. And it is up to us of Wisconsin to point that out. . . . In magnitude and importance Walther's work is less than Luther's only to the extent that Luther's was less than Paul's. The others were all directly or indirectly his students. Three years in St. Louis were enough to make one a Waltherian in doctrine and love.²

August Pieper offered this suggestion to the churches as a step toward resolving the controversy between the seminary faculties of the two church bodies:

Walther's chief work was that he purely "repristinated," or better "reproduced" both of these doctrines [justification and church and ministry] from Luther and the confessions and brought the majority

¹The first phase was the controversies raised by Stephan, Grabau, and Löhe in which Walther himself participated. The middle phase was the debate between professors of the St. Louis and Mequon (Thiensville) seminaries, which began in the early 1900s and was never fully resolved. The third phase is the present wide spectrum of views with a resurgence of romanizing views of the ministry on the one extreme and of views which denigrate the divine institution of the pastoral ministry on the other extreme (roughly corresponding to the views of Grabau and Hoefling respectively).

²WLQ, 1923, "Anniversary Reflections," p 233-234, p 245-246.

of the Lutheran church in America to recognize them. That assures him of a place among the greatest theologians of the church and gives him a claim to the thanks of all who love Zion. . . . The on-going discussion among us concerning church, synod, and discipline calls each one of us urgently to study the doctrine of church and ministry anew. For this study Walther's classic book [*Church and Ministry*] is the most convenient and best pre-school.³

More recently, in 2001, the Missouri Synod in convention affirmed the synod's acceptance of Walther's *Church and Ministry* as "the definitive statement under the Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions of the Synod's understanding on the subject of Church and Ministry; and . . . as the official position of the LCMS" and resolved that "all pastors, professors, teachers of the Church and congregations honor and uphold the resolutions of the Synod as regards the official position of our Synod on Church and Ministry and teach in accordance with them" (Resolution 7-17A). The crucial follow-up question to this resolution is the very Lutheran question, "What does this mean?" What does Walther's *Church and Ministry* really mean?

It is clear from these and from many other statements that the intersynodical controversy over church and ministry never involved being for or against Walther's view.⁴ It was about determining what his view really was. The assignment that Pieper suggested for the church in 1912 would be a very valuable undertaking today. A restudy of Walther's classic work can perhaps suggest both some guidelines for this study and some specific topics that call for further exploration and clarification.

In the earliest phases of the controversies Walther was re-exploring *terra incognita*. Luther had walked this path before, but Luther's clear scriptural understanding of church and ministry had largely been clouded by the state church mentality in Europe. During the tumult that arose among the Saxons as a result of Stephan's departure, Walther went back *ad fontes*, back to Scripture, to the Confessions, and to Luther. As a result he went through a rather drastic change in his own position on this topic. Walther had to work his way through the issues afresh as they arose in a new situation in the life of the Lutheran church. We have the advantage of standing on his shoulders.

Walther's presentation consists of nine theses on the church and ten theses on the holy ministry. He supports each thesis with proof from Scripture, followed by citations from the Confessions, from

³WLQ, 1912, Review of Walther's *Church and Ministry*, p 36, 40.

⁴Though it is interesting that a few voices in the Missouri Synod have recently distanced themselves somewhat from Walther and slid toward Löhe and even toward Grabau.

Luther, and from other respected writers of the Lutheran church. Walther himself made it very clear that the final arbiter of the debate about church and ministry must not be Walther nor any of those theologians whom he copiously cites but the Scriptures alone. No discussion of Walther's book should rush past a careful study of the passages which he cites. This is one case where we do need to "re-invent the wheel" in each generation.

It is true that in his dogmatic works Walther often briefly listed passages without fully expounding them, but he was assuming familiarity with them as the necessary starting point of the discussion. Scripture alone judges; all other participants in the discussion are witnesses not judges.

Although August Pieper and his colleagues offered some mild criticism of Walther's tendency to slight exegesis in favor of citations from the fathers in some of his dogmatic works, his former students and their successors, nevertheless, tried to explain and, in part, to justify Walther's practice of relying heavily on citations from the fathers in his controversies with Grabau.

