

Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

LESSON 5 – DIVINE SERVICES & LITURGICAL OFFICES

(All citations of Holy Scripture are from the English Standard Version.)

THE PROBLEM IN OUR SYNOD

Today there is no more divisive issue in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod than the matter of how we worship. Within the lifetime of many older LCMS members are clear memories of uniform worship from the 1941 edition of *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Today, it is not at all uncommon to travel on business or vacation and to visit LCMS congregations only to discover that the service you are attending is not even remotely Lutheran either in appearance or content. Non-Lutheran hymnody with false teaching is frequently found in LCMS congregations. Hymnody from Reformed churches is imported into LCMS worship, bringing along the theological errors of the Reformed. Homemade liturgies and so-called "creeds" are sometimes written by pastors in place of the Three Ecumenical Creeds.

Some of our congregations are using praise bands, projection screens, chancel drama, liturgical dance, clown ministry and altars on wheels that can conveniently replace the focus of the worship from the Lord's sacrifice to human activity.

We once were a Synod that firmly believed, taught, and confessed that our worship should be an expression of the unity of God Himself, our doctrine, and our life together. It was for this reason that the first constitution of the LCMS said with reference to worship forms:

- IV. Business of the Synod...
 - 10. To strive after the greatest possible uniformity in ceremonies...
 - 14. Synod holds in accordance with the 7th Article of the Augsburg Confession that uniformity in ceremonies is not essential; yet on the other hand Synod deems such a uniformity wholesome and useful, namely for the following reasons:
 - a. because a total difference in outward ceremonies would cause those who are weak in unity of doctrine to stumble; ...
 - b. because in dropping heretofore preserved usages the Church is to avoid the appearance of and desire for innovation.

Furthermore Synod deems it necessary for the purification of the Lutheran Church in America, that the emptiness and the poverty in the externals of the service be opposed, which, having been introduced here by the false spirit of the Reformed, is now rampant.

All pastors and congregations that wish to be recognized as orthodox by Synod are prohibited from adopting or retaining any ceremony which might weaken the confession of the truth or condone or strengthen a heresy, especially if heretics insist upon the continuation or the abolishing of such ceremonies...

The desired uniformity in the ceremonies is to be brought about especially by the adoption of sound Lutheran agendas (church books).

(Constitution of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, Vol. XVI, No. 1, April 1943)

Worship in the LCMS is in total disarray and confusion. Innovation has been elevated as though it were a virtue. We have even passed Synodical Resolutions which reject uniformity in ceremonies:

Resolved, That the Synod in convention, affirm respect for diversity in worship practices as we build greater understanding of our theology of worship and foster further discussion of worship practices that are consistent with that theology;

and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage pastors, musicians, and worship leaders to exercise this freedom responsibly...and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Worship institute a process leading toward the development of diverse worship resources for use in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

(2004 Convention Proceedings, 62nd Regular Convention of the LCMS, p. 124)

The stage has been set for diverse worship forms; any thought of seeking uniformity has been cast aside. For those pastors and congregations committed to the errant Church Growth Movement consider the above resolution to be license to do whatever they please in worship.

LUTHERANS HAVE HISTORICALLY BEEN A LITURGICAL CHURCH

Compared to the fathers of the Missouri Synod who emerged from the confessional renewal of the 19th century and reclaimed the liturgy and hymns of pre-rationalism and pre-pietism Lutheranism, we have fallen into modern versions of what they sought to avoid. The theologies they sought to push out the front door have been invited in the back door and, in some cases, formalized by synod action. There is now disparity between some liturgical practices and our creedal and confessional writings. In the Augsburg Confession we note the following regarding liturgical matters:



1] Falsely are our churches accused of abolishing the Mass; for the Mass is retained among **2]** us, and celebrated with the highest reverence. Nearly all the usual ceremonies are also preserved, save that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns, which have been added **3]** to teach the people. For ceremonies are needed to this end alone that the unlearned **4]** be taught [what they need to know of Christ]. And not only has Paul commanded to use in the church a language understood by the people 1 Cor. 14:2-9, but it has also been so ordained by man's law. **5]** The people are accustomed to partake of the Sacrament together, if any be fit for it, and this also increases the reverence and devotion of public **6]** worship. For none are admitted **7]** except they be first examined. The people are also advised concerning the dignity and use of the Sacrament, how great consolation it brings anxious consciences, that they may learn to believe God, and to expect and ask of Him all that is good. **8]** [In this connection they are also instructed regarding other and false teachings on the Sacrament.] This worship pleases God; such use of the Sacrament nourishes true devotion **9]** toward God. It does not, therefore, appear that the Mass is more devoutly celebrated among our adversaries than among us. (Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV (The Mass), 1-9)

From the Apology of the Augsburg Confession:

At the outset we must again make the preliminary statement that we **1]** do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it. For among us masses are celebrated every Lord's Day and on the other festivals, in which the Sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved. And the usual public ceremonies are observed, the series of lessons, of prayers, vestments, and other like things. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV (The Mass), 1)

All this is to support the fact that the liturgy is "Divine Service," that is, the Lord serving us in Word and Sacrament in His way (see Apology XXIV (The Mass) under the term 'Mass' and Luke 22:27). Attending church is not about what we are doing for God but what He is doing for us through His designated means. The liturgy we received grew around that fact and was carefully trimmed by Luther and his colleagues under the article of justification by grace through faith. This has been the historic understanding of the liturgy among Lutherans in various countries (German: *Gottesdienst*; Finnish: *Jumalanpalvelus*; Swedish: *Gudstjänst*). The Lord Jesus is and continues among us as the One who serves (Luke 22:27; Acts 1:1-3) with forgiveness, life and salvation.

