Worship, Liturgy, and Ceremonies in the Lutheran Church

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

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

The Communion followed, which the minister began with the Lord’s Prayer sung in German. Then he sang the words of the Supper, and these in German with his back turned toward
the people, first those of the bread, which, when the words had been offered, he then elevated to the sounding of bells; likewise with the chalice, which he also elevated to the sounding of bells. Immediately communion was held. ... During the communion the Agnus Dei was sung in Latin. The minister served the bread in common dress [in a cassock?] but [he served] the chalice dressed sacrificially [i.e. in mass vestments]. They followed the singing of the Agnus Dei with a German song: Jesus Christus [unser Heiland] and Gott sei gelobet. After the sermon the majority of the people departed. ... The minister ended the Communion with a certain thanksgiving sung in German. He followed this, facing the people, with the Benediction, singing “The Lord make his face to shine on you, etc.” And thus was the mass ended. (Wolfgang Musculus, travel diary [1536]; quoted in Joseph Herl, Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism [New York: Oxford University Press, 2004], pp. 195-96)

The All-Holy Communion is celebrated among us today [in Württemberg] with a minimum of ceremonial. The church assembles at an appointed time. Hymns are sung. Sermons are preached concerning the benefits of Christ for mankind. Again, hymns are sung. An awesome exhortation is read, which in part explains the words of institution of the Most-Holy Supper, and in part demands that each person should prepare for a worthy communion. A general but sincere confession of sins is made. Forgiveness is publicly pronounced. With devout prayers we ask the Lord to make us partakers of the heavenly gifts and benefits. The Words of Institution of the sacrament are read, after which the congregation approaches with reverence and receives (offered by the holy minister) the body and the blood of Christ. Again we give thanks to God in prescribed words for the heavenly gifts. Finally, the holy minister of God says the blessing over the assembled congregation, and all are dismissed to go to their homes. (Lucas Osiander, Jacob Andreae, and Martin Crucius, letter to the Patriarch of Constantinople [1577]; in George Mastrantonis, Augsburg and Constantinople [Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982], p. 144)

In appearance the [Danish-Norwegian Lutheran] service looked very much like the pre-Reformation liturgy. The pastor was vested in the usual vestments (alb, chasuble). The altar was also vested with the usual paraments, chalice, candles, etc.

The pastor, kneeling at the altar, would read his Confiteor, and pray for the preaching of the Gospel, for the king, and for the government, while the Introit or Psalm proper to the day was sung. Where there was no choir a Norwegian hymn was sung.

The Kyrie eleison was sung according to the melody proper to the day or season. Then the pastor would intone the Song of the Angels (in Norwegian on regular Sundays or Latin on the festivals) and the congregation would continue the song until its conclusion.

The pastor, turning to the congregation, would sing the salutation and the choir would respond. Then, turning to the altar, he would pray one or two collects, proper to the day, or appropriate for the needs of the time. The people answer “Amen”.

Then the pastor would turn to the congregation and read the Epistle for the day, in Norwegian, after which the children would sing Alleluia (the eternal song of the church) and the appropriate verse. Then a Gradual of two verses, or a Norwegian hymn would be sung. On Festival days one of the old (but pure) Sequence hymns (Christmas to Presentation: Grates nunc omnes; Easter to Pentecost: Victimae paschali laudes; Pentecost: Veni Sancte Spiritus) would be sung in alternation with the appropriate vernacular hymn.

Then the pastor would turn to the people and read the Gospel for the day, in Norwegian,
after which he would turn again to the altar and sing, “Credo in unum deum” followed by the congregation singing, “We All Believe in One True God, Who Created...”.

The sermon would follow, in the vernacular, of course, but never to last longer than one hour. At the end of the sermon the pastor would bid the people to pray, including petitions for all spiritual and temporal needs, concluding with the Lord’s Prayer. Then the schoolmaster would lead the singing of a vernacular hymn for peace (Grant peace, we pray) or another hymn. At times the Litany and a Collect would have been sung or said, the people responding, “Amen”.

If there were any communicants the pastor would go to the altar to prepare the bread and wine. He would then turn to the communicants and read an Exhortation. Then, facing the altar, he would sing the Lord’s Prayer in a loud voice followed by the Words of Institution, which of all parts of the service must always be in the vernacular. On the high festivals the Preface, proper preface and Sanctus would have been sung (in Latin) between the Exhortation and the Lord’s Prayer, and the Agnus Dei would follow the Words of Institution.

It was very important that the sacristan would have prepared the right amount of elements for the number of communicants so that the Institution would not need to be sung or said again during the communion.

The schoolmaster directed the singing of “Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior” and other hymns during the communion, as they were needed for the duration of the distribution.

Then the pastor would turn again to the people for the Salutation and, facing the altar, pray the Collect of Thanks, and the people would answer “Amen”. Finally, facing the people, the pastor blessed the congregation according to the form of Numbers 6. The cantor would then lead the singing of a short closing hymn, in Norwegian, while the pastor removed the mass vestments and knelt at the altar for a private prayer of thanks.

...if there were no communicants there would be no consecration, for a consecration without communicants would be a misuse of the sacrament. Instead the pastor, vested in an alb without the chasuble, would stand in the pulpit for the pulpit service and prayers, and the service would conclude with the singing of one or two hymns and the usual Benediction. (Johannes Bergsma, Die Reform der Messliturgie durch Johannes Bugenhagen [Hildesheim: Bernward Verlag, 1966], pp. 121-27; quoted in Dennis W. Marzolf, “Mass Appeal: Discernment in Liturgical Innovation” [2010])

Their [the Dutch Lutherans’] public service was very similar to that of their Reformed neighbors; and yet it had some noteworthy features. The gospels and epistles for the church year were read in course and explained. ... The church prayers of the Dutch Lutheran churches of the sixteenth century were not extemporaneous, but those which the church appointed were read before and after the sermon. ... Before communion, instead of the private confession that had been usual in other portions of the Lutheran Church, a preparatory service with public absolution was held the preceding Friday. ... The church constitution of 1597, as revised in 1614, 1644, and 1681, ...directs that the morning sermons must always be on the gospel for the day, and the afternoon sermon on the epistle, Luther’s Catechism, or some other edifying text. The Sunday morning service is limited to two hours, and the afternoon and weekday services to an hour. ... The Lutherans of that purer period, which the emigrants who founded our church in America represented, during Lent heard the Passion History explained... To prevent those from coming to the Lord’s Supper who had not been properly instructed and been present at the preparatory service, or otherwise privately conferred with the pastor, the custom widely prevalent in the Reformed Church had been adopted by the Lutherans. Those entitled to commune were furnished

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with “tokens,” which the elders standing by the side of the Lord’s Table received as the communicants approached. At the previous distribution of the tokens by the elders to applicants, one or more of the pastors was present to see that none received them who should not commune. As they received the communion they knelt, and psalms and hymns were sung by the rest of the congregation. (Henry Eyster Jacobs, A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, fifth edition 1907], pp. 40-42)

...among early Lutherans..., the Lord’s Supper was the center around which all other services revolved. Except for a few areas in the south that were influenced by the Swiss Reformation, the Supper was offered every Lord’s day and holy day throughout Lutheran Germany. Several practices highlighted the importance of the sacrament:

1. Private confession before each reception of the sacrament was required in nearly all Lutheran territories. ...in eighteenth-century Leipzig there were so many penitents that confessional stations had to be set up in the church on Saturdays and eves of holy days from 8:00 in the morning until late afternoon. This practice not only assured the pastor that communicants were prepared for the sacrament, but also enabled him to count the communicants before consecrating the bread and wine. Thus the problem of what to do with the body and blood of Christ that remained after all had communed was avoided, as only enough for the announced communicants was consecrated.