In fairness to Walther it should be remembered that the Missouri Synod had been accused that its doctrinal position on the church and its ministry, and its church polity established on that position, were un-Lutheran. Thus Walther's book aimed to show that both Missouri's doctrinal position and its polity were indeed Lutheran and were in accordance with the Lutheran understanding of the Scriptures as set forth in its confessions and in the writing of its orthodox teachers. . . . Walther's book was to squelch the suspicion that the Missouri Synod was introducing American democratic ideas into church government. . . . Walther's method of argumentation must therefore be recognized as being fully consistent with the goal which he had set for himself. According to the very title of his book of 1852, it was to set forth "the voice of *our church* on the question concerning the church and the ministry.⁵

In any case, the criticism that Walther was a "citation theologian" is not justified when it comes to *Church and Ministry*. The abundant scriptural testimony is there. One should not rush by it too quickly. It obviously goes without saying that any valid study of Walther has to be preceded and followed by study of Scripture as the only norm of doctrine.

It is important that we learn the view of Walther from his works *in their entirety*, not from brief statements detached from their supporting context. It is also important to consult the original German and Latin texts. Just as it is not sufficient for pastors to study isolated

⁵C. Lawrenz, *WLQ*, Spring 1982, p 105-106.

proof passages in the Catechism, it is not sufficient for us to rely on second-hand or third-hand quotations of parts of Walther's theses. Too often Walther's theses have been cited without a careful reading of all the supporting quotations and notes which follow. It is necessary to read sections in their entirety, not in abridgments. This study edition is a great help in all of these necessary steps.

Church, Synod, and Congregation

The English versions of some of Walther's major writings are problematic at times due to inadequate or slanted translation. One of the most valid criticisms of the J. T. Mueller translation of *Church and Ministry* is that Mueller too often used the translation "congregation" in contexts in which it was misleading to limit the application of the principle which was being discussed only to the local congregation to the exclusion of larger groupings of churches, such as synods.

A clarification of this issue is one of the greatest contributions of this new edition. Already on the first page of the discussion (p 9) a note states, "Note immediately that Walther uses 'congregation' (*Gemeinde*) for the entirety of those who believe in Christ, that is for the whole Church, the *una sancta*. However, we will also see that he uses the same German word for a local congregation." Throughout the discussion Harrison carefully makes the reader aware of the German and Latin words underlying the translation and of the fact that the same words can be used for a local assembly, a regional church, or the *una sancta*. On page 37, where Mueller translates that the keys were given to "His true Church, his holy believing congregation," Harrison has "His true Church, his holy believing community" and comments in a note: "Mueller translated this as 'congregation' and this could be misunderstood by those who do not read the text carefully . . . The text refers to the one true Church and not to a particular congregation." Similar notes occur throughout the presentation on the church. In his introduction to Thesis VI Harrison states, "Walther clearly does not define the Church only or merely as a congregation. . . . A synod is in fact 'church' because it is a trans-congregational expression of ecclesiastical unity (church fellowship)" (p 64, 65). He later states, "I do not believe one can exclude the view that multiple congregations—the whole Church—can act to call. . . . Mueller pushed heavily toward a more narrowly congregational view on this issue. I do not believe the Missouri Synod's decision to 'call' clergy to its district or national work . . . is fundamentally at odds with Walther's views" (p 212). It will be interesting to see how widely this approach is accepted in the LCMS, or whether it raises dissenting voices. WELS readers will find little to disagree with in Walther and Harrison's comments on the church.

Church Fellowship

The thesis that most directly addresses the issue of church fellowship is Thesis VIII on the church. In his introduction to this thesis Harrison says, “Orthodox Lutheran Christians may and should associate kindly with non-Lutheran Christians, and out of love may regard them as brothers and sisters in Christ. We may attend funerals, weddings, and other services out of respect, and we are to act respectfully in such services, though we should not participate in the Sacrament of the Altar” (p 92). Though this statement may be understood correctly in so far as it goes, the statement makes one uncomfortable in light of the recent position in the LCMS that tended to limit church fellowship to altar and pulpit fellowship. The extent to which one may or may not regard such non-Lutherans as brothers and sisters is stated by Walther though quotations from Selnecker and Heilbrunner on page 97. The degree to which Lutherans must avoid “indiscreet association” with heterodox worship is clarified in the quotations from Balduin which Walther cites on p 120-124. It is clear that more than pulpit and altar fellowship are involved. Though this is not per se a topic of Walther’s book, it is a topic that needs further discussion. But that is a discussion for another time.

