

REFERENCE MATERIAL FOR A PRESENTATION ON “WORSHIP AND LITURGICAL REFORM AT THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION”

The Lutheran Reformation: Justification by Faith and the Means of Grace

As Set Forth in the Augsburg Confession

...it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St. Paul says in Romans 3[:21-26] and 4[:5].

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel. It teaches that we have a gracious God, not through our merit but through Christ's merit, when we so believe.

Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that we obtain the Holy Spirit without the external word of the gospel through our own preparation, thoughts, and works. ...

It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.

For this is enough for the true unity of the Christian church that there the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that uniform ceremonies, instituted by human beings, be observed everywhere. As Paul says in Ephesians 4[:4-5]: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” ...

However, it can easily be judged that nothing contributes more to preserving the dignity of ceremonies and to cultivating reverence and piety among the people than conducting ceremonies properly in the churches.

(Augsburg Confession IV-V, VII [German], *The Book of Concord*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000], pp. 38,40,42; Augsburg Confession, Prologue to XXII:6 [Latin], Kolb/Wengert p. 61)

The Lutheran Reformation: The Centrality of God's Word

As Set Forth in Part I of the Large Catechism

...God's Word is the treasure that makes everything holy. ... At whatever time God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work is hallowed, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word that makes us all saints. Accordingly, I constantly repeat that all our life and work must be based on God's Word if they are to be God-pleasing or holy. Where that happens the [third] commandment is in force and is fulfilled. Conversely, any conduct or work apart from God's Word is unholy in the sight of God, no matter how splendid and brilliant it may appear...

Note, then, that the power and force of this commandment consists not in the resting but in the hallowing, so that this day may have its special holy function. ... Places, times, persons, and the entire outward order of worship have therefore been instituted and appointed in order that God's Word may exert its power publicly.

(Large Catechism I:91-94, Kolb/Wengert p. 399)

Liturgical Implications of the Lutheran Reformation I

As Set Forth in Article XV of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession

...we gladly keep the ancient traditions set up in the church because they are useful and promote tranquillity, and we interpret them in the best possible way, by excluding the opinion that they justify. But our enemies falsely charge that we abolish good ordinances and church discipline. We can claim that the public liturgy in the church is more dignified among us than among the opponents. ... Among the opponents, unwilling celebrants and hirelings celebrate the Mass, and very often they do so only for the money. They chant psalms, not in order to learn or pray, but for the sake of the rite, as if this work were a required act of worship, or for the sake of financial reward. Many among us celebrate the Lord's Supper every Lord's day after they are instructed, examined, and absolved. The children chant the Psalms in order to learn them; the people also sing in order either to learn or to pray. Among our opponents there is no catechesis of children whatever, even though the canons prescribe it. Among us, pastors and ministers of the church are required to instruct and examine the youth publicly, a custom that produces very good results.

Among the opponents there are many regions where no sermons are delivered during the entire year except during Lent. And yet the chief worship of God is to preach the gospel. And when the opponents do preach, they talk about human traditions, about the devotion to the saints and similar trifles. This the people rightly loathe, and so they walk out on them immediately after the reading of the gospel. A few of the better ones have begun now to speak about good works, but they still say nothing about the righteousness of faith, about faith in Christ, and about the consolation of consciences. Indeed they rail against this most salutary part of the gospel in their polemics. On the contrary, in our churches all the sermons deal with topics like these: repentance, fear of God, faith in Christ, the righteousness of faith, consolation of consciences through faith, the exercise of faith, prayer (what it should be like and that everyone may be completely certain that it is efficacious and is heard), the cross, respect for the magistrates and all civil orders, the distinction between the kingdom of Christ (the spiritual kingdom) and political affairs, marriage, the education and instruction of children, chastity, and all the works of love. From this description of the state of our churches it is possible to determine that we diligently maintain churchly discipline, godly ceremonies, and good ecclesiastical customs.

(Apology XV:38-44, Kolb/Wengert p. 229)

Liturgical Implications of the Lutheran Reformation II

As Set Forth in Article VII/VIII of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession

...it is evident that many foolish opinions about traditions have crept into the church. Some thought that human traditions were necessary acts of worship for meriting justification. ... Likewise, some churches excommunicated others on account of such traditions as the observance of Easter, images, and similar things. From this the inexperienced have concluded that faith or righteousness of the heart before God cannot exist without these observances. ...

But just as the different lengths of day and night do not undermine the unity of the church, so we maintain that different rites instituted by human beings do not undermine the true unity of the church, although it pleases us when universal rites are kept for the sake of tranquillity. Thus, in our churches we willingly observe the order of the Mass, the Lord's day, and other more important festival days. With a very grateful spirit we cherish the useful and ancient ordinances, especially when they contain a discipline by which it is profitable to educate and teach common folk and ignorant.