2. The traditional vestment for Mass, the chasuble, was retained in many Lutheran churches.

3. With few exceptions, the Consecration, as it was called in the sixteenth century, was always sung. This practice was new with Luther; prior to his time in western Christianity, the priest said the Consecration softly so the people could not hear it.

4. Many Lutherans retained the Elevation, in which the priest raised the consecrated body of Christ aloft for the people to view.

5. In many Saxon churches, according to a contemporary report, the ringing of the Sanctus bell at the consecration of the bread and cup was retained into the eighteenth century.

6. Only ordained pastors distributed the sacrament.

7. Some churches used a houseling cloth to catch any crumbs that might fall from the host while it was being distributed. It was carried by an assistant and held underneath the chin of each communicant. (Joseph Herl, “Seven Habits of Highly Effective Liturgies: Insights from the Sixteenth through the Eighteenth Centuries,” Thine the Amen: Essays on Lutheran Church Music in Honor of Carl Schalk [Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2005], pp. 144-45)

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 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 [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. (Rudolf Rocholl, Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland [1897], pp. 300-02; quoted in Edward T. Horn, “Ceremonies in the Lutheran Church,” Lutheran Cyclopedia [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899], p. 83)

For whatever notions some people may form to themselves as agreeable to their own wishes and interest, the Lutheran religion so far differs from the Presbyterians, and the fond persuasions of other sectaries and dissenters from the Established Church [of England], that it carries matter much higher than her, as the use of trumpets, drums and kettle drums, besides the organs, which the zealots in Scotland call a box of whistles, and other instruments of music, nay, they go much farther; and are not only more abundant in their ceremonies, but in the pomp and splendor of their churches, where images and pictures of saints and holy men are exposed to public view, on purpose to excite the frequenters of those sacred places to the imitation of their examples. (William Dawes, Archbishop of York, An Exact Account of King George’s Religion: With the Manner of His Majesty’s Worship in the English and Lutheran Church; and the First Rise of the Lutheran Religion [London: Printed for J. Churchell in Pater-noster-Row, 1714], p. 7; spelling and capitalization modernized.)

The Reformation came and stirred up much of ancient date. Zwingli did away with the vestments, considering them – together with Altar, Candles, Crucifixes, and Organ – to be an
expression of ungodliness. The South Germans followed him generally and constructed the Service, not along the ancient Order of the Communion, but on that of the Preaching Service of the Middle Ages.

It was different in Wittenberg. Luther built the Communion Service on the Order of the Mass, and he retained the Communion vestments, which were considered an entirely neutral matter – doing neither evil nor good. It is not improbable that to this came the consciousness that it would seem strange to appear before the altar in ordinary dress – therefore the accustomed vestments might well be retained. In the Order of the Mass of 1523 Luther says that the vestments may be used unhindered, when pomp and luxury are avoided...

This position was, however, the very opposite of that of the Fanatics, who maintained it as a law of God that these things and many others – where Luther allowed full liberty – should be prohibited. This placed Luther in the peculiar position that he was forced to emphasize liberty in these matters by emphasizing the liberty to continue the use of the ancient Communion vestments. This is what he does in his writing Against the Heavenly Prophets, which writing is from the fall of 1524. ... In the Confession of the Communion (in 1528) – essentially against the same movements – he insisted on the same liberty, and in the German Mass of 1526 he retained the vestments, candles, and altar.

It was in full agreement with this that Bugenhagen retained the ancient vestments of the Church in the services in all the different countries where it became his duty to revise and order the services anew. ...

This plainly shows the mind of the parish priest of Wittenberg, the great Reformation practician Bugenhagen. When the South Germans in 1536 came to Wittenberg to close the Wittenberg Concord, they were therefore greatly shocked by the Communion Service on Ascension Day. Wolfgang Musculus from Constance confided to his journal: There were pictures in the church, candles on the altar, and a priest in “papistic” clothes! The Introit was played on the organ while the choir sang in Latin – as was the custom of earlier days – while the priest having the celebration proceeded from the sacristy wearing vestments. They (the South Germans) complained to Bugenhagen...

The general conception of these things was that the use of the Communion vestments was typically and distinctly Lutheran as over against the black gown of the Calvinists. ...

To form an idea of the richness of the vestments (Gewandpragt) used in a German Lutheran church in the days of the strict Lutheran orthodoxy, we will go into the church of St. Nicolai in Leipzig about year 1650 (Paul Gerhardt, 1607-1676): The alb is used with amice, maniple and parurer, which latter the sexton’s wife must take off to launder and put on again. Then there is a surprising collection of chasubles for many varied occasions. For ordinary Sundays there are five: one green satin, one red patterned velvet, one dark red smooth velvet, one red satin, and one violet-brown velvet. Besides this there are sixteen most elaborate ones for festivals: For Advent one green velvet with Christ’s Entry in embroidery, for New Year one of gold cloth, for the Presentation one of white satin with a crucifix embroidered, for Palm Sunday one green with palm leaves, for Holy Thursday one of green satin, for Good Friday one of black velvet with a crucifix, for Easter Day (No. 2) one with a crucifix of pearls, for Whitsunday one of brown-red velvet with the Trinity in pearls and stones, and so on. There still remains a collection of “very old ones.” At the administration of the Sacrament four boys hold the Sacramental cloths, over which the Sacrament is handed to the communicants who pass the celebrating priests. The boys are in black cassocks with surplices over; but on festival days the boys wear “special cassocks of crimson velvet” donated by a widow.
Rationalism sold this whole collection in 1776. ... The surplice, however, continued in use in Leipzig.

The Evangelical churches in Nuremberg received orders in 1797 to deliver their collection of chasubles to the city treasury as a contribution to the taxes. In the churches of St. Sebald and St. Lawrence, the collection contained eighteen chasubles of very elaborate design, and many of them ornamented with pearls. There were also some Dalmatics. ... The surplice was abolished in 1810, as it had already been in 1798 in Ansbach, to save laundry expenses. (This certainly is the way of Rationalism in all its modifications.) ...

In Sweden all the Communion vestments were retained. Archbishop Laurentius Petri would not have it otherwise. Charles IX was of a different turn of mind and in the parliament of 1618 made an attack on the Communion vestments. The leading churchmen would not hear anything of this, however. They remarked in their reply to the king that some of the old customs were retained at the Reformation so that everything in the churches might be done decently and in order, and also to show liberty in these indifferent matters. It was but fitting that a poor priest celebrating the Holy Communion should also have a fitting garment and not his outworn clothes, making him a laughing stock for people. Everyone would know that it was not done to follow the pope. That decided it – as far as Sweden is concerned.

In the inventory of the Cathedral Church at Westeraas in 1620 are mentioned: a number of copes, chasubles, dalmatics, albs, humeralia, stoles, and cinctures. It shows that the alb was worn with all its belongings. The surplice was worn at all churchly acts outside of the Communion.