The Holy Preaching Office

There appear to be more unresolved issues in the section on the holy preaching office than in the section on the church. The two key issues are the relationship of the holy preaching office to the priesthood of all believers and the relationship of the holy preaching office to the office of parish pastor. These issues revolve around unclarity and confusion about the word *Predigtamt*.⁶

The most serious problem which WELS reviewers found with the J. T. Mueller translation was the translation of *Predigtamt* as “pastoral ministry” even in passages in which it has a wider meaning. In Walther’s Thesis VIII on ministry (“Das Predigtamt ist das höchste Amt in der Kirche, aus welchem alle anderen Kirchenämter fliessen.” “The *Predigtamt* is the highest office in the church, out of which all other church offices flow”) Mueller translates *Predigtamt* as “pastoral office”. This implies that the pastor of a congregation is the only one who directly holds the office of the ministry and that other office holders derive a portion of it from him. This is clearly wrong according to Walther’s own explanation of the thesis. In his explanation to this thesis, Walther says that the *Predigtamt* that Christ instituted contains other offices besides the office of parish pastor. He also distinguishes

⁶A fuller treatment of this topic can be found in Lawrenz, WLQ, Spring 1982, or WELS Compendium II, p 465-520.

between offices in the church that exercise *a part of the ministry* of the Word and those that do not use the Word but do *support* (*stand at the side of*) the ministry of the Word.⁷ Walther writes:

The highest office is that of the ministry of the Word (*Predigtamt*), with which all other offices are also conferred at the same time. Every other public office in the church accordingly is *part of the same* or a *helping office* that supports (stands beside) the ministry of the Word (*Predigtamt*), whether it be the elders who do not labor in the Word and doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17) or the ruling office (Rom. 12:8) or the deacons (the office of service in a narrow sense) or whatever other offices the church may entrust to particular persons for special administration.

Unfortunately, Walther's next sentence, though correct, introduces an element of confusion.

The offices of school teachers, who are to teach God's Word in their schools, distributors of alms, sextons, precentors at public worship, and others are all to be regarded as ecclesiastical and sacred offices, for they take up a part of the one ministry of the Word (*Kirchenamt*) and stand at the side of the pastoral office (*Predigtamt*).

In this case Mueller's translation of *Predigtamt* as "pastoral office" is not necessarily wrong (though Harrison's more literal "preaching office" is to be preferred since it more accurately helps the reader trace the occurrences of *Predigtamt*). This two-fold use of the term *Predigtamt* also introduces an unclarity into Harrison's introduction where he says, "teachers who instruct children in the Word of God hold a part of the one mandated Office of the Ministry, but not *the office of preaching*" (p 284). This is correct if it means that teachers are not in the pastoral ministry (which we often call "the preaching ministry") and they are not called or trained to preach. It would not be correct if it meant that teachers of the Word do not serve in the ministry of the Word as set forth in AC V. Here Walther shares some of the blame for the unclarity since he uses *Predidgtamt* in more than one sense without clearly signaling the distinction. He does make this distinction clear elsewhere in his writing as we will note below.

We cannot be too critical of Walther's flexible and multi-faceted use of terms because it is a natural feature of every language and we do exactly the same thing. We use "ministry" as a word for all kinds of service, as an abbreviation for ministry of the Word in all its forms, and as an abbreviation for the pastoral ministry ("is your son studying

⁷Walther, *Church and Ministry*, trans. by J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: CPH, 1987), p 289-290. For the German original, see the Zwickau edition, p 342-343. Regarding this translation, see K. Marquart, *The Church*, p 143, notes 72 and 73; and Wilbert P. Gawrisch, review of the Mueller translation in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 90 (1993), p 313-314.

for the ministry?”). We use “preaching ministry” both as a literal translation of *Predigtamt* and as another term for the pastoral ministry. Such flexible use of terms is a common feature of language (even in Scripture), but we need to get in the habit of more clearly signaling when we are using terms in different senses and taking more careful notice of such terms by authors.

Though Walther is sometimes inconsistent or unclear in his use of terms also in this section of *Church and Ministry*, he here distinguishes two kinds of auxiliary offices that stand beside the comprehensive office of pastor: those that are *part of* the ministry of the Word and those that *support* it but do not take up a part of it. The statement of Chemnitz which Walther cites and highlights on page 295 says clearly that those grades which Chemnitz had spoken about were not above or outside the office of Word and Sacraments, but rather, the true duties of the ministry were divided into these grades.

