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Pastoral Formation in Lutheran Orthodoxy and the Method of Theological Study Proposed by Johann Gerhard

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Pastoral formation is a pastoral duty. Saint Paul said to Pastor Timothy and to all who share his vocation, "The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2).[1] Yet pastoral formation begins in the family and congregation. Saint Paul also said to Timothy, "I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (2 Tim 1:5). Pastoral formation is intense. It requires study and prayer. It is not simply a matter of making converts and then sending them out immediately to make more converts. Paul again says, "*Be diligent* to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15, emphasis added). The Lord Jesus prepared his apostles full-time for three years. Thus, we, who are teachers far inferior to the Lord Jesus, and disciples far inferior to the Twelve, may need just as much time for pastoral formation, and just as much intensity, or more.

As we consider how best to prepare pastors in our times, we should look to our own history for resources. Lutherans recognize the special blessings of the Reformation: In the sixteenth century, God led Martin Luther and his colleagues to preach and teach the law and gospel clearly from Holy Scripture. This same biblical doctrine was then established in the churches, schools, art, music, hymns, and theology of Lutheran Orthodoxy, from the time of the 1580 Book of Concord through the following century. If we want to see examples of the acme of Lutheran pastoral formation, this is where we should look.

Among Orthodox Lutherans, the arch-theologian was Johann Gerhard.[2] Gerhard (1582–1637) lived about a century after Luther. After a distinguished education at the University of Jena and elsewhere, he was called in 1606 to be a pastor and superintendent of twenty-six parishes in Heldburg, and a lecturer at a high school.

[1] Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotations are from the New King James Version.

[2] This is the judgment of Gerhard's contemporary Matthias Hoë von Hoënegg (1580–1645). Erdmann Rudolph Fischer, *The Life of John Gerhard*, trans. Richard J. Dinda and Elmer M. Hohle (Malone, TX: Repristination, 2000), 295.

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He was just twenty-three years old. Just by considering his first call, it is obvious that his contemporaries thought highly of the gifts God had given him. On January 7, 1615, Gerhard was called to the office of pastor and superintendent general (something like a bishop) of Coburg.[3] This was a promotion. Previously he had been a "specific superintendent." Now his supervision included more churches, subdistricts, and specific superintendents. He soon set to work writing a church order for his diocese, the "Church Order of Johann Casimir," which was finished by 1616.[4] Then, that year he was called to be a professor of theology at the University of Jena, where he served for the next twenty-one years, until his death in 1637. Gerhard's writings built up the church and Christian believers, and also defended the church against attacks.[5] He also wrote about pastoral formation.

While the formation of Christians begins in congregations and homes by means of the Sacraments, preaching, teaching, prayer, and devotion, here I will examine *formal* pastoral preparation at the time of Johann Gerhard. This consisted of three parts: (I) university curriculum, (II) personal study, and (III) ongoing assessment and quality control.

I. Pastoral Formation at German Lutheran Universities of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Theological Faculties

Universities with their theological faculties were the Lutheran centers of pastoral formation in Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1600, there were eleven Lutheran universities in the Holy Roman Empire (including Germany), with about 2,500 students.[6] The theological professors often had more to do than just teaching future pastors. Sometimes theology professors would also teach in the

[3] Fischer, *The Life of John Gerhard*, p. 72, sec. 5.2.

[4] Fischer, *The Life of John Gerhard*, p. 73, sec. 5.3; Martin Honecker, *Cura religionis Magistratus Christiani: Studien zum Kirchenrecht im Luthertum des 17. Jahrhunderts, insbesondere bei Johann Gerhard*, Ius ecclesiasticum 7 (Munich: Claudius, 1968), 43; and Johann Anselm Steiger, "Kirchenordnung, Visitation und Alltag: Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) als Visitator und kirchenordnender Theologe," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 55, no. 3 (2003): 229.

[5] For a biography of Gerhard, see Steven R. J. Parks, "Johann Gerhard (1582–1637)," in *Lives and Writings of the Great Fathers of the Lutheran Church*, ed. Timothy Schmeling (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 163–178.

[6] Thomas Kaufmann, "The Clergy and the Theological Culture of the Age: The Education of Lutheran Pastors in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe*, ed. C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schütte (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 121.

arts faculty, teaching Greek and Hebrew, or classical Latin and Greek texts.[7] Professors often had to fulfill nonuniversity tasks, too, such as representing the university or prince at meetings, being judges or jurors for church courts, and the like. Such activities were a nuisance to the professors, who complained that such extracurricular duties were preventing them from giving due diligence to their study and lectures.[8]

The theology faculties were small. At Wittenberg in 1580, there were four regular professors of theology. All four of the professors had the duty of lecturing on the Bible, and one of them from time to time was supposed to lecture on Christian doctrine. The four professors could decide among themselves who would teach what, and could even change from one area to another.[9] The statutes for the University of Rostock in the sixteenth century stipulated that each theology professor should take turns lecturing on every subject. While this was never fully implemented, the professors did commonly lecture in several different areas: books of the New Testament, books of the Old Testament, doctrine (theological commonplaces), and topics from the arts faculty, such as ancient languages or classical texts.[10]

Lectures

The official curriculum of the universities could vary somewhat from place to place but always focused on the Bible. Philipp Melanchthon wrote the statutes for the University of Wittenberg in 1545, and these were influential on all other Lutheran universities in Germany.[11] These statues stipulated that lectures would be offered on the Bible, the creeds, and Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter*. Courses were to be offered on Greek and Hebrew, and the faculty was responsible for the moral and mental development of the students. At later times, lectures on Melanchthon's *Commonplaces*, the Small Catechism, or the Augsburg Confession were added. The focus on the Bible is striking. Thus, the stereotype of the Lutheran

[7] Thomas Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung: Die Rostocker Theologieprofessoren und ihr Beitrag zur theologischen Bildung und kirchlichen Gestaltung im Herzogtum Mecklenburg zwischen 1550 und 1675*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte 66 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1997), 399.

[8] Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung*, 392–393n623.

[9] Marcel Nieden, *Die Erfindung des Theologen: Wittenberger Anweisungen zum Theologiestudium im Zeitalter von Reformation und Konfessionalisierung*, Spätmittelalter und Reformation, neue Reihe 28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 116–117.

[10] Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung*, 391–392, 402.

[11] Kaufmann, "The Clergy and the Theological Culture of the Age," 123; and Walter Friedensburg, ed., *Urkundenbuch der Universität Wittenberg*, vol. 1 (Magdeburg: Selbstverlag der Historischen Kommission, 1926), 261–265.