The Danish Reformation was very like that of Wittenberg. The question of vestments was not up at all – neither with regard to the Romanists nor the Evangelicals mutually. ... Hans Tausen (later Bishop) states in 1531 that he has so far observed all the usual ceremonies of the Mass and left all unchanged with regard to vestments, candles, elevation, etc. The Ordinants – the revised Order of the Danish Service, which bears the personal marks of Bugenhagen and Luther – prescribes “the usual Communion vestments, but the priest shall, when there is no Communion, close the service before a desk and not at the altar, neither shall he again put on the chasuble after the sermon” (Rørdam, Danish Church Laws).

The Bishop of Lund, Frantz Wormordsen, published, on this basis, an Altar-Book, Handbook for the Proper Evangelical Mass (Malmo, 1539). In it we find the following, defending and explaining: “The priest and the altar should be clothed with the usual vestments, clean and orderly – not for any service that we can render God by it, nor that there in any manner is any special holiness in it in regard to the use and effect of the Sacrament. But this shall be done as a good, proper, and fitting custom, as an honor, not to God, but to the Christian congregation, and as a service of unity. So must everything in the Christian congregation be done honestly, decently, and in order – were it for nothing else than for the sake of the angels of God who are there present amongst us.” ...

Rationalism impoverished the services in the use of the vestments as in everything else, but nothing was ordered discontinued. A later time, with a new spiritual revival, has also revived a new interest in the services of the sanctuary, and a renewed desire to revive the truly historic and beautiful service of the Lutheran Church of an earlier day. An intelligent Lutheran knows very well that while these things have an historic and oecumenic interest, and do not fail in inciting the devotional atmosphere of the Church Universal, they have nothing to do directly with the church of the Pope – only insofar as the popish church also is part of the Church Universal. ...

The Lutheran and the Roman churches parted ways after the Reformation, but both
continued the ancient and historic use of the chasuble. ... The colors used for the Chasubles in the after-Reformation period were many. Numerous examples are found in the ancient churches – indeed a variegated collection... The material generally is silk, gold-cloth, gold-brocade. What applies to Denmark, applies equally to Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Many ancient treasures are preserved in Iceland. ...

Lutheran customs were naturally criticized by the Reformed – but the times were conservative. Halle, however, was somewhat of an unquiet, restless corner. *A Legal Dispute About the Sabbath* was published in 1702 by a lawyer, Candidate Konrad Ludwig Wagner. Professor Johann Samuel Stryk, who was *Praeses*, gave it his sanction by an introductory *Programma* about the unfortunate observance of feast days, which he declared ought to be abolished. ... Both men are forerunners of the period of Enlightenment (Rationalism). It is, according to the opinion of Wagner, a question whether it was right to continue to make use of the old “catholic” churches. No pictures should be tolerated. Crucifixes are idols. The church steeple reminders that we live among the Babylonians. The use of church bells should be discouraged, and the same applies to music. He has little use for the ordinary hymns. Chanting should by all means be prohibited. To decorate the altar and pulpit with velvet is a remnant from the days of Popery – as is the idea of using black in Lent! ... Is the observance of all this not an absolutely unnecessary luxury?

Then he comes to the Communion vestments, which, he declares, are without a doubt from the days of Popery. They have been invented by the priests in order to be different from other people and thus secure authority. Chasubles, copes, girdles, collars, cassocks, cloaks with big sleeves – it all comes from the same common source, the Pope. ... He (Wagner) advises that everything distinguishing the priest be abolished, but that if nothing else is, the chasuble must be, since it is manifestly from the days of the Pope. ... From this he proceeds to attack the texts of the Church Year, which also are “Papistic.” ...

After a couple of years things seem to have become quiet regarding this particular matter until Christian Gerber – after his death – appeared on the scene (in 1732) with his *Historie der Kirchen-Veremonien in Sachsen*. The author died in 1731 as parish priest in Lockwisch, a little south of Dresden, and his son published the book. Gerber was a Pietist with Reformed sympathies... He (Gerber) is much offended at the use of the Communion vestments. He tells how he, as a young priest in Schönberg, was obliged to use the Communion vestments because the patron of the church demanded it. He then goes on to say that during the 40 years he had been at Lockwisch he had never used the Communion vestments belonging to the church, and the congregation did not miss them any more. He then proceeds to treat the question of altar candles, which he thinks are an unreasonable Papistic remnant that certainly ought to be abolished.

...Gerber’s book...found...sympathetic readers, for instance Bishop Peder Hersleb. Neither is it improbable that this book of 1732 has some connection with what happened in many of the lands under the king of Prussia in 1733. Stryk and Wagner had encouraged the princes to legislate against the ceremonies of the church and the temptation was big enough where the prince was Reformed, to take hold of the “Papistry” among the Lutherans.

It was a Reformed king who declared the war against the Communion vestments of his Lutheran subjects. The royal house of Brandenburg, Prussia, was Reformed, while the population was largely Lutheran. The condition had already caused trouble, of which the experience of Paul Gerhardt bears ample proof. The war against the Communion vestments was declared by the peculiar soldier-king, Frederick William I, who ruled in a very autocratic fashion. Through a Decision of 1733 he “prohibited the remnants of Popery in the Lutheran Church: copes,
Communion vestments, candles, Latin song, chants, and the sign of the cross.” Many priests sanctioned this step, but conservatism was also very strong. Many complained and counted the whole event a “betrayal of genuine and pure Lutheranism.” Many reports were also given of the disappointments of the congregations.

The brutal king repeated the decision in 1737, with the addition: “Should there be those who hesitate or who desire to make it a matter of conscience, we wish to make it known that we are ready to give them their demission.” At least one priest was discharged for refusal to submit.

In a supplement [to V. E. Löscher’s *Unschuldige Nachrichten*] of 1737, page 81, we find the following: ... These things are admittedly not of any inner necessity, but they have become no insignificant mark of our church, and must therefore be safeguarded under these circumstances. The king gives to the Papists and the Jews full liberty in matters of worship. Should then the Evangelical Lutheran Christians not be able to obtain the same protection and liberty from their Landesvater – their king? ...

One might think that the Pietists, with their dread of externalism, would wholeheartedly support the royal command. This is, however, not the case, for their chief city, Halle, was among those who protested against the royal dictatorship. The Danish Hallensian, Enevold Ewald, shows no sympathy in his account of the event. He says: “Some obeyed the royal decision, but a number of places protested, for instance, Königsberg, Pomerania, Magdeburg, Halle, etc. This led to a repetition and strengthening of the royal command in 1737. A number of priests chose to be dismissed from their office rather than make submission.” ...

Frederick [William] I was succeeded in 1740 by his son Frederick II. Immediately on ascending the throne, he issued a cabinet order allowing the churches and their priests full liberty in the matter of religious services. A number made use of the liberty granted. The Communion vestments were restored in Berlin and other places. A number of Prussian churches, such as the Maria Church in Danzig and the Cathedral Church of Brandenburg, possess even today the greatest collections of Communion vestments in Christendom. They are possibly not in use now. Some years of prohibition put the vestments out of use in many places, and the time of Frederick II was the time of Rationalism. ... The time of Frederick II was not a time for pious sentiment. Rationalism flourished, and it had an infinite dread of all that was “mystic” or that was handed down from the “Middle Ages.” The use of the Communion vestments was decidedly “catholic” to the mind of Rationalism. Rationalism completed what the Reformed king of Prussia had begun.

