
The Relationship of Adiaphora and Liturgy in the Lutheran Confessions

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TO COME TO AN UNDERSTANDING of the right relationship between liturgy and adiaphora in the Lutheran Confessions, one must first determine where to begin. Article x of the *Formula* of Concordis not the starting point for such an investigation, but rather its culmination. After all, the basic concern of Article x is with the Doctrine of the Church and only secondarily with liturgical practices. Commenting on adiaphora in his "Six Sermons," Jacob Andreae noted that the adiaphoristic controversy "was not just over the surplice and that sort of thing." We must set the issue of adiaphora in a larger context, namely, the Confessions' own understanding of "liturgy." Lutherans have sometimes failed to recognize that our Confessions assume a doctrinal definition of liturgy that goes beyond a simplistic examination of liturgical texts to discern whether or not the texts are dogmatically correct. At this point we may agree with Aidan Kavanaugh:

... ritual behavior has its own grammar and syntax. If these go unlearned, the liturgical act itself not only suffers, but those who engage in it may well find themselves split rather than united by it. If these go unlearned, the Power of ritual for evil as well as for good goes unfactored, and those who engage in it may find themselves gripped by the viciousness they would not rather than the good they would.²

For the Lutheran Confessions, the grammar and syntax of the liturgy are Christological. To be sure, there are usages and ceremonies embodied within the liturgy that may be identified in the category of adiaphora. However, we may not dismiss liturgical questions with the quick response "liturgy is just adiaphora." Thus, we turn to a look at adiaphora

from the Confessions' own perspective of the liturgy

I

In the Lutheran Confessions, it is maintained that *liturgy* is the *Lord's public service to his people* (Ap. XXIV, 79-83). Thus, the Confessions ground the *liturgy in the doctrine of justification by grace through faith for Christ's sake* (AC IV, V, VII, XV, XX, XXI, XXIV, XXVI; Ap. IV, 49, 57-59, 154, 228, 310; VII-VIII, 5, 30-46; XI, 8; XV; XXII; XXIV).

Within recent history it has been common-place among liturgical scholars—especially Lutheran liturgical scholars who follow the lead of the Swedish Bishop, Yngve Briloth—to lay a good portion of the blame for the allegedly poor condition of liturgy in the Lutheran Church on Luther himself. And yet, the Anglican liturgical scholar, Byran Spinks, has come to Luther's defense, noting that Luther's liturgical revisions were not ill-conceived efforts at creating a new liturgy but rather a re-working of the historic Mass in a manner entirely consistent with the doctrine of justification. Luther's liturgical reforms had at the very core the doctrine of justification.³ God's action in Christ was to be clearly distinguished from all human effort. Thus, Luther argues in the *Large Catechism* that man is by nature a worshipping creature: "There has never been a people so wicked that it did not establish and maintain some sort of worship. Everyone has set up a god of his own, to which he looked for blessings, help, and comfort" (LC I, 17). This self-created worship is, of course, idolatry.

In contrast to idolatry, the worship of faith is to cling to God alone as he gives himself in his Word. Again, the *Large Catechism*:

To have God, you see, does not mean to lay hands upon him, or put him in a purse, or shut him in a chest. We lay hold of him when our heart embraces him and dings to him. Behold, here you have the true honor and true worship which please God and which he commands under penalty of eternal wrath, namely, that the heart should know no other consolation or confidence than that in him, nor let itself be torn from him, but for him risk and disregard everything else on earth (LC I, 13, 16-17).

Luther understood worship, then, not as a human activity in which man achieves reconciliation with God, but as the receptivity of Faith. In his *Admonition Concerning the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord* (1530), Luther wrote:

For this is a true God who gives and does not receive, who helps and does not let himself be helped, who teaches and rules and does not let himself be taught or ruled. In short, he does and gives everything, and he has need of no one; he

does all things freely out of pure grace without merit, for the unworthy and undeserving, yes, for the damned and lost. This kind of remembrance, confession, and glory he desires to have.⁴

The doctrine of justification is, as William Nagel puts it, both the critical and dynamic principle in a confessional Lutheran theology of worship.⁵ Any liturgical text, form, or practice that contradicts or clouds this foundational doctrine is to be omitted. It is in this light that we see Luther's view of the Canon of the Mass as a prayer turning the Lord's Supper into the Christian's supper, God's gift into the action of the church. The doctrine of justification is therefore the dynamic principle in Luther's liturgical revisions, and the liturgy sees to it that the Means of Grace, Word and Sacrament, are set forth in all of their God-given fullness as instruments which actually bestow the forgiveness achieved in our Lord's cross.