Orthodox theologians as "the dogmaticians"[12] needs to be challenged, since Lutheran universities did not make dogmatics dominant in their curricula until the latter half of the seventeenth century.[13] Before that, apparently, the doctrinal exposition of the Bible was more common. At Wittenberg in 1580, there were several professors of exegetical theology, but only one for dogmatics. Yet exegesis, too, was dogmatic. Lutheran exegetes were keenly aware of how the Bible supports Lutheran doctrine, and they often dealt with and refuted the wrongful exegesis of their theological opponents (such as Roman Catholics, Reformed, and, later, Socinians).[14] While the lectures usually focused on doctrinal books of the Bible (especially the prophets and the Pauline epistles), university sermon series were used to preach through the Gospels and historical books of the Bible.[15]

From circa 1575 to circa 1625, regulations for Wittenberg's theological faculty repeatedly emphasized that lectures must not go into too much detail; they must instead cover material that the students would need to know as future pastors, showing them good examples of how to exposit the words of the Bible and to defend the church's doctrine. Nevertheless, during this period the lectures tended to become long, detailed, slow dictations.[16]

Lectures at Rostock were never supposed to be held at the same time as another class. The blocks of time set forth for the lectures were up to two hours in length. Theoretically a student could attend every regular lecture offered. According to the statutes, time blocks were reserved for particular professors to lecture every day of the week,[17] surely excluding Sunday. Professors did not have to lecture on the same topic every day; some chose to lecture on two different topics at a time on alternating days.[18]

At the University of Jena, there were different kinds of classes: public lectures, *collegia* (which were extracurricular lectures or disputations), and sermon exercises. The professors themselves chose what they were going to teach. In order to keep professors accountable and make sure they were teaching subjects that the students

[12] E.g., Jacob A. O. Preus, "The New Testament Canon in the Lutheran Dogmaticians," *The Springfielder* 25, no. 1 (1961): 8–33.

[13] Kaufmann, "The Clergy and the Theological Culture of the Age," 123–124; and Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung*, 391–392, 403–404.

[14] Nieden, *Die Erfindung des Theologen*, 245.

[15] Nieden, *Die Erfindung des Theologen*, 117; and Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung*, 391–392.

[16] Nieden, *Die Erfindung des Theologen*, 115–117, 119–120; cf. Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung*, 391.

[17] Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung*, 392.

[18] Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung*, 400.

needed to learn, printed lists of lectures were regularly published, which could be examined by the prince and his bureaucracy.[19]

A survey of printed class lists can give us a good picture of the Jena theological curriculum at the time of Johann Gerhard. Normally, Jena had three regular theology professors. In 1613, before Gerhard was teaching there, Ambrosius Reuden (1543–1615) offered one lecture series at a time. First he announced lectures on the Decalogue, which would be followed by doctrinal commonplaces on the gospel, repentance, providence, and predestination. Albert Grawer (1575–1617) offered two lecture classes: on Malachi and on Augsburg Confession II–IV. Johann Major (1564–1654) offered one lecture series: on Acts. At this time there was no mention of disputations or sermon exercises.[20]

In the winter semester of 1616, Johann Major was still lecturing on Acts. Johann Gerhard, a new professor, gave one lecture series at a time: first on the canonical and apocryphal books of the Bible; then an explanation of apparent contradictions in the New Testament; then his method of theological study. He announced that later he would lecture on the doctrine of God. At that time, there were only two theology professors.[21]

In 1617, Johann Himmel (1581–1642) had joined the theology faculty, bringing the number up to three. In the winter semester, Johann Major continued his lecture series on Acts, now having reached chapter 16. Johann Himmel offered one public lecture series on polemical theology and announced the continuation of a private theological class. Gerhard was more active. He offered the end of a lecture series on the method of theological study and the theological *praecognita* (which probably included what we call *prolegomena*, dealing with the nature of theology, the doctrine of Scripture, and revelation).[22] After that was done, he announced that the next lecture series would be a "synoptic" explanation of theological commonplaces. He would also begin a Bible seminar and would continue the "rest of the exercises of disputations and sermons." Among the "philosophical" studies, no classes on

[19] Ulrich Rasche, "Über Jenaer Vorlesungsverzeichnisse des 16. bis 19. Jahrhunderts," in *"Gelehrte" Wissenschaft. Das Vorlesungsprogramm der Universität Jena um 1800*, ed. Thomas Bach, Jonas Maatsch, and Ulrich Rasche (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2008), 17–18.

[20] Johann Tobias Major, *Prorector Academiae Ienensis Johannes Maior S. S. Theologiae Doctor, & Coeteri Professores L. S.: Socrates Ille Princeps Philosophorum Dicere Solebat: . . . P. P. Die 5. Septemb. A. O. R. 1613.* (Jena: Weidnerus, 1613); on the printed lists of classes at Jena, see Rasche, "Über Jenaer Vorlesungsverzeichnisse des 16. bis 19. Jahrhunderts."

[21] *Rector Et Senatus Academiae Ienensis L. S.: Quae Catalogi Lectionum Publicarum, Quos Semestres Edere Solemus . . . P. P. Calend. Septemb. 1616* (Jena: Beithmannus, 1616).

[22] Cf. the contents of Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Praecognitorum Theologicorum Libri Duo: Naturam Theologiae explicantes, & rationem studii illius plenissime monstrantes* (Frankfurt am Main: Hummius, 1615).

metaphysics or logic were offered in 1617, since "a professor of metaphysics and logic is still being sought."[23]

In the summer semester of 1618, Major again was lecturing on Acts. Himmel said he would lecture on Romans 9, followed by a "methodical synopsis of church history," followed by a succinct explanation of the minor prophets. He also had a private theological *collegium* (an extracurricular class of some kind). Gerhard was lecturing on theological commonplaces and leading disputations on the Gospels and polemical theology.[24]

From this sample of course offerings at Jena, we see a number of surprising things. If they did not have the right professor, they just did not offer the class. The professors offered usually just one lecture class per semester, but it was ongoing and thus probably always included brand new content. (These lectures were commonly turned into books later on.) Besides the main lecture, they often offered private classes, often in the form of disputations.

Collegia and Disputations

Many of the Jena class lists mention *collegia.* These were private classes, electives that did not have to be offered by the professors nor attended by students but could be offered according to the interests of the professors and students and seem to have taken place frequently.[25] The classes consisted of lectures, disputations, or preaching exercises. The purpose of these private classes was to supplement the public lectures with preparatory studies or exercises.[26] They also supplemented the professors' salaries, since professors could charge extra fees for them.[27] These *collegia* seem to be the way that our modern classes developed. The topics, manner, and duration of the old public lectures were fixed by university statutes and could not easily be changed. Private *collegia*, on the other hand, both provided extra income and allowed professors and graduate students to offer whatever topics the local academic market desired.