The white surplice or alb is still in use in Leipzig and the surrounding country; in a couple of churches in Berlin, for instance, the Church of St. Nicolai where Paul Gerhardt was the parish priest; in Lausitz; in Weimar; in Königsberg, in Old Württemberg, and probably in other places. The chasuble was still used in Dresden in the early part of the nineteenth century. It was discontinued in Nuremberg in 1810, and about the same time in Hannover, Grimma, and Lübeck. At the outbreak of the Great War [World War I] there was probably no church in Germany where the chasuble was in use. Its use is retained by the Lutheran Slovaks.

Taken as a whole the German Lutheran priest appears at the present time in the black Calvinistic cloak handed him by the Reformed king of Prussia. The whole affair proved one tremendous defeat – a colossal yielding and giving up of typical Lutheran ways and customs. The condition was reached through protests and objections on the part of the Lutheran population, and through dismissals and threats of dismissal from office on the part of the king. And the force of the tyrant was superior.
It should always be remembered that the Calvinistic blackness of the clergy in the present-day German Lutheran churches – and in her daughters – is not only not Lutheran, but is a remnant and constant reminder of a period of the greatest helplessness and degradation of the German Lutheran people. The brutal Prussian king, followed by the overwhelming power of Rationalism, did accomplish one thing (insofar as externals are concerned). They shifted the German branch of the Lutheran Church, and her daughter churches, from her natural position among the great historic communions of Christendom, to a place among the sectarian, Calvinistic denominations. Her place there has so far been one of continued yielding in order to make herself acceptable. Lutheran in theory and increasingly Reformed in practice...

The original and typical apparel of the German Lutheran – as of all Lutheran clergy when officiating in the sanctuary – is not that of blackness and gloom, but the festive apparel of the historic church through the ages. We of Scandinavian ancestry cannot be too grateful for the better conditions prevailing in the Mother-Countries [of Scandinavia]. ...

While these humiliations passed over the Lutheran church in Germany, things went peacefully and very dignified in the Scandinavian countries. ... But the spirit of Rationalism spread its chilling and deadening influence everywhere. It also passed over the Northern countries. Voices were raised in Denmark requiring “reform.” Some took up the battle against the liturgy of the Church – because it was “antiquated” and “meaningless.” Up to this time the Danish service had retained all the essential features of the beautiful and devotional service of the Reformation period, but Rationalism had no use for it and succeeded only too well in getting the greater part of the Liturgy eliminated from the services of the church – creating a havoc which to the present day has but partly been overcome.

War was also started against the Communion vestments, but on this point no success was gained. The common people would not sanction the discontinuance of these ornaments of the service. Voices from all sorts and conditions of the people defended the continued use of these ancient heritages of the early days of Christianity. The attacks also seemed to neutralize themselves to a great extent by being directed at various objects. Some took up the battle against the candles on the Altar, arguing that it was more reasonable to place the money in the “school-fund” (how like the rationalistic mind! ...). Others wanted to retain the candles, but suggested that the Communion vestments be sold to provide the means by which to buy candles. There is no doubt that great neglect prevailed in many parishes where a virtually indifferent clergy was in office, but it was all of a temporary nature. Others would come into their places and restore what had been torn down. The general consciousness was a deep desire to maintain the ancient appurtenances of the services of the church.

The leading Rationalist in Denmark, court preacher Christian Bastholm, was a decided enemy of the traditional services, as well as of the vestments, which he calls “ridiculous ornaments.” Many and various opinions could be quoted as examples of the lack of spiritual perception of things having to do with spiritual matters. Probst Jensen in the Karlabo parish does not know “why the white vestments should be retained – except that it does not confine one to the use of black, which color we are not accustomed to ascribe to the Angels of Light.”

In spite of all the confusion the old was not discontinued anywhere, and a consciousness settled more and more that the Communion vestments should be retained, and, wherever lacking, should be restored.

In 1803 a royal decision was issued declaring that the Communion vestments were necessary accessories of the altar and should be included in the regular inventory of all the churches. Another decision of September 1811 makes it obligatory on all patrons of churches “to
provide new Communion vestments when the old ones are worn out.” This actually put an end to the devastating work of Rationalism [in Denmark]. ...

What has been said of Denmark applies equally to Norway and in a slighter measure to Sweden, where conservatism was so much stronger. Through the changes and the chances of the period of Rationalism, the historic and oecumenical character of the Lutheran Church of Scandinavia had been preserved. (J. Madsen, *The Proper Communion Vestments* [n.d.]; an English abridgement of P. Severinsen, *De rette Messeklaeder* [1924] [edited for style by David Jay Webber])

Calls for liturgical reform written from a Rationalist perspective began to appear in the 1780s. They called for drastic modifications to the traditional liturgy or even wholesale abandonment of it. ... Johann Wilhelm Rau argued in 1786 that the old formulas were no longer usable because the expressions in them were in part no longer understandable and in part objectionable. Fixed forms in general were not good, and even the Lord’s Prayer was meant only as an example to follow and not as a prayer to be repeated. Some said that liturgical formulas served to ease the task of the pastor and preserve order in the service. But [according to Rau] the advantages were specious: very few pastors had so little time left over from other duties that they could not prepare a service, and in Dortmund (for example) no liturgical formulas were prescribed, without disruption to the service. Each pastor used his own self-written order or spoke extemporaneously. According to Rau, the most important abuses to curb were the too-frequent use of the Lord’s Prayer, the making of the sign of the cross, the Aaronic benediction, chanting by the pastor, the use of candles on the altar, private confession, the use of the appointed lectionary texts for sermons, and various superstitious practices surrounding communion, such as carrying the houseling cloth to catch crumbs that might fall and referring to the “true” body and blood of Christ. ... Peter Burdorf, writing in 1795, argued that repetition in the liturgy weakened the attention of the listener and the impact of the form. The current liturgy did not hold people’s attention, nor did the sermon. ... Some liturgy was necessary for public services to be held, but it should be as simple as possible in order to meet the needs of contemporary Christians. Rationalist writers backed up their words with deeds and produced a number of new liturgies written with the above concerns in mind. Luther Reed...offered the opinion that these liturgies “ranged in character from empty sentimentality to moralizing soliloquy and verbosity.” ... Hymns were rewritten as well with a view to removing “superstition” and outdated theology. ... This, then, was the situation around the turn of the nineteenth century. In 1817, the three hundredth anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, Claus Harms published his anti-Rationalistic Ninety-Five Theses, which marked the beginning of a revival of Lutheran theology and liturgy that was to continue for more than a century. (Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2004], pp. 127-29)

Gradually a desire manifested itself to gain popularity for the Lutheran Church in this country. The hard dogmatical knots of the old Lutheran oak were to give way under the Puritan plane. The body was deprived of its bones and its heart, and the empty skin might be filled with whatever was most pleasing, if only the Lutheran name was retained! The statement of the seventh article of the Augsburg Confession, that “unto the true unity of the Church it is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by men, should be everywhere alike,” was most extensively used, and in the desire to make the Lutheran Church as much as possible like others, her leaders were much more ready to adopt foreign elements than to retain her own distinctive
features. Thus the Liturgy, the ancient lessons of the Gospels and Epistles, the festivals of the Church Year, the gown, and other usages were given up, in order that as little as possible might be seen of these Lutheran peculiarities. Hoping to gain others, they lost themselves. The Lutheran Church had given away her own spirit, her own original life and character. (William Julius Mann, “Blaetter aus dem Wanderbuche,” Der Deutsche Kirchenfreund, Vol. VIII [1855], pp. 386 ff.; quoted in Adolph Spaeth, Charles Porterfield Krauth, Vol. I [New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1898], pp. 354-55)

