

RESOURCES FOR “EARLY LUTHERAN WORSHIP IN NON-LUTHERAN COUNTRIES AND MODERN AMERICAN LUTHERAN WORSHIP”

A Description of the Divine Service in Wittenberg, Electoral Saxony, in 1536

A Lutheran Order of Service Based on the Ancient and Medieval Latin Mass

At the seventh hour we returned to the city church and observed by which rite they celebrated the Liturgy; namely thus: First, the Introit was played on the organ, accompanied by the choir in Latin, as in the mass offering. Indeed, the minister meanwhile proceeded from the sacristy dressed sacrificially [i.e. in traditional mass vestments] and, kneeling before the altar, made his confession together with the assisting sacristan. After the confession he ascended to the altar to the book that was located on the right side, according to papist custom. After the Introit the organ was played and the *Kyrie eleison* sung in alternation by the boys. When it was done the minister sang *Gloria in excelsis*, which song was completed in alternation by the organ and choir. Thereafter the minister at the altar sang “Dominus vobiscum,” the choir responding “Et cum spiritu tuo.” The Collect for that day followed in Latin, then he sang the Epistle in Latin, after which the organ was played, the choir following with *Herr Gott Vater, wohn uns bei*. When it was done the Gospel for that Sunday was sung by the minister in Latin on the left side of the altar, as is the custom of the adherents of the pope. After this the organ played, and the choir followed with *Wir glauben all an einen Gott*. After this song came the sermon, ...delivered on the Gospel for that Sunday... After the sermon the choir sang *Da pacem domine*, followed by the prayer for peace by the minister at the altar, this in Latin as well.

The Communion followed, which the minister began with the Lord’s Prayer sung in German. Then he sang the words of the Supper, and these in German with his back turned toward the people, first those of the bread, which, when the words had been offered, he then elevated to the sounding of bells; likewise with the chalice, which he also elevated to the sounding of bells. Immediately communion was held. ... During the communion the *Agnus Dei* was sung in Latin. The minister served the bread in common dress [in a cassock?] but [he served] the chalice dressed sacrificially [i.e. in mass vestments]. They followed the singing of the *Agnus Dei* with a German song: *Jesus Christus [unser Heiland]* and *Gott sei gelobet*. After the sermon the majority of the people departed. ... The minister ended the Communion with a certain thanksgiving sung in German. He followed this, facing the people, with the Benediction, singing “The Lord make his face to shine on you, etc.” And thus was the mass ended.

(Except from the travel diary of Wolfgang Musculus; in Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2004], pp. 195-96)

A Description of the Divine Service in Tübingen, Duchy of Württemberg, in 1577

A Lutheran Order of Service Based on the Medieval Preaching Service

The All-Holy Communion is celebrated among us today with a minimum of ceremonial. The church assembles at an appointed time. Hymns are sung. Sermons are preached concerning the benefits of Christ for mankind. Again, hymns are sung. An awesome exhortation is read, which in part explains the words of institution of the Most-Holy Supper, and in part demands that each person should prepare for a worthy communion. A general but sincere confession of sins is made. Forgiveness is publicly pronounced. With devout prayers we ask the Lord to make us partakers of the heavenly gifts and benefits. The Words of Institution of the sacrament are read, after which the congregation approaches with reverence and receives (offered by the holy minister) the body and the blood of Christ. Again we give thanks to God in prescribed words for the heavenly gifts. Finally, the holy minister of God says the blessing over the assembled congregation, and all are dismissed to go to their homes.

We think that these rites are sufficient, because a multitude of distracting customs, beyond those which are necessary, prevent the people from properly paying attention to the important and necessary ones. Certainly, we do not contend with anyone about customs so long as they do not include anything which contradicts the Word of God, or (contrary to Christian freedom) is insisted upon as necessary for salvation. We judge that this use of the Lord’s Supper by us agrees with the command of Christ and serves the Church in the work of salvation.