Since an understanding of Walther’s use of *Amt* and *Predigtamt* is the most crucial part of the debate about Walther’s *Church and Ministry*, we will digress for a moment to elaborate on this point. The chief terminological problem in Walther’s writing is that though he sometimes uses *Predigtamt* in a wide sense to refer to all ministry of the Word, at other times he uses *Predigtamt* as a synonym for *Pfarramt*, pastoral ministry. There is no confusion of thought about this in his writings, but misunderstandings may arise if we read sentences out of context. *Predigtamt* is first of all the activity of proclaiming God’s Word. It then is a term for a specific public office for proclaiming that Word.

The German word *Amt* is not limited to an office or position held by an incumbent. It often refers to a task or action, or, if you will, a function. It appears that confusion about this word *Amt* had developed already in Walther’s day even among native speakers of German since Walther warned against misreading the Confessions on the basis of this confusion. This tension was present in everyday German where *Amt* sometimes meant *Werk* rather than *Posten*. In commenting elsewhere on the word *Amt* Walther says:

I hope these comments on language will convince the kind reader or strengthen him in the conviction that great caution is necessary in coming to conclusions concerning the doctrine of the Lutheran church on the ministry as found in the Confessions when looking at our individual symbols in which the words *Amt* (office), *Predigtamt* (preaching office), and *Schlüsselamt* (office of the keys), etc., are found. And I will add (I hope it will convince him) that the presumption must be that where the word “office” occurs in such texts, it is being used in the simple sense of a “commissioned work” (*aufgetragenen Tuns*) without any other additional meaning

because this alone is the essential idea of office in the use of the German language as we have proven above.⁸

In *Church and Ministry* he states that *Predigtamt* in Augsburg Confession V is not concerned with ministry in the concrete or the *Pfarramt*, but rather in AC V the topic is the *Amt in abstracto* through which God gives the Holy Spirit.⁹ After presenting further citations from the confessions, Walther concludes as follows:

This is an important matter, because of those who make the *Pfarramt* into a means of grace and equate it with the Word and sacraments, and who assert that this office would be absolutely essential to each person for salvation, so that a person without the service of an ordained *Pfarrer* can neither come to faith, nor can receive absolution for his sins. But our church teaches this necessity only in regard to the spoken or physical (*mündlich und leiblich*) Word in opposition to a supposed inner Word and to every type of enthusiasm. Nevertheless, our *Grundbekenntnis* in the 5th article gives testimony for the divine institution of the *Pfarramt*, even if only indirectly, as all of the commentaries of our orthodox theologians concerning this article clearly show.¹⁰

In the Harrison edition this crucial passage occurs on page 169. In a footnote Harrison cites the opinion of Kurt Marquart, which seemingly attempts to minimize Walther's interpretation of AC V which is reflected in the citation from Hartmann. Harrison seems skeptical of Marquart's attempt to explain away this citation.

Harrison frequently states the paradox that the one office is possessed by all believers as spiritual priests (from below) and that the office is distinct from the general priesthood and is mandated by Christ (from above). Communication in this section of Walther would be clearer if the word "public" or "publicly" was more often inserted where appropriate, following the pattern of AC XIV, "no one should publicly teach or preach in the church without an ordered call." For example, Walther's explanation of his first thesis (p 152) would be clearer if he had inserted a single word: "there is a *public* office to teach, feed, and rule, which Christians by virtue of their general Christian calling do not possess."

A clarification of the *Predigtamt* issue may well be the key to reaching an understanding of Walther's views in *Church and Ministry*.¹¹

⁸*Lehre und Wehre* 7 (1861), p 295-296.

⁹C. F. W. Walther, *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt* (4. Aufl.), Erlangen 1862, p 198. Page numbers will be different in different printings, for example in the 1911 Zwickau edition, it is p 194.

¹⁰Walther, p 199. Zwickau edition, p 195.

¹¹There is a lengthy list of resources for this discussion in Brug, *The Holy Ministry*, p 331-360.

Forms of Ministry

The issue of “forms of ministry” which is raised by this section of *Church and Ministry* is discussed only tangentially in this new edition, but it appears to be an issue that would need a lot of attention in any attempt to reach a consensus on ministry and on Walther’s views of ministry.