QUESTIONS

1. What understanding of the Church is implied by the above two statements from the Lutheran Confessions?
2. How did the Lutherans understand the reformation according to these statements on the reform of the Mass?

LUTHERAN IS AS LUTHERAN DOES

Doctrine determines practice and shapes the use of things which are neither commanded nor forbidden. As the Lord indicates in Luke 22:27, He is and continues among us as the One who serves in His Word and Sacraments. The liturgical rites and ceremonies reinforce and convey Christ's presence among us.

Given our unconditional subscription to the Book of Concord, one is befuddled to grasp how Baptist, Wesleyan, and Assemblies of God worship practices are allowed to proliferate among LCMS congregations. The Augsburg Confession and its Apology (defense) are clear that the historic body of liturgy as revised under Scripture and the

article of justification by grace alone is the expectation in a church that considers itself confessional Lutheran. Thus, neither “evangelism” nor the “missional movement” drive our liturgy.

Often in discussions of liturgy the underlying assertion is that what is said about adiaphora in Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration) Article X (Church Practices) trumps what is said about adhering to the historic liturgy in Augsburg Confession and Apology XXIV (The Mass). This cannot be sustained in light of the confessional and historical evidence. Before approaching these two articles in the Book of Concord, let us consider another oft-cited article in this discussion. Augsburg Confession, Article VII (The Church) says in part:

And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and **3]** the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike.

What we see in this statement dealing directly with the marks of the church is not a minimalistic gospel reductionism, nor a mechanical ritualism or traditionalism. However, neither does the Augsburg Confession endorse a willy-nilly importation of ceremonies, rites, or songs from heterodox confessions. Hence, Augsburg Confession XXIV (The Mass) clearly makes that point. Ceremonies and rites might expand and contract, but Lutherans do not abolish liturgy or make it a mere museum piece reserved for Reformation Day or some nostalgic occasion. The historic liturgy is contemporary for genuine Lutherans.

Unfortunately, today Formula of Concord X (Church Practices) on adiaphora (things neither commanded nor forbidden; German: *Mitteldinge*, “middle-things”) is often used to justify contemporary Christian music, charismatic practices, or the latest from the protestant Christian bookstores. One need only examine the history of post-Reformation struggles with Calvinism (for instance in Brandenburg) to discern that this is not a proper application of the Formula of Concord. Notably, Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration), Article X (Church Practices) declares:



4] To explain this controversy, and by God's grace finally to settle it, we present to the Christian reader this simple statement regarding the matter [in conformity with the Word of God]:

5] Namely, when under the title and pretext of external adiaphora such things are proposed as are in principle contrary to God's Word (although painted another color), these are not to be regarded as adiaphora, in which one is free to act as he will, but must be avoided as things prohibited by God. In like manner, too, such ceremonies should not be reckoned among the genuine free adiaphora, or matters of indifference, as make a show or feign the appearance, as though our religion and that of the Papists were not far apart, thus to avoid persecution, or as though the latter were not at least highly offensive to us; or when such ceremonies are designed for the purpose, and required and received in this sense, as though by and through them both contrary religions were reconciled and became one body; or when a reentering into the Papacy and a departure from the pure doctrine of the Gospel and true religion should occur or gradually follow therefrom [when there is danger lest we seem to have reentered the Papacy, and to have departed, or to be on the point of departing gradually, from the pure doctrine of the Gospel].

6] For in this case what Paul writes, 2 Cor. 6:14-17, shall and must obtain: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what communion hath light with darkness? Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord.

7] Likewise, when there are useless, foolish displays, that are profitable neither for good order nor Christian discipline, nor evangelical propriety in the Church, these also are not genuine adiaphora, or matters of indifference.

What is said above about avoiding the impression that our faith does not differ greatly from that of the Papacy (Roman Church) also applies to other sects (denominations; i.e., Baptists, Pentecostals, Methodists, Presbyterians, Assemblies of God, etc.). The use of things which are neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture is an important matter, even though adiaphora are sometimes called “indifferent” matters. Ceremonies either support Scriptural teaching and practice or undermine it.

QUESTIONS

1. Even though there are things that Scripture neither commands nor forbids, give examples of good and bad uses of freedom.
2. Why is it important to express the continuity or catholicity of the Church by using certain ceremonies or customs?

HUMAN TRADITIONS DON'T HAVE TO BE THE SAME

When the Augsburg Confession VII ((The Church)) says that human traditions do not have to be alike everywhere, there is a qualification made to “rites or ceremonies” “instituted by men.” The sacraments may be thought of as rites and ceremonies, but they are divinely instituted means of grace.

