

How High is Too High? How Low Can We Go?

Acceptable range of worship practice in WELS

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April 2013: this essay is modified slightly from the original. The unusual title was not the author's but was requested by the agenda committee. Some content is excerpted in *Worship the Lord*, No. 60, May 2013 – available at <https://connect.wels.net/worship>. Two significant books published since 2001 follow. They are mentioned in some footnotes; much more content from these books relates to the historical portions of this essay.

Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism*. Oxford, 2004.

Robin Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*. Lutheran Quarterly Books/Eerdmans, 2007.

See also "Retaining Rituals and Considering Ceremonies," Mark Tiefel, *Worship the Lord*, No. 61, July 2013 and its reference to: Zeeden, Ernst Walter. *Faith and Act: The Survival of Medieval Ceremonies in the Lutheran Reformation*. Kevin Walker, tr. CPH, 2012.

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1. Introduction

Let's start outside WELS by hearing Terry Johnson, writing in 1996 for a Presbyterian audience.

Lamenting the then current condition of Presbyterian worship, Charles W. Baird wrote in 1855 in his book *Eutaxia* (renamed *Presbyterian Liturgies*) of the failure of non-liturgical worship, of worship in which "everything is left to the unaided individuality of the minister."

We conceive it to be plain beyond denial, that while the earnest and practical piety of its members, the learning, ability, and fidelity of its clergy, obtain for Presbyterianism a commanding position of respect and influence; the effect of its external modes of worship, as at present generally conducted, is rather to impair than to augment the force of these advantages. Evidently, the young are not drawn into our congregations by any beauty and impressiveness of our services; their attachment is not won and strengthened by interest in the devotional exercises of the sanctuary (252-253).

He called for an end to the 200 year experiment with "unaided" worship.

For nearly two centuries, in the face of all historic precedent, at variance with all other denominations of Christians, and in conflict with their own earlier principles and practice, the Calvinistic Churches of Great Britain and the United States have faithfully adhered to this method, unknown to ecclesiastical

experience before the sittings of the Westminster Assembly. We believe that the times are drawing near, when by general attestation that method will be pronounced defective.

Among Baird's proposals was the resumed use of "those ancient, Scriptural, and Apostolic Elements of worship," namely the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed.

Surprised? Presbyterians today are living on the other side of reforms sparked by Baird which resulted in the widespread use of the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments, the Doxology, and the Gloria Patri. None of these were used by Presbyterian churches prior to the mid-19th Century. What we commonly associate with "traditional" American Presbyterian worship was in fact considered an innovation in the middle of the last Century.

Baird's reforms created a consensus that lasted for about 100 years. From the mid-to-late 19th Century until the 1960's, reverent, mildly liturgical worship featuring some or all of the above elements could be found in nearly all churches, conservative and liberal, Northern and Southern, calling themselves Presbyterian.

TODAY'S CONFUSION

Over the last several decades that consensus has been shattered. Today it is virtually impossible to walk into a Presbyterian church and know what style of worship one will encounter. It could be "traditional" Presbyterian. On the other hand, it could be revivalistic Baptist, charismatic, or Episcopal.

Is this a positive development? Many treat it as such, and celebrate the diversity. We doubt it. The Reformation produced not only distinctive theological systems, but also distinctive forms of worship which flowed from and also gave expression to those theological systems. ... Each was unique. ... Each provided for their adherents around the world a unifying experience of worship that was historic, reliable, and satisfying.

Today our diversity approaches anarchy. Some of what is being presented as worship can only be called idolatry. Historic forms are being abandoned in the name of contemporary appeal. Invariably these innovations result in services that are superficial and man-centered. Nothing is left that can be identified as "Presbyterian" and "Reformed" worship. Nothing unifies the experience of our churches in worship. We will leave to our children no common heritage. Indeed, it is doubtful that Presbyterian doctrines and practices can be sustained without the support of a distinctly Presbyterian worship through which they may be conveyed. Once again, "the unaided individuality of the minister," though in a different sense than that of which Baird complained, is producing undesirable results.¹

Are there parallels in WELS? Perhaps there are: apparent evolution in worship practice to a period of consensus followed by some degree of disintegration and uncertainty. While we don't want a Presbyterian model to shape our Lutheran worship, we do note Johnson's principles and perspectives.

Decades of negligence have resulted in worship being reclassified not as *the*, or even a primary issue, but as a matter of personal taste and preference, and as such, virtually above criticism or even evaluation. That forms or styles of worship could be all but universally viewed in this way demonstrates that we have lost sight of the connection between theology and practice. As noted already, every theology generates a distinctive worship. Every form of worship ~~expressed or~~ [sic] flows from a distinctive theological outlook. It is as true to say that Reformed theology produces and requires a unique worship as it is to say that Roman theology generates the Roman mass, and Charismatic theology generates the peculiar features of Charismatic worship.

Johnson ends his article with this plea:

Trends tending to raise up Reformed worship to the style of the "high church," by employing extrabiblical rituals and ceremonies, and material or visual props should be resisted. Trends tending to dumb-down (if you don't mind the expression) Reformed worship to the style of the "low church," by shortening or eliminating prayers and Bible reading, reducing preaching to story-telling, and replacing hymns and Psalms with campfire songs and choruses, whether in the name of revivalism or becoming "user

friendly," should be resisted. Neither the "high" nor "low" church alternatives can carry the weight of Presbyterian theology and practice.

This work is offered as a call to reform the church again. We call the Presbyterian Church back to its historic roots and to a deeper, more reverent worship. We hope that, as was the case in 1855, a consensus will emerge in the coming years, that will unify our churches and produce a common worship clearly identifiable as Presbyterian.

Our worship situation in WELS is not identical to Johnson's, but we still work in the same cultural context—not only the same American and Evangelical cultural contexts, but to some degree we also share "decades of negligence" in some areas of worship, including until recent years worship education and worship variety. So let us explore high and low church within our WELS history and within our longer Lutheran history. If we look only within WELS history, we might end up with conclusions fairly close to Johnson's: neither the "high" nor "low" church alternatives. If we consider centuries of early Lutheran history, we will have to grant a potentially higher place for rituals and ceremonies—and a liturgical-sacramental focus—than would fit a Presbyterian because "every theology generates a distinctive worship."²

Various theories of ritual can assist our exploration.

In a recent book from the Alban Institute Roy Oswald states, "No individual, group, congregation, or community can be well sustained and developed without shared rituals."³ I suspect that such a bold statement will be met by a degree of wariness in a church body with a history of suspicion about ritual. Is this an overstatement? Does this opinion square with our reliance on simple Word (and Sacrament)? Do we really *need* rituals? Does the Holy Spirit need rituals?

Behind Oswald's statement is a study of ritual that has exploded in recent decades. It isn't necessary for us today to rehearse the key points and emphases of that study. But it is helpful for us to realize some of the fundamental presuppositions and approaches of "ritual study."

Basic is an understanding of ritual that is not in any way pejorative. This perspective sees much of life as permeated with ritual—including mundane details of life: preparing for the day (start the coffee pot or brush teeth first, rise early for quiet time routines?) eating meals together as a family (rehearse the day or just scarf down the food, TV on or off, candles?). This *broad* understanding of ritual is familiar to us who have read defenses of ritual in worship through a widely shared analogy: the common, pervasive, and unchanging *rituals* associated with a child's birthday party. Numerous defenders of liturgical worship have pointed to the necessity or at least comfortable practicality of rituals at birthday celebrations. The liturgical defense states that if rituals are natural and helpful at a birthday, then why not also in worship?

Neutral and broad understanding of ritual is apparent in a 1971 book review by Prof. Peters in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*.

Great Days for the Family, by Harold J. Belgum. St. Louis and London: Concordia, 1969.

Family life and family festivals, birthdays and church days, nation days and nature days are presented to us in this family book. "Family Doings for the Christian Year" take up the greater part of the book (pp. 44–104). These doings are preceded by a study of what rituals mean in family life. If we but observe the family rituals in the Old Testament, which helped families remember the great acts of God for His chosen people, we have every reason to ask ourselves **with what rituals we regularly welcome the main festivals of our church year**. In view of the fact that "Jewish family ritual welcomes and gives thanks for the Sabbath," our author asks each of us, "With what rituals do you regularly and with dignity welcome Sunday (the day of Christ's resurrection) and thank God for it?" (p. 18). Author Harold Belgum, who also wrote the popular *Family Vacation Idea Book*, does not intend the 124 pages of this book to be "prescriptions" for us "to fill out," not "rules for manufacturing rituals," but to be "intended as interesting for-instances ..." as "seed thoughts for 'growing' your own authentic Christian family festivals" (pp. 16f.).

Since in our day family life and family devotions are on the wane, this book can only be recommended for family use.⁴

Contemporary study of ritual isn't concerned only with observing mundane ritual in our daily lives. Ritual study shows how rituals are used to maintain tradition and status quo or to enable change. "Rituals serve either to resist and transcend historical change or to become a medium for the smooth accommodation of change."⁵ Rituals are employed to help an individual or institution to change. Note the use of rituals in Alcoholics Anonymous or in the radical feminist movement in some churches. Oswald includes an appendix (135): "A Ritual to Honor the Movement into Puberty." Women gather around a tea kettle or a fire.

Leader: I invite each of you to remember a woman who inspired you.... In doing so, we gather the memories and spirits of women who have made us what we are.

Each lights a candle and speaks

INVOCATION: Today we gather in the names of these women who have helped us in our life's journey. We thank God for the blessings they have given to us, and ask God's presence here, especially the fierce and gentle mothering energy of God. We remember El Shaddai, the great breasted one, who provides for her children's needs, from Abraham and Sarah even to this day. May she bless our work today.

STORIES

The First Lesson (*Each tells a story of the movement from chaos to order from her adolescence. All toast each story with tea.*)

The Second Lesson Genesis 1:26-31

Enough! You get the idea. This is one example where today I'll give you a black and white answer: this is *outside* the range of acceptable practice in WELS even though it is tame compared to some other radical feminist rites! But it does illustrate how some want to use ritual.

One cannot miss the sociological bias in theories of ritual that focus primarily on maintaining tradition or enabling change. Is there a third option? I think there is. Distinct Lutheran/biblical purposes of Christian ritual are to emphasize Law and Gospel, to make use of the Sacraments, to reflect themes in worship, to enable people's participation. Consider some of our rituals and customs: sign of the cross in a blessing or baptism, standing for the Gospel, an Advent wreath, a song of praise after Confession and Absolution, kneeling for communion, use of candles or paraments, maintaining a sense of decorum in church. These are done neither to maintain tradition nor to effect change, but rather to communicate or reflect something about the Christian faith. Thus the Augsburg Confession states, "The chief purpose of ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ (AC 24, 3)." Note the assumption that ceremonies and not only preaching or teaching can teach.

In one sense, though, reflecting the Christian faith *is* about maintaining "tradition," the truths that we have received (*traditio*, that which is handed down to us). Thus ritual in Christian worship is typically slow to change. Forrest Bivens spoke of this in a presentation at the 1996 WELS worship conference.⁶

The God who justifies is also a God of order. As revealed in Scripture, orderliness and stability in the way things are done serve human needs better than confusion or unpredictable arbitrariness. Perhaps this is the reason for the frequently observed paradox among Lutherans as they approach external worship forms. While the Augsburg Confession asserts no need for uniformity in customs or ceremonies, Lutherans have proved to be very conservative in worship traditions. There is an apparent conviction that a liturgical stability is important to preserving and proclaiming what we hold as primary doctrine. The objective gospel is seen as best expressed in forms that don't essentially vary from place to place or generation to generation. Our belief on this issue may be expressed in this way:

Ritual and ceremony exist for the sake of stability, something the people in our changing society need. Dr. Luther expressed concerns about the wide variety of worship rituals and ceremonies that

could be found in Germany in his day. He feared “everyone parading his talents and confusing the people so that they can neither learn nor retain anything.”

C.S. Lewis made a point about the “liturgical fidget” whose continual novelties serve only to set up obstacles to worship. A service, he said, “is a structure of acts and words through which we receive the sacrament, or repent, or supplicate, or adore.” As in dancing, so in worship, Lewis suggested, one needs to be thoroughly at home with the form in order to concentrate on the content without distraction: “As long as you notice, and have to count the steps, you are not dancing, but only learning to dance.” The ideal service, he said, “would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God. But every novelty prevents this. . . .”⁷

Stability without adequate content or predictability without substance, of course, is not what we’re talking about here.

“No individual, group, congregation, or community can be well sustained and developed without shared rituals” (Oswald). I think we can agree if we start with the essential *neutrality* of ritual. Yes, rituals can be abused. Yet the question is not “shall we have rituals in our worship?” but rather “what rituals shall we have in our worship?” And to phrase the question this way is not to reveal a bias in either direction of today’s assigned topic (how high, how low?), but simply to recognize that even the lowest of WELS worship is full of ritual.⁸ Similarly, nonliturgical worship of whatever brand is also full of rituals. The silence of Quakers in their attempt to avoid ritual became a striking Quaker ritual.

The essential *neutrality* of ritual leads to the next emphasis: the *necessity*—or more precisely the *inevitability*—of ritual. John Kleinig provides an excellent discussion from a confessional Lutheran perspective in his essay “Witting or Unwitting Ritualists.”⁹ He begins:

We are all ritualists. We may find that hard to believe, because Lutherans don’t usually rate ritual very highly. Like many of our contemporaries, we tend to associate ritual with hocus-pocus, superstition, and magic. At best, ritual is used by Roman Catholics and High Church Anglicans to obscure the Gospel and to mystify ordinary people. There is, therefore, little serious reflection on ritual in our circles. It is, after all, a matter of personal preference whether we use ritual or not. It is still common to hear Lutherans speak quite disparagingly about the dangers of empty ritualism, as if ritual were in itself insignificant and even harmful apart from our piety. Yet, practically speaking, ritual is just as important for us as for any Catholic, and so it should claim at least some of our attention.¹⁰

He is not saying that Lutherans need a superstitious use of ritual but rather that ritual is as unavoidable for Lutherans as for Catholics, and—used properly—ritual can be helpful. Ritual flows naturally from what we do and what God does in worship. Kleinig’s train of thought is worth summarizing.

Use of ritual is natural to people in all cultures (anthropological perspective).

Worship controversy is driving greater attention to ritual. “Some people are impatient for liturgical change, while others are uneasy about the changes which have taken place. Laymen complain that pastors are either careless or mechanical in their performance of the liturgy.”

Rituals constitute and maintain communities (anthropological perspective). “Alienation from a community coincides with a refusal to participate in its ritual activity. . . . The closer the community, the more important is ritual participation; the looser the community, the less significant is ritual participation. . . . If you wish either to undermine and destroy a community, or if you wish to reform and lead it, you need to deal with those rituals which sustain it.”

Rituals communicate a whole way of life. “[Ritual] not only tells us how to react to God’s grace, but actually helps us to react properly by providing us with habitual models of confession, prayer, and praise.” Kleinig’s point here reminds us of the common insight that the liturgy, like the psalms, not only *expresses* our faith or our response but also *teaches* us what our faith and response is. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*.

Christian ritual allows the faithful to participate in the life and word of the Triune God. “The Word and sacraments are the ritual means by which God’s Spirit works in us and all Christians. . . . The purpose of

Christian ritual, then, is to communicate the Gospel as a way of life to people, so that they can participate in the life and work of the Triune God."

Conclusion. "Every pastor is either a witting or unwitting ritualist. ... While the Lutheran Church has traditionally been a liturgical church, it exists in a culture where liturgical worship, with its emphasis on corporate and supernatural activity, has become alien, incomprehensible, and even nonsensical to many people. So unless the pastor understands the role of ritual in worship, and creates some appreciation for it by his leadership, both he and his congregation will suffer confusion. They will be caught between the devil of trendy, liturgical innovation, and the deep blue sea of obstinate, liturgical traditionalism. As a church we, therefore, need to perform our rituals wittingly, without becoming either reactionary ritualists, insensitive to the needs of people, or individualistic antiritualists who damage our congregations." ¹¹

Compare criticism of *both* the "terminally hip and the rigid repristinators" by Carl Schalk as cited in *Christian Worship Manual*, page 62.

Another concept worth exploration is the idea of "ritual gap." Oswald writes that "we are losing our sense of ourselves as a nation because we no longer take seriously those national holidays that celebrate our identity as a nation." Memorial Day and the Fourth of July become just another three-day weekend and break from work. "Rarely do we participate in the rituals that celebrate the meaning of our basic human rights and the freedom we enjoy or the sacrifices others have made to preserve our democracy." ¹²

Oswald wonders if a "ritual gap" exists in some churches where symbols no longer are understood. His encouragement is not that we then minimize ritual but rather "bring alive rituals that celebrate our deepest beliefs and relationship to God...."

Oswald's concern is for personal spiritual life as well as corporate (19): "There is a large gap in the ritual life of congregations. Most leaders are attentive to ritual related to Sunday worship and the liturgical calendar. Assisting members and the larger community to ritualize their daily lives is not even on the radar screen of most congregations. Yet when the rituals experienced in the church do not find concomitant expression in our daily lives in our homes and in our shared lives in society, we have to some extent nullified the impact of our Sunday ritual. We experience no congruence between what we say we believe and what we actually practice. Perhaps at no time in the church's history have people needed support for their practice of ritual more than now as we enter the Post-Christendom Era...."

Within the Lutheran church compare suggestions that families use an Advent wreath as part of their family devotions. Recall Luther's morning and evening prayers: make the sign of the cross, speak the invocation, and then pray. Note the Lenten resources for daily family or personal worship provided by the LCMS Commission on Worship; these resources include such customs as the sign of the cross, responsive reading of psalms, and a blessing—a structure similar to the devotions in *Christian Worship*. ¹³

2. How can rite, ceremony, and form express and reinforce Lutheran convictions?

We're still not ready to answer the question in the subtitle about acceptable range of practice, from low to high church, within WELS. Before we think about specifics, let's think in some broad categories. Worship customs, variety, and rituals don't exist for their own sake but rather to answer some key Lutheran worship questions.