Luther's "justification-centered" approach to liturgy is taken up in the *Augsburg Confession*. Wilhelm Maurer states that "The article on justification by faith alone gives the rationale for all statements [in the *Augsburg*] about worship and church law."⁶ The faith confessed in Article IV is bestowed through external means. Thus there follows, Article V: the Office of the Ministry, Word and Sacraments.

For through the Word and the sacraments, as though instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel (AC V, 2).

It is the Lord who is acting in and through these means. These means actually constitute the liturgy. Article XXIV of the *Apology* goes into an extended discussion of the term "liturgy" asserting that:

It does not really mean a sacrifice but a public service. Thus it squares with our position that a minister who consecrates shows forth the body and blood of the Lord to the people, just as a minister who preaches shows forth the gospel to the people as Paul says (1 Corinthians 4:1), "This is how one should regard us, as ministers for Christ and dispensers of the sacraments of God," that is, of the Word and sacraments; and 2 Corinthians 5:20, "We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Thus the term "liturgy" squares well with the ministry (Ap. XIV, 80-81).

The liturgy, then, is not simply a collection of various and sundry texts and ceremonies, but the public service that God renders to his church in Word and Sacrament. The posture of the church is, therefore, one of receptivity. Article IV of the *Apology* constitutes the basis for the evangelical description of liturgy given in Article XXIV:

Faith is that worship which receives God's offered blessings; the righteousness of the law is that worship which offers God **our** own merits. It is by faith that God wants to be worshipped, namely, that we received from him what he promises and offers (*Ap.* IV, 49).

This service and worship (that is, faith) is especially praised throughout the Prophets and the Psalms. Even though the law does not **teach** the free forgiveness of sins, the patriarchs knew the promise of the Christ, that for his sake God intended to forgive sins. **As** they understood that the Christ would be the price for our sins, they knew that our works could not pay so high a price. Therefore they received free mercy and the forgiveness **of sins** by faith, just as the saints in the New Testament. . . . Therefore the patriarchs, too, were justified not by the law but by the promise and faith. It is strange that our opponents made so little of faith when they **see** it praised everywhere as the foremost kind of worship, as in **Psalm 50:15** "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." This is how God wants to be known and worshipped, that we accept his blessings and receive them because of his merit rather than **because of our** own merits (*Ap.* IV, 57, 59-60).

The woman [of **Luke 7**] came, believing that she should seek the forgiveness of sins from Christ. This is the highest way of worshipping Christ. Nothing greater could she ascribe to him. By looking for the forgiveness of sins from him, she **truly** acknowledged him as Messiah. Truly to believe means to think of Christ in this way, and in this way to worship and take hold of him (*Ap.* IV, 154).

The *Apology's* confession of the liturgy as God's service is necessitated by the proper distinction of Law and Gospel. The **ceremonial** requirements of Moses have been fulfilled in Christ (see *Ap.* xv, 29-30). The liturgy of the Gospel is not a reinstatement of a Mosaic code of ritual law, but the bestowal and distribution of the forgiveness of sins in the Means of Grace. This leads us into our second thesis:

II

The Confessions argue for a distinction between divinely instituted ceremonies and ceremonies established by men. (AC VII, 3; XXVI, 2; 42-44; XXVIII, 2; *Ap.* VII-VIII, 30-31, 46; XIII, 2-6; XV; XXIV, 17-18, 32-43; XXVII, 55-58; SA II/II 1-7; XX/IV, 14; III/XII, 1-3). *Human ceremonies must be distinguished from the genuine worship of God- they may not be given the same status as divine commandments* (FC SD X, 8, 26).