During the Reformation era in Germany, there were various territorially adopted liturgical orders with rubrics for certain ceremonies. However, these were not adopted from congregation to congregation but only for particular jurisdictions. The congregations of those jurisdictions were under those orders. The Augsburg Confession XV (Church Ceremonies) does not reject ceremonies per se, but rather those “ordinances and traditions instituted by men for the purpose of propitiating God and earning grace” (Augsburg Confession, XV 3).

To a great degree, intent, which might be changed by catechesis, could reinterpret historic ceremonies “in an evangelical way.” Such has been shown to be historically the case many times over as we may observe in liturgical gestures, vestments, processions, artwork, architecture, chanting, bowing, kneeling, the use of lectionaries, the church year, and the like. Even where there is a variation in ceremonies from place to place, the assumption is that such ceremonies express what we believe, teach and confess. And they do not give the impression of unity with the heterodox. Also, such ceremonies will not merely be “useless spectacles.” Church catholicity is expressed as much as possible in rite and ceremony. Lutherans did not intend to be a “new church.”



QUESTIONS

1. Why is it helpful that ceremonies are adopted within certain territories or regions rather than merely from congregation to congregation on their own?
2. What is the danger to the Gospel if Church practice is simply reduced to questions of whether we “have to” do something or not?

For an extended discussion demonstrating that the Lutherans rightly understood the good and proper use of adiaphora in the Church, see the excursus in the appendix to this study, titled: The Lutherans Defend the Proper use of Adiaphora.

WHAT'S GOING ON AMONG US LUTHERANS?

What do we see in the “contemporary worship” movement among us? Is it chiefly an exercise of freedom to produce new Lutheran hymns, a new post-communion canticle, or a new gesture to proclaim Christ’s death and resurrection? Or do we see imported hymns that promote the theology of the Assemblies of God, the Methodists and Baptists? Do we not see the liturgical gesture of the *schwärmer*, the modern descendants of Zwingli, Wesley, and the tent meeting revivalists? The citation of Formula of Concord X (Church Practices) on adiaphora in such cases is a fraud and affront to the faith and life of our Lutheran forefathers. This is many times worse than the Prussian Union or its predecessors of radical reform from Zurich, Geneva, or Halle. Such moves in worship practice are many times worse than even the union liturgy of Friedrich Wilhelm III who restored much historic ceremonial, except in some critical areas of the Eucharist.

The Christian pop mills of Nashville are hardly fit compositions for the holy of holies of the New Testament. Here we should look in our own attic and we would be surprised at the treasures we already have. A church that confesses the bodily presence of Christ in the Holy Supper will worship different than a sect that does not. Dissonant practice from a church’s confession will eventually erode the confession into oblivion or cause it to reform its practice back into harmony with orthodox teaching.



The doctrine of adiaphora is not the time for everyone to do what is right in his own eyes, to become a servant of the world rather than of God. The Formula of Concord reminds us:

20 For this reason, too, believers require the teaching of the law: so that they do not fall back on their own holiness and piety and under the appearance of God’s Spirit establish their own service to God on the basis of their own choice, without God’s Word or command. As it is written in Deuteronomy 12:8, 28, 32:

“You shall not act all of us according to our own desires,” but “listen to the commands and laws which I command you,” and “you shall not add to them nor take anything from them.”

21 Furthermore believers also require the teaching of the law regarding their good works, for otherwise people can easily imagine that their works and life are completely pure and perfect. [Formula of Concord Solid Declaration VI (The Third Use of God's Law), 20,21]

When parts of the ceremony are adiaphora, the liturgist(s) and church musician(s) cannot be indifferent. A performance of self-expression, inciting concupiscence (sinful desires) and irreverence in the presence of the holy God is not acceptable. Even the desire to bring people to the Church building must be examined carefully to see that its methods are not at odds with the doctrine of original sin which renders man incapable of understanding the things of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1) and justification by grace alone. The methods of enticement, attraction, and entertainment point not to the bondage of the will in spiritual matters and salvation (including conversion) by grace through faith alone. Hence what is argued to be a faithful use of adiaphora is really in many cases an indication that a pastor or church has given way to the theological underpinnings of Jacob Arminius and John Wesley.



QUESTIONS

1. How does using worship to attract or entice outsiders indicate an assumption of spiritual free will to convert oneself to Christ?
2. How does decision theology contradict a Scriptural understanding of sin and justification by grace alone?

LITURGY AND *LEX ORANDI, LEX CREDENDI*

Liturgists are to be servants of the church for the sake of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. It is not chiefly our doing, but Divine Service (*leitourgia*). Such things concern the marks of the church, which we dare not obscure. Dr. Hermann Sasse (1895-1976), the great 20th century Lutheran theologian, remarks on the need for careful thinking and application even in matters of adiaphora:

We Lutherans know nothing of liturgy that is prescribed by God's Word. We know that the church has freedom to order its ceremonies and that it can therefore preserve the liturgical heritage of Christendom, as long as it is consistent with the Gospel. Indeed, our church in the Reformation placed the greatest value on preserving as much as possible this heritage that binds us with the fathers. But these ceremonies do not belong to the essence of the church or to the true unity of the church, as Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession and Article 10 of the Formula of Concord teach. [Hermann Sasse. "The Lutheran Understanding of the Consecration" in *We Confess the Sacraments*. Trans. Norman Nagel. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), p.117