How can rite, ceremony, liturgy, simplicity, sparseness, richness, and form express and reinforce Lutheran convictions?

How can we showcase Law/Gospel in ways other than verbal?

How can we emphasize the primacy of God's action?

How can we (better) enable the people's response?

How can we (better) emphasize the awesome reality of a sacramental faith—that God is present and active through the sacraments?

How can we raise baptismal consciousness? (The daily "use" of Baptism Luther describes in the catechism, part four, a perspective based on Romans 6 and Galatians 3.)

How can we move toward communion that is less penitential?¹⁴

How can we communicate awe and reverence (Hb 12:28) along with joy and relevance in a casual culture, or a small mission, or with limited resources?¹⁵

How can we maximize the value and impact of the Church Year for new people and lifelong Lutherans?

How can we encourage transition from busy lives and various distractions to hearts focused and ready for worship?¹⁶

As we ask and answer the question about how rite and ceremony can reinforce and express Lutheran convictions, we will balance several concerns: sensitivity to the risks of change, willingness to consider the benefits of change, lack of *hubris* that claims the way we/I have always done it is without question the best. As we ask and answer our questions, we will remember that our approach as confessional Lutherans is different than the approach of others. "Every theology generates a distinctive worship."

With the above perspectives and questions in mind we see the primary purpose for rite and ceremony as neither effecting change nor maintaining tradition but rather highlighting doctrine, practice, and life. Thus rite and ceremony are not a crutch for weak people; they not a tool for someone with an agenda; decisions are not made on the basis of aesthetic preference; rite and ceremony are not considered in competition with doctrine, Word, Sacrament, or anything else that is more important. Rite and ceremony highlight and express doctrine, practice, and life.

3. Confessional perspectives

As confessional Lutherans, we care deeply about what the Confessions say. Even as we recognize the distinction between prescriptive and descriptive confessional content, we recall that we have promised loyalty to these Confessions—to the point of death. The Confessions help us address the concerns expressed by the agenda committee in an expanded statement of this essay's theme.

"There are two main issues: 1) How far can you go in either direction before you cease being recognizable as a Lutheran (on the one end, appearing Roman Catholic, on the other appearing Baptist, etc.)? 2) At what point does a congregation break the unity with other congregations of the same church body? I recall passages in the Book of Concord calling for not just unity, but uniformity, so as not to cause needless offense and confusion."

The Confessions have much to say about both freedom and uniformity.¹⁷ There is no categorical rejection of ceremonies in the Confessions. Ceremonies are not condemned in and of themselves, but only when they

1. give the appearance of being necessary for salvation.
2. claim to merit righteousness before God.
3. obscure the work of Christ.
4. burden consciences by claiming that one sins by omitting them.

Paul condemns the ceremonies of Moses as well as traditions **because** they were thought of as works meriting righteousness before God and therefore they **obscure** the work of Christ and the righteousness of faith (AP XV, 10).

They take honor away from Christ when they teach that we are not justified freely for his sake but by such rites, and especially when they teach that for justification such rites are not only useful but necessary (AP XV, 18).

The Gospel clearly testifies that traditions should not be imposed on the church to merit forgiveness of sins or to be acts of worship that please God as righteousness or to burden consciences so that their omission is judged to be a sin (AP XXVIII, 11a).

The church is the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions or rites and ceremonies, instituted by men, should be alike everywhere (AC VII, 1-3).

We believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the right, authority, and power to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances (FC SD X, 9).¹⁸

We believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men (AP VII, 33a).

The statements above clearly emphasize our gospel freedom in regard to ceremonies. With such a focus on freedom, some might be surprised that the Confessions also speak so forcefully about uniformity and an historically informed tradition. The first part of the next statement (Ap VII, 33) was quoted just above—and is often the *only* portion quoted by those who want to reinforce freedom not balanced by a degree of uniformity and tradition.

We believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men, *although we like it* when universal rites are observed for the sake of tranquility. So in our churches we willingly observe the order of the Mass, the Lord's day, and the other more important feast days. With a very thankful spirit we cherish the useful and ancient ordinances, *especially* when they contain a discipline that serves to educate and instruct the people and the inexperienced (AP VII, 33).

Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. Actually, 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 are interspersed here and there among the parts sung in Latin (AC XXIV, 1-2).

To begin with, we must repeat the prefatory statement that we do not abolish the Mass but religiously keep and defend it. In our churches Mass is celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals,¹⁹ when the sacrament is offered to those who wish for it after they have been examined and absolved. We keep traditional liturgical forms, such as the order of the lessons, prayers, vestments, etc. (AP XXIV, 1).

We gladly keep the old traditions set up in the church because they are useful and promote tranquility, and we interpret them in an evangelical way, excluding the opinion which holds that they justify. Our enemies falsely accuse us of abolishing good ordinances and church discipline. We can truthfully claim that in our churches the public liturgy is more decent than in theirs, and if you look at it correctly we are more faithful to the canons than our opponents are.... From this description of the state of our churches it is evident that we diligently maintain church discipline, pious ceremonies, and the good customs of the church (AP XV, 38-39, 44).

The Confessions speak often about the beneficial uses of ceremonies, especially to educate and instruct the people, to establish and preserve good order.

We believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the right, authority, and power to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances, *as long as* it does so without frivolity and offense but in an orderly and appropriate way, as at any time may seem to be most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the church (FC SD X, 9).

In his *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Martin Chemnitz elaborates on what is meant by these terms.

Good order: "It is necessary that in the public meetings of the church there be order worthy of churchly dignity."

Decorum: "We understand not theatrical pomp or courtly splendor²⁰ but such decorum as shows by means of external rites the honor in which we hold the Word, the sacraments, and the remaining churchly functions, and by which others are invited to reverence toward the Word, the sacraments, and the assemblies of the church."

Edification: "That men may be invited to the Word, to the sacraments, and to other exercises of piety; that the doctrine may be more aptly set forth, valued more, received more eagerly, and better retained; and that penitence, faith, prayer, piety, and mercy may be kindled and cherished, etc."²¹

Matthew Harrison: "Martin Chemnitz and The Origin, Content and Meaning of the Tenth Article of the Formula of Concord"

One theme from the Confessions is especially relevant to today's topic. The subtitle assigned for this presentation wonders about "acceptable range of worship practice within WELS" and thus recognizes the value of *some* degree of worship uniformity and unanimity among those who share unity of faith. While it once was fairly easy to achieve or assume such unanimity, this seems to be diminishing for a variety of reasons. Some wonder if we can or even should try to maintain such unanimity when the Confessions state, "We believe, teach, and confess that the *congregation* of God of every place and every time, according to its circumstances, has the good right, power and authority [in matters truly adiaphora²²] to change, to diminish, and to increase them.... (FC SD 10, 9, Triglotta)."

It has become so common to quote this as compelling proof that every parish is free to do as it pleases that no one seems to explore the original intent of the confessors, nor the application of their intent by the first two centuries of Lutherans. Harrison mentions that *Worship Leaders' Resource*, a periodical urging alternative worship among Lutherans, has featured this quotation prominently and without explanation, obviously as justification of the legitimacy of non-liturgical worship (Summer 1993, 2:3).

After discussing how the Augsburg Confession uses the term "adiaphoron," Harrison focuses on precisely which ceremonies and church rites were under debate as adiaphora in the Church of the Augsburg Confession and in the Adiaphoristic Controversy (Augsburg and Leipzig Interims, 1548/49).

The debate was not about whether the church ought follow the historic western liturgical pattern and usages (aside from the obvious disagreement with Rome over the canon of the mass). The liturgical question for the Lutherans simply orbited about the two poles of catholicity and orthodoxy. Whatever of the basic Western liturgy could be retained, without violence to the doctrine of justification, was retained.²³ They knew the church wasn't born in 1530! ²⁴ Just which "ceremonies" were causing concerns?

That infant baptism, together with exorcism, the assistance and confession of sponsors, and other ancient Christian ceremonies [salt, oil, etc.], should be taught and retained.

That confirmation should be taught and retained... and thus by the aid of divine grace [the confirmands] be confirmed and established by the laying on of hands and Christian prayer and ceremonies.

That the people should be taught also that whoever partakes of this sacrament unworthily eats and drinks damnation to himself, and should therefore be urged to forsake his sinful life and to true repentance, prayer, alms, temperance and other Christian virtues...

Also that, as has been said, ministers should hereafter be ordained with Christian ceremonies...

That the mass be observed henceforth in this country with ringing of bells, with lights and vessels, with chants, vestments and ceremonies.²⁵

When the Formula insists on freedom in ceremonies and church usages, it does so against the backdrop of these issues. Yes, there could be liturgical divergence from territory to territory, but to use statements of the Formula which allow freedom, to justify the current state of (non)liturgical disunity and individualism among American Lutherans is unjustified. The authors of the Formula simply did not in any way intend to sanction anything remotely like our current American congregationalistic worship situation.

Even more significant for current discussion and quotation of the Confessions is Harrison's material on the translation of *Gemein* in Article X.

Did the formulators of the Formula intend to assert that every congregation had the right to liturgical freedom and could not be restrained by any liturgical parameters. Certainly not. What did the formulators mean²⁶ when they stated:

We believe, teach and confess that the community of God [*Gemein Gottes; ecclesiae Dei*], in every locality and every age has authority to change such ceremonies according to circumstances, as it may be most profitable and edifying to the community of God (FC, Ep. X:4, Tappert).

And:

We believe, teach and confess that no church [*Kirche; ecclesia*] should condemn another because it has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God, as long as there is mutual agreement in doctrine and in all its articles as well as in the right use of the holy Sacraments, according to the familiar axiom, 'Disagreement in fasting does not destroy agreement in faith.' (FC, Ep. X:7, Tappert)

The Formula purports to do nothing more than repeat the dogma of the Augustana. The statement of Irenaeus on fasting harkens back to AC XXVII.44, and in turn to AC VII, "It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places [*allenthalben*]." "*Allenthalben*" might be rendered best as "every quarter," thus pointing to something broader than a single parish (though admittedly, in the early years of the Reformation, as there were free cities, and before that entire duchies adopted the Lutheran faith, and before the 'territorial church' arose, there was a great deal of flux in this regard). Still, the *Confutatio Pontifica* would point in this direction as it commented upon AC VII: "They are praised also in that they do not regard variety of rites as separating unity of faith, if they speak of special rites. For to this effect Jerome says; 'Every province abounds in its own sense' (of propriety)."

Do "*Kirche*" and "*Gemeine*" (the latter of which the Triglotta translates as "congregation"²⁷) mean "larger church," or rather "congregation"? Tappert (i.e. Piepkorn) gets "*Gemeine*" right by translating it as "community of God." The authors of the Formula were perfectly capable of using terminology denoting a local congregation (*Versammlung*, S.D. VII.79; S.D. XII.14). To be sure, "*Gemein*" at least once is used to denote a local Christian community (S.D. XII.34), but in Article X "*Kirche*" and "*Gemeine*" do not mean merely "local congregation." First, "*Gemeine*" is used in the same article for the "*tota ecclesia*" (S.D. X. 10). It is unlikely the same word should be used in the same article in two different ways. Secondly, in the Epitome (X.7, "no church should condemn another") the word "*Kirche*" is used in the German text and "*ecclesia*" in the Latin where "*Versammlung*" and "*congregatio*" would have been the choice were individual congregations intended. We should note too that the Epitome's "*Gemein Gottes jedes Orts*" (X.2; BKS 814.35), comes into Latin as "*ecclesiae Dei ubivis terrarum*." "*Ecclesiae*" is plural, "the churches" [see Appendix 1, BG]; and "*terrarum*" is the plural of *terra*, which is a "particular country, land, region." We would have expected *locus* should an individual local congregation have been intended. Thus in the Latin we have, "the churches of various regions or districts."

August Pieper, writing for a different purpose, supports the linguistic nuances Harrison has described.

We have become accustomed to use the expression "*Gemeinde*" exclusively of the organized local congregation and designate as "church" (*Kirche*)—apart from the application of this term to the house of worship of Christians and their worship services—almost exclusively the larger church body. ... In Germany one still speaks today of the community (*Gemeinde*) of Berlin, of Chemnitz, of Frankfurt, or of Stolp and refers with this expression to a group of people who in the government of the state have a certain portion of civil authority. The word community or congregation in this instance also denotes a unit consisting of a smaller or larger group of German citizens.²⁸

It seems fair to say that the Formula does not speak directly to a widely independent approach to "congregational choice" commonly understood today. Does this mean then that congregations are *not* free to make these decisions? Not quite. The concept of adiaphora rests on biblical principles. Matters of adiaphora in worship may not be (legalistically) imposed on congregations. But while we recognize this biblical

principle, we also have an obligation not to warp history or the confessions into saying something they do not say and which Lutheran history denies.²⁹

Rather than affirming each congregation's independence, it is more accurate to say that the Formula espouses two key principles. Because the liturgy proclaims the gospel clearly and teaches and edifies the people, the Confessions affirm: 1) profound respect for the past and for continuity with the historic liturgy, and 2) the benefit of a degree of liturgical commonality from parish to parish. We might say "from parish to parish within a region" but then we must also beware of anachronistic analogies. An anachronistic application might suggest that the Michigan District will aim for a degree of consistency while the South Central District will perhaps aim for a different consistency. But our national mobility and interaction within WELS far surpass similar factors in the 16th-17th centuries. Thus one might conclude that the Formula supports a degree of consistency in WELS worship.

Is this then an argument for hymnal-only uniformity in WELS? Hardly, as the next section will demonstrate. To conclude this section, a reminder from Luther.

Now even though external rites and orders—such as masses, singing, reading, baptizing—add nothing to salvation, yet it is unChristian to quarrel over such things and thereby to confuse the common people. We should consider the edification of the lay folk more important than our own ideas and opinions. Therefore, I pray all of you, my dear sirs, let each one surrender his own opinions and get together in a friendly way and come to a common decision about these external matters, so that there will be one uniform practice throughout your district instead of disorder—one thing being done here and another there—lest the common people get confused and discouraged....³⁰

4. Confessional perspectives implemented – *Kirchenordnungen*

Our confessional documents were never merely abstract doctrine or an academic formulation, but a formative and living confession with profound impact on centuries of Lutheran worship. To better understand how the early Lutherans understood and applied the Confessions, we are able to research the *Kirchenordnungen* (KOO).³¹ These are extensive documents giving many details about church life, including detailed instructions on the conduct of worship. Harrison includes a lengthy discussion on Chemnitz and the *Kirchenordnungen*.

The *Kirchenordnungen*, or "Church Orders," show what Chemnitz considered the liturgical ideal, and they give us great insight into how Article X is to be interpreted. In 1567 Chemnitz became the Superintendent of the city of Braunschweig. Before he accepted the office he clearly outlined his position on a number of issues relating to the relationships of pastors and congregations, ministerium, and government. One paragraph dealt particularly with liturgical issues and pastoral practice:

Likewise, we must all stick together, as we have in the past, and retain the practice that each does not build up himself or act as lord in his congregation and do what he pleases in preaching, administration of the sacraments, liturgical practices, discipline and the other aspects of his office, acting only according to his own ideas, but rather all these things shall be and remain the business of the entire ministerium. And because the conference meets regularly every two weeks, matters of this kind should be brought there and discussed, matters which are problems of the whole church which require our mutual concern or consideration.

Chemnitz' proposals were unanimously accepted and he was installed on October 15, 1567. The next year the new Duke of the Duchy of Braunschweig, Julius, called upon Chemnitz to carry out the reformation of the entire duchy. This involved a visitation and the establishing of a "church order". Chemnitz carried out this visitation with the help of Andreae and Selnecker (both of whom Julius had called to help with the task), on the basis of the church order which Chemnitz and Andreae had prepared earlier, and revised again after the visitation. Two hundred-seventy-eight pastors in all were examined. In the *Enchiridion* (designed for the examination of clergy) Chemnitz states:

With regard to the doctrine concerning ecclesiastical ceremonies (which we said would be the third chief part of this examination), it is contained and set forth in the church order. Pastors should also be examined with regard to that very doctrine, so that they might both have the right understanding of it and be able rightly to explain it to their hearers. Likewise, one should inquire whether and how they observe those ceremonies.

This church order is most significant for understanding Article X of the Formula because it was prepared by two formulators of the Formula of Concord.... The 1569 *Church Order* has an extensive *corpus doctrinae*. Immediately prefacing what amounts to an "agenda," prescribing all liturgical matters in the church, there is a section entitled, "Agenda or Ordering of the Church as to how ceremonies shall be treated and maintained in the churches of our princely realm."

First Chemnitz makes a distinction between those

"*kirchenceremonien*" which are commanded by God himself, and those which are "with, before and after such handling of the Word, the sacrament and common prayer, and are so to be ordered by the churches that all things may occur honorably, orderly and for the betterment of the church."

It is one thing with what God's Word clearly commands, "But it is quite something else with human principles and ordinances in the church." Attacking the papal teaching on ceremonies does not, however, justify their abolition in the church:

The community of God however, should be very fundamentally and decisively informed in matter of such indifferent ceremonies which are free, that when the human regulations of the papacy are rejected, the intent is not that now absolutely no order in ceremonies should be maintained; for Paul says in I Corinthians 14:[33]: God is not a God of disorder...

The problem in the papacy is that human ordinances are put on a par with the divine, as though they were meritorious "true divine service" (*wahre gottesdienst*). Such things bind consciences, cause scandal and must be resisted. However, the church order proceeds to defend uniform ceremonial:

On the other hand, however, the people should be instructed as Paul teaches in I Corinthians 14, that it is God's will that when the congregation comes together to deal with God's Word, the Sacrament and prayer, that all things should occur very honorably, orderly and for the betterment [of all]. And for this reason the reformed churches have and maintain certain free ceremonies which are indifferent, not with the opinion by which the pope has forced his regulation upon the church, as described above, rather only alone to this end, that in such assemblies everything may occur honorably, orderly and for the betterment [of all]; namely that there be a certain order regarding which place, which time, which persons, and what sort of form and manner shall be maintained, when dealing with the Word, the Sacrament and prayer; what shall precede, what shall follow, and that there be such ceremonies which give the external indication that in the congregation great, high, serious dealings are present, that thus the ceremonies lead, stimulate, admonish and move the people to join together their thoughts, lift up their hearts in all humility, that there be in the congregation heartfelt devotion to the Word, the Sacrament and prayer; for this is what Paul means when says [I Corinthians 14:40; 26]: Let all things be done in such assemblies completely honorably and orderly and for the betterment [of all].