Since the Means of Grace, Word and Sacrament, constitute and define the church, the Confessions draw a careful distinction between these divinely-instituted means and human ceremonies. Article VII of the *Augustana* is pivotal in this regard:

The church is the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. For the true unity of the church it is

enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions and rites or rites and ceremonies instituted by men, should be **alike** everywhere (AC VII, 1-3).

Word and Sacrament may not be compromised, for they are established by God himself. Thus Article XIII of the *Apology* reacts against the *Confutation's* insistence that the evangelical confessions enumerate which rites are sacraments:

We believe we have the duty not to neglect any of the rites and ceremonies instituted in Scripture, whatever their number. We do not think that it makes much difference if, for purposes of teaching, the enumeration varies, provided what is handed down in Scripture is preserved. For that matter, the Fathers did not **always** use the same enumeration.

If we define sacraments as "rites which have the command of God and to which the promise of grace has been added," we can easily determine which are sacraments in the strict **sense** since men do not have the authority to promise grace. Hence signs instituted without God's command are **not** sacraments, of grace, even though they may instruct or admonish the simple folk. The genuine sacraments, therefore, are Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution (which is the sacrament of penitence), for these rites have the promise of grace, which is the heart of the New Testament (*Ap.* XIII, 1-4).

As the Confessions see it, the Sacraments are indeed ceremonies, but they are divine ceremonies. They have been instituted by Christ himself, and they may not be set aside. It is precisely because of this sacramental principle that the Confessions reject the papal understanding of human ceremonies. This can be demonstrated from a number of points within the Confessions. Article xv of the *Augustana* does not reject ceremonies *per se*, but rather "ordinances and traditions instituted by men for the purpose of propitiating God and earning grace" (AC xv, 3). Article xxvi maintains that ". . . new fasts, new ceremonies, new orders and the like . . ." (AC xxvi, 2) were invented out of the false notion that men could use these as means of earning grace and making satisfaction for sin. Article xxvi sees this development as nothing less than a resurrection of Moses.

Article VII-VIII of the *Apology* capsulizes the Confessions' polemic against the Roman position on ceremonies:

They require uniform human ceremonies for the unity of the church while they themselves have changed the ordinance of Christ in the use of the Lord's Supper, which certainly was previously a universal ordinance. . . . If human ordinances are necessary, why do they change the ordinance of Christ's Supper, which is not human but divine? (*Ap.* VII-VIII, 46).

The Roman use of ceremonies transforms the divinely instituted ordinance of Christ, namely, the distribution of both his body and blood in the Holy Supper. No human ceremony or usage may be given priority over that which is established by Christ in his Word.

The confessional distinction between human ceremonies and divinely-instituted rites is *no* mere *biblicistic* distinction, however. The Confessions do not view the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures as a handbook of ritual rules and regulations. Colossians 2:16-17—"Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival, or a new moon or a sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; the substance belongs to Christ"—is cited on eight different occasions to make the point. Even directives given by the apostles to specific congregations, such as the practice of women covering their heads in church services, are not binding according to the *Augsburg Confession* (AC xxviii, 53-56). Therefore, ceremonies are evaluated not by citing a biblical text to determine whether or not it was practiced in New Testament times, but instead from the standpoint of the doctrine of justification. Ceremonies which are used to obscure or contradict this doctrine are not to be tolerated, for they rob Christ of his glory as the only Redeemer and enslave consciences in despair (see *Ap.* IV, 157). Thus human ceremonies, no matter how *venerable* their history, can never be afforded the same status as the Word and Sacraments.

III

The Lutheran Confessions' polemic against the misuse of human ceremonies is not iconoclastic. In the Confessions, a spiritual understanding of worship does not lead to the abandonment of concern for the external forms that are to be used in the Divine Service. That is to say that worship in the Church of the Augsburg Confession is both evangelical and catholic in content and character (Ap. xv, 20-21, 38-44; Ap. xxiv, 1-6, 26; SA III/vii, 3-6).

We have already noted that the highest worship of God is faith itself (*Ap.* IV). The First Commandment is foundational for the theology of worship in the Confessions. In this Commandment, God sets himself against all false worship, exposing and crushing all idolatry. In the *exposition of the First Commandment in the Large Catechism*, Luther writes:

From the beginning [God] has completely rooted out all idolatry, and on that account he has destroyed both heathen and Jews; just so in our day he overthrows all false worship so that all who persist in it must ultimately perish (*LC* 1, 35).