The liturgical practices of the Dano-Norwegian Church were carefully followed by the [Norwegian] Synod. Traditional forms of worship were maintained, including the chanting of the collects (prayers), the benediction, and the communion service. Five congregational hymns were standard for Sunday worship. Worship in Synod congregations was always very formal. The old forms were maintained. The entire worship heritage was scrupulously preserved. In all forms of worship, the Synod employed and contributed greatly to church music. The historic vestments of the Norwegian state church pastors were carefully preserved: the loose-fitting black cassock, the stole, and the white-fluted collar. (Photos show that pioneer pastor J. W. C. Dietrichson also wore a heavy chasuble.) (O. Rolf Olson, The Norwegian Synod, 1853-1917: A Short History of a Premier Predecessor Church Body [Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2016], p. 57)

My sainted grandfather, Jacob Aall Ottesen, always celebrated the Communion, robed in the colorful, and, as it seemed to me, beautiful vestments of the Lutheran Church. On ordinary Sundays he wore the narrow-sleeved cassock, with its long satin stole, and the white “ruff,” or collar. But on “Communion days” and on all festival days he also wore the white surplice or cotta. As he stood reverently before the altar with its lighted candles and gleaming silver, the old deacon, or verger, placed over his shoulders the scarlet, gold embroidered, silk chasuble. This ancient Communion vestment was shaped somewhat like a shield. As it was double, one side covered his back and the other his chest. Upon the side, which faced the congregation when he turned to the altar, was a large cross in gold embroidery; upon the other was a chalice of similar materials. As a child I instinctively knew that the most sacred of all observances of the church was about to be witnessed. As grandfather turned to the altar and intoned the Lord’s Prayer and the words of consecration, with the elevation of the host and the chalice, I felt as if God was near. The congregation standing reverently about those kneeling before the altar, made me think of Him who, though unseen, was in our midst. I forgot the old, cold church, with its bare walls, its home-made pews, and its plain glass windows. I early came to know some words of that service, such as: “This is the true body, the true blood of Christ”; “Forgiveness of sins”; “Eternal life.” I venture that all who, like me, early received such impressions of the Lord’s Supper, will approach the altar or the Communion with a reverence that time will but slowly efface. ...

The chasuble...I now use was presented to me by the president of our Church, Dr. J. A. Aasgaard. He had used it while pastor at Norway Grove. A former pastor of this congregation, the sainted [Norwegian Synod] President H. A. Preus, undoubtedly regularly used a chasuble at the Communion, as did so many of the fathers of our Church. (J. A. O. Stub, Vestments and Liturgies [n.d.], pp. 3-4, 18)

We have described the zeal with which the young theologians are indoctrinated in the pure old-Lutheran faith at this university [Concordia Seminary in St. Louis]. The same situation obtains in the congregations throughout the entire church [the entire Missouri Synod]. The complete old-
Lutheran ritual and altarbooks from the days of the Reformation are very faithfully followed. The lovely old Lutheran hymns, chanting from the altar, lighted candles at Holy Communion, intercessions for the sick, publishing of the banns [before a wedding], vestments – in short, their whole worship life is marked by a deep love for the fidelity to the traditions of the fathers. In this regard, their worship life has much in common with our own [in the Norwegian Synod]. (Jacob Aall Ottesen and Nils O. Brandt, “Report of Pastors Ottesen and Brandt On Their Visit To St. Louis, Missouri, Columbus, Ohio, and Buffalo, New York” [August 1857]; in Carl S. Meyer, Pioneers Find Friends [Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1963], p. 71)

Whenever the divine service once again follows the old Evangelical-Lutheran agendas (or church books), it seems that many raise a great cry that it is “Roman Catholic”: “Roman Catholic” when the pastor chants “The Lord be with you” and the congregation responds by chanting “and with thy spirit”; “Roman Catholic” when the pastor chants the collect and the blessing and the people respond with a chanted “Amen.”

Even the simplest Christian can respond to this outcry: “Prove to me that this chanting is contrary to the Word of God, then I too will call it ‘Roman Catholic’ and have nothing more to do with it. However, you cannot prove this to me.”

If you insist upon calling every element in the divine service “Romish” that has been used by the Roman Catholic Church, it must follow that the reading of the Epistle and Gospel is also “Romish.” Indeed, it is mischief to sing or preach in church, for the Roman Church has done this also...

Those who cry out should remember that the Roman Catholic Church possesses every beautiful song of the old orthodox church. The chants and antiphons and responses were brought into the church long before the false teachings of Rome crept in. This Christian Church since the beginning, even in the Old Testament, has derived great joy from chanting... For more than 1700 years orthodox Christians have participated joyfully in the divine service. Should we, today, carry on by saying that such joyful participation is “Roman Catholic”? God forbid!

Therefore, as we continue to hold and to restore our wonderful divine services in places where they have been forgotten, let us boldly confess that our worship forms do not tie us with the modern sects or with the church of Rome; rather, they join us to the one, holy Christian Church that is as old as the world and is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. (C. F. W. Walther, Der Lutheraner, Vol. 9, No. 24 [July 19, 1853], p. 163)

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 that 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 as poor as a 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 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 that he can possibly obtain. In Methodist songs there is much that is false and 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 religions 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 hymnbooks, 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 hymnbooks in their Sunday Schools, but rather would use Lutheran hymnbooks.

6. By introducing Methodist hymn books, the entire Lutheran congregation is given great offense, and the members of the same are led 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. (C. F. W. Walther, “Methodist Hymns in a Lutheran Sunday School” [1883], in Matthew C. Harrison, *At Home in the House of My Fathers* [Lutheran Legacy, 2010], pp. 331-32)

We know and firmly hold that the character, the soul of Lutheranism, is not found in outward observances but in the pure doctrine. If a congregation had the most beautiful ceremonies in the very best order, but did not have the pure doctrine, it would be anything but Lutheran. We have from the beginning spoken earnestly of good ceremonies, not as though the important thing were outward forms, but rather to make use of our liberty in these things. For true Lutherans know that although one does not have to have these things (because there is no divine command to have them), one may nevertheless have them because good ceremonies are lovely and beautiful and are not forbidden in the Word of God. Therefore the Lutheran Church has not abolished “outward ornaments, candles, altar cloths, statues and similar ornaments” [Ap XXIV], but has left them free. The sects proceeded differently because they did not know how to distinguish between what is commanded, forbidden, and left free in the Word of God. We remind only of the mad actions of Carlstadt and of his adherents and followers in Germany and in Switzerland. We on our part have retained the ceremonies and church ornaments in order to prove by our actions that we have a correct understanding of Christian liberty, and know how to conduct ourselves in things which are neither commanded nor forbidden by God.

We refuse to be guided by those who are offended by our church customs. We adhere to them all the more firmly when someone wants to cause us to have a guilty conscience on account of them. The Roman antichristendom enslaves poor consciences by imposing human ordinances on them with the command: “You must keep such and such a thing!”; the sects enslave consciences by forbidding and branding as sin what God has left free. Unfortunately, also many
of our Lutheran Christians are still without a true understanding of their liberty. This is
demonstrated by their aversion to ceremonies.