And now the order proceeds to state in essence that while "Christian freedom has its place in these matters", still it is most beneficial for ceremonies to be the same:

And while indeed the Christian is not bound everywhere to one certain form of ceremony, rather Christian freedom has its place in this matter, as the ancients said: Disagreement in rites does not take away agreement in faith; but because it still brings all sorts of benefit that in ceremonies, so much as it is possible, a uniformity be maintained, and that such uniformity serves to maintain unity in doctrine, and that common, simple, weak consciences be all the less troubled, rather strengthened, it is therefore viewed as good, that as much as possible a uniformity in ceremonies with neighboring reformed churches be affected and maintained.

The order then proceeds to bind its pastors:

And for this reason, henceforth all pastors in the churches of our realm, shall emphatically follow this written [church] order, and not depart from the same without specific, grave cause.

And finally:

The common people may be instructed in such ceremonies; how they are matters of Christian freedom, for what end they are maintained and used, and this so that they are not again caught up in the old papistic delusion regarding ceremonies.

To demonstrate that one of the chief formulators of the Formula of Concord saw no contradiction between the statements of Formula X and the binding of clergy to specific liturgical parameters, we quote Chemnitz' *Articuli, qui subscribendi proponuntur illis qui ad ministerium in has ecclesia recipiuntur* [1571] which were subscribed to by all pastors who served in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel: "Let him retain the rites in use and received ceremonies of this church, and not presume to change anything by private decision without a common decree."³²

Harrison concludes his survey of Chemnitz and Article X with these words.

May Article X of the Formula of Concord be used to justify individual pastors' or congregations' claims to absolute liturgical freedom in modern America? Is Article X intended to keep larger church bodies from setting specific liturgical standards, and requiring pastors and congregations to adhere to these standards for the sake of order, decorum edification and love? Absolutely no to both questions. The nature of liturgical consensus must continue to be discussed among American Lutherans. Let no one assert that a desire for liturgical unity and uniformity is *eo ipso* "unLutheran." For then Chemnitz, Andreae, Selnecker, and the Lutheran Confessions are "unLutheran." Ceremonies are "free," but "this liberty is not license."

Do these principles mean then that there should be no changes in WELS worship practices? The impossibility of that position is obvious if we review a few decades of WELS history to recall beneficial changes: communion only four times per year; no Old Testament lessons; less attention to church year; archaic language issues; a new hymnal (neither *uniformly* nor *totally* adopted in all WELS parishes).

Then where do changes originate? In conferences such as this, for one. As Chemnitz wrote in 1567, quoted above, "All these things shall be and remain the business of the entire ministerium"—and, we might add, with the input and participation of the members.

5. Confessional perspectives implemented – musical repertoire

To study how the Lutherans understood and implemented worship principles, we have considered first some relevant citations from the Confessions. Next we looked at how confessional statements are reflected in the *Kirchenordnungen*. But the KOO still give us only rather bare outlines of early Lutheran worship. We can see the liturgical consistency from region to region as well as minor variations. This is like seeing a drawing of an ancient instrument. We know what it looks like, but we do not know much more; we do not know what it sounded like.

Fortunately, we are able to move beyond the KOO to the actual liturgical music publications and choir library inventories. Thus we have not only bare outlines of early Lutheran worship; we also have detailed information from the actual music used.

Our focus here is not so much ceremony, ritual, and rite but rather musical settings for the Lutheran mass. Ceremony, ritual, and rite from this era are worth further exploration, but we will focus now on the wealth of musical expression in Lutheran worship formed by the Confessions and guided by the KOO. This musical wealth is not unrelated to ceremony and rite.

To understand early Lutheran worship, we must deal with some strong myths—or at least overgeneralizations—about early Lutheran practice and history. [Herl's *Worship Wars...* is especially good at dispelling myths, including pious idealization of early Lutheran worship.]

#1 - "The Reformation restored singing to the people." Does this mean *all* of the liturgy? Far from it! The choir continued to have a major role, especially in cities. In villages the KOO often specify that the preacher should take along some musical students to sing the liturgical portions commonly sung by a choir.³³ The people sang hymns. Compare our sparse role for choir, at least in terms of the liturgy. We know from extant records and inventories that during the 17th century alone 151 Latin settings of the liturgy (mostly *missa brevis*: just Kyrie, Gloria³⁴) were published for use by German Lutheran choirs. Latin was preferred for the Kyrie and Gloria in cities, but German settings were also used.³⁵ Lutheran "masses" in Latin continued in Nuremberg until the beginning of the 19th century (Senn, 333). Musical practice in the 17th-18th centuries was, of course, an extension of practice in the 16th century. Equally important as hymnals were cantionales, containing liturgical music for choirs. Johann Spangenberg's encyclopedic collection (Magdeburg, 1545) was a large volume of 379 pages, prepared at the urging of Luther. It contained a *de tempore* arrangement of parts of the liturgy with traditional melodies set to the Latin texts and adaptations of them to the German translation. ["These volumes were of immense importance to the Lutheran liturgy, but unfortunately no comprehensive study of them has yet appeared, and no modern edition of them is available." Joseph Herl. *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism*. Oxford, 2004, 104.] Lucas Lossius's publication, as indicated by the title, provided a selection of liturgical chants from the old church for use in the new: *Psalmodia, hoc est Cantica sacra veteris ecclesiae selecta* (1553, 1561, 1569, 1579). This *Psalmodia* contained within its 800 pages: plainsong melodies to 56 Introits, 14 Alleluias, 31 sequences, 206 antiphons, 47 responsories, as well as settings of the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Proper Prefaces, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, the Litany, and full provision for Matins and Vespers (Senn, 348). The *Psalmodia* provided traditional plainsong settings. Polyphonic settings of the Ordinary were also used. Georg Rhau, Luther's colleague and the most important publisher of early Lutheranism, provided ten four-voice settings of the Ordinary in *Opus decem missarum* (1541). In addition to its liturgical role, choirs participated in *alternatim* hymn singing through a vast repertoire of polyphonic hymn settings. Yes, the Reformation provided for congregational singing, but historical accuracy requires that we not understand this anachronistically.

#2—"The *Deutsche Messe* was low church; the *Formula Missae* was high church." Actually, it appears that the DM as actually used was higher than the highest high church in WELS today. (I'm not arguing for high church stereotypes.) A more accurate application for us now (stated anachronistically for illustration) might be: DM, straight from the hymnal, with little elaboration, but still chanted liturgy and lessons, a liturgical role for choirs or soloists including choral variations of the chief liturgical songs; FM, hymnal with great elaboration: chant, brass & more instruments, an expanded role for choir, and a richer use of rite and ceremony.³⁶

#3—"Lutherans used music by Lutheran composers." Not even close. "The manuscript repertory of courts and churches in Lutheran Germany contains, in addition to original works by Protestant composers, a large number of masses by Catholic masters. These Catholic works remained acceptable to the Lutheran Church through the strength of tradition and because the Latin ordinary of the mass remained the common property of both confessions. Insofar as changes in the use of the ordinary in the Lutheran divine service involved the omission of certain texts or the substitution of the vernacular works for them, Catholic masses could be adapted simply by the excision of particular texts."^{37 38}

From the many published collections as well as inventories of actual music held by various churches, we gain an impression of vigorous and dynamic variety. Certainly an unwavering use of TLH page 5/15 for two or three decades was not a 20th century application of historic Lutheran variety. This variety suggests part of an answer to our inquiry about "acceptable range of practice" within WELS today. Here are four observations and applications.

First, historic Lutheran worship was, generally, higher than any current manifestations of "high church" in WELS. Nevertheless, there were variations within historic Lutheran worship in at least two ways. (1) Town and campus worship was richer both because these places had access to greater resources and because of familiarity with Latin and thus access to the vast Latin repertoire of church music. Village worship was simpler and less likely to use Latin. (2) Festivals tended to be "higher church" compared to nonfestival

Sundays. Considering these two points, it is only natural that there is a range of practice within WELS based both on resources available and customs followed on festivals. Thus larger parishes commonly make use of brass quartets and *alternatim praxis* for hymns or concertatos, and some parishes use a procession on festivals, but not regular Sundays.

Second, should WELS be united by use of a common liturgy? Most will answer yes, with two applications: (1) a common liturgical *structure*, so that the flow of worship makes sense to those who transfer membership and so that this flow reinforces our theology of worship; and (2) a common liturgical *repertoire* that gives a visible expression to our unity and that, again, is useful in a mobile society. But these values need not lead to a 21st century parallel to two or three decades of TLH page 5/15, a rut that never should have held us for so long. Too often talk about a common liturgy is understood to mean a rigidly exclusive structure and repertoire. That's not surprising, since that's what we did: used almost exclusively page 5/15 for so long. But the early Lutheran model encourages far greater variety. Thus parishes may well develop their own expanded repertoires of liturgical settings. Here are some recent examples from WELS practice [in 2001]: occasional use of the Melodic Gloria and Magnificat, both by James Chepponis; "Remember Your Love" from the 2001 NPH Lenten materials; our Madison, Wisconsin campus church's adaptation of Marty Haugen's "Creation" communion service used once a month; pending publication of a new setting of The Common Service with options for either organ or piano accompaniment; *Service of Word and Sacrament: Festival Setting* (flexible options for brass with a "keyboard reduction" for use with a synthesizer, percussion, winds, and/or descants); *Christian Worship: Altar Book* (options for singing much or less of the presiding minister's parts). For these last two, note the parallels with historic Lutheran intent to highlight festivals.

Third, applying the principles evident in historic Lutheran worship prevents liturgical worship from appearing to limit creativity and variety. Note historic use of both existing plainsong repertoire and newly composed and more elaborate repertoire. One application of this approach concerns the musical settings we use for the Psalm and Verse of the Day. Singing the psalms has met with wide approval in WELS, but a musical rut could develop if we use only the psalms from the hymnal. Similarly, the Verse settings published by NPH provide simple and accessible music that works with almost any resource: choir of adults or children, soloist, cantor (even presiding minister), duet. But a steady "one size fits all" diet of these settings might also lead to a rut. For other possibilities, see the Verse repertoire list prepared by Carol Laitinen for a workshop at the 1999 worship conference.³⁹

Fourth, when liturgical worship demonstrates variety and vitality, it might be judged more satisfying by more people. This satisfaction level might well remove some of the pressure for worship styles usually judged to be less Lutheran. Thus a strategy for variety and creativity within Lutheran parameters—which broadens and diversifies current "range of practice"—also promotes a creative unity *within* that range of practice. This increased satisfaction level also should be expected to have a positive impact on outreach and member retention. I mention this *not* as a sociological strategy to pursue *for the sake of* outreach or member retention but rather as a sort of apologetic to fortify confidence in Lutheran liturgical worship. (We make worship choices first on the basis of theology, not pragmatic sociology.)

Now, with a vast horizon of possibilities before us, what do we do? What does a parish do? It cultivates a core repertoire (mostly hymnal) and then a wider repertoire appropriate to its setting and resources.

Some parish choirs might learn more challenging choral settings for festive use, not difficult concert repertoire but whatever fits the parish. Historically this was not an elitist approach only for the big cities and court chapels. Andreas Hammerschmidt published 16 mostly *breve* mass settings (Kyrie, Gloria) in 1663. His preface for a 1655 publication defends his more accessible music as "directed toward the usable [or usual] style of the common city singers, who have thereby glorified and praised their and our God no less than the most artistic singers of the present time."⁴⁰

An accurate historical picture of worship variety in the 17th century is useful both as a model to inspire our efforts toward good, creative, Lutheran variety and as a corrective to the impression one sometimes gets that good liturgical worship is "hymnal-only" worship, with a little "decorative" variety added by the choir(s). It is

fair to make some generalizations about our historical WELS worship patterns: pietistic roots, pioneer beginnings, unwavering use of TLH page 5/15 for two or three decades (with Matins included sometimes or some places). Now try to imagine worshiping in one of the mother churches or daughter churches of Lansing or Ann Arbor formed *not* by our actual history but by something closer to the practice of Lutheran churches *circa* 1640-1690 instead of 1940-1990.⁴¹ It is interesting to speculate how our circumstances today might be different had we employed variety and vigor analogous to the 17th century.

Less (risk of) worship wars? Or at least greater satisfaction with worship?

Stronger member satisfaction and retention—and thus also outreach?

Deeper ownership of how we worship and intentionality by worshipers? (Stronger focus and participation.)

A Lutheran "immune system" better equipped to resist aberrations from other theologies?

Keep in mind that early Lutherans were fiercely concerned with being Lutheran and not Catholic.⁴² In some ways their consciousness of being Lutheran—and being willing to die for it—was stronger than ours. No Catholic army has ever swept through one of our towns, killing Lutherans or damaging our churches. (Though we have at times lost to Catholics in football or basketball.) A new WELS worship history by James Tiefel states:

The Lutheran churches were just beginning to recover from the doctrinal battles when the Roman popes and their Catholic allies began a determined effort to recapture the Lutheran lands lost during the Reformation. The Thirty Years War raged in Germany between 1618 and 1648. Hundreds of Lutheran churches were destroyed, and their pastors and members killed, scattered, or impoverished.⁴³

Some emotional reactions to "that's Catholic" have more to do with roots (Pietism, frontier, immigrant, early WELS history) than they have to do with a longer and broader sense of what it means to be a determined confessional Lutheran.

At a pastoral conference in California, where one essay dealt with the Smalcald Articles, I called attention to the Praetorius recording, *Mass for Christmas Morning* and suggested that we need to study not only what the reformers said and wrote about music and worship but also what that worship was like. Worship principles are always better caught than taught. It is better to let people experience something new in worship (with adequate preparation), than to editorialize on worship or merely to teach about worship. We need to gain insight into Luther's worship principles from hearing or experiencing the music and worship that grew out of his principles, not only from studying volume 53 of the American Edition. An instructive and growing discography of such music is available due to continued interest in "early music."⁴⁴

Paul Grime also comments on insights gained from the Praetorius recording.

For our worship to breathe deeply of the church's history and heritage requires work. Finding a comfortable niche in our worship and then not building upon it can easily result in stagnation. In 1994 a recording was made that demonstrated a communion service from the early 17th century—during the height of Lutheran Orthodoxy. The value of this recording is not to prescribe how we ought to be worshiping now; rather, it provides a glimpse into the past and reminds us of our roots and heritage. What this recording did for me was to demonstrate how mellow we have become. That recorded service brims with vitality. The organ grabs you by the throat; the singing is lusty; the instrumentation demonstrates tremendous variety; there are even drums.⁴⁵

6. WELS history

A deeper awareness of the realities of early Lutheran worship—in short, a more accurate historical awareness—might be helpful for current worship discussions. But a lack of this historical knowledge is hardly the only factor affecting our worship decisions today. There is much in WELS history that has shaped our view toward worship.

We cannot pinpoint a precise decade when WELS worship was exactly what it should have been, and we grant that today's worship is not perfect. Thus a degree of worship evolution is not only understandable but also necessary. As we participate in that evolution, it is helpful to look carefully and without anachronistic biases at the actual worship of Lutheran history.⁴⁶ It is also helpful to consider our own WELS history. Both of these historical perspectives can help us to answer questions about "acceptable range of worship practice in WELS" as we continue to experience and lead change in worship.

This section will quote heavily some WELS voices from 1950 to 1970. Our fairly recent history has much to say about who we are and how we think about worship today.

Without doubt our pietistic roots have had an impact our views of worship. In 1951 E.H. Wendland's essay, "Present-Day Pietism," was published the *Theological Quarterly*. He wrote:

A more serious cause for alarm [than sentimental hymnody], however, is the fact that Pietism has left its mark upon our present-day attitude towards the sacraments, which seems extremely difficult to overcome. The deplorable fact that our orthodox church has not succeeded in raising its average communion attendance to more than slightly over twice annually per communicant (cf. 1948 Statistical Report, Wisconsin Synod) is a definite throwback to Pietism, and a far cry from that which Luther preached. A further study will show that many of our customs regarding the Sacrament which serve to discourage rather than encourage frequent communion attendance (quarterly celebrations, special confessional services, personal announcement, departure from the regular communion liturgy, etc.) are of Pietistic, rather than Reformation origin.

Notice that Wendland points out not only the results of historic Pietism and its lingering effect on WELS at mid-century; he also points to spiritual parallels between 1650 and 1950.

The final factor which we referred to as a contribution to early pietistic trends was carefully called *Orthodoxism*, or a religious intellectualism, devoid of spiritual strength, and coldly intellectual in its presentation of doctrine and in the dispatch of its duty. Here particularly we must exercise care in attempting to picture any present-day parallel within the Lutheran Church, since any reference to similarities in our day would immediately be stamped as a vicious insinuation and a judging of hearts. Our Synod particularly has been generally labeled as guilty of "proving the validity of its orthodox position by means of every possible dialectical definition and distinction" so that the "people grow weary of the endless and useless theological disputes in which their pastors and professors engaged." Although the contributing influence of orthodoxism as a factor in the development of early pietism has been greatly overplayed, it is admitted by all to have been, nevertheless, a contributing factor, and it also remains such to the present day. The danger of a clergy and a laity which is more intent upon being professionally correct than on saving souls is always present in any established church. A coldly intellectual approach to Christianity, coupled with a lack of zeal for doing mission work, is a danger of the Old Adam which we all must face. And the fact that such an attitude, when permitted to grow, can estrange the common people and nurture the desire for something more vital, no matter where it may be found, also cannot be questioned.