Opposite to idolatry is faith which clings to God alone. As faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, it is the Word that creates and sustains the true worship which is faith. Commenting on the Third Commandment, Luther writes:

The Word of God is the true holy thing above all holy things. Indeed, it is the only one we Christians acknowledge and have. Though we had all the bones of the saints or all holy and consecrated vestments gathered together in one heap, they could not help us in the slightest degree, for they are all dead things that can sanctify no one. But God's Word is the treasure that sanctifies all things. By it all the saints themselves have been sanctified. At whatever time God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work are sanctified by it, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word which makes us all saints" (*LC* 1, 91).

When the Confessions speak of "spiritual worship" they do so in reference to the worship of faith, that is, the worship created by the living Word. In the discussion of sacrifice, *Apology* XXIV maintains that this spiritual worship ". . . is a worship in which the spirit knows and takes hold of God, as it does when it fears and trusts him" (*Ap.* xxiv, 26). Or in the next paragraph ". . . the worship of the New Testament is spiritual; it is the righteousness of faith in the heart and the fruits of faith" (*Ap.* xxiv, 27).

Spiritual worship is not divorced from that which is external. The *Apology's* emphasis on spiritual worship does not negate the *Augsburg Confession's* assertion that the Holy Spirit does not come to us except through the external Word of the Gospel (*AC* vi, 4). The *Augsburg* is consistent with Luther, who, in his *Commentary on Genesis* attacks the Sacramentarians:

Therefore it is not only a foolish but also an ungodly argument of the Sacramentarians to maintain that externals are of no profit for salvation and then heap up examples and statements of Scripture such as (John 6:63): "The flesh is of no avail," etc. A distinction must be made among externals, and not all externals should thus be cast aside in general. Externals are rightly considered as having been instituted by the demned as profiting nothing for salvation when they will of man or more correctly, rashly, without the Word of God. In other respects God wants to work through the Word of his creatures. For this reason one must consider above all whether these externals are performed in accordance with the institution and will of God or not. If there is no Word or institution of God then you are correct in saying that the externals profit nothing for salvation but even do harm. Thus Christ says (Matthew 15:9) "In vain do you worship Me with the precepts of men."

But if you see that the externals rest on the Word and were instituted by God's command, then worship those externals silently on bended knee, and say "Not

my pastor, not Peter, not Paul commands this to be done; it is my Father in heaven who gives the command. Therefore I shall obey in humility, and I shall believe that this obedience will be profitable for salvation."⁷

Likewise, the *Smalcald Articles* take care to guard "spiritual worship" from all who would boast an access to the Spirit without or before the Word.

In these matters, which concern the external, spoken Word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word which comes before (SA III/VIII, 3).

The very fact that God has chosen to deal with us in his Incarnation and through the physical means of his ministry, his Word, and his Sacrament necessitates our attention to the external forms to be used in the Divine Service.

What Werner Elert says of Luther is equally applicable to the whole of the *Book of Concord*:

No matter how strong [Luther] emphasized Christian freedom in connection with the form of this rite [the Sacrament of the Altar], no matter how much he deviates from the form handed down at the end of the Middle Ages, no matter how earnestly he warns against the belief that external customs could commend us to God, still there are certain ceremonial elements, that he, too, regarded as indispensable.'

Or as F. Kalb states: "Liturgy is inherent in the commission to proclaim the Word of God and dispense the sacraments." How seriously Luther and the Confessions took the question of the liturgy's form, we may see from their polemic against the papal practice of withholding the cup from the laity in the Blessed Sacrament, to mention but one example.