Dr. John Kleinig (b. 1942; an Old Testament Lutheran theologian from Australia), in discussing his teacher's views on liturgy, describes Dr. Sasse's views of catholicity as it plays into rites and ceremonies:

While he repeatedly argued for the freedom of the church from all kinds of liturgical legalism, he had no time for liturgical experimentation. He always taught us that we should use our freedom in a catholic way to retain the best of [the] past and affirm our continuity with the church of all ages. In contrast to most modern church men and women, he maintained that the oldest liturgies were the best. Paradoxically, the greatest freedom for individual Christians lay in the use of the old forms, because they were catholic and not idiosyncratic; they did not demand uniformity of experience or piety. Just because they were objective and because they expressed what all Christians had in common, they were capacious and inclusive. [John Kleinig. "Sasse on Worship" in *Hermann Sasse: A Man for our Times?* (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1998), p.117]

As Lutheran history attests, sometimes an aversion to certain ceremonies is an indicator of an aversion to certain theological truths and articles of faith. Walther certainly was aware of that. Recent decades of Lutheranism in North America have not seen a great deal of catechesis in matters of liturgy or the sacraments. Add to this, what is still often very minimal liturgical education among seminarians, and one has a recipe for division and importation of heterodox practices.

What makes our situation difficult is that we are in many cases talking about the restoration of rites and ceremonies that are well within our Lutheran heritage but in many cases were never or only sparsely in living memory. So for the congregations they are often, "New to you, but not new." In our mobile society there is great helpfulness in ceremonies that have precedent, and are churchly, and therefore exhibit some catholicity. In a mobile society especially, it would not be desirable for every congregation to be doing their own thing. Rev. Dr. Kenneth Korby (1924-2006) observes:

We have difficulty with language, furthermore, because the language we have inherited was different from the one we now

use, and we have not spent that much time learning to know the language of the past before we discard it. Furthermore, our vocabulary regarding call, ordination, and the authority of the pastoral office in relationship to the royal priesthood of believers has become obscured and troubled. We are suffering confusion to a great extent because of the loss of our common spiritual and theological language. The language of pastoral theology and the care of souls is predominantly the language of the personality and social sciences. We are becoming poorer and poorer. Similarly, much of the language of piety has been taken over by the language of baptistified charismatics. The language of the catechism, of hymnody, of the liturgy, and of Bible translations is in such flux that fewer and fewer learn it by heart. [Kenneth F. Korby. "The Pastoral Office and the Priesthood of Believers" in *Lord Jesus Christ, Will You Not Stay: Essays in Honor of Ronald Feuerhahn on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*. Edited by J. Bart Day, Jon D. Vieker et al. (Houston, Texas: The Feuerhahn Festschrift Committee, 2002); pp.333, 334]

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi – You will eventually believe like you worship. “The law of prayer is the law of faith,” or put more simply, what we pray shapes what we believe, and vice-versa. When there is a disconnect between liturgy and the church’s biblical doctrine, eventually one will overwhelm the other.

18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. James 2:18

Why Lutheran Congregations use the Historic Liturgy

- It is the practice described in the Lutheran Confessions.
- It has historically served to deliver God’s gifts throughout history.
- It protects us from fads and idiosyncrasies of people and cultures.
- It is catholic.
- It serves the mission of the gospel.
- It keeps us focused on Christ.
- It engages the heart, mind, body and soul.
- It preserves the reverence of worship.
- It covers the whole counsel of God.
- It is built upon word and sacrament and justification by grace through faith, and the real presence of Christ.

FREEDOM IN CHURCH MUSIC

Freedom cannot be used to import what is heterodox-and therefore, spiritually dangerous.

The Lutheran Church is the church of such greats as Johann Sebastian Bach, Dietrich Buxtehude, Michael Praetorius and others. Our church knows the freedom of using musical composition in liturgy, hymns, and instrumentation to proclaim the gospel, express reverence in His holy presence, and direct attention to God’s Word.

Music is powerful but this power can be both negative and positive. Music can manipulate the emotions and senses. God calls us out of darkness into His marvelous light and we become holy as a gift of God when we are brought to faith in Christ our crucified and risen Lord. The old Adam does not want God in Christ at the center; he refuses to sit at the receiving end of God’s Gospel gifts as one in need of rescue, cleansing, and forgiveness. Catechesis from pastor to musician is essential – whether to choir director, organist, instrumentalist, cantor, or choir.



The music is there in the same way that the pastor is there for the liturgy: for the sake and purpose of the Word and Sacraments. The music vests the voices of pastor, congregation, and choir. If used well it de-emphasizes the personality and emphasizes the words of the musical piece in liturgy or song. Music in this way serves as John the Baptist did in relation to Jesus – preparing the way, pointing the way to Jesus.

In liturgical music, God’s Word, rightly divided, comes first as setting the priority and purpose of the Services of God’s House. And this goes on continually in the Church throughout the ages (Matthew 16:18; Jude 3). Out of the Word of God comes everything that exists, therefore the text, the priority of the Word, the Gospel message comes first.