(Correspondence from Lucas Osiander, Jacob Andreae, and Martin Crucius, to the Patriarch of Constantinople; in George Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople* [Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982], p. 144)

The Liturgical Life of the Lutherans in Slovakia in the 16th and 17th Centuries

Patterned Chiefly after the Type of Service Used in Electoral Saxony

The first completely revised worship services, which were fully in the spirit of the Reformation, were conducted in Bardejov in 1525. Luther's *Formula Missae* served as the pattern which was followed. The *Deutsche Messe* was basic but it did not serve successfully everywhere. Certain liturgical parts were supplanted with material taken from the *Formula Missae*. This service order then was gradually completed in the city church of Wittenberg and then sent out to other territories such as in Germany, Scandinavia, and Slovakia, and became known as the Wittenberg Order of Service in the year 1533. This service was codified in the Saxon Agenda from the years 1536 until 1539. The Slovak students in Wittenberg appropriated this service and then brought it to Slovakia. Three examples of the Wittenberg-Saxon Agenda have been preserved in Slovakia. These were the 1536, 1564, and 1584 editions. The Slovak evangelicals became bound to this liturgical order of service. Documented evidence of this is found in the resolutions passed at the Prešov synodical meeting in 1546; the liturgical canons which were written and adopted at the synod which met in the mining cities district in 1580; the conclusions of the synod which met in Žilina in 1610, and finally the Order of Service which appeared in the Tranovský Hymnal (*Tranoscius*) since 1636. The Wittenberg type of service has been adhered to faithfully until the present time, just as it appeared from the beginning of the Reformation in Slovakia. ...

A hard Reformational line was kept in the liturgical contributions, agendas, hymnals, and collections of prayers which were published. Many of Luther's hymns also were translated and placed in such hymnals as the *Tranoscius* (1636), with Pastor Juraj Tranovský being the main translator. The chief function of the pastor in the service is to preach the Word of God. ... It was as if the Reformational preachers untied their tongues when they began to preach the great acts of God in their own vernacular. ... The spirit of the Reformation pealed in the spiritual hymns of...gifted poets and hymnists...

(August A. Skodacek, *Lutherans in Slovakia* [1982], pp. 50-51)

The Liturgical Life of the Lutherans in the Netherlands in the 16th and 17th Centuries

Patterned Chiefly after the Type of Service Used in the Duchy of Württemberg

We find the regulations of the Lutheran Church in Holland, in their fully developed form, in a statistical work published before the seventeenth century closed, Bentham's *Condition of the Churches and Schools of Holland*. This writer says that, with the exception of doctrine, the Lutheran Church in Holland was, at that time, in all respects the same as the Reformed. It had complied with this external order as the price of toleration, and, besides this, had been closely related to the Lutheran Church at Strassburg, where a similar resemblance to the Reformed had prevailed. ... Their public service was very similar to that of their Reformed neighbors; and yet it had some noteworthy [Lutheran] features. ...

All sermons are to be directed to the edification of the congregation, by teaching God's Word purely, distinguishing between true and false doctrine, and, with all plainness and directness, reproving sin. The constitution directs that the morning sermons must always be on the Gospel for the day, and the afternoon sermon on the Epistle, Luther's Catechism, or some other edifying text. The Sunday morning service is limited to two hours, and the afternoon and weekday services to an hour. ... The Lutherans of that purer period ...during Lent heard the Passion History explained, and, as children, were examined every Sunday afternoon in the catechism. No private religious meetings were held without the knowledge and approval of the pastor.

The administration of the Lord's Supper was announced two weeks in advance. Before their first communion, a careful examination was made of all young persons. To prevent those from coming to the Lord's Supper who had not been properly instructed and been present at the preparatory service, or otherwise privately conferred with the pastor, the custom widely prevalent in the Reformed Church had been adopted by the Lutherans. Those entitled to commune were furnished with "tokens," which the elders standing by the side of the Lord's Table received as the communicants approached. At the previous distribution of the tokens by the elders to applicants, one or more of the pastors was present to see that none received them who should not commune. As they received the communion they knelt, and psalms and hymns were sung by the rest of the congregation. Rigid discipline was exercised according to a detailed process.