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[23] Johann Gerhard, *Rector Academiae Ienensis Johannes Gerhardus S.S. Theologiae Doctor, & Caeteri Professores L. S. D.: Aristoteles, Qui Teste Laërtio, Inter de Ambulandum Suiscum Discipulis Philosophari Solebat . . . P. P. Prid. Calend. Sept. A. O. R. 1617* (Jena: Steinmannus, 1617).

[24] *Rector Et Senatus Academiae Ienensis L. S. D.: Scipio Maior, Qui Vicit Hannibalem . . . ; P.P. Die 15. Martii A. O. R. 1618* (Jena: Typis Steinmannianis, 1618).

[25] Margreet J. A. M. Ahsmann, "Teaching in Collegia: The Organization of Disputationes at Universities in the Netherlands and in Germany During the 16th and 17th Centuries," in *Università in Europa: Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni strutture, organizzazione, funzionamento; Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Milazzo, 28 settembre -2 ottobre 1993*, ed. Andrea Romano (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1995), 99–114.

[26] Rasche, "Über Jenaer Vorlesungsverzeichnisse des 16. bis 19. Jahrhunderts," 17–18, 22–23, 25, 28.

[27] Rasche, "Über Jenaer Vorlesungsverzeichnisse des 16. bis 19. Jahrhunderts," 28.

After lectures, disputations were seen as the most important educational activity. Disputations were supposed to help strengthen students' ability to think and argue clearly, and to make clear the truth of the faith and to show it as plausible by refuting contrary arguments.[28] In the seventeenth century, the popularity of disputations as an educational activity rose dramatically and characterized theological education in Lutheran Orthodoxy. This practice, which was originally supposed to train students to think critically and respond to the arguments of the opponents of Lutheran doctrine, was used increasingly by Lutheran professors in the seventeenth century for building consensus and for responding to new theological challenges in detail.[29]

Disputations were debates on theological topics. The purpose of academic disputations, as practiced by Lutherans such as Johann Gerhard, was truth and clarity, not just winning. A professor usually wrote theses and presided over the disputation as the "president." The "opponents" were usually students. In advance, they divvied up the theses and researched arguments against the theses in the books of the Lutherans' opponents. In the disputation, these "opponents" then brought arguments against the proposed theses. Their arguments were drawn from Scripture, church fathers, and philosophy. The "respondent" was often a senior-level student, and in many cases was a doctoral candidate, who had a difficult job. He had to defend the theses against the opponents. Often if a respondent had troubles, the president (i.e., the professor) would step in to defend the thesis.[30]

The disputation could also be an assessment tool. Often students of theology would avoid taking the degree of "bachelor of Bible" because of the high cost of the fees for this degree. Instead, they would hold a disputation, serve as the respondent, and maybe even author the theses. The theses were printed with the student's name as the respondent and could serve as sufficient proof of his theological learning.[31]

Despite the popularity of the practice, disputations were sometimes criticized. Professors sometimes complained of the large amounts of time they had to devote to conducting disputations. This, combined with defenses of the practice, indicate that disputations sometimes were perceived as deficient.[32] Johann Gerhard's rules

[28] Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung*, 409.

[29] Nieden, *Die Erfindung des Theologen*, 123–127; and Kenneth G. Appold, *Orthodoxie als Konsensbildung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

[30] On the practice of disputations in the age of Lutheran Orthodoxy, see Appold, *Orthodoxie als Konsensbildung*; and Johann Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, in *On Interpreting Sacred Scripture and Method of Theological Study*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, trans. Joshua J. Hayes, Theological Commonplaces I–II (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 191–198. On the practice of disputations in general, see Ahsmann, "Teaching in Collegia," 107–113. Luther's disputations will be translated and published in Luther's Works: American Edition, vols. 72–73.

[31] Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung*, 413–414.

[32] Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung*, 419.

for disputations, too, sound as though he was aware of problems that could occur in disputations—for example, sophistic arguments, heated passions, and striving to win instead of seeking to set forth and know the truth.[33]

Assessment

From the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, it has been estimated that students stayed at the University of Wittenberg an average of 1.8 years.[34] A university degree was not required in order to become a pastor. In fact, in early modern Germany, pastors with university degrees were usually not wanted for rural pastorates. The differences in background and interests between the pastor and people were too great and could easily lead to conflicts. Pastors without a degree and especially of peasant background were the most suitable for such parishes, also because they could be more easily controlled by patrons (rich lay leaders). Such pastors were known as "postil riders" (*Postillenreiter*), since they usually read sermons of other pastors to the people instead of writing their own sermons.[35] But in the cities and towns, and even in many rural places, having a well-educated pastor was regarded as important. While it was common for pastors to lack a university education at the beginning of the Reformation, the trend was toward increased educational requirements for pastoral candidates. Most Lutheran leaders saw increased formal pastoral formation as desirable, and as finances and teachers were increasingly available, standards rose.[36]

Theological study at a university was also quite different from modern North American practices, because university statutes (at least at Wittenberg) did not speak about or require grades or examinations, except when students wanted to graduate with a degree.[37] While programs of study and course offerings were well defined, there was a surprising amount of freedom. There were no set entrance requirements for the universities (aside from fluency in Latin), and there was no specific length of time that a student needed to stay at the university. Appointment to a parish as a pastor did not usually require a formal academic degree. Instead, the church's examinations were required, and these focused on the candidate's confession of faith, knowledge of the Bible and theology, and preaching. Thus, the length of study was tailored to students, who had differing abilities and education levels

[33] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 192–198.

[34] Nieden, *Die Erfindung des Theologen*, 116n69.

[35] Sven Tode, "Bildung und Wissenskultur der Geistlichkeit im Danzig der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Bildung und Konfession: Theologenausbildung im Zeitalter der Konfessionalisierung*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis and Markus Wriedt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 93–94; and Kaufmann, "The Clergy and the Theological Culture of the Age," 132–133.

[36] Kaufmann, "The Clergy and the Theological Culture of the Age," 128–130.