Harrison comments on what we would call “forms of ministry” in several places. He does not limit the one office to the office of parish pastor. He briefly discusses such offices as senior pastors, associate pastors, district presidents, and synod presidents. What he means in saying that these offices are “by human arrangement” needs to be explored more fully in discussions of the topic. These specific forms are not mandated by God, but those serving in them are serving in the divinely instituted public ministry of the Word.

Very interesting is the footnote on page 203 which shows that the seed of the so-called “Missouri Synod view” of the office of parish pastor as the highest office from which others flow was already present at the time of Walther’s death. But ironically Walther stood against the “one congregation—one pastor” view, and it was his death that permitted the “one parish pastor” view to step forward during the dissolution of the St. Louis *Gesammtgemeinde*.

In his conclusion to his introduction to Thesis VIII (p 285) Harrison notes, “As I worked with this section of Walther, I noted that it is full of terms for offices in the church. We have freely increased the number of such offices and rightly so because of need. It’s time to revisit our nomenclature for offices and bring it back into conformity with the Bible, Walther, Luther, and the church catholic. We should also emphasize that such vocations are sacred and are in fact an *Amt*.” This is a good starting point for discussion.

Miscellaneous Statements

There are a number of other scattered statements that merit further discussion. “The preaching office is established with the apostolate in Matthew 28” (p 203). The issue of the institution of the public ministry is a complex one because there are so many candidates for the honor. Matthew 28 which is a commission to the church is not the strongest candidate. The confessions in fact seem to prefer the sending of the seventy as the key event.¹²

The bare statement “Luther believed that the real presence is achieved by the Words of Institution” (p 250) calls for elaboration. On

¹²Brug, *The Holy Ministry*, p 57-86.

that very page Luther states that the bread and wine do not become the body and blood of Christ by our doing, speaking, or work, much less because of our chrism or ordination, rather because of Christ's order, mandate, and institution.

The statement "the Lutheran dogmaticians know nothing of an ordination of missionaries" (p 256) does not agree with Gerhard's statement that Paul and Barnabas received laying on of hands as they set out on their mission to the Gentiles (p 257-258) or with Chemnitz's statement about the supra-congregational nature of the office of evangelists (p 294). What the Lutherans objected to was the Genevan practice of ordaining men to send them to Christian congregations without the participation of those congregations. If the apostles were ordained (which is a question), then the first ordinations were of missionaries not parish pastors.

Though there is an abundance of statements in this book that say that ordination is an adiaphoron, the note on page 211 about whether a pastor *should* be ordained or *must* be ordained introduces a question that needs further discussion.

Other side issues worth discussing since they form a pretty good test of one's views about what "the office" really is are whether vicars can celebrate the sacraments and under what circumstance an isolated group of Christians who have no access to a pastor can set up a celebration of the Lord's Supper. These issues also are a good test of how consistently a person applies his principles in practice.

The Need to Include Other Sources

Even as we study *Church and Ministry* to discover Walther's views of church and ministry, we must not confine ourselves to this one work. Walther's other works, such as his dogmatics textbook and his periodical articles, are too often left out of the discussion. Key to the understanding of Walther's view on any doctrinal topic is the Walther-Baier *Compendium* which he used as his dogmatics text.¹³ Walther sometimes delegated the writing of key elaborations of the topic to co-workers. (The Missouri ministerium was a team, though there was no doubt who the captain was.) Walther would assign one of his associates to write the key article on a topic on behalf of the group. Walther then published and endorsed the article. For example, the initial response to Grabau was written by Loeber, the key articles on forms of ministry

¹³An English translation of a portion of this by Pastor Benjamin Schaefer was published in the Winter 2010 issue of *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, p 33-63 under the title, "The Church's Ministry." Additional portions of this section are available online in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary essay file.

were written by Kähler and Stellhorn, and the key article on the ministry of teachers by Selle. There are also many unsigned articles that are probably by Walther. Virtually all of *Lehre und Wehre* and *Der Lutheraner* must be searched for evidence of Walther's position.

Here we will have to limit ourselves to just a couple of the most important examples.

Early Missouri struggled to define where the schoolteacher fits into the ministry. Walther and the majority believed that the teacher was serving in the ministry of the Word in a way analogous to that of a preaching deacon. This position was summarized in an article by E. W. Kähler, in *Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 20.