The overly somber communion piety of Pietists—compared to the joyful foretaste of the feast to come—certainly has had a negative impact on Lutheran worship influenced by pietistic roots. Kurt Marquart writes about

...the real inner connexion between the Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper. It means that the Holy Supper must be understood first of all as the feast and celebration of the Resurrexion Victory, not as a lachrymose re-enactment of Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, which is what Lutheran pietism tended to make it. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession rightly states at the conclusion of Article X [The Holy Supper]: "We are talking about the presence of the living Christ, knowing that 'death no longer has dominion over him.'" ⁴⁷

Early American influence away from Pietism and back to confessional Lutheran roots in worship came from Wilhelm Loehe (1808-1872) in his *Agenda fuer Christliche Gemeinden* (1844) used in the Franconian colonies until 1862.⁴⁸ His attitude toward worship is apparent in these comments.

"The true faith is expressed not only in the sermon but also prayed in the prayers and sung in the hymns. In this way the liturgy will serve the church as a new defense against its enemies" (*Three Books About the Church*, Fortress, 1969, 178-79).

"The Church remains what she is even without a Liturgy, she remains a queen in beggars' rags. It is better to give up everything else and to hold only to pure doctrine than to go about in the pomp and glory of splendid services which are without light and life because the doctrine has become impure. Yet it is not necessary to let the Church go in beggars' rags. Much better it is that her prayers, her hymns, her sacred order, the holy thoughts of her Liturgy, should be impressed upon the people" (*Three Books About the Church*, 8).

The early liturgy espoused by C.F.W. Walther, *Kirchen-Agende*, 1856, is considered simpler than Loehe's, but still far closer to "old Lutheran" roots than the worship of early WELS. Course notes from Tiefel's 2000 summer quarter course state:

Even the Bavarians used this Saxon order (but only because Ottomar Fuerbringer wrote that he would accept the call only if the Loehe liturgy was dropped. In *Teach My People the Truth*, Herman Zehnder comments: "The abandonment of the Loehe liturgy was tragic, for the liturgy developed by the Saxons was no liturgy at all."⁴⁹ Not until the early 1940s of the next century, when A.C. Klammer in the English services introduced the Common Service, which was essentially the liturgy which Loehe had developed a hundred years previously in German, did a respectable liturgy return to St. Lorenz.)⁵⁰

The Mission Societies of Basel (1815) and St. Chrischona (1840) shaped the formation of early WELS worship. Until 1848, the graduates of many mission societies were prepared to serve either Lutheran or Reformed congregations. They deplored the "Old Lutheran" insistence on Lutheran doctrine and practice and considered it zealotry and priestcraft. Johannes Muehlhaeuser at Grace Church, Milwaukee, shaped a constitution with an ironic stipulation:

Be it resolved that our congregation, founded on the ground of the apostles and prophets, whereon Jesus is the cornerstone, makes confession of the Augsburg confession and Luther's Small Catechism. However, never may or shall a preacher of the said congregation use the Rite of the Old Lutheran Church, whether in Baptism or the Lord's Supper.⁵¹

From Tiefel's course notes (21-22):

Lacking (and even avoiding) an intense confessional interest, early WELS pastors didn't grapple with the *lex orandi lex credendi* principle in the same way that the Saxons and Franconians did.

A reliance on the mission societies for its pastors made it difficult for Bading and others (who probably had a growing appreciation for the *lex orandi* principle) to change minds, especially in the area of liturgy. Good forms (e.g., the 1899 Agenda service or the use of the rhythmic chorale) were not put into practice. Wisconsin lacked a liturgical and musical leader who had the stature of Walther or Loehe.

We cannot underestimate the reality that our analysis of the early era of the WELS is made in the light of Lutheran liturgical renewal and Vatican II. What sometimes seems preposterous to us was not preposterous to Edward Fredrich, Armin Schuetze, or Wilbert Gawrisch nor to men of their generation nor to men they trained.

Remember this last paragraph when we arrive at some mid-20th century quotations from WLQ.

In the late 19th century, Wisconsin struggled to find or produce both an acceptable Agenda and hymnal. Regarding the *Book of Hymns* (1917) Tiefel states: "One senses a determined opposition to the Common Service which had been used in Missouri's 1911 Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book."⁵² This meant a trimmed down approach to the liturgy, an attitude that had more to do WELS roots than with something wrong with

Missouri and the Common Service. Comments by O. Hagedorn appeared in *Northwestern Lutheran*, May 5, 1918.

The words "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen," as an introduction to the altar service have been intentionally omitted, because the thought conveyed therein is sufficiently expressed in the words "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth," and in the subsequent confession of the Creed.

There is a very good reason for singing the Kyrie or "O Christ, Thou Lamb of God" immediately after the Confession of sins; hence we put it there, but omitted it later, where it is often found [the Kyrie]. [Cf. later complaints about placement of the Kyrie in TLH; why *after* confession?]

We believe the average church-goer will thank us for not putting in more than one Scripture Lesson.

Other deviations from forms found in other books were made from the same considerations: to avoid unnecessary duplications and reiterations. Let the pastor and choir director put all the variety into the service that their liturgical conscience will demand or permit; but for the standard forms let us confine ourselves to that which is truly essential and liturgical.

Especially interesting—and discovered only in the middle of the year 2000 summer quarter course—is a copy of the 1896 *Agende*. While not the same as Missouri's *Kirchen-Agende*, 1856, this 1896 *Agenda* is closer to Luther's *Formula Missae* than to Wisconsin liturgical practice that was to dominate the early 20th century. Why did Wisconsin start with something richer than 1917 and then "regress?" Possibly the early influence of editor August Graebner was not yet appreciated by Wisconsin, so close to its 19th century roots.⁵³

In 1941 *The Lutheran Hymnal* was not an effort to perpetuate certain liturgical practices and perspectives within WELS, but to discover them. This hymnal brought much that was new for WELS:

- The Common Service and the order of the Synaxis

- The complete Proper: introits, graduals, collects and a greater emphasis on the church year

- Matins and Vespers and their use of the psalms

- The language of 19th century Anglicanism

Tiefel summarizes early WELS history.

Despite the heartening move toward Lutheran confessionalism, Wisconsin was not ready to abandon the non-liturgical practices of Pietism. This was certainly true of its members, but especially true of its pastors. The move toward confessionalism, guided, of course, by the Holy Spirit, was an intellectual move, born out of study of the Scriptures and the Lutheran confessions. But Missouri's brand of liturgical worship and its tastes in hymnody ran counter to what Wisconsin's founders and early leaders had experienced from their youth. Wisconsin was ready for a confessional adjustment, but the assimilation of liturgy, ceremony, and objective hymns didn't feel right to many pastors and people born and bred in pietism. ...

Wisconsin had no liturgical champion of its own. There is no doubt that Adolph Hoenecke had as much theological influence in Wisconsin as Walther had in Missouri, but Hoenecke did not carry the dual mantle of Synod and Seminary president as Walther did and thus could not influence his Synod in the same way that Walther influenced his. Hoenecke's practical theology field was homiletics, not liturgics, and, although he served on several hymnal review committees, he does not seem to have had as much interest in music and the arts as Walther did. Not until J.P. Koehler (Walther's student in St. Louis) arrived at the Seminary in 1900 was there an emphasis on teaching confessional hymnology at the Seminary, and not until after Hoenecke's death in 1908 was there a course on liturgics.

Roots in Pietism, few financial resources, resentment of Missouri's perceived overbearing leadership, and a resulting skepticism over practices considered show and ostentation—these combined to establish a generally negative attitude toward liturgical worship, ceremony, music, and art that lasted well into the second century of Wisconsin's history.⁵⁴

There is no doubt that the mid-century liturgical movement carried baggage that made it difficult for WELS leaders to find the wheat among the chaff. But even apart from the negative turn caused by the "ecumenical high church men" WELS had not shown much interest in the study of worship.

It is interesting to note that the first scholarly article on the history and value of the Lutheran liturgical service did not appear in the *Quarterly* until 1938, 34 years after the publication's first issue. Entitled "What Benefits May be Derived From More Emphasis on the Study of Liturgics," the article was written, not by a Seminary professor, but by a parish pastor, Gervasius Fischer, who also served on the liturgics subcommittee for *The Lutheran Hymnal* (cf. *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol 35, No. 2, page 109, and Vol. 36, No. 2, page 97).⁵⁵

Consider this lack of attention to liturgy not only in light of WELS context, tastes, and preferences but also in light of the vast amount of historical material available. Richter's early study of the *Kirchenordnungen* was published in 1846. The first five volumes of Sehling's critical edition—beginning with the all-important Saxon KOO—were published in 1902-13. These large volumes occupy significant shelf space in our seminary library but were not acquired until the 1980s. The Common Service became available in 1888 after research and study that lead east coast Lutherans to search out the best and most widely-used liturgical orders of the Reformation era. A fuller service using this research didn't become common in WELS until after the 1941 hymnal.

Mid twentieth century Liturgical Movement

Early WELS history did not show much interest in either liturgical research or practice. Events in the middle of the 20th century further discouraged interest in liturgy. "Ritual" is largely a pejorative word in WELS. If you doubt this, run a word search on the Logos collection of the WLQ. It turns up either in discussion of pagan religions or of liberal/ecumenical Christian trends, and to a lesser degree in discussion of Old Testament ritual.

Begun in the 1930s, the liturgical movement attracted pastors, teachers, church musicians, and laypeople from various Lutheran synods who were interested in the liturgical, musical, and artistic legacy of orthodox Lutheranism. Unfortunately, many of these individuals were also interested in Lutheran ecumenicity and arrived at conferences and symposiums not only for the study of worship but also to discover how the confessional walls that existed between Lutherans might be broken down. Among those quietly pushing for Lutheran unity were theologians who had begun to accept the conclusions of the historical critical method of Bible. One can hardly blame Wisconsin Synod pastors, cautious and conservative by nature (and generally wary of ostentation anyway), for their disapproval of and distaste for the emphases of the Lutheran liturgical movement. Attending the sessions of the Valparaiso Liturgical Institutes or subscribing to the publications of the Liturgical Society of St. James could put an ugly brand on a man during the 1940s and 50s.⁵⁶

The first of many "liturgical institutes" at Valparaiso was held in 1949. Before this date WELS leaders had shown strong aversion to the liturgical movement even apart from the later and more serious concern of false ecumenism being reinforced by liturgical trends. But at least one Wisconsin reaction to the St. James Society showed a neutral to positive assessment: "We welcome the activities of the Liturgical Society of St. James, as expressed in the first issue of *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana* and hope it may avoid successfully the many pitfalls on its path. When properly correlated to other forms of Gospel work, liturgics will fill an important place in our Savior's Kingdom" (John Meyer in *Theologische Quartalschrift*). But the WELS reaction was generally negative: "Jesuits in disguise," "Ecclesiastical dressmakers," "Veiling the true program and work of the Church," "While the souls of men are dying these men are talking about vestments and incense."

Wisconsin's negative reaction to liturgical emphases was exacerbated by the doctrinal battles of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. With but few exceptions, those leading the liturgical movement in Missouri were also leading its ecumenical excursions: O.P. Kretzmann, Jaroslav Pelikan, A.C. Piepkorn, Richard Caemmerer.

In such a context, it's not surprising that those with liturgical interests in Wisconsin were not appreciated.

Martin Albrecht recounted an incident that took place in the fall of 1941 in the sacristy at Calvary, Thiensville, WI, where he was serving as pastor. He was preparing for the opening service of the Milwaukee pastoral conference and had posted "page 15" (*The Lutheran Hymnal's* "Order for the Holy Communion") on the hymn board. Just before the service his district president and the chairman of the Synod's Board of Trustees arrived at the sacristy door and suggested that Albrecht not use "that high church liturgy."⁵⁷

We will consider now lengthy excerpts from mid-century essays published in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, first "A Time-Honored Warning Against Present Dangers to the Church from Pharisaism."⁵⁸

The Pharisees loved ceremonies. Their worship was afflicted with what we could call ceremonitis. Their daily lives were regulated by ceremonies—ceremonies of washing their hands whenever they might have touched a Gentile or anything belonging to him, ceremonies of cleansing dishes and utensils, prayer ceremonies, fasting ceremonies, ceremonies when they tithed, Sabbath ceremonies, ceremonies connected with their apparel, climaxed by ceremonies in their public worship that had degenerated to a mass of ritual and liturgy, every word and action of which was regulated by law. Catholicism is likewise ceremony-ridden.⁵⁹

Pharisaism was a legalistic religion,⁶⁰ a tangled maze of laws, commandments, ordinances, precepts, regulations that no strict Pharisee could follow without an indexed handbook in his pocket.

If Pharisaism has vitiated and undermined the Christian faith in the Church of Rome and much of Protestantism, we should be only deluded Pharisees ourselves if we should suppose that it could not creep into our Lutheran Church, even though our Lutheran confessions bar every door by which it could enter.⁶¹

To mention another Pharisaism, there is the growing emphasis on ritual and ceremony under the guise of going back to Luther's day when the Lutheran Church was just crawling out of its Roman Catholic shell and still outwardly observing many Roman Catholic ceremonies.⁶² In Synodical Conference churches we hear of perpetual lamps⁶³ burning ... [and] altar boys.... It behooves us to beware of drifting into Pharisaic ceremony which is death to the true worship "in spirit and in truth" of which Jesus speaks.⁶⁴ Rich, beautiful, historic liturgies may have a powerful appeal to our finer religious senses, but they are always fraught with the Pharisaic and Roman Catholic peril of being considered something good and God-pleasing in themselves.⁶⁵

What the leaven of Pharisaism did to the doctrines of the Church of Rome it can and will do to any church that harbors such leaven. The leaven of Pharisaism will corrupt true doctrine as yeast will leaven dough. Let our Lutheran Church begin to stress ritual and liturgy, as if God is better served by a more elaborate liturgy, and the leaven of Pharisaism will be at work.⁶⁶

Next, from "Observations on Ecumenicity." While this material might not represent mainstream WELS thinking at the time of writing, there is also no doubt that these opinions were both shared and influential.

Just lately a book has appeared by the former editor of *The Christian Century*, Charles Clayton Morrison. It is being received with acclaim. It deals with this very thing, the Ecumenical Movement. Fulsome reviews praise his counsel to the many branches of the Protestant Church to forget their divisive doctrines and practices and to draw together in a solid phalanx against the evils threatening both political institutions and the Church. In plain words, he advocates setting aside God's Word and its supreme authority in favor of great numbers standing together shoulder to shoulder, not recognizing that his plan of battle means certain and abject defeat. God cannot go along with a strategy that leaves Him out as commander-in-chief. And what further folly to take out of the hands of an army its only weapon, in this case the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! Morrison's advice sounds like sending into deadly combat a nondescript, undisciplined multitude, armed with sticks and stones, scythe and pitchfork, with no plan of battle and no leader, against the best disciplined and most modernly armed and directed army in the world. The outcome would be certain: Satan and his cohorts would carry away the victory; in whose army one of the best-trained corps is that of the Pope, the Anti-Christ yea, the Pope, who is finding in our camp aid and comfort in the Romanish high church party. **For these brethren fail to**

evaluate the calling of the Lutheran Church in America to remain definitely Lutheran in simplicity of ritual, of doctrine, of practice, and of dress—adding cassock and cope, surplice and cincture to scores of other accoutrements belonging as definitely to the Roman Catholic habit (emphasis added).⁶⁷

The essay ends with these thoughts, echoing the theme that God calls Lutherans in America to simple ritual.

The antidote? Back to the Bible; back to the promises of Christ; back to faith in God; back to the Lutheran Confessions and Luther; back to singing the grand Lutheran chorales; back to a sturdy trust in the word of Christ concerning the Church: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In short, be Lutheran! For the confessional church has always proved the strong church. Would that the Lutheran Church of whatever synod in America were to realize that its God-given call in America is to remain definitely LUTHERAN! Lutheran in preaching the Word, Lutheran in administration of the sacraments, Lutheran in simplicity of ritual⁶⁸ and organization, Lutheran in every phase of confession. For only as staunch Lutherans shall we be able to keep true course in the pagan civilization surrounding us, help to dam the leaping growth and influence of the Roman Catholic Church in our land, stem the tide of Reformed influence in the Protestant Church,—and not drift away on the stream of the Ecumenical Movement into the shallows of indifferentism to wreck on the shoals of ultimate unbelief.

Within the pale of the Lutheran Church in America the current of the Ecumenical Movement is running strong. It had its beginnings in the mergers of the second decade of this century. It deposited the Opgjoer, the Chicago Theses, the Minneapolis Theses, the Pittsburgh Agreement, and other documents on the way. Then for a while it seemed to subside, diked off from the Synodical Conference largely by the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod. But in recent years it has crevassed this levee, first seeping, then beginning to pour into the Synodical Conference. The chief crevasses through which brackish waters are flowing are four in number: the English District of the Missouri Synod; the chaplaincy; the high church party; and, sad to say, Concordia Seminary at St. Louis.⁶⁹

The Ecumenical Movement ... stands alongside of the high church movement as one of the most powerful agents in preparing our people for a return to Roman Catholicism and for the temporary triumph of the Anti-Christ before the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ,⁷⁰ Who will slay him with the breath of His mouth. For, as was said before, the ecumenical movement substitutes an external organization for inner conviction of faith, as the high church man learns to commute genuine contrition of the heart into an easy genuflection.
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"The Twentieth Century Crucifixion of Christ," 1971, clearly and without debate makes valid points. The reason for including this quotation is because it links the malady with "splendid clerical vestments" and "pectoral crosses"—granted, not in unavoidable cause-and-effect fashion and perhaps simply to reinforce the irony, but still in a way that helps WELS know what it ought to be.