[37] Nieden, *Die Erfindung des Theologen*, 245.

when arriving at the universities.[38] Qualification for the pastoral office depended wholly on the competency of the man, and the theological curriculum existed wholly to make the man competent to be a pastor. Thus, instead of a grade card or academic transcript, recommendation letters for candidates were commonly written, testifying to the candidate's moral character, ability to preach, and understanding of doctrine. These competencies were seen as requisite in order to be a pastor. That is, qualification for the pastoral office was based in part on the piety and character of the candidate. It was expected that candidates must first have experienced God's word and cultivated it in prayer and reading, and that they had been put to the test in the real world. These kinds of competencies (academic and personal) were far more important than any academic *degree* for most parishes and pastors.[39] This appears to be a rigorous kind of competency-based education.[40]

II. Pastoral Formation according to Johann Gerhard's *Method of Theological Study*

Now that we have considered pastoral formation from the standpoint of curriculum at Orthodox Lutheran universities, it is also important to consider what else pastoral formation included. Namely, it included prayer, intense private study of Scripture and theological texts, and careful note-taking. This leads us to consider how Gerhard directed students to carry out the private side of pastoral formation.

Methods of Theological Study

Since the officially stipulated courses of study were very flexible, many professors wrote methods of theological study in the form of advice to theology students, to lead students to prepare themselves well for the pastoral office.[41] Perhaps this indicates an implicit admission that the official curricula were not sufficient to form the students into competent pastors. Thus, the written methods of theological study were geared toward a student's personal, private study much more than toward an official curriculum at a university.[42]

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[38] Kaufmann, "The Clergy and the Theological Culture of the Age," 125, 127–128, 132.

[39] Kaufmann, "The Clergy and the Theological Culture of the Age," 134–136.

[40] Cf. Rebecca Klein-Collins, "Sharpening Our Focus on Learning: The Rise of Competency-Based Approaches to Degree Completion" (Champaign, IL: National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, 2013), https://learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/Klein%20Collins%20OP20.pdf.

[41] Kaufmann, "The Clergy and the Theological Culture of the Age," 125; for a list of such works, see Johann Georg Walch, *Bibliotheca theologica selecta litterariis adnotationibus instructa*, vol. 1 (Jena: sumtu viduae Croeckeriane, 1757), 4–11.

[42] Kaufmann, "The Clergy and the Theological Culture of the Age," 126.

Gerhard's Method of Theological Study *(1617)*

Johann Gerhard published directions for theological study for his students at Jena.[43] In his *Method of Theological Study* of 1617, he incorporated Luther's general advice of prayer, meditation, and spiritual trial (*oratio*, *meditatio, tentatio*) into a work of three parts.[44] The *Method* arose from Gerhard's lectures as a new professor of theology at the University of Jena. In these lectures he led his students through a plan for a five-year course of study focused primarily on the study of Holy Scripture, though not neglecting other areas of theology. Here Gerhard sets forth a methodical approach to studying Scripture and dogmatic theology in which one is supposed to write down quotations and observations in large blank books organized by topic. The *Method* gives readers not just a list of *what* to study but also practical guidelines on *how*, guidelines that will benefit students and theologians even today. It is a rigorous method of study that centers on biblical exegesis in conversation with the Reformation and the early church, with a view to how this material can be used for pastoral life in sermons, teaching, and debate. To speak anachronistically, it integrates exegetical, systematic, historical, and practical theology.

Prerequisites of Theological Study

In the first part, Gerhard deals with the prerequisites of theological study, such as a right intention, piety, and daily prayer. Here he shows the connection between the academic study of theology and Christian faith.[45] For Gerhard, "study" does not imply that only mental faculties are to be involved. The Latin word *studium* means more than English "studying." It also means "zeal, exertion, endeavor."[46] At the

[43] According to Robert Preus, Gerhard had the study programs of Andreas Hyperius (1511–1564) and David Chytraeus (1531–1600) in mind as he was setting forth his *Method.* While he was not wholly original in setting forth the *Method*, he was indeed influential on those who read him. Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), 140; and Johann Anselm Steiger, "The Development of the Reformation Legacy: Hermeneutics and Interpretation of the Sacred Scripture in the Age of Orthodoxy," in *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Sæbø, vol. 2, *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 723.

[44] Johann Gerhard, *Methodus Studii Theologici: Publicis Praelectionibus in Academia Jenensi Anno 1617. Exposita* (Jena: Tobiae Steinmanni, 1620); and Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*. Walch writes about this book, "[Est] liber perspicue, adcurate ac prudenter scriptus ac quamuis non talem rerum adparatum praeferat, qualem nonnulla recentiora huiusmodi scripta complectuntur; solida tamen ac salutaria consilia dat cultoribus theologiae, auctorque eos, qui ante eum in argumento hoc versati sunt, longe superat. Sequitur Lutherum et ad studium diuinioris doctrinae, recte instituendum, requirit orationem, meditationem et tentationem." Walch, *Bibliotheca theologica selecta*, 1:5–6.

[45] See Nieden, *Die Erfindung des Theologen*.

[46] Charlton Thomas Lewis and Charles Short, eds., *A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), s.v. "studium" I.

beginning of the *Method* Gerhard discusses prayer and a godly, Christian life as part of this theological formation, and at the end he discusses *tentatio* ("testing"), which means two things: experiencing the truth of this theology personally, and suffering the testing of the devil. Thus, "study" refers to the formation of the whole person of the Christian, not just the mind.

Pre-Theological Studies

In the second part, he deals with the pre-theological studies (what we might call pre-seminary education), including Hebrew and Greek.[47] It was assumed that students already knew Latin, since Gerhard's book was written in Latin. Here we also see how Gerhard regarded philosophy.[48] Gerhard saw many parts of philosophy as useful for the study of theology, though God's revelation in Holy Scripture must always remain the master; philosophy is not allowed to undermine the revelation. Gerhard favored retaining the study of philosophy for theologians not simply because of its use by opponents, such as Calvinists.[49] Rather, for Gerhard "philosophy" includes a number of different fields of knowledge. As a whole, philosophy sharpens one's mind. The "real" parts of philosophy, such as astronomy, geography, physiology, and classical psychology, are useful—even necessary—to explain many biblical terms. The "instrumental" parts, such as logic and rhetoric, help a theologian to be clear in teaching.[50] Aristotelian metaphysics, on the other hand, is useless for theology. In general, Gerhard cautions against misusing philosophy, but his praise of it is due not just to its use by his opponents. He saw philosophy as being in service to God's revelation, not reigning over it. This allowed him to view it as useful.[51]

Personal Bible Study

In the third part, Gerhard deals with the course of theological study itself, which was projected to last five years, though Gerhard recognized that not all students would be able to progress through the entire course of studies.[52] With regard to the study of Scripture, Gerhard advised a twofold approach: cursory and accurate

[47] Donald Meyer, "John Gerhard on Philosophy in Theology," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 27 (September 1956): 721–724.