It is truly distressing that many of our fellow Christians find the difference between
Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism in outward things. It is a pity and dreadful cowardice when
a person sacrifices the good ancient church customs to please the deluded American
denominations just so they won’t accuse us of being Roman Catholic! Indeed! Am I to be afraid
of a Methodist, who perverts the saving Word, or be ashamed in the matter of my good cause,
and not rather rejoice that they can tell by our ceremonies that I do not belong to them?

It is too bad that such entirely different ceremonies prevail in our Synod, and that no
liturgy at all has yet been introduced in many congregations. The prejudice especially against the
responsive chanting of pastor and congregations is of course still very great with many people –
this does not, however, alter the fact that it is very foolish. The pious church father Augustine
said, “Qui cantat, bis orat – He who sings prays twice.”

This finds its application also in the matter of the liturgy. Why should congregations or
individuals in the congregation want to retain their prejudices? How foolish that would be! For
first of all it is clear from the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. 14:16) that the congregations of his time
had a similar custom. It has been the custom in the Lutheran Church for 250 years. It creates a
solemn impression on the Christian mind when one is reminded by the solemnity of the divine
service that one is in the house of God, in childlike love to their heavenly Father, also give
expression to their joy in such a lovely manner.

We are not insisting that there be uniformity in perception or feeling or taste among all
believing Christians – neither dare anyone demand that all be minded as he. Nevertheless, it
remains true that the Lutheran liturgy distinguishes Lutheran worship from the worship of other
churches to such an extent that the houses of worship of the latter look like lecture halls in which
the hearers are merely addressed or instructed, while our churches are in truth houses of prayer in
which Christians serve the great God publicly before the world.

Uniformity of ceremonies (perhaps according to the Saxon Church order published by the
Synod, which is the simplest among the many Lutheran church orders) would be highly desirable
because of its usefulness. A poor slave of the pope finds one and same form of service, no matter
where he goes, by which he at once recognizes his church.

With us it is different. Whoever comes from Germany without a true understanding of the
doctrine often has to look for his church for a long time, and many have already been lost to our
church because of this search. How different it would be if the entire Lutheran church had a
uniform form of worship! This would, of course, first of all yield only an external advantage,
however, one which is by no means unimportant. Has not many a Lutheran already kept his
distance from the sects because he saw at the Lord’s Supper they broke the bread instead of
distributing wafers?

The objection, “What would be the use of uniformity of ceremonies?” was answered
with the counter question, “What is the use of a flag on the battlefield?” Even though a soldier
cannot defeat the enemy with it, he nevertheless sees by the flag where he belongs. We ought not
to refuse to walk in the footsteps of our fathers. They were so far removed from being ashamed
of the good ceremonies that they publicly confess in the passage quoted: “It is not true that we do
away with all such external ornaments.” (C. F. W. Walther, “Explanation of Thesis XVIII, D,
Adiaphora, of the book The True Visible Church,” delivered at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in
Indianapolis, Indiana, Beginning August 9, 1871, at the 16th Central District Convention; in
The teachers of the [school in the Frankenmuth] congregation were also helpful in maintaining the fine and correct liturgical character of the public services, especially Cantor Riedel, who came from Bavaria, where the churches have always been known as good liturgical churches. And [Wilhelm] Lohe (the Lohe of the earlier years) and his co-laborers, especially Friedrich Hommel, left their liturgical imprint on the Franconian colonies. I think I can say without exaggeration that there are not many other churches in our Synod that could be compared with Frankenmuth in this respect. I remember that [Missouri Synod] President [Heinrich Christian] Schwan and others who, when I was pastor there, came to Frankenmuth from Saginaw on synodical Sunday, were deeply impressed by the service, especially the powerful singing of the Lutheran chorales. Everybody joined in singing, men and women, old and young, and the congregation was really a “singende Kirche.” Also the finer parts of the Lutheran liturgy were used from the very beginning of the congregation. In the Communion service – and because it was a large congregation and on account of private confession and absolution on Saturday afternoon the Lord’s Supper was celebrated every Sunday – the Nunc Dimittis ending with the Gloria Patri was sung according to the old correct tune, the Sanctus was sung in the fine, stately setting of Lossius, which agrees so well with the words. ... The great Te Deum Laudamus of the Ancient Church, translated by Luther and harmonized by M. Vulpius, was regularly sung on the minor festivals of the church year, which were all observed in Frankenmuth on St. John’s Day, the three St. Mary’s days, and others. The first line was sung by the men, the second by the women, and everyone having an ear for music will concede that this agrees very beautifully with the peculiar tune for the two choirs. (Ludwig Ernest Fuerbringer, 80 Eventful Years [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944], pp. 156-57)

...the congregation wished that also here for us [in Frankentrost], like in Frankenmuth, there would be a daily brief Matin and Vesper service. ... In general our public worship services and also our daily Matins and Vespers followed the liturgical method as given in the Lohe agenda. According to the constitution which Rev. Lohe sent along with us, all Sunday as well as all special festival services, on the first day thereof, holy communion shall be observed and the exclusive use of private confession shall be practised. During the six years that I was in Frankentrost it was very rare that there were no Communicants on Sunday or high festivals. (Johann Heinrich Philipp Graebner, Die frankischen Colonien des Saginaw Thales, im Staate Michigan [The Franconian Colonies of the Saginaw Valley, in the State of Michigan] [1890] [translated by Esther Meyer Stahlke])

...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 apt to conform to their doctrines also, 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, though they be said to be antiquated and not suiting this country. We will mention here the words of a pious Lutheran duchess, Elisabeth Magdalena of Brunswick-Luneburg. Her court-chaplain [Hieronymus] Prunner relates as follows: “Although her ladyship well knew that the ceremonies and purposes of this chapter (at which Prunner officiated) must have the appearance and repute of popery with
some people, she still remembered the instructions which that dear and venerable man, Luther,
had once given to her father [Joachim II, Elector of Brandenburg] 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 those 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.” (August L. Graebner, book review of Church Liturgy for Evangelical Lutheran
Congregations of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, The St. Louis Theological Monthly, Vol.
1, No. 4 [August 1881], pp. 77-78. Emphasis in original.)

The first care, then, of all who work in the field of English Mission, pastors and laymen
alike, ought ever to be that they steadfastly adhere to the biblical doctrine in all its parts. Lutheran
hymns, Lutheran liturgies, Lutheran prayers, above all Lutheran sermons ought to be heard
wherever our missionary work is carried on. True Lutheranism need not fear any criticism. It has
stood the test of centuries, and no modern weapon of offence will subvert it. It is an impregnable
fortress. Be not afraid, then, to show its beauties to all who come to hear. They expect to be
treated to something new in our churches, and they ought not to be disappointed. To follow the
example set by sectarian clergymen, to sermonize on anything else rather than upon questions of
doctrine, or to fill the hearers’ ears with weak generalizations and pasture them on fine, poetic
language alone, would be worse than folly. To make a good impression, to effect some real,
living good, solid meat must be offered, which alone can satisfy the soul’s desires. Emphasize
doctrine, if you would accomplish your aim. Else why should we expend money and labor, only
to do what others may do as well? It is not our intention to insist upon polemical preaching.