To this day Jesus' claim to be the Son of God is denied and denounced. In the front ranks of His accusers before Pilate's tribunal were the religious leaders of the day, the chief priests and elders of the people. In our day, too, the most vehement and vicious attacks on our Savior, the Christ of the Scriptures, originate with those who profess to be religious authorities—professional theologians and ecclesiastical officials, professors of theology and doctors of divinity. In this twentieth century in which we live attacks on Christianity by those outside the pale of the visible Christian Church have been blatant and bold, but the subversion from within has been more treacherous and damaging. In the very forefront of those crying, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" in our day are ecumenical dignitaries parading in splendid clerical vestments adorned with ponderous pectoral crosses and the learned occupants of chairs of theology at prestigious seminaries and universities.⁷²

Now let me be very clear about my intent in quoting these great WELS leaders. My intent is not to criticize their instincts and judgments. They addressed important issues that concerned the faithfulness of the church. My intent in quoting them is rather to place them into a historical context, both a WELS context and a much longer confessional Lutheran context.

Strong opinions about liturgical trends were not aimed only at the ecumenicals outside WELS. Some voices inside WELS did their best to minimize usage of liturgical elements in TLH. In the following, why pit attention to preaching *against* attention to liturgical form?

“There is nothing that so attaches people to the church as good preaching.” Always in place, this opinion from the Apology of the Augsburg Confession certainly needs to be stressed again in these days, which have witnessed a decided, sometimes dangerously strong emphasis on liturgical forms and a reintroduction of some liturgical features so unnecessary, and at the same time so foreign to our people as to give offense. Attractive as many of these things are, yes, important as it is that also our forms of worship be meaningful and edifying, orderly and beautiful, “they are,” as the Apology continues, “not the adornment that properly belongs to the church.” They may attract people to the church, but it is chiefly through good preaching that people will become attached to the church. How important especially for every pastor to keep this continually in mind.⁷³

Contrast this from Armin Schuetze: “We must learn the practical skill of pleading the cause of the Gospel most effectively. The fact that the Gospel is the power of God, that through it the Holy Spirit works, that it does not return void, does not free us from the obligation of proclaiming it in the best possible manner. ... This means ... acquiring good homiletical habits, **learning good liturgical practices** (emphasis added), so that our preaching, our manner of conducting worship services may not put a stumbling block into the way of the Gospel message.” Not every citation from WLQ reflects the strong and understandable antipathy toward worship reflective of earlier Lutheran rite, ceremony, and ritual. From “The Confessional Lutheran Emigrations From Prussia and Saxony Around 1839”:⁷⁴

During the reigns of Elector Frederick III, who in 1701 took the title King Frederick I of Prussia, and his successor, King Frederick William I, a number of changes were ordered in the Lutheran liturgy in Prussia. Exorcism was abolished in the rite of baptism. Private confession was done away with. Crucifixes were removed from altars, as were the traditional paraments. The pastors no longer wore traditional vestments.⁷⁵ Bread was substituted for the host in the communion service. The chanting of the liturgy was dropped. No Lutheran could object that these changes in rites and customs were scripturally intolerable. Yet all of these changes were in the direction of making the Lutheran worship service more like the Reformed service.⁷⁶

From Wendland's 1951 “Present-Day Pietism” again:

The Lutheran Order of Service began to be regarded as an ossified relic of Pre-Reformation times, a legalistic strait jacket which through its prescribed prayers impeded the free outpouring of a devout heart. The ex-corde prayer took precedence over the liturgical prayer. Sentimental Gospel-hymns replaced the confessional Lutheran hymn. Private confession and particularly the pronouncement of absolution by the pastor was bitterly opposed, since it was claimed to presuppose a judgment as to the true repentance of an individual. “The confessional chair is the devil’s chair,” it was declared.

No doubt there come times in the life of every liturgist, when his Lutheran Order of Service appears as an “ossified relic” of Catholic ritual, which he must either arbitrarily amend to put a little more life into it, or inject into it greater appeal through giving it its proper Catholic setting. The early Pietists, of course, were iconoclasts, because they saw little sentimental appeal in the Lutheran liturgy. Many of us may protest vigorously against any iconoclastic bent, and at the same time conduct our order of service as though we have to apologize for it, or eliminate some of its dullness by injecting our own “vibrant” personality whenever and however possible. Or we possibly feel that a flair for more pomp and ritual will restore a little effectiveness at least, even though our people may not understand what it is all about.⁷⁷

From Wendland's closing paragraph: “We need to restudy Luther, not only in biographical surveys, but by actually digging into his writings. His sermons, his expositions, his isagogical and exegetical studies, his essays, his hymns reveal a living Gospel, soundly based on Word and Sacrament throughout. There was nothing “canned” about his sermons, nothing perfunctory about his practice, nothing ossified about his liturgies....” Accurate awareness of Lutheran history, especially of actual 17th century worship, is valuable not so that we blindly imitate what they did (restitution) but so that we can make our choices with hind-

sight for the way they made theirs (theology, principles, application). Others have also called for accurate history. "In stage 1 of [the modern liturgical movement], we were concerned to reclaim our liturgical history from the 'nonhistorical orthodoxy' that characterized counter-Reformation Catholicism."⁷⁸ A Lutheran "nonhistorical orthodoxy" will not serve us well because it will prevent us from sensing the connection between theology and practice in the past.

Citations from WELS leaders fifty years ago offer perspective on one major theme requested by your agenda committee. "We'd like your morning session to focus not so much on worship options, but on Christian unity." So it's worth asking, What was the nature of WELS worship unity in 1950 when some were eagerly implementing the implications of a new hymnal, TLH? Which opinion in 1950 (less liturgy or more liturgy, higher or lower church⁷⁹) expressed greater unity with the first fifty years of WELS history? Which expressed greater unity with previous centuries of confessional Lutheranism? Which opinion in 1950 is more widely reflected in WELS worship today? And finally, of most interest, where will we be or where should we be in 2025?

It is interesting to note that 1950 is midway between 2000 and 1900, between our first and most dramatic recovery from pietistic roots and a lack of confessional perspective and today, when many pressures again urge at least the *style* and focus if not the substance of worship to be less "Lutheran."⁸⁰

7. Conclusion

You have surely noticed that this presentation has not quoted much Scripture or arrived at its direction by applying specific Bible references. This is because we do not have ceremonial laws to answer our questions. This study could have elaborated on St. Paul's appeal from 1 Corinthians, cited at the beginning; "agree with one another." But such elaboration belongs better in a general study of the relationship between agreement in doctrine and agreement/latitude in adiaphora.

Now, having considered many strands and themes in Lutheran worship history, we return to the assigned title for this presentation: How High is Too High? How Low Can We Go? I'm not sure. These are important questions without obvious answers. These are pastoral questions that can be answered only in real contexts where pastors are fully aware of both historical and contemporary strands and themes.

As we address these questions, we are brothers who apply St. Paul's body imagery to our deliberations and decisions. The hand does not say to the eye, "I don't need your historic, aesthetic, or broadening perspectives." The foot does not say to the hand, "I don't want to hear your questions about pastoral pace or the fears and biases that some people have."⁸¹

As we continue to lead and experience worship evolution in WELS, let's do so with a firm grasp on the things that matter most: God's amazing gifts in Word and Sacrament. Let's help his people to worship with a sense of John's vision in Revelation 5 and 7: the Lamb is on his throne. Our Lord Christ himself comes to us with his Word, with his body and blood. His power is there in Baptism and Absolution. These things are real, not mere signs or cognitive content. They will help us make wise decisions along the low-high continuum.

May God bless your preaching and presiding and teaching about worship—to his glory and for his people.



Appendix 1

From later analysis: 'Ecclesiae dei' is not plural (see page 10 of this essay). As the German text shows, it is a dative after the impersonal verb 'licet' and dative after 'utilissima': 'It is allowable *to the church of God* in all lands/countries/regions.' But the essential accuracy of the main point remains.

Analysis of Waddell/Harrison

James A. Waddell. *The Struggle to Reclaim the Liturgy in the Lutheran Church: Adiaphora in Historical, Theological and Practical Perspective*. Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2005.

The following numbered points are quotations from a 662-word footnote in Waddell, p50, that challenged Harrison's essay on FC X (footnote 24). My analysis follows each point. Bold is my emphasis.

1) "Harrison attempts to demonstrate that uniformity of liturgy is **necessary** for the catholicity of the church...."

Harrison is probing the **intent** of the Confessions. To say that the Confessions intend to establish a freedom that is guided by something larger than a single congregation does not mean that "uniformity of liturgy is **necessary** for the catholicity of the church" – not any more than for WELS congregations to submit constitutions for review. An approved constitution is not necessary, but it is beneficial for various reasons. To see some degree of uniformity (even if only macrostructural) as **beneficial** and **supported** by the Confessions and by the practice of the Confessors hardly makes such uniformity **necessary**.

2) "Harrison argues that Gemein must mean a larger **church body** rather than a local congregation...."

It sounds like Waddell is trying to refute the idea (which isn't implied) that the LCMS could impose liturgical uniformity. Harrison's point is NOT that we should today have a KO for a synod but that the Confessors didn't operate with an assumption that every congregation would make its own private choices. Every congregation IS free, based on New Testament freedom without reference to the Confessions; but that doesn't establish that they SHOULD operate with an independence devoid of connection to those around them.

The historical record is quite clear that there were variations among the KOO. Rather than the bogeyman of "enforced uniformity," it may be more accurate historically to see a situation of flexibility within familiar forms. Just as there were variations among the regions of Germany (and even more so in different Lutheran lands, like Scandinavia), so there may be variations among us today.

Again, this doesn't mean that our 21st century variety MUST be within familiar forms – based neither on a descriptive nor a prescriptive understanding of the Confessions.

3) "Harrison would press the confessional and historical witness into ... his assumption, that **liturgical uniformity** is necessary for the catholicity and orthodoxy of the church...."

I wonder if this example is an illustration of defeating one's opponent by refuting a position he really hasn't taken.

A risk of falsely perceived overstatement is also in WELS writings. Consider the common expression "Lutherans are liturgical." Wayne Mueller entitled an article in his *Forward in Christ* series with this expression, 3-1-2002. This doesn't mean "Lutherans **must** be liturgical" or "Being liturgical is a **mark** of the church" or "The Confessions **require*** Lutherans to be liturgical." It simply means that Lutherans, taking into consideration the principles of worship, have commonly chosen to be liturgical.

* The Confessions don't "require" in a prescriptive sense even while they "expect" in a descriptive sense. The KOO often "require" in a sense analogous to our submission to constitution and bylaws.

Bryan Gerlach, 2009

See also *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance: a Review of the Controversy and a Way Forward*, by David R. Maxwell. From the 2007 Pieper Lectures: <http://www.shop.logia.org/category.sc?categoryId=16>. Especially page 120.

Appendix 2: Letter from C. F. W. Walther

Honored Sir,

This morning I received your worthy letter, written on the 19th of the month. In your letter you ask for my opinion on whether it is advisable to introduce the singing of Methodist songs in a Lutheran Sunday School. May what follows serve as a helpful reply to your questions:

No, this is not advisable, rather very incorrect and pernicious.

1. Our church is so rich in hymns that you could justifiably state that if one were to introduce Methodist hymns in a Lutheran school this would be like carrying coals to Newcastle. The singing of such hymns would make the rich Lutheran Church into a beggar which is forced to beg from a miserable sect. Thirty or forty years ago a Lutheran preacher might well have been forgiven this. For at that time the Lutheran Church in our country was in as poor as beggar when it comes to song books for Lutheran children. A preacher scarcely knew where he might obtain such little hymn books. Now, however, since our church itself has everything it needs, it is unpardonable when a preacher of our church causes little ones to suffer the shame of eating a foreign bread.
2. A preacher of our church also has the holy duty to give souls entrusted to his care pure spiritual food, indeed, the very best which he can possibly obtain. In Methodist songs there is much which is false, and which contains spiritual poison for the soul. Therefore, it is soul-murder to set before children such poisonous food. If the preacher claims, that he allows only "correct" hymns to be sung, this does not excuse him. For, first of all, the true Lutheran spirit is found in none of them; second, our hymns are more powerful, more substantive, and more prosaic; third, those hymns which deal with the Holy Sacraments are completely in error; fourth, when these little sectarian hymnbooks come into the hands of our children, they openly read and sing false hymns.
3. A preacher who introduces Methodist hymns, let alone Methodist hymnals, raises the suspicion that he is no true Lutheran at heart, and that he believes one religion is as good as the other, and that he is thus a unionistic-man, a mingler of religion and churches.
4. Through the introduction of Methodist hymn singing he also makes those children entrusted to his care of unionistic sentiment, and he himself leads them to leave the Lutheran Church and join the Methodists.
5. By the purchase of Methodist hymn books he subsidizes the false church and strengthens the Methodist fanatics in their horrible errors. For the Methodists will think, and quite correctly so, that if the Lutheran preachers did not regard our religion as good as, or indeed, even better than their own, they would not introduce Methodist hymn books in their Sunday schools, but rather would use Lutheran hymn books.
6. By introducing Methodist hymn books, the entire Lutheran congregation is given great offense, and the members of the same are lead to think that Methodists, the Albright people, and all such people have a better faith than we do.

This may be a sufficient answer regarding this dismal matter. May God keep you in the true and genuine Lutheran faith, and help you not to be misled from the same, either to the right or to the left.

Your unfamiliar, yet known friend, in the Lord Jesus Christ,

C. F. W. Walther

St. Louis, Missouri

January 23, 1883

Translated by M. Harrison

Included in "Sacramental Worship, Sacramental Preaching: Treasures of our Lutheran Church,"

Mark DeGarmeaux, 1998. Available at www.blc.edu/comm/gargy/gargy1/M.DeGarmeaux.html

Appendix 3: Ceremonies among Early Lutherans

A notion of the extent to which the Lutheran Church retained and purified olden ceremonies may be got from the following description of its usages so late as the eighteenth century ([Rudolf] Roscholl, *Gesch. d. ev. Kirche in Deutschland*, 300):

According to the Brunswick Agenda of Duke Augustus, 1657, the pastors went to the altar clad in alb, chasuble, and mass vestments. Sacristans and elders held a fair cloth before the altar during the administration, that no particle of the consecrated Elements should fall to the ground. The altar was adorned with costly stuffs, with lights and fresh flowers. "I would," cries [Christian] Scriver, "that one could make the whole church, and especially the altar, look like a little Heaven." Until the nineteenth century the ministers at St. Sebald in Nuremberg wore chasubles at the administration of the Holy Supper. The alb was generally worn over the Talar, even in the sermon. [Valerius] Herberger calls it his natural Sæetuch [seed-cloth], from which he scatters the seed of the Divine Word. The alb was worn also in the Westphalian cities. At Closter-Lüne in 1608 the minister wore a garment of yellow gauze, and over it a chasuble on which was worked in needlework a "Passion." The inmates and abbesses, like Dorothea von Medine, were seen in the costume of the Benedictines. The "Lutheran monks" of Laccuna until 1631 wore the white gown and black scapular of the Cistercian order. Still later they sang the Latin Hours. The beneficiaries of the Augustinian Stift at Tübingen wore the black cowl until 1750. The churches stood open all day. When the Nuremberg Council ordered that they should be closed except at the hours of service, it aroused such an uproar in the city that the council had to yield. In 1619 all the churches in the Archbishopric of Magdeburg were strictly charged to pray the Litany. In Magdeburg itself there were in 1692 four *Readers*, two for the Epistle, two for the Gospel. The Nicene Creed was intoned by a Deacon in Latin. Then the sermon and general prayer having been said, the Deacon with two Readers and two Vicars, clad in Mass garment and gowns, went in procession to the altar, bearing the Cup, the Bread, and what pertained to the preparation for the Holy Supper, and the Cüster [Verger] took a silver censer with glowing coals and incense, and incensed them, while another (the *Citharmeister*?) clothed and arranged the altar, lit two wax candles, and placed on it two books bound in red velvet and silver containing the Latin Epistles and Gospels set to notes, and on festivals set on the altar also a silver or golden crucifix, according to the order of George of Anhalt in 1542. The *Preface* and *Sanctus* were in Latin. After the Preface the communicants were summoned into the choir by a bell hanging there. The Nuremberg *Officium Sacrum* (1664) bids all the ministers be present in their stalls, in white *chorrocken*, standing or sitting, to sing after the *Frühmesse* [Morning Mass], "Lord, keep us steadfast." The minister said his prayer kneeling with his face to the altar, with a deacon kneeling on either side. He arranged the wafers on the paten in piles of ten, like the shewbread, while the *Introit* and *Kyrie* were sung. The responses by the choir were in Latin. Up to 1690 the Latin service was still said at St. Sebald's and St. Lawrence's. Throughout this (eighteenth) century we find daily Matins and Vespers, with the singing of German psalms. There were sermons on weekdays. There were no churches in which they did not kneel in confession and at the Consecration of the Elements.

These ceremonies yielded finally to the attacks of the Reformed and the influence of Rationalism. -- In our own age we feel an increased respect for the dignified worship of the Reformers.

(Edward T. Horn, "Ceremonies in the Lutheran Church," in *The Lutheran Cyclopedia* [Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899], p. 83.)

From "Why Is the Lutheran Church a Liturgical Church? A Confessional Anthology" compiled by David Jay Webber

Available at www.blc.edu/comm/gargy/gargy1/liturgical_church.html

And www.angelfire.com/ny4/djw/lutherantheology.html

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APPENDIX 4

This article first appeared in the Spring 1990 issue of Focus on Worship, a former publication of WELS Commission on Worship, James Tiefel, editor. Later it was reprinted in the July 1990 Northwestern Lutheran.

But Isn't that Catholic?

by James P. Tiefel

The issue was raised again at a recent teachers' conference. In a workshop on teaching worship to children, I had encouraged participants to use the *Sampler's* musical settings of the psalms in their classrooms. The workshop had just ended when a teacher asked a very pleasant but obviously frustrated question. "All my life I've been taught that chanting was Catholic," she said. "How can I convince myself and other people that it's all right for Lutherans to chant the psalms?" Her question was a variation of a question which hundreds of WELS members have asked when they have been introduced to new worship forms. I've heard it asked about the phrase "And also with you," about white robes and freestanding altars, as well as about the *Sampler's* psalm settings. The same question will be asked again when the new Evening Worship service appears with the printing of the pastor's chant lines. "But isn't that Catholic?" someone will wonder. How are WELS pastors and worship leaders to answer that question?