There is simply no such thing as an "informal service," that is, a service without form. Recognizing this, the Lutheran Reformers carried forward the liturgy they had received from the Roman Church, making changes in light of the central doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of justification. The confessions look upon the liturgical renovation initiated by the Reformers as being faithful to the catholic tradition itself. Article xv of the *Apology* is explicit in its focus on the relationship of this liturgical conservatism to the doctrine of justification:

We gladly keep the old traditions set up in the church because they are useful and promote tranquility, and we interpret them in an evangelical way, excluding the opinion which holds that they justify. Our enemies falsely accuse us of abolishing good ordinances and church discipline. We can truthfully claim that in our churches the public liturgy is more decent than theirs, and if you look at it correctly, we are more faithful to the canon than our opponents are (Ap. xv, 38).

Article XXIV of the *Apology* is descriptive of the Mass "interpreted in an evangelical way." The Sacrament of the Altar is retained and "celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals." Traditional liturgical forms, such as the lectionary, prayers, and vestments are maintained. The genuinely catholic character of the Lutheran service is not to be denied. In fact, the *Apology* argues that the Lutheran practice of "the public or common Mass" (Ap. XXIV, 6) is more ancient than the private Masses of the papists. The bulk of *Apology* XXIV, however, is devoted to the defense of the crucial distinction between "sacrament" and "sacrifice."

Already in 1520, in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther had argued:

We must therefore sharply distinguish the testament and the sacrament itself from the prayers which we offer at the same time. Not only this, but we must also bear in mind that the prayers avail utterly nothing, either to him who offers them or for those for whom they are offered, unless the testament is first received in faith, so that it will be faith that offers the prayers; for faith alone is heard as James teaches in his chapter (James 1:6). There is therefore a great difference between prayer and the mass."

In a similar fashion, Luther draws a distinction between the Sacrament itself and the remembrance in his 1530 treatise *Admonition Concerning the Sacrament*:

The remembrance is indeed supposed to be a sacrifice of thanksgiving; but the sacrament itself should not be a sacrifice but a gift of God which he has given to us and which we should take and receive with thanks."

The Mass or the Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice, but to use the words of the title of Carl Wisloff's book, *The Gift of Communion*. *Apology* XXIV holds that the "dignity of the Mass" is preserved when it is received as God's work and his gift. "Interpreted in an evangelical way" the liturgy confesses and extols the Donor and the gifts he bestows, his Word and his body and blood.

This evangelical interpretation of the catholic liturgy postulates a didactic function for the liturgy. Thus Article XXIV of the *Augsburg Confession* maintains: 'After all, the chief purpose of ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ' (AC XXIV, 3). This is given further amplification in the corresponding article of the *Apology*: "The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray" (Ap. XXIV, 3).

IV

According to the Lutheran Confessions, the church's cultus is always engaged in confession of the Word before both God and the world. Even items of genuine adiaphora are to be rejected or retained on the basis of clear and uncompromising confession (Ap. XV, 49-52; Ap. XXVII, 27; FC SD x).

Hermann Sasse notes that a "characteristic of confession of faith is that it belongs in the liturgy, the divine service, in which the congregation appears as the hearing, praying, and confessing congregation."¹² It is from this perspective that we see the significance of adiaphora in the church's liturgy. The ceremonies associated with the liturgy may indeed be vehicles for either the confession or denial of the truth of the Gospel.

The Adiaphoristic Controversy sprang from the Augsburg and Leipzig Interims of 1548. Melancthon and the Wittenbergers were willing to submit to the imperial requirement that certain traditional, liturgical customs be revived. Matthias Flacius and the Magdeburg theologians refused on the grounds that:

In a case where confession of faith is demanded, where ceremonies or adiaphora are commanded as necessary, where offense may be given, adiaphora do not remain adiaphora or indifferent but become matters of moral precept, in which God must be obeyed."

The Interims were made mute issues as such by the Truce of Passau in 1552 and its ratification by the Religious Peace of Augsburg in 1555. However, the theological and churchly problem raised by the Interims continued to be debated among Lutherans. It is out of this context that the formulators forged Article x, "Church Usages, Called Adiaphora or Indifferent Things."