Polemics have their season, the determination of which must be committed to the wise discretion
of the preacher, who must also make quite sure that his sermons offer no just reason for being
offended [attacked]. But doctrinal preaching is ever in season; it alone will do the work we wish
to accomplish.

Having laid a good foundation, we may hope to build up congregations really Lutheran.
Having sown good, living seed, we may look forward to a rich harvest. We shall reap the
first-fruits; they will ripen before our eyes. Our English congregations will give proof of spiritual
life. In the great battle against worldliness we shall find them fighting shoulder to shoulder with
their elder German sisters. From them, streams of living waters will flow, and their influence will
be widespread. For is not this promised as a certain effect of THE WORD? (John Schaller,
“Danger Ahead!”, Lutheran Witness, Vol. 10, No. 8 [Sept. 21, 1891], p. 58. Emphases in
original.)

The reason why so much that is un-Lutheran in spirit and expression is sung in our churches is
because there are some in our circles who no longer appreciate the beauty of the Lord as it is
expressed so beautifully and so nobly in the Lutheran hymn. It is stylish to join in with the crowd
and crowds like what is rather trivial. It is hard to be different and somewhat separate; unionism
is in the air and distinct Lutheranism is unpopular; this spirit is reflected in the music which some
of our own circles prefer. Some of the sectarian bodies have been forced to realize that they have
lost out through their shallow music; but there are people in our circles who insist on learning
through their own experiences and not through the experience of others. This is certainly a
foolhardy attitude, but what makes the situation all the more serious is the fact that it affects not
only an individual here and there, but the Church at large. (Walter E. Buszin, “Music in the
The songs of childhood should be essentially of the same character as the songs of maturity. The child should therefore learn the easiest and best of the songs he is to sing as a communicant member of the Christian Congregation. Old age delights in the songs learned in childhood. The religious songs learned in childhood should therefore be worthwhile. We want childlike songs, but not childish songs. The early songs should be the choicest congregation songs adaptable to his age and capacities. In the same manner as he is taught the rudiments of Christian theology through Luther’s *Smaller Catechism* and the chief Bible stories through the *Bible History*, should he also be taught the words and tunes of our most priceless church songs and chorals. It can be done just as easily as teaching him a number of equally difficult and perhaps new songs and tunes which will never be sung in his congregation. It should be done, for a child should be trained up in the way he should go (Prov. 22:6).

The songs of Lutheran children and youth should be essentially from Lutheran sources. The Lutheran Church is especially rich in songs and hymns of sound doctrine, high poetical value and fitting musical setting. They express the teachings and spirit of the Lutheran Church and help one to feel at home in this Church. Of course, there are songs of high merit and sound Biblical doctrine written by Christians in other denominations also, and some of these could and should find a place in a Lutheran song treasury. But the bulk of the songs in a Lutheran song book should be drawn from Lutheran sources. We should teach our children to remain in the Lutheran Church instead of to sing themselves into some Reformed sect. ...

Concerning choral tunes we shall therefore let F. L. Humphreys, S.T.D., Mus.D., an American authority on church music (who is not a Lutheran), say a few words. In his *Evolution of Church Music* he speaks as follows of the lighter songs which unfortunately are at present demanded also by many Lutheran church people: “The character of piety they encourage is somewhat superficial, not to say hysterical; they are full of extravagant and often foolish statements; but it cannot be denied that they stir the hearts of the common throng. The refrains which are generally attached to them are readily caught by the ear; and that wave of emotional sympathy, easily started in large audiences, soon sweeps over the meeting, and choir and congregation are at once drawn into close accord. The musical structure of these hymns is very slight; the harmony has hardly any variety, seldom changing more than once in a bar, and they employ the march rhythms so frequently that they produce an effect of monotony. The slight structure and trivial harmony of these tunes only vitiate the public taste and strengthen the impression abroad that in America only the cheapest forms of art can flourish.”

Rev. Humphreys continues: “It is a pity that the compilers of almost all hymn books have failed to borrow as many of the German chorals as they should. These Chorale are so elevated, and at the same time so simple and devotional, that they are beyond question the most perfect models of hymn tunes. It is humiliating to compare our collections with those used in the German (Lutheran) Churches. In one for the use in their Sunday schools, the title page bears the inscription: ‘For our children only the best is good enough.’ If our compilers would give us a few more of these Chorale instead of the feeble and sensuous melodies which are too numerous in our collections, our psalmody would be greatly improved; and, more important still, the public taste would be better trained. In the Lutheran Church (of Germany) the introduction of those trifling tunes, even for Sunday school use, would not be permitted. There is a certain dignity in the German music, and, indeed, in their entire conception of the church service. Stateliness,
majesty, solidity, grandeur, dignity, beauty, purity of style, fulness of harmony, fine modulation and rhythm – all these are characteristics of good music; they are essential to the formation of model tunes."

In addition to this witness by a non-Lutheran we might say that the chorals are sung by children in all of the Lutheran lands and are not considered difficult. It is only here in America that their stately swing and reverential spirit are considered heavy and dull. ... The popular demand is for novelty. To lower the standard of Lutheran church music to suit the popular demand would be a disastrous policy.

...the best Lutheran songs are the best Christian songs in the world. As Dr. Philip Schaff, the great Presbyterian theologian, says in the Preface to his German song book of 1874: “To the Lutheran Church unquestionably belongs the first place in the history of Church song.” And as Dr. Adolph Spaeth, the great Lutheran theologian, says in his article on Hymnody in Jacobs’s *Lutheran Cyclopedia*: “The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century is the mother of true evangelical church song. The message of God’s free grace puts a new song into the heart and mouth of the justified believer. The general priesthood of believers demanded the active participation of laymen in the service of the sanctuary, and particularly in the service of song, which Gregory the Great had assigned to the choir and the clergy. Luther gave to the Germans not only their Bible and Catechism, but also their hymn book. He called for poets and singers, able to produce hymns which might be worthy to be used in the daily service of the Church of God. It was primarily in the interest of the congregation and its service that he wanted the hymns.”

Following upon Luther, during the Sixteenth Century, a host of hymn writers arose, such as Hermann, Decius, Walther, Helmbold, Ringwaldt, Nicolai and others, whose hymns are plain and direct, fresh and vigorous, expressing the deep personal conviction and the objective testimony of the whole Congregation. They were sung by children as well as adults.

Also during the Seventeenth Century the subjective personal element blends most beautifully with the pronounced objectivity of the earlier hymnody. Among the notable hymn writers may be mentioned Gerhardt, Clausnitzer, Heerman, Held, Neander, Rinkart and Schirmer.

During the first half of the Eighteenth Century, in the interest of personal piety and sanctification, the hymns of the Pietists emphasize the personal element so strongly that many of their songs are not adapted to congregational use, not to say school use. Among the best hymn writers of this period are Freylinghausen, Garve, Mentzer, Rambach and Zinzendorf. During the second half of this century the Rationalists played sad havoc with the hymn books of the Church. Churches became lecture rooms where longwinded treatises on morals and the utility of things were pronounced to a sleeping audience. The liturgy was shortened and otherwise mutilated. The good old church hymns were removed or changed, and commonplace rhymes praising virtue and natural religion were substituted.