"It's not Catholic at all"

That's the easiest answer and it is also the most accurate. The chanting of the psalms was a part of the worship of believers 1500 years before anything resembling Roman Catholicism appeared on the scene, and scholarly research indicates that the *Sampler's* settings may not be so different from what Old Testament believers heard and sang. The man who first suggested a freestanding altar was not some Roman pope, but Dr. Martin Luther (cf. *Luther's Works*, Vol. 53, p. 69). Luther also spent a great deal of time and energy revising the chants for the Epistles and Gospels so that the Sunday lessons could be chanted by the pastor in German. The chanting of liturgical dialogue (pastor and people back and forth) was part of German services in our synod even in this century. Christian pastors wore white vestments long before the church came under Roman influence and long after Luther's reformation. Many customs which people perceive as being "Catholic" are actually very Christian and very Lutheran!

"We use many Catholic forms"

Isn't that the truth! It doesn't take a liturgical scholar to notice the similarities between our Lutheran liturgy and an English version of the Roman Mass. Again, it was Luther who saw to it that the Reformation did not trample on the church's traditions. Some of our favorite hymns were born in Catholicism, e.g., "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry" (*TLH* 63) [*CW* 16] and "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name" (*TLH* 250) [*CW* 278]. The three-year cycle of Scripture readings, used by a growing number of WELS churches since 1973, shares many features with the Roman Catholic lectionary which was produced in 1969. Much of the contemporary Christian music on today's market is being produced by Roman Catholics (e.g., Keith Green) and at least a few of the psalm settings by Marty Haugen, another Roman Catholic, will surely find their way into our hymnal and, we're guessing, will achieve notable popularity.

"It only sounds Catholic"

Why do chanting and freestanding altars seem more Catholic than our liturgy, hymns, and lectionary? The easiest answer is that we're used to the latter but not the former! But the answer is more involved than that. Many of our readers can remember an era when the Roman Catholic Church was seemingly dedicated to the destruction of Lutheranism. Rome refused to grant that a Lutheran (or any non-Catholic, for that matter) actually could be saved or even rightfully married.

Thousands of Lutherans who became engaged to Catholics were coerced by priests into signing nuptial agreements in which they promised not to interfere with the Catholic education of their children. Pastors and teachers made a valiant effort to instruct lay people about the doctrinal differences which existed between Catholicism and

Lutheranism, but often as not the differences in form and style were easier to identify and understand than the differences in doctrine. People could see that Catholics had saints days and altar boys and that Lutherans did not, that Catholics chanted and Lutherans sang and that Catholics wore white and Lutherans wore black. A look into the hymnal or a history book would have disproved all of those perceptions, but the popular piety in that era, needing the lines between Catholics and Lutherans drawn clearly, cleanly, and easily, held onto the perceptions tenaciously. Given the circumstances, it's easy to understand why a whole batch of customs and forms, many of which were actually just as Lutheran as they were Catholic, came to be disowned and despised in the conservative Lutheran church.

"So what if it's Catholic?"

That's a better response than it may seem at first glance. There can be no doubt that Roman Catholicism still holds to a false theology. But neither the church nor its members are completely without the gospel. What does it matter if a Lutheran paints a picture of Christ or a Catholic paints a picture of Christ so long as both pictures say about Christ what the Scriptures do? Martin Luther set the pace for the churches of the Reformation when he let it be known that he would throw out of worship whatever harmed the gospel and bring into worship whatever proclaimed the gospel. He wrote,

The service now in common use everywhere goes back to genuine Christian beginnings, as does the office of preaching. But as the latter has been perverted by the spiritual tyrants, so the former has been corrupted by the hypocrites. As we do not on that account abolish the office of preaching, but aim to restore it again to its right and proper place, so it is not our intention to do away with the service, but to restore it again to its rightful use (*LW, Vol. 53, p. 11*).

Luther was not willing to part with any form that had to do with the gospel, and he wasn't so concerned whose tradition it was. In his day and ours, gospel is gospel, whether carried by Gregorian chant, Lutheran hymn, or American folksong. Jews chant the psalms, for that matter, and we certainly aren't going to stop using the psalms! On the other hand, we are determined, as Luther was, to eliminate whatever is opposed to the gospel or makes it unclear. It can't help but amaze one that some of the same faces which scowl in disgust over chanted psalms will grin from ear to ear over an old revival hymn that blatantly denies the Bible's doctrine of conversion!

"Let me explain"

The issue is quite easy for the mind to grasp, but that doesn't make it a simple issue. The perception that certain rites and ceremonies are symbols of Roman Catholic heresy developed, in some cases, over many years and may even have been reinforced by well-meaning church leaders. People need time to analyze and redirect those perceptions and that's why none of the answers suggested by this article's headings is really adequate. No pastor, teacher, organist, choir director, or church elder should expect that fears of false doctrine so firmly felt will dissolve into thin air. Efforts to push and prod may well confuse pious believers and cause actual harm to their faith. "Make haste slowly" is always good advice, and especially so in matters which are neither commanded nor forbidden by God.

On the other hand, "make haste" is also good advice. Both our present liturgy and the three-year lectionary entered our synod amid charges of "catholicizing" and yet our congregations have been enriched by these forms. There are many rites and customs not now in use in our churches which could bear similar fruit. The key ingredient is education, first for ourselves and then for our people. Let the leaders be the first to part with imprecise perceptions and then let them carefully and thoroughly teach their people from God's word, the Lutheran confessions, and Luther himself. Speaking of hymns, the reformer once asked in a lighter moment, "Why let the devil have all the good tunes?" We might paraphrase and ask, "Why let non-Lutherans have so many fine customs which rightfully belong to Lutherans and to all Christians?" Perhaps with patience and education the day will come when more WELS members can enjoy more of the symbols and ceremonies of Christian worship without wondering if the use of such signals the loss of the gospel!

Endnotes

- ¹ "Introduction to Worship." *Premise*, v3:1, January 31, 1996; a monthly electronic journal of the Center for the Advancement of Paleo Orthodoxy (with Presbyterian Church in America connections). <http://capo.org/premise/96/jan/p960107.html> accessed 11-25-2000.
- Endnotes provide references as well as featuring longer comments and quotations to shorten the body of the essay while still providing additional material for those interested.
- ² "A distinctive worship" need not mean *no* points of similarity, especially for Lutherans who share the perspective of the Confessions on worship forms. Yet, even while respecting history and the good in traditional forms, Lutheran worship became noticeably different than Catholic even while it shared many features, including worship music.
- ³ Roy M Oswald, *Transforming Rituals: Daily Practices for Changing Lives*, Alban Institute, 1999. From the Foreword, page v. Compare also Tom Driver's observation: "Rituals belong to us, and we to them, as surely as do our language and culture. The human choice is not whether to ritualize but when, how, where, and why." *The Magic of Ritual: Our Need for Liberating Rites that Transform Our Lives and Our Communities*, Harper Collins, 1991; p6. Note the sociological bias here: ritual to cause change.
- ⁴ *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 67. Page not known, citation from electronic edition.
- ⁵ Nathan Mitchell, "The Amen Corner: The Coming Revolution in Ritual Studies," *Worship* v60#4, July 1986, p79. See also Catherine Bell, "Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals," *Worship* 63:1, January 1989. "Since the turn of the century, the study of ritual has been closely tied to issues of social change. Two general approaches have predominated.... 1) the role of ritual in the *maintenance* of social groups.... 2) how groups *change* through ritual (p32)...." [Emphasis mine.] "Ritualization can function either to accommodate history or deny it (p41)."
- ⁶ Bivens, "The Primary Doctrine in Its Primary Setting: Objective Justification and Lutheran Worship," p7. Available at <https://connect.wels.net/worship> under Valuable Worship Reading.
- ⁷ [This reference quotes Bivens' footnote.] Cited by James Tiefel in *Christian Worship: Manual*, p 48-49. The same quotations, cited more extensively, are used by Kurt Marquart ["Liturgical Commonplaces," *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, October, 1978. Fort Wayne, IN, Concordia Theological Seminary Press.] (1978), p 342-343.
- ⁸ The latest issue of Forward/NL (May 2001) includes this from Randy Hunter's "Interactive Bible Study":
1. "There is no such thing as a 'dead ritual;' only the people who perform them are dead." What are our rituals in worship?
 2. What keeps those rituals from becoming "dead" or without meaning?
- ⁹ John Kleinig, "Witting or Unwitting Ritualists," *Lutheran Theological Journal (Australia)*, v22, 1988, pp13-22. See also a two-page condensation, "Rituals and the Enactment of the Gospel," in *For the Life of the World*, 2.2, June 1998, pp8-9. This article states, "Because we confuse ritual with its abuse, we underestimate its importance. Like many other Christians and our secular contemporaries, we treat ritual with contempt. Ritual, we reckon, is used by Roman Catholics to evade the simple truth of the Gospel and mystify ordinary people. And so we speak rather disparagingly of it as empty or meaningless or dead, as if it were in itself alien to the Gospel and contrary to true piety." Available at www.lifeoftheworld.com
- ¹⁰ Kleinig, 13.
- ¹¹ Kleinig, 14-20. Note also a Calvinist wondering about the right degree of ritual in Reformed worship: Harry Boonstra, "Right Rites," *Reformed Worship*, #32, 2-3. The entire issue is devoted to ritual in Reformed worship. It is remarkable to see conservative-to-moderate Calvinists addressing these issues. Questions raised include: incense, processions, sign of the cross, passing the peace, kneeling for confession, Advent candles, observing the church year, banners, the *Sanctus* in communion liturgies (real presence implications?). Also addressed are isolated, creative, or idiosyncratic rituals: always beginning the Sunday after Christmas with the "Hallelujah Chorus"; Ash Wednesday communion around tables in the fellowship hall; "Don't sit in the same place" Sunday. In "Ritual in Reformed Congregations: A Guided Tour" (6-10) Robert Meyering wonders, "We seem to have a kind of ecclesiastical individualism by which each congregation does what it finds interesting or effective or enhancing to its own worship. By what criteria, I wonder do, do such congregations decide to use such rituals?"

How do the actions and words of one congregation relate to what goes on in another congregation? ... How much freedom do congregations have to do things 'their' way? Can a minister, a worship committee, or a consistory simply decide how it will do its worship without reference to either a wider denominational identity, or to the traditions and practices that have characterized vast thousands of Christians throughout the ages?" Sounds like the questions Lutherans in southern Michigan are raising. But we at least have not only a doctrine of adiaphora to guide us but also a history of using some of the rituals that many Christians are now exploring.

¹² Oswald, 17-18, relying on Tony Campolo.

¹³ Available at <http://worship.lcms.org/Lent2001.htm>

¹⁴ "If we say that the music should best be on the quiet or reflective side, this does not mean that it should be mournful. The Communion is, after all, a supper of GRACE. Though we are properly conscious of our sinfulness, the distribution is not confession but ABSOLUTION. It is a GOSPEL celebration! The dimension of awe properly associated with the Sacrament might well be reflected in our music (e. g . "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"), but let the keynote of our music be solemn JOY, as befits our whole Christian life." Kurt Eggert "Music for the Distribution," by *Focus on Worship*, Epiphany 1974. Available at <https://connect.wels.net/worship> under Valuable Worship Reading.

¹⁵ Cf. mission of the church material at the Worship website: the article by Joel Gerlach, "Two Dimensional?" Available at <https://connect.wels.net/worship>.

¹⁶ Demonstration: Lee Dengler piano arrangement, Veni Emmanuel, from "Advent Piano Variations," CPH. Transition idea from midweek Advent soup-n-sandwich to start the service with a worshipful focus: welcome people to worship and invite their contemplation as the piano plays a brief prelude. This can be especially helpful where friendly visiting dominates right up to the start of the service.

¹⁷ For this next section I have relied on an unpublished essay by Paul Grime, "The Catholicity of Lutheran Worship," September 2000. Grime then was LCMS Executive Director of the Commission on Worship.

¹⁸ Note the emphasis on reducing or *increasing* ceremonies. The confessional perspective is both freedom **not** to use and freedom **to use** ceremonies. Neither perspective is to be "condemned." Is it likely that our WELS history as well as our comfort with the familiar creates a bias for the status quo or a "culture-friendly" reduction of ceremony rather than consideration of new or recovered ceremonies? Compare Luther's encounter with the iconoclast Karlstadt. See also Walther in an Appendix.

¹⁹ Remarkable for its time is a WELS essay urging attention to more frequent—even weekly—celebration of Holy Communion. "The Leaven of the Sadducees," Walter Wegner, 1950 Western Wisconsin District Convention, published in the *Quartalschrift*, July and October, 1952. The preface indicates that this essay followed in the same district "The Leaven of the Pharisees" by Carleton Toppe, quoted below. Excerpts:
 "The Sacraments were no longer used as Means of Grace.... The Liturgy was mutilated almost beyond recognition; and Holy Communion, which had formerly been celebrated at least once a week (Augsb. Conf. XXIV, 34), was increasingly neglected, until at the lowest ebb of rationalism the celebration was generally restricted to four times a year, after the manner of the Reformed." [WELS roots! BG]
 "Dr. Spaude, in his book on *The Lutheran Church Under American Influence*, lists among other present-day remnants of the former Age of Rationalism: a weakening of loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions (p. 364ff.), a trend toward doctrinal indifference (370f.), and a decline of the liturgical worship in the Lutheran Church (371f.). And in connection with this last point, the greatest loss is the previously mentioned decline in celebrating and participating in the Service of the Holy Communion."

²⁰ Note the emphasis on avoiding of pomp and splendor even though worship then and for the next two centuries (wherever Lutheran orthodoxy remained strong) used a much higher degree of ceremony than we are accustomed to. See also Art Just, "God's Call for a Growing Church," a plenary address at the 1999 national Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) conference; in *Cross Accent*, 8.2, Summer 2000. "Lutheran liturgy is liturgical without being ceremonial, timeless without being inaccessible. Instead of seeking after greener liturgical pastures, we should look at our own tradition, learn it, and discover its riches (p12)."

²¹ Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 1:269.

²² "Indifferent" does not mean "unimportant." Article X is about extraordinarily important matters because they testify to the Gospel, even though they are "free." Cf. Bruce Backer's "Gray and Latter Days" at <https://connect.wels.net/worship> under Valuable Worship Reading.. Excerpt: "It is often said that the forms of worship are not important, since they fall into the area of adiaphora. This is a truth that can often do more harm than good. The liberty to choose a given worship form belongs to the Church. But once it has chosen a particular form, that form begins to speak for itself. It has content; it is the prayed doctrine, hopefully, the doctrine of the Church that brought it into being or adopted it."

Compare: "Lutherans have used the word *adiaphora* to refer to things that are not necessary, things that are optional. Thus, we have at times 'adiaphorized' the life right out of worship. We have identified as adiaphora so much of what is, in fact, the heart that we have pared down our worship to what is merely sufficient. We have replaced the strongly theological hymns of our tradition with loud choruses congregations cannot sing, just to give one example." Robert Rimbo [ELCA bishop], "Listen, God is Calling," *Cross Accent*, 8:1, Spring 2000, p12. While containing some good insights, this article also seems to accept some of the false theology of the modern Liturgical Movement. See footnote 69.

See also: "We as WELS pastors must take our own brand WELS pragmatism and put it under a microscope.... Our pragmatism is adiaphora-driven! The WELS has always had a rugged individualist reputation. ... It is my contention that many good discussions on worship and liturgics are scuttled in our circles with the Christian Freedom trumps-all card." Aaron Christie, "Lutheran Liturgy and Evangelism," unpublished January 2000 Chicago Pastoral Conference essay.

²³ Harrison offers this footnote here: Lowell Green in *Sixteenth Century Bibliography*, no. 11 on The Formula of Concord, notes: "Franz Lau in a brilliant essay on the Interim and on Prince George von Anhalt has presented the thesis that the "high-church" liturgical practices called for in the Interim were normal practice among Lutherans in many parts of Germany. ... This of course does not alter the fact that Melanchthon and the "Interimists" were blameworthy, not because they permitted certain teachings or practices, but because they compromised the faith in a time of persecution", pp. 50-51.

²⁴ [This footnote applies to the lengthy material that follows as well as to this paragraph.] Matthew Harrison "Martin Chemnitz and The Origin, Content and Meaning of the Tenth Article of the Formula of Concord," in *Mysteria Dei: Essays in Honor of Kurt Marquart*. Ed. Paul McCain & John Stephenson. Concordia Theo. Sem. Press, 1999. We explore Harrison's article in some depth here not as a preface for urging uniformity but simply to deepen our historical/confessional perspective. N.B. my conclusion on page 15. See also Harrison, "Lutheran Liturgical Uniformity..." Luther Academy, 2010; and a more tightly edited version in *Lutheran Theological Journal* 36/2 [Australia], 2002.

See also Robert Schaibley, "Adiaphora and the Question of Evangelical Style in Light of the Original Intent of the Lutheran Confessions." National Free Conference #4, 1993.

²⁵ Harrison cites the following for each item: *The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church with Historical Introduction, Notes, Appendixes and Indexes* by Henry E. Jacobs, D.D. (Philadelphia: G.W. Frederick, 1883), p. 268.