The issue of adiaphora is settled by Article x in a manner that is consistent with the theology of liturgy set forth in the earlier confessional writings contained in the *Book of Concord*. Apart from Article x of the *Formula of Concord* there are only two places where the term "adiaphora" is used in the Lutheran Confessions. The first is in Article xv of the *Apology*. Here the Confession notes that when human traditions are required as necessary for justification they became "snares for consciences" (Ap. xv, 49), they obscure the righteousness of faith. Here it also asserts that "Paul is our constant champion; everywhere he insists that these observances neither justify nor are necessary over and above the righteousness of faith" (A. xv, 50). Nevertheless, *Apology* xv urges a cautious conservatism stating that liberty should be used moderately, lest offense be given to the weak. "Nothing should be

changed in the accustomed rites without good reason, and to foster harmony those ancient customs should be kept which can be kept without sin or without great disadvantage" (Ap. xv, 51).

Article xxvii, "On Monastic Vows," also addresses itself to the matter of adiaphora stating that Christian perfection is not "to be found in the observance of other things which are called 'adiaphora.'" Because the kingdom of God is righteousness (Romans 14:17) and life in the here, therefore perfection means to grow in the fear of God, in trust in the mercy promised in Christ, and devotion to one's calling" (Ap. xxvii, 27).

The consistency between the *Formula* and the earlier Confessions in regard to liturgy and adiaphora is further demonstrated at these three points.

First, ceremonies which are not commanded in the Word of God "are in and of themselves no divine worship or even part of it" (FC SD x, 8). Here the *Formula* quotes Matthew 15:9: "In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." This text is used in eight additional places in the earlier Confessions (AC xxviii, 36; Ap. xii, 143, xv, 5, xxvii, 23, 41, xxviii, 67; SA ii/ii, 2; iii/xv, 1) in a polemic against self-shown forms of worship designed to merit justification *coram Deo*. The polemic is not against forms or ceremonies, for the church's worship will always take some form and have some ceremony. As Matthias Loy noted: "...the spirit of the church must manifest itself in some form; without a cultus it cannot exist."¹⁴ The polemic is against those who would elevate the commandments of man to the status of divine commandments, thus teaching that justification could be achieved by obedience.

Second, since the true unity of the Christian Church is in established agreement concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with the Divine Word (AC vii), human ceremonies may vary from place to place and time to time. The axiom of Irenaeus, "Disagreement in fasting should not destroy agreement in faith" already quoted in AC xxvi is restated. The diversity in ceremonies assumes, however, "agreement in doctrine and in all its article" and agreement "concerning the right use of the holy sacraments" (FC SD x, 31).

Third, freedom is not a license to retreat from a clear confession of the faith. When the Gospel is under attack, a Particular adiaphoron may indeed become essential in order to preserve the truth of the Gospel:

In such a case we should not yield to adversaries even in matters of indifference, nor should we tolerate the imposition of such ceremonies on us by adversaries

in order to undermine the genuine worship of God and confirm their idolatry by force or chicanery (*FC SD x, 10*).

For the *Formula*, the issue of adiaphora and Christian freedom is a double-edged sword, for a clear confession is also called for when the freedom to use ceremonies is threatened. Article x of the *Formula* bears with it the imprint of Luther's encounter with Karlstadt in March of 1522:

We also reject and condemn the procedure whereby matters of indifference are abolished in such a way as to give the impression that the community of God does not have the liberty to use one or more ceremonies at any time and place, according to the circumstances, as may in Christian liberty be most beneficial to the church (*FC SD x, 30*).

V

Conclusions

In the years prior to the construction of the *Formula of Concord*, the pressures confronting the Church of the Augsburg Confession in regard to the liturgy of Word and Sacrament were derived from two sources. The reforming movements that centered around Zwingli and later Calvin as well as the enthusiast theology represented by Müntzer and the Anabaptists carried with them liturgical proposals that were integral with their theological positions. Article x of the *Formula* does not deal directly with Reformed and Anabaptist pressures facing early Lutheranism, for the more immediate context was set by the challenge that grew out of the Interims. This, of course, was the challenge posed by Rome.