During the first half of the Nineteenth Century a revival of positive Christianity swept over the Church, bringing with it a number of gifted hymn writers. “But by far the most precious result of the revival of the old faith was the renewed appreciation of the old jewels of our Lutheran hymnody, and the return to those classical hymns in their original beauty and force” (Spaeth).

A number of able critics began analyzing the hymn book chaos (for example R. Stier in his *Die Gesangbuchsnoth* [“Hymn Book Misery”], 1838). The German Church governments in 1852 appointed a commission to select 150 standard hymns, up to the middle of the Eighteenth
Century, which were to form the common nucleus for the different territorial hymn books. The result of their work was published in 1854, under the title *Deutsches Evang. Kirchen-Gesangbuch, in 150 Kernliedern*. Thus the way was opened for a general return to the more conservative principles which characterize all the latest hymn books of our Lutheran Church in Germany, though in different degrees.

In our day, here in America, too, we are having a “hymn book misery” in that we are throwing overboard our choicest hymns and tunes from the past and manufacturing a multitude of more commonplace ones. We are being forced to listen to the demand from the children attending our American public schools and living in a Reformed atmosphere to provide our Lutheran books with American tunes and Reformed music. All of the English Lutheran church books, including our own *Lutheran Hymnary*, are over 50 per cent from Reformed sources. Most unwarranted and uncritical judgements against the Lutheran portion of our English Lutheran song books are freely offered not only by children, but also by parents, pastors, teachers, publishers and sellers. The situation here is really worse than it was in Germany in 1852, when a song book commission, as stated above, was appointed to compile a book of 150 standards hymns which should form the nucleus of the future German hymn books. We are happy to say that our *Lutheran Hymnary* contains nearly 250 of such precious hymns; also that the present book, *Lutheran Hymnary, Junior*, contains 114 of the choicest of the hymns to be found in Landstad’s *Salmebog*, and 95 of the easiest chorals from Lindeman’s *Koralbog*. The committee that has prepared *Lutheran Hymnary, Junior* has recognized the “hymn book misery” of our times and in the light of history has sought to choose songs and tunes for this book chiefly from Lutheran sources. It is their hope that the book may in some measure serve as a check against the temptations from Reformed quarters that plague our people and lead them away from their Lutheran song treasures and into Reformed tastes. (Introduction, *Lutheran Hymnary, Junior* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1916])

We must take note also of a most deplorable tendency of our times, namely, that of preferring the shallow modern “Gospel anthem” to the classical hymns of our Church. The reference is both to the text and to the tunes in use in many churches. On all sides the criticism is heard that the old Lutheran hymns are “too heavy, too doctrinal; that our age does not understand them.” Strange that the Lutherans of four centuries and of countless languages could understand and appreciate them, even as late as a generation ago! Is the present generation less intelligent or merely more frivolous? (Paul E. Kretzmann, *Magazin für evangelisch-lutherische Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie*, Vol. 53, No. 6 [June 1929], pp. 216-17)

The scope of this book [*Screen and Projector in Christian Education*] is more exactly shown by its subtitle: How to Use Motion Pictures and Projected Still Pictures in Worship, Study, and Recreation. The author rightly says: “With the addition of motion-pictures, projected still pictures, prints, photographs, models, maps, school journeys and reproduced sound, the educator has set out to stimulate a wealth of experiences to be used in the classroom to facilitate the understanding of the verbal symbols in books” (p. 14). We should like to emphasize the words “in the classroom” and add “in the church hall,” because visual education has proved an invaluable aid in the work of our parish-school, Sunday-schools, young people’s societies, and the various auxiliary organizations of the congregation. Every pastor who desires to have accurate information concerning the use of visual education helps will be glad to use the information contained in this book. We cannot endorse the larger part of Chapter V, on “The Use...
of Visual Aids in Worship,” because the doctrinal and expository sermons of the Lutheran Church will rarely require, in most cases not even permit, the use of pictures. There are other dangers connected with the indiscriminate use of visual aids, especially if the emotional element is stressed. (Paul E. Kretzmann, book review of Screen and Projector in Christian Education by Paul H. Janes, Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. 4, No. 1 [January 1933], p. 79)

Divine worship in the Christian Church is not an adiaphoron. The Lord expressly commands that His Word be heard, John 8, 47. He has only severe censure for those who forsake the Christian assemblies, Hebrews 10, 25. He expressly enjoins public prayer, 1 Timothy 2, 1. 2. 8. He graciously promises His divine presence at such assemblies, Matthew 18, 20. He records with approval the public services of the early Christians, Acts 2, 42-47.

But though He has prescribed the general content of public worship, though He is present in the sacramental acts of divine service, declaring and appropriating to the believers the means of grace, and though He graciously receives the sacrificial acts of the assembled congregation, in confession and prayer and offerings, He has not commanded a definite form or order of divine service. It is a matter of Christian liberty whether a congregation wishes one or many prayers, one or several hymns, one or two sermons or homilies, whether the chief assembly be held in the morning or in the evening, whether the service be held on Sunday or on a ferial day.

To argue from these facts, however, that it is a matter of complete indifference as to how the form of Christian worship is constituted would be bringing liberty dangerously near to license. The Lord says: “Let all things be done decently and in order,” 1 Cor. 14, 40; and again: “Let all things be done for edification,” v. 26. It cannot really be a matter of indifference to a Christian congregation when the order of service used in her midst shows so much similarity to a heterodox order as to confuse visitors. One may hardly argue that such adiaphora do not matter one way or the other, when it has happened that a weak brother has been offended. And a Lutheran congregation cannot justly divorce herself, not only not from the doctrinal, but also not from the historical side of its Church. It is a matter of expediency, as well as of charity and edification, that every Lutheran pastor and every Lutheran congregation have outward significant symbols of the inner union, of the one mind and the one spirit.

In addition to these facts, there is the further consideration that the outward acts of the Church, commonly known by the appellation “the liturgy,” have a very definite significance, which, in many cases, renders the acts of public service true acts of confession of faith. And the symbolism of many of the Lutheran sacred acts, if correctly performed, is such that the beauty of these treasures of our Church may be brought to the joyful attention of our congregations.

This is true especially of the morning worship in the Lutheran Church, commonly known as The Service or The Communion. For this is not, as some people have supposed, a haphazard combination or a fortuitous conglomeration of heterogeneous material, but an artistic unit with definite and logical parts, a “spirituo-psychological, well-ordered, and articulated whole,” as [Friedrich] Lochner says [Der Hauptgottesdienst, 41]. The order of service is a beautiful work of art, presenting a gradual climax of such wonderful dignity and impressiveness that the mere presence [of people] in such a service should result in the edification of the faithful. (Paul E. Kretzmann, Christian Art in the Place and in the Form of Lutheran Worship [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921], pp. 395-96)
Lutheran Divine Service as it would have been conducted in Berlin, Germany, in 1639
Lutheran Divine Service in Wittenberg, Germany, 1558
Lutheran Divine Service in Nürnberg, Germany, 1577

Lutheran Divine Service in Langenbermsdorf bei Zwickau, Germany, 1590
Lutheran Divine Service in Hamburg, Germany, circa 1650
Lutheran Divine Service in Nürnberg, Germany, 1718
Lutheran Divine Service in Dresden, Germany, 1760
Lutheran Divine Service in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, eighteenth century
Lutheran Divine Service in Sweden, nineteenth century
Lutheran Divine Service in Denmark, nineteenth century