The musical selection does not disregard the liturgical structure of the service nor the church year nor the teaching of the whole counsel of God. In the Psalms the text was often given to the Chief Musician. The text came first and then the music was brought to fit the purpose of the text. As Johann Walther, the composer colleague of Luther,

put it aptly, “All music should be so arranged that its notes are in harmony with the text” (Carl Schalk, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise*, p.27).

Jesus Christ is the one who has made the atoning sacrifice once and for all and there is none other who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the One who comes to us here and now in His Word and Sacraments to deliver to us the benefits of Good Friday and Easter. Since we are conceived and born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and likewise are native to death and sin (Ephesians 2:1-2) we cannot naturally discern the things of the Spirit of God (I Corinthians 2:14). Therefore, the Word of God, in preaching and in music, must not be used to entertain, but to bring the truths of man’s salvation in Christ to the ear where the Holy Spirit does the work.

Of course, all the arts can be abused. Neither PowerPoint nor icons, neither baroque music nor soft rock, are mediators between God and men. The church has a culture all its own as the Word bears fruit in the history of the Church in contrast to our surrounding culture.

QUESTIONS

1. What might the position of musicians in the Divine Service (in the sanctuary) suggest about the nature of the gathering in the understanding of the people?
2. What is implied about the nature of going to Church when different styles or “flavors” of worship are used in a congregation?
3. What is implied when a Lutheran congregation begins to use musical forms and songs that are known from other Christian confessions/denominations?
4. What power, positive or negative, can musicians exercise?
5. Is music in the Divine Service simply a matter of taste or style preference?
6. Even if a particular music style isn’t commanded or forbidden, does this mean that anything goes or that some might work against the Gospel?
7. How can we keep straight the difference between the Gospel of salvation in Christ vs. human means and methods of attracting a crowd and or emotional manipulation (crowd dynamics)?

GOD GIVES HIS GIFTS

God has called His sheep into His green pastures in the Divine Service. It is not we who invite God to the gathering. He initiates giving His gifts. Music is summoned into the liturgical context as an “Amen” to the structure of texts in the liturgy and church year. To praise God is to praise His marvelous deeds (I Peter 2) not merely to emote or speak in testimonials whether in old Pietism or in new American revivalistic ways. So the music is to go along with the text rather than direct us back to our own filthy rags. In this way the Word of Christ dwells among us richly with the prominence and reverence that is truly meet, right, and salutary.

Those who have sold their birthright for the sake of outward success and “effective ministry” are depriving the flock of the treasures that Christ wants to give. It is evangelism at the expense of the evangel. The loss of our Christology (read Formula of Concord VIII! (The Person of Christ)) and downplaying original sin and the separation of the Word and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-7) rob us of the certainty of faith and of Christ’s exalted humanity with us and within us—to be replaced only with engineered worship experiences, personal messages from the leader, and an ahistorical and un-catholic church.

Reverence or the lack thereof is a leading indicator of things happening below in the depths of texts and forms and the attendant music and ceremonies. As Lutherans who still subscribe to Augsburg and Apology XXIV (The Mass) (and which are not negated by Formula X! (Church Practices)), we know that the early Lutherans understood that they were not a new church and that freedom was used for the sake of justification by grace and not for recruitment or to indulge the fallen self and its programs.

The pastoral reforms of the Mass that were done by Luther, Bugenhagen, and Chemnitz were carefully done to let the Word of the Gospel ring clearly and to exhibit the truth that the one church does indeed continue until the end of the world under suffering and cross.

This was true also for the confessional renewal of Lutheranism in the 19th century before Pietism and Rationalism took their toll on the Church of the Augsburg Confession. Reverence for the Gospel of cross-purchased mercy,

reverence for the act of reform, reverence for ecclesiology are all at work there and it is evident (see Hebrews 12:22-29). For the Church, this does impact the rite (the words), the ceremonies (the how, the rubrics), the music, and our hearts and minds by the words of Jesus that are Spirit and Life.

QUESTIONS

1. Given how we understand the power of God's Word and the gift of salvation in Christ, what caution should we exercise in the church when using words like "effective" or "successful"?
2. Given that the power to believe in Christ lies solely in the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and that God also allows His Word to be rejected (since it is gift and not forced on us), can we guarantee outcomes when witnessing or doing outreach?
3. How does the Lord's way of incarnation (His coming in the flesh) and His way of coming in the particular means of grace (Word and Sacraments) affect the way the church worships and receives the Gospel gifts?
4. What is the value of continuity of liturgical rites and ceremonies with our forefathers during and before the Reformation period?
5. If a congregation simply does its own thing, what does this say about its attitude with regard to its own church body/synod?
6. What do models of enticement/attraction imply about fallen human nature? Is that correct according to Scripture?
7. Can we make disciples of Jesus by watering down the faith? (See Matthew 28:19-20.)
8. Is the Divine Service *primarily* for the baptized believers or those outside?
9. Should the Divine Service be the chief means or context for obtaining new members? Or does something else come first?

Hebrews 12:22-29

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, **23** to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, **24** to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, **26** whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." **27** Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. **29** For our God is a consuming fire

In the appendix are two excursus. The first gives additional important thoughts on adiaphora, and the second the use of projectors and projection screens in the sanctuary.