(Apology VII/VIII:32-33, pp. 179-80)

Liturgical Implications of the Lutheran Reformation III

As Set Forth in Article XXIV of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession

...we do not abolish the Mass but religiously retain and defend it. Among us the Mass is celebrated every

Lord's day and on other festivals, when the sacrament is made available to those who wish to partake of it, after they have been examined and absolved. We also keep traditional liturgical forms, such as the order of readings, prayers, vestments, and other similar things.

The opponents include a long harangue about the use of Latin in the Mass, in which they childishly quibble about how it benefits hearers who are ignorant of the church's faith to hear a Mass that they do not understand. Apparently, they imagine that the mere act of hearing itself is a useful act of worship even where there is no understanding. ... We mention it only in passing in order to point out that our churches retain the Latin readings and prayers.

Ceremonies should be observed both so that people may learn the Scriptures and so that, admonished by the Word, they might experience faith and fear and finally even pray. For these are the purposes of the ceremonies. We keep the Latin for the sake of those who learn and understand it. We also use German hymns in order that the [common] people might have something to learn, something that will arouse their faith and fear.

...

Consciences were tormented by enumeration of sins and satisfactions. The opponents never mentioned faith, by which we freely receive the forgiveness of sins. All their books and sermons were silent about the exercise of faith in its struggle with despair or about the free forgiveness of sins on account of Christ. In addition, they horribly profaned the Mass and introduced many other godless acts of worship into the churches.

...

By contrast, due to God's blessing, our priests attend to the ministry of the Word. They teach the gospel about the blessings of Christ, and they show that the forgiveness of sins takes place on account of Christ. This teaching offers solid consolation to consciences. In addition they teach about the good works that God commands, and they speak about the value and use of the sacraments. ...among them [our opponents] the priests use the sacrament to make money. Among us it is used more frequently and more devoutly. For the people use it, but only after they have been instructed and examined. They are taught about the proper use of the sacrament, that it was instituted as a seal and testimony of the gracious forgiveness of sins and therefore as an encouragement to sensitive consciences in order that they may be completely convinced and believe that their sins are freely forgiven. ...

Moreover, if we must speak about outward appearances, attendance in our churches is greater than among the opponents'. Practical and clear sermons hold an audience. But neither the people nor the theologians have ever understood the opponents' teaching. The true adornment of the churches is godly, useful, and clear doctrine, the devout use of the sacraments, ardent prayer, and the like. Candles, golden vessels, and similar adornments are appropriate, but they are not the distinctive adornment of the church. ...

But let us speak about the term "liturgy." This word does not properly mean a sacrifice but rather public service. Thus, it agrees quite well with our position, namely, that the one minister who consecrates gives the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as a minister who preaches sets forth the gospel to the people, as Paul says [1 Cor. 4:1], "Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries," that is, of the gospel and the sacraments. And 2 Corinthians 5:20, "So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ..." Thus the term "liturgy" fits well with the ministry. ...

(Apology XXIV:1-3, Kolb/Wengert p. 258; Apology XXIV:46-51, Kolb/Wengert p. 267;
Apology XXIV:79-81, Kolb/Wengert p. 272)

Liturgical Implications of the Lutheran Reformation IV

As Set Forth in Article X of the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

We should not regard as free and indifferent, but rather as things forbidden by God that are to be avoided, the kind of things presented under the name and appearance of external, indifferent things that are nevertheless fundamentally opposed to God's Word (even if they are painted another color). Moreover, we must not include among the truly free *adiaphora* or indifferent matters ceremonies that give the appearance or (in

order to avoid persecution) are designed to give the impression that our religion does not differ greatly from the papist religion or that their religion were not completely contrary to ours. Nor are such ceremonies matters of indifference when they are intended to create the illusion (or are demanded or accepted with that intention), as if such action brought the two contradictory religions into agreement and made them one body or as if a return to the papacy and a deviation from the pure teaching of the gospel and from the true religion had taken place or could gradually result from these actions. ...

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

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

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

(Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration X:5,7,9-10, Kolb/Wengert pp. 636-37)

The Ceremonies of the Mass

Commentary by Martin Chemnitz

The ceremonies of the Mass are not all of one kind. For some have a divine command and examples of Scripture that they should be done at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, being as it were essential, e.g., to take bread and the cup in the public assembly, to bless, distribute, eat, drink, proclaim the death of the Lord. Some indeed do not have an express command of God, that they must of necessity be done thus in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, nevertheless they are in their nature good and godly if they are used rightly for edification, such as psalms, readings from Scripture, godly prayers and giving of thanks, confession of the Creed, etc. Some are *per se* superstitious and ungodly, for instance the sacrifice of the Mass for the living and the dead, invocation of the saints, satisfaction for the souls in purgatory, the private Mass, consecration of salt, blessing of water, etc. Some ceremonies indeed are *adiaphora*, such as vestments, vessels, ornaments, words, rites, and things which are not against the Word of God.

Things which are of the first kind must of necessity be observed, for they belong to the substance of the Lord's Supper. Of the things that belong to the second and fourth kind, many which make for the edification of people are observed in our churches without infringing on Christian liberty. The third kind, however, being superstitious and godless, has deservedly, rightly, and of necessity been abrogated and done away with. ...