²⁶ Lest the question seem like an obfuscation of clear and obvious meaning, consider this comment from a book review of Heiko Oberman's *Luther: Man Between God And The Devil* (Doubleday, 1992; German original, 1982): "The book ... poses the problem of how far 'the language of the present', as Oberman calls it, . . . should be used to bring the past to life without misleading the reader into anachronistic analogies. . . ." (Alastair Hamilton - *The Times Literary Supplement*, quoted at the Barnes and Noble website; shared by Prof. John Brenner at a Bible class on the Confessions.) Carter Lindberg, also quoted at BN, states: "Oberman is able to facilitate contemporary understanding of, and dialogue with, Luther precisely because he refuses to modernize him. 'We can encounter Luther only where he was convinced he stood and not where he approximates the temper of our time.'" "Anachronistic analogies" have caused some to conclude that Luther's comments on music endorse pop-style music for worship and that St. Paul's reference to "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" proves stylistic diversity in the music of his day; therefore Christian "contemporary" music and praise choruses—the "spiritual music" of our day—belong in our worship. I know of no responsible exegesis that sees in Paul's words *anything* about musical styles as we today talk about musical styles. Discussions of worship are full of anachronistic analogies. Just last Saturday (4-21-01) someone posted this "AA" to the Cranach listserve: "Luther was ... just

as critical of the priests and others who sprouted [sic] off their Latin (a language they did not understand) to people who also did not understand it and had little hesitation in changing so both the priests and the people could understand. My suggestion is that despite some of the traditional liturgies being in English they are not in the language that people can understand, a similar situation to those early reformation days, and for campus ministry this language is likely to be different for [from?] the congregation down the street where a majority of worshippers are 45 plus."

²⁷ [Harrison offers this footnote.] Here note that in revising the antiquated German of the Book of Concord, the Triglotta replaces the original "gemeine" in every instance (FC Ep. X.2; S.D. X.9; 10; 30) with "gemeinde." The two are essentially equivalent, but "gemeinde" is that term used in Missouriana to express "congregation." The BSLK retains the original "gemeine."

See Luther in the *Deutsche Messe*: "It would be well if the service in every principality would be held in the same manner and if the order observed in a given city would also be followed by the surrounding towns and villages..." LW 53:62.

²⁸ "Concerning the Doctrine of the Church and of Its Ministry, with Special Reference to the Synod and Its Discipline"; August Pieper, *Theologische Quartalschrift*, October 1929. The English translation is by H. J. Vogel; *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 59. No page number, citation from electronic edition.

2013: See John Brug's discussion of Gemeinde and other terms in C.F.W. Walther's important book (Matthew Harrison, editor. CPH, 2012): "Review Article: The Church and the Office of the Ministry," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 110.2 (Spring 2013). "Throughout the discussion Harrison carefully makes the reader aware of the German and Latin words underlying the translations and of the fact that the same words can be used for a local assembly, a regional church, or the *una sancta*" p103.

²⁹ Longfellow was quoted on a NPR broadcast: "Americans don't much care for history." One WELS pastor son [not me] was debating something theological with his pastor dad. The father said, "I don't give a crap about history." Michael Crichton, in the same NPR broadcast discussing his book *Timeline* (Knopf), said, "If you don't know history, you don't know anything. You're a leaf that doesn't know it's part of a tree."
"...we are surrounded by a cloud of historical witnesses, as the letter to the Hebrews puts it, whose faith we follow. G.K. Chesterton characterized Christianity as 'the democracy of the dead.' This is why we must study history—our history. History is mostly bunk, as Henry Ford so memorably put it.... Carl Springer "Reflections on Lutheran Worship, Classics and the *Te Deum*," *Cross Accent* v7A, 1-99. p34.

³⁰ Martin Luther. From "Christian Exhortation to the Livonians Concerning Public Worship and Concord." *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 53:47.

³¹ *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts: Urkunden und Regesten zur Geschichte des Rechts und der Verfassung der evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*, Aemilius Ludwig Richter (1808-1864); Weimer, 1846; 2nd ed. Leipzig, 1871.

See also the fifteen-volumes (to date) critical edition: *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Emil Sehling, 1860-1928. [Institut für Evangelisches Kirchenrecht der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland zu Göttingen.] Vol 1-5: Leipzig, 1902-13; Vols. 6-15, Tübingen, 1955-70.

"No fewer than 135 church orders appeared between 1523 (*Formula Missae*) and 1555 (Peace of Augsburg). They differ considerably in minor details, and yet their liturgical provisions show a remarkable similarity." Frank Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, Fortress: 1997, 332.

Two brief essays in English are helpful:

Dennis Marzolf, "Johannes Bugenhagen and the Lutheran Mass," *Logia* 2.2, 4-1993

Maurice Schild, "John Bugenhagen: Theological Existence and Practice," *Concordia Journal*, 1-1986."The contents and characteristics of Bugenhagen's church orders should be required reading for candidates for the Lutheran ministry.... Some aspects of our modern problem of pluralism are at least in sight in early Lutheranism, in that there is identity in diversity" (14).

See also Joseph Herl. *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism*, especially chapters 3-4. Oxford, 2004. Note the difference between expectations specified in the KOO and actual practice revealed by visitations, including congregational singing that was "poor to nonexistent in a number of places" (75).

See also Robin Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*, chapter 18 "The *Deutsche Messe* from Luther to Bach,"

³² See also Gould, Ronald Lee. "The Latin Lutheran Mass at Wittenberg 1523-1545: A Survey of the Early Reformation Mass and the Lutheran Theology of Music, As Evidenced in the Liturgical Writings of Martin Luther, the Relevant Kirchenordnungen, and the Georg Rhau Musikdrücke for the Hauptgottesdienst." S.M.D., Musicology, Union Theological Seminary, 1970.

"The suggestions of the Unterricht [der Visitatoren, 1528; in Sehling] were prompted by the liturgical chaos existing during the earliest days of the new Church, and as such, gradually became enforced in the various orders [KOO] which ensued. The authority of the Wittenberg Order of 1533 is emphatically asserted, for the order speaks of that city as a 'metropolis' for all the Saxon parishes, whose pastor, together with the provost of Kemberg was to have Obersuperattendanz of the clergy in the territory (p61)."

2013 addition: What was the result of regular "pastors' conference" discussions under the leadership of Chemnitz? "An amazing unanimity was achieved in questions dealing with doctrine, ritual, worship, and discipline" (Theodore Jungkuntz, *Formulators of the Formula of Concord*, CPH: 1977, 51). A contemporary plea for similar discussion touches on relevant themes: "Complete uniformity of forms has never been a Lutheran mandate. Nevertheless, when understood in their historical context, the Lutheran Confessions do not justify the wide diversity of forms—and the theological substances that inform them—which characterizes the contemporary crisis.... Too often, traditionalists refuse to engage the legitimate questions that arise in light of contemporary challenges. And, too often, those who try to deal with the realities of American culture have simply borrowed models from a non-Lutheran theological base." Charles Arand, Andrew Bartelt, Paul Raabe, James Voelz, "The State of Synod: An Assessment," *Concordia Journal* 30.3, July 2004, p132-133.

³³ Nürnberg 1543: Order of the mass in *villages* with schools: when the Priester comes to the altar, he may say the Confiteor (Confession) ..., then he reads the Introit. Then the schola [student singers] sing the Introit in German, but where there are no schools and therefore no people that can sing the Latin, a German hymn is sung. If the people cannot even do that, the Pfarherr should teach them. ... Then the Gospel, then he begins the Credo, which the schola sings in Latin where it is the custom, otherwise the people sing the Glaube (German Creed). In *small* villages two or three students sing the Litany in German after the Epistle from the altar, and the rest of the choir and people answer....

Then the distribution, during which the schola sings "Agnus dei, &c." If there are no singers, the people may sing something appropriate to the time. If there are many people, not only a communion is sung, but also something else, such as the responsory "Discubuit Jesus."

Where there are no schools... During the distribution "Gott sey gelobet," "Jesus Christus unser Heyland" or another hymn is sung. [Most German titles are in CW's tune index.]

³⁴ In Lutheran services the Creed was often Luther's hymnic version, Wir glauben all an einen Gott; Sanctus—Jesaia, dem Propheten, das geschah (Isaiah Mighty Seer); Agnus Dei—O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig. Andorff 1567: on high feasts the presider sings the Preface and the schola the Sanctus, but on other Sundays and holy days Luther's exhortation is read to the communicants.

Magdeburg 1667: On festivals the Latin preface is sung, after which the Latin Sanctus is done by the choir and organ.

Leipzig at the time of Bach (indicates depth and duration of traditions): Stiller mentions choir custom for festivals: polyphonic setting of Sanctus (86, 126). *Neu Leipziger Gesangbuch* (1682) presents three versions of the Sanctus, one for six-part harmony. Even sections of the Preface are for the choir, four to six parts.

³⁵ With Latin so common, the title of a *missa breve* setting by Michael Praetorius (whose father studied theology at Wittenberg when Luther was still living) is particularly significant: Missa: gantz Teutsch, from 1619. Usually the Kyrie and Gloria (and some other parts) were in Latin. But this mass is "entirely German." This *missa breve* is the one found on the remarkable recording *Praetorius: Mass for Christmas Morning* (Archiv, 1994, 439250-2). The timings give a sense of "ceremony" by showing the time given to these key musical elements of worship: Kyrie 4:31, Gloria 7:36.

See also Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*, chapter 14: "Liturgical Chant in Church and School."

³⁶ High and Low are not useful terms, more likely to be misleading than helpful. Consider another unhelpful expression, perhaps an oxymoron: "casual worship." Where in the Bible do we see casual worship? The two most common verbs for worship in Greek and Hebrew both mean to prostrate oneself to the ground. All services of early Lutherans were high church by definition one (focus, formality, ceremony). Even village churches used

chant formulas for Epistle, Gospel, and Words of Institution. See Luther's DM. City services as opposed to village services were high church also by definition two (musical richness, elaboration, length.)

³⁷ [Note the era: a century after Luther's death!] Howard, John Brooks. "The Latin Lutheran Mass of the Mid-Seventeenth Century: A Study of Andreas Hammerschmidt's Missae (1663) and Lutheran Traditions of Mass Composition." Ph.D., Musicology, Bryn Mawr College, 1983. p97-98. Also: "Were one to examine systematically inventories of contemporary music collections, the impression that masses by non-Lutherans occupied a significant place in the performance repertory would be unavoidable (p200)."

Some in WELS have raised questions about using "Catholic" music today. One pastor wrote: "I have a growing worry (concern, question), however. GIA pops up a lot, and I wonder if we don't have sources in our synod for many of the same things. I know you know _____'s music. He has the capability to write more. No doubt you know many more [WELS] people who could write for us."

And I replied, "_____ is a phenomenal musician. You probably know that I [the C/W] have commissioned him to write music.... Shortly the Worship website will list numerous published WELS composers and their email addresses along with an encouragement for parishes to consider commissioning them for special events, like dedications or anniversaries."

The pastor again: "Let's not just enrich the Catholic publishing houses and composers."

Response: It's interesting that Lutherans at the height of the period of Orthodoxy (and not long after war with Catholics) did NOT hesitate to use music from Catholic sources. The historical record is crystal clear on this. Even objectionable texts were modified because the music was good. This really isn't surprising considering Luther's own approach: "*quod bonum est, tenebimus.*" Our situation today is different because we deal with modern "businesses." But we still follow the same principle as Luther and the 17th century Lutherans: we use the good from whatever source and modify as needed. If a denominational connotation were to limit our repertoire, then we would logically need to avoid LCMS and ELCA sources too. If we had to rely only on WELS/ELS sources, we would be the poorer for it. So for me, it's both/and: both a creative encouragement of WELS composers and a judicious use of other material.

³⁸ In 17th c. Nurnberg there was a Lutheran publisher named Dietrich Gerlach [Theodor Gerlatz]. He published music for Lutheran worship, music by Lutherans and music by Catholics. Here's a recent email dialogue:
 Father: The Gerlach who made a contribution to the mass of Lutheran Masses would be thrilled to hear Bach at a brass concert today, but he might frown at including a papal representative with a name like Gabrieli.
 Son: Actually, he most likely wouldn't frown at all. This is another myth. Lutherans not only used existing repertoire by RC composers; they also published and republished this music. Their approach wasn't "give us the best from Lutheran composers" but "give us the best that's out there." They even took famous motets based on texts with obvious Catholic false doctrine - like a hymn to Mary - and changed the words so they could use the great music.

³⁹ Available from the Commission on Worship office. A binder of music samples is available at this pastoral conference. Note the variety in both resources (additional instruments, some unison, some SATB, simple/difficult) but also some stylistic variety. 2013: Search various publishers for "gospel acclamation" to find Verses, e.g., *The Cantor's Book of Gospel Acclamations*, GIA G-4987. See also the accompaniment edition for Divine Service, Setting 3 in *Lutheran Service Book* (CPH 2006, 102-3) for options to use the familiar triple alleluia with the Verse of the Day.

⁴⁰ See footnote 37. Howard, 32. Cited also in "A Composer's Dilemma: Andreas Hammerschmidt and the Lutheran Theology of Music," *Choral Journal*, 12-1999, 27. Two recent recordings: *Hammerschmidt: Sacred Vocal Music*, Ars Musici, 2010. Also *Hat Gott Die Welt Geliebt*, Carus, 2013.

⁴¹ Recall Prof. Tiefel's statement to your conference: "One can only wonder what worship in WELS churches would look like today without the influence of Pietism!" From "The Pattern and Practice of Christian Worship," February, 1999, p17. In two senses we are "recovering Pietists"; we have two strikes against us, history and human nature. We have Pietism in our history, and human nature has incurable pietistic tendencies. There is no Twelve Step program for Pietism, only a two step program: Law and Gospel.

⁴² The idea that Catholics love ceremony and Lutherans don't might surprise some Catholics. In the mid-1980s the "Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life" revealed that "a kind of 'anti-ritual' bias seemed to prevent many communities from making use of liturgical options that foster a sense of 'ceremony' or 'ritual splendor.'" Summarizing these findings in a report to the 1986 meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy, ...Mark

Searle noted: 'There is little evidence of ceremony and ritual splendor in the Masses we observed.... The impression is one of ritual minimalism. Ninety percent of the Masses, for example, had some form of entry procession, but a processional cross was carried only one-third of the time.... The opportunities offered by the rite for solemnizing the liturgy are not much used in this country, even at the main parish Mass' (*Worship* 60:4 [1986], 317). The American Catholic's apparent discomfort with ceremonial (or at least with the rituals traditionally linked to the Church's public worship) was, Searle suggested, the result of virulent individualism—the kind of individualism decried by Robert Bellah and his associates in their book, *Habits of the Heart*. As Searle noted, "...there is strong evidence that American Catholics are in process of becoming more characteristically American than characteristically Catholic...." Any Lutheran parallels? [Cited by Nathan Mitchell, "The Amen Corner: The Coming Revolution in Ritual Studies," *Worship* 60:4, July 1986, p76, but quoting less than above.]

Nor do all other denominations operate with a stereotype that Lutherans prefer simplicity. A Reformed journal wonders "why for three or four hundred years the Presbyterian and Reformed churches were so skittish about ceremony and ritual and color, while most Anglican and Lutheran churches welcomed ritual and ceremony. What was it in Reformed life or doctrine that discouraged ceremony and made simplicity and the nonceremonial become the hallmark of Reformed worship?" In "A Return to Ritual," *Reformed Worship*, #32, 13.

⁴³ James Tiefel, "The Formation and Flow of Worship Attitudes in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod," in *Not Unto Us: A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert*, NPH 2001, 145.

⁴⁴ This paragraph is from a 1996 meeting of ELS/WELS leaders, a formal response by Bryan Gerlach to "O Come, Let Us Worship! A Study in Lutheran Liturgy and Hymnody," Mark DeGarmeaux, 1995 ELS convention. Essayist DeGarmeaux mentioned the Praetorius recording on p105 in the published version. The essay is available at www.blc.edu/comm/gargy/gargy1/M.DeGarmeaux.html

⁴⁵ Modified from Grime, "The Catholicity of Lutheran Worship," 22, September 2000. See also a 2012 recording: *Ostermesse/Easter Mass*, a complete Proper and Ordinary according to the 1569 church order of Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Lüneburg; cpo 999 953-2. The musical resources are restrained compared to the Christmas Mass: seven singers and 10 instrumentalists. Herl discusses the size of early Lutheran choirs (*Worship Wars...*, p46).

⁴⁶ Cf. comments in footnote 26 on Heiko Oberman's *Luther: Man Between God And The Devil* (Doubleday, 1992; German original, 1982).

⁴⁷ "Eucharist and Eschatology," Kurt Marquart presentation from the 23rd Ft. Wayne symposium on the confessions, in 2000; unpublished, p9. Compare Kurt Eggert's comment at footnote 14. For another recent discussion of Pietism and worship, see "Liturgy and Pietism Then and Now," John Pless; in *Pietism and Lutheranism*, The Pieper Lectures, v3, 1998; John Maxwell, ed; Concordia Historical Institute & The Luther Academy, 1999. (Also in *Logia*, Reformation 1999.) Pless begins: "David Luecke has advocated Pietism as a slice of the Lutheran heritage which holds promise for the renewal of mission, congregational life, and worship. ... When we compare the changes in liturgical texts and structures introduced by Pietism with those brought about by the advocates of so-called alternative worship, we might be tempted to conclude that the innovations of Pietism were rather minor (144)."

⁴⁸ See *A Handbook of Church Music*, ed. Carl Halter, Carl Schalk, p292ff for the 1844 Loehe *Agende* and the simpler 1856 Saxon *Agende* that became the norm in the LCMS. Both of these came from determination to be pure Lutheran.

⁴⁹ No reference for Zehnder. But Richard Stuckwisch states, "While Walther's liturgy is simpler than Loehe's, 'it is no less churchly' (Marzolf:89)." From "Johannes Konrad Wilhelm Loehe—Portrait of a Confessional Lutheran." [Yes, too bad about the chiliasm.] Malone, TX: Repristination Press, n.d.

Stuckwisch makes quite a point about Loehe's pastoral pace (p13-14). "For all his deep appreciation of the liturgy, Loehe never foisted anything upon his congregation. Instead, by patient catechesis, he taught his people liturgy. 'Only after ten years did he introduce the full form of the Lutheran communion liturgy in his congregation.' (Heintzen-1964: 28) 'Through training and instruction he welded the members of his congregation into a group which participated in the services with such unison that one visitor of rank to his church said: You have a liturgical people.' (Greenholt: 8) And this in a parish of simple, peasant people, 'rather stolid and set in their ways!'"