Appendix 1 to Lesson 5 – Excursus on Adiophora

THE LUTHERANS DEFEND THE PROPER USE OF ADIOPHORA

In an essay on Formula of Concord, Article X (on adiophora), Kurt Marquart writes:

The a-liturgical orientation of our modern Reformed-pietistic environment moreover jumps only too easily to the conclusion that Article X simply consigns everything liturgical to the realm of adiophora, so that as long as the Word and Sacraments still come to expression somehow, all outward arrangements are free and “indifferent.” That too would be a grave misunderstanding. The term adiophora applies only to that strictly circumscribed area of external details neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word. In no way does FC X abrogate Article XXIV of both the AC and the Apology, in which the Lutheran Church officially confesses its doctrinal stand on the nature of Christian worship – including such particulars as the divinely given relation between preaching and the Sacrament (Apology XXIV, 33-40, 71-22, 80, 89), and the “right use” of the historic Christian “mass” (AC XXIV 35 German; Apology XXIV 99) or the “liturgy” (Apology XXIV 79-81) or the “Eucharist” (Apology XXIV 74-77, 87). It would be a reductionist fallacy to confuse all such deeply theological issues with mere adiophora. [Kurt E. Marquart. “Article X, The Formula of Concord – Confession and Ceremonies” in *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord*. Edited by Robert D. Preus and Wilbert Rosin. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), p.263-264]

The Formula of Concord itself is foundational for Marquart’s observation regarding the continuing importance and authority of Augustana and Apology XXIV. In Rule and Norm of the Solid Declaration it is stated [FC-SD, Rule and Norm, 5]:

In the third place, since in these last times God, out of especial grace, has brought the truth of His Word to light again from the darkness of the Papacy through the faithful service of the precious man of God, Dr. Luther, and since this doctrine has been collected from, and according to, God’s Word into the articles and chapters of the Augsburg Confession against the corruptions of the Papacy and also of other sects, we confess also the First, Unaltered Augsburg Confession as our symbol for this time, not because it was composed by our theologians, but because it has been taken from God’s Word and is founded firmly and well therein, precisely in the form in which it was committed to writing, in the year 1530, and presented to the Emperor Charles V at Augsburg by some Christian Electors, Princes, and Estates of the Roman Empire as a common confession of the reformed churches, whereby our reformed churches are distinguished from the Papists and other repudiated and condemned sects and heresies, after the custom and usage of the early Church, whereby succeeding councils, Christian bishops and teachers appealed to the Nicene Creed, and confessed it [publicly declared that they embraced it].

Note here that it is affirmed *in toto* and not as merely historic testimony to what Lutherans at that point confessed and practiced. And note also that the Confession is meant to distinguish the genuinely Lutheran churches “from the Papists and other repudiated and condemned sects and heresies....” It is clear that the Formula of Concord is not taken to be a repudiation of nor a modification of the Augsburg Confession. Likewise we also have the following affirmation of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession [FC-SD, Rule and Norm, 6]:

In the fourth place, as regards the proper and true sense of the oft-quoted Augsburg Confession, an extensive Apology was composed and published in print in 1531, after the presentation of the Confession, in order that we might explain ourselves at greater length and guard against the [slanders of the] Papists, and that condemned errors might not steal into the Church of God under the name of the Augsburg Confession, or dare to seek cover under the same. We unanimously confess this also, because not only is the said Augsburg Confession explained as much as is necessary and guarded [against the slanders of the adversaries], but also proven [confirmed] by clear, irrefutable testimonies of Holy Scripture.

Also notable is the following summary from Rule and Norm [FC-SD, Rule and Norm, 12-13]:

12] So also, as before mentioned, they were all written and sent forth before the divisions among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession arose; therefore, since they are held to be impartial, and neither can nor should be rejected by either part of those who have entered into controversy, and no one who without guile is an adherent of the Augsburg Confession will complain of these writings, but will cheerfully accept and tolerate them as witnesses [of the truth], no one can think ill of [blame] us that we derive from them an explanation and decision of the articles in controversy, **13]** and that, as we lay down God’s Word, the eternal truth, as the foundation, so we introduce and quote also these writings as a witness of the truth and as the unanimously received correct understanding of our predecessors who have steadfastly held to the pure doctrine.

Charles Porterfield Krauth (1823-1883), the great English-speaking theologian of the 19th century, published a little book in 1860 called, *The Evangelical Mass and the Romish Mass: A Contribution to the Defence of the Augsburg Confession and the History of the Reformation*. In it he argues:

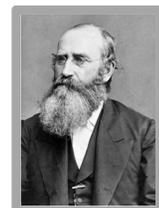
...to prove that the Augsburg Confession by the Mass, means the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and that the ceremonies retained were those appropriate to that celebration; and that they, consequently, did not retain the ceremonies distinctive of the Romish Mass [p.6].