[48] See Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 1:122–126; and Meyer, "John Gerhard on Philosophy in Theology," 721–724.

[49] Cf. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 1:126.

[50] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 162–179.

[51] Cf. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 1:122, 130–131.

[52] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 180; Steiger, "The Development of the Reformation Legacy," 705; and Walch, *Bibliotheca theologica selecta*, 1:5–6.

reading.[53] With the cursory reading, one would read the Bible in the vernacular, two chapters of "doctrinal books" in the morning and two chapters of "historical books" in the evening. While reading, the student should write the theme of each chapter at the top of the page in his Bible, such as "creation" for Genesis 1.[54] Following this plan, the heavy thinking is done in the morning, and the lighter reading is done in the evening. The schedule allows around thirty days to be missed, and one could still finish reading the Bible in one year.

With the accurate, or painstaking, reading, the student is to read the Bible in the Greek and Hebrew, beginning with the New Testament Epistles, and he should read a trusted commentary on the original text alongside the Greek and Hebrew. In this manner of study, he might work through only a few verses per day. Gerhard says that for each chapter of the Bible, one should take notes on the following things: (1) the summary and scope of the chapter; (2) its general outline; (3) significant emphases of words or phrases (such as the definitions of unusual words or phrases); (4) the differing interpretations of ancient or recent teachers of the church (that is, a comparison of the most important translations of the Bible); (5) the resolutions of apparent contradictions; (6) significant doctrines and observations that are not obvious at first sight; and (7) solid sayings of the fathers.

By spending hours each day on this diligent reading of Scripture, and by copying and taking notes in their notebooks, pastoral candidates prepared for themselves a source of knowledge that would serve them throughout their ministries.

Reading Doctrinal Books

Gerhard next suggests studying and taking notes on doctrinal books. According to Gerhard, the student should first read a book of doctrine for beginners, such as Chemnitz's *Enchiridion*. After the principal "definitions and scriptural testimonies connected with them" have been memorized, he is ready to move on to a precise treatment of theological commonplaces. But this doctrine for beginners is important, since it gives the student the theological vocabulary and categories that will allow him to gather and organize theological knowledge in the future. Gerhard says, "For that can be one's greatest aid in the examinations, extemporaneous discourses, disputations, and sermons, and all throughout one's life—lest one wander into

[53] For the following, see Gerhard, *On Interpreting Sacred Scripture and Method of Theological Study*, 180–187; and Martin H. Jung, "'Est omnino sapientia donum Dei': spirituelle Aspekte des Theologiestudiums bei Melanchthon, Gerhard und Francke," in *Dona Melanchthoniana*, 2nd ed., ed. Johanna Loehr (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2005), 180–181.

[54] For an example of chapter summaries for the whole Bible, see Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "Mayes Bible Chapter Summaries," *Lutheran Orthodoxy* (blog), June 10, 2019, https://lutheranorthodoxy.blogspot.com/2019/06/mayes-bible-chapter-summaries.html.

unknown forests, so to speak, but rather he should know how to store everything away in its proper spot like a busy bee."[55]

When the student is ready to study theology (theological commonplaces) more deliberately, Gerhard recommends that he prepare a large blank book with sections of blank pages reserved for each article of faith and all its parts. Gerhard recommends following certain writers in order to organize one's theology notebook: Matthias Hafenreffer (1561–1619), Balthasar Mentzer (1565–1627), or Gerhard's colleague Johann Himmel. This listing of the parts of each doctrine helps the student to think clearly and to gather notes methodically for the rest of his life.[56]

At the end of his *Method*, Gerhard recommends that the fifth-year student begin to read church history, Luther's works, and the early church fathers. Gerhard's section on Luther's writings is quite short, only two pages in our English translation. He encourages students to begin not with the early Luther, to whom so much twentieth- and twenty-first-century attention has been directed, but with Luther's German writings from the time of the Augsburg Confession (1530) until his death. Only then should they go back to read the earlier writings. The same method can be seen regarding his Latin writings; students should start with the Genesis lectures (1535–1545) and only then read the other Latin writings of Luther.[57] The section on how to read the medieval scholastics is eight pages in English. Here Gerhard mostly just exposes their errors. The scholastics can be useful polemically, since many arguments against contemporary Roman Catholic doctrines can be found in them. Students are encouraged to read only Lombard's *Sentences*, Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, and the commentaries of Bonaventure and Biel on the *Sentences*.[58]

Gerhard's recommendations on reading the early church fathers are comparatively long, comprising nineteen pages in the English translation. Gerhard goes into detail to make clear what the fathers are not: norms of truth in the church. But besides this negative approach to the fathers, Gerhard also has a very positive approach. Constructively for Protestant theology, Gerhard recognizes that without the writings of the fathers, many exegetical insights would be lost. Thus, one cannot simply replace the fathers with an appeal to *sola Scriptura.* The fathers are irreplaceable. Without the fathers, the church's knowledge of Scripture would be decreased.

[55] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 188.

[56] For a different proposal on organizing analog commonplace books, see Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "How to Organize Analog Commonplace Books for Theology or Anything Else," *Lutheran Orthodoxy* (blog), May 14, 2023, http://lutheranorthodoxy.blogspot.com/2023/05/how-to-organize-analog-commonplace.html. For a digital implementation, see Joshua Hayes, "How to Organize Digital Commonplace Notes for Theology or Anything Else," *Lutheran Orthodoxy* (blog), May 15, 2023, http://lutheranorthodoxy.blogspot.com/2023/05/how-to-organize-digital-commonplace.html.

[57] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 211–212.

[58] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 230–238.

The fathers also play an important role in polemics for Gerhard. They were, after all, the common patrimony of the divided confessions, and an appeal to their writings was important and effective among discussion partners who wanted to be the successors of those revered fathers. Whatever criticism Gerhard had toward the fathers, he criticized as one who stood within that very Christian tradition. He criticized not all that the fathers wrote but only some; he criticized not from the outside but from the inside; he criticized not on the basis of subjective whim or the spirit of the age but on the basis of Holy Scripture. His theology continued to be formed intensely by the fathers, since the tradition of the ancient church was not just his history but also a part of his own present.[59]

Disputations

Gerhard valued disputations greatly. "The exercises of the school disputations have great advantage and advance students' studies in no small way. . . . They cause one to search for truth and its confirmation."[60] They help to free the mind from doubts. They train future pastors to be able to "convict those who contradict" (Titus 1:9; cf. 2 Tim 3:16). They help a student to be able to "give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15). "Moreover, these kinds of disputations were initiated and consecrated by Christ who, after turning twelve years old, 'sat in the midst of the teachers, hearing and questioning them' (Luke 2:[46]), and they have been repeated by continual use in the church among the piously learned."[61]

Yet most of Gerhard's teaching about disputations are rules that aim at keeping the disputations on track. "Sophistic argumentation unbecoming of theological order should be banished." "There should be no outbursts, taunts, or curses." "Beware of pointless logomachies and word fights." "Keep from interrupting one another." "The disputation should be about questions that are good to know, necessary to understand, and contained in the Holy Scriptures."[62] Such rules and warnings seem to be directed against the kinds of debates that many of us know: undisciplined, filled with personal attacks and often with irrelevant arguments. Gerhard was aware of the

[59] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 212–230; and Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "*Lumina, Non Numina*: Patristic Authority According to Lutheran Arch-Theologian Johann Gerhard," in *Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition*, ed. Jordan Ballor, David Sytsma, and Jason Zuidema (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 457–470.