...the fathers...In the celebration of the Lord's Supper...observed such ceremonies as might aid and explain the proclamation of the Lord's death, which was made by means of the public preaching of the Word; such ceremonies, together with the Word, would usefully teach men something about the doctrine and use of the sacrament and would incite them to give heed more attentively to the doctrine of the Word and the things which belong to the substance of the Lord's Supper. Such ceremonies were observed in Christian liberty, for they were not the same and alike everywhere, nor did any force others to the observation of their ceremonies. We gladly approve and observe good and useful rites in such liberty.

(*Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part II [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978], pp. 524-26)

The Divine Service in Wittenberg, Electoral Saxony

As Described by Wolfgang Musculus in 1536

At the seventh hour we returned to the city church and observed by which rite they celebrated the liturgy; namely thus: First, the *Introit* was played on the organ, accompanied by the choir in Latin, as in the [Catholic] mass offering. Indeed, the minister meanwhile proceeded from the sacristy dressed sacrificially [i.e. in mass vestments] and, kneeling before the altar, made his confession together with the assisting sacristan. After the confession he ascended to the altar to the book that was located on the right side, according to papist custom.

After the *Introit* the organ was played and the *Kyrie eleison* sung in alternation by the boys. When it was done the minister sang *Gloria in excelsis*, which song was completed in alternation by the organ and choir. Thereafter the minister at the altar sang *Dominus vobiscum* ["The Lord be with you"], the choir responding *Et cum spiritu tuo* ["And with your spirit"]. The Collect for that day followed in Latin, then he sang the Epistle in Latin, after which the organ was played, the choir following with *Herr Gott Vater, wohn uns bei* ["God the Father, Be our Stay"]. When it was done the Gospel for that Sunday was sung by the minister in Latin on the left side of the altar, as is the custom of the adherents of the pope. After this the organ played, and the choir followed with *Wir glauben all an einen Gott* ["We All Believe in One True God"]. After this song came the sermon, ...delivered on the Gospel for that Sunday... After the sermon the choir sang *Da pacem domine* ["Give Peace, O Lord"], followed by the prayer for peace by the minister at the altar, this in Latin as well.

The communion followed, which the minister began with the Lord's Prayer sung in German. Then he sang the Words of the Supper, and these in German with his back turned toward the people: first those of the bread, which, when the words had been offered, he then elevated to the sounding of bells; likewise with the chalice, which he also elevated to the sounding of bells.

Immediately communion was held. ... During the communion the *Agnus Dei* was sung in Latin. The minister served the bread in common dress [i.e. in a black robe or cassock] but [he served] the chalice dressed sacrificially [i.e. in mass vestments]. They followed the singing of the *Agnus Dei* with a German song: *Jesus Christus [unser Heiland]* ["Christ, Who Freed our Souls from Danger"] and *Gott sei gelobet* [O Lord, We Praise Thee"]. ... The minister ended the communion with a certain thanksgiving sung in German. He followed this, facing the people, with the benediction, singing "The Lord make his face to shine on you," etc. And thus was the mass ended.

(Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2004], pp. 195-96)

Lutheran Ceremonies in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

As Described by Rudolf Rocholl

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 *Säetuch* [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 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 [in Nuremberg]. 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.

(*Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* [1897], p. 300; quoted in Edward T. Horn, “Ceremonies in the Lutheran Church,” *Lutheran Cyclopedia* [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899], p. 83)

Lutheran Worship in the American Context

Commentary by August L. Graebner

It appears to be our duty to aid in spreading a knowledge of the rich treasures of our Lutheran Church among those in our country who are unacquainted with German. A good liturgy, the beautiful Lutheran service, form part of those treasures. Church usages, except in the case when the confession of a divine truth is required, are indeed *adiaphora*. But they are nevertheless not without an importance of their own. Congregations that adopt the church usages of the sects that surround them will be likely to conform to their doctrines more easily and quickly than those that retain their Lutheran ceremonies. We should in Lutheran services, also when held in the English language, as much as possible use the old Lutheran forms, even if they are said to be antiquated and not suitable in this country. We will mention here the words of a pious Lutheran duchess, Elisabeth Magdalena of Brunswick-Lueneburg. Her court-chaplain Prunner relates as follows: “Although her ladyship well knew that the ceremonies and purposes of this chapter (at which Prunner officiated) must have appeared to some to be, and were even said by some people to be, ‘Popery,’ she still remembered the instructions which the dear, venerable man, Luther, had once given to her father concerning such ceremonies. I remember in particular that her ladyship several times told me that she did not desire at these present times to begin discontinuing any of these church usages, since she hoped that so long as such ceremonies continued, Calvinistic temerity would be held back from the public office of the church.”

(“Review of *Church Liturgy for Evangelical Lutheran Congregations of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession*,” *Saint Louis Theological Quarterly*, August 1881, pp. 77-78)

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