The pressures brought to bear on Lutheranism by the Interims were invested with political, even military energy. Where are the pressures today relative to liturgy within the Lutheran Church? As at the time of the Reformation, the challenge appears to be two-fold. We designate the first challenge as that of Rome, even though it is also given expression by a number of liturgical scholars who are not part of the Church of Rome. The work done by Roman Catholic liturgical theologians such as Odo Casel, Josef Jungmann, and Louis Bouyer proved to be foundational for the view of liturgy adopted by the Second Vatican Council. This view is consistent with Rome's sacrificial understanding of the Sacrament. In turn, the influence of Roman Catholic liturgical scholarship, coupled with the work of Gregory Dix, has been far-reaching in non-Roman churches. One need only survey the theological explana-

tions of liturgy as well as revised liturgical rites that were produced by Lutheran and Protestant scholars and commissions in the 1960s and beyond.

Eugene Brand, a Lutheran deeply involved in the work of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship, which ultimately produced the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, writes:

Liturgical renewal among Lutherans shares goals similar to those of other communions: restoration of significant practices of mainstream Western Catholicism, expressing the interrelation of worship and mission, recovering the spirit of joy and celebration in the eucharist, grasping the mystery that God's work and man's work are indistinguishable.¹⁵

According to Brand, the liturgy now becomes the work of the people. The accent is now placed on corporate action of the congregation. The Lord's Supper is now defined as a meal for the common remembrance of Jesus.

Where the celebration is seen as a meal in common for the remembrance of the saving work of Jesus, however, the motivation (of the worshiper) enlarges significantly. The personal value of participation does not diminish but is brought into proper balance with the corporate action. Now the question is not just "what do I receive?" but "how am I involved?"¹⁶

The receptivity of non-Roman Catholic liturgical scholars to results of a liturgical agenda set by Rome paved the way for widespread recognition and general acceptance of the World Council of Churches document of 1982, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry [BEM]* and its accompaniment, a eucharistic liturgy, sometimes referred to as the "Lima Liturgy." But, as Ernst Volk notes, the consensus achieved in the Lima document is achieved at the expense of the Lutheran insistence that it is Christ himself who is Host and Lord in the Supper.¹⁷

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has not been isolated from the impulses that have shaped *BEM* and the liturgical consensus that it represents. However, for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the major source of pressure with regard to the liturgy seems to be American Evangelicalism, especially as it is represented by the Church Growth Movement. Charles Evanson, in his paper "Evangelicalism and the Liturgical Movement and Their Effects on Lutheran Worship," has pointed out the convergence between the Liturgical Movement and American Evangelicalism:

The Evangelicalistic and Liturgical Movements are points of convergence where new notions of the Christian life and vocation depart radically from the Gospel's

sola Christe. What predominates in both movements is an anthropocentrism which works the vocabulary of human action and accomplishment ("growth", "offering") and validity ("effective," "actualization"). Neither movement takes the sinner who is curved in on himself outside of himself to place him before the presence of a Father who is merciful solely for the sake of his Son and his saving work. The *givenness* of what God gives is made conditional on human activity, in one case on the appropriation which comes of subjective acceptance and in the other on the appropriation which comes of participation in ritual action which draw one out of the present into a liturgical "transitus" by which he passes from lower to higher, from earthly to *spiritual*, from time to *eternity*.¹⁸

As we have already noted, the Lutheran Confessions ground liturgy neither in the action of the worshiping congregation nor in the subjectivity of personal religious experience. For the Lutheran Confessions, liturgy is not simply a matter of style as David Luecke would have us believe. In his book *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance*, Luecke typically refers to the congregation gathered for the Divine Service as the "audience."¹⁹ Thus the congregation is seen as a collection of consumers to be satisfied rather than the Royal Priesthood of Believers called together by the Gospel to receive all that the Lord promises to bestow in the preached Word and the Holy Supper. Thus, the liturgy can readily be modified to fit the "felt needs" of the participants, leaving the "substance" unchanged. We would do well to remember that such a conclusion is not really new in the history of Lutheranism. Melancthon and company were ready to settle for the terms of the *Leipzig Interim* which allowed for the retention of the "substance" of Lutheran doctrine (i.e., the doctrine of justification) as long as certain matters of "style" or "adiaphora" were changed.

Faced with increased pressures from synodical evangelism departments and church growth technicians to initiate liturgical changes in Lutheran liturgy that would make it more accommodating of a culture that is largely shaped by the cultus of American Evangelicalism, do we not need to ask ourselves if these changes, to paraphrase Article x of the *Formula*, "are designed to give the impression that our religion does not differ greatly from theirs, or that we are not seriously opposed to it?"