[60] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 191.

[61] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 192.

[62] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 193.

abuses of the practice but still defended the usefulness of disputations, so long as they were conducted appropriately.

Preaching

Gerhard's advice on preaching in the *Method* has attracted attention in English.[63] His advice on applying Scripture to hearers in terms of teaching, reproof, training, correction, and consolation based on 2 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 15:4 is surely worthy of our attention. But beyond that, it is significant that for Gerhard, instruction in preaching does not begin until the fourth year of theological study. "Since those who rush into preaching before they have a firm grasp of heavenly doctrine and tried judgment usually run afoul, we have wanted to defer practicing church homilies until the fourth year of studies. Nevertheless we will not prescribe anything for those who, aided by a uniquely excellent talent or compelled by family needs, aspire to reach this goal and practice of theological study more quickly."[64]

Gerhard's concern makes sense to professors such as myself who hear student field workers preach from time to time. Not every student is ready in his first year to take homiletics. He really needs to achieve the competency of thorough biblical knowledge and clear theological thinking before he tries to preach. That is, he needs to have something to preach before he can preach it. Gerhard saw this and treated the learning of preaching in a way that recognizes varying competencies among students.

III. Pastoral Formation According to Johann Gerhard's Church Order

So, with the theological curriculum of the University of Jena and Gerhard's *Method of Theological Study*, a full and complete way of pastoral formation has been set forth. But what has not yet been discussed is assessment. How can the church be sure that this or that man is qualified to begin the pastoral ministry? For this, Gerhard's church order shows us how seriously Orthodox Lutherans took theological examinations within the call process.

[63] Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "The Useful Applications of Scripture in Lutheran Orthodoxy: An Aid to Contemporary Preaching and Exegesis," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 83, no. 1–2 (January/April 2019): 111–135; Adam C. Koontz, "Speak as the Oracles of God: Reinhold Pieper's Classical Lutheran Homiletic," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (January 2021): 23–36. Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 201–210.

[64] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 201.

Gerhard's Church Order

On June 5, 1606, Gerhard was called to be pastor and superintendent of Heldburg by Duke Johann Casimir of Coburg.[65] Four years later, in December 1610, he had made his report of an inspection of the churches and schools of Heldburg and had come to conclusions about how they needed to be improved.[66] Having successfully carried out this task, he was given the duty of conducting a general inspection of all of Johann Casimir's lands in Thuringia and Franconia in 1613.[67] By 1615, Gerhard had become general superintendent (the functional equivalent of a bishop) in Coburg and had written a church ordinance (or a "church order"), the "Church Ordinance of Johann Casimir," which was later published in 1626.[68] This church ordinance included chapters on many of the same topics that appeared in Gerhard's commonplace *On the Ecclesiastical Ministry*, such as the call, examination, ordination, investiture, and pastoral duties.

A church ordinance in early Lutheranism was both more and less than what we have in the *Handbook* of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). It was more in that it usually included a detailed statement of faith to which all the ministers had to adhere. This was the "body of doctrine." In Gerhard's church ordinance, instead of a body of doctrine, he explains that God's word is the only rule of doctrine and preaching, he explains which are the symbolical books of our church, and he explains how the writings of the church fathers are to be regarded. Then, Gerhard's church ordinance has chapters on the call, examination, ordination, investiture (i.e., installation), preaching, catechization, ceremonies, Confession and Absolution, Holy Communion, Baptism, marriage, visiting the sick, funerals, pastoral ethics, pastoral remuneration, duties of the laity, church and school visitation, the office of church superintendents, excommunication, church discipline, alms, lay leaders, hospitals, sacristans, and marriage cases. Then, in Latin, there are school regulations. Gerhard was not original in this. He basically took two existing church ordinances and edited them for the situation in Coburg. Of these two church ordinances, the

[65] Georg Berbig, *D. Johann Gerhards Visitationswerk in Thüringen und Franken* (Gotha: Th. Herm. Wechsung, 1896), 5.

[66] His report of the visitation is printed in Berbig, *D. Johann Gerhards Visitationswerk in Thüringen und Franken*, 32–36.

[67] Berbig, *D. Johann Gerhards Visitationswerk in Thüringen und Franken*, 5–6.

[68] Honecker, *Cura religionis Magistratus Christiani*, 43; and Johann Gerhard and Johann Casimir of Sachsen-Coburg, *Ordnung Wie Es in Deß Durchleuchtigen Hochgebornen Fürsten Und Herrn Herrn Johann Casimir . . . Fürstenthumb Und Landen . . . in Den Kirchen, Mit Lehr, Ceremonien, Visitationen Und Was Solchen Mehr Anhängig, Dann Im Fürstlichen Consistorio, Mit Denen Verbotenen Gradibus in Ehesachen Und Sonsten, Auch Im Fürstlichen Gymnasio, so Wol Land: Und Particular Schulen, Gehalten Werden Solle* (Coburg: Forckel, 1626).

one he quotes most often, both in his own church ordinance and in his *Theological Commonplaces*, is the 1580 church ordinance of Elector August of Saxony.[69]

In Lutheran Germany, churches were governed by a board of control called a "consistory," which consisted of theologians and lawyers appointed by the Christian ruler to deal with oversight of the churches in the realm. The cases it decided dealt with marriage; disputes over church property; supervision of life, doctrine, and conduct of pastors; protecting pastors from injustice; and the exercise of the major ban (excommunication).[70] This placement of church matters under consistories was widely adopted in all Evangelical territories in Germany.[71] The leading clergyman of the consistory was called a "superintendent." The model of church government by superintendent and consistory resembles the model of a bishop with his cathedral chapter. It is what the Lutherans were used to coming out of the Middle Ages.