(Henry Eyster Jacobs, *A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States* [Fifth Edition] [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907], pp. 38-43)

The Augsburg Confession on Matters of Liturgy and Ceremony

From *The Book of Concord*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000)

The churches among us teach with complete unanimity...that one holy church will remain forever. The church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere. As Paul says [Eph. 4:5, 6]: "One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all..." ...

Concerning church rites they teach that those rites should be observed that can be observed without sin and that contribute to peace and good order in the church, for example, certain holy days, festivals, and the like. However, people are reminded not to burden consciences, as if such worship were necessary for salvation. ...

As can be seen, there is nothing here that departs from the Scriptures or the catholic church, or from the Roman church, insofar as we can tell from its writers. ... For even the canons are not so severe as to demand that rites should be the same everywhere, nor have the rites of all churches ever been the same. Nevertheless, the ancient rites are, for the most part, diligently observed among us. For the accusation is false that all ceremonies and ancient ordinances are abolished in our churches. Truth is, there has been a public outcry that certain abuses have become fused to the common rites. Because such abuses could not be approved with a good conscience, they have been corrected to some extent.

...the churches among us do not dissent from the catholic church in any article of faith but only set aside a few abuses that are new and were accepted because of corruption over time contrary to the intention of the canons... However, it can easily be judged that nothing contributes more to preserving the dignity of ceremonies and to cultivating reverence and piety among the people than conducting ceremonies properly in the churches. ...

Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. In fact, the Mass is retained among us and is celebrated with the greatest reverence. Almost all the customary ceremonies are also retained, except that German hymns, added for the instruction of the people, are interspersed here and there among the Latin ones. For ceremonies are especially needed in order to teach those who are ignorant. Paul advised [1 Cor. 14:2,9] that in church a language that is understood by the people should be used. The people have grown accustomed to receiving the sacrament together – all who are fit to do so. This also increases reverence and respect for public ceremonies. ... The people are also reminded about the dignity and use of the sacrament – how it offers great consolation to anxious consciences – so that they may learn to believe in God and expect and ask for all that is good from God. Such worship pleases God, and such use of the sacrament cultivates piety toward God. So it does not appear that the Mass is held with greater devotion among our adversaries than among us. ...

Since the Mass is such an imparting of the sacrament, among us one common Mass is held on every holy day, and it is also administered on other days if there are those who desire it. Nor is this custom new in the church. For the ancient teachers before the time of Gregory...often speak of the common Mass. ... Since, therefore, the Mass as we conduct it has on its side the example of the church, from Scripture and the Fathers, we are confident that it cannot be disapproved, especially since the customary public ceremonies are for the most part retained. ...

It has been a general conviction, not only of the people but also of those who teach in the churches, that distinction of foods and similar human traditions are useful works for meriting grace and making satisfaction for sins. That the world thought so is evident from the fact that daily new ceremonies, new ordinances, new holy days, and new fasts were instituted and that the teachers in places of worship exacted these works as necessary worship for meriting grace and viciously terrified consciences if people omitted any of them. Much misfortune has ensued in the church from this conviction concerning traditions. ...these traditions obscured the precepts of God because traditions were preferred far more than the precepts of God. All Christianity was thought to consist of the observance of certain holy days, rites, fasts, and vestments. ...

Nevertheless, many traditions are kept among us, such as the order of readings in the Mass, holy days, etc., which are conducive to maintaining good order in the church. But at the same time, people are warned that such acts of worship do not justify before God and that no punishable sin is committed if they are omitted without offense. Such freedom in human rites was not unknown to the Fathers. For in the East, Easter was kept at a different time than in Rome, and when the Romans accused the East of schism because of this difference, they were admonished by others that such customs need not be alike everywhere. ...