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- ⁵⁰ James Tiefel, "The Shaping of Liturgical Thought in the WELS, 1850-2000," p14. Course description: "To observe and appreciate the process by which the members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, over the 150 years of its existence, have come to use, understand and value the common and catholic forms of proclamation, praise, and prayer employed by Christians gathered around Word and Sacrament across the span of 20 centuries." See also Tiefel, "The Formation and Flow...." In *Not Unto Us*, NPH 2001, 148-149.
- ⁵¹ Cited in Tiefel, "The Formation and Flow...." 147.
- ⁵² Tiefel, "The Shaping of Liturgical Thought in the WELS, 1850-2000," p23.
- ⁵³ The 1896 volume is a large version of the smaller 1899 agenda. Also worth exploring, for those with early WELS historical interests, is *Agende*, 1872; David's Star Ev Lutheran Church, Jackson, Wisconsin. This handwritten Agenda uses the first 83 pages of a worn 8"x10" leather "diary" volume of some 300 pages with only the first 83 pages containing any material. The other pages are blank. The liturgical practice evident in this volume is also "richer" than one might expect based on early WELS stereotypes: for example chanted liturgy, old chorales.
- ⁵⁴ Tiefel, "The Formation and Flow...." 151.
- ⁵⁵ Tiefel, "The Formation and Flow...." 152. Fischer: "[The individualistic pastor who considered his own notions about church services paramount or who copied a little from here and there] is like the man who displaces the church architect, by copying a steeple from one church, arches from another, windows and chancel from another. The result is a botch and not satisfying even to the untrained eye, nor can such a patchwork liturgy be satisfying to the congregation" (1938, p. 110).
- ⁵⁶ Tiefel, "The Formation and Flow...." 158.
- ⁵⁷ Tiefel, "The Formation and Flow...." 154-5.
- ⁵⁸ Carlton Toppe to the Western Wisconsin District Convention at Winona, Minnesota, June 14–17, 1948.
- ⁵⁹ Confessions are not against ceremony, but ceremony viewed as meritorious. How would a WELS Lutheran from 1940 react if somehow he could have attended an orthodox Lutheran festival service in 1610? How would a 1610 Lutheran react to this essay's bias against ceremony?
- ⁶⁰ Here, of course, is the problem—not ceremony per se.
- ⁶¹ The same confessions that speak highly of ceremony. The same confessions that formed Lutheran worship during the period of Orthodoxy with its degree of ceremony much higher than WELS.
- ⁶² This point would have more validity if 50 or 100 years after Luther, Lutherans had repudiated ceremony in worship. But just the opposite is true. It was not until the devastations of Pietism and Rationalism that a "high church" feel began to disappear from German Lutheran worship (but not as much in Sweden).
- ⁶³ How common are perpetual lamps now? Cf. growing use of a Paschal candle.
- ⁶⁴ Yes, absolutely! But what makes it Pharisaic is not the ceremony, but legalism or works righteousness. Otherwise we must condemn the orthodox dogmatists for the worship in which they regularly participated—and defended. And note above the material on the false view about *meritorious* ceremony.
- ⁶⁵ Yes, the risk is there. 17th century Lutherans addressed this issue, as the following questions from 1671 indicate: "Whether in church, before or after the sermon, you really exercised your devotion with the Christian congregation and helped to sing the spiritual songs and hymns of praise, or read in your prayer book during the playing of the organ; or whether you entertained other thoughts, gazed at the organ loft, and were too lazy to open your mouth in the praise of God. Whether you attended church only for the sake of the beautiful music and organ playing; and whether you visited now this parish church and now that because you knew that a choir would be there and good music would be heard." Kalb, Friedrich. Tr. by Henry P A Hamann. *Theology of Worship in 17th-Century Lutheranism*, 148. CPH. Possibly out of print. Available as reprint from Concordia Theological Seminary Press, Ft. Wayne, IN.
But read *JS Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig*; note the vigorous orthodox piety—in many ways in conscious opposition to the erosions of Pietism. (Cf. the need to open the university church for public worship because the existing churches couldn't accommodate people.) Would confessional Lutherans in 1648 have perceived this 1948 comment, perhaps read out of context, to be pietistic? Cf. similar comments in Kalb. It's important to admit that *everything* we do is "always fraught with the Pharisaic and Roman Catholic peril of being considered something good and God-pleasing in themselves" because of the *opinio legis* and because the Old Adam is a

persistent Pharisee. But this is not a reason to disallow rich, beautiful, historic liturgies. The orthodox dogmatists did just the opposite; they defended these liturgies against the attacks of the Calvinists and Pietists.

⁶⁶ As with comments in footnotes above, the statement is true when it stresses "as if God is better served" But one could reword the statement in a way that would reflect a 17th century confessional perspective: "If the Lutheran Church uses ritual and more elaborate liturgy, let it be to highlight and express confessional Lutheran worship principles with the chief focus on the means of grace." Note the date of this essay, 1948 (originally presented, not published). TLH is still quite new, and TLH was not an effort to perpetuate liturgical worship in WELS, but to reclaim degrees of liturgical worship.

⁶⁷ "Observations on Ecumenicity," E. Arnold Sitz. V51.1, January, 1954. Is there not a risk here of the very legalism Toppe eschews? Note his opinion: "the calling of the Lutheran Church in America to remain definitely Lutheran in simplicity of ritual." And this emphasis on ritual is paired with doctrine and practice. How does this square with the Confessions statement "no church should condemn another..." and with the rituals and ceremonies practiced by the confessors?

⁶⁸ As I prepared this presentation I asked Michigan pastors (by email) to evaluate this emphasis on our God-given calling "to remain definitely Lutheran in simplicity of ritual, of doctrine, of practice, and of dress." Numerous responses were uncomfortable with the apparent overstatement that God had determined a certain style of worship for American Lutherans.

⁶⁹ Key points! Forceful language laments unionistic decay and its relationship to high church trends. Today some LCMS advocates for liturgy—a new and different liturgical movement—also espouse closed communion and openly, in print, criticize the theology of early Liturgical Movement leaders. The deeply theological and conservative spirit of some in LCMS is evident in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*. John Pless (was Minneapolis campus pastor, now prof at Ft Wayne) in footnote 61 on p239 attacks a romanizing theology of rite and *names* two of the most influential Lutheran proponents of the so-called modern "liturgical consensus": Frank Senn and Eugene Brand! Senn is a past president of the North American Academy of Liturgy and author of the monumental *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical*, Augsburg-Fortress, 1997. Brand retired as assistant general secretary for ecumenical affairs for the Lutheran World Federation. Pless discusses flaws of the earlier liturgical movement also in "Relationship of Adiaphora and Liturgy in the Lutheran Confessions", from *And Every Tongue Confess: Essays in Honor of Norman Nagel on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed., Gerald Krispin and Jon Vieker (Chelsea, Michigan: The Nagel Festschrift Committee), 1990. Available in WLS library.

Current conservative LCMS voices from Missouri's confessional liturgical leaders are very far from moving toward anything Catholic. In "Liturgy and Pietism Then and Now," (p159) Pless suggests a parallel between the Liturgical Movement (the ecumenical not the confessional Lutheran version) and Pietism! Charles Evanson, former member of the LCMS Commission on Worship, suggests "convergence" between the Liturgical Movement and Evangelicalism because both "depart radically from the Gospel's *sola Christe*. What predominates in both movements is an anthropocentrism which works the vocabulary of human action and accomplishment ('growth', 'offering') and validity ('effective,' 'actualization'). Neither movement takes the sinner who is curved in on himself outside of himself to place him before the presence of a Father who is merciful solely for the sake of his Son and his saving work. The givenness of what God gives is made conditional on human activity, in one case on the appropriation which comes of subjective acceptance and in the other on the appropriation which comes of participation in ritual action...." (From "Evangelicalism and the Liturgical Movement and Their Effects on Lutheran Worship," originally a plenary address at the 1989 Rochester, NY national convention of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians; published by ALCM and available through Morning Star Music Publishers, St. Louis or the Ft Wayne seminary printshop.)

See also Timothy C. J. Quill, *The Impact of the Liturgical Movement on American Lutheranism* (Lanham, MD and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1997) and excerpts or similar content in "The Modern Liturgical Movement and American Lutheranism," in *The Bride of Christ*, 9-2000, v24#4. Quill exposes theological flaws of the Liturgical Movement. Two excerpts from *The Bride of Christ*: "Given the long standing, deep seated dislike and suspicion of things Roman Catholic among large segments of American Lutheranism, it is astonishing to observe the speed with which the leadership of the LCA, ALC, and LCMS embraced the contemporary Liturgical Movement (10)." [LCMS leadership especially in the 50s and 60s.] "Ecumenical issues and agendas continue to

be inseparably connected to the Liturgical Movement.... The LCMS must avoid the 'unity at all cost' agenda popular among so much of world Lutheranism (17)."

See also Jon Vieker (in 2001 assistant director of the LCMS Commission on Worship; in 2013 senior assistant to LCMS President Matthew Harrison), "Unity and Diversity in Irenaeus as Paradigm for Contemporary Lutheran Ceremonial Consensus," *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, ?, p100. Missouri must "come to grips with the essential need for a unified confession of faith in her midst.... Diversity in ceremony can never be resolved until unity in doctrine has first been achieved."

For more on false ecumenicity and the "ecumenical liturgical consensus," see Oliver K. Olson, *Reclaiming the Lutheran Liturgical Heritage*, ReClaim Resources, 2007. www.ReClaimLutheranWorship.org

See also Burnell Eckardt, "High Church or No Church?" *Gottesdienst*, 5:2, Trinity 1997. He contrasts the "...high church tendencies among the liberals of the seventies who sympathized with those who marched pompously out of the St. Louis Seminary..." with the newer liturgical movement. "The difference is profound and critical.... They [the newer] may dress like walking-out seminary president John Tietjen did in '74, but they are definitely not on the same team. These are men whose confessional subscription, unlike that of the Seminex crowd, is not *quatenus* but *quia* (6)."

One LCMS conservative/liturgical pastor I knew in California told some of his members not to bother with exploring LCMS options in Sacramento. "Just join the WELS." This same pastor said that he would not commune certain LCMS pastors because of the public positions they had taken. It appears that a link between false ecumenism and at least one part of the liturgical movement is quite broken! Confessional Lutherans today who urge a liturgical approach are no more aligned with liberals or sympathetic to Catholics than were confessional Lutherans in the 16th-17th centuries.

⁷⁰ Regarding the risk of interest in liturgy leading WELS brothers to Rome, it's fair to ask, "How many have 'poped'?" It appears that the Church Growth Movement has been a far bigger temptation and has done far greater damage in some Lutheran circles. Is it any wonder then that Lutherans are asking, "What in our roots—our worship theology and practice as part of our doctrinal heritage—than can inform us and equip us for the challenges we consensus?" Toppe and Sitz were right to sound their cautions (though sometimes overstated and with scant attention to the 17th century), but it's a different world now. Not every interest in liturgy is tied to liberalism or ecumenism. See also in Appendices C.F.W. Walther's and Jim Tiefel's comments on appearing Catholic. A WELS member in Milwaukee grew up ELCA. She was moved to tears by a new chant setting of Psalm 22 for Tenebrae. Rather than thinking this chant style was Catholic, she said it was just perfect for Tenebrae. She associates "praise chorus" variety with ELCA aberrations and a faulty worship focus. Of course, we could swap anecdotes all day and not prove anything. More important is to ask which worship choices are most congruent with our theology.

See also C.F.W. Walther, *the American Luther: essays in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Carl Walther's death* / eds, Arthur Drevlow, John Drickamer, Glenn Reichwald. Ch 6: "C.F.W. Walther the musician and liturgiologist."

Compare this comment from Stuckwisch's Loehe portrait: "Much has been discarded simply for polemical reasons. And it was not noted that what was discarded may be readopted when the polemic becomes superfluous." Carl S Meyer, ed. *Moving Frontiers...* p70.

⁷¹ As if external form precludes internal reality? This militates against both the practice of 17th century Lutherans and against Luther himself, unless one buys the argument that Luther was unable to steer people away from ceremony. But this is the argument of the Reformed: that the Reformation didn't go far enough, that the Baptists have a better sense of what worship should be like. To be fair, we must understand the quote's forceful language in light of a historical context. But we also should not treat that context as immutable.

⁷² Wilbert Gawrisch, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, v68. Page number not know. Citation from the Logos version of WLQ. This essay is reprinted in *Our Great Heritage*.

⁷³ WLQ v54—Reviewer's Desk. "G.H." on Sermonic Studies. The Standard Epistles, Volume I.

⁷⁴ Martin Westerhaus, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, V86.

⁷⁵ "It was a Reformed king who declared war against the Communion vestments of his Lutheran subjects. The royal house of Brandenburg, Prussia, was Reformed while the population was largely Lutheran. The war against

the Communion vestments was declared by the peculiar soldier-king Frederick Wilhelm I, who ruled in a very autocratic fashion. Through a decision of 1733 (*Note the year*) he prohibited copes, Communion vestments, candles, Latin song, chants, and the sign of the cross." Severinsen, *De rette Messeklæder* (1924), cited in David Jay Webber, "Why Is the Lutheran Church a Liturgical Church? A Confessional Anthology"; <http://www.angelfire.com/ny4/djw/lutherantheology.html>

See also Stiller's *JS Bach & Liturgical Life in Leipzig* for mention of historic vestments on p238, footnotes 39-41. One reference, pp107-108, has Pietist Gerber arguing against Lutheran vestments, including chasuble. "Ministers customarily wore a white ankle-length surplice over a black cassock. The celebrant at Holy Communion wore a chasuble in the color of the day or seasons throughout the service.... (Senn, 501). See Dietrich Steinwede's pictorial: *Reformation: A Picture Story of Martin Luther* (Fortress, 1983). Page 34 shows the famous Cranach d.J. altarpiece with Luther preaching in a black academic gown. But the pastor distributing the chalice is wearing alb and chasuble. The version of Cranach in Steinwede's volume is edited; a fuller view of the original is at David Jay Webber's homepage: www.angelfire.com/ny4/djw/lutherantheology.html (2013: at "The Text of Holy Scripture").

See also photos of old art in Diestelmann's 1998 "Ueber die Lutherische Messe" in the Seminary library. When the Reformation came to Electoral Brandenburg, the elector's chaplain, Buchholzer, wrote to Luther for advice on retaining processions, alb, and chasuble. Luther replied on December 4, 1539:

As to the matter that worries you...this is my advice: If your lord, the margrave and elector, will allow the gospel of Jesus Christ to be preached openly, clearly, and without admixture...[and with two sacraments, no invocation of saints, no daily (private?) masses and requiems, pure responsories]; then in God's Name, go along in the procession, and carry a silver or golden cross, and a chasuble or an alb.... And if one chasuble or alb is not enough for your lord the elector, put on three of them, as Aaron the high priest put on three, one over the other.... and if his Electoral Grace is not satisfied with one circuit or procession, in which you go about and ring and sing, go around with him seven times, as Joshua and the children of Israel went around Jericho shouting and blowing trumpets.... For such matters, if free from abuses, take from or give to the gospel nothing; only they must not be thought necessary to salvation, and the conscience dare not be bound to them. *Martin Luthers Briefwechsel*, XII:316ff.; trans. in Reed, 98ff.; cited in Senn, 335.

How do we best use this material: 1) historical awareness informs our perspectives even if we choose different options; 2) uncritical or even legalistic approach says "we should do what they did"; 3) "Who cares? Just ignore it."

⁷⁶ Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, v49 (Jan. 1952); also in v3 of Our Great Heritage, NPH 1991. [There seems to be a mistake in footnotes 74 and 76.]

⁷⁷ Contrast reliance on ritual to fix an "ineffective" service with "natural ritual" or "self-evident ritual." Examples of the latter might be: reverencing the altar, silence in Tenebrae, a festival procession—at least self-evident to some. Children connect easily with the symbolism of a procession. They have no catholicophobia. See *Children in Worship: Lessons from Research*, River Forest: Pillars Press (708-209-3173); the research included a sampling of WELS parishes/schools. The January 2001 "Supplement to the Reporter" from the LCMS Commission on Worship included "Moving Beyond Cheerios and Crayons" along with a helpful bibliography; available also at <http://worship.lcms.org/RPChildren.htm>

⁷⁸ Nathan Mitchell, "The Amen Corner: The Coming Revolution in Ritual Studies," *Worship* v60#4, July 1986, p81.

⁷⁹ In asking the question this way, recall my disclaimer about using such polarized and unhelpful terminology. The options are not "low" or "high" but choices along a continuum influenced by many factors: history, context, parish, and more.

⁸⁰ Worth exploring is whether "alternative worship" maintains the same *focus* as historically-informed worship. Consider these examples. A service named "Prayer and Praise" seems to place the response of God's people above the reception of God's gifts. A song leader, soloist, or choir/ensemble up front (emcee, personality, hype?) might communicate a different *focus* than does musical leadership from a balcony or other location assisting worshippers in sending their response forward to the altar, the chief symbol of God's presence. Do projector screens in worship become the chief visual element in the chancel, obscuring the altar? (A pipe organ also should not compete there! Some call that "organolatry.") From outside WELS but still among Lutherans one could gather many more examples: downplaying confession and absolution, or the sacrament, or participation by

the people, and deliberate use of entertainment. And finally, is "Casual Worship" a misnomer? "Intentional worship" with jeans, casual shirts and piano/guitar is better than passive consumers in suits with organ. To call "casual worship" a misnomer is not an argument for suits and rigid formality at worship. At Grace, Milwaukee one sees everything from suits to corporate casual to baggy jeans and body piercing (and no one seems to mind, which is good), but the worship is not casual. Biblical worship there, as everywhere, takes place on holy ground. Hebrews 12:28 "Let us...worship God acceptably with reverence and awe."

⁸¹ And hopefully no one in the body will say, "I don't give a crap about history." See footnote 29.