Pastoral Formation Verified by the Call Process and Visitation

The call process in Gerhard's district, Coburg, was handled mainly by the consistory and the superintendent. Candidates were not permitted to request a particular parish, much less to give bribes to obtain it. (The fact that this prohibition had to be mentioned means that it must have been regarded as a danger, and may have happened.) The call process itself ran something like this. Those who have the right of patronage in a vacant parish should nominate suitable persons to the consistory. This has to happen so that the consistory can examine the candidate in person before he gives a trial sermon before the patron (and perhaps also before the congregation). If the candidates are found qualified—pure in doctrine and upright in life, testified by references—then they are presented to the congregation.[72]

Theology students normally are not allowed to take over pastorates right away. First they must serve as schoolteachers or as assistant pastors. This is so that they can learn the rituals of the church (*ritus ecclesiae*). With testimonies from their superintendents and pastors, students could later be called to sole pastorates or as senior pastors. Yet before such calls, they would need to be examined again. This

[69] Steiger, "Kirchenordnung, Visitation und Alltag: Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) als Visitator und kirchenordnender Theologe," 229.

[70] See August, Elector of Saxony, "Des durchlauchtigsten, hochgebornen fürsten und herrn, herrn Augusti, herzogen u. s. w. Vorordenung und befehl, was sich alle und jede in seiner churfürstlichen g. erblanden und incorporirten stiften underthanen auf die negst gehaltenen zwo visitationes anno 1574 und 1575, und dann anno 1577 bis auf ferneren befehlich und vorbesserung vorhalten sollen," in *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Emil Sehling, vol. 1.1 (Leipzig: Reisland, 1902), 200.

[71] Otto Friedrich, "Kirchenverfassung B. Evangelische Kirche," in *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon: Kirchlich-theologisches Handwörterbuch*, ed. Heinz Brunotte and Otto Weber, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 814.

[72] Gerhard and Casimir, *Ordnung*, 128–131.

examination consisted of a trial sermon and an inspection of their progress in learning and reading. The consistory carries out this examination and keeps records in a book of men waiting for a call. Particularly gifted men, equipped for preaching and well acquainted with the rituals of the church, may skip the diaconate period. The decision on this lies with the consistory. Not only is this examination required before the first call, but it is required also at subsequent calls to other parishes.[73]

There was a specified list of points that the consistory had to examine. Is the candidate's doctrine pure? Is he diligent in studying Scripture and reading other books? What kind of voice does he have? What is his health status? Does he lead a morally upright life? How old is he? And has he subscribed the Book of Concord?[74]

The trial sermon was also necessary. Here the consistory would pick a text, and the man being examined would have to give a short sermon on it. The consistory was supposed to pay attention not just to his oratory but also to his pronunciation and gestures. If the examination was a failure but the candidate was young and there was hope that he would improve, he was to be sent back to the academy for further study. (This indicates, again, that the length of formal seminary formation was variable, based on the competency of the individual man.)

Then there is a trial sermon before the congregation. The superintendent presents the candidate to the congregation, the candidate preaches, and afterward the superintendent asks the parishioners if they will have him.[75] The common people as a whole did not have a choice between several candidates, as in an American election. One candidate was put before the congregation, and after listening to him, they could accept him or refuse him.

The congregation has the right to refuse a proposed new pastor, but they have to give reasons. If the reasons are trivial, from misunderstanding or ignorance, their refusal can be overruled by the consistory. In this case, the congregation would be instructed by the superintendent before the new pastor begins. Why would the congregation's wishes not be followed in this case? Because, according to Gerhard's church order, it is not edifying to let a congregation continue in error, ignorance, or obstinacy.[76]

After the candidate has been cleared by the consistory and accepted by the laity, he still has to receive confirmation by the prince in Coburg. So, the candidate travels to Coburg and there preaches yet another trial sermon. After being given approval by the prince, ordination and installation follows.[77]

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[73] Gerhard and Casimir, *Ordnung*, 131–132.
[74] Gerhard and Casimir, *Ordnung*, 132–139.
[75] Gerhard and Casimir, *Ordnung*, 139.
[76] Gerhard and Casimir, *Ordnung*, 128–131.
[77] Gerhard and Casimir, *Ordnung*, 139.

Gerhard's church ordinance states also that repeated examination was required for preachers who had been serving for fewer than eight years, even though they had already been ordained. This would have to take place if their progress in study was not already known by the consistory.[78]

In Gerhard's church order it was also expected that periodic inspections (or visitations) would take place, conducted by the representatives of the superintendent and consistory, and at these inspections, one of the things investigated was the extent to which pastors had continued to study the Bible and theology. Besides this, the representatives investigated the pastors' sermons and diligence in carrying out their pastoral duties. Among the questions to be asked, the ministers of the church were asked about their loyalty to the Book of Concord, whether they had been reading the Bible through twice each year, and whether they had also been reading the symbolical books and Luther's works. They were asked which of the ancient and modern Bible commentators they had been using and whether they knew Greek and Hebrew. At each visitation, a book of the Bible and one or two articles of doctrine were assigned to the pastor, and he would be examined on them at the next visitation.[79] This ensured that a lazy pastor would continue studying and, most importantly, would study the things that would be most helpful to his people in defending and edifying their faith.

What can we learn from the church order of Johann Gerhard? The call process included a lot of preaching. People wanted to make sure that every pastoral candidate could preach well before he became a pastor. There were also many checks and controls on the purity of doctrine, as well as a clear program of continuing education and recertification. Pastors did not have to take classes, but each pastor had to demonstrate progress in his theological study. There were no requirements for any particular academic degree.

Thus we have seen that formal pastoral formation included curriculum, a method for personal study, and a manner of assessment. Working together, early modern Lutheran churches did the best they could in producing able ministers of the New Testament, who would be "complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:17).

[78] Gerhard and Casimir, *Ordnung*, 140.
[79] Gerhard and Casimir, *Ordnung*, 237–239.

IV. Conclusions and Applications

Our study of pastoral formation according to Johann Gerhard has brought forth results that may surprise some people. Some of the approaches to pastoral formation may be of great value to us today. But first, what does the seventeenth-century pastoral formation lack?