Moreover, it is debated whether bishops or pastors have the right to institute ceremonies in the church and make laws concerning food, holy days, ranks or orders of ministers, etc. ...concerning this question, our people teach...that bishops do not have the power to establish anything contrary to the gospel. ...it is not lawful for bishops to institute such acts of worship or require them as necessary, because ordinances that are instituted as necessary or with the intention of meriting justification

conflict with the gospel. ... It is necessary to retain the chief article of the gospel: that we obtain grace through faith in Christ, not through certain observances or through acts of worship instituted by human beings.

What, therefore, should one think of Sunday and similar rites in places of worship? To this our people reply that it is lawful for bishops or pastors to establish ordinances so that things are done in the church in an orderly fashion, not so that we may make satisfaction for our sins through them or so that consciences may be obliged to regard them as necessary acts of worship. ... It is fitting for the churches to comply with such ordinances for the sake of love and tranquillity and to keep them insofar as they do not offend others. Thus, everything may be done in an orderly fashion in the churches without confusion, but in such a way that consciences are not burdened by thinking such things are necessary for salvation or that they sin when violating them without offense. ... Such is the case with the observance of Sunday, Easter, Pentecost, and similar festivals and rites. ...

Only those things have been recounted which seemed to need saying. This was done in order that it may be understood that nothing has been accepted among us, in teaching or ceremonies, that is contrary to Scripture or the catholic church. For it is manifest that we have most diligently been on guard so that no new or ungodly doctrines creep into our churches.

(Augsburg Confession [Latin], I:1, p. 37; VII:1-4, p. 43; XV:1-2, p. 49; Conclusion of Part One: 1-5, p. 59; Introduction of Part Two: 1, 6, p. 61; XXIV:1-5, 7-9, 34-35, 40, pp. 69, 71, 73; XXVI:1-3, 8, 40-43, pp. 75, 77, 81; XXVIII:30, 34, 50, 52-53, 55-57, pp. 95, 97, 99, 101; Conclusion: 4-5, p. 105)

The Formula of Concord on Matters of Liturgy and Ceremony

From *The Book of Concord*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000)

We should not regard as free and indifferent, but rather as things forbidden by God that are to be avoided, the kind of things presented under the name and appearance of external, indifferent things that are nevertheless fundamentally opposed to God's Word (even if they are painted another color). Moreover, we must not include among the truly free *adiaphora* or indifferent matters ceremonies that give the appearance or (in order to avoid persecution) are designed to give the impression that our religion does not differ greatly from the papist religion or that their religion were not completely contrary to ours. Nor are such ceremonies matters of indifference when they are intended to create the illusion (or are demanded or accepted with that intention), as if such action brought the two contradictory religions into agreement and made them one body or as if a return to the papacy and a deviation from the pure teaching of the gospel and from the true religion had taken place or could gradually result from these actions. ...

In the same way, useless, foolish spectacles, which are not beneficial for good order, Christian discipline, or evangelical decorum in the church, are not true *adiaphora* or indifferent things. ...

Therefore, we believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every time and place has the right, power, and authority to change, reduce, or expand such practices according to circumstances in an orderly and appropriate manner, without frivolity or offense, as seems most useful, beneficial, and best for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the building up of the church. ...

We also believe, teach, and confess that in a time when confession is necessary, as when the enemies of God's Word want to suppress the pure teaching of the holy gospel, the entire community of God, indeed, every Christian, especially servants of the Word as the leaders of the community of God, are obligated according to God's Word to confess true teaching and everything that pertains to the whole of religion freely and publicly. They are to do so not only with words but also in actions and deeds. In such a time they shall not yield to the opponents even in indifferent matters, nor shall they permit the imposition of such *adiaphora* by opponents who use violence or chicanery in such a way that undermines true worship of God or that introduces or confirms idolatry.

...the churches are not to condemn one another because of differences in ceremonies when in Christian freedom one has fewer or more than the other, as long as these churches are otherwise united in teaching and in all the articles of the faith as well as in the proper use of the holy sacraments.

(Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration X:5,7,9-10, 31, pp. 636-37, 640)