Krauth traces the analysis of Luther on the Mass leading up to the Augsburg Confession, the important precursor

documents up to the Augustana, and then examines the Augsburg Confession and Apology themselves on the Mass. Krauth also examines the writings of some of the early orthodox Lutheran fathers. Krauth cites Johann Gerhard's rebuttal of Robert Bellarmine to defend the Confessions' statement that Lutherans do not abolish the Mass. In part, Gerhard is quoted by Krauth as saying:

All turns, therefore, on our ability to show that what we retain in our Church is the true mass. This we prove from the institution of our Lord, the example of the Apostles, and the primitive practice." [Krauth, p.62]

It is clear that the Lutherans intended to say, as Krauth argues, that the Lutheran mass is that liturgy and administration of the Lord's Supper (in context of the Word also) that is in continuity with the Apostles and the early church, without Romanizing additions (canon of the mass, Corpus Christi procession, exclusive Latin, communion in one kind only, inaudible Verba, prayers to the saints). Krauth adduces many quotations from the orthodox Lutheran fathers to show that what Bellarmine objected to in the Lutheran celebration of the mass was the absence of the sacrificial prayers and such (chiefly the canon of the mass). The attitude of the Reformers was that what was undeniably "Romish" is purged from the Mass, while anything that was not was kept in freedom and with proper catechesis. Justification by grace was the determining criterion, as Bryan Spinks has shown in his booklet, *Luther's Liturgical Criteria and His Reform of the Canon of the Mass*. In his conclusion, Krauth writes in the spirit of Formula of Concord X:



Charles Porterfield
Krauth (1823-1883)

The law of love may require the rejection of a thing at one time, which it is not only tolerated, but defended at another. Change the circumstances, and that becomes a making Christ of none effect, which at another time was but a loving confession to the innocent infirmity of brethren. All rites, ceremonies, usages of human origin may, though originally proper and useful, lose their value and beauty in time, may subvert in one era what they built up in another. Hence, conformity with our fathers in anything confessedly of human origin, is not necessary to constitute us their true children. But truth is the abiding life of which the noblest outward forms are but the mantle. We cannot reject as a diabolical lie, what our fathers considered heavenly truth, and yet be their own true children. He who affirms that the devils were cast out by Beelzebub, the prince of devils, is not a lineal spiritual son of him who believes they were cast out by the Spirit of God. Religious obligations, it is true, are not hereditary, but when we retain names which by the testimony of all history, and the confession of all mankind, imply certain principles with the name, or reject the name with the principles. No man is bound by his birth to be a Lutheran; but when he accepts and glories in the name as his birthright, he binds himself to be the thing which the name implies. But what construction of the name of Lutheran can be so wide as to make good the defence of those who not only attempt to blot out and foul our glorious Confession, but to place those who regard it with heartfelt love, in the odious position of persons not loyal to that Protestantism in which we all have such a tremendous stake? "He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind." [Krauth, p.64]

The contemporary worship movement is a modern expression of the tent-meeting revivalism of Charles G. Finney (1792-1875; an American Presbyterian and leader in the 2nd Great Awakening in America) and those of the Arminian/Wesleyan tradition. And yet, with great theological ineptitude, rites, ceremonies and hymns of that tradition are brought into Lutheran congregations in the name of leadership, evangelistic zeal, church growth, and success. Supposedly these things are imported in the name of "vision-casting" and "revitalization" (see Ezekiel 13!).

Adiaphora leaves room for the continued blessing of the church through the composition of hymns and other arts. It gives the church the opportunity to give thanks for all the Lord's benefits, especially in response to the administration of the Word and Sacraments. It is a way for the heirs of the great tradition of Christendom to add their voice to the heavenly chorus of those who have gone before us. But it is an abuse simply to pretend that we do whatever pleases us or whatever can create the kind of response we need for statistical reports, church fund-raising, the budget or to pump up egos. Evangelism is not properly the enticement of Christians from protestant denominations down the street or a band aid for the poorly catechized to remain as sheep without a shepherd.

Appendix 2 to Lesson 5 – Excursus on Projection Screens in the Sanctuary

SOME THOUGHTS ON PROJECTION SCREENS IN THE SANCTUARY

Using projection screens in place of printed books or bulletins in the Divine Service has become quite prevalent in some parts of North American Lutheranism in general and in the LCMS in particular. Obviously there is nothing in the Bible that forbids them as they didn't exist until recently. But this does not thereby commend their use to us. Even when things are neither commanded nor forbidden, this does not mean they are completely indifferent or that they may be used willy-nilly. What follows below are a few reflections and cautions regarding the use of projection screens (PowerPoint, etc.) in the sanctuary or for the Divine Service in general. We certainly do not expect these reflections to be definitive, but as grist for conversation and hopefully to give pause before jumping with both feet into this novelty.

1. **Regarding the transient and ethereal nature of the projection.**

Obviously the computer, projector, and monitor can be switched on and off. During the progression of a service various lyrics, pictures, and information can be flashed onto the screen for varying lengths of time. This means that reading ahead in the service is not a possibility for the worshiper and neither for the liturgist, without a hand-held version of the service. This also means that the parishioner who is concerned to be a Berean Christian (Acts 17:11) about the content of the service has no means to evaluate such prior to or during the service until it comes into being on the screen(s).

A thing that can lose power cannot be accounted for and is easily forgotten. Yet the effect of these things upon the heart and mind, and the soul can be lasting, even negatively with harm. There is no test of time, no evaluation of the church catholic, no ecclesial awareness at all in what is produced from an individual or committee in one locale. It then becomes liturgical Russian-roulette. Furthermore, even when said content is good, meditation on the text or other item projected is also a fleeting moment. (And what trouble there is in a power outage!) What is given in this context is a brief appearance, reflecting what someone thought at a moment.