The school diaconate takes a middle position between the teaching ministry of the teaching elder and the above diaconate insofar as laboring in doctrine is one of its chief duties. But its ministry is confined only to a part of the congregation even if it is the most precious part. On the other hand the teaching presbyter is a bishop, that is, an overseer of the adults as well as the young. And when the preaching office and the teaching-diaconate coincide in one office,¹⁴ still the essential part of the latter is to lend parents assistance in training their children and to take care of the children personally in every detail. Its ruling side consists in school discipline. But this must remain the least important element. The personal ministry to every individual child is the most important matter. To watch over discipline must remain the matter of the bishop. The schoolteacher is placed under him not only in matters of office but also as the caregiver of his soul.¹⁵

J. C. W. Lindemann, instructor at Missouri's teacher's seminary at Addison, Illinois, did not agree with Walther's view that the school teacher was part of the ministry of the church. Lindemann submitted an article to *Der Lutheraner* which Walther sent back for correction because Lindemann had derived the office of the teacher from the parent. Walther insisted that it belonged to the *Predigtamt*. Walther's claim that most in Missouri disagreed with Lindemann's view is demonstrated by an article by C. A. T. Selle which appeared in *Evang.-Luth. Schulblatt* (January 1869).¹⁶ Here we must confine ourselves to a couple of brief citations and to Walther's endorsement.

¹⁴As they often did in frontier congregations when the same man was pastor and teacher.

¹⁵E. W. Kähler, "Does a Congregation . . . ?" *Logia*, Trinity 1997, p 43.

¹⁶"Das Amt des Pastors als Schulaufseher," *Evang.-Luth. Schulblatt* 4 (January 1869), English: "The Office of a Pastor as School Overseer" translated by Mark Nispel. Online. This is an extremely important article that should be read in its entirety by anyone interested in this topic. This essay was presented at the general School-teacher Conference of the Missouri-Synod on August 5 and 6, 1868 in Addison, Illinois.

Thesis II.

When someone is given the instruction of the children in God's Word, he has a teaching office and therefore teaches publicly and administers herein a part of the public preaching office.

Thesis V

In the Lutheran church of the 16th century and following the schoolmaster was therefore, insofar as he taught the children God's Word and performed ecclesiastical functions and also administered a separated part of the public preaching office, considered as belonging to the so-called clergy.

We here in America in our Missouri Synod are already giving witness that the teachers are to be considered among the so-called clergy by our synodical constitution which requires them to be examined (to enter into office) and afterwards claims that with the pastors they are standing members of Synod. Even as we make such witness now our dear fathers witnessed unto the same thing when they placed them under the consistory as their court of justice. But the consistory only dealt with and currently deals with the ruling and circumstances of the church and her ministers.

Walther published this article and gave it a warm endorsement. Both in his comments to Lindemann and in this endorsement, he indicates that he realized that all in Missouri were not on the same page on this issue.

We consider this lecture to be a work of truly reformatory character. No preacher, no schoolteacher, no elder of a congregation and above all no congregational member who has an interest for the right form of our church in America should leave this lecture unread and untested. We are convinced that only when the principles presented here concerning the mutual relationship of school and church, of the school teacher and the preacher, come into play will school and church remain here in indissoluble association and bring the first of the other gifts which this association should bring according to God's will and order.¹⁷

Similar studies on the role of women teachers, the roles of the various kinds of elders, and preaching deacons also deserve renewed study.

Conclusion

This study edition of Walther's *Church and Ministry* is an excellent resource for the study of church and ministry. There should be little disagreement among confessional Lutherans with Walther's most important points that the church is the assembly of all believers regardless of the configuration in which it assembles to exercise the ministry of the

¹⁷*Der Lutheraner* 25 (February 1, 1869) no. 11. Cited by Nispel.

Word, and that in addition to the priesthood of all believers there is a divinely instituted public ministry of the Word, of which the pastoral ministry is the most comprehensive form. Some other topics seem to call for further clarifying discussion. Among them are:

1. clarification of the understanding of the terms, *Amt*, *Predigtamt*, and ministry.
2. the understanding of various forms of ministry and auxiliary offices and their relationship to each other and to the priesthood of all believers (consideration should be given especially to three forms of ministry: ruling elders, preaching deacons, and teachers).

Initially, the discussion should focus on thorough exegesis of all of the pertinent passages of Scripture. Unless there is agreement on what Scripture says about the matter, little progress can be made by debating interpretations of confessions, historical precedents, and contemporary practice.