Perhaps the liturgical life and practice of worship was not covered at the universities in a consistent way. According to Gerhard's church order, this aspect of formation was, nevertheless, required of new pastors. Candidates lacking familiarity with the church's liturgical rites would need to serve as assistant pastors or schoolteachers at first, until they had learned the rites. The music of Lutheran worship was taught by requiring students to participate in worship and liturgical choirs.[80]

Mainly, practical-pastoral theology seems to have been limited to preaching advice and exercises. How would candidates learn to teach the catechism, do evangelism, or provide individual pastoral care? Such subjects were not taught at Jena, apparently, yet candidates for the ministry were supposed to have competency in some of these areas. Perhaps it was hoped that students would learn these skills under the tutelage of senior pastors out in the parishes. It is also possible that aspects of individual pastoral care and counseling were taught in exegesis.[81]

While there might be a plethora of valuable pastoral skills that a pastor should have, the old Lutheran pastoral formation instead aimed at making a young man competent in the Bible, doctrine, and self-directed learning. Apparently everything else could be learned somewhere else. The pastors were taught to be self-learners.

By and large, the ideal of a mainly biblical curriculum was followed in the lectures and disputations at Jena and other Lutheran universities. Yet side-by-side was the study of dogmatics, including the Book of Concord, and exegesis was conducted in such a way as to show that our dogma is biblical. One might say that nearly all the curriculum was dogmatic exegesis. In my humble opinion, this is desirable for our day and age. Our exegetes need to be at home in our dogmatics and should show our future pastors how and why every point of our doctrine is not just "what we as Lutherans believe" but exactly what God gave to us through the apostles and prophets. And, the other way around, our teachers of systematic theology need to see themselves as biblical theologians, should make sure to refrain from speculation, and should bind themselves to what Scripture actually says. As for church history,

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[80] Paul Graff, *Geschichte der Auflösung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen in der Evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1937), 1:18–23.

[81] E.g., Friedrich Balduin, *Commentarius In Omnes Epistolas Beati Apostoli Pauli* (Frankfurt am Main: Mevius, 1654); and Friedrich Balduin, *Apostolic Agenda: The Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul to Titus and Philemon*, trans. Eric G. Phillips and James L. Langebartels (Fort Wayne, IN: Emmanuel Press, 2020).

much of this could be put in a book and assigned as directed reading. In my experience, the best pastoral formation that happens in historical theology classes is when students are confronted with *theological* texts from the past and then discuss the *doctrine* and use of *Scripture*.

According to Gerhard and all the early Lutherans, pastors and theology students must develop a daily discipline of reading and methodical note-taking.[82] This, too, is desirable for pastoral formation today. Nowadays, there are more distractions than ever. Just as daily instrument practice is necessary for a professional musician, so also daily practice in focused reading, note-taking, and writing is necessary for a pastor. Could our curricula make more use of directed readings and less use of classes? Such directed readings could be assessed by means of a student's portfolio, in which he demonstrates that he has taken good, methodical notes on his readings, which he can then use throughout his ministry.

Gerhard's method of pastoral formation looks to me like competency-based pastoral formation. For being a pastor, no particular degree was required; no particular classes had to be taken. What was required was a thorough knowledge of the Bible and theology, an excellent ability to preach and teach, and piety. Formal assessment seems to have been mostly lacking. There was some assessment of students in early Lutheranism, though not as much as in a typical North American educational institution. Students were evaluated only if they wanted to be tested for a degree, or as part of their rigorous theological interview as part of the call process. A benefit of this method is that it might allow students the time they need to immerse themselves in reading and thinking during their years of study. A disadvantage is that a student might study for years and then, at the end, fail to pass his exams either for a degree or for pastoral competency. Our current system of classes with assessment every quarter (or semester) avoids such situations.

There was also a kind of accreditation. The seventeenth-century Lutheran universities were funded by the state, and therefore representatives of the state came to the universities from time to time to conduct inspections. Sometimes inspectors found that university statutes were not being followed. There always has to be accountability and quality control in some way or the other, and early modern Lutherans knew this too. But for the pastors, an *accredited* degree was not necessary. A man's actual theological knowledge, confession of faith, and ability to preach well were more important than where he studied or for how long.

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[82] Nieden noticed this with regard to sixteenth-century Lutheran theological study methods in general. Marcel Nieden, "Rationes studii theologici: Über den bildungsgeschichtlichen Quellenwert der Anweisungen zum Theologiestudium," in *Bildung und Konfession: Theologenausbildung im Zeitalter der Konfessionalisierung*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis and Markus Wriedt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 222–225.

It is also interesting to me that the theology faculties were all small: three or four regular professors plus some adjuncts. There is no need for us in the LCMS to be ashamed of the size of our seminaries. Historically considered, our seminary faculties are large.

Some aspects of the seventeenth-century German Lutheran pastoral formation may seem appealing to busy twenty-first-century pastors and professors, but different is not necessarily better. For example, being able to lecture in detail straight through a book of the Bible (as Luther did, lecturing on Genesis from 1535 to 1545), or on a theological topic, or on a part of the Book of Concord, could lead to more good books. And if the same thing has to be said to students year after year in classes, why is this not instead turned into an article or book and simply assigned as reading? On the other hand, perhaps a continuous lecture over the course of years would be boring and not useful in giving a consistent pastoral formation to all students.

So, rather than advocating wholesale adoption of the early Lutheran pastoral formation process, the ideas I find most compelling for our consideration at the present day are the following. First, we should consider rigorous competency-based pastoral formation, with varying *durations* of seminary study tailored to the individual student's abilities and prior knowledge and experience. Second, we should consider more directed reading of the Bible (cursory and accurate/painstaking). Students should be able to present an extensive portfolio of their well-arranged notes, which will serve them in their ministries. Third, seminar-format classes should sometimes use the disputation model. Somehow or the other, recovering the practice of disputation could be of great benefit. Fourth, as Gerhard says, "He who prays diligently has completed half of his studies."[83] If this is true, then maybe prayer should be made a part of the *curriculum*. For example, perhaps the course load could be reduced and students could be taught to meditate on Scripture and then be expected to do it every day, recording their insights in their well-organized exegetical and theological notes.

In a world where computer software (like ChatGPT or Bing) can generate halfway decent prose on any subject, including Lutheran theology, some of our prior practices need to change. If a chatbot can spit out bland but correct prose on theological topics, then hastily graded writing assignments are a worthless learning activity. Instead, the most valuable activities will be those in which students are guided to create something useful for their future preaching and ministering, and in which the students become deeper thinkers and more thoroughly biblical and faithful. Finally, after significant learning, guiding their development as preachers and teachers will be most important.

[83] Gerhard, *Method of Theological Study*, 143.

Faithfulness in committing our faith "to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2) is of the utmost importance. It is the duty of the whole church, but especially of the ministry, and most especially of church leaders and called theology professors. Learning from our Lutheran history on pastoral formation can give us some tips and new approaches, which, while old, may be extremely timely here and now.