2. **Regarding the dangerous potential of weekly chosen (potentially weak) content.**

Anytime one changes format or mode of presentation, casting aside standardized content becomes a real possibility. For Lutherans who subscribe to the Augsburg Confession and Apology XXIV (The Mass), this is not something that should be ignored or taken for granted. Even before the advent of projection screens in Lutheran sanctuaries, we saw wholesale rejection of the liturgical heritage of our Confessions. The liturgy *du jour* (*du jour* means something that is short lived, or of the day) produced by pastor, worship committee, praise team, or whatever becomes the standard content of the screen.

And the liturgy *du jour* is hardly built around a format that is Divine Service (Acts 1:1-2; Luke 22:27; Revelation 3:20; Romans 10:17), or *leitourgia* in the sense of Apology of the Augsburg Confession XXIV, 78-83. This article of the Confessions still stands even when Formula X (Church Practices) is invoked by the practitioners of liturgy *du jour*. While, in the LCMS, we have resources like Lutheran Service Builder, this still does not preclude liturgical tinkering, or worse, liturgical borrowing from the Arminians, Wesleyans, and charismatics. Formula X, on adiaphora, never condones importing heterodoxy-laden songs and practices and rites from the *schwärmer*. On the contrary it assumes that adiaphora are used to avoid confessional ambiguity in a liturgical context. In this area, novel use of said technology in the worship context may lend itself well to promoting an Arminian to charismatic understanding.

We have a history of importing practices that originated among non-Lutheran protestants without much prior theological reflection. This is worse than crossing the street without looking both ways. The purpose of the liturgical service is to deliver the saving gifts of our crucified and risen Lord. However, so much of what happens when the liturgy *du jour* occurs is an engineered experience to produce a certain mood or sensation. The projection screen helps enable this. Psychological and social sciences along with propaganda devices enable not catechesis but manipulation of image and emotion.

3. **Regarding the displacement of books and printed material.**

Certainly the use of printed material is well within the biblical orthodox tradition, whether scrolls or codices, or modern bound books. Computers and high quality printers make this easier than ever. There is also something reflective of the incarnation and the sacraments in their physical, earthly, tangible character (see 1 John 1:1-5; John 1:14). Many a bookworm could muse freely on the texture, weight, smell, and even the sound of a book as pages are turned, especially as books age. One could argue that the displacement of printed books with electronic media has shortened the attention span in western culture and narrowed our

vocabulary. This certainly impacts our catechesis and the nurture of faith in terms of both trust and content (*fides qua and fides quae*).

A book or a printed bulletin may easily be taken home and referred to again and become an object of discussion beyond the initial presentation. By comparison, the permanence of a printed Bible or Catechism or hymnal presents an opportunity for ongoing reference, discussion, study, teaching, and prayer, with or without electricity or a projector technician, while the electronic text or artwork is only virtually there. In such cases is the medium or the text itself primary? Will we become like Christians in the medieval church who thought it benefited them to merely watch the spectacle Mass rather than receive Christ's body and blood given for the forgiveness of sins?

4. **Regarding the visual displacement of altar and cross.**

Using projection screens means altering the chancel architecture and a new focal point. Prior to projection screens, the classic Christian tradition saw the altar and cross a united focal point for theological reasons: We preach Christ and Him crucified. This is surely even more consequential than when televisions became the



focal point of the American household's family room, now with even bigger screens and louder sound systems and integrated computers. Screens in the sanctuary (holy place) cultivate the atmosphere of the living room, concert hall, karaoke bar, and sports arena. After demonizing television for so many years why invite it in with its ever-expanding creep of questionable and indiscriminate content. We live in the world and are not of it – we whose citizenship is in heaven among angels, archangels and the saints who have gone before us. Connected to an internet or satellite feed, such screens open up no end of trouble for heresy and idolatry (Revelation 13:15) and indiscriminate borrowing from heterodox societies and fellowships that would deny our genuine confession of the unchanging faith (Jude 3).

What has been noted above is certainly not exhaustive by any means. Christianity is spiritual not at the expense of or negation of the physical and tangible. We confess a Savior who came back bodily alive from the grave. And this Savior is the eternal Word of the Father who became flesh in order to submit Himself perfectly under the law in humility and suffer as the holy sacrificial Lamb. The Temple and its predecessor were very earthy and tangible places. Christianity does not become less tangible or more ethereal but rather universal and sacramental so that the Word who became flesh and redeemed us may go out into the whole world until the new creation is revealed. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith as He comes and serves us in His holy Word and Sacraments.

Our prayer is that more discussion and theological consideration of this prevalent practice may take place and we pause to consider whether we ought to use such technology in the liturgical context or reserve it for other uses with thoughtful care. We might even consider back-tracking down the road, before our eyes were fixed on shiny new equipment of neighboring churches. Certainly technology can be a great and useful gift in the Church, but how and where it is used is important. Technology can be best used in the church in the context of education or catechesis rather than in the liturgical realm. It can also be used well in outreach and catechesis beyond the church building with streaming audio and video, podcasts, informative websites, tracts, and online education as a component of the larger realm of residential education and parish catechesis.