Terms must be defined clearly, so that people are not speaking past each other. In what sense, is the term “ministry” being used? Unless there is clarification and understanding of the terms which are being used by various parties there will be continual confusion.

Recovering a clearer understanding of the position of Walther based on the whole corpus of his works would also be a helpful step.

The key factor in the restoration of harmony in early Missouri in the aftermath of the Stephan debacle and in the development of the “Wisconsin Synod position” in the early 20th century was the willingness of the participants to set aside for the moment their preconceptions and even the works of their teachers and to go back *ad fontes*, back to the Scriptures. They were willing to reexamine every detail of their position in the light of Scripture alone. If this study revealed areas in which they had been operating with assumptions or interpretations not supported by Scripture, they were ready to correct their view. The *ad fontes* method of Walther in the 1840s and of the Wauwatosa men in the early 1900s provide a good model for us in the early 21st century.

Further Reading

Walther, C. F. W., *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt*, Editions appeared in 1852, 1865, 1875, 1894, and 1911. Pagination is not the same in the various editions. The English translations are based on the 1875 edition. First English translation: *1 Church and Ministry*, St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1987, known as the Mueller edition.

Other works of Walther that need to be consulted.

- Walther, C. F. W. and Baier, J., *Compendium theologiae positivae*, St. Louis, MO: Luth. Concordia Verlag, 1879. A much enlarged edition of this 17th century work was prepared by Walther for use as his dogmatics text. Very important as evidence for what Walther was teaching. Recently reprinted.
- Walther, C. F. W., *Pastoraltheologie*. St. Louis, MO: M.C. Barthel, 1875. (The 1995 English edition by Drickamer is much abbreviated).
- Walther, C. F. W., "Rede bei Einführung zweier Gymnasiallehrer," *Lutherische Brosamen*, p. 346 ff; quoted in *WLQ*, Spring 1982, p 128-30. English: "Sermon at the Installation of Two College Professors." Translated by J. W. Klotz. *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. XXXII (March 28, 1949), p 82-89.
- Walther, C. F. W., "Über Laienälteste oder Gemeindevorsteher," *Lehre und Wehre* 1858, Volumes 4-2, p 54-57, 4-3, p 82-89, 4-4, p 110-113.
- Wyneken, Karl, "Selected Aspects of C. F. W. Walther's Doctrine of the Ministry" and "Later Developments in the Missouri Synod Doctrine of the Ministry," in Research Project of the Graduate School of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. Volume III, p 17-74 and 75-117. These articles contain a helpful survey of the treatment of this topic in *Lehre und Wehre*, *Der Lutheraner*, and in convention proceedings during the ministry of Walther and his contemporaries.

Key works of Walther's colleagues on the topic:

- Kähler, E. W., "Does the Congregation Ordinarily Have the Right to Temporarily Commit an Essential Part of the Holy Preaching Office to a Layman," Translation by Mark Nispel, *Logia*, Trinity, 1997, p 37-46. Original in *Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 20, No. 9, 11, 12. An important article for insight into the currents in early Missouri.
- Selle, C. A. T. "Das Amt des Pastors als Schulaufseher," *Evang.-Luth. Schulblatt* 4 (January 1869). English: "The Office of a Pastor as School Overseer" translated by Mark Nispel. Online.
- Stellhorn, F. W. "Dr Krauth und Laienälteste," *Lehere und Wehre* 21-4, April 1875), p 104-112.
- Stoeckhardt, Georg, "Von dem Beruf der Lehrerinnen an christlichen Gemeindeschulen," Originally in *Lehre und Wehre* 1897. English in *Concordia Theological Monthly* October, 1934, p 764-773.

Treatments of Church and Ministry in WELS publications:

- Pieper, August, Review of Walther's *Die Stimme Unser Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt*, *Theologische Quartalschrift*, now *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, January 1912, p 21-40.
- Lawrenz, Carl, "An Evaluation of Walther's Theses on the Church and Ministry," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Spring 1982, p 85-139.
- Gawrisch, Wilbert, "Review of the Mueller translation of Walther's *Church and Ministry*," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Fall 1993, p 313-314.
- Brug, John F., "Recovering Walther," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Winter 2009, p 3-15.
- Brug, John F., *The Ministry of the Word*, Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2009. Has extensive citation and discussion of the works referred to in this review.