The challenges to Lutheran liturgy raised by a liturgical movement generated and shaped primarily by Roman Catholicism on the one side and American Evangelicalism on the other side, make it imperative that Lutherans give attention to the development of what Paul Rorem calls a "liturgical hermeneutic."²⁰ Such a hermeneutic would carry with it both formal and material principles. Jaroslav Pelikan succinctly states

how the formal principle of such a hermeneutic might function:

The authority of Scripture in liturgical matters is an authority of norm rather than one of source; hence liturgy is Scriptural not if all of its content can be demonstrated to have Scriptural origins, but if its content, from whatever source, does not conflict with Scripture."

The worship of the Church of the Augsburg Confession carries forward what it has received from the past from both Scripture and tradition.

A hermeneutic of the liturgy would have as its material principle the doctrine of justification by grace through faith for Christ's sake. Nothing in the liturgy dare cloud or contradict that fundamental confession of the truth of the Gospel. A hermeneutic of liturgy normed by the Lutheran Confessions would not lead to a "liturgical reductionism" but rather a liturgy that receives its fullness from God's generosity in Word and Sacrament. It is this Divine Service that the Lutheran Confessions extol and promote. Such a service is not a matter of indifference, but indeed of confession.

Notes

¹Robert Kolb, *Andreae and the Formula of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), 93.

²Oliver Olson, "Politics, Liturgics, and Integritas Sacramenti," in *Discord, Dialogue, and Concord* ed. by Lewis W. Spitz and Wenzel Lohff (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 80.

³See Byran Spinks, "Berakah, Anaphoral Theory and Luther," *Lutheran Quarterly* 3 (Autumn 1989):267-280; and *Luther's Liturgical Criteria and His Reform of the Canon of the Mass* (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1982), 3-37.

⁴Martin Luther, *Admonition Concerning the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord*, *AE* 38:107.

⁵William Nagel, "Justification and the Discipline of Liturgics," *Lutheran Quarterly* 8 (January 1956):45-46.

⁶Wilhelm Maurer, *Historical Commentary on the Augsburg Confession*, trans. by George Anderson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 18.

⁷*AE* 3:273.

⁸Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. by Waker A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 325.

⁹Friedrich Kalb, *Theology of Worship in 17th Century Lutheranism*, trans. by Henry P. A. Hamann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 274

¹⁰*AE* 36:50-51.

¹¹*AE* 38:122.

¹²Hermann Sasse, *We Confess Jesus Christ*, trans. by Norman E. Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 11.

¹³Robert Kolb, "Historical Background of the Formula of Concord," in *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord* ed. by Robert Preus and Wilbert

Rosin (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 325.

¹⁴Matthias Loy, "Restoration of the Cultus in the Lutheran Church," in *Lutheran Confessional Theology in America 1840-1880*, ed. by Theodore Tappert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 303.

¹⁵Eugene Brand, "Lutheran Worship," in *The Westminster Dictionary of Worship*, ed. by J. G. Davies (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 251.

¹⁶Eugene Brand, *The Rite Thing* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1970), 68.

¹⁷Ernst Volk, "Evangelical Accents in the Understanding of the Lord's Supper," *Lutheran Quarterly* 1 (Summer 1987):185-204. Also see Charles Evanson, "The Lord's Supper According to the World Council of Churches," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 49 (April-July 1985):117-134.

¹⁸Charles Evanson, *Evangelicalism and the Liturgical Movement and Their Effects on Lutheran Worship* (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Concordia Seminary Printshop, 1989), 20.

¹⁹David Luecke, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 99 ff. A confessional remedy to Luecke is to be found in Harold Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action/Evangelical Challenge and Lutheran Response* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1989).

²⁰Paul Rorem, "Toward Liturgical Hermeneutics: Some Byzantine Examples," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 13 (December 1986):346-353.

²¹Jaroslav Pelikan, "Luther and the Liturgy," in *More About Luther*, ed. by Gerhard Belgum (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1958), 11.